

Storylines and storyspaces:

A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies

Folio Item 1: Thematic Analysis Statement

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Abstract

The Thematic Analysis Statement demonstrates the ways in which the various texts included in *Storylines and storyspaces: a folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies*, are linked in a common exploration of socially-just pedagogies. The Thematic Analysis Statement constitutes Folio Item 1 and provides an analysis of each of the four texts that constitute this folio of learnings. In Folio Item 2, *A research journey: Reflective journal*, I explore my own subjectivities and the discourses which led to this study and which shaped the research in particular ways. The journal also explores the ways in which the research journey itself shaped my subjectivities. The largest item of the folio, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* (Folio Item 3, Part A) adopts the genre of teacher professional development materials and consists of theoretical, methodological and practical perspectives related to socially-just pedagogies. This folio item is accompanied by a companion text, *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces* (Folio Item 3, Part B). The companion text is designed to provide practical support to readers engaged in professional learning associated with the main text. Two papers both written for academic audiences and with similar titles constitute Folio Item 4. These two papers reflect my own learning journey in terms of developing a theoretical framework that resonates with feminist poststructuralism.

These texts are all underpinned by feminist poststructural theorising. Each of these texts is considered in relation to three further aspects. First, the ways in which each item addresses the central research questions are explored. Second, each text is examined in terms of its place in relation to the five key stages of the research journey. Third, the place of “head work, field work and text work” (McWilliam, Lather & Morgan, 1997) and *heart* work is considered in relation to each text.

Introduction

Storylines and storyspaces: A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies is the result of “head work, field work and text work” (McWilliam, Lather, & Morgan, 1997) and certainly some *heart* work. These themes will be taken up later in this paper. Specifically, the texts here reflect my learnings as a result of investigation of the central research questions:

1. What discourses might be associated with socially-just pedagogies?
2. What discourses might inhibit socially-just pedagogies?
3. What do socially-just pedagogies look like in practice?

The research component of the work was completed as partial fulfilment of an Education Doctorate at the University of Southern Queensland. This folio consists of four texts that represent a small part of the research journey that I have undertaken to complete this degree:

<u>Folio Item 1</u>	Thematic Analysis Statement
<u>Folio Item 2</u>	<i>A research journey: Reflective journal</i>
<u>Folio Item 3</u>	<i>Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces</i> , learning materials for teachers and other educators (Part A) <i>Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces</i> , a companion text to support readers’ reflection of their practice (Part B)
<u>Folio Item 4</u>	<i>All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies</i> , an academic paper.

Folio Item 4 continued An earlier paper, *All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies* in attached as an appendix, along with a rationale for its inclusion.

The numbering of these folio items indicates my recommended sequence for engagement with these texts.

Folio Item 1: Thematic Analysis Statement

The purpose of this paper, that is, Folio Item 1, is to provide the examiners of this Education Doctorate with an overview of the nature and purpose of the folio of learnings. An overview of each of these items is provided in Diagram 1 followed by a more detailed analysis of each with a particular focus on the common elements of the texts.

Rather than use language prescribed by the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), I have opted to explore the “folio items” as *pieces* or *texts* rather than as “components” (USQ, 2002, p. 24) and explore the ways in which these are “interlinked” (USQ, 2002, p. 25), rather than argue their existence as part of a “unified whole” (USQ, 2002, p. 25). Importantly, the texts that comprise *Storylines and storyspaces: A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies* will always remain partial. To present or re-present them as a “unified whole” would be to claim a unity and completeness that is not possible given the feminist poststructural theorising that informs this work. There are, however, significant intersections and commonalities among the texts presented here as “folio items” (USQ, 2002, p. 24).

The strongest linking factor underpinning these folio items is that all are informed by feminist poststructural theorising. While the nature of this theorising is taken up in detail in Chapter 2 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* (Folio Item 3, Part A), a snapshot is warranted here. A key tenet of poststructural theories is the role of language, through discourses, in constituting who and what we are. Poststructural theories highlight the ways in which we are “spoken into existence” (Alloway, 1995, p. 9), along with the ways in which we speak ourselves into existence, through discourses.

Feminist poststructural theories support understandings of the ways in which women and others are constituted and constitute themselves through discourses, along with the generative spaces available within the relations of power as they exist in local and complex ways. All of the texts that comprise this folio of learnings are informed by feminist poststructural theorising. According to Adams St Pierre (2000), “we word our world” (p. 484). Certainly, other forms of textual representation, such as visual texts, are underpinned by discourses. The focus of this study, however, is an exploration of the discourses that underpin the ways we write and talk about our pedagogies.

In addition to the common theoretical underpinning, there are three further ways in which the folio items are linked. First, each folio item addresses the central research questions listed above. My learnings from this research, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 7 of Folio Item 3 (Part A), *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, suggest that “seeing through poststructural eyes” (Davies, 1994, p. 26) provides a framework for analysing one’s own and others’ practice in order to engage in what might be considered socially-just pedagogies. Specifically, my learnings suggest that socially-just pedagogies are aligned with understandings by teachers generally that:

1. discourses operate in complex ways in school settings and in the wider society
2. teachers’ own subjectivities influence and are influenced by these discourses
3. some discourses operate in regimenting ways, with some of these inhibiting socially-just pedagogies
4. some discourses operate in generative ways, that is, they support socially-just pedagogies.

Further, my learnings from this research suggest that the practice of socially-just pedagogies is related to key *action* areas based on:

1. the identification of discourses as they operate, the questioning of discourses which operate in regimenting ways to inhibit social justice, as well as work within those identified as generative
2. work beyond the classroom in which teachers act to challenge and change regimenting discourses which inhibit socially-just pedagogies.¹

Second, each folio item reflects, to varying degrees, the five key stages of the research journey undertaken to arrive at these learnings.² These stages include:

1. developing my understandings as a researcher
2. forming research relationships
3. co-creating field texts
4. learning from the teaching narratives and developing commentaries
5. sharing the learnings to “inspire action” (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002).

Third, the folio items each reflect the importance of “head work, field work and text work” (McWilliam, Lather & Morgan, 1997) and heart work in my pursuit of understandings in relation to what constitutes socially-just pedagogies. This theorising, the *head* work is accompanied by field work and text work. The *field* work in this study consisted of a forum, a series of two focus groups at each of six sites, eleven substantive conversations, four of which formed the basis for collaboratively-developed narratives. The *text* work was made up of this collaborative development of narratives, which explore socially-just pedagogies, as well as the writing of commentaries to accompany

¹ It is not the contention here that all regimenting discourses inhibit socially-just pedagogies. This idea is explored further in Chapter 7 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

² See Chapter 3 of Folio Item 3, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* for a detailed description of these phases.

the narratives. In addition, further text work is reflected in the analysis of what seems to constitute socially-just pedagogies and the ways in which pedagogy itself could be defined.

A final introductory comment relates to the variety of audiences that are accommodated by this range of texts. This paper, the Thematic Analysis Statement, is directed specifically at the examiners of this work. Further, the other three texts are also directed at an examiner audience, but for a broader audience as well. The reflective journal, as any authentic journal should, adopts its writer as the key audience. Folio Item 3, which consists of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* and *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces*, has been written for a teacher audience first and foremost but also for those educators who are university based. The fourth item consists of two papers prepared for academic audiences. The first paper included in this item is entitled, *All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies*, has been prepared for submission to ***Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education***. The second paper, *All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies*, is included as an appendix along with the comments from an anonymous reviewer following its submission to ***Curriculum Perspectives*** in August 2002. Both papers are included in this item to reflect my own learning journey in terms of theoretical understandings. As a result, the examiners of this folio constitute a key audience for these two papers. Diagram 1 provides an overview of the folio items.

Diagram 1: Overview of folio items**Folio Item 1: Thematic analysis statement**

Purpose: to outline the nature and purpose of the folio, as well as the linkages between the folio items.

Audience: examiners

Genre: expository.

Folio Item 2: *A research journey*

Purpose: to share some of the researcher subjectivities that have shaped this study

Audience: its author and examiners

Genre: reflective journal.

Folio Item 3 (Part A): *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*

Purpose: to support the professional learnings of educators in the pursuit of socially-just pedagogies

Audience: teachers, other educators and examiners

Genre: learning materials.

Folio Item 3 (Part B): *Pedagogies: A participant's journal of storylines and storyspaces*

Purpose: to provide practical support for readers engaging with above text

Audience: teachers, other educators and examiners

Genre: journal to accompany learning materials.

Folio Item 4: *All dressed up with no place to go*

Purpose: to argue some of the ways in which feminist poststructuralism serves well teachers' engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b)

Audience: university-based educators, teachers and examiners

Genre: refereed journal article.

Folio Item 2: *A research journey: Reflective journal*

Given that this study is informed by feminist poststructural theorising, a key idea is that all of those involved in it, including and importantly the readers of the range of texts produced, are situated in particular locations. These issues are taken up in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, Folio Item 3, Part A (see Chapter 2) in more detail, but some discussion of these issues here highlights the way in which the journal links with other folio items.

The purpose of the text, *A research journey: Reflective journal* is to articulate my own location with regard to a range of issues which emerge from my research into socially-just pedagogies. Donna Harraway's (1988) phrase "God trick" is useful here. According to Fine (1994), the "God trick" occurs when "the author tells Truth, has no gender, race, class, or stance" (p. 17). Developing my understandings as a researcher in this study has involved exploring my own subjectivities through the reflective journal. Given that my subjectivities, including my class, gender and ethnicity are "implicated in [my] interpretations" (Jones, 1992, p. 31) of socially-just pedagogies, or any other topic I might contemplate, I consider a reflective journal to be a vital piece of the storylines and storyspaces that constitute this folio of learnings. Sue Middleton (1993), in a wonderfully evocative and powerful text, *Educating feminists: Life histories and pedagogy*, argues the case for explicating the various locations we occupy:

To develop pedagogies that are authentic to our personal and collective histories, we must explore the ideas and imagery that are indigenous to our circumstances—geographical, cultural, historical and material, and generational. This provides teachers and students with ways of understanding how our own subjectivities have been constituted and with

ways of making visible the alienations that can result from interpretations of our personal and collective histories purely through the eyes of theorists whose perspectives have arisen elsewhere. (p. 35)

Informed by theories articulated by feminist poststructuralists, like Jones (1992), Harraway (1988) and Middleton (1993), I reflect on some aspects of the research journey in the journal. Specifically, in *A research journey* I explore my entrance into the research field and my early development of subjectivities which have led me to pursue the central research questions outlined at the outset of this paper. Further, I explore my taking up of feminist and poststructural ways of looking at and acting on the world, my research path within the academy, as well as some of the personal experiences that have particularly shaped this work. Importantly, I also explore the ways in which the research has shaped my subjectivities. The reflective journal provides a textual space in which to consider these personal subjectivities, reflect on the field work that is such a major focus of this study, ponder the intellectual basis which informs the study and convey some of the heart work or passion that is integral to this work.

Folio Item 3 (Part A): *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*

Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces, the major item in the folio, contains both theoretical and practical emphases, designed to support the professional learnings of educators. The key stages of the research journey are most explicitly explored in this folio item and particularly in Chapter 3.

Key stage of the research journey: developing understandings

In Chapter 3 of this item I elaborate on the nature of the understandings I needed to develop for this study. In particular, I consider my development of understandings in relation to feminist poststructural theory, as well as the use of narrative as a research methodology.

Key stage of the research journey: forming research relationships

The second key stage of the research journey, forming research relationships, is also addressed in this item. Chapter 3 explores the two key goals of this stage: to form relationships with participants (those who participated in focus groups) and co-investigators (teachers whose collaboratively-developed narratives form an integral part of this study) and to develop some shared meanings about the nature of pedagogy generally and socially-just pedagogies in particular. The two processes adopted to achieve these goals, an open forum and a series of two focus groups held at six sites, are explored.

Key stages of the research journey: co-creating field texts and narratives, and learning from the narratives and developing commentaries

The process involved in co-creating the field texts and collaboratively developing narratives, the reasons for adopting such genres, as well as the narratives themselves feature in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. The narratives and their accompanying commentaries reflect strongly the commitment to “head work, field work and text work” (McWilliam, Lather & Morgan, 1997) and heart work that underpins this study. In terms of *head* work, the commentaries are informed by feminist poststructural theorising. The narratives themselves are the product of the *field* work which involved two-hour substantive conversations with each of the co-investigators and the subsequent conversations to produce the narratives as they appear in this folio item. Both the narratives without commentaries and the narratives with commentaries reflect the strong commitment to *text* work, that is, the valuing of texts in the form of narratives and commentaries as partial re-presentations of particular teachers’ socially-just pedagogies. Finally, the narratives, as well as my reflections contained in the commentaries, reflect the *heart* work that also characterises this study. The term, heart work, is used here to convey a sense of the commitment to socially-just pedagogies that the co-investigators and I bring to this study. Such commitment is fuelled by a passion for greater social justice in schooling and an “ethics of care” (Noddings, 1992, p. 18). Through such “head work, field work and text work” the narratives and their commentaries address the central research questions of this study.

It is through the narratives indirectly in Chapter 4 of this item and explicitly through the commentaries in Chapter 5, as well as a discussion of regimenting and

generative discourses in Chapter 7, that participants in these materials are supported to consider:

1. What discourses might be associated with socially-just pedagogies?
2. What discourses might inhibit socially-just pedagogies?
3. What socially-just pedagogies look like in practice?

Importantly however, a key focus of this study, reflected strongly in this folio item, is the commitment to move beyond an understanding of what might constitute socially-just pedagogies to action in relation to the practice of such pedagogies.

Key stage of the research journey: Sharing the learnings to inspire action

The decision to convey the learnings of this study through materials to support the learnings of teachers and other educators represents a practical strategy to share the learnings to “inspire action” (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002). The creation of this folio item is more than an academic exercise. In fact, it is a “folio item” for the purposes of examination for the awarding of an Education Doctorate. Following its submission for examination, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* will be distributed widely to a range of educators, including practising teachers, for comment so that the text can be modified further to best serve the needs of the educational community. It is then intended that a modified version of the text be produced.

Chapter 8 in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* contains practical activities designed to support participants engaging in the materials to explore their own pedagogies and to reconstruct such pedagogies where needed. Specifically, these activities, which are organised using the acronym, TEACH, support readers to consider the ways they are spoken and speak themselves into existence as teachers, how they and others constitute students, as well as how students constitute themselves. Importantly,

the TEACH activities also invite the reader's reflection on the discourses that produce the knowledge that is valued in their classrooms. Such professional learning activities reflect the commitment to action, my own and others', which underpins this work.

Folio Item 3 (Part B): *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces*

This item provides spaces, physically and philosophically, for those who engage with the key questions posed in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Participants in these materials are also encouraged to critique any aspect of the accompanying text. This companion text also contains reflections from those teachers whose narratives are represented in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* on both their own narratives and their co-investigators' narratives.

Folio Item 4: *All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies*

This folio item consists of two papers, both prepared for academic audiences. The one with the above title is discussed below and has been prepared for submission to *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*. An earlier paper with a similar title, which was submitted to *Curriculum Perspectives*,³ is included in Folio Item 4 as an appendix. A comparison of these two papers is instructive in terms of reflecting my own learning journey throughout this research. The nature of such learning is discussed in Folio Item 4.

The paper, *All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies*, is written for an academic audience and argues that the Productive Pedagogies, which emerged from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Lingard, Ladwig, Mills, Bahr, Chant, Warry, Ailwood, Capeness, Christie, Gore, Hayes & Luke, 2001a), provide opportunities for teachers to enhance student learning outcomes in socially-just ways. Further, it is argued that feminist poststructural theorising serves well teachers' successful engagement with these pedagogies. One of the four narratives collaboratively developed during this research (see Chapters 4 and 5, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*) is drawn upon in this paper.

Feminist poststructural theorising is explored in two key ways in this paper. First, the paper explores some of the ways in which the research project and specifically the commentaries that accompany each narrative are informed by such theorising. Second, it

³ Each of these papers is formatted in accordance with the protocols of the particular journal.

is argued that the practice of the teacher, known here as Monica, is also informed by feminist poststructural theorising. Specific examples of the ways in which Monica's pedagogies promote intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001b) are explored in this paper.

Importantly, the paper argues that for successful engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) a conceptualisation of pedagogy as discursive activity is needed. Furthermore, the need to support teachers' professional learning in this area is advocated so that they are positioned to access the opportunities offered by the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Without such professional learning, teachers might be all dressed up with no place to go.

There are two key ways in which Folio Item 4 contributes to this folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies. First, both of these papers reflect my research focus to share the learnings to "inspire action" (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002). Specifically, each of these papers argues for greater professional support for teachers in their engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Second this item, comprised as it is of two papers bearing similar titles but reflecting divergent understandings, reflects my considerable journey of learning throughout this research. Despite my claim that the paper, *All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies*, is informed by feminist poststructural theorising, in hindsight I can appreciate that this is not the case. This issue is discussed in Folio Item 4 in light of comments made by an anonymous reviewer.

Some concluding comments

All of the texts that comprise this folio of learnings resonate with my commitment to understand and act on my own world to promote socially-just pedagogies. I hope that these texts also support others in their work for social justice. Just in the way that Folio Item 4 reflects my learning, all of these texts will continue to change. Ursula Le Guin's (1973) words are instructive here: "It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters in the end" (p. 150).

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Storylines and storyspaces:

A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies

Folio Item 2: A research journey: Reflective journal

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Location, location, location

One of the main reasons for the inclusion of *A research journey: Reflective journal* as a folio item is to avoid what Donna Harraway (1988) calls the “God trick.” Fine (1994) claims that the “God trick” occurs when “the author tells Truth, has no gender, race, class, or stance” (Fine, 1994, p. 17). As discussed in the Thematic Analysis Statement, this study is informed by feminist poststructural theorising with its central concern for the ways in which we are constituted and constitute ourselves through language. It is through language, and more specifically, discourses that “we word our world” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 484).

Given that my subjectivities, including my class, gender and ethnicity are “implicated in [my] interpretations” (Jones, 1992, p. 31) of socially-just pedagogies, or any other topic I might contemplate, a reflective journal is a vital piece of the storylines and storyspaces that constitute this folio of learnings. So as I consider a range of issues, which have emerged for me during the course of this study, it is through the lens of subjectivities and discourses that I examine them. Some of the issues I take up in this reflective journal include my entry into the research field, my taking up of feminist and poststructural ways of looking at and acting on the world, my research path within the academy, as well as some of the other personal experiences that have particularly shaped this work. Importantly, I also consider the ways in which the research has shaped my subjectivities.

The development of early subjectivities and an interest in pedagogy

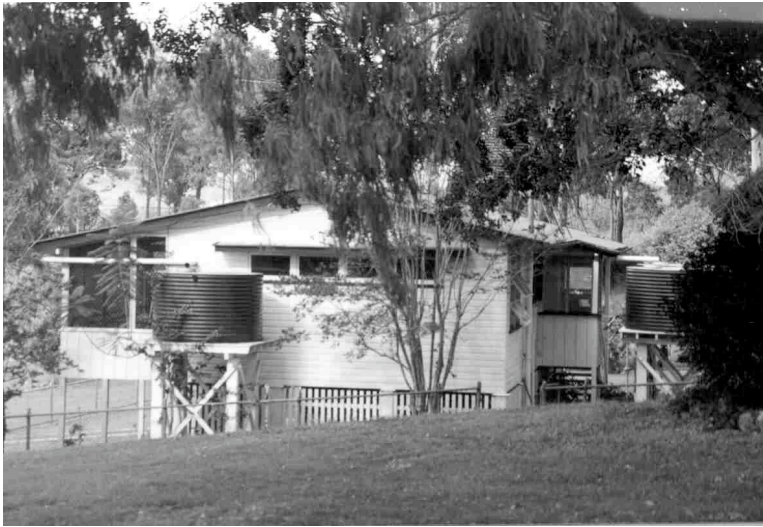
This research project has involved me in “head work, field work and text work” (McWilliam, Lather, & Morgan, 1997) and I would add *heart* work as well. This work constitutes more than academic work: it is about making schools better learning places for students and teachers. I am aware that there are many meanings that, I, as the writer, and you, as the reader, could attach to the phrase, “making schools better learning places.” As well, much could be said about improving schooling in Australia and elsewhere but the focus of this research has been on gaining and sharing greater understandings in relation to socially-just pedagogies.

For many years, prior to my formal “entry into [my] field of inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 69), I was fascinated by the nature of pedagogy, though I didn’t use that term. However, I saw with the increased currency of that term, despite it being regarded as a “somewhat clumsy term” (Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000, p. 96), an opportunity to explore, critique and enhance this socially-constructed activity we’d called “teaching.”

It is hard to pin-point when this fascination with teaching began, or when I entered the “field of inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), but I believe that it started well before I commenced my formal teaching career. Even before I started school in 1962, I was engaging in the discourses of both the teacher and the student: “playing school” was a common childhood pastime for my sisters and me. Interestingly, I have no recollection of my brother joining in this activity: possibly he saw teaching as “women’s business.” My early years of primary schooling were overwhelmingly positive, attending two rural state schools in South-East Queensland. The first two years or so of my primary

schooling were spent at a small school on the Darling Downs, followed by a further five years at another even smaller school in Wide Bay. Both of these schools were sites of pleasant and not-so-pleasant learning experiences.

By Year 6 my classmates and I were thrust into the role of teacher following the arrival of a new, but ready-to-retire tyrant. It soon became our job to devise and record activities for younger students. It was during this time that I realised that school could in



The Panopticon lived at this school

fact be a very nasty place.

The Panopticon (Foucault, 1977) lived at this one-teacher primary school in

rural South-East

Queensland. Upon our arrival by bus well before 8

a.m. each morning, we were

compelled to sit on long

wooden benches some distance from our classroom but in our teacher's line of sight as

he prepared and ate his breakfast. It is only now as I write that I think that this principal

must have been concerned with his duty-of-care responsibilities, but not sufficiently so,

to be motivated or able to get to the classroom ahead of the "bus children" as we were

known. One of my before-school tasks during this period was to ensure that one of my

schoolmates, deemed by the principal to have a "speech impediment" (though no trace

of this exists today), conscientiously practised saying the phrase, "red rabbits run

round." We both tired easily of listening to "wed wabbits wun wound" and I think that,

even if the letter “r” had figured more prominently, this activity would not have engaged our hearts or minds.

School days were long, unpleasant days during this last 18 months of my primary school education. Another unpleasant memory I have of these last years of primary school relates to the principal’s insistence that we stood in front of him at very close range to recite poetry. This “learning” always took place around lunch-time and inevitably flecks of his sandwiches would land on my face, distracting me from whatever compelling and lyrical verse I was reciting.

My overwhelming memory of this time is one of despair that one person could so negatively affect my experience of schooling. As I look back on these times, I think that this experience of schooling impacted significantly on my view of what teaching should and shouldn’t be: there had to be more justice and there had to be more fun. And yet my perceptions and experiences of injustice were largely confined to being a student in this teacher’s class. For example, I was only marginally aware of class differences and their impact on how we were “spoken into existence” (Alloway, 1995, p. 9) and how we spoke ourselves into existence.



A country life



The main class distinction was between the “town kids” and those of us who lived—and worked, even as students—on nearby farms. In terms of being constituted and constituting ourselves as gendered beings, it seems in hindsight (though maybe naively) that the gender boundaries were not policed as strongly as they might have been at a larger school or in a contemporary setting. For example, all of the students who were big enough played softball, probably our major team sport. Without such a “whole-school approach,” we would never have had enough players for a game. Tennis was the other sport that occupied the space that might in another place have been taken up by football. However, I must have crossed the gender boundaries because I recall regularly being called a “tom-boy” as I grew up. It actually seemed to be a pretty good thing to be. Nevertheless I spent many afternoons after school—with slate and slate pencil—writing “I must not slide down the stairs.” This example highlights many things, including teaching practice in which what we were not permitted to do figured more prominently than what we were permitted to do.

I was acutely aware then and now of the gendered nature of the Wednesday afternoon curriculum. While the girls learned what seemed to be an endless variety of ways to make a decorative (and occasionally functional) mark on a fabric with thread, the boys toiled above us in the regular classroom space to construct cane baskets. Cane featured in another way as well during our Wednesday afternoon segregated curriculum. Caning as a punishment was meted out to the boys during these sewing/basket-making sessions, but only in the midst of the boys who were also only the ones eligible for this inducement to their learning. Not even the witnessing of this punishment/behaviour modification strategy was allowed for girls. As I struggled to produce an adequate

representation of what the local matriarch called a “lazy daisy stitch,” my female classmates and I heard the sombre tones of the caning event.

As students we were all clearly positioned in terms of the “religious denomination” to which we belonged because everyone *did* belong to a denomination, that is, a particular version of Christianity. When the weekly religious education session occurred the Catholics, the group to which I belonged, and the rest, “the Protestants,” were separated and each group was inculcated with a particular view of the world with no communication between these groups on the basis of religion. I recall walking home in trepidation from my first school on the Darling Downs. To get to our farm several kilometres from the school, my sisters and I had to pass a non-Catholic church where several kids from our school lived. We ran quickly past this *religious place* as its inhabitants hurled abuse at us on the basis of identifying us as Catholic.

Issues of race were virtually invisible for me as a student growing up in the small farming communities on the Darling Downs and then in Wide Bay. In twelve years of schooling I did not have any classmates who identified as Indigenous. I recall that while I was a primary student only two Indigenous students came to one of the two schools I attended and then only for several months. I recall the bus driver telling us that they would be arriving and warning us to treat these girls only with respect. The fact that there were so few kids who identified as Indigenous at my schools was extraordinary given the local history, at least in the area of Wide Bay where I grew up. Unknown to me at the time, a government which clearly valued European life over Indigenous life moved these people to other places.

The physical invisibility of Indigenous people during the 1960s, when I attended school, was matched by the invisibility of Indigenous cultures, histories, land rights,

health issues and so on in the storylines of school Social Studies. Instead what I was taught about Indigenous people when I went to school was all in relation to the pioneering achievements of the white “settlers.” Indigenous people within this storyline were obstacles in the way of “development” of the country. Not only were Indigenous people regarded as impediments to white “settlement,” many of the texts with which I grew up constructed Indigenous people as lesser people than their white counterparts. I recently sought out a text, revealingly titled *Wilderness to Wealth* (Murphy & Easton, 1950), which was regarded by many local people at the time as offering an insightful and careful history of the district. What is insightful is looking back now on the storylines that dominated our texts of the 1950s and 1960s. The following passage was written to describe events that occurred near the farm on which my family lived:

Sometimes the blacks effected their pillage [of sheep] by stealth. A favourite device was that employed by natives engaged in sheep washing. A sheep’s leg would be grasped between the blackfellows’ large and prehensile toes and dragged underneath the surface and held there till drowned, the carcass being recovered at leisure. (Murphy & Easton, 1950, p. 262)

The above quote reflects the discourse used throughout the text: Indigenous people were regarded as less human than were white Australians. It’s those who get to write the history that get to use their descriptors—there is reference to “the truculence of the blacks” (Murphy & Easton, 1950, p. 262). While the “pioneering” European women were lauded, Indigenous women were referred to as “gins.”

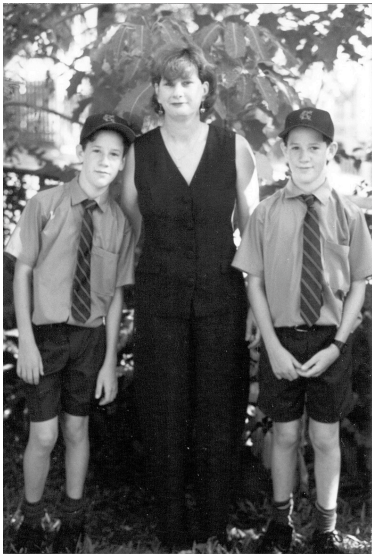
I know that I grew up without making these apparently ordinary words extraordinary (Shor, 1992). I grew up with no appreciation that the discourses operating in a text, whether that text was a “school book,” a conversation or a television program,

were invitations to look at the world in particular ways. Instead I just gained a sense from all of these texts and others that that was how the world was. And so for me the truth about anything was not in dispute, not contested—it was just there.

I did realise at any early age, though of course not with the language and lenses on which I now draw, that one's experience of schooling and with schooling was inevitably bound up with particular subjectivities, such as those related to age, religion, gender, location and so on. So I don't think it's possible to talk of entering the "field of inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 69) as a "student-teacher," as we were called at the time, or as a teacher with my own classes.

Learning some lessons about pedagogy from my sons

My subjectivities as a mother have influenced my commitment to socially-just pedagogies. In turn, such commitment has influenced my taking up, or resisting, particular discourses related to my sons' formal and informal learning. Of the many



Many educational moments

research journey.

Poles apart!

instructive "educational moments" I've shared, and continue to share, with Sam and Ben, two stories stand out. I am sharing these stories in this journal for two main reasons. First, both stories are suggestive of pedagogies practised within the past decade and which, may still in fact, be practised today in some contexts. Second, these stories are also suggestive of the experiences I've had as a mother who has an educational focus. Such experiences have contributed to my motivation to take up this

The first story, which I've labelled here, "Poles apart!" was published in *Gender up front: Strategies for a gender focus across the key learning areas* (Nayler, 1997). The pseudonym, John, is used in the story to represent Ben and I am "the project teacher" referred to in the text.

An inclusive curriculum is within reach of our kids!

The following conversation took place between a project teacher and her 10-year-old son.

Child (holding up a handout from a social studies lesson that day):

Mum, I told Mrs Black that I thought this handout was sexist.

Parent: *Mm ... you think that it's sexist.*

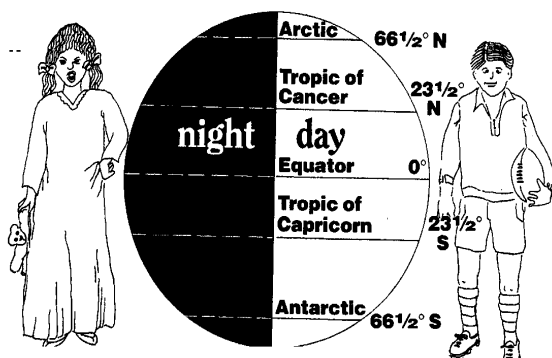
Child: *Yeah, I do.*

Parent (wanting to move the child away from the oppositional politics of dismissing a text outright without exploring the voices represented): *John, what are you invited to understand about females from this text?*

Child: *Well, that they're not interested in sport or that they can't do it, that they're just not active.*

Parent: *What about males of this age? What are you invited to understand about males?*

Child: *It shows males as interested in sport, playing sport.*



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It is not the suggestion here that sweeping claims about the narrow ways in which masculinity and femininity are constructed should be made on the basis of this one visual text. If such a study were to be undertaken, a broad range of texts (visual, written, aural, oral) should be explored.

What is important to note is that this 10-year-old child has:

1. valued girls as interested in sport (they're marginalised in this text);
2. identified a barrier (i.e. girls' marginalisation in this text) to girls being portrayed as interested and successful in sport; and
3. critically challenged a text in order to redress inequality.

What this learner has achieved with guided, but limited questioning by the parent is—unknowingly!— a synthesis of the Education Queensland's inclusive curriculum standard. However, although he has critically challenged a text in order to redress inequality, this was an individual response rather than part of a collective action to redress this situation as it may occur in his class or at school level.

Educators need to seize critical, individual moments and invite students to devise and carry out appropriate group action. In this particular case, several weeks later, the parent asked her son whether there were any girls in his school soccer team. 'There were two,' he reported, 'but they gave up—I don't think they wanted to put up with the teasing!'

And a word about the child ... This 10-year-old is passionate about sport and is highly competent in several sports, including rugby league, hockey, tennis and track athletics. He enjoys the highly competitive aspect of sport which is often aligned (at this socio-historical moment) with a dominant form of masculinity. At the same time as he is able to derive pleasure from that masculine culture, he is able to stand aside and critique that culture, and explore some of the ways in which it marginalises or silences other groups.

Source: Nayler (1997, p. 33).

And I did use that precise phrase with 10 year-old Ben: “What are you invited to understand...?” and he did understand. I recall being overwhelmed by Ben’s sophisticated analysis but also saddened, as I remain today, with the notion that basic principles of social justice, so apparent to my 10 year-old son, are still neglected or marginalised by some educators.

Sam and the Blue Mountains

The second story is one that I’ve shared on numerous occasions in workshops with teachers. At the time that this conversation took place Sam was also ten years of age. One morning, over breakfast, Sam invited me to “ask him his Social Studies questions.” Thinking this would be a great opportunity to incorporate a few thinking skills, with a special emphasis on lateral thinking, I took the brief further than my son intended. Fairly soon into the “teaching moment” my agenda, as teacher/mother, and Sam’s agenda, as conscientious Social Studies student, collided. “Just ask the questions, Mum, and in the exact order that my teacher has given them to me—that’s just what she said to do – none of this other stuff.” The “other stuff” was made up of questions, such as:

- *What do you think was happening in other parts of the world at this time?*
- *What do you think would have happened if...?*
- *What else would you like to know about?*

I was suitably chastised and attended to the list and in its correct order. At the end of the recall of some of the “key facts” about European settlement, I dared to pose one further question: “Do you really think that Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson were the first people to see beyond the Blue Mountains?” The reply was immediate and confident: “Of course, not Mum, Aboriginal people would have been there, but my teacher doesn’t count them.”

This conversation had a profound effect on me at the time and continues to do so. I'm sure that if I had asked Sam's teacher the same question she would have acknowledged the presence of Indigenous people. But I think that she was probably teaching in ways she was taught herself. I received similar invitations to truth as a student and was complicit in sharing such invitations in my early years of teaching. In this way, I wasn't challenging the traditional storylines about "European settlement" but accepting notions of "First Settlement in 1788" as the uncontested, "true" version of history. In 1995 Sam's experiences of Social Studies still contained vestiges of the traditional storylines that had dominated my own schooling thirty years before.

The discourses that constitute us as teachers and with which we constitute ourselves elide with those associated with other areas of our lives, such as these above related to my positioning as a mother. The discourses associated with pedagogy are not hermetically sealed around the classroom door, though maybe in many of our classrooms we try to do just that.

The lens of feminist poststructural theorising, with its focus on the constitutive role of language in our lives, has heightened my passion for exploring the complex and often contradictory and contestatory ways in which discourses and subjectivities influence the pedagogies we experience as students and teachers. This research has engaged me in "head work, field work and text work" (McWilliam, Lather, & Morgan, 1997) but also importantly in *heart* work.

Strength through uncertainty

On the same day I delivered a presentation on this research at the Brisbane Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education in 2002, and interestingly in the same room, I attended an outstanding series of presentations, all underpinned by feminist poststructural theorising. Three times the number attended the afternoon session as attended mine. Another comparison was really instructive. One of the afternoon presenters paused in an outline of her research to say, “I feel I’ve lost everybody—I’ve lost myself.” This comment seemed to me, and I think to the other participants, an appropriate reflection—an acknowledgement of the complex and often contradictory thinking informed by poststructural theorising. I interpret such reflection as strength rather than weakness. I make this point in Chapter 1 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. The reflective comments made by this presenter are in contrast to those made about my presentation to me following my session.

Several people lingered following my presentation with one participant introducing herself by saying that my presentation “really threw her.” She went onto describe me as “a powerful, articulate woman confident in what I was saying”—“a deep contrast,” she said “to what one normally expected from anyone, especially a woman, articulating work underpinned by feminist poststructural theorising.” I found this woman’s comments fascinating—there was a clear tension between recognising the need to proceed cautiously and yet the simultaneous need to convey the nature of the work in clear and accessible ways. The notion of strength through uncertainty has manifested itself in other ways as well during the course of this study.

Strength through uncertainty—a very personal perspective

It would be both sad and surprising to devote five years of my life to a project such as this that did not result in significant shifts in my thinking about the world and my place in it. Probably the most significant shift in my thinking relates to my appreciation of the strength associated with uncertainty. As is often the case, and especially given the feminist poststructural theorising which informs this work, the personal and the professional slide inevitably towards and across each other in constant motion.

Prior to this research I might have considered that embracing uncertainty was not a strength. Though not accepting the certainty of positivist ways of viewing education, prior to this research I did not embrace the notion of strength through uncertainty. My work exploring the discourses that appear to operate in the teaching narratives, which form the central aspect of my study, has led me to a cautious stance. Research methodologies that propose definitive understandings in terms of teachers' practices seem foolhardy and methodologically weak. The positivist methodologies to which I refer claim certainty with regard to understanding teachers' practice. No such certainty underpins these texts. Strength through uncertainty extends beyond my life as an educator.

When I told my then supervisor in January 2001 that I'd just been diagnosed with breast cancer he said that it would change the understandings that I would bring to my study. I thought not. Even though I'd always considered the intersections between the personal and the professional, I wasn't prepared for the enormous impact that this change in my health would have on my study. When I did the inevitable prioritisation of

what was important in my life, my study remained. And not only did it remain a key part of my life but its importance escalated. To learn more about what might constitute socially-just pedagogies seemed, and continues to seem, to be worthy of devoting the enormous amounts of time and resources that such study involves. I realised early on in 2001 that fear of the unknown could undermine my capacity to do anything. I have a strong sense that participation in this research has been part of my journey to survive and even thrive amidst so much unknown. But eight months of treatment and major surgery were a mere prelude to a much greater fear of the unknown that followed.

Just one year after my diagnosis, our son Sam—just seventeen years of age—also received a diagnosis of cancer. His whole school year in 2002 was taken up with treatment for an aggressive cancer in the nasal cavity. Following a diagnosis in early February, he was only days out of intensive care in November, when he donned his now familiar black eye patch, and saw his twin brother and their friends off to the senior formal. On the eve of Sam's major surgery I recall saying to a colleague that I didn't feel weakened by the events of the year, but that I felt strengthened. I'm learning to live, and live with strength, amidst much uncertainty. And what of the relationship between these tumultuous events and my study?

For two and a half of the past five years in which I have studied for this degree, cancer has been a challenge for my family and for me. One of my substantive conversations was interrupted by a call from my son's oncologist. I sat for long hours in oncology wards reading articles and trying to find spaces in my head that would allow me to theorise my work. I listened to one of my co-investigators talk of how she invites her students to consider themselves as lived texts, only to draw heavily on that concept within days to understand the new world my son and I now inhabit. I found the

following story instructive for two key reasons. First, the story explicates the complex ways in which discourses operate in our lives. Second, on a personal level the story shows the way in which people being treated for cancer stand out from the crowd as a result of the often extensive and overt changes to their bodies which they experience.

It was Monica, the secondary English teacher, whose narrative appears in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, who invites her students to see themselves as “lived texts.” During the very week in which I shared the substantive conversation with Monica, my son Sam told me a story that illustrates powerfully the notion of people as “lived texts.” Seventeen year-old Sam, dressed in black and with no hair, was approached by a young Indigenous male one evening in the City. What this young male did next conveys a sense of the way he “read” Sam as a “lived text.” He raised his arm in a Nazi salute and called “Zeig Heil!” Undoubtedly, the young Indigenous male had experienced oppression and, noting especially, Sam’s hair or lack of hair, “read” Sam as someone complicit in that oppression. “Actually, I’ve got cancer,” Sam replied to which the other responded, “Gee, sorry mate.” That story, and others like it clump together to form memories of the past two and a half years, some of which are painful. And yet I find that the lenses that I have developed during this research have helped me to understand better the world in which I live.

My research path within the academy

A major reason for embarking on this course of study has been to put challenges out to people—myself included—to change pedagogical practice by drawing on what I consider, after much reading and thought, to be helpful lenses. My friend from another university lamented to me once that she “needed to decode her PhD so that others could make meaning from it.”

The discourses that speak the PhD student and graduate into existence seem to be more powerful than the discourses that construct those in Education Doctorate programs. As I embarked on this study I had a strong sense that the Education Doctorate is regarded as the poor cousin to the PhD by some in the academy. But my motivation was strong and focused: I wanted to develop understandings and materials that would be shared as a direct rather than indirect result of the study. It is this strong motivation that led me to develop the texts that make up this folio.

Some concluding comments

My research journey, represented here as it is by five texts that constitute *Storylines and storyspaces: A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies*, is not at an end. There is no fixity or permanence intended in these texts—my understandings are constantly changing. I look forward with optimism and excitement to know the ways in which others will challenge these texts as helpful in leading us all to practise more socially-just pedagogies.

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Storylines and storyspaces:

A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies

**Folio Item 3 (Part A): Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces
Teachers' work within and against invitations to truth**

Jennifer Margaret Nayler

Submitted in September 2003 in partial completion of an Education Doctorate
(University of Southern Queensland)

*For Ben, Gary, and especially for Sam,
who continues to teach me lessons I need to learn.*

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I would like to acknowledge especially the key role my “co-investigators” played in this research project. These thirteen remarkable teachers shared their knowledge about socially-just pedagogies with me, as well as their passion. Unfortunately, the scope of the project allowed me to develop collaboratively only four narratives from the field texts created as a result of these thirteen substantive conversations.

My heartfelt appreciation is extended to the four teachers whose narratives appear in these pages. These teachers are known in this text as Alice, Jemma, Monica and Tina. Not only did these busy teachers participate in professional conversations with me, they provided careful and insightful feedback on the narratives as we worked on these together. Without their stories, there would be no *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

To my supervisors, Dr Jon Austin, Dr Amanda Keddie and Dr Tony Rossi, I owe an enormous debt. These three people share a commitment to socially-just pedagogies, in terms of theoretical understandings and in terms of the action needed to implement such pedagogies. Jon, Amanda and Tony provided me with unwavering support and each has left a special imprint on this text. Tony’s support was invaluable in the early conceptualising of the research methodologies. Jon’s sharing of his extraordinary knowledge of the literature relevant to this type of work has greatly enhanced these materials. My capacity to engage with feminist poststructural theorising has been boosted enormously by Amanda’s understandings and skills in this area.

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1 Introduction: A little bit of theory goes a long way

I invite [my students] to always be open—even though at times it might be difficult—we need to remember that we don't always know the backgrounds of the voices we hear, we don't know always about the cultures that have produced the voices. Even to my Year 8 students I talk about how we are all inscribed by our life experiences. And when we listen we are hearing the product of forces that sometimes we are not aware of. And so that makes what we hear all the more mysterious but all the more revealing....

(Monica—see Chapter 4)

Are these materials right for you?

Welcome to *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. The central focus of these materials is learning: my learnings as the author/compiler of these materials, the learnings of the teachers and other educators whose stories and commentaries are “spoken” here and, most importantly, your learnings as a participant in these materials.

If you're looking for professional development materials that provide:

- a precise definition of pedagogy
- instructions on how to practise socially-just pedagogies or
- a clear picture of what socially-just pedagogies look like in practice

...you've got the wrong materials.

If you're looking for materials to support your learnings about:

- what pedagogy might mean
- the ways in which teachers' subjectivities, that is, their “conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions” along with “their sense of [themselves and their] ways of understanding [their] relation to the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32), influence the pedagogies they practise
- the ways in which *your* subjectivities might influence the pedagogies you practise
- the discourses that might support socially-just pedagogies
- the discourses that might inhibit socially-just pedagogies and
- what socially-just pedagogies look like in particular contexts

...then read on.

As a participant in these materials, you are invited to consider what is meant by the term “pedagogy” and what might constitute “socially-just pedagogies.” Any explicit exploration of these terms is purposefully delayed in these materials to encourage your consideration of these terms. These materials consist of this text and an accompanying text, *Pedagogies: A participant's journal of storylines and storyspaces*.

Danger: proceed with caution

If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world, and “the Right thing to do” will always be partial, interested and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing circumstances in which students of difference can thrive. (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 324)

Ellsworth’s (1989) call for educators to acknowledge the ever-present partiality, the interested stance and the potentially oppressive quality of any pedagogy suggests the tentative standpoint that underpins *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. The key idea here is that particular pedagogies serve the interests and needs of particular groups of students and teachers, as well as broader societal interests. As well, particular pedagogies marginalise or neglect the interests and needs of certain groups and interests. My ideas as to what constitutes socially-just pedagogies are presented more explicitly in Chapters 6 and 7. At this stage, the participant in these materials is invited to consider her/his own position in relation to what constitutes socially-just pedagogies.

Participants in these learning materials are invited to consider this tentative stance not as the result of a lack of careful thought, or inadequate scholarship, but as a tentativeness borne of an appreciation of the world and educational contexts, in particular, as places of complexity, change and contradictions. The tentative standpoint adopted here is presented as a strength, a necessary and appropriate cautiousness about what counts as knowledge, about what counts as truth and so on.

It is an exploration of these notions in relation to what counts as knowledge and truth, of what constitutes pedagogy and specifically socially-just pedagogies, that is foregrounded in Chapters 1 to 3 before, as the participant, you are invited to engage in a range of activities designed to explore and enhance your own and others’ pedagogies in Chapter 8. These activities, which build on your reading of narratives from classroom teachers about their pedagogies in Chapters 4 and 5, invite reflection and action. Importantly, the activities in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* are designed to support you on your journey to explore the key questions with which I grappled as a researcher.

The key questions that underpin these materials include:

1. What are the discourses that might promote socially-just pedagogies?
2. What are the discourses that might inhibit socially-just pedagogies?
3. What do socially-just pedagogies look like in practice in particular contexts?

At this point you might be asking yourself questions about what the term, “pedagogy” means and what particular definitions are implied here. As you engage in the TEACH activities you will have opportunities to consider the nature of pedagogy and what socially-just pedagogies might look like. The labels you adopt to explore these topics depend on *your* reflection and decision-making. An idea developed throughout these materials is that our understandings of pedagogy, or of any other concept, are influenced by the multitude of invitations to truth that confront us in our everyday lives. Take for example the print advertisement on the billboard that invites you to buy a particular brand of clothes. This is an invitation to truth: buy these clothes and you will fit the image suggested. The booklet setting out road rules provides another invitation to truth: the “right” way to drive. A seminar you might attend on middle schooling or any other topic also invites you to view the role of teachers, the role of students and knowledge in particular ways. Just these few examples suggest the ways in which

invitations vary in terms of the power associated with each. The consequences of not wearing a glamorous brand name are different from the repercussions associated with deciding to drive on the “wrong” side of the road. You will see that I accept particular invitations to truth and will be inviting you to think about socially-just pedagogies in specific ways. Importantly, you can choose to take up or ignore such invitations.

Worth thinking about?

- Are you practising your preferred pedagogies? If not, why not? What, if anything, gets in the way of the practice of your preferred pedagogies?
- Are you invited to practise pedagogies in particular ways by particular people, groups or organisations? How would you describe these invitations? Which invitations do you take up? Which invitations do you decline?

Socially-just pedagogies: haven't we got them already?

A pervasive and, to many, reassuring notion associated with education in Australia is that schooling is a vehicle for individual, group and societal betterment. Such faith in schooling as a deliverer of equitable outcomes for individuals and groups, as well as broad societal benefits, ignores the concept of schooling as a social practice that advantages some groups and disadvantages others. It is argued here that schooling is not a neutral activity that provides its participants with “a level playing field” where earnest play can lead to an equitable share of society’s benefits. That socially-just education does not just happen or that it is not something that has been achieved and can therefore be forgotten is evident in the commitment taken by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Education in *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 1999). The Adelaide Declaration reflects a commitment from Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments that “schooling should be socially-just.” Table 1 outlines in further detail MCEETYA’s commitment.

Table 1: Extract from *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*

Section 3: Schooling should be socially-just, so that:

1. students’ outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students’ socio-economic background or geographic location
2. the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students
4. all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
5. all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally
6. all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training. (MCEETYA, 1999, p. 3)

There is no attempt here to address all of these specific aspects of the commitment to social justice made by MCEETYA (1999). Throughout these materials, however, you will have opportunities to reflect on how your learnings might support you to address these goals for schooling in terms of pedagogy. You can read more about *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (MCEETYA, 1999) by accessing this website:

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/>

Worth thinking about?

- Has *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* influenced the pedagogies you practise? If so, in what ways?
- Which of these goals are especially relevant to the context in which you work?
- Which of these goals present particular challenges for you? If so, in what ways?

What have we been re-forming in Australian education?

Teachers have been involved in significant reform measures over the past decade. Ashenden (1994) claims:

The greatest single weakness...of this present raft of reforms...[is] that they stop at the classroom door. The classroom is the student's workplace. It is, in essence, a nineteenth-century workplace—much more humane and interesting but recognisably the same place. It is an inefficient and inequitable producer of the old basics and simply incompatible with the new. (p. 13)

Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000) propose that a situation now exists in which “reform or change fatigue is commonly reported by those working in schools, as well as a deep cynicism and skepticism among many teachers within government educational systems regarding structural reforms” (p. 93). Much reform in many parts of the Western world has pivoted around site-based management.

A major research project conducted by Townsend (1996) for the National Industry Education Forum resulted in four significant conclusions that: there is a lack of uniformity in patterns of devolution; it is commonly claimed by central authorities implementing devolution that such processes lead to improved student outcomes; most researchers concede no evidence of improved student outcomes; and there is a lack of research to suggest which forms of devolution are better than others. Townsend (1996) particularly cites Brian Caldwell as conceding that there is no concrete evidence that devolution leads to improved student outcomes. Writers commenting on devolution beyond Australia have made similar conclusions. Elmore (quoted in Townsend, 1996), for example, claims that:

There is little or no evidence that [site-based management] has any direct or predictable relationship to changes in instruction and students' learning. In fact, the evidence suggests that the implementation of site-based management reforms has a more or less random relationship to changes in curriculum, teaching, and students' learning. (p. 42)

The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Lingard, Ladwig, Mills, Bahr, Chant, Warry, Ailwood, Capeness, Christie, Gore, Hayes, & Luke, 2001a¹) also concludes that, “school-based management is not related per se to any of the elements the QSRLS has identified as being associated with improved student outcomes” (p. xxii). Moreover, the QSRLS (2001a) provides a window into the strengths and areas for improvement related to teaching practice in state schools in Queensland.

The Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b), a key focus in the research underpinning *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, emerged from the QSRLS (2001a), a study commissioned by Education Queensland. Almost 1000 lessons over a three-year period were observed and “rated for evidence of 20 elements of ‘productive pedagogies’” (QSRLS, 2001a, p. xiii), supplemented with interviews with administrators, participating teachers and other senior staff. In addition, student assessment pieces were collected and analysed. Informed by the concept of “authentic pedagogy” developed by Newmann and Associates in the Center on the Organisation and Restructuring of Schools (see QSRLS, 2001c), the study involved observing and rating classroom lessons on a set of five-point scales for evidence of twenty elements of Productive Pedagogies. The study proposed that these elements, which were present in varying degrees within schools observed, could be grouped into the four dimensions of intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference.

The report concluded that although levels of social support are satisfactory, pedagogical reform in Queensland schools requires a focus on “intellectual demandingness” (QSRLS, 2001a, p. xiv), as well as enhanced repertoires of practices for accommodating diversity within the classroom. A key finding of the QSRLS (2001a) is the teachers’ own rating of “basic skills as the highest of their priorities, and intellectual engagement and demand as the lowest” (p. xiv), prompting the researchers to call for “refocussing and change” (p. xiv). Concepts and strategies for social justice are strongly embedded in the Productive Pedagogies (see Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000).

What appears to be needed is a focus on pedagogies in order to improve student learning outcomes, but not a pedagogical focus that ignores “enhanced funding, more redistributive funding, new social justice policy statements and a new federal policy settlement on schooling funding” (Lingard, Mills and Hayes, 2000, p. 96). That is to say, pedagogical reform must be located within an environment of broad organisational and cultural change determined by equity considerations. It is within this context of the need for broad organisational and cultural change that participants in these materials are invited to explore their pedagogies. There is no suggestion that student learning outcomes can be improved solely as a result of a focus on teachers’ practice. The focus on socially-just pedagogies in these materials is within the context of the need for broader and complementary reform. This emphasis aligns with a recommendation of the QSRLS (2001a) that “Education Queensland schools recognise curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as equity issues” (p. 143).

Bigelow (1994) shares his commitment as a teacher who sees pedagogy as an equity issue when he says:

¹ When reference is made throughout these materials to the findings of the QSRLS, the full report is cited (QSRLS, 2001a). When reference is made to the actual elements of the Productive Pedagogies, reference is made to the summary version produced (QSRLS, 2001b). This is because slight changes were made to the wording of the elements and the summary version represents the latest version.

As a teacher I want to be an agent of transformation with my classroom a centre of equality and democracy—an ongoing if small critique of the repressive social relations of the larger society. I don't propose holding a plebiscite on every homework assignment or pretending I don't have any expertise. But I hope my classroom can become part of a protracted argument for the viability of a critical and participatory democracy. (p. 19)

Ain't it a grand story!

Much of what has been written in, for and about education has presented a universal story, a story about everyone and yet about no-one. What I am suggesting here is that our stories of the world, our stories of teaching and so on are complex, changing and contradictory. And yet I read teacher texts, policy documents, research findings and a range of other texts that present simple stories—one-size-fits-all stories. I read a range of educational texts that appear to serve the interests of particular groups and ignore the interests of other groups.

Worth thinking about?

- Ever read a policy document or framework developed by your employer and thought that it doesn't address your class or your context?
- Ever been compelled to implement a policy or program that was not suited to your class or school context?

Increasingly, there is research in education about the inappropriateness of one-size-fits-all stories (see Adams St. Pierre, 2000, Davies, 1994, Jones, 1992). Much of this writing has been informed by Lyotard (1984). Writing in *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*, Lyotard (1984) challenges as inadequate the “grand narrative” to explain the complex, interconnected and sometimes contradictory events across time and space. In other words, general or overarching stories cannot capture local and diverse events. Our lives in schools and beyond are characterised by complexity, interconnectedness and contradiction. Elkind's (1997) comparison of the modern era with that of the postmodern² helps me to understand the inadequacy of universal stories in our pursuit of greater insights into what socially-just pedagogies might look like in practice:

This era [that of the modern] was built on three seminal ideas which nurtured the intellectual flowering of that historical epoch. These seminal beliefs were in *progress, universality, and regularity*. Modern education...gives abundant evidence of its modern heritage.

...Postmodernism stresses *difference* as much as progress, *particularity* as opposed to universality, and *irregularity* in contrast to regularity. (p. 27, emphasis in original)

As a result of the importance of difference, particularity and irregularity (Elkind, 1997), *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* is informed by the notion that we need to negotiate tentatively any exploration of what constitutes socially-just pedagogies.

² The term, “postmodern,” is used here to introduce Elkind's (1997) ideas in which he uses this particular term. In Chapter 2 the term “poststructuralism,” will be introduced to describe the ideas that inform these materials. Some writers use the terms synonymously. Other writers consider that poststructural theories are aligned with literary criticism and in particular the foregrounding of language and discourses and their implication in power. Sarup (1993) suggests that “postmodernism is the name for a movement in advanced capitalist culture, particularly in the arts” (p. 131).

Such exploration involves an examination of who we are as teachers and, in particular, the subjectivities which influence the pedagogies we practise.

Particular stories about particular people

A key idea in this introduction is that our stories of teaching—yours and mine, as well as those of our colleagues known and unknown to us—don't fit neatly into one-size-fits-all stories. Our stories vary according to our particular subjectivities. To quote Weedon (1997) again, "subjectivity" is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world". McLaren (1989) refers to "subjectivity" (p. 32) as "everyday knowledge in its socially constructed and historically produced forms" (p. 179).

According to Davies (1994, p. 3) an individual's subjectivity is made possible through the discourses to which she or he has access. The concept of discourses is explored by Gee (1990) when he refers to them as "socially accepted association[s] among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group" (p. 143). Further, Lankshear (1994) argues that "through participation in Discourses³ we take up social roles and positions that other human beings can identify as meaningful, and on the basis of which personal identities are constituted"(p. 6).

So our stories of teaching are shaped by our subjectivities which, in turn, shape and are shaped by discourses related to our gender, class, ethnicity, ability, location, occupation and so on. And so the narratives included in Chapters 4 and 5 are about particular people in particular places. The teachers are each influenced by their subjectivities as a result of their gender, ethnicity, class, location and so on. A second key idea in this section is also related to the importance of subjectivities influencing what's said and what's not said in any text. Just as the teachers' narratives included in these materials are influenced by their subjectivities, so too is this text influenced by my subjectivities as its writer/compiler.

The idea that we constitute ourselves and are constituted by specific discourses helps me to make sense of my world and to tentatively explore others' worlds. A key feature of these materials then is that "I" have written them—a particular person who is located in a specific position in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, geographical locality, particular knowledge about pedagogies, as well as other subjectivities not named here, including those not overtly known to me.⁴ The methodological implications and imperatives related to making me visible in this research are explored in Chapter 3, The research process: Social justice in action.

³ Lankshear (1994, p. 10) draws on the distinction made by Gee (1990) between "Discourse" and "discourse." Discourse with the upper case "D" refers to social practices which speak people into existence in particular ways. In contrast, discourse with the lower case "d" refers to "language (saying, listening, reading, writing, viewing) components of a Discourse." It is the first of these two definitions that is used in these materials. It is, however, spelt with a lower case "d" throughout.

⁴ Gore (1990) uses this notion when she suggests that, "subjectivities are largely influenced by struggles for power around issues of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability, size and no doubt other oppressive formations of which I am currently unaware or which I am currently unable to name" (p. 106).

Understanding the “I” in the text

My subjectivities, including my class, gender and ethnicity are “implicated in [my] interpretations” (Jones, 1992, p. 31) of what constitutes socially-just pedagogies. An exploration of these aspects is not so that I can produce “an autobiographical account of a particular life” (Davies, 2000a, p. 10). Such information about me will provide you, the participant, with some sense of the subjectivities operating in my life at this time that have led to the texts, written by me and others, that constitute *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Further information about my subjectivities will unravel as you negotiate the materials. And more importantly, it is intended that *your own* subjectivities will be made more apparent to you as you engage with these materials.

At 46 years of age the most important things in my life are the health and happiness of my family, my own health and happiness, as well as my commitment to socially-just education. As you can see from this snapshot of my priorities, I don't see it as desirable or appropriate to separate the personal and the professional in my life. They are closely aligned with who I am and what I believe in. This commitment to socially-just education has implications for my concerns that all students have opportunities to engage in education that serves their needs and that results in a more just redistribution of society's resources. I consider that I have been influenced significantly by my working-class origins and identify myself strongly as a feminist. As a white, Australian female of Anglo-Celtic background, I am aware of the “middle-class/ness” of my feminism and strive to identify and redress the barriers that this can and does produce. (The development of my subjectivities is explored further in Naylor, 2003a.)

Some key messages in this chapter and beyond

I have attempted in this chapter, A little bit of theory goes a long way, to introduce some key ideas that underpin *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. To restate, the key focus of these materials is the engagement of you, the participant, in activities that relate to what constitutes socially-just pedagogies. Specifically, you are supported throughout these materials to explore the discourses that might support socially-just pedagogies, those that might inhibit such practice, as well as an examination of what socially-just pedagogies might look like. A key message presented is that our stories of teaching, research or of any other social activity reflect the subjectivities of those actors in the story.

This introductory discussion about how our subjectivities as researchers and teachers are determined by the discourses through which we are constituted and through which we constitute ourselves is part of a much bigger story. The ideas explored in this introduction and indeed throughout *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* are informed by feminist poststructural theories. Such an ostensibly highly theoretical term might dissuade some from reading on. Be assured: this theoretical framework is explored in some detail throughout these materials. In order to highlight this way of viewing the world and its actors, and to challenge some other very dominant ways of viewing the world, the “humanist story” is explored in Chapter 2, along with some key tenets of feminist poststructural theories. Humanism, with its surety about the range of social endeavours, involves particular assumptions about pedagogy and its practitioners. Humanism has provided, and in many ways continues to provide, the philosophical base on which educational practice and research in the Western world are built.

As a participant in these materials, you are invited to explore four stories of socially-just pedagogies in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 there are opportunities to investigate the subjectivities and discourses underpinning the narratives of Monica, Jemma, Tina and Alice. In Chapter 6, I attempt to explore what might constitute pedagogy, while in Chapter 7 issues related to the socially-just pedagogies of the four teachers are considered. Chapter 8 provides opportunities for you to explore your own subjectivities and the ways in which they influence the pedagogies you practise.

To understand how our subjectivities are constructed, that is, to appreciate the discourses through which we constitute ourselves and are constituted, is a primary task for materials such as these which have a critical agenda and which are underpinned by feminist poststructural theories. That our voices are the products of the discourses with which we constitute ourselves and are constituted by others is eloquently put by Monica at the outset of this chapter and is repeated below. It is the unravelling of the “voices” in our own lives that is a key purpose of this text.

I invite [my students] to always be open—even though at times it might be difficult—we need to remember that we don’t always know the backgrounds of the voices we hear, we don’t know always about the cultures that have produced the voices. Even to my Year 8 students I talk about how we are all inscribed by our life experiences. And when we listen we are hearing the product of forces that sometimes we are not aware of. And so that makes what we hear all the more mysterious but all the more revealing....(Monica—see Chapter 4)

2 The big picture: Theories that frame these materials

Meaning systems in our lives

Our actions and thoughts are all profoundly influenced by the meaning systems in our lives. These meaning systems help to shape our beliefs in terms of what counts as knowledge, where knowledge comes from and indeed what truth is. Such concerns are related to epistemology or the theory of knowledge. Epistemology is concerned with:

Assumptions about the grounds of knowledge—about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings. These assumptions entail beliefs, for example, about the forms of knowledge that can be obtained, and how one can sort out, what is regarded as “true” from what is to be regarded as “false.” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2)

Linked to concerns with what counts as knowledge and truth are questions regarding the nature of existence. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), there is a key question that confronts social scientists:

whether the “reality” to be investigated is external to the individual—imposing itself on individual consciousness from without—or the product of individual consciousness; whether “reality” is of an “objective” nature, or the product of individual cognition; whether “reality” is a given “out there” in the world or the product of one’s mind. (p. 1)⁵

Questions related to the nature of reality, that is, ontological questions, are closely linked with questions to do with the nature of knowledge or epistemology. Ontological and epistemological considerations can provoke key questions for us all in relation to the myriad aspects of our lives and, in particular, are vital areas for consideration when we examine the pedagogies we practise and those that we would like to practise. Many of us don’t take the time or initiative to explore these key questions. Despite this, our meaning systems pervade our lives and our actions. Any re-form of ourselves as teachers, or of our schools or the broader society requires us to consider and challenge, where necessary, the meaning systems that inform our everyday, *common sense* actions.

⁵ While within poststructural theorising an element of fixity might be seen to characterise elements of Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) ontological theorising, their understandings are largely situated within the methodological framework used to carry out this research.

Worth thinking about?

- What are sources of *your* own meaning systems?
- Where does your knowledge of the world come from?
- How do you work out what's "true" and what's "false"?
- Is reality something "out there" for you to discover or is it something more elusive?

In the remainder of this chapter I explore different types of meaning systems: pre-humanist, humanist, and feminist poststructuralist, with a focus on the latter two. There is no suggestion that these meaning systems should be regarded as hermetically-sealed systems of thought. However, it is proposed that some ways of thinking in each of these systems contain within them a significant degree of commonality with regard to notions of what constitutes knowledge, truth and so on. With regard to the exploration of humanism and feminist poststructuralism, Adams St Pierre's (2000) comments are useful:

Rather than place [humanism and poststructuralism] in a binary opposition that allows no movement and inevitably privileges one or the other, we might, as we attempt to describe them, look at how they function in the world. (p. 478)

It is within this spirit of investigating some storylines that have held sway in Western societies that an exploration of pre-humanist, humanist, and feminist poststructural meaning systems follows.

European pre-humanist meaning systems

Worth thinking about?

Consider the meaning system that underpins the actions of Anna Frith, Geraldine Brooks's (2001, p. 215) central character in *Year of wonders: A novel about the plague*. This novel explores the lives of seventeenth century villagers living in Eyam, Derbyshire. During 1666 the Plague decimates the village's population, including Anna's own children. As you read the extract consider this character's challenging of the meaning system that she acknowledges has influenced her life and the lives of her neighbours.

As I walked away from the croft, I caught my toe on a loose stone and stumbled, grazing the hand that I flung out to break my fall. My anger magnified this small hurt and I cursed. As I sucked at the injured place, a question began to press upon me. Why, I wondered, did we, all of us, both the rector in his pulpit and simple Lottie in her croft, seek to put the Plague in unseen hands? Why should this thing be either a test of faith sent by God, or the evil working of the Devil in the world? One of these beliefs we embraced, the other we scorned as superstition. But perhaps each was false, equally. Perhaps the Plague was neither of God nor the Devil, but simply a thing in Nature, as the stone on which we stub a toe.

I walked on, nursing my injured hand and probing my heart on these matters. Did I really believe that God put the rock in my path to trip me? Some would say certainly: the finger of God places every speck of dust. I did not see it so. Yet I would have inclined to believe in God's hand at work if, as a result of the rock, I'd struck my head and lay now fatally injured. So where, exactly, in the design of the world, did I believe that matters tilted the scale sufficient to garner God's notice? If I did not think He cared for the lie

of a rock, why should I believe that He cared for a small life such as mine? It came to me then that we, all of us, spent a very great deal of time pondering these questions that, in the end, we could not answer. If we balanced the time we spent contemplating God, and why He afflicted us with more thought as to how the Plague spread and poisoned our blood, then we might come nearer to saving lives.

While these thoughts were vexing, they brought with them also a chink of light. For if we could be allowed to see the Plague as a thing in Nature merely, we did not have to trouble about some grand celestial design that had to be completed before the disease would abate. We could simply work upon it as a farmer might toil to rid his field of unwanted tare, knowing that when we found the tools and the method and the resolve, we would free ourselves, no matter if we were a village full of sinners or a host of saints. (p. 215)

Brooks's (2001) character recognises a belief system that might be described by contemporary commentators as "pre-humanist." Confidence in God and the Church provided the key source of knowledge and truth in pre-humanist Europe. Everyday phenomena, as well as extraordinary occurrences such as the Plague, were believed to be the work of God or the Devil. It was to the Christian God and God's earthly representatives in the Church that European villagers looked in search of answers. The world was couched in a certainty borne of a faith in God's will. That is not to say that people today don't seek answers to life's questions in this God or in other gods. However, in pre-humanist Europe, the Christian faith was a predominant source of knowledge and truth. Anna's reflections, rather conveniently for the reader looking for changes in meaning systems, involve a questioning of God and the Church as the predominant sources of knowledge and truth. Anna's dilemma is this: might the Plague not be the result of something in nature to which she and other humans could apply their understandings to combat rather than the result of the actions of [the Christian] God or the Devil?

How enlightening was the Enlightenment?

A faith in the capacity of humans to control and direct their lives was a key legacy of the European Enlightenment. "A broad trend within European philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Macey, 2000, p. 111), the Enlightenment has had a profound impact on what counts as knowledge and truth since that time, with its impact still felt strongly today in a broad range of social endeavours. Macey (2000) writes that:

Enlightenment philosophy is critical of all forms of traditional authority, and particularly of those associated with religion and feudalism...seek[ing] to replace fear and superstition with consent and truth and look[ing] forward to the establishment of a social order based upon reason and natural law. (p. 111)

It was writers such as Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, Kant and the French Encyclopedists who were central players in shaping and reflecting the shift away from meaning systems largely determined by a faith in God's will to a faith in humans and their capacities. It is with an acknowledgement of Foucault's (1984) caution "to avoid the always too facile confusions between humanism and the Enlightenment" (p. 43), that a description of the emergence of a particular form of humanist thinking of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe is attempted.

McWilliam, Lather and Morgan (1997) provide an insight into humanism when they claim that it was accompanied by “a belief that our human nature has certain essential, stable characteristics which are universal (shared by all)” and that it constructed humans as “rational, conscious, decision-making selves, autonomous individuals who have freedom of choice and action and the right to realise their potential” (p. 5). *Legitimate* or authorised knowledge within the humanist philosophical base draws heavily on notions of universal reason, scientific and industrial bases, along with an assurance that autonomous individuals contribute to humanity’s steady progress. Flax (1990) proposes several key themes associated with humanism: that “language is in some sense transparent,” the presence of “a stable, coherent self,” a confidence that “reason and its ‘science’—philosophy—can provide an objective, reliable, and universal foundation of knowledge,” along with the idea that “knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be ‘true’” (p. 41–42). The emergence of the Enlightenment in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the decline of the dominance of belief in God and the Church as the key sources of knowledge and truth.

Cartesian and Hegelian thought and positivism

Enlightenment thinking was a thinking bolstered by certainty. According to Macey (2000), “an important aspect of the Enlightenment period is the compilation of the first modern encyclopedias, which claimed to provide a compendium of the whole of human knowledge” (p. 111). Kant’s (1784/2003) call, “*Sapere aude*: have courage to use your own understanding” (p. 45) reflects the growing faith in human decision-making. Adams St Pierre (2000) acknowledges that “humanism has produced a variety of knowledge projects” but identifies three particularly significant ones: the Cartesian, the Hegelian, along with positivism, which draws on the ideas of Auguste Comte, claiming that they have “had remarkable longevity even after centuries of critique” (p. 493).

According to Adams St Pierre (2000), Descartes, writing in the seventeenth century:

established foundationalism, the view that knowledge must be constructed from the bottom up; that first principles, truths, can be discovered using the mind of man; and that this foundation can shore up an ordered, unified structure of truths that are logically linked together. (p. 494)

A characteristic of Descartes’ foundationalism was a rejection of all knowledge based on the senses and the external world (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 494). Further, Cartesian thought was based on the belief that God-given qualities of a rational intellect equipped humans to make order and sense out of the external world. According to Adams St Pierre (2000), Hegel also wanted to “develop a systematic philosophy with logically interrelated theories that would account for the categories of both the natural world and human activity” (p. 494).

The Hegelian legacy is associated with a belief in humans’ steady but sure progress toward freedom and the associated idea that humans are capable of absolute knowledge, “the moment when the mind finally knows itself, when man finally understands and masters all there is to know” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 494). According to Flax (1992), “the Enlightenment hope is that utilizing *truthful knowledge* in the service of legitimate power will assure both freedom and progress” (p. 447, emphasis added).

A key contribution of Auguste Comte, a nineteenth century philosopher, to the development of humanism as a meaning system was the notion that true knowledge could only be the result of observation. Comte believed that “scientific thought

developed through three stages: theological, metaphysical and positivistic” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 495). This philosopher accepted only the latter, the positivist, which is based on humans’ observations, as a legitimate source of scientific knowledge. Comte considered that just as the laws of physics and mathematics could explain the physical world, so too could laws be used to understand the social world (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 495). Macey (2000, p. 393) records that it was Comte whose philosophising led to the rise of sociology with his coining of the term, *sociologie* which means “social physics.” The implication of science in social progress is suggested by Seidman (1994) when he claims that a hegemonic humanist story is that “science uncovers truths which mark a path of enlightenment and social progress” (p. 8).

Adams St Pierre (2000) highlights the impact of the philosophies of Descartes, Hegel and Comte when she says:

The mind/body dualism, foundationalism, the primacy of the intellect, the belief that the conscious, thinking subject is the author of knowledge, the idea that the history of mankind is progressing is produced through the rational observation and description of a reality detached from the observer, the idea that the purpose of science is to predict and control, the idea that a positivist science can produce true knowledge about both the material and social worlds, and the concept of absolute knowledge are all theories that have operated for centuries to construct a particular version of knowledge and truth that seems almost impossible to disrupt. (pp. 495–6)

The challenges presented by these conceptualisations of what counts as knowledge and truth, which “envelop us every moment, and have become ‘natural’” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 478), are further highlighted by Adams St Pierre (2000) when she says:

Humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures. Humanism is everywhere, overwhelming in its totality; and, since it is so “natural,” it is difficult to watch it work. (p. 478)

Emancipatory possibilities within the humanist story

The humanist or modernist story has been deployed for emancipatory purposes. For example, Kanpol (1997) claims that there are two strands of modernist thought, both shaped by Enlightenment ideals. While one strand of thought reflects the humanist ideas described above, the other strand draws on humanist sources of knowledge and truth as a rationale or means for those who are oppressed to cast off their oppression.

The theoretical corpus informing modernist-influenced critical theory is both a product of and a response to the modernist times in which it emerged. The strand of thought associated with modernism, described earlier, is associated with “reason, rationality, and scientific progress and change” (Kanpol, 1997, p. 31), combined with a confidence in capitalism as a major conduit to individual and societal betterment. Further, Kanpol (1997) argues that power is “placed in the hands of people to control nature through incessant inquiry, discovery, and innovation” (p. 31). It was argued by Marx, and later by others, that the economic relations of production that consequently emerged created oppressive conditions for the working class. In response to such oppression, another strand of modernism emerged with a focus on social critique and commitment to emancipatory processes to redress the inequities produced by and within capitalist society. According to Kanpol (1997), “liberty and justice became the emancipatory modernistic guiding principles” (p. 32).

Fuelled by post-Marxist perspectives and according to Kanpol (1997, p. 28), “at least indirectly, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and especially in response to the World Wars,” the critical theory movement became established. Significantly, the Frankfurt School of critical theory, to which Jurgen Habermas later belonged, emerged. Kanpol (1997) claims that “the Frankfurt School sought a new moral social order, a social emancipation from the various economic, social, and cultural oppressive qualities, such as social prejudices and economic inequalities” (p. 29). Meaning systems concerned with a range of matters but centrally with the nature of knowledge and truth, were shaped for some by this view of the oppressive qualities of capitalism. Despite the emancipatory agenda of critical theory, others (see Lather, 1998, Sarup, 1996) have attacked the conceptualisation of knowledge and truth associated with critical theory, given its emphasis on class. One source of such attacks emanates from a diverse range of ways of viewing the world that have enough in common to be labelled poststructural theories.

The humanist/modernist story under challenge

The universalising qualities of critical theory, informed as they are by Marxism, are challenged by Sarup (1996) and Lather (1998). Sarup (1996) attacks the “historicist” and “totalizing” nature of Marxism, when he claims that “rejecting the Marxist theory of history as the progress of a single narrative of class struggle, the grand narrative of History, poststructuralists stress the heterogeneous and the discontinuous” (p. 67). This leads Sarup (1996) to conclude that “instead of the unity of the working class (the agent of universal emancipation) we have heterogeneous social movements, the new communities of interests” (p. 75). Sarup’s (1996) claims are supported by those of Lather (1998).

Lather (1998) proposes that given critical pedagogy with its origins in critical theory, “as an ensemble of practices and discourses with competing claims of truth, typicality, and credibility, tensions with feminist pedagogy were always there” (p. 487). Lather (1998) claims that “these erupted into visibility in Elizabeth Ellsworth’s 1989 piece” (p. 487). Ellsworth (1989) in a landmark paper, “Why doesn’t this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy,” challenges critical educators to abandon abstract language and strive to find better ways to carry out emancipatory work that confronts the specific realities in which students live and study. Critiques such as that by Ellsworth (1989) are reflective of the moves towards a more particularised and localised en-action of critical pedagogy. Lather (1998) calls for a move away from “abstraction and universalization” that hitherto have been dominant in the discourses associated with critical pedagogy (p. 488). Further, Ellsworth (1989) asks, “What diversity do we silence in the name of ‘liberatory’ pedagogy?” (p. 299).

At the heart of these critiques of critical theory by Sarup (1996) and Lather (1998) and the attempted translations to practice by Ellsworth (1989) is a challenging of what counts as knowledge. In relation to education, such challenging also relates to asking what is required by particular learners to serve as meaningful knowledge, as well as the action that might be required to ameliorate oppressive conditions under which people are living.

Worth thinking about?

- Can you think of examples of your classroom practice in which your strategies didn't suit the range of individuals and groups in your class or cohort? For example, addressing gender-related issues will have varying requirements depending on the particular intersections of your students' subjectivities. Strategies for working towards gender-equitable outcomes for girls living in rural locations will differ from those for their urban counterparts. Initiatives to support Indigenous working-class boys will vary from those required for Anglo middle-class boys and so on.
- Can you think of some of the ways in which subjectivities related to gender, ethnicity, location and so on operate in your classroom to produce different needs?

Some poststructural views of the world

Postmodernism or poststructuralism?

Before an exploration of some key poststructural views, it is necessary to address the particular use here of the term, "poststructural" as opposed to the term, "postmodern." Some writers use these terms synonymously. A distinction between the terms is made in these materials, however. Following Calinescu (1985), "postmodernism" is regarded as a historical category and a framework for analysis (p. 62). Weiner (1994) points out that, "[postmodernism's] relationship to poststructuralism lies in the acceptance of poststructuralists of the analytic framework but not the sense of periodization" (p. 62). Many writers (see Adams St Pierre, 2000, Davies, 1992, 1993, 2000a and Weedon, 1997) suggest that poststructural theories are aligned with literary criticism and, in particular, the foregrounding of language, discourses and subjectivities, and their implication in power relations. Following a consideration of some of the broad tenets of poststructural theory, it is this focus on language, discourses, subjectivities and power relations that will be explored.

Key tenets of poststructural theorising

Poststructural theorising, especially that informed by feminism, challenges the ostensibly secure meaning systems produced by the Enlightenment project with its humanist storylines. A key poststructural notion involves the rejection of objective truth for all times, as well as the security of the grand narrative. Nicholson (1989) refers to this as "a crisis in the authority and the conceptual systems of Western culture" (p. 98). Lather (1991) describes "the disappointed hopes engendered by optimistic confidence in the continuing progress and imminent triumph of Enlightenment reason" (p. 87).

Legitimate knowledge couched within a structuralist framework draws heavily upon notions of universal reason, the scientific and industrial base, as well as a world in which autonomous individuals contribute to humanity's steady progress. Cherryholmes (1988) writes that "structuralism," a pervasive and often unacknowledged way of thinking [which] has influenced twentieth-century thinking, in important ways...promises order, organization, and certainty" (p. 30). In contrast, poststructuralists "question the possibility of truths that are objective in the sense of being necessary, universal, and unchanging" (Nicholson, 1989, p. 198). Emphasis is placed by poststructuralists on the language and discourses which constitute us and which we use to constitute ourselves. Such discourses work reflexively with subjectivities to produce these subjectivities and to contribute to what we view as knowledge and truth.

Poststructural views of language

A central tenet of poststructural theory is that there is no universally applicable knowledge. That is to say, there are no grand stories or metanarratives that can provide meaningful sources of knowledge to support our understanding of the world and our places in it. Davies (2000c) offers a poststructural view of modern history:

Modern history is thus the story of celebrated individuals and of their impact on the world. Modern stories, similarly, are about heroes who engage in specific tasks and conquer the difficulties that the world puts in their way. The people about whom these stories are told are not understood as beings discursively produced by their times, but as individuals writ large that we might each imagine becoming as we struggle towards our own individual personhood. (p. 56)

The very term, *poststructural*, points to its emphasis on language. It was the work of structural linguist, Saussure, that poststructural theories both build on and challenge. Saussure's *structural* approach to linguistics is based on his belief that language consists of chains of signs, with each sign made up of a signifier, which is a sound or written image, and a signified, that is, what is meant. There is no *natural* connection between the sound or written image and what it identifies. Weedon (1997), points out the relationship between structuralism and poststructuralism and the political importance of language when she claims:

Poststructuralism, while building on Saussure's theory, radically modifies and transforms some of its important aspects. It takes from Saussure the principle that meaning is produced within language rather than reflected by language, and that individual signs do not have intrinsic meaning but acquire meaning through the language chain and their difference within it from other signs. These principles are important because they make language truly social and a site of political struggle....Yet, to satisfy feminist interests, we need to move beyond Saussure's theory of an abstract system of language....we need to view language as a system always existing in historically specific discourses. (p. 23)

Adams St Pierre (2000) highlights some problematic aspects of the humanist view of language when she says:

Theories of language in humanism generally accept the idea that there is a correspondence, an identity, between a word and something in the world. If words point to preexisting things in the world, then language simply names and reflects what it encounters. One problem with this theory is that it is difficult to produce enough names to match all the different things there are in the world, so often we are forced to group things/ideas/people that are similar but significantly different into the same category. (p. 480)

Given that a focus of the humanist project is to capture the essential nature of things, such grouping of things/ideas/people allows us to *identify* something or someone (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 480). Such production or enforcement of order out of randomness (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 480) and silencing of diversity in place of the quest for a unitary, stable and coherent identity has had and continues to have a range of harmful impacts on those for whom the "one-size-fits-all" story offers little or no meaning. It is this grouping of people who are similar that has produced the humanist notion of identity. Humanist storylines privilege *identity* with its origins from the Latin term, *identitas*, which means "staying the same" (Moon, 2001, p. 67). Before exploring the spaces that exist for emancipatory or transformative work to respond to the

difference that characterises our world as opposed to *identities*, some key aspects of poststructural views of language, discourse and subjectivities will be examined.

Discourses and subjectivities

It is through language and particularly the specific discourses available to each of us that our own subjectivities are constituted. Kress (1985) suggests the way in which we are constituted and constitute ourselves:

Discourses are systemically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension—what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about, in that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions. (pp. 6–7)

Discourses are socially-constructed ways of constituting human beings so that their social roles are identifiable and meaningful (Lankshear, 1994, p. 6). For example, we are “spoken into existence” (Alloway, 1995, p. 9⁶) by a range of discourses, including but not only, those based on our gender, ethnicity, where we live, the employment we have/or don’t have, our age and so on. The discourses related to these and other aspects mean that some things are able to be said, while others are not. Adams St Pierre (2000) reinforces this point when she says: “language gathers itself together according to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be made and not others” (p. 485).

A central tenet of poststructural theory is the relationship between discourses and power relations. That is to say, following the work of Michel Foucault (1977), poststructuralists identify the ways in which dominant discourses operate to serve the interests of particular groups. For example, a discourse of economic efficiency is increasingly coming to exert its influence over what is said and done, as well as what is not said and done, in schools. Such a discourse might serve the needs of those keen to operate within a frugal budget, but marginalise the needs of those wanting to improve student learning outcomes through the purchase of enhanced teaching/learning resources.

⁶ Alloway’s (1995) phrase, that we are “spoken into existence” (p. 9) is used throughout these materials and is a key idea. In order to avoid interruptions to the text, this phrase is not referenced to Alloway on every occasion.

Worth thinking about?

- When you think about how you are “spoken into existence” (Alloway, 1995, p. 9) as a teacher, what are the dominant storylines?
- What are the discourses that operate in your school? How powerful are these discourses?
- How significant are what we might call managerialist or economic rationalist discourses in storylines that construct you as a teacher?

Smyth (1993, p. 12) makes a cogent argument for the inappropriateness of managerialist or economic rationalist discourses dominating schools when he challenges the values of the business sector as suitable for schools. He summarises hegemonic business values as including notions that:

1. the only thing that matters is the bottom line
2. profit and material gain are more important than compassion
3. competitive individualism is to be valued above collaboration
4. private rates of return rank ahead of the common good
5. the strong should survive and the weak go to the wall
6. what counts in the final analysis, is measurement of output or outcomes.

There are numerous practices that could be found in schools that are shaped by discourses of economic rationalism. For example, a school's decision to charge other schools a fee for professional development provided by their staff provides one example. In this case, discourses of professionalism are outweighed by discourses of economic rationalism, that is, the need or desire to make money.

- What other practices might be occurring in a school in which discourses of managerialism or economic rationalism are dominant?
- What might be said and done and not said and done in a school in which these discourses operate powerfully?
- Are other discourses marginalised by managerialist or economic rationalist discourses at your school? If so, in what ways does this happen?

The tendency of powerful discourses towards taking over or infiltrating less powerful discourses is suggested by Kress (1985):

Discourses tend towards exhaustiveness and inclusiveness; that is, they attempt to account not only for an area of immediate concern to an institution, but attempt to account for increasingly wider areas of concern....A metaphor which I use to explain the effects of discourse to myself is that of a military power whose response to border skirmishes is to occupy the adjacent territory. As problems continue, more territory is occupied, then settled and colonised. A discourse colonises the social world imperialistically, from the point of view of one institution. (pp. 6–7)

It is through engagement with discourses that human beings take up particular subject positions. For example, the institution of marriage for many people is maintained by particular discourses that contribute to individuals' subjectivities. To offer a further example, discourses associated with Christianity also produce subjectivities within individuals. Generally speaking, discourses associated with marriage would be compatible with discourses related to Christianity, whereas discourses associated with some decisions about reproduction taken by women might be incompatible with some Christian discourses. Weedon (1997) describes subjectivities as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 32). In contrast to the humanist conceptualisation of the individual as “unique, fixed and coherent” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32), poststructural theories are underpinned by the notion of subjectivities which are

“precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p. 32).

Davies’ (1994) explication of subjectivity “shifts attention away from the unitary non-contradictory selves that we each struggle after as a result of our immersion in humanist discourses” (p. 3):

[The concept of subjectivity] enables us to see the diversity and richness of our experience of being a person as we find ourselves positioned now one way and now another, inside one set of power relations or another, constituted through one discourse or another, in one context or another. Our subjectivity is in part the result of our particular life histories of being in the world. But our experiences of that life history—even the life history itself and how it unfolds and is told—are the result of intersections of discourses, storylines and relations of power. (pp. 3–4)

It is the oppressive and marginalising tendency of the humanist storyline in producing reductionist categories that feminist poststructuralists reject. For example, Adams St Pierre (2000) acknowledges the work done by feminists to investigate the “essence of woman” (p. 480), but maintains that such a fixed category is dangerous in its silencing of “identity categories [such as] race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, wellness, etc” (p. 480).

Furthermore, Davies (2000d) illustrates the fluidity of the subject in poststructural theory when she says:

It is through making that constitutive force visible that the subject can see its “self” as discursive process, rather than as a unique relatively fixed personal invention. Poststructural discourse entails a move from the self as a noun (and thus stable and relatively fixed) to the self as a verb, always in process, taking its shape in and through the discursive possibilities through which selves are made. (p. 137, emphasis in original)

The earlier example suggests the potential lack of compatibility among discourses associated with femaleness, that is, marriage, Christianity and medicine suggesting the complex, non-unitary dimensions of women’s lives. Each of these and other discourses operating in a person’s life suggests what “the right thing to do” is and what counts as knowledge. Within a poststructural frame, discourses determine what counts as truth or as Flax (1992) puts it “truth for postmodernists is an effect of discourse” (p. 452). Each and every discourse makes its own claims as to what constitutes truth. Moon (2001), for example, points out that “where Western cultures speak of ‘mental illness’ it was once possible to talk of [being] ‘possess[ed]’” (p. 36). The nature of the *truth* about such conditions now falls within medical discourse as opposed to religious discourse. Moon (2001) goes on to suggest that this might be reflective of a movement of power from religious institutions to medical institutions (p. 36).

Power: what is it and who’s got it?

The above examples of the discourses which at various times throughout history in Western society have spoken “mental illness” into existence are illustrative of the ways in which discourse, power and knowledge are connected. According to Foucault (1978), “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (p. 100). Foucauldian conceptualisations of power are linked to forms of “government,” which were current in the sixteenth century and which “did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick....To govern, in this sense, is to structure the

possible field of action of others” (Foucault, 1983b, p. 221). Foucault (1977) highlights the difference between two forms of power when he says:

Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown and what was manifested....Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his⁷ subjection. (p. 187)

According to Sarup (1993), “the Panopticon is Foucault’s apt metaphor for the anonymous centralization of power” (p. 81). Foucault (1977) draws on Jeremy Bentham’s nineteenth century structure in which individual prison cells are located around the outside of the building containing a central tower. The Panopticon enables those in the central tower to observe the inhabitants of the cells. Backlighting means that those in the cells are seen but cannot see who observes them. Foucault (1977) uses the Panopticon to illustrate the disciplinary power of discourse, claiming that “the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201).

According to Adams St Pierre (2000), Foucault “describes all sorts of disciplinary mechanisms, practices, technologies, and institutions such as the military, psychiatry, the school, the workshop, the state, the examination, the ‘disciplines’ of academia” (p. 491) and to use Foucault’s (1977) own words, “the minute disciplines, the panopticism of every day” (p. 223). Adams St Pierre (2000) further describes Foucauldian notions of power when she says:

Discipline blocks relations of power in that it objectifies and fixes people under its gaze and does not allow them to circulate in unpredictable ways. Modern society, therefore, has not been progressing toward a freer, more enlightened state, but, instead, has become increasingly colonized by disciplinary power that proliferates and is diffused into every aspect of human life. (pp. 491–492)

A Foucauldian notion of power is not, therefore, a commodity to be possessed by some and not others, to be sought after and relinquished. Rather, Foucault (1983a) speaks of power relations or relations of power. Foucault (1983a) explicates this idea when he says:

When I read—and I know it has been attributed to me—the thesis “knowledge is power” or “power is knowledge,” I begin to laugh, since studying their relation is precisely my problem. If they were identical, I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose *the question of their relation* proves clearly that I do not identify them. (p. 210, emphasis in original)

Moon (2001) provides a useful explanation of this complex area when he says:

Power [therefore] is an effect of unequal relations between people that society recognises as belonging to certain groups. Social practices sort people into a variety of groups. These groups may be based on class (executives, manual workers), gender (women, men), sexuality (straight/gay), age, profession and so on. These groupings arise from the basic organisation of a society. A capitalist society, for example, creates the

⁷ According to Gore (1993), “it should be noted that French is a highly gendered language. The ‘individual in his subjection’ is a literal, but not faithful, translation. ‘L’individu’ has no feminine equivalent” (p. 162).

categories of “boss” and “worker,” and produces the power differences between them....Because power is an *effect* of social structure, and not an absolute force imposed from above, nobody is completely powerful or powerless. But people have different degrees of power, depending upon how they are “located” in society. People’s “location” in society is not entirely fixed, of course, but nor is it freely changeable. (p. 172, emphasis in original)

It is through discourses that people are located variously. As a result people take up or are constructed by others, institutions or practices that result in the existence of power relations which are “unbalanced, heterogeneous, unstable and tense (Foucault, 1978, p. 94). Given that power relations are present in all discursive practices, “if one can never be outside relations of power, whether disciplinary or otherwise, then resistance is always possible” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 492).

Emancipatory possibilities informed by feminist thinking

As Weedon (1997) suggests, “once language is understood in terms of competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which imply differences in the organization of social power, then language becomes an important site of political struggle” (p. 23). The nature of such struggle can be determined by consideration of “who is speaking, from what position, in what context and with what political effect” (Davies, 1994, p. 18). According to Adams St Pierre (2000), “feminists and others representing disadvantaged groups use poststructural critiques of language, particularly deconstruction, to make visible how language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world” (p. 481).

This is not to say that the alliance of feminism and poststructuralism is an easy one. Fraser and Nicholson (1990) suggest this when they claim:

Each of the two perspectives suggests some important criticisms of the other. A postmodern reflection on feminist theory reveals disabling vestiges of essentialism while a feminist reflection on postmodernism reveals andocentrism and political naivete. (p. 20)

The emancipatory possibilities available through feminist poststructural theorising are well documented (see Davies, 1994, Adams St Pierre, 2000, Flax, 1992, Weedon, 1997). Possibilities for emancipation require individuals to be aware of the ways in which discourses generally speak gender [and other subjectivities] into existence (Alloway, 1995, p. 9), and to be aware of their own particular subjectivities. An awareness is needed of the ways in which such subjectivities are the result of “particular life histories of being in the world...[which] are the result of intersections of discourses, storylines and relations of power” (Davies, 1994, pp. 4–5). And most importantly, “resistance to discourses of domination is possible...[once we can]...locate and name the discourses” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 486). Davies (1994) suggests that “seeing with poststructural eyes” [does not involve] “colonis[ing] or impos[ing] particular ways of seeing the world, but supports people to “*position themselves differently* in relation to existing discourses” (p. 26, emphasis in original). The emancipatory spaces that poststructuralism offers feminists is suggested by Adams St Pierre (2000) when she says:

Certain feminists have indeed done close readings of humanism and have not been satisfied with its effects in their lives. They have concluded, in fact, that the world humanism has produced is harmful to women as well as to other groups of people. This is hardly surprising, since patriarchy, racism, homophobia, ageism, etc., are cultural structures, cultural regularities, that humanism allows and perpetuates. These feminists have chosen to employ

poststructural critiques both to *respond differently to the questions about living that humanism has answered in certain ways* and also to *ask questions that the discourses and practices of humanism do not allow*. (p. 479, emphasis added)

Flax (1993) explores the complementary nature of the poststructural subject and emancipatory possibilities when she claims:

Many theorists argue that the decentred/postmodernist forms of subjectivity some critics advocate as replacements for older ones cannot exercise the agency required for liberatory political activity. Are the claims of the Enlightenment philosophers from Kant to Habermas correct? Does emancipatory action—and the very idea and hope of emancipation—depend upon the development of a unitary self capable of autonomy and undetermined self-reflection? Can there be forms of subjectivity that are simultaneously fluid, multicentered, and effective in the “outer” worlds of political life and social relations? Could multicentred and overdetermined subjects recognize relations of domination and struggle to overcome them? I believe a unitary self is unnecessary, impossible, and a dangerous illusion. Only multiple subjects can invent ways to struggle against domination that will not merely recreate it. (pp. 92–93)

It is this process of “seeing through poststructural eyes” (Davies, 1994, p. 26) that has been used to interrogate the narratives presented in Chapter 5. Alongside each narrative is a commentary in which I have attempted to explore the discourses and subjectivities that appear to be supporting the particular teacher to practise socially-just pedagogies. Further, the discourses that seem to be operating to inhibit socially-just pedagogies are also explored. Sawicki’s (1991) comments provide a useful insight when she says, “freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized, and classified” (p. 27). The importance to you, the participant in these materials, of “seeing through poststructural eyes” (Davies, 1994, p. 26) in order to act to improve your own and others’ situations is cogently put by Davies (2000b):

Seeing poststructurally makes visible both the systemic practices and the moment-by-moment work through which relations of power and powerlessness are played out. For me, this tends to increase the will to act, and the capacity to act, since it becomes possible to see the multiple and complex discourses and practices through which any particular situation is being put in place and held in place. (p. 166)

The invitation to the participant in these materials to “see through poststructural eyes” (Davies, 2000b, p. 166) is just that—an invitation. It is up to you, as a participant in these materials, to determine whether or not you will accept this invitation.

Some key messages in this chapter

This section explores meaning systems or the sources of knowledge and truth. An extract from Geraldine Brooks’s (2001) text, *Year of wonders: A novel about the plague*, suggests the way in which pre-humanist meaning systems in Europe involved reliance on God and the Church as sources of knowledge and truth.

An outline of some of the key thinking that both produced and reflected the Enlightenment suggests the importance of humanism as a source of meaning which has persisted in current times. Humanism involves a faith in humans as rational thinkers who can direct their own lives and control their environments. The contributions of Descartes with his focus on the rational intellect of man to make order out of the

external world, Hegel's belief in man's progress towards freedom and Comte's commitment to knowledge production as a result of observation have been significant in informing meaning systems since the Enlightenment. The ways in which the humanist storyline has been deployed in order to constrain people, as well as to provide emancipatory discourses, are explored.

The challenges to the humanist storyline from poststructural theorising are considered. A central tenet of poststructural theory, that there is no universally applicable knowledge, is examined, along with the emphasis on language with which we constitute ourselves and with which we are constituted. The alliance between some strands of feminism and poststructuralism is cogently put by Adams St Pierre (2000) when she says:

Feminism's slogan that everything is political must be joined with the poststructural idea [from Foucault] that "everything is dangerous"....If everything is both political and dangerous, then we are ethically bound to pay attention to how we word the world. We must pay attention to humanism's desire for unity, coherence, totality, and equilibrium as well as to the language that produces real, material structures—categories, binaries, hierarchies, grid of intelligibility based on essences—that reward identity and punish difference. (p. 484)

A particular focus for this section is the ways in which discourses shape and are shaped by our subjectivities. The implication of power within discursive structures is also examined. The section concludes with an exploration of the emancipatory spaces that poststructural theorising provides. The final and very significant message of this section is the invitation to the reader to recognise the discourses with which we are spoken into existence and with which we speak ourselves into existence in order to enhance our capacities to resist particular discourses and embrace others.

3 The research process: Social justice in action

We can teach for the society we live in, or we can teach for the one we want to see.

(A “classroom veteran” quoted in Bigelow, Harvey, Karp & Miller, 2001, p. 4)

A framework for interrogating research

This opening comment provides a useful introduction to this chapter. This suggestion offers two key notions: in this teacher’s view, current society does not equal a vision of a just society, and that pedagogies can have a role in creating a better society. Such aspirations are not based on the technical capacities of teachers, though technical considerations are a component of pedagogies, but on teachers’ knowledge and skills in relation to supporting their students to identify and redress injustice where possible. The focus of the research project, *Socially-just pedagogies: Exploring the spaces*, was to investigate the discourses that might support socially-just pedagogies, those that might inhibit such pedagogies and to examine what socially-just pedagogies look like in practice. This research project was conducted in partial fulfilment of an Education Doctorate at the University of Southern Queensland. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the methodology used in the research.

Importantly, every attempt has been made throughout all stages of this research to practise what might be considered socially-just research. In order to explicate the methodology used, I draw on a framework for critical reflection developed by Smyth (1994) in order to share a description and analysis of the research project. Developed primarily as a tool for teachers to examine their own pedagogies, Smyth’s (1994) framework consists of four questions:

1. Describe...what do I do?
2. Inform...what does this mean?
3. Confront...how did I come to be like this?
4. Reconstruct...how might I do things differently? (p. 6)

Each of these questions is used here to interrogate the research process. Importantly though, these questions do not represent entrenched categories, but rather are deployed as fluid markers for interrogation of my research. The questions are addressed in the sequence above. As a result, a very common sequence for exploring and analysing research methodology is disrupted. A dominant approach used by researchers to share their methodologies is to begin with an exploration of the philosophical ideas which inform the research, followed by an outline of what was done, how it was done and by and with whom. There is one pivotal reason for deploying Smyth’s (1994) questions: the focus of this research involves not only an exploration of the nature of socially-just pedagogies in classrooms, but demands that the research is designed and carried out in socially-just ways. Given this commitment to socially-just

research processes, Smyth's (1994) framework is used to interrogate those processes—to challenge what was done, why it was done and with whom it was done. To borrow a phrase from Shor (1992), I use Smyth's framework to gain and share “critical knowledge of my [potentially] unexamined experience” (p. 122).

According to Smyth (1994), a key purpose for *describing* a practitioner's work, which in this case is a research process, is as a precursor to uncovering the broad and underpinning principles. Such a process supports practitioners to “extra-ordinarily re-experience the ordinary” (Shor, 1992, p. 122). Just as Smyth (1994) invites practitioners in the classroom to describe what it is they do with a view to greater understanding, such a process is essential for researchers.

There are, of course, implications associated with doing research in particular ways. Smyth's (1994) second stage of *informing* or asking what this means, supports an investigation of the specific implications of doing research in particular ways. Kohl's (1983) comments about teachers are just as relevant to researchers: “Unless we assume the responsibility for theory making and testing, the theories will be made for us” (p. 30). The particular actions I have taken in this research have resulted in particular roles for me as researcher and for those with whom I have worked. All of us involved in this research have been situated in particular ways.

Smyth (1994) highlights the importance of *confronting* the notions that underpin our actions when he claims: “Theorising one's practice and the circumstances of its enactment is one thing, but being able to subject those theories to interrogation and questioning that establishes their legitimacy, is another matter” (p. 7). This process of confronting will support an exploration of the feminist poststructural theories, as well as the critical theory, that underpins this work.

Finally, Smyth (1994) proposes that practitioners consider *reconstructing* their practice in more socially-just ways. Such reconstruction of practice is underpinned by the notion that teaching, and in this case, research into pedagogies, is not made up of “immutable givens” (Smyth, 1994, p. 8) but that reflection and action are pivotal. Research, like teaching, is a social activity and as such can be remade to serve more worthwhile and socially-just purposes as we confront problematic futures. I use this form of questioning to invite the reader to consider what research they might like to undertake and importantly to deconstruct or uncover what this might mean in terms of the type of knowledge that is valued, sources of truth, preferred ways of looking at education and so on.

While the remainder of this chapter is devoted to an interrogation of the research process using Smyth's (1994) framework, an overview of the research methods is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: An overview of research methods

Research method used and purpose	Time frame	Recruitment of participants	Participants' profile
<p><u>An open forum: Socially-just pedagogy: A forum for sharing ideas</u></p> <p>Purposes: —to form relationships with participants who might continue to be involved in the research —to develop shared meanings about the nature of pedagogies and socially-just pedagogies in particular</p>	18 September 2001	Participants were recruited via a flyer distributed electronically.	<p>16 educators (female and male) attended this forum.</p> <p>This group comprised a range of educators including: —four teachers (2 primary, non-State teachers, 1 primary Education Queensland teacher and 1 secondary Education Queensland teacher) —one teacher educator —three educational advisers (2 from Education Queensland and 1 non-state).</p>
Forum generated interest among educational community for focus groups which followed →			
<p><u>A series of two focus groups</u></p> <p>Purposes: —to form relationships with participants who subsequently volunteered to take part in substantive conversations —to develop shared meanings about the nature of pedagogies and socially-just pedagogies in particular with a focus on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001)</p>	<p>Focus group 1 was held at the six sites during March 2002</p> <p>Focus group 2 was held at the six sites during April 2002</p>	The focus groups were advertised through conferences at which the researcher was presenting and through email contact via employing authorities, as well as through individual principals and teachers.	<p>Approximately 100 teachers (female and male) from five primary schools and one primary/secondary school (Year 5–12) attended (see schools listed below)</p> <p>One participant (who had participated in the open forum) joined another school group to participate in the focus group sessions.**</p> <p>At two of the sites, administrators decided that teachers would participate in lieu of other professional development, while at other sites participation was voluntary.</p>
13 focus group participants volunteered to take part in substantive conversations →			
<p><u>Substantive conversations</u></p> <p>Purpose: —to co-create field texts from which narratives could be collaboratively developed</p>	Between May and July 2002	13 participants volunteered to take part in the substantive conversations	<p><u>School 1</u> (Catholic non-systemic/Year 5–12)—2 participants <u>School 2</u> (BCE/primary)—4 participants <u>School 3</u> (EQ/primary)—1 participant <u>School 4</u> (BCE/primary)—2 participants <u>School 5</u> (BCE/primary)—no participants <u>School 6</u> (EQ/primary)—3 participants **Individual (EQ/primary)—1 participant All participants in the substantive conversations were female with the exception of one from School 1.</p>
4 substantive conversations were used to develop 4 teaching narratives →			
<p><u>Narratives</u> collaboratively developed based on four of the substantive conversations conducted</p>	Between August and November 2002		<p><u>School 1</u>—one participant (Monica) <u>School 2</u>—one participant (Alice) <u>School 4</u>—one participant (Jemma) **Not with a school cohort—one participant (EQ/primary) (Tina)</p>

NB: Data from forum and focus groups not used in research proper

Describe: What did I do in this research process?

The research journey has consisted of five key processes:

1. Developing my understandings as a researcher
2. Forming research relationships
3. Co-creating field texts and narratives
4. Learning from the teaching narratives and developing commentaries
5. Sharing the learnings to “inspire action” (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002).

Developing my understandings as a researcher

Developing my understandings as a researcher who was intent on exploring the discourses associated with socially-just pedagogies involved reading and learning in a range of areas. My acknowledgement that there was a need for greater justice with regard to pedagogies led me to an exploration of critical theory and feminist poststructural theories. The myriad ways in which such ideas impacted on my research journey are investigated in the “confront” phase in which I explore some of the many influences that led me to do what I did as a researcher. In this section, I explain the way the research came to be the way it is. I also developed my understandings as a researcher in terms of the use of the narrative as a field text from which I could learn about the discourses associated with socially-just pedagogies. My efforts to form research relationships were aligned with developing these understandings.

Forming research relationships

There were two main goals associated with this phase of the research journey: forming relationships with participants and co-investigators,⁸ and developing shared meanings about the nature of pedagogies and socially-just pedagogies, in particular.

Two events were conducted to work towards these goals: an open forum was held as well as a series of two focus groups at each of six school sites. The goal of forming research relationships was paramount during the forum and the series of two focus groups. However, the field texts created as a result of the forum were used to make some proposals regarding the capacity of teachers generally to engage with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b; see Nayler, 2003b). The field texts created at this forum were not used in the later collaborative development of the extended narratives. The research processes used in the forum are explored elsewhere (see Nayler, 2003b). The focus groups further contributed to interest among the educational community, as well as forming relationships between me, as the researcher, and focus group participants, some of whom later engaged in substantive conversations.

Focus groups

Approximately 100 teachers attended the series of two 120-minute focus groups conducted at school sites within the Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast areas. Five of the six groups⁹ comprised teachers and administrators from individual

⁸ The use of these terms will be explored in greater detail in the “inform” phase. Briefly those teachers and other educators involved in the forum and the focus groups are known here as “participants” while those who participated in the later substantive conversations are referred to as “co-investigators.”

⁹ One participant who became a co-investigator, that is, she participated in the substantive conversations, was the sole representative from her school site. As a result she joined another school group for the focus groups.

school sites. An invitation to participate in the focus groups was extended through a range of media, including email and fax messages, information-sharing during conferences and so on. At two school sites the administrative teams decided that staff members would participate in lieu of other professional development, while at the other sites individual teachers determined whether or not they would participate. The school sites were made up of participants from three Education Queensland primary schools, three Catholic primary schools and one Catholic secondary school.

The main purpose of the first focus group was to support participants to share their own examples of what they considered to be socially-just pedagogies, as well as to explore their own and others' definitions of what constitutes pedagogy and socially-just pedagogies in particular. In addition, participants were invited to consider the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) as a lens with which to analyse their own examples of socially-just pedagogies. Participants were also invited to consider the ways in which their examples could be enhanced to achieve more just learning outcomes for students. Finally, participants were invited to consider what needed changing in their schools or their classrooms in order to enhance their practice. Activities in the second focus group built on what had been achieved during the first focus group.

Participation in the second focus group involved completion of three main tasks. Firstly, participants were invited to complete a task, "Exploring messages about pedagogy they receive." In this task participants were asked to reflect on and record "the messages about the sort of pedagogy you should practise."¹⁰ Suggested sources of these messages included employers, principals, other management personnel, the media, students, parents/carers, tertiary studies and so on. A second task, "Mapping personal professional histories," was optional. In this task participants were invited to map what they considered to be significant milestones in their teaching careers. They were further supported to consider the ways in which gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability/disability and other subjectivities impacted on these milestones. A third and final task during the second focus group was to provide suggestions regarding questions that could be used to generate discussion during the substantive conversations¹¹ involving some participants during the following two months.

Co-creating field texts and narratives

Thirteen focus group participants opted to engage in substantive conversations during June and July 2002. Each substantive conversation lasted two hours and participants in the substantive conversations became known as "co-investigators." It was the literature related to "semi-structured interviews" that informed the nature of

¹⁰ When developing this task I felt unease about my invitation to participants to reflect on and record "the messages [they receive] about the sort of pedagogy [they] should practise." My unease was the result of my use of the idea that teachers "receive messages" about pedagogy. I struggled, unsuccessfully, with the challenge to support participants to consider the ways in which their subjectivities impacted upon the ways they practised their pedagogies. In hindsight, I would avoid the suggestion that teachers "receive" messages about pedagogy, but rather propose that particular discourses speak certain actions into existence as acceptable while denying the acceptability of other actions.

¹¹ This term, "substantive conversation" is drawn from the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). This element is advocated by the researchers in order to challenge traditional classroom discourses in which "interaction typically consists of a lecture with recitation where the teacher deviates very little from delivering information and routine questions, and students typically give very short answers" (QSRLS, 2001c, p. 5). In contrast, "in classes with substantive conversation there is considerable teacher-students and student-student interaction about the ideas of a substantive topic, the interaction is reciprocal and it promotes coherent shared understanding" (QSRLS, 2001c, p. 5).

these scheduled interactions between the researcher and each co-investigator. Open-ended questions (see Table 3), as well as an invitation to co-investigators to direct the discussion characterised the substantive conversations which could be further described as informal and friendly. Further, the questions used to stimulate the substantive conversations were shared with co-investigators prior to the discussion.

Table 3: Questions used in substantive conversations and accompanying letter

1. Tell me about what you do in your classroom to work for social justice.
 - Is your view of socially-just pedagogy related to the classroom only or does it have implications for life beyond the classroom?
2. What does the fact that you are working for social justice mean for your pedagogy or teaching practice?
3. Can you describe some examples of your pedagogy that reflect your commitment to socially-just pedagogy? (You might like to refer to a particular unit you have taught or some of your routine classroom processes that reflect your commitment to socially-just pedagogy.)
 - What do YOU actually do as a teacher in these examples?
 - How would you describe your beliefs and practices regarding the role of the student in her or his own learning?
 - How would you describe the type of knowledge that is valued in your classroom?
4. Would you like to draw on the dimensions of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) to consider the nature of your socially-just pedagogy? For example, which, if any, of those dimensions support your practice of socially-just pedagogy?
5. Do you think that there are certain groups of students who benefit particularly from your teaching practices? If so, which groups are these?
6. Where do you think your understandings of socially-just pedagogy come from?
7. What messages do you receive from others (employers, parents/carers, colleagues, students and so on) about the pedagogy you should practise? Do these messages ever conflict with your own beliefs and practices? What happens if such a conflict occurs?
8. If you were to make changes to your teaching practices, what changes would you make?
9. How does teaching at this school support your socially-just pedagogy?
10. What events or experiences in your professional or personal life have influenced your beliefs and practices in relation to socially-just pedagogy?

Dear Jemma¹²

Thanks for agreeing to join with me in a substantive conversation about your beliefs and practices regarding socially-just pedagogy. I have proposed some questions for us to consider in this conversation, but this is just meant to be a guide.

We don't have to adhere to these questions—I hope that you'll feel free to steer the conversation in ways that you consider to be appropriate. You might want to ask me some questions.

I'm hoping that together we can create a relaxed and informal atmosphere in which to talk about socially-just pedagogy. Remember: there are no right or wrong answers. Also remember that there is no preparation required, but you might like to peruse these questions prior to our conversation.

Also please feel free to bring along any materials to our conversation. For example, you might want to share some student work, a lesson plan or unit, or something you've written about education.

I'll use the material shared in our conversation to prepare a narrative which I will forward to you for your consideration. You'll be invited to propose any changes to this narrative.

Thanks again for generously committing this time to exploring socially-just pedagogy with me. I look forward enthusiastically to our conversation.

Yours faithfully
Jenny Nayler

¹² Real name used in original.

The substantive conversations were designed to emphasise the supportive role of the researcher in teachers' discussions about their pedagogies. The research design allowed for teacher's input into questions to be posed during substantive conversations, change of direction and pace during the conversations, and for affirmation of teachers' practice throughout the research. The design was also based on the establishment of a supportive environment so that challenges to and clarification of co-investigators' practice could occur. As mentioned earlier, participation in the focus groups contributed to the forming of relationships between the researcher and the co-investigators, thus, enhancing the collaborative process. The importance of the relationship in the achievement of collaboration is highlighted by Wallace and Louden (1994) when they claim that "collaborative cultures are based on beliefs about desirable relationships between individuals as much as beliefs about practice" (p. 332).

Each substantive conversation was taped, and in the case of four substantive conversations, transcribed in full and used as a basis for the collaborative development of the four narratives. A draft of each narrative was shared with the relevant co-investigator. Subsequent collaborative development of the narrative involved verbal and written communication, with each co-investigator deleting, adding and modifying text to achieve a narrative with which each was satisfied. It is important to stress that the narratives as they appear in Chapters 4 and 5 are the product of both the researcher and the co-investigator. As suggested elsewhere in these materials, it needs to be acknowledged that I asked particular questions and responded in particular ways to responses made by my co-investigators. Furthermore, I selected particular examples from the field texts and re-presented them with particular language. Hence, my subjectivities, especially in terms of my agenda to pursue an investigation of socially-just pedagogies are implicated in all of the narratives in both explicit and implicit ways.

Learning from the teaching narratives and developing commentaries

Following the collaborative development of each narrative, I prepared a commentary on each. These commentaries sit alongside the narratives. This format draws on Lather and Smithies' (1997) text, *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*, in which they present a series of women's stories running across the top of each page with a series of research stories running along the bottom of each page. According to Lather and Smithies (1997), their text "moves toward a weaving of method, the politics of interpretation, data, analysis—all embedded in the tale" (p. xvi). I hope that such an approach "positions the reader as thinker, willing to trouble the easily understood and the taken-for-granted" (Lather & Smithies, 1997, p. xvi). The adoption of the split-page format is underpinned by a commitment to socially-just research. Lather and Smithies (1997) put it eloquently when they express their wish "not to drown the poem of the other with the sound of [their] own voices, as the ones who know, the 'experts' about how people make sense of their lives and what searching for meaning means" (p. xvi). Such an approach, according to Morgan (2000), "questions the usual order of authority of research" (p. 138).

The commentaries themselves are informed by feminist poststructural theorising strengthened, not weakened, by a cautious stance. Each commentary proposes the discourses and subjectivities that might be operating in each narrative. These commentaries acknowledge and celebrate the co-investigators as educators whose actions are the result of discourses that they shape and which shape them. The narratives are not so much *analysed* as accompanied by commentaries that might support greater understanding. Such narratives are clearly "cultural products, texts...crafted from the competing beliefs, values and ways of speaking of a particular society at a particular time" (Moon, 2001, p. 30).

Sharing the learnings to “inspire action” (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002)

A key purpose of this research is to share my own and others’ learnings in a range of forums. These materials represent one vehicle for the sharing of the research learnings. Papers (see Naylor, 2003b) written for academic audiences are also a product of the commitment to share these learnings. The major publication for sharing these research learnings is this text with its focus on both theory and practice. Given the research’s underlying premise that current dominant forms of pedagogy advantage some groups and deny the interests and needs of other groups, an important goal of this research is to “inspire [others to] action” (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002). The focus throughout these materials is the invitation to educators to reflect on their practice and to take action on the basis of such reflection.

Inform...What does this mean?

In this section I attempt to uncover the broad and underlying principles that characterise this research. Four main features emerge from the description above:

- the importance of the educative function of the research for both the researcher, the co-investigators and others whose voices are heard here
- the joint ownership, to varying degrees, of the research project by the co-investigators
- the value of particular stories about particular people
- acknowledgement of the researcher as part of the process.

Educative function of the research

At multiple points and in a myriad of ways this research project was designed to be educative for those involved: the researcher, the co-investigators, as well as others associated with the work. Lather (1988) foregrounds the important role of the educative function of research when she calls for research that involves “educative encounter[s] between researcher and researched” with a focus on helping “participants understand and change their situations.” The main dimensions of this educative function relate to who learned, what they learned and how they learned.

The forum and the focus group participants and co-investigators, for example, were supported to reflect upon their practice in a range of ways. This is not a research project in which *data* were *extracted* from *subjects*. During the forum, focus groups and the substantive conversations, teachers were invited to share their stories of teaching. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) highlight the need for such educative opportunities when they say:

What is missing in the classroom is a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories of teaching. The classroom can become a place of endless, repetitive living out of stories without possibility for awakenings and transformations. (p. 13)

That an educative function is associated with such sharing of stories is proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) when they add:

The possibilities for reflective awakenings and transformations are limited when one is alone. Teachers need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways. (p. 13)

A key aspect of the educative function of this research occurred as a result of the desire among the teachers in the research project to learn more about the Productive

Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Throughout the forum, focus groups and substantive conversations, this framework was used very explicitly as a lens with which to explore and analyse participants' own examples of socially-just pedagogies.

In short, the rationale for an educative function in this research was three-fold. It responded to participants' desire for professional learning associated with very practical matters, it offered participants enhanced understandings of some relevant theoretical frameworks with which to explore their own pedagogies and finally it sought to "inspire [participants to] action" (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002) with regard to greater justice in education.

Joint ownership of the research project

Use of substantive conversations

As far as possible, decisions were shared so that participants and co-investigators could direct the research process. The use of substantive conversations to co-create "field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the choice of narrative as a genre in which to re-present the field texts, as well as the collaborative development of such narratives were three elements integral to building joint ownership of the research project.

The substantive conversations were designed to promote ownership of the research project, while reflecting the social justice focus of the overall research project. To explore what constituted the substantive conversations it is helpful to consider what they were not—they were not designed or carried out along the lines of what might be considered a traditional interview. Interviews per se do not necessarily afford scope for participants or *respondents* to exert influence over the course of events.

Mishler (1986) cites a definition of interviews used by Macoby and Macoby (1954), which he claims has influenced interviewing design significantly, even in the area of social research. According to Macoby and Macoby (1954), "an interview will refer to a face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (p. 449). Mishler (1986) claims that such definitions, which make reference to "verbal exchange," "a pattern of verbal interaction" or a "verbal report" (p. 11) construct interviews as "behavioral rather than linguistic event[s]" (p. 10). Further, Mishler (1986) proposes that, "in this way the definitions erase and remove from consideration the primary and distinctive characteristic of an interview as discourse, that is, meaningful speech between interviewer and interviewee as speakers of a shared language" (pp. 10–11). The substantive conversations in this study were not based on interviewing as "routine technical practice and a pervasive, taken-for-granted activity in our culture" (Mishler, 1986, p. 23). Instead the substantive conversations in this study were informed, in so far as I could as researcher shape these events, by feminist perspectives (Reinharz, 1992) in which the participants in the interview jointly construct meaning (Mishler, 1986). Graham (1984) suggests the nature of semi-structured interviews when she claims that they have become "the *principal means* by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives" (p. 112, emphasis in original). Riessman (1993) proposes that "interviews are conversations in which both participants—teller and listener/questioner—develop meaning together, a stance requiring interview practices that give considerable freedom to both" (p. 55). Mishler (1995) articulates the joint project that constitutes the collaborative development of field texts when he claims:

It is clear that we do not find stories; we make stories. We retell our respondents' accounts through our analytic redescriptions. We too are

storytellers and through our concepts and methods...we construct the story and its meaning. In this sense the story is always co-authored. (p. 117)

Riessman (1993) also states her preference for “less structure in interview instruments, in the interest of giving greater control to respondents” (p. 55). To this end, Riessman’s (1993) suggestion that an interview guide with about five to seven questions, supplemented with probe questions, was used as a stimulus to sharing ideas in the substantive conversations.

I supported the co-investigators’ active involvement in the substantive conversations through a range of further strategies, which have been outlined earlier in the description of the research process, and which includes the use of open-ended questions, the sharing of questions prior to having the conversation and so on. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) propose the value of open-ended questions when they claim that such questions allow them to hear what their participants have “to say in their own terms rather than test [their] own preconceived hypotheses” (p. 11). Reinhartz (1992) supports this view when she claims that interviews generally “offer researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (p. 19). For reasons that will be explored below, the nature of the substantive conversation sits comfortably with the narrative as a genre for re-presenting the field texts co-created as a result of such conversations.

Re-presenting the field texts through narratives

There is much support in the literature for the use of narratives as an integral component of teachers’ professional learning and an appropriate research medium (Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht, 1995, Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). It is worth quoting Jalongo and Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995) at length when they advocate the usefulness of teaching narratives, arguing that:

Teachers’ stories, these positive and negative personal accounts of our lives in classrooms, are central to the type of inquiry and reflection that lead to professional development and personal insight. Educators must delve beneath the routine, the surface, the business-as-usual if they are ever to unearth the heart of teaching and, in the process, nurture their souls as teachers. The word *soul* is used deliberately here, not to raise religious eyebrows but to refer to our inner being rather than our professional façade....we contend that it is through careful examination of real-life classroom experiences—both lived one’s self and borrowed from other teachers—that teachers explore the complexities of what it means to teach. It is in the narrative mode that teachers consider daily dilemmas, examine their motives and misgivings, savor their successes, and anguish over their failures. (p. xvi–xvii)

Kanpol (1997, p. 14) suggests the appropriateness of the narrative for such research with a social justice focus when he claims that it “allows the subject to be his or her own authority.” Co-investigators assume such subject status in their own narratives as a result of the inherent nature of the explication of subjectivities. Drawing on Fiske’s work, Gore (1990) alludes to how this is possible by presenting Fiske’s argument in the following way: “the social subject has a history, lives in a particular social formation (a mix of class, gender, age, ethnicity, etc.) and is constituted by a complex cultural history” (p. 108). Alldred (1998) expounds important implications for the nature of research that is underpinned by poststructural notions of subjectivities and subject positions when she claims that:

In post-structuralist informed discourse analytic research, representations of interviewees’ accounts are made without a realist, objectivist warrant.

Research is recognized to be a practice of re-presentation, and "findings" a re/presentation through a particular lens. This invites reflexivity about the production of the account. The participant's "voice" is seen as produced from what was culturally available to her/him, rather than from a private reserve of meaning. The fantasy of the authentic subject, one whose subjectivity is imagined to be independent of, or prior to, culture is rejected. (p. 155)

The appropriateness of narratives as a legitimate research genre is called into question by some (Phillips quoted in O'Dea, 1994). These concerns are addressed below to argue that narratives are not only appropriate but worthwhile re-presentations of field texts which illustrate the value of particular stories about particular people.

The value of particular stories about particular people

While it is argued here that the narrative is an appropriate genre in this research project, conceptualised as it is, the challenges to narrative as a *data source* must be addressed. Writing in an article entitled, "Pursuing Truth in Narrative Research," O'Dea's (1994) primary goal is to explore and refute the claims made by Phillips in a conference paper, "Gone with the wind? Evidence, rigor and warrants in educational research" (quoted in O'Dea, 1994). Phillips claims that narratives need to be made "epistemically respectable" (quoted in O'Dea, 1994, p. 161). In many ways the debate about the appropriateness of narratives as a *data source* in educational research is reflective of the broader argument related to the efficacy of positivist or non-positivist research (see Sparkes, 1992) to inform educational practice. The reasons for incorporating the narrative into this research project are two-fold: the close alignment of this genre to the nature of teachers' lived experiences and the suitability of the narrative as an instrument for "critical discourse analysis" (Janks, 1997, Luke, 1997).

Carter (1993) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make cogent arguments regarding the appropriateness of the narrative as a text which resonates with teachers' lived experiences. Carter (1993) claims that story has become "more than simply a rhetorical device for expressing sentiments about teachers or candidates for the teaching profession" but "a central focus for conducting research in the field" (p. 5). The rationale for the use of the narrative is made stronger by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) when they assert that:

The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. (p. 2)

Further, Carter (1993) adds that:

Stories become a way...of capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and, thus, redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness. (p. 6)

It is the inadequacy of the narrative to incorporate "discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness" (Carter, 1993, p. 6) and other elements which some researchers consider essential for the search for "truth" that has prompted criticisms, such as that mentioned above by Phillips (quoted in O'Dea, 1994). The literature on the use of narrative in educational research abounds with challenges to the assumption that the pursuit of truth is pivotal, with a range of other criteria being put forward (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Van Manen, 1990, Bruner, 1991). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) for example, call for narratives that fulfil the criteria of "adequacy" and "plausibility" (p. 8).

Van Manen (1990) argues that the aim in narrative research is to build an “animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, intentions, behaviours and experiences as we meet them in the life world” (p. 19). Bruner (1991) provides a particularly cogent argument when he claims that:

Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve “verisimilitude.” Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness, although ironically we have no compunction about calling stories true or false. (pp. 4–5)

Further, O’Dea (1994) weighs into the argument with the claim that “while empirical objections may all too easily be dismissed with derisive charges of ‘positivism,’ the issue of artistic truth is much less easily deflected” (p. 162). Pivotal to this claim is the notion of subjectivities which links to the second main reason cited here for the use of the narrative as a genre for analysis. O’Dea (1994) concludes that “far from eschewing subjectivity” narrative method “openly endorses it, endeavouring to give [time and space] to the practitioner who has long been silenced in the research relationship” (p. 162). Hence, this research project involves a commitment to the exploration and interrogation of teachers’ subjectivities, which rise to the surface more apparently within the genre of narrative, as opposed to other more traditional forms of *data sources* in educational research. In short, the use of the narrative as a text for analysis supports Kanpol’s (1997) notion of the “subject as his or her own authority” (p. 14). Further, a key criterion for inclusion of narratives in this research project is that of resonance. That is to say, teachers’ narratives are powerful and useful texts for analysis on the basis of their resonance, that is, their capacity to evoke key aspects and themes in teachers’ lived experiences related to socially-just pedagogical practice.

Acknowledgement of the researcher as part of the process

There is growing acceptance of the notion that the researcher’s presence in educational and other forms of research is legitimately made explicit. Fine’s (1994) notion of “ventriloquy” is relevant here. Drawing on Clark’s work, Fine (1994) claims that “ventriloquy means never having to say ‘I’ in the text” (p. 19). Fine (1994) also proposes that the researcher’s recognition of her/his subjectivities denounces the use of what Haraway (1988) refers to as the “God trick” (p. 587). In Fine’s (1994) words, the “God trick” occurs when “the author tells Truth, has no gender, race, class, or stance” (Fine, 1994, p. 17). Sparkes (1995) employs a term developed by Geertz, that of “author-evacuated texts” (p. 161) to address a crisis of representation in qualitative inquiry through the explicit exploration of their own situation and role in relation to the research process. Sparkes (1995) claims that in such texts the “author is everywhere but nowhere,” adding that “many qualitative researchers seem happy to write narratives that situate their subjects of inquiry in culturally and historically specific locations, but appear less assured about recognizing that they as authors also write from specific locations” (p. 165).

The importance of acknowledging the situatedness of the writer of this or any other research material is further reinforced by Jones (1992) when she proposes that:

New traditions in social inquiry, expressed in their most recent forms by postmodernists and feminists, point out something different: that “I” is central; that our accounts of the world *can only be* constructions, made up from the language, meanings and ideas historically available to us, the “I”. (p. 1, emphasis in original)

So just in the way that our stories of teaching are influenced by our subjectivities, research stories, including this one, are the product of our subjectivities. There is always an “I” in a research text or any other text and these materials are no exception. However, the writer of a text doesn’t always make her/himself explicit. There is no “God trick” (Harraway, 1988) attempted here: I strive to make my subjectivities/me visible. This visibility of me as the author who says some things and does not say others, who selects some material and omits other material, occurs throughout my reporting of this research. Importantly, mine is only one voice spoken in these materials. I’m not *the*—or even—a grand narrator in these materials, but I acknowledge that I have made particular selections with regard to the words I’ve written and those written by others. I also acknowledge that all of these selections are linked to my own understandings of what might constitute socially-just pedagogies. In order to support the participant engaging with these materials to formulate her/his own views, as far as that is possible given that narratives and their commentaries are featured, I delay making my own views more explicit until Chapters 6 and 7.

This research project contains multiple voices—mine as researcher, educator, mother and woman, the voices of my co-investigators whose narratives appear later, as well as those of other interested educators whose commentaries appear throughout. Further, our voices are interwoven. For example, I am located in each narrative included, as I’ve asked particular questions, introduced and *analysed* the teachers’ *own* words, written accompanying commentaries, privileged some material and omitted other material and so on. Some further comments about my role as researcher in the process, generally, and specifically, about the ways in which the narratives have been fashioned and how analysis has been undertaken, are warranted.

In many respects, it is not just the commentaries and Chapter 7, Storyspaces for socially-just pedagogies, that constitute my analysis of the practice of these four teachers. The narratives which constitute the data analysed are themselves a form of analysis. As indicated earlier, I have adopted a physical layout in Chapter 5 in which the narratives are presented along the top of each page with their accompanying commentaries located along the bottom (following Lather & Smithies, 1997). As I drafted these narratives for negotiation with the teachers involved, I was mindful that I had analysed data not only within the commentaries, but within the narratives themselves. Mishler (1995) highlights this point when he says that “we retell our respondents’ accounts through our analytic redescriptions” (p. 117). I do not wish to convey any sense that these narratives are ‘natural’ or that they reflect a ‘real’ or ‘true’ picture of the practice of the four teachers. Nespor and Barylske (1991) talk of narratives as “representational technologies [as opposed to] reflections or traces of psychological processes” (p. 806). The narratives presented in Chapter 4, and again in Chapter 5 with their accompanying commentaries, suggest a tidy genre. Each narrative has an introduction, a series of paragraphs located conveniently under headings and a conclusion which offers some closure. The tidiness of the genre used here belies the complexity of the lives and practices that the narratives seek to suggest. Keddie (2001) acknowledges the poststructural thinking that shapes such narratives which she claims that they “(re)present and illuminate the complexities and dynamics of the participants’ (re)constructions of their experiences and relationships and in this sense, incite a proliferation of thoughts and emotions for the reader” (pp. 115–116).

While acknowledging that I want to delay a discussion of my conceptualisation of pedagogy, some comments are warranted here about the nature of my role in conducting this research. More specifically, some words are needed about the particular knowledges or agendas that I bring to this study. It is what I consider to be a deep commitment to socially-just teaching and learning which has the capacity to

redress injustice for individuals, groups and society generally that has motivated me to conduct this research and to shape it in particular ways. Furthermore, I consider that a range of feminisms, but particularly feminist poststructuralism, supports theory and practice designed to improve the conditions under which many women and girls live, along with other groups which are positioned in disadvantaged ways (see Davies, 1994, Adams St Pierre, 2000, Flax, 1992, Weedon, 1997).

This commitment to feminism was in some ways a difficult one to manage throughout the research. I sought a research design which provided a supportive environment in which teachers were able to speak about their socially-just pedagogies. In order to privilege the voices of the 13 teachers, one of whom was male, in the substantive conversations, I proposed a series of questions (see Table 3). These questions share a common theme, that is, an invitation to teachers to talk about their socially-just pedagogies in terms of practical examples and the factors that produced such practice. The one specific framework against which teachers were invited to consider their practice was that of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Specific references to feminism were not made in my questioning of the teachers and no teachers raised feminism explicitly as a factor influencing their practice. Feminist poststructuralism has, however, provided the theoretical framework for exploring the broad power relations and contexts suggested by teachers in the substantive conversations.

It was with this theoretical framework in mind that I fashioned the narratives in particular ways. As a result of this theoretical stance, I privileged particular ideas and practical examples shared by the teachers. Issues associated with power relations between students and teachers, and between teachers and employing authorities are foregrounded in these narratives and the subsequent commentaries. Acknowledgement is made of marginalised groups and marginalised knowledges. Practice and beliefs related to the connectedness of teaching to students' lives beyond school are also foregrounded. The examination of schooling discourses associated with power relations, as well as those related to ameliorating or exacerbating the conditions under which teaching and learning occurs also feature in the narratives and commentaries. Feminist poststructuralism with its generative focus on deconstructing and reconstructing discourses has provided me with a theoretical frame for privileging such positioning.

Our voices are varied but they all speak about what some of us think constitutes socially-just pedagogies. A key purpose of these materials is to support you, the participant, to explore the subjectivities that have produced the voices spoken here. Exploration of the subjectivities that have produced these voices is integral to an understanding of the discourses at work. It's a closer understanding of these discourses that is the central focus of this research. The rationale here is that if we can get a richer understanding of the discourses that promote socially-just pedagogies, as well as those that get in the way of such practice, we can direct our energies, skills and knowledge in ways that will best support our students and the societies in which they live. The necessity to examine our own subjectivities with the view to considering what this does and can mean for the ways in which we act on the world and are acted upon is put persuasively by Davies (2000a) when she says:

The inclusion of my embodied self in this body of writing is not in order to produce an autobiographical account of a particular life...but because the detail of the texts of life as I have lived it as an embodied being provide an immediate and vivid resource for examining the constitutive power of discourse both as I find myself constituted and as I, in turn, constitute the world in my reading and writing of it. It is in examining one's own subjective

take-up of the tangled threads of life that the most convincing evidence can be found for the arguments that poststructuralist theories make against universal explanatory schemas and false unities. (p. 10)

Using Smyth's (1994) framework, an attempt has been made to uncover some of the broad features that have characterised this research. From the vantage point of the researcher, it appears that these features might include:

- the importance of the educative function of the research for both the researcher, the co-investigators and others whose voices are heard here
- the joint ownership, to varying degrees, of the research project by the co-investigators with the use of substantive conversations, as well as the narrative as a genre for re-presenting the field texts
- the value of particular stories about particular people
- acknowledgement of the researcher as part of the process.

These features are, of course, the result of the philosophical base which underpins the research project. Smyth's (1994) third question, "How did I come to be like this?" supports the exploration of the philosophical base below.

Confront...How did the research come to be like this?/How did I come to be like this as a researcher?

This section has been organised by drawing on a further sub-set of questions proposed by Smyth (1994, pp. 7–8) which seek to explicate the attitudes and values that underpin this research, as well as the ways in which such research serves some interests and marginalises other interests.

What do my practices say about my assumptions, values and beliefs about teaching? (Smyth, 1994, p. 7)

I believe that my initial selection of an investigation into what constitutes socially-just pedagogies is the result of two important beliefs: that pedagogy, as a social construction, can be reconstructed as a vehicle for societal and individual betterment, and that schooling in Australia and in other Western cultures serves the needs of some groups while marginalising the needs of others. Further, I believe that the pedagogies that we all practise are the result of our particular subjectivities (see Nayler, 2003a for a discussion of the ways in which my own subjectivities influenced, and were influenced by, this research journey).

Where did these ideas come from? (Smyth, 1994, p. 7)

These ideas come from my belief in critical theory and feminist poststructural theories as ways of viewing and acting upon the world that have the potential to ameliorate injustice. Despite my current thinking that critical theory is inadequate to shape pedagogies appropriate for contemporary postmodern conditions, my initial work in exploring socially-just pedagogies has been fuelled by such theory. Given this importance of critical theory to my work, an outline of some key aspects of critical theory follows.

Some key tenets of critical theory

Fuelled by post-Marxist perspectives, and according to Kanpol (1997), "at least indirectly, as a result of the Industrial Revolution and especially in response to the World Wars" (p. 28), the critical theory movement became established. Significantly, the Frankfurt School of critical theory, to which Jurgen Habermas later belonged, emerged. Kanpol (1997) claims that "the Frankfurt School sought a new moral social order, a

social emancipation from the various economic, social, and cultural oppressive qualities, such as social prejudices and economic inequalities” (p. 29). Critical pedagogy, informed as it is by critical theory, is explored in the following section.

Lather (1998) points out that “critical pedagogy” was “originally grounded in a combination of Frankfurt School, Gramsci, and Paulo Freire” and emerged in the 1980s as a “big tent” for “those in education who were invested in doing academic work toward social justice” (p. 487). Despite the diverse representations of what collectively can be labelled “critical pedagogy,” McLaren (1989) claims that the various forms are united in one objective, that is, “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (p. 160). Additionally, McLaren (1989) argues that “schooling for self and social empowerment is *ethically prior* to a mastery of technical skills, which are primarily tied to the logic of the marketplace” (p. 162, emphasis in original). The broadly based political, economic and social agendas of pedagogies that locate themselves under the umbrella of “critical pedagogy” are alluded to by McLaren (1998) when he claims that:

Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state. Developed by progressive teachers, literacy workers, and radical scholars attempting to eliminate inequalities on the basis of social class, it has sparked a wide array of anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic classroom-based curricular and policy initiatives. This follows a strong recognition that racism, sexism, and homophobia are exacerbated by capitalist exploitation. (p. 435)

It is the contention here that critical pedagogy referred to above, conceived as it was within modernist traditions, provides an inadequate response given today’s postmodern conditions. It appears that it is precisely that broad social, economic and political agenda proposed above that stymies the capacity of modernist-influenced critical pedagogy to act in meaningful ways in today’s contexts. That is to say, it is the “commitment to social transformation in *solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups*” (McLaren, 1989, p. 162, emphasis added) that is challenged by the feminist and poststructural notions that inform this research more directly.

What social practices are expressed in these ideas? (Smyth, 1994, p. 7)

Feminist poststructural challenges to critical theory, especially those expounded by Sarup (1996) and Lather (1998) provide for a research methodology that rejects the applicability of universal truths for all times and all places. Associated with this notion, is the rejection of teachers as one-dimensional human beings who establish identities that can be uncovered in order to understand the complexity of teaching. Rather, the methodology used here is based on understandings that reject a one-dimensional view of teachers but which accept that discourses and subjectivities operate reciprocally to produce patterns which are not linear but contradictory and complex. Further, this methodology carries with it no warrant that its findings might be universally applicable to all teachers in all places. Rather, the methodology used here supports the participant to consider the ways in which the co-investigators’ subjectivities might have impacted on the teaching storylines contained in the narratives. Further and very importantly, this methodology supports the participant to consider her or his own subjectivities and propose how these might impact on the pedagogies practised.

The theoretical frameworks of feminist poststructuralism underpinning this research are, in turn, informed by an epistemological base that could be labelled subjectivist. According to Crotty (1998), the nature of knowledge or epistemology known

as subjectivism is based on the understandings that “meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject...[with this epistemological stance coming] to the fore in structuralist, post-structuralist and postmodernist forms of thought” (p. 9). In this research, knowledge is conceptualised as constituted by discourses as we “word the world” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 483). Adams St Pierre (2000) adds, “the ‘way it is’ is not ‘natural,’ claiming that “we have constructed the world as it is through language and cultural practice, and we can also deconstruct and reconstruct it” (p. 483). Such a subjectivist epistemological stance is in strict contrast to an objectivist epistemology, for example, which “holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8).

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently?

In this section you are invited to do two things:

- evaluate the research methodology presented here
- devise your own research plan for investigating socially-just pedagogies.

Evaluating the research methodology presented here

Consider the research methodology as it has been presented using the “describe,” “inform” and “confront” phases. The reader is invited to consider the overall question: How might such research have been done differently? Specific questions to support your analysis are listed below. Some of these questions require your understanding of aspects of this research, such as the use of narratives, which are addressed in subsequent chapters. As a result you might return to these questions of methodology after further reading.

Worth thinking about?

- Is the epistemological base, that of subjectivism, appropriate for this research? Indeed, does a subjectivist epistemology underpin this research? What changes would you propose?
- Are the theoretical perspectives of feminist poststructural theory:
—appropriate for this research?
—evident in this research?
What changes would you propose?
- Is the methodology of discourse analysis:
—appropriate for this research?
—evident in this research?
What changes would you propose?
- Are the methods of narratives as co-created field texts, together with commentaries:
—appropriate for this research?
—evident in this research?
What changes would you propose?

Devising your own research plan

Worth thinking about?

- What would you call your research project?
- What would your overall research question be (e.g. *What enables me to practise socially-just pedagogies and what gets in the way?* or *What do my socially-just pedagogies look like?*)
- What would the aims and objectives of the research be?
- Why would this research be important? To whom would it be important? Who would be interested in the findings/learnings?
- What can you find out about this topic from the literature? What material and human resources could you access to support your investigation into the literature related to this topic?
- How would you gather or create evidence/data/field texts to address your research question?
- How would you analyse your evidence/data/field texts?
- With whom would you share your findings/learnings? How would you share your findings with others?
- Record any other key ideas related to your proposed research plan.

Some key messages in this chapter

The substantive nature of this research is an investigation of the nature of socially-just pedagogies. What I have attempted to do is to work towards a research process that itself reflects socially-just practice. Such socially-just research practice is informed by a subjectivist view of knowledge which supports the feminist poststructural frameworks that shape the methodologies used. The discourse analysis used to interrogate the collaboratively developed narratives recognises the power of language to speak us into existence in particular ways and the complex ways in which power is implicated within discursive structures.

Importantly, this research has been accompanied by an educative function for co-investigators and researcher alike. This involved attempts to extend as much ownership as possible to the co-investigators through the use of substantive conversations, the representation of field texts in collaboratively developed narratives and so on. The recognition of the researcher as a person whose subjectivities inevitably influence the nature of the research is a further characteristic of this socially-just research.

4 Socially-just pedagogies: Teachers' narratives

This research has really empowered me as a teacher. It has helped me see my worth in difficult and challenging times as I strive to do a good job. This helps me see this! I was having an interview with a principal about a job and gave him my narrative and said "Here read this. This says what I'm on about—it's better than any resume!"

(Jemma, comment made at a meeting with co-investigators on 16 November, 2002)

In this section you'll find four narratives. These narratives are based on the pedagogies of Jemma, Monica, Tina and Alice.¹³ It is recommended that you read each narrative in its entirety before re-reading it in the next chapter with its accompanying commentary. The order of the narratives is designed to introduce the participant in these materials to particular concepts taken up in Chapter 5. You are urged to read all narratives—not just Monica's, for example, if you are a secondary teacher, Jemma's if you teach in the early childhood area or Tina's or Alice's if you teach in the middle years. Each narrative provokes some stimulating thought for teachers across all sectors.

As discussed in Chapter 3, these narratives are the result of substantive conversations which were held with the four teachers during June and July 2002. Each teacher participated in one substantive conversation which extended for 2 hours. During the subsequent three months, each narrative was collaboratively developed with the particular teacher. This process consisted of emails and telephone conversations. The purpose of this contact was to negotiate changes to the proposed text.

It is important to emphasise that each narrative constitutes just one representation among many possible in conveying some sense of the socially-just pedagogies practised. These narratives are written—with caution—using the third person, with the exception of the quoted material drawn directly from the field texts. As explored in some detail in Chapter 3, "I" am located in each narrative. The participant in these materials is invited to consider how these narratives have been shaped or fashioned by me.

Table 4 below contains some information about these teachers, with more detail included in each narrative.

¹³ These are pseudonyms.

Table 4: Overview of teachers whose narratives follow

Teacher	Year level/s taught	Employing authority
Jemma	Year 2	Brisbane Catholic Education
Monica	Years 8 to 12 (English)	Non-systemic Catholic
Tina	Year 7	Education Queensland
Alice	Year 7	Brisbane Catholic Education

Pedagogies of belonging: Jemma's story

We are the mighty 2B superkids,
Learning at school will lift our lids.
We like being in this team,
The coolest team you've ever seen.
We walk tall, we aim high,
Watch us as the year flies by.
Mrs B thinks we're number one,
And teaching us is loads of fun.
Mighty 2B kids is our name,
And being superkids is our game.

Early in the school year Jemma¹⁴ read a book to her Year 2 students about some superkids who rescued people from giants, monsters and dragons. And 2B decided that they would be superkids. Jemma wrote the rap chant above, she made a large red cape to adorn the classroom door, superkid cut-outs were labelled with every student's name and the "Mighty 2B Superkids" were born. Jemma explores the ways in which the cultivation of the team has forged a group identity and encouraged the students to be more active learners:

From the start of the year the Superkids idea has just completely set the tone. You could hear it in their conversation over the table—it was beautiful—things like when someone said, "I can't write that" another student replied, "Oh, yes, you can, you're a superkid! We can do everything you know."

When it was 2B's turn to deliver a liturgy—a regular event in Catholic schools—the superkids theme was used. The cape, which represents the strength of their team, was put over 2B's "sacred space." The students then added to the space the three promises they made in their covenant: to be a good friend, agreeing that everyone had a right to be safe and happy, and to care for the school.

The road to a pedagogy of belonging

Jemma's commitment to socially-just pedagogies is clearly evident in the way she talks about her students and their learning together. According to Jemma, when her students set foot in their classroom she wants them to leave their stress behind and engage in learning that is exciting and challenging. The notions of belonging and caring for each other are key themes in Jemma's description of her classroom. Jemma suggests that it might have been the nature of her own childhood that has led to this emphasis in her pedagogy. She talks about being a "RAAF kid":

I grew up in Catholic schools—actually I went to a couple of state schools as well. I was a RAAF kid and we moved practically every two years of my school life. My dad would come home and say, "We're moving to Victoria in three weeks or six weeks or at the end of the year." And I'd think, "Oh, great, here we go again." I did twelve schools in twelve years—but I did most of that in primary school, but I still had three high school changes. It makes you really know what it feels like to be alone. You know what it feels like to have to make new friends. You know what it's like to have to walk into new situations and feel comfortable and make yourself get out there and

¹⁴ The field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 14 June 2002 between Jemma (a pseudonym) and Jenny Naylor. Further collaborative development involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

be part of it and I've always had to do that. So I guess I have empathy for kids in situations like that because I know what it feels like.

According to Jemma working in a Catholic school supports the creation of a sense of belonging for her students. She says that in Catholic schools there's a "common unity, a common expectation, a core of belonging." The school's mission statement, which promotes the education of the "total child," that is, their spiritual, physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth, provides further vital support. Jemma's commitment to socially-just pedagogies appears to be strongly linked to her appreciation of the diversity in her classroom.

When invited to speak about the ways in which she works for social justice in her classroom, Jemma talks about students with learning difficulties and serious illnesses. Her experience highlights the "emotional labour" associated with teaching when she says:

Over the years here I've taught children with terminal illness. I taught one little boy, who had leukaemia, for two years and I've had children with severe Attention Deficit Disorder. I've had children with learning difficulties. I've had children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. I had a little girl who was only with me for six months before she died. And that was incredibly traumatic because I was pregnant with my second child at that stage. So I guess my learning curve has been from children with differences and I think probably the thing that I do is to try to put myself into their family situations—just looking at things from their point of view. I try to really go the other way from being really, really judgemental according to my own framework or expectations and what works for me and what doesn't work for me. Because I think that the family structure is so vastly different in so many lives.

That focus on the family is important in other ways in Jemma's classroom. She says:

I think that the biggest thing I try to do is to use the image of a home within my classroom. For example, quite often I'll have beads up on the door and so it's like the worry beads—just leave all your worries behind and step in—you don't have to stress about everything else that's happening. You know you can feel safe and feel secure. Right now I've got black plastic up to represent jungle vines because we're doing biomes. So there's a sign up saying, "You're entering a rainforest" but at other times it might be "an ocean" or something else. So the children feel that there's a real pull to come in.

Jemma has reflected considerably on the notion of the classroom as a "home." In a reflective journal, which Jemma prepared for a tertiary course, she explored the concept of "image." She says:

Images combine emotion, morality—I have an image of the classroom as an ideal "home." This has become more evident in my professional life since becoming a mother. I am now more familiar with a child's needs, wants and development. The day-to-day methodology in my classroom reflects the image of "home." Through reflection I aim to improve the reality of my "home" to reflect my philosophy of teaching. Separating the two would be impossible. "Home" should be a comfortable, safe place in which we develop relationships, form opinions and attitudes, are listened to and respected. It's a place where we have freedom to grow and change through learning and gaining awareness of the self, others and the world in which we live. This is a tall order, but the image of what I hope to create keeps me professionally honest.

Jemma's creation of a supportive environment includes a commitment to students' self-direction. Explicit guidelines about what is required from students leads to the students' agency in their own learning. Jemma explains:

I give my kids a fair amount of freedom. I think particularly with little kids if you show them where everything is and you show them an accepted way of behaving with whatever the equipment is then you could be pretty safe in thinking that they'll follow through. And I think I'm quite consistent—I start the year off the way I mean

to continue it. I love the fact that in the second half of the year it really starts to kick in.

And you can actually start to see those processes becoming internalised. The children know what's expected without there ever having to be a major deal. I don't have and I've never had major management problems.

The use of the "traffic light" in 2B's classroom illustrates the use of explicit criteria, as well as the incorporation of student agency in their own learning. Teachers and students together determine which traffic light is "on." When the traffic light indicates red in this classroom the students are expected to do silent work, orange represents quiet talking and green stands for "full-on discussion." Jemma comments that students will often say, "Can this be orange-light work?" for example.

Important role of intellectual quality

Though the creation of a supportive classroom environment and the recognition of difference are important dimensions to 2B's classroom, intellectual quality with connections to students' worlds and worlds beyond the classroom appear pivotal. The development of deep knowledge and deep understandings are evident in the student work that decorates the classroom. Vocabulary, which has emerged from the students' research, includes words such as "chicle," "sapodilla," suggesting that they deserve their teacher's label as "fact fiends." Students use vocabulary such as this in a variety of ways, including for tasks that require higher order thinking in which they use their knowledge to create riddles about animals that live in the rainforest. Jemma recalls a recent student comment which suggests the depth of understandings developed by one class member. The class was reading a "Maths big book" when one of the students commented on the height of a particular tree, "It's certainly not part of the emergent layer and it's certainly not part of the canopy." This study also provided opportunities for students to engage in metalanguage. Jemma reports that her students competently identify informational texts, making comments such as, "This book has diagrams with labels." 2B's parents and the broader school community have recognised the students' depth of knowledge. One student reported that when he asked his mother if she knew what a "biome" was she suggested that he was swearing at her! When 2B presented their liturgy, their sign, "God's beautiful biomes," generated interest among parents/carers and other visitors. The students' study of biomes illustrates connectedness in several respects.

Making connections

In this unit Jemma's students make strong connections to life beyond school and their concerns for the environment. The students each produced a four-page booklet focusing on how they could be "caretakers of Creation." This task emphasised problem-solving with students responding to the call to care for the environment by proposing water conservation, collection of rubbish, planting of trees and so on. The focus on Creation involved connection with the students' study of Religious Education. Jemma considers that this has been a very successful study. She says that she wanted "the students to be empowered to learn, to find things out for themselves rather than being given information by their teacher or their mother." As well as studying rainforests, students in 2B have been exploring life in the desert. At the time Jemma spoke about her class's activity they were observing the amount of moisture that collects in four different types of trees located in their playground. "I'm going to try this experiment with the palm tree at home," proposed one student, while another said, "I've only got passionfruit plants at home, so I might try it with them." This experiment provides an opportunity for students to attempt procedural report genres.

Teachers constructing students for success or otherwise

The following episode suggests the enormous latitude that teachers have to construct their students for success or otherwise. When confronted with a new student with a “history,” Jemma felt professionally challenged and a bit overwhelmed, despite her experience and expertise. Her recollection of her feelings and subsequent actions reveal the choices she made.

I’ve long since learnt that ranting and raving doesn’t get you anywhere. So, I don’t do that. I had a kid arrive for fourth term last year and I was actually forewarned about this child because a friend of mine taught in the same school where he was coming from and she had actually told me a story that had happened with this kid the year before and I remember her saying, “God, I pity the poor bloody sucker that gets that kid!”

And I rang her back and said, “Guess what? I’m ‘the bloody sucker’ who’s getting the kid.”

And she just went, “Oh, my God!” She said, “Look, I’m telling you, if someone is crying in your room, you can bet your bottom dollar that this child is hurting them. And it will be so sneaky. It won’t be real, real obvious and he’ll always have an excuse for everything and he’ll lie through his back teeth.”

But she said it will depend very much on how you accept him and what you do. And so I knew I was getting him—he arrived and I thought this is so unfair—this is fourth term I should be enjoying my class without this unwelcome interruption—having to get a child used to a whole set of expectations. Alex had been to two schools. He had had two moves in a term—he’d been in one school for a whole year and spent most of his time in the office and then the first half of the year in Year 2 where again he spent most of his time in the office. He came from a very violent, aggressive background—the whole bit—you think of the worst things and he’s probably seen a lot of that. And I thought, “I’m just going to like you. I think that’s the first thing I need to do is to let you know that I really do like you and I really want you to be here.”

So the Learning Support teacher said, “He can draw really well, Jemma.” She was running through his enrolment material and there was this picture that he’d drawn of himself playing football in his football uniform, so I photocopied it and enlarged it and I stuck it on my brick wall, so that when he came in on the first day I said, “Hey, I’ve got one of your pieces of art work up here. Gee, you’re a good drawer—this is great, this is fabulous. I knew you were coming and that’s why we put it up there because we’ve been talking about you and really wanting you to be here.” And so he came in and he has a true gift with his art—there is no doubt about it. Academically, there are a lot of keys to unlock; emotionally, he’s not going to learn until he gets all of that straightened out, but that was a way that I could get through to him—through his art work. And I guess that’s what I did—I was exhausted because I was constantly watching out for everybody else and I used to say to my teaching partner, “Look, I feel really frazzed because I’m trying to keep an eye on everything he’s doing and I’m trying to pre-empt the situation before it happens.” Anyway I had him medicated in that time—I had a month without the medication and then the medication came onboard. And he actually was great. I remember seeing his old teacher at a seminar and she said, “I believe you have one of mine.” And she had nothing but derogatory things to say.

I told her, “I really love that little boy.”

She looked at me intently and I replied, “He was great.”

She responded with, “What?” followed by, “Have you had him medicated?”

I said I had him medicated for half the time, but what I did was take the time to get to know him and I said that I like him and that maybe that’s the difference. He didn’t do everything right—he often misbehaved—he often thumped someone and that’s

a real justice problem, because kids that don't normally do that see that happening and think, "I should be able to get away with that" and they know they can't.

Jemma went onto suggest that at a school-level they have that approach, "tip-toeing" around particular students in order to avoid provoking certain behaviours. Jemma says:

You see these students who come to school and they do the right thing all the time and they know that if they did that they'd be hung, drawn and quartered, internal suspension or whatever it may be and I think sometimes they perceive things as being very unfair. Sometimes, I just feel sorry for the ones who do what's expected. They're the ones that tend to miss out—your bright, creative ones tend to sort of get recognised, your slow ones, your children with learning problems get targeted for intervention, your behavioural children getting targeted for management. There's not a lot of recognition for those really nice kids who just try their hardest—don't set the world on fire...and maybe we need to be more equitable for them...finding ways to recognise their worth.

Taking care of our children: a key role for society or a business

Jemma is a highly reflective practitioner. She considers thoughtfully the role of schools and other institutions with responsibilities for the care and education of the young. Jemma draws on her own involvement in the management of her son's child-care centre to make some conclusions about societal priorities generally. She reflects:

I think that in so many ways our society has become so much more sophisticated and yet our basic stuff is actually declining: our education, our old age care. I'm just so angry about that—I'm the chairperson of my son's management committee at childcare—it's a private, non-profit daycare centre—and it's *the* best childcare centre in Brisbane, without a doubt. And they have a closed book and have done so for two years. And the Director and I often have these really emotive discussions about the fact that we don't value our carers, the people that we pay to look after our children—we don't pay them enough. A lot of childcare centres are seen as big business—let's pay all these young girls and not train them properly and cut the costs as much as we can. And there's going to be a crisis with that I feel sure. And I would love to form some kind of group to lobby to get people to look at this.

Jemma's reflection extends to the changing nature of schools and the economic pressures being brought to bear on schools. She also raises the issue of class size and what she sees as the school's lack of capacity to "screen enrolments" when she says:

There's been a shift—I think schools now have to look at themselves as businesses and they need to sell themselves and if a PR situation isn't working, then they need to fix it up. I get angry sometimes here because I think we are desperate for enrolments and seem to take all the children with problems. So, we'll attract problems [that is, students] that we'll take on board. We've lost a few of them this year, but usually we get a few of them that come through. If we're saying that we want enrolments for this particular school because our numbers are declining, why do we have four infant classes of 29, 29, 29 and 31? Why? I just don't understand that. I think that if you want to really attract people to the school then you do something about that area. And I think how do you attract people who want to stay in the system if you're putting them with big, big classes and I know all of this stuff is budget, financial constraints and a numbers game—the admin here have a very difficult time—and all the rest but I just get very frustrated with things like that.

Bricks, mortar and pedagogies

Jemma suggests that the physical surrounds dictate the type of pedagogies to a great extent. Jemma uses her creativity and imagination to do innovative things in the classroom, especially given what she considers the poorer resources available at her current school in comparison with a previous workplace interstate many years ago. She

acknowledges that the basic level of resources and type of resources available in the classroom provide a strong invitation to pursue particular sorts of pedagogies. The quality and type of furniture, for example, is an issue. Jemma says:

They're slowly going through the school and replacing all the desks and chairs—where it might make a difference to those parents who are paying the school fees—they start at the top end....I'm working with the same furniture that was in that room when school started, some twenty something years ago. I'm using the same desks, chairs, trolleys. And the physical surrounds have a huge impact on the teaching and learning that goes on.

Jemma shared her exasperation at having to accommodate 31 students in her classroom along with the bathtub she uses as a comfortable reading location, saying that, "I'll never get rid of the bathtub." She goes on to say that "reading corners take up space, desks take up space" and adds that, "sometimes I'm really flummoxed by that." Jemma sees the classroom as a constantly changing learning space and she involves the students in rearranging resources, taking onboard their suggestions for location of various items and their reasons for such location.

Future outlook

Jemma sees benchmarking and standardised testing as real constraints on her pedagogies: "I'm really getting jaded with all the benchmarking and the standardising of children and stuff like that." She explains that there is an expectation that there will always be a certain percentage of students who do not meet particular criteria. Jemma's frustration with such constraints leads her to seek a change in work environment. She explores this further when she says:

That's why I really want to shift to pre-school because I think a microwave, a full-time teacher-aide, my own toilet and a kettle are going to give me some comforts that actually make me feel good—I know that sounds stupid and I would like to be attached to an environment but also have my own area of control, I think. And I would like to have a go while I'm young enough—I'm forty-two this month so I don't know how long I'm going to teach. I'm the major breadwinner in my family too so it's not a choice—I *have* to love the job. You have to be happy at what you do so I make the most of being happy and I think if I end up having to teach for the next ten years of my life then I want it to be somewhere I feel I can be more creative, that I can actually have a bit more control. I want to get right into the area of documentary evidence and digital photography. I want to be able to give parents portfolios that actually show their children engaged in meaningful learning situations that are not institutionalised by a desk and a pencil case and desk tidy and a formal classroom where most of the parents think the students all have to sit at the front of the class.

Jemma's view of "pedagogy"—an invitation to reflect

Jemma's capacity to reflect on her professional practice is evidenced further in her comments on the nature of "pedagogy".

Ah, pedagogy is a word that demands that you somehow think about it—that you actually have to be reflective and you have to really think, "Oh my God, what do they mean and what's the definition and how do I associate it with what I do?" Teaching is teaching. I think because there needs to be a new word because the teaching word is—depending on the area you come from—like from the parent point of view that may have a completely different bias to what a staff member thinks teaching is to what the outside community thinks teaching is and I think teaching is so devalued these days that at least "pedagogy" stumps a few people, it mystifies them. It's a word, it's a difficult word to even say, particularly if you've got a speech defect. So, yeah, I guess it demands you look into it before you actually make an opinion. I mean you can say "Oh, I teach" and everyone pretty-well knows what teaching means but pedagogy is like—I can remember when I first read it—

thought, “What the hell is this?” and “Is that what it is? Oh, OK.” And then I’d come across it in another reading and I’d look at it again. I don’t know—it’s a difficult word but I think it does demand that you actually look at it and try to work it out...because if it isn’t an invitation to reflect then there’s no point in talking about it.

Voices—mysterious and revealing: pedagogies for social justice: Monica’s story

In my classroom I start on the basis of mutual respect for everyone. I treat the boys with the kind of respect that I’d expect them to show to each other and to me. I invite them to always be open—even though at times it might be difficult—we need to remember that we don’t always know the backgrounds of the voices we hear, we don’t know always about the cultures that have produced the voices. Even to my Year 8 students I talk about how we are all inscribed by our life experiences. And when we listen we are hearing the product of forces that sometimes we are not aware of. And so that makes what we hear all the more mysterious but all the more revealing....

These words were spoken by Monica,¹⁵ an English teacher at St Marcellin’s School,¹⁶ a large, metropolitan Catholic high school for boys. Monica’s story is a fascinating one—she speaks with passion about teaching English in a faith-based and caring environment in which syllabus development from outside has led to far-reaching pedagogical reforms within her own and her colleagues’ classrooms.

As well as teaching several English classes, Monica also holds an administrative position with responsibility for matters related to studies across the school. She has had a diverse career background, teaching interstate in both Catholic and state schools. Her twenty-nine years of teaching experience belie her very obvious passion to continually learn to teach in more exciting and socially-just ways. Monica attributes her commitment to socially-just pedagogies to a range of factors: early experiences teaching in country New South Wales, her upbringing, and the spiritual legacy of the founder of the religious order to which the school belongs.

The paths to Monica’s socially-just pedagogies

Teaching in a country town

Monica talks of the profound impression that teaching in a country town of about 3000 people, including a significant Indigenous population, had on her:

There is no doubt in my mind that these Indigenous people are marginalised by forces beyond their control as well as forces within their control. I learnt to see too that my white students felt that they were marginalised. I remember a student called “Evan” in my Year Nine class sort of blowing up on me one day when I asked him for his homework. He retaliated with comments that he was not paid to come to school or paid to do homework and he flavoured his remarks with an inappropriate term of some description. And that’s always stood with me—that idea that marginalisation can work on our students in lots of different ways. And the more I’ve worked with boys over the past 10 or 15 years, the more I’ve come to see them as people who by their gender can be marginalised by our society. And that really concerns me, and that’s why I’m so passionate about literacy for boys.

¹⁵ The field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 14 June 2002 between Monica (a pseudonym) and Jenny Nayler. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

¹⁶ This is not the school’s real name.

Impact of syllabus development on pedagogies

Many years later, teaching in a context in which Monica was not confronted by the same issues of poverty and isolation, she is still acutely aware that marginalisation of students occurs in a myriad of ways. Importantly, a new syllabus document has supported Monica to recognise and seek to redress, to some extent, the marginalisation of her students within and beyond her classroom. Monica attributes her strong focus on social justice to engagement with the new English syllabus for Years 11–12. She says that what's been interesting is that as an English team "we've learnt new ways to break into pedagogy through the underpinning of critical literacy." She talks about her new-found pedagogies in colourful ways:

I would have hated to have gone to the grave thinking that there was only one way you could study literature and that was, you know, this is plot, this is characterisation, this is setting—these are the good characters, these are the bad.

Prior to exploring in some detail what actually happens in Monica's classroom, an insight into her own spiritual upbringing, as well as the spiritual legacy of the founder of the school's order, is useful.

A Catholic background in contrast to her contemporary Catholicism

Monica claims not to be the "archetypal Catholic." She talks of being a "guilt-ridden teenager and young woman":

My life experiences, because of the conservative religious background of my parents, were necessarily constricted and it took me a long time to come to grips with the fact that, as a woman, I had the right to own or not own Catholic practices. And I'll be quite frank with you and say that it took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of pre-marital sex. It took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of missing Mass on Sunday and not be racked with guilt. And I think what I've been lucky enough to be able to do is to reflect on how I've seen other people and ask myself: "Are they happy? Are they balanced? Is the way they are just? Is that what Christ would want?" And I think in my heart of hearts, it's not. And that's why I think I'm so open to what Marcellin Champagnat is on about.

Monica reflects on the spirituality that now informs her teaching at St Marcellin's School. She compares her education at an all girls' school, where young women couldn't have shiny shoes and where many behaviours resulted in feeling guilty, to the spiritual legacy of Marcellin Champagnat, a Catholicism which Monica describes as being more caring and more intellectual.

Monica describes the founder of the order to which St Marcellin's School belongs: He's on about journeying with people. He's on about understanding people at their most humane, human level. He's on about sharing their pain but seeing the future of hope and I don't think my Catholic background was ever one of hope. It was always one of moralistic judgement and that doesn't fit easily with me and I don't believe it's healthy. And so I suppose that's why I feel at home within Champagnat's philosophy. And that's what I want the boys to feel.

What the legacy of Champagnat means for Monica's teaching and for her students' learning is further explored when she explains:

Marcellin, who began the Order, wanted to care for the most marginalised: the young men in LaValla, [a small village in the heart of the country]. Living in the brutality of post-Revolutionary France, Marcellin worked with men who were homeless, men who were not educated, men who had no faith in God. A pivotal point for Marcellin was being called to prepare a young man for death only to find that he didn't know who God was or anything about God. And that reinforced for Marcellin the need to see life as a life of hope and to bring that message of hope to everyone—to the young people in the villages who were so impoverished and

marginalised. And his young Brothers, the young men with whom he started this Order, couldn't read or write—he had to teach them before they could teach others.

Monica speaks with great conviction about what Marcellin “says” now to her and to her students. She sees the founder of the Order as speaking from the past but with a focus on contemporary challenges. Monica sees direct relevance of the lessons from Marcellin to the pedagogies that she needs to practise. She establishes these clear linkages when she says:

So, it's this sort of image of presence and permanence...as well as the future and the ability to forge your own future that is based on faith in God and faith in journeying with fellow human beings. And to me, that makes sense in pedagogy. It makes sense in educating young men in this context for rich and fulfilling lives over which they must take control. Because in a poststructural world—in an increasingly globalising sense—there are so many forces which are out to destabilise and to disempower. I reminded my Year 10 boys the other day that seventy per cent of the positions into which they will move in the workforce have not yet been created. So they must prepare themselves. Learning must be meaningful for them. And how can you learn, how can you become a productive human being if there is nothing around you to give that development meaning?

Acknowledgement of these challenges leads Monica to articulate a powerful view of the learning she wants for her students:

I want to see the learning for my students in each of their classrooms being faith-based with students having a strong sense that they can change the world into which they're moving, in little ways, to a more caring world, a more just world, more a world of hope. And that takes courage when you're a young man in an environment where pay-outs are rife. It takes courage whether you're young or an older adult moving into a social situation where you're offered drugs and you don't want to accept. It's about the power to create a better world, and I think it comes through whether it's Maths or Geography or English, the curriculum needs to be life-contextualised, connected to their worldly experiences.

Pedagogies informed by critical literacy

Monica's pedagogies are focused strongly on supporting her students to engage with texts that are meaningful to their lives in ways that lead them to sophisticated understandings of themselves and the worlds they negotiate. Further, her pedagogies are aimed at supporting her students to make positive changes in the world. The high levels of intellectual rigour that underpin learning in Monica's English classroom are noteworthy.

Intellectual rigour through reader response theory

A major source of the intellectual rigour present in Monica's classroom is the critical literacy approach to texts, and specifically the use of Jack Thompson's (1987) framework for reader response. Monica supports her students, from Year 8 to Year 12, in mixed ability and extension classes, to interact with texts using Thompson's hierarchy of engaging with a text. This hierarchy provides for engagement with texts at a level that is a non-reflective, reactive response at its most elementary level through to empathising with characters, analysis and so on to the sixth stage which involves the ability to be self-reflective. In Monica's own words she “didn't dumb it down” for any of her students with the result that her Year 8 students can talk in sophisticated ways about their responses to texts. For example, her students are able to speak about Gillian Rubinstein's (1984) *Foxspell*, not just in terms of plot, characterisation and themes, but make comments, such as, “I was able to empathise with Todd when his Dad ran away because that's how I felt when my father left too. It made sense to me.” Monica is inspired by the literary critic, Agnes Niewenhausen, who talks about students

“trying on life experiences” through their engagement with texts. The intellectual rigour inherent in Monica’s teaching is illustrated in her pedagogical approaches with her older students as well.

Monica’s scaffolding of narrative writing provides a good example of intellectual rigour and of a focus on higher order thinking in particular. She explains “the task” to her students and places the associated criteria sheet in context. Monica introduces the narrative to her students by saying:

Yes, I have to have a task and criteria sheet when I go for my driving test or when I write my master’s paper, but narrative is not just a piece of assessment. Narrative is the story of your life: it’s the cup of tea you had for breakfast, it’s the way you smiled at someone in the yard. So when you write narrative what you are actually doing is making connections.

The following example illustrates the ways in which Monica supports her students to write narratives by making intertextual connections. Monica’s students read *In cold blood* by Truman Capote (1994) about the family of four who was murdered in Kansas in 1959. In this narrative students explored the impact of the murders on this very conservative community—a town that had 32 churches at the time. The students were asked to transpose their reading into images through a collage using whatever they wanted—a CD cover, something from a magazine—a McDonald’s wrapper if they wanted to. Each student then wrote a brief paragraph justifying his collage and exploring its symbolic meaning. The collages then became “step-off points to write the narratives.” One student presented an image of the four members of the Clutter family who were murdered, placing an image of a gun diagonally through the four victims. The narrative that this collage generated was a piece about the fracturing of a relationship. Monica comments that, “I have no way of knowing whether it was autobiographical or not. It was a narrative and that was what I asked for, but it was a very powerful piece of writing.” Narratives from the past that “speak” to the students provide an important focus in their final year of English at St Marcellin’s School.

Monica teaches a unit in which she draws on Roland Barthes’ (1977) notions of the narrative as being transhistorical and transcultural (p. 79). The students are asked to look at a narrative from a past time and in another culture. The result is that Monica has 16 year-old males reading Tolstoy, Virgil and Bronte—and engaging. Monica shares an example of the way in which she uses a critical literacy device such as intertextuality to bring Charlotte Bronte’s (1953) *Jane Eyre* to life for her students. The students explore the novel as a canonical text which conveys a male, white, upper-class viewpoint of life in England in the nineteenth century. Monica links *Jane Eyre* intertextually with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written by Jean Rhys (1966), a post-colonial writer. Monica comments that this text is one of the “most haunting pieces of literature I have ever read” and suggests that when she was at school it wouldn’t have been considered literature. What Rhys (1966) does in this text is to transpose Rochester’s mad wife, Bertha, into Rhys’s West Indian culture as “Antoinette.” In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Bronte’s Rochester visits the beautiful equatorial islands and falls in love with the equally beautiful Antoinette. But because he can’t understand her culture and the practices of voodoo in which she and her people engage, he constantly feels marginalised. In Monica’s words, Rochester “exerts his white superiority and takes Antoinette back to England where she is increasingly marginalised, taken away from her culture, out of her extended family and goes mad.” Monica confidently asserts that these narratives “speak to the boys” who are “moved by the socially-unjust practices in past times.”

A set of generic questions used by Monica scaffolds intellectual rigour in her classroom and supports her students to appreciate the problematic nature of knowledge. Monica says:

We talk about social justice in terms of text. Whose voices are marginalised in the text? Whose interest is best represented? Is this just? Is this fair? If you were writing this text from your encultured background would it be different? Why? And I have no doubt that the boys have responded particularly well here. The boys have responded amazingly to reader response theory.

Connecting with real life experiences in a supportive environment

In Monica's classroom there are many occasions on which students making the connections with their lives would not be possible without the existence of a supportive learning environment. Monica talks about the ways in which her students draw on their life experiences in order to engage with texts. Sometimes students can find this confronting.

I always say to them, "You don't have to go where you are uncomfortable. If this is too hurtful, don't go there." It's not my intention to hurt anyone. "If every time you think of this particular part of the novel, you want to cry, then don't go there. It's too close to you. It's not meant to be something that locks you up, it's meant to be something that frees you."

What happens in Monica's classroom is connected to real life. Monica says: I always talk to the boys about how this work should be something that enriches their lives, their life stories—this isn't "school work" and they shouldn't see it as school work. If it is school work, then they are looking at it the wrong way. And so "assessment" is never "assessment." It is learning how to write a text that will reflect viewpoints and values, and judgements that are dear to them which may one day they might have to replicate in their working lives.

Monica's pedagogical examples contain explicit and implicit references to the supportive environment which she creates and maintains. The creation of a supportive learning environment involves a focus not only on the students but on the role of the teacher as well. The risks involved in creating a supportive learning environment are obvious from the following comment:

I never feel threatened. In fact, I feel enriched because the boys are able to speak their existence, their narrative, their stories, their experiences into being. Some years ago a piece of work was brought to me as Head of English by a teacher who had refused to mark it—it was incredibly violent and incredibly bloody. Basically, it was about decapitation and disembowelling and set within the most beautiful, beautiful scenery. The teacher was very angry about the work and felt professionally insulted by it. And the more I looked at the work the more disquieted I became. I talked with the student who wrote the work and asked him to talk to me about what had prompted this piece of writing. I discovered that the student had been in a situation of civil war and he had actually seen members of his own family decapitated and disembowelled and for him this piece of writing was by way of catharsis.

The impact of this experience on Monica's pedagogies, and in particular her commitment to diversity, is obvious when she says:

Over the years that episode has put another spin on socially-just pedagogy for me—the whole notion that we as a white culture cannot stand in judgement of others. We know little of the experiences of some of our students. They have a right to their voice. And if in my role as an educator I can journey with them, even for just a short while, then hopefully that will be some support for them.

Monica "resolved" the situation by marking the student's work and communicating to him that she understood how this work emanated from his background. She also suggested that he might consider not drawing on this material in his responses to the

Queensland Core Skills Test which he was about to complete, proposing that “people would not understand.”

The risks Monica takes in creating a supportive learning environment as a key component of her socially-just pedagogies are further reinforced when she says:

As a contemporary literary theory, reader response theory, is incredibly liberating for our students and for our staff who are prepared to engage with it. It is incredibly confrontational for teachers of any age who see themselves as authority figures. And there’s a point about social justice in that too, isn’t there?

Importantly, students’ sense of direction and agency in Monica’s classroom comes from the boys’ understanding of the ways in which discourse and power operate in their lives. She suggests her pedagogical approach in supporting such understandings when she says:

What I do is draw the shape of an umbrella on the board and I put in the spokes of the umbrella. I suggest to the students that in any one of these areas, there is a contestation of discourse which brings with it powers and limitations, freedoms, responsibilities and accountabilities. I propose to them that if they are responsible thinking people then they know how to move between those discourses. And we talk about discourses having power, permission and privileges.

Monica’s examples about the role of discourse in her students’ lives are not abstract: they are connected firmly to the boys’ lives. She supports them to see themselves as lived texts. Further, Monica invites them to consider what “permissions, privileges and power” they have in her classroom, in other classrooms, on the football field and so on. She illustrates the boys’ access to power through the use of an imaginary scenario which involves two boys fighting in the school grounds. She says to her students:

Let’s change the discourse now—to the playground at lunch. Imagine that I’m the only teacher on duty—other teachers have been called away. A fight breaks out, and in the midst of 100 boys, two boys are punching each other. I try to get in there, calling “Stop! Stop! Stop!” I ask the boys who’s got the power. “Oh, you have,” they reply.” I challenge the suggestion that I’m the one with the power in that context. That opens up all sorts of questions. They make connections. I think they appreciate growing in understanding and I always equate those understandings with life, with their lives.

Monica’s capacity for, and predisposition to, change is clearly stated when she says:

I hope I always want to change. The day I don’t want to change is the day I should leave the classroom. But I can’t predict what the changes will be. There will be changes, but given the interactive professionalism of our team, we’ll be making changes together. Recently I presented a professional development session to some English teachers in Northern Queensland. I told them that they needed to understand that the copy of the Year 12 English syllabus, to which we’d refer during the session, was already out-of-date. “Why are you showing it to us?” they retorted. I explained that I was using it because it was the most up-to-date version, but that criterion 3, for example, would be changed. But some of those teachers found that hard to accept—they don’t want to change. I’ve discovered that you have to go through the pain to get the passion.

Some concluding words

Monica passionately pursues socially-just pedagogies. Her pedagogies, with their focus on intellectual rigour and learning in a supportive environment, are powerfully informed by the spiritual context in which she works. Further, Monica attributes the significant transformation of her own pedagogies, as well as that of her colleagues, to the impact of the new English syllabus for Years 11–12 (Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, 2002). The ways in which Monica, as a teacher, has had to

engage with students and with texts as a result of this syllabus change, has involved considerable risk-taking. She readily acknowledges and explores the “pain” involved in such far-reaching professional change, but recognises that it’s not possible to live out the “passion” of teaching young people without that pain.

Pedagogies with students centre stage: Tina's story

How do I practise socially just pedagogy? It's one of those questions that you could start anywhere—and nowhere—to answer.

Tina¹⁷ teaches Year 7 in a metropolitan primary school—an Education Queensland school—and wouldn't work anywhere other than a state school. She is passionate about high quality, socially-just state education, saying:

I don't see why people with money should get the best teachers, the best resources or the best professional development or whatever. Public education needs to attract good teachers, to attract passionate teachers and to attract people who don't want an easy ride. And that's good—it's challenging but it's good.

Tina makes clear and strong links between her commitment to working towards a more just society and the pedagogies she uses in her classroom. She wants to educate students who will become “voters who insist that governments work for the benefit of all people, not just for a select group.” Two aspects of Tina's pedagogies stand out: her capacity to theorise her work and her very practical application of what such theory means in her classroom. The following example typifies Tina's capacity and predisposition to support her students to view the world in critical ways. According to Tina, “The whole point of education is to have literate, thinking people in this world who make a difference.”

Read all about it!

The following example reflects the comprehensive nature of Tina's socially-just pedagogies. Tina seized the opportunity to engage her students in critical thinking when she saw an article in the local paper about a Queensland primary school that had decided to abandon interschool sport for social justice reasons. The principal of the school reported to the media that the decision had been taken because it was considered that the school did not have the resources to provide an interschool program that would serve the needs and interests of the range of students at the school. The school was determined not to maintain an interschool program that nurtured “elite” sports students while neglecting the needs of the broad range of students. The discontent that this produced among some parents drew the media's attention to the issue. The newspaper article used by Tina in her class included a visual text showing a female student apparently winning a race.

Tina introduced the issue by distributing copies of the article and reading it with her students. Prior to that, the students explored their knowledge and attitudes regarding interschool sport. The students also considered the various formats that interschool sport can take and the reasons for including it as part of the curriculum. Some of the management issues were also explored, with students being surprised that their own school's program could only exist in its current format as a result of parental support. The students' engagement with the issue then focused on the accompanying visual text.

The students noted that the female student was “obviously not playing hockey or netball or football”—activities one might expect to see illustrated in an article about interschool sport. Students made sophisticated conclusions regarding the alignment of

¹⁷ The field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 5 July 2002 between Tina (a pseudonym) and Jenny Naylor. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

the visual and written texts. Students concluded, for example, that the happy expression on the child's face suggested that interschool sport was a good idea—despite the fact that her participation in a race was unrelated to school team sports. Tina invited the students to consider the links between schools' promotion of individuals, sometimes at the expense of the range of students, and what occurs at the national level through the Australian Institute of Sport. The students' capacity to think laterally was further enhanced when they were challenged to consider why this particular news item was included in the local paper. Tina recalls that, "The kids came up with all sorts of reasons—some of which I hadn't thought about." Further, Tina challenged them to consider the role that sensationalism plays in selection of particular stories by the media.

Tina's skilful use of the narrative as a teaching strategy is illustrated in her sharing of the story below with her students as they considered the decisions made by newspaper editors.

A story Tina shared with her students

In 1990 I'd been on Long Service Leave, travelling in Europe and South America, and Iraq had just invaded Kuwait. I was actually in Bolivia when the invasion occurred. I remember my dad meeting me at Brisbane Airport and saying, "What do you reckon is on the front page of today's paper?" I recall my reply: "Well, I've read the *New York Times*, the London *Guardian* and the Toronto *Globe and Mail* and everything that I've read is about the invasion of Kuwait. I also remember saying that I'd just left Bolivia, and even though I can't read Spanish, I could tell that the invasion was the main news there as well. My father replied, "Well you know what the local paper thought was the most important thing that happened last week? Wally Lewis was sacked as the captain of the Broncos."

Tina found the students' reactions to her story instructive: "Yeah, but that's more interesting than one country invading another country" some said. Tina reflects that, "Hearing kids respond in this way keeps you grounded." She believes that this example illustrates strongly her practice to promote intellectual quality in her students.

Tina's view of knowledge in the classroom

The knowledge that I value in my classroom is that which is arrived at through critical reflection. I look at knowledge that can be used in order to gain access to those power structures that exist by using critical thinking skills, negotiation, conflict resolution and so on. Knowledge that can actually be useful—"Who wants to be a millionaire—20 questions stuff" is a fun five minutes in which we could look at some general knowledge questions. In our society, that impresses people....I take on the responsibility as the teacher to ask crucial questions. I define a crucial question as something that gets to the nub of an issue, something that is creative, is analytical—it indicates some kind of thought beyond what is basically there—the smartest people are the people who ask the big questions—the people who can see what's not there. I really want the kids to start asking those crucial questions. When I get a kid asking a crucial, perceptive question in class my little heart goes flutter—I think it's wonderful.

Making connections: literacy and power

Tina has a strong sense of her responsibilities to support her students to develop specific key skills, as well as the implications of not possessing such skills:

If you haven't got literacy and you haven't got numeracy and you haven't got thinking skills—and I could go on—you haven't got the keys to the power in society. Children have got to have these skills so that in the future they will have a better share of resources in this society and have better lives in this society.

The tensions of supporting students in their own languages, as well as in the English language, are very real for Tina. Lamenting that in various parts of Australia funding for education in Indigenous community languages has been cut, Tina says that:

Teachers have to open up the world of English and the powerful and efficient use of English but still respect the students' version of English or their community language.

Switched on to students' worlds

The recollection of a recent conversation with a teaching colleague from a non-state school provoked Tina to reflect on the ways in which particular issues might be invisible in the eyes of some educators. In a workshop, when asked to share responses to the question, "What was the most difficult teaching situation you've ever been in?" Tina recounted a child abuse case. As the Sexual Harassment Referral Officer, Tina has inherited a job that "seems to get bigger and bigger." She has taken on the role of key teacher in responding to instances of bullying, ensuring that children understand the school's protocols in dealing with all forms of harassment. Over a period of time one student confided to Tina that she'd been hit and yelled at by her step-father and would swing from allegiance towards her mother to loyalty to her father and their respective partners. The student's situation was worsened by health problems which included epilepsy. The case was reported to the police, followed by a court case in which the mother lost custody of her daughter. Tina acknowledged how upsetting this whole episode was for her, saying "But that's part of the human experience of teaching."

What Tina finds difficult to accept is that her colleague from a non-state school had never experienced "anything remotely similar" to this episode. Tina's reactions were multi-focal: "What world do you live in? Are your students all from stable families? Are you living in a world that doesn't exist?" Tina concludes her recollection of this experience by saying, "If it were just cardboard cut-outs in the classroom, then I wouldn't feel teaching was an engaging profession—but it is gut-wrenching at times, you know."

A strong theme in Tina's pedagogies is her capacity to respond to students in terms of where they're situated. Tina reflects on an earlier teaching experience when she taught in a working class area south of Brisbane:

The thing that used to worry me there wasn't the kids, not the parents, but the middle-class teachers. There were people there who believed that the kids should do homework and that everybody should do homework. And there was a kind of belief that they all had the same kind of home life in which to do homework. And it was the principal at the time who persuaded people that what they assumed was going on at home wasn't really going on there and a lot of children actually lived in chaos and to expect the same standard of homework from everybody was just totally ignoring the kind of situation that many kids lived in. This principal would tell anecdotes about what would be in the cupboard at some places he visited—I remember him telling us about one home he visited where there was one packet of Sao biscuits in the cupboard and nothing else.

According to Tina, the principal made the links between the concerns that many of their students' parents and carers have had about survival to their attitudes and valuing of homework. In this context Tina learnt an unexpected lesson about leadership. The principal managed to convince the majority of teachers that the setting of homework was not appropriate, but had to make it school policy to ensure that all teachers followed the "no homework" approach. Tina was aware of the further barriers to student

learning that the “middle class attitudes” of teachers created. “There were lots of comments from staff about the way parents dressed, whether they were overweight—you know their ‘middle-classness’ really came out. I’m middle-class too, I’m not denying that, but their attitudes really worried me.”

Tina’s commitment and capacity to put her students, rather than herself, at the centre of her pedagogies is illustrated through her approaches towards an Aboriginal student in her class:

I have an Aboriginal boy, Jack, in my class at present who has had a lot of absenteeism in the past and I talk regularly to his parents about this and other issues. I value his parents’ perspectives about their son’s education and I know that I’m not the one who knows about Aboriginality. They’re the ones who know about it and I respect their wishes for their child. I still want Jack to come to school more often but I respect the fact that they know about his culture and they are active as parents. They’re the people who are going to make sure that he understands his Aboriginality. But I also say, “Ask Mum and Dad ‘such and such’” and Jack’s become our expert.

The example of another student, this one with a history of significant behavioural problems, provides further illustration of the way in which Tina places her students at the centre of her pedagogies. Tina comments:

I try to recognise talent in non-academic areas as well as academic areas. I’ve got a little boy—well, not that little—he’s taller than me—who came to me following two suspensions from our school. He has huge literacy problems, numeracy problems, a dysfunctional family, but he loves rugby league. Personally, I am not interested in rugby league, but that’s beside the point. He loves rugby league and he gets high self-esteem from achieving in that area. Sol is also very good at art, so I make a big deal of that and make sure that his art is show-cased. I also ask him to help other students who are having a struggle with art, because he knows how to do it. And he’s often helping the kid who’s the computer genius in the class.

It’s on the basis of this recognition of difference that Tina builds group identity in her classroom. She draws an analogy between the group building in her classroom and what occurs in the broader society:

Even though we’re a whole lot of different people, we have a society of caring...you know we have a great diversity of people in our classrooms but we are a society working together—just as our country and our world is each made up of a group of different people working together. And we have our differences and we need to negotiate, we need to listen to each other, we need to do the best we can to appreciate other people’s points of view and still work together as a group.

Tina elaborates on how and why she considers it to be important to forge a group identity when she says:

There’s a real emphasis in my classroom on harmony and peace to maximise learning. I personally can’t deal with a battle every day. I want my class to work really hard at making our class, and the other Year 7 class, our family. You know there are fifty of us and we are the family of Year 7s who are the leaders in our school, who are responsible, who will respect each other, who will listen to each other and who will lead our school. I tell them all the time about their responsibilities—the little kids are looking up to them. Some of them are a bit daunted by it, but it’s that harmony, that peace, the working together to achieve what we can that I think is really important for kids.

A critical consumer of theory

A significant aspect of Tina’s pedagogies is the way they are informed by theory and policy. Tina sees theory and policy as keys to more rewarding teaching practice—they’re enabling factors. Like her colleagues, however, Tina needs to constantly prioritise her use of time and particularly needs to evaluate the efficacy of

any formal learning opportunities: she has to see that such sessions will make a difference in the classroom. Tina describes a pervasive attitude among teachers generally to professional development sessions:

It's interesting with my staff—and I don't think they're any different to others—when you talk about pedagogy they have to be convinced about the application of what you're saying. They'll say: "Don't waste my precious time talking about useless things after school on a Monday afternoon. If you're going to use my time, if you're going to take up my time to actually make my teaching practice better—good on you—go for it. If you want to take up my time waffling on with a whole lot of rubbish that I can't use, I'm going to be immediately against it." And you will get people who show that by their body language or others who are polite but you can see that they're not engaged. And I agree with it, why when you've got more pressing things to do like tomorrow's lessons, are you going to sit listening to someone waffling away about something that doesn't interest you? Teachers are the biggest critics, teachers are a tough audience.

Tina sees clearly the value of theory and policy in informing her pedagogies. Her example of the study into interschool sport illustrates her practice of the dimensions valued in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) and importantly, her ability to articulate her practice using that framework. Her expertise and leadership within her school and beyond in terms of boys' education offers a further example of engagement with theory and policy. Tina says:

I like reading about boys' education and specifically about acceptable masculinities. Pam Gilbert's book, *Masculinity goes to school*¹⁸ was helpful. And one of the real shifts I've had through reading this book is that there are lots of different ways of being masculine, but if we really want to tap into the boys—I'm talking about 12 year-olds who are going through all kinds of changes and are struggling with an acceptable kind of masculinity for them—they've got to see men in positions that are both attractive to them and good for society. You know men should be able to dance and do ballet, but I'm not going to support my male students to consider helpful and healthy forms of masculinity by suggesting that because it's not close enough to their experience to be useful. I get my boys to think about being masculine through leading protests against detention centres, being peace workers, fire-fighters, air-sea rescue workers and soldiers who do things that are good—and from there look at the range of options available to boys and men in terms of being masculine. And of course this must always be balanced by an understanding that these are not the exclusive domains of men!

Active engagement in policy-making at both state and national levels informs further Tina's pedagogies. Tina is involved in a pilot study of Education Queensland's (2001a) *Professional Standards for Teachers*¹⁹ and sees the potential for her own and others' professional growth through engagement with this document:

I'm really excited about the whole professional standards thing—it's an online community. There's a structure there [in the document] that we can look into and use to take personal responsibility for our own professional development....One of my great dilemmas with professional development is the "one-size fits all" model. We are constantly told that we need to cater for individual differences and recognise difference and yet so much of our professional development is based on a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

¹⁸ Gilbert, R. & Gilbert, P. (1998). *Masculinity goes to school*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

¹⁹ Education Queensland (2001a). *Professional Standards for Teachers: Guidelines for Professional Practice*. Brisbane, Qld.

The making of a socially-just teacher

A range of significant factors has led to Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies. These include her family background and early teaching experiences in places where there were important lessons to be learnt. Speaking of her family background, Tina says:

That family background is priceless....And I often wondered what it would've been like to have grown up in a different family who had very conservative ideas. You know I come from a long line of people who were secretaries and presidents of branches of the Labor Party—when the Labor Party was a labour party. You know I had a father whose hero in life was Ben Chifley and a brother who went into social work—one social worker and one teacher—how much more socially just can you get?

Tina also attributes the development of her current pedagogies to the influence of her experiences at an all-girls Catholic school with teachers who were “intelligent, successful women” who practised a kind of pedagogy that “got the girls thinking and considering other people.” Tina recalls that these teachers were the kind of people who talked to students about social justice issues, though not using those terms. Further, Tina believes that historical events such as “Gough Whitlam giving us free tertiary education” shaped the kind of teacher she is today.

Early teaching experiences and, importantly, the students and the teachers who were part of those experiences have a far-reaching influence on Tina's pedagogies. The impact that our colleagues can have on us as professionals is suggested by Tina when she says:

At the beginning of the 90s I came across four people in particular who just happened to be there at the right time and the right place—four women who thought really, really deeply about how you teach and why we teach and what's the best way of doing it. And they were women who could very effectively match theory to practice. And that's when I think I saw that the whole point of public education was so that the kids we were teaching could actually get a chance in life.

Not unsurprisingly, Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies, as well as her concerns for appropriate working conditions for teachers, led her to involvement in her union. According to Tina:

I don't think my colleagues see me as a departmental lackey. I think that because I went in there and within six months became the union rep and have spoken for the last ten years about working conditions, class size, behaviour management, and when we've needed to, about salaries, and professional development and all those kind of things, they know I'm prepared to take political action and industrial action in order to achieve our goals. Teachers need to know that they can trust this person—there's a lot of teachers out there who are sceptical....Because I've got industrial kudos with the teachers, I believe they listen to me when I talk about pedagogy.

Employer support for socially-just pedagogies

Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies is evident in her practice within and beyond her classroom. It appears that Tina draws on her students' needs, family background, early and current teaching experiences, her colleagues, professional and industrial organisations, as well as educational research and policy documents as sources of support in her practice of socially-just pedagogies. Though Tina utilises Education Queensland policy to support her practice, she looks towards her employer for more support. Tina elaborates on these ideas when she says:

I think my employer is more concerned with the budgetary bottom line. I'm cynical about my employer's response to socially-just pedagogy because while there are

some beautiful documents produced, I have problems with some of their priorities. I think that if I'm prepared to go out there and find out about socially-just pedagogy and I'm prepared to practise and reflect on my teaching, that's terrific. "We've got a bargain here!" is the EQ attitude. But I don't find much genuine leadership for people who are looking for guidance in their practice but can't find it—people who just need a little bit more encouragement and valuing—genuine valuing by their employer. And I honestly think that if I made one mistake and talked out of turn and got a particularly active parent who decided to take an issue to the local paper, I don't believe I would get much support from my employer. I might be pleasantly surprised, but I don't think I would be. So there you go.

Some concluding words

Tina sees the provision of high quality state education as a priority. Her broad goals for well resourced public education are matched by her commitment to social justice in her classroom. Tina's sensitivity to her students' interests, abilities and identities results in pedagogies which place the students centre stage.

Pedagogies of learning: Alice's story

Alice's story is very much one of journeying—journeying from a secure middle class existence to a standpoint from which injustice is visible. Several influences have awakened Alice's sense of pedagogy as a vehicle for social justice. These influences have included her awareness of her own safe and secure childhood, some travelling, postgraduate study and several years teaching in a small country school which included a significant Indigenous population.

Some early influences

Alice reflects on her childhood as the “white picket fence childhood” which produced a “Brady Bunch, naïve, 2.2” mentality. She says that her parents are “very Christian people and very service-oriented,” qualities she admires. Alice comments that when she graduated from teachers' college she was “armed” with all of the knowledge she thought she'd need:

I thought everyone lived a very similar life to what I had lived until I went to my first school which was in the country. I then realised that there were various realms of economics in the world and opportunities in the world, along with differing perspectives and prejudices. My first posting at this school helped to open my eyes a little. And then during this time I took a year off and went travelling and this, too, reinforced the point that the world was a very diverse place.

Alice quickly became attuned to the implications for her classroom practice of the disparity of resources and opportunities. She says about teaching the range of students in her class, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous students:

My teaching days went from “Open up your maths book” to “OK, who hasn't had breakfast this morning?”, “Where did everyone sleep last night?” and “Does anyone need to go and have a nap?”. I think that these early years of teaching created in me an awareness that I'm just one of many caring adults and that schools offer resources that you can use to establish good teams that can make a difference. I also realised that everyone has something to offer. So the best way is to aspire to working out how to bring out everyone's goodness rather than focusing on kids who can or can't achieve according to standardised testing and that sort of rubbish.

When Alice took up her current position at an outwardly middle-class Catholic school located in a coastal area north of Brisbane, she said she was “branded” by some as passionate about a range of social justice issues. She also draws on the legacy of her first teaching appointment for the strong professional friendships she made. She says, “I still regularly phone, cry and scream, debrief—any of those things with these four people.” One of the people from whom Alice learnt much in this setting was a teacher-aide who had valuable knowledge of, and empathy for, the community.

When Alice talks about her pedagogies and the areas of learning in which her upper school students engage she speaks passionately about a myriad of social issues and events. She acknowledges that there are social justice issues of immediate concern for her students at her current school, but that such issues tend not to be as obvious in comparison to her previous school. There are school-wide initiatives to address some social justice issues, but Alice concludes that predominantly school-wide responses tend to be of a “pastoral care” nature, such as contributing to villagers who lost family members, as well as possessions in the New Guinea tidal wave. But in Alice's classroom she has acted in very concrete ways to address a social justice issue, that of bullying, with the initiative extending school-wide. Alice maintains that her actions are similar to those of the majority of her colleagues.

Addressing bullying—the students' and her own

This example of Alice's socially-just pedagogies also reflects her capacity to confront her own unjust practice. Alice's involvement in a school-wide program to address bullying sprang out of "a particularly bad incident of bullying, involving a little boy in my class." Alice discovered that this student had been the victim of bullying for three to four years. She develops a further picture of this student when she says:

I didn't realise that he was leaving home some days at 5.30 a.m. in the morning to go to school a totally different way and getting home at 6.00 p.m. at night to avoid meeting up with some of my kids. I didn't know any of that stuff, but kids in my class knew. I had 32 kids and 29 of them knew that this particular kid came to school every single day and got hassled every single day and it had gone on for years.

The distress that Alice experienced as a result of not knowing that one of her students had been bullied is obvious. She recounts the action she took when she became aware of the bullying:

I confronted the "bully" by saying that the feedback I was getting was that he was hassling Tim and I let him know that if he didn't stop the bullying behaviour, he would be moved through the behaviour levels program established by the admin. And the child actually said to me, "I'm not bullying him—I'm just giving him some choices. It's up to him to choose what he wants to choose." I replied with the comment: "No, you're really limiting his choices because if he doesn't choose something that you like, then you feel right in dishing out the punishment." And that kid looked at me and said, "How is that any different from what you're doing to me now?" And I remember just sitting there and thinking, it was true. And I realised that I was doing the old, you know, probably well-intentioned and protective thing, protecting the child who had been bullied and standing up for them. But I was probably just accentuating the pattern where the kid was trying to exert power over his victim and I was going to demonstrate how wrong that was by exerting my power over him. I remember driving home and thinking "Bloody hell, he's right!"

This incident appeared to have a profound influence on Alice who says that, "Now I'm learning to sit back and watch, gathering information as best I can and looking at the dynamics of stuff as I try to work out strategies." Alice reflects on what a significant learning experience this episode had been for her. She says that:

It's funny—I was indignant at the time—and aghast. I remember driving home and thinking he's got a point. I didn't give that kid any other options bar the one I was promoting and if he didn't back my option, which was to back off, then that's OK: "You're free to make a choice, but if you choose this, then this is what is going to happen to you." I wasn't giving kids free choices.

A concrete result of that experience was the development of a school-wide anti-bullying program implemented during that year. The issue was discussed at a class meeting and the class decided that they wanted to take some action. In collaboration with the Assistant to the Principal Religious Education (APRE), Alice and her students wrote a formal education program. Following training by the APRE and Alice, the teaching teams taught weekly lessons to every class from pre-school through to Year 7.

The bullying program developed by the students was integrated into their own knowledge and skill development. Key aspects of the program involved supporting their fellow students to consider the way they treat others, their expectations of others and the extent to which some of these expectations or choices they offer others are unrealistic or inappropriate. Alice's students responded to the particular developmental levels of the students with whom they worked. For example, the pre-school lesson involved supporting the children to say, "I don't like that, stop it now," whereas the Year 5 response choices included options, such as "I" statements and assertive statements and so on. The Year 1 team taught every one of the series of 8 lessons using puppetry.

Some of Alice's students used video snippets that they had recorded from programs, such as "The Simpsons." The program capitalised on the learning opportunities for the "teaching teams" themselves, as well as for their "students."

Each teaching team taught the same lesson to each class in the year level. The supervising teacher completed an evaluation form that was added to the team's teaching portfolio. This feedback was used to amend subsequent teaching episodes. Alice reserves her judgement as to the lasting benefits of the anti-bullying program, but two key observations seem relevant. Alice recounts that the key perpetrator of the bullying incident that sparked the program commented in a written piece of work that he felt that he was a better person for having participated in the program. Another Year 7 student claimed that he had observed his six year-old sister using an assertive statement promoted in the program when he was attempting to bully her at home!

When Alice speaks about what she and her class learn together she mentions people and events from which her students can acquire knowledge about the use and abuse of power and injustice generally. Like many of the teaching programs implemented by Alice, this approach is the result of collaboration with other year level teachers. In order to explore the narrative genre, Alice's class and the year level have studied Bryce Courtenay's (1999) *The Power of One: Young Readers' Edition*. They have also examined Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech, as well as investigating the roles of Steve Biko and Donald Woods in *Cry Freedom*. The lessons from Alice's integration of knowledge across key learning areas is strongly evidenced in her class's examination of the film based on Harper Lee's (1987) *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Easter. Alice and her teaching partners supported their students in examining the parallels between Christ and Tom Robinson²⁰ and people's responses to these men in each context. Alice adds, "Obviously this is a Catholic school, that's where those connections come from."

Alice's pedagogies are firmly grounded in trying to make connections with students' lives. According to Alice:

In my opinion, there's a great need to affirm, endorse, value and understand different social groups whether they be town kids, rural kids, farm kids—just cultural groups—wherever there's a story. I mean it sounds like a cliché but I know even in relation to myself, if I don't try to know who I am as a person, if I don't have an identity, all the maths books in the world won't make any difference.

A situational analysis conducted at the school a couple of years ago painted a very middle-class picture of the school. The results suggested that "the average student lives with both parents, has a computer, participates in extra-curricular activities, including sport outside school hours and Mum is normally home when the kids get home from school." Despite its middle-class façade and acknowledging that the survey was conducted a couple of years ago, Alice looks beyond to see that there are problems confronting her students and their parents which impact directly on the pedagogies she needs to practise. Alice says:

I know a family last year that had triplets and Dad lost his job and he's still unemployed. I know people struggle financially. I'm not so much aware of racial issues here—like at my other school where it was in your face from 8 o'clock in the morning. Now that's not a good or bad comment either way, but I'm sure there would be issues here that I don't find visible and as blatant as my other experiences at other times—kids in abject poverty, kids not eating, for example.

²⁰A character in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Tom Robinson an African-American was wrongly accused of rape. He was shot attempting to escape before "justice" could be served.

Alice concludes that just because social problems aren't as visible at her current school, she knows that this doesn't mean that they don't exist.

Students as active players in their curriculum

In Alice's classroom and school-wide there are many significant strategies to involve students in making key decisions. When it comes to showing what they know and can do with what they know, Alice's students exert considerable agency. She explains:

The kids can often pick their own topics and design their own project questions using process verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy. They organise their own timeframes. They organise their medium for presentations. They organise whether they work individually or with partners or in teams. We have conversations like: "Well, I'm not really good at writing stuff, so can I present my information by making a model?" And we talk about different people's learning styles and what's fair and just to expect for a project to let people show their intelligence in ways that best demonstrate their intelligence. So it's not a case of everyone else had to write a book report, but you get to make a book cover—they've got their heads around that sort of stuff.

Alice talks explicitly about the strategies she uses to share power with her students. The Year 7 Parliament has had a significant and positive impact upon decision-making and power-sharing in Alice's classroom. The school parliament is run by the Year 7 students with support from their teachers and in response to the needs of students throughout the school. The sharing of power is suggested by Alice who comments that, "I'll quite often go to Parliament and not even open my mouth for the whole forty minutes—not even 'Hurry up and sit down'—you just walk in and Parliament gets underway."

Alice talks in detail about how the Year 7 Parliament works:

The kids vote the Speaker in following leadership camp. Everyone [in Year 7] goes on leadership camp and we do team building, problem-solving, risk-taking and trust-building exercises. We examine preferential voting while we're there as well. And then we come back and they go through the process of a democratic election. And we look at not voting for the popular people just because they're the popular people. On camp we ask the students to note who does what. When we get back to school we call for nominations and, of course, kids have the choice to accept the nomination or not. We have a girl and a boy elected Year 7 captains and they are our Speakers of the House of Parliament and they alternate each week: one runs the school assembly on Wednesdays and the other runs Parliament on Fridays. We also have four school captains who do PR sorts of things and we also have sports captains.

Strategies are in place to encourage involvement of all Year 7 students in the parliamentary process. Alice adds:

This year a colleague organised for all of the kids [in Year 7] to receive badges. And all of them can pass a Bill through Parliament and all of them can organise parliamentary activities. They get committee time to work out Bill proposals and they take turns to present Bills. When Bills are passed they're presented to the Governor-General, who's our Principal, for assent. If the Governor-General has any concerns about anything, such as a workplace health and safety issue, he sees the students about making amendments—but this is rare. There is also Report Time in Parliament and Question Time. It's run just like the real Parliament—with one exception—it's not adversarial.

Not only is the class time for parliamentary activities embedded in the students' day, but provision is also made for teachers to provide assistance during lunch breaks.

For example, the Year 7 teachers aren't given supervision responsibilities at lunch time because, as Alice says, "we're the parliamentary people." Students make appointments to work with the Year 7 teachers during these sessions if they need any special assistance in the development or execution of a Bill for Parliament.

Alice's commitment to socially-just pedagogies finds expression in not only supporting the Parliament but encouraging the students to engage in critical questions. She relates an example in which some girls in a sports committee proposed a girls' touch football game and in Question Time some proposed that girls lacked the skills for the game. The girls responded that they had already organised to have four weeks of training prior to the game. The Bill was enacted and the game was played with three girls breaking their arms during the season. Alice explores further what happened:

One of the questions in Report Time was "Do you think the reason there were three injuries to the girls was because football is a boys' game?" One of the boys from the Sports Committee responded in the following way: "No, I think there were injuries because the initial preparation time was too short. Injuries just happen in football."

Alice concludes that the students responded to the suggestion in a way that wasn't "gender-biased at all."

Hair-raising risk-taking

Issues of social significance are on the agenda when determining class activities. In the following example, as in the example of the Year 7 Parliament, Alice is part of a whole-school team. Over the last few years there's been a tradition at Alice's school that when the annual Leukaemia Foundation's *Shave for a cure* happens, all teachers do one of two things: they have their heads shaved or they perform a dare if the particular teacher's class is able to raise the amount of money that has been negotiated with the teacher. One year Alice dressed as a duck, a comparatively easy task given what she had to do last year. Last year a student suggested that she could peroxide her hair with the challenge from some students, "You always tell us about taking risks."

And Alice speaks passionately that it's not just about dressing as a duck or having a dramatic change to one's hair style—she's convinced it's connected to students' learning. The students did manage to raise the necessary \$1000 which meant that Alice had to perform the dare. Alice has since spent a considerable sum of money to "recover" her hair, but she sees that the students were impressed with the risk-taking involved. She was pleased to support them to "own something, to really make a difference."

Some concluding thoughts

Alice's pedagogies are attuned to who her particular students are, as well as the issues in the world beyond that are relevant to them. Her pedagogies are characterised by her willingness to reflect on her own practice and to make changes when she needs to. Those changes are often accompanied by some significant values clarification. Alice doesn't always choose the easy path but the path that she considers will lead to enhancing student learning outcomes.

5 Storying the stories: Exploring spaces for socially-just pedagogies

[*Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*] is not, perhaps, the book that any of the women would write, but it is an effort to include many voices and to offer various levels of knowing and thinking through which a reader can make their own sense. While there is some effort to look for patterns as well as differences, our primary interest is in a more interactive way of doing research than is usually the case where the researchers are presented as disembodied, “objective” knowers. We are very much in the book, but we have tried to put it together in such a way that our stories are situated among many voices where, accumulating layerings of meanings as the book proceeds, the story of these women goes far beyond the pages of this book as they change themselves, their worlds and researchers like us.

(Lather & Smithies, 1997, pp. xv–xvi)

Introduction

The narratives introduced in Chapter 4 are repeated here. In this chapter each narrative is accompanied by a commentary written by me. The commentaries are informed by the feminist poststructural theorising explored in Chapter 2. At one level, each narrative reflects the “voice” of the teacher concerned. As explored in Chapter 1, my “voice” exists in each narrative, given that I asked particular questions, made particular responses, selected particular language with which to convey the teachers’ reflections and experiences and so on. Further, the narratives reflect voices beyond those of the teachers and my own. The feminist poststructural theorising that underpins this work suggests that everything that all of us think, say, write and so on draws on the discourses to which we have access at the particular socio-cultural and historical juncture. These feminist poststructural ideas, which are explored in more detail in Chapter 2, mean that the narratives are “produced from what was culturally available [to us] rather than from a private reserve of meaning” (Alldred, 1998, p. 155).

In the accompanying commentaries, I suggest the discourses that might be operating to support what might be considered to be socially-just pedagogies. I also suggest those discourses that might be inhibiting what could be regarded as socially-just pedagogies. As discussed in Chapter 2, every discourse can be regarded as an invitation to truth. For example, a “child-centred” discourse is based on the “knowledge” that to cater for individual students’ needs is a worthwhile approach for students and for others who have a vested interest in education. Such a discourse proposes what “knowledge” is most worthwhile, what knowledge is least worthwhile and, importantly, what constitutes the “truth” in a range of circumstances which are constituted by child-centred discourses.

The point also needs to be made that my commentaries, with their proposals as to what constitutes the discourses operating and further the nature of the discourses, are themselves also invitations to truth. My intention, which I want to make as transparent as possible, is to suggest to you what discourses might be aligned with or antagonistic to socially-just pedagogies. In doing so, I am establishing my own “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980). That is, I am proposing what might count as worthwhile knowledge and how knowledge–power relations might best operate. I have tried to write with caution and I suggest that as a participant in these materials you read with caution as well. To reiterate, my commentary which accompanies each narrative is not *the* commentary but *a* commentary written from my specific location in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and so on.

Pedagogies of belonging: Jemma's story

An introduction to the commentary

As indicated in the previous chapter, the field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 14 June 2002 between Jemma and me. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

I proposed to Jemma that we label this narrative, "Pedagogies of belonging" because it is those discourses that seem to rise to the surface when she talks about her socially-just pedagogies. These discourses of belonging appear to shape and be shaped by Jemma's subjectivities as a mother, a teacher at a Catholic school, the daughter of a highly mobile family during her childhood and so on. In contrast later in the narrative, Jemma identifies forces, labelled here as economic rationalist discourses, which get in the way of her socially-just practice in both philosophical and physical ways.

There is strong evidence in this narrative of the ways in which we take up discourses which are available within the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which we operate. This is to say, that all of us can only participate or engage in discourses that have been produced within and by the socio-cultural and historical circumstances in which we exist. Remember that discourses refer to socially-constructed ways of constituting human beings so that their social roles are identifiable and meaningful (Lankshear, 1994, p. 6). For example, someone can only act in a "motherly" way if there are particular discourses that speak people into being in ways that align with the roles, functions and expectations associated with motherhood that are socio-culturally produced within a specific historical moment. Further, to act in a "motherly" way would vary according to the particular socio-cultural, historical context. So as I explore the discourses that appear to be shaping Jemma's narrative I have looked to the ways in which particular discourses are available to her. As suggested at the beginning of the chapter, this discourse of belonging, like other discourses, is "produced from what was culturally available to [Jemma]...rather than from a private reserve of meaning. The fantasy of the authentic subject, one whose subjectivity is imagined to be independent of, or prior to, culture is rejected" (Alldred, 1998, p. 155).

Feminist poststructural theories highlight the often competing and contradictory, but always complex, range of discourses that constitute us and with which we constitute our lives. Jemma's narrative reminds us of this. In this commentary I explore what I consider to be generative and regimenting discourses. Again, my analysis doesn't provide *the* commentary, but rather one commentary produced from a particular reading: you might like to consider the discourses that you think speak Jemma and her students into existence as you re-read this narrative.

Pedagogies of belonging: Jemma's story

We are the mighty 2B superkids,
Learning at school will lift our lids.
We like being in this team,
The coolest team you've ever seen.
We walk tall, we aim high,
Watch us as the year flies by.
Mrs B thinks we're number one,
And teaching us is loads of fun.
Mighty 2B kids is our name,
And being superkids is our game.²¹

²¹ It's just a rap chant

I think that the discourses of belonging that characterise Jemma's classroom are reflected in 2B's rap chant, a text that persuasively speaks the students into existence in particular ways. Membership in the 2B team figures strongly in this chant with such group identity being associated with successful and enjoyable learning. Given Jemma's development of the text and her authority in suggesting particular ways of seeing, thinking, valuing and so on in the classroom, this is very much a teacher-directed discourse. It is a highly available discourse in this context, given the associated Catholic and early childhood discourses also operating. The Catholic discourses operating here promote inclusion on the basis of belonging to a particular spiritual group. Early childhood discourses seem to be aligned with discourses of belonging, given the strong invitations within early childhood contexts to speak the students into existence as part of a group which promotes links with familial subjects and discourses. Kamler, Maclean, Reid & Simpson (1994) in their discussion of the social and historical contexts of early childhood settings draw on Karen Clarke's 1985 work to propose that contemporary Australian early childhood settings reflect many aspects of their origins in the British "infant school" (p. 25). They claim that the infant school in British society involved "its transference from a predominantly male domain of social engineering to a female domain of child-care and nurturance" (Kamler et al., 1994, p. 25).

The rap chant with its focus on belonging provides an example of how discourses operate in complex ways. For example, it seems that the discourses of belonging operate in generative ways, that is, opening up spaces for socially-just pedagogies. However, at the same time the rap chant is associated with regimenting discourses that carry a strong invitation to students to see themselves first and foremost as members of the 2B class who need to conform in particular ways. (Such issues are explored further in Chapter 7.) Conformity is associated with learning being "loads of fun" and being "superkids" who form the "coolest team you've ever seen." This example offers a salutary example of the complex and often contradictory ways in which discourses operate in our lives, and specifically in our classrooms.

Early in the school year Jemma read a book to her Year 2 students about some superkids who rescued people from giants, monsters and dragons. And 2B decided that they would be superkids. Jemma wrote the rap chant above, she made a large red cape to adorn the classroom door, superkid cut-outs were labelled with every student's name and the "Mighty 2B Superkids" were born.

Jemma explores the ways in which the cultivation of the team has forged a group identity and encouraged the students to be more active learners:

From the start of the year the Superkids idea has just completely set the tone. You could hear it in their conversation over the table—it was beautiful—things like when someone said, "I can't write that" another student replied, "Oh, yes, you can, you're a superkid! We can do everything you know."²²

When it was 2B's turn to deliver a liturgy—a regular event in Catholic schools—the superkids theme was used. The cape, which represents the strength of their team, was put over 2B's "sacred space." The students then added to the space the three promises they made in their covenant: to be a good friend, agreeing that everyone had a right to be safe and happy, and to care for the school.

²² Kids who "can do anything"

This student's comments about being able to "do anything" suggest that this discourse of belonging is one which aligns well with the students' subjectivities, as well as Jemma's subjectivities. The students' subjectivities are impacted upon by a super-hero discourse that supposedly makes all things possible. Such a discourse is highly accessible to young children through contemporary culture, most obvious in mass media through cartoons, adventure stories and so on. The cape, a very strong symbol of the super-hero discourse, featured in 2B's liturgy, further reinforcing this discourse. But can students in 2B "do anything?" Is this an appropriate discourse to appropriate for the purposes of promoting learning? Although we don't see any overt examples of the essentialising effects of the "kids-can-do-anything" discourse in this narrative, nevertheless the discourse would seem to operate to put all students into one hermetically-sealed category.

In one reading of the above example, a student draws on the discourse to exhort his peer onto greater learning. But of course there are no circumstances in which students can "do anything." And it could be argued that the assumption and expectation of knowledge and skills beyond students' reach is far from socially just. This discourse of teacher expectation to enhance student learning outcomes is a dominant discourse in the schooling effectiveness area. This is not to say that teachers should not expect deep learning from their students, but failure to recognise students' needs, and especially the socially-constructed nature of such needs, might not be associated with socially-just practice. It is reminiscent of the "girls can do anything" campaign significant in gender equity programs in Australia during 1980s. (These issues are explored further in Chapter 7.)

The road to pedagogies of belonging

Jemma's commitment to socially-just pedagogies is clearly evident in the way she talks about her students and their learning together. According to Jemma, when her students set foot in their classroom she wants them to leave their stress behind and engage in learning that is exciting and challenging. The notions of belonging and caring for each other are key themes in Jemma's description of her classroom. Jemma suggests that it might have been the nature of her own childhood that has led to this emphasis in her pedagogies. She talks about being a "RAAF kid":

I grew up in Catholic schools—actually I went to a couple of state schools as well. I was a RAAF kid and we moved practically every two years of my school life. My dad would come home and say, "We're moving to Victoria in three weeks or six weeks or at the end of the year." And I'd think, "Oh, great, here we go again." I did twelve schools in twelve years—but I did most of that in primary school, but I still had three high school changes. It makes you really know what it feels like to be alone. You know what it feels like to have to make new friends. You know what it's like to have to walk into new situations and feel comfortable and make yourself get out there and be part of it and I've always had to do that. So I guess I have empathy for kids in situations like that because I know what it feels like.

According to Jemma working in a Catholic school supports the creation of a sense of belonging for her students. She says that in Catholic schools there's a "common unity, a common expectation, a core of belonging." The school's mission statement, which promotes the education of the "total child," that is, their spiritual, physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth, provides further vital support. Jemma's commitment to socially-just pedagogies appears to be strongly linked to her appreciation of the diversity in her classroom.

When invited to speak about the ways in which she works for social justice in her classroom, Jemma talks about students with learning difficulties and serious illnesses. Her experience highlights the "emotional labour" associated with teaching when she says:

Over the years here I've taught children with terminal illness. I taught one little boy, who had leukaemia, for two years and I've had children with severe Attention Deficit Disorder. I've had children with learning difficulties. I've had children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. I had a little girl who was only with me for six months before she died. And that was incredibly traumatic because I was pregnant with my second child at that stage. So I guess my learning curve has been from children with differences and I think probably the thing that I do is to try to put myself into their family situations—just looking at things from their point of view. I try to really go the other way from being really, really judgemental according to my own framework or expectations and what works for me and what doesn't work for me. Because I think that the family structure is so vastly different in so many lives.

That focus on the family is important in other ways in Jemma's classroom. She says: I think that the biggest thing I try to do is to use the image of a home within my classroom. For example, quite often I'll have beads up on the door and so it's like the worry beads—just leave all your worries behind and step in—you don't have to stress about everything else that's happening. You know you can feel safe and feel secure. Right now I've got black plastic up to represent jungle vines because we're doing biomes. So there's a sign up saying, "You're entering a rainforest" but at other times it might be "an ocean" or something else. So the children feel that there's a real pull to come in.²³

Jemma has reflected considerably on the notion of the classroom as a "home." In a reflective journal, which Jemma prepared for a tertiary course, she explored the concept of "image." She says:

Images combine emotion, morality—I have an image of the classroom as an ideal "home." This has become more evident in my professional life since becoming a mother. I am now more familiar with a child's needs, wants and development. The day-to-day methodology in my classroom reflects the image of "home." Through reflection I aim to improve the reality of my "home" to reflect my philosophy of teaching. Separating the two would be impossible. "Home" should be a comfortable, safe place in which we develop relationships, form opinions and attitudes, are listened to and respected. It's a place where we have freedom to grow and change through learning and gaining awareness of the self, others and the world in which we live. This is a tall order, but the image of what I hope to create keeps me professionally honest.

²³ The classroom as family/home

The discourses of belonging that operate in this narrative are supported by compatible discourses related to caring. Jemma's subjectivity, not only as a caring teacher but as promoting caring relations (Noddings, 1992, p. 18) is suggested by her desire to promote a "home" for her students in the classroom, her recall of the serious illnesses experienced by some of her past students and so on. Jemma's promotion of an "ethics of care" (Noddings, 1992) is demonstrated in her practice of hanging beads across the doorway with the invitation to students to "leave all [their] worries behind and step in" adding "[they] don't have to stress about everything else that's happening. [They] know [they] can feel safe and feel secure." This construction of students that recognises that people of this age may experience stress suggests a deep level of care. In contrast, dominant discourses often don't acknowledge the needs of young people in this regard, prompting Davies and Banks (1992) to talk of "children and anyone else not accorded full human status within society" (p. 3). The spaces which Jemma makes available for her students to exert agency over their learning is demonstrated by their negotiation using the "traffic lights." Engaged in this strategy they make some decisions about how they will conduct their own learning.

Your turn to reflect...

Can you suggest any problematic aspects of Jemma speaking her classroom into existence as a home? If so, what might these aspects be?

Jemma's creation of a supportive environment includes a commitment to students' self-direction. Explicit guidelines about what is required from students leads to the students' agency in their own learning. Jemma explains:

I give my kids a fair amount of freedom. I think particularly with little kids if you show them where everything is and you show them an accepted way of behaving with whatever the equipment is then you could be pretty safe in thinking that they'll follow through. And I think I'm quite consistent—I start the year off the way I mean to continue it. I love the fact that in the second half of the year it really starts to kick in. And you can actually start to see those processes becoming internalised. The children know what's expected without there ever having to be a major deal. I don't have and I've never had major management problems.²⁴

The use of the "traffic light" in 2B's classroom illustrates the use of explicit criteria, as well as the incorporation of student agency in their own learning. Teachers and students together determine which traffic light is "on." When the traffic light indicates red in this classroom the students are expected to do silent work, orange represents quiet talking and green stands for "full-on discussion." Jemma comments that students will often say, "Can this be orange-light work?" for example.

²⁴ Freedom or something else?

At first reading, and casting off any of the Foucauldian (1977) notions of the disciplining of bodies through discourse, Jemma's pedagogy seems to be associated with liberatory discourses: the students are enjoying a freedom within delineated boundaries. A feminist poststructural reading of this example provides a different viewpoint. We note that Jemma talks of giving her students "a fair amount of freedom" but the recognition that the students are shown an "acceptable way of behaving," that the "processes becom[e] internalised" and so on is highly suggestive of the regulating nature of discourses. Such discourses constitute "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980), that is, the "right way" to think and act is spelt out. And, of course, the teacher's "survival" in a classroom, constructed as it is in this socio-cultural and historical juncture, depends in large measure on such regulatory discourses. The regimenting functions of discourses as "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980) are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Important role of intellectual quality

Though the creation of a supportive classroom environment and the recognition of difference are important dimensions to 2B's classroom, intellectual quality with connections to students' worlds and worlds beyond the classroom appear pivotal. The development of deep knowledge and deep understandings are evident in the student work that decorates the classroom. Vocabulary, which has emerged from the students' research, includes words such as "chicle," "sapodilla," suggesting that they deserve their teacher's label as "fact fiends." Students use vocabulary such as this in a variety of ways, including for tasks that require higher order thinking in which they use their knowledge to create riddles about animals that live in the rainforest. Jemma recalls a recent student comment which suggests the depth of understandings developed by one class member. The class was reading a "Maths big book" when one of the students commented on the height of a particular tree, "It's certainly not part of the emergent layer and it's certainly not part of the canopy." This study also provided opportunities for students to engage in metalanguage. Jemma reports that her students competently identify informational texts, making comments such as, "This book has diagrams with labels." 2B's parents and the broader school community have recognised the students' depth of knowledge. One student reported that when he asked his mother if she knew what a "biome" was she suggested that he was swearing at her! When 2B presented their liturgy, their sign, "God's beautiful biomes," generated interest among parents/carers and other visitors. The students' study of biomes illustrates connectedness in several respects.²⁵

Making connections

In this unit Jemma's students make strong connections to life beyond school and their concerns for the environment. The students each produced a four-page booklet focusing on how they could be "caretakers of Creation." This task emphasised problem-solving with students responding to the call to care for the environment by proposing water conservation, collection of rubbish, planting of trees and so on. The focus on Creation involved connection with the students' study of Religious Education. Jemma considers that this has been a very successful study. She says that she wanted

²⁵ Learning about the world, in the world and for the world

Many and contradictory discourses operate in Jemma's classroom, as they do in other classrooms. Jemma's pedagogy in terms of her students' engagement in real-life issues provides a strong example of generative discourses. The students are spoken into existence as investigators and problem-solvers addressing key challenges. In this example, the students are engaged in issues related to the stewardship of the planet. It appears that discourses of ecological protection are supported here by both generative and regimenting discourses of Catholicism. For example, there are generative spaces in the promotion of "God's beautiful biomes" during their liturgy and themselves as "caretakers of Creation." The students' experiments to compare moisture capacities of various plants is a concrete example of their engagement in "higher-order thinking," "problem-based curriculum" and "connectedness to the world," key elements in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). It could also be argued that simultaneously discourses of Catholicism might also operate to silence knowledge supported by other discourses. For example, some discourses aligned with "Creation" might be "read" by some as silencing particular discourses associated with evolution.

“the students to be empowered to learn, to find things out for themselves rather than being given information by their teacher or their mother.”²⁶ As well as studying rainforests, students in 2B have been exploring life in the desert. At the time Jemma spoke about her class’s activity they were observing the amount of moisture that collects in four different types of trees located in their playground. “I’m going to try this experiment with the palm tree at home,” proposed one student, while another said, “I’ve only got passionfruit plants at home, so I might try it with them.” This experiment provides an opportunity for students to attempt procedural report genres.

²⁶ Mothers as teachers and nurturers

Jemma explicitly articulates her commitment to a pedagogy which involves the students’ active construction of knowledge as opposed to them “being given information by their teacher or their *mother*” (emphasis added). The suggestion that the mother is the other key teacher in the students’ young lives also provides an interesting case in point. Such a proposal suggests the powerful ways that mothers, as opposed to fathers, are spoken into existence as teachers and nurturers.

Your turn to reflect...

That mothers teach and nurture their children is, of course, a positive thing. However, we could ask some critical questions:

- What discourses are not used to speak mothers into existence as they are constituted in these roles as teachers and nurturers?
- Should we exclude fathers from being discursively constituted as teachers, and nurturers?

Teachers constructing students for success or otherwise

The following episode suggests the enormous latitude that teachers have to construct their students for success or otherwise. When confronted with a new student with a “history,” Jemma felt professionally challenged and a bit overwhelmed, despite her experience and expertise. Her recollection of her feelings and subsequent actions reveal the choices she made.

I’ve long since learnt that ranting and raving doesn’t get you anywhere. So, I don’t do that. I had a kid arrive for fourth term last year and I was actually forewarned about this child because a friend of mine taught in the same school where he was coming from and she had actually told me a story that had happened with this kid the year before and I remember her saying, “God, I pity the poor bloody sucker that gets that kid!”

And I rang her back and said, “Guess what? I’m ‘the bloody sucker’ who’s getting the kid.”

And she just went, “Oh, my God!” She said, “Look, I’m telling you, if someone is crying in your room, you can bet your bottom dollar that this child is hurting them. And it will be so sneaky. It won’t be real, real obvious and he’ll always have an excuse for everything and he’ll lie through his back teeth.”

But she said it will depend very much on how you accept him and what you do. And so I knew I was getting him—he arrived and I thought this is so unfair—this is fourth term I should be enjoying my class without this unwelcome interruption—having to get a child used to a whole set of expectations. Alex had been to two schools. He had had two moves in a term—he’d been in one school for a whole year and spent most of his time in the office and then the first half of the year in Year 2 where again he spent most of his time in the office. He came from a very violent, aggressive background—the whole bit—you think of the worst things and he’s probably seen a lot of that. And I thought, “I’m just going to like you. I think that’s the first thing I need to do is to let you know that I really do like you and I really want you to be here.”

So the Learning Support teacher said, “He can draw really well, Jemma.” She was running through his enrolment material and there was this picture that he’d drawn of himself playing football in his football uniform, so I photocopied it and enlarged it and I stuck it on my brick wall, so that when he came in on the first day I said, “Hey, I’ve got one of your pieces of art work up here. Gee, you’re a good drawer—this is great, this is fabulous. I knew you were coming and that’s why we put it up there because we’ve been talking about you and really wanting you to be here.” And so he came in and he has a true gift with his art—there is no doubt about it. Academically, there are a lot of keys to unlock; emotionally, he’s not going to learn until he gets all of that straightened out, but that was a way that I could get through to him—through his art work. And I guess that’s what I did—I was exhausted because I was constantly watching out for everybody else and I used to say to my teaching partner, “Look, I feel really frazzed because I’m trying to keep an eye on everything he’s doing and I’m trying to pre-empt the situation before it happens.” Anyway I had him medicated in that time—I had a month without the medication and then the medication came onboard. And he actually was great. I remember seeing his old teacher at a seminar and she

said, “I believe you have one of mine.” And she had nothing but derogatory things to say.

I told her, “I really love that little boy.”

She looked at me intently and I replied, “He was great.”

She responded with, “What?” followed by, “Have you had him medicated?”

I said I had him medicated for half the time, but what I did was take the time to get to know him and I said that I like him and that maybe that’s the difference. He didn’t do everything right—he often misbehaved—he often thumped someone and that’s a real justice problem, because kids that don’t normally do that see that happening and think, “I should be able to get away with that” and they know they can’t.²⁷

²⁷ Constructing students for success or otherwise

This account of some of the key moments in the relationship between Jemma and “Alex” provides a very powerful example of the ways in which teachers can speak students into existence as successful or otherwise. Jemma’s subjectivities as a caring teacher who promotes the home and family as metaphors for her classroom were instrumental in speaking Alex into existence in her classroom as someone who could “succeed.” She used his excellence in art to affirm his skills and his membership in the class. One aspect of the “management” of Alex shared by Jemma and her colleague from another school relates to his “medication” and their advice and feedback to Alex’s carers in this regard. Using the feminist poststructural analysis adopted throughout these commentaries, the medication of Alex would seem to be part of the regimenting discourses on which current schooling practices are based, especially given that the poststructuralist would position Alex’s behaviour as socially constructed rather than biologically given. One adult, albeit highly skilled and caring, responsible for over 30 students in one classroom can have little opportunity to cope with aberrant behaviour: the solution is medication. This is not to marginalise students experiencing conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder or their teachers’ attempts to maximise learning outcomes for these students. However, many teachers would probably consider that our institutional practices, including current resourcing levels, are not conducive to adequately supporting students with such needs.

Jemma went onto suggest that at a school-level they have that approach, “tip-toeing” around particular students in order to avoid provoking certain behaviours. Jemma says:

You see these students who come to school and they do the right thing all the time and they know that if they did that they’d be hung, drawn and quartered, internal suspension or whatever it may be and I think sometimes they perceive things as being very unfair. Sometimes, I just feel sorry for the ones who do what’s expected. They’re the ones that tend to miss out—your bright, creative ones tend to sort of get recognised, your slow ones, your children with learning problems get targeted for intervention, your behavioural children getting targeted for management. There’s not a lot of recognition for those really nice kids who just try their hardest—don’t set the world on fire...and maybe we need to be more equitable for them...finding ways to recognise their worth.

Taking care of our children: a key role for society or a business

Jemma is a highly reflective practitioner. She considers thoughtfully the role of schools and other institutions with responsibilities for the care and education of the young. Jemma draws on her own involvement in the management of her son’s child-care centre to make some conclusions about societal priorities generally. She reflects:

I think that in so many ways our society has become so much more sophisticated and yet our basic stuff is actually declining: our education, our old age care.²⁸ I’m just so angry about that—I’m the chairperson of my son’s management committee at childcare—it’s a private, non-profit daycare centre—and it’s *the* best childcare centre in Brisbane, without a doubt. And they have a closed book and have done so for two years. And the Director and I often have these really emotive discussions about the fact that we don’t value our carers, the people that we pay to look after our children—we don’t pay them enough. A lot of childcare centres are seen as big business—let’s pay all these young girls and not train them properly and cut the costs as much as we can. And there’s going to be a crisis with that I feel sure. And I would love to form some kind of group to lobby to get people to look at this.

²⁸ Business values in education

Like many teachers who practise what could be labelled socially-just pedagogies, Jemma critiques society beyond the classroom and its capacity to care for the aged, the very young and so on. Jemma analyses both the child-care centre with which she is involved and her own class and school context to highlight the increasing dominance of business values. (See Chapter 7 for a further exploration of this issue.)

Jemma's reflection extends to the changing nature of schools and the economic pressures being brought to bear on schools. She also raises the issue of class size and what she sees as the school's lack of capacity to "screen enrolments" when she says:

There's been a shift—I think schools now have to look at themselves as businesses and they need to sell themselves and if a PR situation isn't working, then they need to fix it up. I get angry sometimes here because I think we are desperate for enrolments and seem to take all the children with problems. So, we'll attract problems [that is, students] that we'll take on board. We've lost a few of them this year, but usually we get a few of them that come through. If we're saying that we want enrolments for this particular school because our numbers are declining, why do we have four infant classes of 29, 29, 29 and 31? Why? I just don't understand that. I think that if you want to really attract people to the school then you do something about that area. And I think how do you attract people who want to stay in the system if you're putting them with big, big classes and I know all of this stuff is budget, financial constraints and a numbers game—the admin here have a very difficult time—and all the rest but I just get very frustrated with things like that.²⁹

Bricks, mortar and pedagogies

Jemma suggests that the physical surrounds dictate the type of pedagogies to a great extent. Jemma uses her creativity and imagination to do innovative things in the classroom, especially given what she considers the poorer resources available at her current school in comparison with a previous workplace interstate many years ago. She acknowledges that the basic level of resources and type of resources available in the classroom provide a strong invitation to pursue particular sorts of pedagogies. The quality and type of furniture, for example, is an issue. Jemma says:

They're slowly going through the school and replacing all the desks and chairs—where it might make a difference to those parents who are paying the school fees—they start at the top end....I'm working with the same furniture that was in that room when school started, some twenty something years ago. I'm using the same desks, chairs, trolleys. And the physical surrounds have a huge impact on the teaching and learning that goes on.

Jemma shared her exasperation at having to accommodate 31 students in her classroom along with the bathtub she uses as a comfortable reading location, saying that, "I'll never get rid of the bathtub." She goes on to say that "reading corners take up space, desks take up space" and adds that, "sometimes I'm really flummoxed by that." Jemma sees the classroom as a constantly changing learning space and she involves the students in rearranging resources, taking onboard their suggestions for location of various items and their reasons for such location.

²⁹ Contradictions within a socially-just pedagogy

Jemma's discontent with the school's policy of "seem[ing] to take all the children with problems" appears at odds with other discourses, such as those of inclusivity that strongly speak her into existence elsewhere. Again, one possible reading of this apparently contradictory stance relates to the enormous pressure on teachers to act in socially-just ways given their location in contexts in which much is expected with perhaps too few resources.

Future outlook

Jemma sees benchmarking and standardised testing as real constraints on her pedagogies: “I’m really getting jaded with all the benchmarking and the standardising of children and stuff like that.” She explains that there is an expectation that there will always be a certain percentage of students who do not meet particular criteria. Jemma’s frustration with such constraints leads her to seek a change in work environment. She explores this further when she says:

That’s why I really want to shift to pre-school because I think a microwave, a full-time teacher-aide, my own toilet and a kettle are going to give me some comforts that actually make me feel good—I know that sounds stupid and I would like to be attached to an environment but also have my own area of control, I think. And I would like to have a go while I’m young enough—I’m forty-two this month so I don’t know how long I’m going to teach. I’m the major breadwinner in my family too so it’s not a choice—I *have* to love the job. You have to be happy at what you do so I make the most of being happy and I think if I end up having to teach for the next ten years of my life then I want it to be somewhere I feel I can be more creative, that I can actually have a bit more control. I want to get right into the area of documentary evidence and digital photography. I want to be able to give parents portfolios that actually show their children engaged in meaningful learning situations that are not institutionalised by a desk and a pencil case and desk tidy and a formal classroom where most of the parents think the students all have to sit at the front of the class.³⁰

³⁰ Challenging the ways in which students are spoken into existence

This quote by Jemma is interesting from at least two viewpoints: her desire to find an alternative work context in which she has her own “area of control” and her desire to pursue professional practices that will free up her students from “learning situations that are not institutionalised by a desk and a pencil case and a desk tidy and a formal classroom where most of the parents think the students all have to sit at the front of the class.” To begin with the latter example, Jemma again challenges the schooling discourses of regimentation and conformity. Usual accoutrements for students in early childhood settings are the desk, pencil case and the desk tidy, all located within the classroom most typically organised in rows but in many contemporary classrooms in groups of student desks. These artefacts or students’ “equipment” or “resources” might seem to be part of the *natural* order of things, the tools for learning. But, of course, they speak the students into existence in particular ways: every student is required to have particular items and to have those items located in a particular place. In contrast, Jemma articulates a desire to support her students to engage in “meaningful learning situations” and for her to share such learning in innovative ways. The idea of a portfolio suggests a collection of texts, developed using digital technology that might speak the students’ learning into existence in richer and more relevant ways.

Dominant teacher discourses—is resistance always possible?

Some regimenting discourses are identified by teachers as counter-productive to students’ learning but enjoy such authorised status within school and systemic structures that their positions are almost, if not completely, unassailable. For example, Jemma talks about her frustration with regard to “benchmarking and standardised testing” which she sees as significant constraints on her pedagogy.

Jemma's view of "pedagogy"—an invitation to reflect

Jemma's capacity to reflect on her professional practice is evidenced further in her comments on the nature of "pedagogy".

Ah, pedagogy is a word that demands that you somehow think about it—that you actually have to be reflective and you have to really think, "Oh my God, what do they mean and what's the definition and how do I associate it with what I do?" Teaching is teaching. I think because there needs to be a new word because the teaching word is—depending on the area you come from—like from the parent point of view that may have a completely different bias to what a staff member thinks teaching is to what the outside community thinks teaching is and I think teaching is so devalued these days that at least "pedagogy" stumps a few people, it mystifies them. It's a word, it's a difficult word to even say, particularly if you've got a speech defect.

Lamenting that there is always an expectation that "a certain percentage of students [will] not meet the particular criteria," Jemma says that it is that very frustration that is responsible for her decision to move out of the Year 2 teaching area and into a pre-school. Jemma's desire to shift to pre-school where she would have ready access to "a microwave, a full-time teacher-aide, [her] own toilet and a kettle" is highly evocative of discourses which speak teachers into existence in terms of status and recognition of their responsibilities. It is suggested here that despite the significant professional responsibilities that teachers have, in terms of the physical contexts in which they work, they exist on the professional fringe. The question that emerges is whether other comparably qualified professionals would have such career aspirations: ready access to a toilet and a kettle, among other resources. This issue is raised here not just in terms of working standards for teachers, but also to invite reflection about the extent to which such physical conditions impact on teachers' capacities to engage in pedagogies which best serve student and societal needs.

So, yeah, I guess it demands you look into it before you actually make an opinion. I mean you can say “Oh, I teach” and everyone pretty-well knows what teaching means but pedagogy is like—I can remember when I first read it—I thought, “What the hell is this?” and “Is that what it is? Oh, OK.” And then I’d come across it in another reading and I’d look at it again. I don’t know—it’s a difficult word but I think it does demand that you actually look at it and try to work it out...because if it isn’t an invitation to reflect then there’s no point in talking about it.³¹

³¹ Teachers: reflective practitioners/dependent on theory-makers

Jemma’s definition of pedagogy provides much food for thought. Her comments about the nature of pedagogy suggest several significant discourses: teachers as reflective practitioners and in contradiction, teachers as dependent on others for theory-making. Jemma speaks teachers into existence as reflective practitioners quite explicitly saying that if pedagogy “isn’t an invitation to reflect then there’s no point in talking about it.” Her talk of encountering the term in “another reading” suggests the importance of teachers as learners themselves. That Jemma wants to carve out a space for teachers to explore their understandings of pedagogy from their standpoint, as opposed to how parents/carers might understand teaching practice, is also explicitly stated by her.

Despite such a predisposition to reflect on the nature of pedagogy, there is also a pervasive discourse of teachers as dependent on others as theory-makers. At the outset of this quote, Jemma asks, “What do *they* mean and what’s *the* definition [of pedagogy] (emphasis added)?” Such thinking underpins teacher discourses so much so that Kohl (1983) cautions “unless we assume the responsibility for theory making and testing, the theories will be made for us” (p. 30). The importance of teachers as theory-makers is also alluded to by Smyth (1994) who claims that when “teachers engage in unpicking descriptions of their teaching, they begin the process of recapturing the pedagogical principles of what it is they do” (p. 7). Further, Smyth (1994) calls for teachers to “move teaching out of the realm of the mystical, so as to begin to see through discussion with others, the nature of the forces that cause them to operate in the way they do and how they can move beyond intellectualising the issues to concrete action for change” (p. 7).

Voices—mysterious and revealing: pedagogies for social justice: Monica’s story

An introduction to the commentary

Introduction: Monica’s use of a familiar lens

As indicated in the previous chapter, the field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 14 June 2002 between Monica and me. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

Some insights into Monica’s views of the world and some of her predispositions towards socially-just pedagogies are powerfully suggested in the opening quote. Of particular significance is the fact that, when talking about and analysing her own practice, Monica uses a lens that is similar to that used by me in this and the other commentaries. For example, Monica alludes to the constitutive force of language in constructing us as people. The power of language as a window into the conditions, events, circumstances and so on that speak us into existence is eloquently suggested when Monica says, “when we listen we are hearing the product of forces that sometimes we are not aware of.” Monica’s statement is far from a humanist conception of the individual as one who has established her or his identity comprised of “certain essential, stable characteristics which are universal (shared by all) [and who shares commonality with all other humans who are] rational, conscious, decision-making selves, autonomous individuals who have freedom of choice and action and the right to realise their potential” (McWilliam, Lather & Morgan, 1997, p. 5).

Monica’s words explicitly suggest, and it’s a theme underpinning these materials, that working out who we are as people is a complex business. That our subjectivities, or our “conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions” along with our “sense of [ourselves and our] ways of understanding [our] relation to the world” (Weedon, p. 1997, p. 32) are shaped socially is suggested by Monica when she talks of how “we are all inscribed by our life experiences.” The dynamic nature of our subjectivities, suggested by Monica when she labels our voices as “mysterious” and “revealing” resonates with Weedon’s (1997) work when she claims that, “against this irreducible humanist essence of subjectivity, poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (p. 32).

As you read this commentary you might note that I propose that discourses of Catholicism operate strongly to speak Monica’s pedagogies into existence. Another powerful discourse operating to inform her socially-just pedagogies is that associated with syllabus replacement and subsequent school-based curriculum development. The *Senior English Syllabus* (Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, 2002) with its critical literacy focus supports Monica and her students to engage intellectually—and in resistant ways, where they see fit—with a range of texts that are meaningful in their lives. Monica attributes significant pedagogical reform, with its strong social justice focus, to the impact of the new English syllabus.

Voices—mysterious and revealing: pedagogies for social justice Monica’s story

In my classroom I start on the basis of mutual respect for everyone. I treat the boys with the kind of respect that I’d expect them to show to each other and to me. I invite them to always be open—even though at times it might be difficult—we need to remember that we don’t always know the backgrounds of the voices we hear, we don’t know always about the cultures that have produced the voices. Even to my Year 8 students I talk about how we are all inscribed by our life experiences. And when we listen we are hearing the product of forces that sometimes we are not aware of. And so that makes what we hear all the more mysterious but all the more revealing.

These words were spoken by Monica, an English teacher at St Marcellin’s School,³² a large, metropolitan Catholic high school for boys. Monica’s story is a fascinating one—she speaks with passion about teaching English in a faith-based and caring environment in which syllabus development from outside has led to far-reaching pedagogical reforms within her own and her colleagues’ classrooms.

As well as teaching several English classes, Monica also holds an administrative position with responsibility for matters related to studies across the school. She has had a diverse career background, teaching interstate in both Catholic and state schools. Her twenty-nine years of teaching experience belie her very obvious passion to continually learn to teach in more exciting and socially-just ways. Monica attributes her commitment to socially-just pedagogies to a range of factors: early experiences teaching in country New South Wales, her upbringing, and the spiritual legacy of the founder of the religious order to which the school belongs.³³

³² This is not the school’s real name.

³³ Generative and regimenting discourses

The idea of generative discourses and regimenting discourses, introduced in the commentary accompanying Jemma’s narrative, provides a useful lens with which to explore Monica’s narrative. While not wanting to engage in reductionistic thinking that categorises discourses into a neat binary, the assumption here is that some discourses are generative, that is, they are associated with positive impacts for people, while others may be regimenting, that is, discourses that are restricting in terms of available spaces for thinking, acting, feeling in helpful, nurturing ways or broadly speaking in socially-just ways. Monica’s pedagogy is underpinned by her engagement with generative discourses. As would be expected with any teacher in any institutional educational context, Monica’s pedagogies are also informed by some complicity in regimenting discourses, but more often by resistance to such restrictive discourses.

The paths to Monica's socially-just pedagogies

Teaching in a country town

Monica talks of the profound impression that teaching in a country town of about 3000 people, including a significant Indigenous population, had on her:

There is no doubt in my mind that these Indigenous people are marginalised by forces beyond their control as well as forces within their control. I learnt to see too that my white students felt that they were marginalised. I remember a student called "Evan" in my Year Nine class sort of blowing up on me one day when I asked him for his homework. He retaliated with comments that he was not paid to come to school or paid to do homework and he flavoured his remarks with an inappropriate term of some description. And that's always stood with me—that idea that marginalisation can work on our students in lots of different ways.³⁴ And the more I've worked with boys over the past 10

³⁴ Monica's use of a critical lens

In talking about her early teaching career, Monica articulates her understandings that groups within society can be "marginalised." Further, Monica identifies those groups which she considers marginalised as being Indigenous students and particular white students. Monica's use of the term, "marginalised" suggests that in her view the needs and interests of some groups in society are not as well served as are the needs and interests of other groups.

Importantly, Monica also highlights the constitutive force of discourse when she claims that, "Indigenous people are marginalised by forces beyond their control." The capacity that individuals have to work through the available discursive spaces is also alluded to by Monica when she talks of "the forces [that led to marginalisation] within [her students'] control. Very significantly, Monica does not share examples of the ways in which she supported these groups to understand the complex ways in which particular discourses spoke them into existence in less powerful positions than those of other groups. Monica's knowledge and skills in relation to analysing the constitutive force of discourses and the resultant implications for power appear to have developed later in her career. Such analysis is now a key pedagogical focus in Monica's classroom. Nevertheless, during the early stage of Monica's career to which she refers here, her knowledge and skills to view her teaching context in critical ways appear obvious.

Your turn to reflect...

- Do you reflect *critically* on your own practice? If you do, what scaffolding do you use (e.g. set of questions)?
- Have a look at these questions proposed by Smyth (1994) for teacher reflection:
 1. Describe...what do I do?
 2. Inform...what does this mean?
 3. Confront...how did I come to be like this?
 4. Reconstruct...how might I do things differently?

Consider some aspect of your pedagogy that might be concerning you by using these questions. How helpful are they?

- I've used these questions to interrogate my own practice as a researcher. See Chapter 3, The research process: Social justice in action. Did these questions provide a useful framework for you as a participant in these materials?

or 15 years, the more I've come to see them as people who by their gender can be marginalised by our society. And that really concerns me, and that's why I'm so passionate about literacy for boys.

Impact of syllabus development on pedagogies

Many years later, teaching in a context in which Monica was not confronted by the same issues of poverty and isolation, she is still acutely aware that marginalisation of students occurs in a myriad of ways. Importantly, a new syllabus document has supported Monica to recognise and seek to redress, to some extent, the marginalisation of her students within and beyond her classroom. Monica attributes her strong focus on social justice to engagement with the new English syllabus for Years 11–12. She says that what's been interesting is that as an English team "we've learnt new ways to break into pedagogy through the underpinning of critical literacy." She talks about her new-found pedagogies in colourful ways:

I would have hated to have gone to the grave thinking that there was only one way you could study literature and that was, you know, this is plot, this is characterisation, this is setting—these are the good characters, these are the bad.³⁵

Prior to exploring in some detail what actually happens in Monica's classroom, an insight into her own spiritual upbringing, as well as the spiritual legacy of the founder of the school's order, is useful.

A Catholic background in contrast to her contemporary Catholicism

Monica claims not to be the "archetypal Catholic." She talks of being a "guilt-ridden teenager and young woman":

My life experiences, because of the conservative religious background of my parents, were necessarily constricted and it took me a long time to come to grips with the fact that, as a woman, I had the right to own or not own Catholic practices. And I'll be quite frank with you and say that it took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of pre-marital sex. It took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of missing Mass on Sunday and not be racked with guilt. And I think what I've been lucky enough to be able to do is to reflect on how I've seen other people and ask myself: "Are they happy? Are they balanced? Is the way they are just? Is that what Christ would want?" And I think in my heart of hearts, it's not. And that's why I think I'm so open to what Marcellin Champagnat is on about.

Monica reflects on the spirituality that now informs her teaching at St Marcellin's School. She compares her education at an all girls' school, where young women couldn't have shiny shoes and where many behaviours resulted in feeling guilty, to the spiritual

³⁵ Pedagogical reform and a new syllabus

For Monica and her colleagues, the *Senior English Syllabus* (Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, 2002) is linked with generative discourses, that is, it provides spaces for socially-just pedagogies. It is the explicit call for a critical literacy approach in this document that supports teachers and students to challenge some traditional ways of teaching English. The important connection between critical literacies and socially-just pedagogies, apparent in all four narratives is explored further in Chapter 7.

legacy of Marcellin Champagnat, a Catholicism which Monica describes as being more caring and more intellectual.³⁶

Monica describes the founder of the order to which St Marcellin's School belongs: He's on about journeying with people. He's on about understanding people at their most humane, human level. He's on about sharing their pain but seeing the future of hope and I don't think my Catholic background was ever one of hope. It was always one of moralistic judgement and that doesn't fit easily with me and I don't believe it's healthy. And so I suppose that's why I feel at home within Champagnat's philosophy. And that's what I want the boys to feel.

What the legacy of Champagnat means for Monica's teaching and for her students' learning is further explored when she explains:

Marcellin, who began the Order, wanted to care for the most marginalised: the young men in LaValla, [a small village in the heart of the country]. Living

³⁶ Discourses of Catholicism: generative and regimenting

Monica's exploration of the Catholicism of her childhood in contrast to the Catholicism she now embraces provides an instructive example of the usefulness of feminist poststructural theorising as opposed to theorising within a humanist frame. Poststructural thinking which "shifts attention away from the unitary non-contradictory selves that we each struggle after as a result of our immersion in humanist discourses" (Davies, 1994, p. 3) supports an understanding of "Catholicism" as constituted by a range of discourses including some that are contestatory. Rather than accepting the whole package of what Catholicism has meant for her throughout her childhood and teaching career, Monica is able to identify those discourses of Catholicism that are generative and with which she speaks herself and her students into existence in positive ways. Monica's rejection of some regimenting discourses of Catholicism and her taking up of more generative discourses suggests her capacity to appreciate the constitutive force of discourse and her agency in rejecting some subject positions and adopting others. For example, after much struggle, Monica rejects a subject position which invites her to condemn "pre-marital sex" or "missing Mass on Sundays."

The power of discourses to constitute "socially accepted association[s] among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group" (Gee, 1990, p. 143) is shown clearly by Monica when she says that, "it took a long time to come to grips with the fact that, as a woman, I had the right to own or not own Catholic practices." Monica describes the discourses that now constitute her and with which she constitutes herself as a Catholic as "more caring and more intellectual." For example, Monica takes up a subject position which constructs her as "journey[ing] with her students" in which she draws on the strength and ideals of St Marcellin, on whose heritage the school is built, to inform her pedagogy.

Generative discourses and regimenting discourses are contrasted by Monica when she speaks of "seeing the future with hope," rather than the Catholicism of "moralistic judgement" that exerted such an influence on her as a schoolgirl. Such a comparison provides a contrast in terms of what might be counted as truth. The Catholicism of "moralistic judgement" and the Catholicism associated with seeing the future with hope each represents particular invitations to truth. In this section of the narrative Monica reflects a clear stance in terms of which invitation to truth she takes up.

in the brutality of post-Revolutionary France, Marcellin worked with men who were homeless, men who were not educated, men who had no faith in God. A pivotal point for Marcellin was being called to prepare a young man for death only to find that he didn't know who God was or anything about God. And that reinforced for Marcellin the need to see life as a life of hope and to bring that message of hope to everyone—to the young people in the villages who were so impoverished and marginalised. And his young Brothers, the young men with whom he started this Order, couldn't read or write—he had to teach them before they could teach others.

Monica speaks with great conviction about what Marcellin “says” now to her and to her students. She sees the founder of the Order as speaking from the past but with a focus on contemporary challenges. Monica sees direct relevance of the lessons from Marcellin to the pedagogies that she needs to practise. She establishes these clear linkages when she says:

So, it's this sort of image of presence and permanence...as well as the future and the ability to forge your own future that is based on faith in God and faith in journeying with fellow human beings. And to me, that makes sense in pedagogy. It makes sense in educating young men in this context for rich and fulfilling lives over which they must take control. Because in a poststructural world—in an increasingly globalising sense—there are so many forces which are out to destabilise and to disempower. I reminded my Year 10 boys the other day that seventy per cent of the positions into which they will move in the workforce have not yet been created. So they must prepare themselves. Learning must be meaningful for them. And how can you learn, how can you become a productive human being if there is nothing around you to give that development meaning?

Acknowledgement of these challenges leads Monica to articulate a powerful view of the learning she wants for her students:

I want to see the learning for my students in each of their classrooms being faith-based with students having a strong sense that they can change the world into which they're moving, in little ways, to a more caring world, a more just world, more a world of hope. And that takes courage when you're a young man in an environment where pay-outs are rife. It takes courage whether you're young or an older adult moving into a social situation where you're offered drugs and you don't want to accept. It's about the power to create a better world, and I think it comes through whether it's Maths or Geography or English, the curriculum needs to be life-contextualised, connected to their worldly experiences.

Pedagogies informed by critical literacy

Monica's pedagogies are focused strongly on supporting her students to engage with texts that are meaningful to their lives in ways that led them to sophisticated understandings of themselves and the worlds they negotiate. Further, her pedagogies are aimed at supporting her students to make positive changes in the world. The high levels of intellectual rigour that underpin learning in Monica's English classroom are noteworthy.

Intellectual rigour through reader response theory

A major source of the intellectual rigour present in Monica's classroom is the critical literacy approach to texts, and specifically the use of Jack Thompson's (1987) framework for reader response. Monica supports her students, from Year 8 to Year 12, in mixed ability and extension classes, to interact with texts using Thompson's hierarchy of engaging with a text. This hierarchy provides for engagement with texts at a level that is a non-reflective, reactive response at its most elementary level through to empathising with characters, analysis and so on to the sixth stage which involves the ability to be self-reflective. In Monica's own words she "didn't dumb it down" for any of her students with the result that her Year 8 students can talk in sophisticated ways about their responses to texts. For example, her students are able to speak about Gillian Rubinstein's (1984) *Foxspell*, not just in terms of plot, characterisation and themes, but make comments, such as, "I was able to empathise with Todd when his Dad ran away because that's how I felt when my father left too. It made sense to me." Monica is inspired by the literary critic, Agnes Niewenhausen, who talks about students "trying on life experiences" through their engagement with texts. The intellectual rigour inherent in Monica's teaching is illustrated in her pedagogical approaches with her older students as well.

Monica's scaffolding of narrative writing provides a good example of intellectual rigour and of a focus on higher order thinking in particular. She explains "the task" to her students and places the associated criteria sheet in context. Monica introduces the narrative to her students by saying:

Yes, I have to have a task and criteria sheet when I go for my driving test or when I write my master's paper, but narrative is not just a piece of assessment. Narrative is the story of your life: it's the cup of tea you had for breakfast, it's the way you smiled at someone in the yard. So when you write narrative what you are actually doing is making connections.

The following example illustrates the ways in which Monica supports her students to write narratives by making intertextual connections. Monica's students read *In cold blood* by Truman Capote (1994) about the family of four who was murdered in Kansas in 1959. In this narrative students explored the impact of the murders on this very conservative community—a town that had 32 churches at the time. The students were asked to transpose their reading into images through a collage using whatever they wanted—a CD cover, something from a magazine—a McDonald's wrapper if they wanted to. Each student then wrote a brief paragraph justifying his collage and exploring its symbolic meaning. The collages then became "step-off points to write the narratives." One student presented an image of the four members of the Clutter family who were murdered, placing an image of a gun diagonally through the four victims. The narrative that this collage generated was a piece about the fracturing of a relationship. Monica comments that, "I have no way of knowing whether it was autobiographical or not. It was a narrative and that was what I asked for, but it was a very powerful piece of writing." Narratives from the past that "speak" to the students provide an important focus in their final year of English at St Marcellin's School.

Monica teaches a unit in which she draws on Roland Barthes' (1977) notions of the narrative as being transhistorical and transcultural (p. 79). The students are asked to look at a narrative from a past time and in another culture. The result is that Monica has 16 year-old males reading Tolstoy, Virgil and Bronte—and engaging. Monica shares an example of the way in which she uses a critical literacy device such as intertextuality to bring Charlotte Bronte's (1953) *Jane Eyre* to life for her students. The students explore the novel as a canonical text which conveys a male, white, upper-

class viewpoint of life in England in the nineteenth century. Monica links *Jane Eyre* intertextually with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written by Jean Rhys (1966), a post-colonial writer. Monica comments that this text is one of the “most haunting pieces of literature I have ever read” and suggests that when she was at school it wouldn’t have been considered literature. What Rhys (1966) does in this text is to transpose Rochester’s mad wife, Bertha, into Rhys’s West Indian culture as “Antoinette.” In *Wide Sargasso Sea* Bronte’s Rochester visits the beautiful equatorial islands and falls in love with the equally beautiful Antoinette. But because he can’t understand her culture and the practices of voodoo in which she and her people engage, he constantly feels marginalised. In Monica’s words, Rochester “exerts his white superiority and takes Antoinette back to England where she is increasingly marginalised, taken away from her culture, out of her extended family and goes mad.” Monica confidently asserts that these narratives “speak to the boys” who are “moved by the socially-unjust practices in past times.”

A set of generic questions used by Monica scaffolds intellectual rigour in her classroom and supports her students to appreciate the problematic nature of knowledge. Monica says:

We talk about social justice in terms of text. Whose voices are marginalised in the text? Whose interest is best represented? Is this just? Is this fair? If you were writing this text from your encultured background would it be different? Why? And I have no doubt that the boys have responded particularly well here. The boys have responded amazingly to reader response theory.³⁷

Connecting with real life experiences in a supportive environment

In Monica’s classroom there are many occasions on which students making the connections with their lives would not be possible without the existence of a supportive learning environment. Monica talks about the ways in which her students draw on their life experiences in order to engage with texts. Sometimes students can find this confronting.

I always say to them, “You don’t have to go where you are uncomfortable. If this is too hurtful, don’t go there.” It’s not my intention to hurt anyone. “If every time you think of this particular part of the novel, you want to cry, then don’t go there. It’s too close to you. It’s not meant to be something that locks you up, it’s meant to be something that frees you.”

³⁷ Critical literacy and socially-just pedagogy

A cornerstone of Monica’s socially-just pedagogy is her use of critical literacy in the classroom to speak her students into existence as critical consumers of text. The engagement of Monica’s students with texts of significance in their lives is more than an academic exercise, though the students are clearly engaging in learning characterised by intellectual quality (QSRLS, 2001b). Critical literacy in Monica’s classroom serves a political project as well as supporting knowledge and skills valued academically. Throughout the narrative Monica talks both explicitly and implicitly about the ways in which her students need to understand the world so that they can produce a more just world.

What happens in Monica's classroom is connected to real life.

I always talk to the boys about how this work should be something that enriches their lives, their life stories—this isn't "school work" and they shouldn't see it as school work. If it is school work, then they are looking at it the wrong way. And so "assessment" is never "assessment." It is learning how to write a text that will reflect viewpoints and values, and judgements that are dear to them which may one day they might have to replicate in their working lives.³⁸

³⁸ Putting the "real" into real-life learning

It is not always easy for us as educators to practise pedagogies that genuinely engage our students in real-life or life-like tasks and promote the "connectedness" called for in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Monica's challenge to her students to reject their assessment tasks as "assessment" or "school work" invites such connectedness. In this example, Monica is resisting those regimenting discourses that can speak "assessment tasks," which may be unrelated to students' lives, into existence as valued simply by virtue of a school- and teacher-ascribed validity. In doing so, Monica eschews some powerful school and teacher discourses that could ensure the "validity" or value of assessment items that might bear no significance to the students' lives. In preference, Monica appears to place her students and their needs and interests at the centre of her pedagogy.

Monica's pedagogical examples contain explicit and implicit references to the supportive environment which she creates and maintains. The creation of a supportive learning environment involves a focus not only on the students but on the role of the teacher as well. The risks involved in creating a supportive learning environment are obvious from the following comment:

I never feel threatened. In fact, I feel enriched because the boys are able to speak their existence, their narrative, their stories, their experiences into being. Some years ago a piece of work was brought to me as Head of English by a teacher who had refused to mark it—it was incredibly violent and incredibly bloody. Basically, it was about decapitation and disembowelling and set within the most beautiful, beautiful scenery. The teacher was very angry about the work and felt professionally insulted by it. And the more I looked at the work the more disquieted I became. I talked with the student who wrote the work and asked him to talk to me about what had prompted this piece of writing. I discovered that the student had been in a situation of civil war and he had actually seen members of his own family decapitated and disembowelled and for him this piece of writing was by way of catharsis.³⁹

The impact of this experience on Monica's pedagogies, and in particular her commitment to diversity, is obvious when she says:

Over the years that episode has put another spin on socially-just pedagogy for me—the whole notion that we as a white culture cannot stand in judgement of others. We know little of the experiences of some of our students. They have a right to their voice. And if in my role as an educator I can journey with them, even for just a short while, then hopefully that will be some support for them.

Monica "resolved" the situation by marking the student's work and communicating to him that she understood how this work emanated from his background. She also suggested that he might consider not drawing on this material in his responses to the Queensland

³⁹ Judging what's unsay-able

As a result of the predisposition to be "open to the voices" she hears, to use her own phrase, the context in which the student wrote the very violent piece was made visible. Monica's attention to this student's needs (and to those of his teacher) by engaging with the text and exploring the discourses of violence that had contributed to the student's particular subjectivities demonstrates very practically her commitment to socially-just pedagogies. But the example also suggests the limits to Monica's participation in such generative discourses and the point at which Monica judges that acquiescence in regimenting discourses is strategic. Monica supported the student by listening to his experiences of extraordinary suffering, and in doing so, legitimated his text with the authority that comes with being a teacher and a head of department. Her subsequent advice to the student, however, was not to use these experiences in his responses to the Queensland Core Skills Test. In this case Monica appeared to make a judgement that the discourses of violence underpinning the text would not be valued in the externally-marked writing task. Regimenting discourses, which ensure that those in subject positions know what can be said and what can't be said, operate here to make this student's story unsay-able.

Core Skills Test which he was about to complete, proposing that “people would not understand.”

The risks Monica takes in creating a supportive learning environment as a key component of her socially-just pedagogies are further reinforced when she says:

As a contemporary literary theory, reader response theory, is incredibly liberating for our students and for our staff who are prepared to engage with it. It is incredibly confrontational for teachers of any age who see themselves as authority figures. And there’s a point about social justice in that too, isn’t there?

Importantly, students’ sense of direction and agency in Monica’s classroom comes from the boys’ understanding of the ways in which discourse and power operate in their lives. She suggests her pedagogical approach in supporting such understandings when she says:

What I do is draw the shape of an umbrella on the board and I put in the spokes of the umbrella. I suggest to the students that in any one of these areas, there is a contestation of discourse which brings with it powers and limitations, freedoms, responsibilities and accountabilities. I propose to them that if they are responsible thinking people then they know how to move between those discourses. And we talk about discourses having power, permission and privileges.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ A sophisticated analysis of the multiplicity of discourses that operate in our lives

Monica’s highly sophisticated exploration of the role that language plays in our lives includes two significant messages that appear to contribute to a socially-just pedagogy. Using the metaphor of an umbrella, Monica proposes to students that a multiplicity of discourses operates in each of her student’s lives, with each discourse accompanied by particular “powers and limitations, freedoms, responsibilities, and accountabilities.” She also introduces the notion that these discourses are often contestatory, that is, particular discourses might not align with some other discourses. Take for example, Monica’s students at an all-boys, Catholic school. Significant discourses in their lives might relate to being a son, a student, a part-time employee, a partner, a Catholic or a follower of some other faith-based system, an adolescent, a footballer (or other sportsperson) and so on. Some of these discourses will speak Monica’s students into existence in ways that conflict with the ways in which they are constituted as a result of other discourses.

It could be argued that at this point Monica’s pedagogy is focused on supporting the students to deconstruct or unpack the discourses operating in their lives. However, the second key message in this example involves Monica’s move beyond this deconstructive phase, to propose that “responsible, thinking people...know how to move between those discourses.” Such a process of “seeing through poststructural eyes” (Davies, 1994, p. 26):

makes visible both the systemic practices and the moment-by-moment work through which relations of power and powerlessness are played out. For me, this tends to increase the will to act, and the capacity to act, since it becomes possible to see the multiple and complex discourses and practices through which any particular situation is being put in place and held in place.

(Davies, 2000b, p. 166)

Monica's examples about the role of discourse in her students' lives are not abstract: they are connected firmly to the boys' lives. She supports them to see themselves as lived texts⁴¹.

The liberatory possibilities are further explored by Sawicki (1991) who comments that, "freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized, and classified" (p. 27). Monica appears to use the lens of discourse theory as both a basis for academic/intellectual learning and socially-just action within and beyond the classroom.

Note: Monica acknowledges the influence of David King's workshops at English Teachers' Association of Queensland conferences and in particular his use of the idea that discourses have "power, permission and privileges."

⁴¹ My reflection...

Again, the constitutive role of language in our lives is captured by Monica's invitation to her students to view themselves as "lived texts." As is often the case with learning, learning in this research project occurred in unexpected ways. Monica's description of the way in which she invites her students to see themselves as "lived texts" proved a useful lens for understanding my own life beyond this research. During the week in which I shared the substantive conversation with Monica my son Sam told me a story which illustrates powerfully the notion of people as "lived texts." Seventeen year-old Sam, dressed in black and with no hair, was approached by a young Indigenous male one evening in the City. What this young male did next conveys a sense of the way he "read" Sam as a "lived text." He raised his arm in a Nazi salute and called "Zeig Heil!" Undoubtedly, the young Indigenous male had experienced oppression and "read" Sam as someone complicit in that oppression. "Actually, I've got cancer," Sam replied to which the other responded, "Gee, sorry mate."

Your turn to reflect...

- Using the phrase, "lived text," how would you describe yourself?
- How do you think others might "read" you as a lived text? In particular, how might students read you as a lived text? How might parents/carers read you as a lived text? How do these constructions vary from the way you see yourself or the ways in which your close friends see you?

Further, Monica invites them to consider what “permissions, privileges and power” they have in her classroom, in other classrooms, on the football field and so on. She illustrates the boys’ access to power through the use of an imaginary scenario which involves two boys fighting in the school grounds. She says to her students:

Let’s change the discourse now—to the playground at lunch. Imagine that I’m the only teacher on duty—other teachers have been called away. A fight breaks out, and in the midst of 100 boys, two boys are punching each other. I try to get in there, calling “Stop! Stop! Stop!” I ask the boys who’s got the power. “Oh, you have,” they reply.” I challenge the suggestion that I’m the one with the power in that context. That opens up all sorts of questions. They make connections. I think they appreciate growing in understanding and I always equate those understandings with life, with their lives.⁴²

Monica’s capacity for, and predisposition to, change is clearly stated when she says:

I hope I always want to change. The day I don’t want to change is the day I should leave the classroom. But I can’t predict what the changes will be. There will be changes, but given the interactive professionalism of our team, we’ll be making changes together. Recently I presented a professional development session to some English teachers in Northern Queensland. I told them that they needed to understand that the copy of the Year 12 English syllabus, to which we’d refer during the session, was already out-of-date. “Why are you showing it to us?” they retorted. I explained that I was

⁴² Addressing power explicitly in the classroom

Monica’s explicit discussion of power offers a further insight into her socially-just pedagogies. This example highlights the way in which she collaboratively explores the operation of power within school contexts, in this case, in the playground. Importantly, Monica invites her students to understand the complex ways in which discourses and power operate in relation to each other. Foucault’s (1983b) rejection of the reductionism he sees in others’ analyses of his own conceptualisations of knowledge and power is highlighted when he says, “when I read...the thesis ‘knowledge is power’ or ‘power is knowledge,’ I begin to laugh, since studying their relation is precisely my problem” (p. 210). Hence, Foucault is concerned with *power relations* or *relations of power*. Monica’s scenario of the playground fight illustrates the way in which power in that context resides with those who are constituted and/or who constitute themselves through discourses associated with fighting. That is to say, in this context what is say-able and do-able, and what is unsay-able and undo-able is determined by fighting as a valued or appropriate activity by its participants. Any teacher who appears can resist such discourses, and would be expected to resist such discourses given the way they are spoken into existence as guardians against aggression among students. Initially, the students assume that the teacher always has the power whatever the context, but upon reflection they realise the constitutive force of discourse to locate the students, in this case, in positions of power. This example highlights the notion of *power relations*, given that in other contexts, such as the classroom, other discourses speak particular people into existence in other ways and disperse power differently. To reiterate, an enormous strength of Monica’s pedagogy, suggested here, is her provision of spaces for her students to view the ways in which they are engaged in power relations in complex ways.

using it because it was the most up-to-date version, but that criterion 3, for example, would be changed. But some of those teachers found that hard to accept—they don't want to change. I've discovered that you have to go through the pain to get the passion.⁴³

Some concluding words

Monica passionately pursues socially-just pedagogies. Her pedagogies, with their focus on intellectual rigour and learning in a supportive environment, are powerfully informed by the spiritual context in which she works. Further, Monica attributes the significant transformation of her own pedagogies, as well as that of her colleagues, to the impact of the new English syllabus for Years 11–12. The ways in which Monica, as a teacher, has had to engage with students and with texts as a result of this syllabus change, has involved considerable risk-taking. She readily acknowledges and explores the “pain” involved in such far-reaching professional change, but recognises that it's not possible to live out the “passion” of teaching young people without that pain.

⁴³ Pedagogy: not just head work or text work but heart work as well

Monica's talk of the “pain” and the “passion” associated with her pedagogy suggests the importance of a range of discourses, including those related to change management, teacher professionalism and not least of all, discourses associated with Monica as a teacher sensitive to her own emotions and those of others. A central tenet of feminist poststructural theorising is the recognition and resistance of binaries that have become entrenched within the humanist/modernist story that exert such sway over our contemporary Western lives. According to Moon (2001, p. 3), “binary oppositions are words and concepts that a community of people generally regards as being ‘opposed’ to each other.” For example, the words “black” and “white” constitute a binary set (Moon, 2001, p. 3). Significantly, Derrida has highlighted the ways in which one binary term is often privileged in relation to the other (Moon, 2001, p. 3). Consider which of the words that constitute this binary set is more powerful than the other. Consider also the implications of such privileging in terms of how particular language invites particular constructions of groups on the basis of race. Weedon (1997, p. 160) proposes that “deconstruction is useful for feminism in so far as it offers a method of decentring the hierarchical oppositions which underpin gender, race and class oppression and of instigating new, more progressive theories.” Davies (1994) draws on a table of binary opposites produced by Wilshire which proposes that “reason (the rational)” and “emotions and feelings (the irrational)” (p. 9) are binary opposites with the former occupying a more powerful position in humanist/modernist thinking. It is this marginalising of the significance of the emotions in relation to the more valued concept of rationality that has resulted in the devaluing and silencing of the discourses of emotions in terms of pedagogy and other social pursuits. It is important to note that feminist poststructural theorising does not negate the importance of reason and rationality as concepts but proposes that they are “always situated, local, and specific, formed by values and passions and desires” (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 487). The discourses of emotions, very evident in Monica's narrative, might be clearly integral to the socially-just pedagogies she practises.

Note: The title in this section draws on *Head work, field work, text work: A textshop in new feminist research* (McWilliam, Lather & Morgan, 1997).

Pedagogies with students centre stage: Tina's story

Introduction to this commentary

As indicated in the previous chapter, the field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 5 July 2002 between Tina and me. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

Apart from explicating what socially-just pedagogies might look like in some circumstances, Tina's narrative is instructive in at least two other ways in addressing the overall purpose of these materials. You will recall that a key purpose of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* is to support you as the participant in these materials to explore the often complex ways in which your own subjectivities and the discourses with which you are constituted and with which you constitute yourself influence the pedagogies you practise. To this end, this commentary, along with the others, is designed to explicate the ways in which Tina's subjectivities and the discourses operating in the narrative might influence the pedagogies she practises.

First, Tina's narrative illustrates the complex ways in which some discourses can be generative for some people while being regimenting for others. For example, Tina embraces discourses aligned with teacher professional standards, finding generative spaces which others might find regimenting.

Second, this narrative suggests the way in which any organisation or person is implicated in a range of discourses that are often contradictory or contestatory. For example, Tina's narrative highlights the ways in which her employing authority speaks teachers into existence in divergent and contradictory ways. Such discourses include regimenting or controlling discourses which could be seen as efforts to ensure conformity to particular norms or standards, whereas other policies highlighted by Tina provide generative or liberatory spaces. This is similar to the ways in which discourses of Catholicism explored in Monica's narrative include those that are generative, along with those that are regimenting.

At the outset of this narrative, the reader is invited to make the connections between Tina's pedagogies and two related discourses, that of schooling as emancipatory and as a function of the state. Tina suggests that inequities exist in the education system such that those "with money" are in a better position to enjoy a high quality education. These discourses align with others introduced throughout the narrative. Such interrelated discourses which speak Tina into existence in particular ways, including as an "activist professional" (Sachs, 2000) involve energetic engagement with organisations that have a professional and/or industrial focus.

Pedagogies with students centre stage Tina's story

How do I practise socially just pedagogy? It's one of those questions that you could start anywhere—and nowhere—to answer.⁴⁴

Tina teaches Year 7 in a metropolitan primary school—an Education Queensland school—and wouldn't work anywhere other than a state school. She is passionate about high quality, socially-just state education, saying:

I don't see why people with money should get the best teachers, the best resources or the best professional development or whatever. Public education needs to attract good teachers, to attract passionate teachers and to attract people who don't want an easy ride. And that's good—it's challenging but it's good.

Tina makes clear and strong links between her commitment to working towards a more just society and the pedagogies she uses in her classroom. She wants to educate students who will become “voters who insist that governments work for the benefit of all people, not just for a select group.” Two aspects of Tina's pedagogies stand out: her capacity to theorise her work and her very practical application of what such theory means in her classroom. The following example typifies Tina's capacity and predisposition to support her students to view the world in critical ways. According to Tina, “The whole point of education is to have literate, thinking people in this world who make a difference.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Socially-just pedagogies at the classroom level and beyond

Tina's appreciation of socially-just pedagogies as occurring on a range of levels is suggested by this statement and by her comments in the session, *Socially-just pedagogy: a form for sharing ideas*, which I conducted on 18 September 2001 as part of this research. When forum members were asked for their understandings of socially-just pedagogy, Tina commented:

There are two key themes. One is looking at the child, or the student that you're working with and all of that—their background, distinct characteristics that the particular students bring and social justice being applied that way, and the other is the outcomes of the educative process. (Participant comment, *Socially-just pedagogy: a forum for sharing ideas*, 18 September 2001)

This comment suggests Tina's understanding of socially-just pedagogies at the level of the classroom, as well as the broader societal ramifications.

⁴⁵ Proposing some overarching discourses that might influence Tina's pedagogies

Tina's comments here suggest her affinity with discourses that speak schooling into existence as an emancipatory activity. The links between literacy and “mak[ing] a difference in the world” are elaborated upon later in the narrative.

Read all about it!

The following example reflects the comprehensive nature of Tina's socially-just pedagogies. Tina seized the opportunity to engage her students in critical thinking when she saw an article in the local paper about a Queensland primary school that had decided to abandon interschool sport for social justice reasons. The principal of the school reported to the media that the decision had been taken because it was considered that the school did not have the resources to provide an interschool program that would serve the needs and interests of the range of students at the school. The school was determined not to maintain an interschool program that nurtured "elite" sports students while neglecting the needs of the broad range of students. The discontent that this produced among some parents drew the media's attention to the issue. The newspaper article used by Tina in her class included a visual text showing a female student apparently winning a race.

Tina introduced the issue by distributing copies of the article and reading it with her students. Prior to that, the students explored their knowledge and attitudes regarding interschool sport. The students also considered the various formats that interschool sport can take and the reasons for including it as part of the curriculum. Some of the management issues were also explored, with students being surprised that their own school's program could only exist in its current format as a result of parental support. The students' engagement with the issue then focused on the accompanying visual text.

The students noted that the female student was "obviously not playing hockey or netball or football"—activities one might expect to see illustrated in an article about interschool sport. Students made sophisticated conclusions regarding the alignment of the visual and written texts. Students concluded, for example, that the happy expression on the child's face suggested that interschool sport was a good idea—despite the fact that her participation in a race was unrelated to school team sports. Tina invited the students to consider the links between schools' promotion of individuals, sometimes at the expense of the range of students, and what occurs at the national level through the Australian Institute of Sport. The students' capacity to think laterally was further enhanced when they were challenged to consider why this particular news item was included in the local paper. Tina recalls that, "The kids came up with all sorts of reasons—some of which I hadn't thought about." Further, Tina challenged them to consider the role that sensationalism plays in selection of particular stories by the media.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Pedagogies of connections and critique

Discourses of learning as connected to the world beyond the classroom, as well as that of students and teachers as able, if not compelled, to challenge what could go unnoticed, appear to underpin this example of Tina's practice. For many of Tina's Year 7 students, though we cannot assume all, school sport is probably an issue of considerable interest. Rather than drawing on an example far removed from her students' experiences, Tina uses the example of another Queensland primary school's decision-making with regard to school sport arrangements as a stimulus for her students' use of critical literacy skills, promoting connectedness to students' worlds, and views of knowledge as problematic, both elements of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b).

Tina scaffolds her students' critical thinking by inviting them to see school sport not just as who plays which sport and with which schools, but through the lens of which

Tina's skilful use of the narrative as a teaching strategy is illustrated in her sharing of the story below with her students as they considered the decisions made by newspaper editors.

A story Tina shared with her students

In 1990 I'd been on Long Service Leave, travelling in Europe and South America, and Iraq had just invaded Kuwait. I was actually in Bolivia when the invasion occurred. I remember my dad meeting me at Brisbane Airport and saying, "What do you reckon is on the front page of today's paper?" I recall my reply: "Well, I've read the *New York Times*, the London *Guardian* and the Toronto *Globe and Mail* and everything that I've read is about the invasion of Kuwait. I also remember saying that I'd just left Bolivia, and even though I can't read Spanish, I could tell that the invasion was the main news there as well. My father replied, "Well you know what the local paper

groups of students might be involved, along with whose interests might be served and whose interests might be marginalised. A problem-solving approach, another element of the Productive Pedagogies is clearly evident in Tina's pedagogy. The invitation to critically reflect on the newspaper article extends to an examination of the accompanying visual text. The students note that, even though the article relates to school sport, that is, team-based activities, the photograph alongside the article is of a single student running her own race and apparently winning. The critique by Tina and her class of the representation of a triumphant individual provides a powerful example of social justice in practice.

Pervasive in our school systems are discourses that valorise the individual. That our systems cater for students' individual needs is worthwhile, but such discourses prove to be unhelpful when they operate at the expense of accommodating the needs and aspirations of the range of groups of students. (This issue is explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.) Further, Tina invites her students to make the connection between what happens at the school level with the arrangements at the national elite sports level in Australia. Tina powerfully speaks her students into existence as critical thinkers who can and should challenge the status quo. Tina's invitation to critique school and national sports organisation supports students to appreciate that current sporting arrangements, at both the school and national level, are socially constructed and as such can be reconstructed in more socially-just ways. A further critical perspective introduced in this learning is a recognition of the role that parents and carers play in providing infrastructural support so that interschool sport can occur.

Critical literacy as a key aspect of socially-just pedagogies is a feature of this and other narratives presented in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Tina supports her students to challenge the persuasive discourses which underpin the invitation to read this or any other text unproblematically. Instead Tina and her students take up discourses that recognise that no text is neutral and that every text represents the interests of some and marginalises or silences the interests of others. It is the discourses associated with "teaching [and reading] against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1991) which speak Tina and her students into existence as resistant readers, unprepared to accept the invitation to view sports in particular ways or to view themselves as sportspeople in particular ways.

thought was the most important thing that happened last week? Wally Lewis was sacked as the captain of the Broncos.”⁴⁷

Tina found the students’ reactions to her story instructive: “Yeah, but that’s more interesting than one country invading another country” some said. Tina reflects that, “Hearing kids respond in this way keeps you grounded.” She believes that this example illustrates strongly her practice to promote intellectual quality in her students.

⁴⁷ Telling stories and socially-just pedagogies

Tina’s recounting of her return from an overseas trip just after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 to find that the captaincy of the local rugby league team was the major news item in the local paper is instructive for two main reasons. First, Tina’s use of the narrative in her pedagogy speaks her and her students into existence as story-tellers and listeners. A key element in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b), the use of narrative, “allows the subject to be his or her own authority” (Kanpol, 1997, p. 14). Second, the content of the narrative contributes to socially-just pedagogy given its challenge to football-as-all-important discourse. By sharing her father’s question about what the local paper considered to be the most important news for that particular day, Tina demonstrates her resistant reading of the news item: she rejects the invitation implicit in the news report that the captaincy of a football team is more important than the invasion of the Middle Eastern country.

Tina's view of knowledge in the classroom

The knowledge that I value in my classroom is that which is arrived at through critical reflection. I look at knowledge that can be used in order to gain access to those power structures that exist by using critical thinking skills, negotiation, conflict resolution and so on. Knowledge that can actually be useful—"Who wants to be a millionaire—20 questions stuff" is a fun five minutes in which we could look at some general knowledge questions. In our society, that impresses people....I take on the responsibility as the teacher to ask crucial questions. I define a crucial question as something that gets to the nub of an issue, something that is creative, is analytical—it indicates some kind of thought beyond what is basically there—the smartest people are the people who ask the big questions—the people who can see what's not there. I really want the kids to start asking those crucial questions. When I get a kid asking a crucial, perceptive question in class my little heart goes flutter—I think it's wonderful.⁴⁸

Making connections: literacy and power

Tina has a strong sense of her responsibilities to support her students to develop specific key skills, as well as the implications of not possessing such skills:

If you haven't got literacy and you haven't got numeracy and you haven't got thinking skills—and I could go on—you haven't got the keys to the power in society. Children have got to have these skills so that in the future they will have a better share of resources in this society and have better lives in this society.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Speaking students and herself into existence as critical knowledge producers

Tina's definition of knowledge as the product of students' critical thinking and linked to access to society's power structures further explicates this teacher's view of the emancipatory role of schooling generally and of knowledge specifically. This is in stark contrast to the way in which many of us have treated knowledge in the past, and might even continue to do, in our classrooms: knowledge for knowledge sake regardless of any connection to students' worlds in or beyond the classroom. The capacity of students to ask a "crucial question" is highlighted by John Ralston Saul (1997) when he says that:

knowledge is one of the currencies of systems *men*, just as it was for the courtiers in the halls of Versailles....Today's power uses as its primary justification for doing wrong the knowledge possessed by its experts....This is how hospitals are closed or public education is squeezed or taxes shifted from those who have to those who have less. Knowledge is more effectively used today to justify wrong being done than to prevent it. (pp. 44–46, emphasis added)

⁴⁹ Particular discourses and power

The schooling as emancipatory discourse is again addressed explicitly here with reference to how powerful the literacy and numeracy discourses are in our society. According to Martinez (n.d.):

Without basic literacies and numeracy skills...students will have little capacity for fulfilling participation in any aspect of life. It is evident that students leaving school without basic numeracy and literacy and without completing a full secondary education are not only vulnerable to a lifetime

The tensions of supporting students in their own languages, as well as in the English language, are very real for Tina. Lamenting that in various parts of Australia funding for education in Indigenous community languages has been cut, Tina says that:

Teachers have to open up the world of English and the powerful and efficient use of English but still respect the students' version of English or their community language.

Switched on to students' worlds

The recollection of a recent conversation with a teaching colleague from a non-state school provoked Tina to reflect on the ways in which particular issues might be invisible in the eyes of some educators. In a workshop, when asked to share responses to the question, "What was the most difficult teaching situation you've ever been in?" Tina recounted a child abuse case. As the Sexual Harassment Referral Officer, Tina has inherited a job that "seems to get bigger and bigger." She has taken on the role of key teacher in responding to instances of bullying, ensuring that children understand the school's protocols in dealing with all forms of harassment. Over a period of time one student confided to Tina that she'd been hit and yelled at by her step-father and would swing from allegiance towards her mother to loyalty to her father and their respective partners. The student's situation was worsened by health problems which included epilepsy. The case was reported to the police, followed by a court case in which the mother lost custody of her daughter. Tina acknowledged how upsetting this whole episode was for her, saying "But that's part of the human experience of teaching."

What Tina finds difficult to accept is that her colleague from a non-state school had never experienced "anything remotely similar" to this episode. Tina's reactions were multi-focal: "What world do you live in? Are your students all from stable families? Are you living in a world that doesn't exist?" Tina concludes her recollection of this experience by saying, "If it were just cardboard cut-outs in the classroom, then I wouldn't feel teaching was an engaging profession—but it is gut-wrenching at times, you know."

A strong theme in Tina's pedagogies is her capacity to respond to students in terms of where they're situated. Tina reflects on an earlier teaching experience when she taught in a working class area south of Brisbane:

The thing that used to worry me there wasn't the kids, not the parents, but the middle-class teachers. There were people there who believed that the kids should do homework and that everybody should do homework. And there was a kind of belief that they all had the same kind of home life in which to do homework. And it was the principal at the time who persuaded people that what they assumed was going on at home wasn't really going on there and a lot of children actually lived in chaos and to expect the same standard of homework from everybody was just totally ignoring the kind of situation that many kids lived in. This principal would tell anecdotes about what would be in the cupboard at some places he visited—I remember him telling us about one home he visited where there was one packet of Sao biscuits in the cupboard and nothing else.

of unemployment but to exclusion from the processes of social and civic life.
(p. 10)

According to Tina, the principal made the links between the concerns that many of their students' parents and carers have had about survival to their attitudes and valuing of homework. In this context Tina learnt an unexpected lesson about leadership. The principal managed to convince the majority of teachers that the setting of homework was not appropriate, but had to make it school policy to ensure that all teachers followed the "no homework" approach. Tina was aware of the further barriers to student learning that the "middle class attitudes" of teachers created. "There were lots of comments from staff about the way parents dressed, whether they were overweight—you know their 'middle-classness' really came out. I'm middle-class too, I'm not denying that, but their attitudes really worried me."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Whose class counts?

This section of Tina's narrative highlights a further aspect of her socially-just pedagogies. While acknowledging her own "middleclassness," she does not want to silence or marginalise her students who may not possess similar "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1977). Tina's description of her colleagues who made disparaging remarks about their students' parents/carers suggests teachers marginalising people who do not have access, or who choose not to engage in, discourses associated with being middle-class. In the eyes of these teachers they were not "doing middle-class."

My reflection...

One of the strongest senses I have from my childhood is the notion that being successful at school would deliver me into a more comfortable life. As an adult, I explore my desire to move out of a working-class life with some tentativeness. I reassure myself that such "ambition" was not the result of any rejection of working-class values, far from it, but a desire for more economic security. Nonetheless, I am acutely aware that my subjectivities as the daughter of a large working-class family impact upon my reading of Tina's description of these teachers. If location in the middle-class translates to greater security, how do we as teachers tread the awkward ground of valuing and embracing students' values generally and, for example, literacies specifically, while providing access to particular knowledges and skills that might be "more rewarding" socially, politically and economically.

Further, Tina recognises the power of the English language, specifically, and literacy and numeracy, generally, as associated with valued and valuable discourses that bring rewards to members of our society both socially and economically.

Homework as a social justice issue

The issue of homework emerged in this research as a significant social justice issue. According to Tina, discourses aligned with homework, a socially-constructed activity and potentially oppressive activity, were out-of-step with the discourses that speak these students and their parents/carers into existence. The seemingly authoritarian position taken by Tina's principal at the time to enforce that teachers did not expect homework, was aligned, in Tina's view, with an emancipatory discourse. Interestingly, I taught at a secondary school in the same area at around the same time and I recall that I set homework and ensured that it was completed, delivering "detentions" if it were not done.

Tina's commitment and capacity to put her students, rather than herself, at the centre of her pedagogies is illustrated through her approaches towards an Aboriginal student in her class:

I have an Aboriginal boy, Jack, in my class at present who has had a lot of absenteeism in the past and I talk regularly to his parents about this and other issues. I value his parents' perspectives about their son's education and I know that I'm not the one who knows about Aboriginality. They're the ones who know about it and I respect their wishes for their child. I still want Jack to come to school more often but I respect the fact that they know about his culture and they are active as parents. They're the people who are going to make sure that he understands his Aboriginality. But I also say, "Ask Mum and Dad 'such and such'" and Jack's become our expert.⁵¹

The example of another student, this one with a history of significant behavioural problems, provides further illustration of the way in which Tina places her students at the centre of her pedagogies. Tina comments:

I try to recognise talent in non-academic areas as well as academic areas. I've got a little boy—well, not that little—he's taller than me—who came to me following two suspensions from our school. He has huge literacy problems, numeracy problems, a dysfunctional family, but he loves rugby league. Personally, I am not interested in rugby league, but that's beside the point. *He* loves rugby league and he gets high self-esteem from achieving in that area. Sol is also very good at art, so I make a big deal of that and make sure that his art is show-cased. I also ask him to help other students who are having a struggle with art, because he knows how to do it. And he's often helping the kid who's the computer genius in the class.⁵²

⁵¹ Locating students at the centre

Tina's engagement with Jack suggests the discourses of inclusivity that underpin her pedagogies. The dialogic relationship between Tina, the student and his parents is suggested here: Tina respects their knowledge and role as educators of their son while at the same time seeking to learn more herself about their Aboriginality.

⁵² The above example of Jack, as well as the example of Sol, suggests a pedagogy that places students at the centre, rather than on the margins. It could be argued that discourses associated with traditional pedagogy valorise the white, middle-class, male and position all others at the periphery. Writing with reference to issues associated with gender equity, but having broader applicability, Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, & Rennie, (1994) cite Alcoff's concept of "positionality" as helpful in resisting the positioning of some girls as "normal" and those who are not middle-class or from an Anglo-Celtic background as "other." "The concept of "positionality"...requires schools to look at themselves rather than elsewhere, to ask both how it is that they position some girls at the margins of school life and value systems, and how they can reposition them at the centre" (Kenway et al., 1994, p. 199). In the example involving Sol, Tina implies that she draws on her student's love of rugby league, a discourse in which she ordinarily might not engage, in order to locate Sol at the centre of her pedagogical frame.

It's on the basis of this recognition of difference that Tina builds group identity in her classroom. She draws an analogy between the group building in her classroom and what occurs in the broader society:

Even though we're a whole lot of different people, we have a society of caring...you know we have a great diversity of people in our classrooms but we are a society working together—just as our country and our world is each made up of a group of different people working together. And we have our differences and we need to negotiate, we need to listen to each other, we need to do the best we can to appreciate other people's points of view and still work together as a group.

Tina elaborates on how and why she considers it to be important to forge a group identity when she says:

There's a real emphasis in my classroom on harmony and peace to maximise learning. I personally can't deal with a battle every day. I want my class to work really hard at making our class, and the other Year 7 class, our family. You know there are fifty of us and we are the family of Year 7s who are the leaders in our school, who are responsible, who will respect each other, who will listen to each other and who will lead our school. I tell them all the time about their responsibilities—the little kids are looking up to them. Some of them are a bit daunted by it, but it's that harmony, that peace, the working together to achieve what we can that I think is really important for kids.⁵³

A critical consumer of theory

A significant aspect of Tina's pedagogies is the way they are informed by theory and policy. Tina sees theory and policy as keys to more rewarding teaching practice—they're enabling factors. Like her colleagues, however, Tina needs to constantly prioritise her use of time and particularly needs to evaluate the efficacy of any formal learning opportunities: she has to see that such sessions will make a difference in the classroom. Tina describes a pervasive attitude among teachers generally to professional development sessions:

It's interesting with my staff—and I don't think they're any different to others—when you talk about pedagogy they have to be convinced about the application of what you're saying. They'll say: "Don't waste my precious time talking about useless things after school on a Monday afternoon. If you're going to use my time, if you're going to take up my time to actually make my teaching practice better—good on you—go for it. If you want to take up my time waffling on with a whole lot of rubbish that I can't use, I'm going to be immediately against it." And you will get people who show that by their body language or others who are polite but you can see that they're not engaged.

⁵³ Tina's class: a real-life team

Tina's talk about the way in which she speaks her students into existence as part of a team, also demonstrates her connectedness to the world beyond the classroom. She explicitly draws an analogy between the challenges and rewards of working together as a class group with that of the need to work together nationally and globally. Tina offers a helpful perspective on group identity, an element of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) when she highlights their common challenge to work together while simultaneously recognising their diversity.

And I agree with it, why when you've got more pressing things to do like tomorrow's lessons, are you going to sit listening to someone waffling away about something that doesn't interest you? Teachers are the biggest critics, teachers are a tough audience.

Tina sees clearly the value of theory and policy in informing her pedagogies. Her example of the study into interschool sport illustrates her practice of the dimensions valued in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) and importantly, her ability to articulate her practice using that framework. Her expertise and leadership within her school and beyond in terms of boys' education offers a further example of engagement with theory and policy. Tina says:

I like reading about boys' education and specifically about acceptable masculinities. Pam Gilbert's book, *Masculinity goes to school* was helpful. And one of the real shifts I've had through reading this book is that there are lots of different ways of being masculine, but if we really want to tap into the boys—I'm talking about 12 year-olds who are going through all kinds of changes and are struggling with an acceptable kind of masculinity for them—they've got to see men in positions that are both attractive to them and good for society. You know men should be able to dance and do ballet, but I'm not going to support my male students to consider helpful and healthy forms of masculinity by suggesting that because it's not close enough to their experience to be useful. I get my boys to think about being masculine through leading protests against detention centres, being peace workers, fire-fighters, air-sea rescue workers and soldiers who do things that are good—and from there look at the range of options available to boys and men in terms of being masculine. And of course this must always be balanced by an understanding that these are not the exclusive domains of men!⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Working towards gender equity

There is much that could be said in relation to the points raised by Tina in the above quote. At a general level, Tina speaks herself into existence as a learner prepared and keen to engage in issues relevant to the learning of her students. She also acknowledges contemporary discourses surrounding a concern about the ways in which boys take up various masculinities and the potential adverse impacts on themselves and on girls and women as a result of boys' and men's performance of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1987). Tina's invitation to her male students to consider occupations associated with "leading protests against detention centres, being peace workers, fire-fighters, air-sea rescue workers and soldiers who do things that are good" seems to be the product of two, not always compatible discourses. First, the risk-taking element underpinning these occupation choices (see Mills, 2001 for a discussion of risk-taking and constructions of masculinity) resonates with Connell's (1987) idea of hegemonic masculinity which is associated with power, authority, aggression and technical competence (p. 183). Second, the occupations promoted by Tina are underpinned by discourses associated with social justice, including for example challenging detention centres. This example demonstrates the complex ways in which discourses operate in people's lives: Tina is acknowledging the powerful social construction of dominant forms of masculinity by advocating ways in which her students could maintain their investment in such ways of being but at the same time invites them to engage in activities with a social justice focus.

Active engagement in policy-making at both state and national levels informs further Tina's pedagogies. Tina is involved in a pilot study of Education Queensland's (2001a) *Professional Standards for Teachers: Guidelines for Professional Practice* and sees the potential for her own and others' professional growth through engagement with this document:

I'm really excited about the whole professional standards thing—it's an online community. There's a structure there [in the document] that we can look into and use to take personal responsibility for our own professional development....One of my great dilemmas with professional development is the "one-size fits all" model. We are constantly told that we need to cater for individual differences and recognise difference and yet so much of our professional development is based on a "one-size-fits-all" approach.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Professional standards for teachers: about transformation or control?

In some ways the issue of professional standards for teachers is a litmus test for Tina's professionalism. Tina is involved in a range of pursuits, including engagement with her employing authority, Education Queensland, in relation to the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (Education Queensland, 2001a) and active participation as a union member within her school and beyond, which resonate with the what Sachs (2000) calls "the activist professional." (The idea of the "activist professional" is taken up in Chapter 7.) While not trying to trivialise the challenging conditions under which teachers work, Tina speaks herself into existence as someone who can act on her world and support her colleagues through her participation in collaborative critique with a range of "stakeholders" to find opportunities in a document such as the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (Education Queensland, 2001a) for teacher growth and, above all, enhancement of student learning outcomes. Tina speaks as someone who, not in any naïve sense, has both a considerable sense of, and actual, agency over her professional practice. The efficacy of this active engagement in policy formation on Tina's own professional and personal well-being—arguably preconditions for the practice of socially-just pedagogies—is suggested by Grimmer, Rostad & Ford, 1992 when they say:

Externally mandated change typically has a cataclysmic effect on teachers' morale, resulting in a strong sense of dependency. Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the new expectations when their actions are continually shaped by the directives of others. There is an accompanying sense of helplessness and powerlessness when heightened expectations appear to be beyond reach. (pp. 185–186)

Whereas some teachers feel threatened by the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (Education Queensland, 2001a), seeing it has a regimenting discourse, Tina sees and acts on the generative spaces available.

My reflection...

Tina's taking up of generative discourses here resonates strongly with me. During 1997–1998 I worked in the then Centre for Teaching Excellence in Education Queensland on an earlier version of the above document. Simultaneously, I was completing my Master of Education through coursework. Acknowledging the embeddedness of competency agendas across state, national and international contexts, I explored the generative spaces available for teachers. In a paper entitled *From*

The making of a socially-just teacher

A range of significant factors has led to Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies. These include her family background and early teaching experiences in places where there were important lessons to be learnt. Speaking of her family background, Tina says:

That family background is priceless....And I often wondered what it would've been like to have grown up in a different family who had very conservative ideas. You know I come from a long line of people who were secretaries and presidents of branches of the Labor Party—when the Labor Party was a labour party. You know I had a father whose hero in life was Ben Chifley and a brother who went into social work—one social worker and one teacher—how much more socially just can you get?⁵⁶

Tina also attributes the development of her current pedagogies to the influence of her experiences at an all-girls Catholic school with teachers who were “intelligent, successful women” who practised a kind of pedagogy that “got the girls thinking and considering other people.” Tina recalls that these teachers were the kind of people who talked to students about social justice issues, though not using those terms. Further, Tina believes that historical events such as “Gough Whitlam giving us free tertiary education” shaped the kind of teacher she is today.

Early teaching experiences and, importantly, the students and the teachers who were part of those experiences have a far-reaching influence on Tina's pedagogies. The impact that our colleagues can have on us as professionals is suggested by Tina when she says:

At the beginning of the 90s I came across four people in particular who just happened to be there at the right time and the right place—four women who thought really, really deeply about how you teach and why we teach and what's the best way of doing it. And they were women who could very effectively match theory to practice.⁵⁷ And that's when I think I saw that the

competency frameworks to transformative practice (Nayler, 1997), I proposed strategies that were based on teachers starting with their own professional practice and insights, through the use of narratives, and using the standards framework, which was being developed, as only one possible lens with which to view such practice. At the time I thought that the possibilities for working within generative spaces were overshadowed by regimenting discourses associated with the framework.

⁵⁶ Exploring some of Tina's subjectivities

Tina makes very explicit some of the subjectivities that have been implicated in the discourses constituting her, as well as those with which she constitutes herself. For example, Tina's subjectivity as a member of a working-class family, all of whom were constituted and constituted themselves through discourses as people who can and want to act on the world to improve the circumstances in which people live, is highlighted here.

⁵⁷ A collaborative and reflective practitioner

We can see here the way in which Tina speaks herself into existence as a colleague and a reflective practitioner. Discourses aligned with the teacher as theoretician and as practitioner appear to figure prominently in Tina's professional activity.

whole point of public education was so that the kids we were teaching could actually get a chance in life.

Not unsurprisingly, Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies, as well as her concerns for appropriate working conditions for teachers, led her to involvement in her union. According to Tina:

I don't think my colleagues see me as a departmental lackey. I think that because I went in there and within six months became the union rep and have spoken for the last ten years about working conditions, class size, behaviour management, and when we've needed to, about salaries, and professional development and all those kind of things, they know I'm prepared to take political action and industrial action in order to achieve our goals. Teachers need to know that they can trust this person—there's a lot of teachers out there who are sceptical....Because I've got industrial kudos with the teachers, I believe they listen to me when I talk about pedagogy.⁵⁸

Employer support for socially-just pedagogies

Tina's commitment to socially-just pedagogies is evident in her practice within and beyond her classroom. It appears that Tina draws on her students' needs, family background, early and current teaching experiences, her colleagues, professional and industrial organisations, as well as educational research and policy documents as sources of support in her practice of socially-just pedagogies. Though Tina utilises Education Queensland policy to support her practice, she looks towards her employer for more support. Tina elaborates on these ideas when she says:

I think my employer is more concerned with the budgetary bottom line. I'm cynical about my employer's response to socially-just pedagogy because while there are some beautiful documents produced, I have problems with some of their priorities. I think that if I'm prepared to go out there and find out about socially-just pedagogy and I'm prepared to practise and reflect on my teaching, that's terrific. "We've got a bargain here!" is the EQ attitude. But I don't find much genuine leadership for people who are looking for guidance in their practice but can't find it—people who just need a little bit more encouragement and valuing—genuine valuing by their employer. And I honestly think that if I made one mistake and talked out of turn and got a

⁵⁸ Managing the tension: resisting some discourses and taking others up

Tina rejects the notion that her colleagues might see her as a "departmental lackey." Using the theoretical frames underpinning these materials, a "departmental lackey" could be seen as someone unproblematically engaging in, and promoting, regimenting discourses aligned with her employer. It is Tina's robust engagement with industrial discourses that she believes gives her "industrial kudos" with her colleagues. Interestingly and importantly, the individual discourses in which she and her colleagues engage relate predominantly to direct enhancement of student learning outcomes. Almost apologetically, Tina refers to taking action regarding "salaries...when we've needed to." Arguably, the level of teachers' pay is highly relevant to the enhancement of student learning outcomes but discourses of professionalism intersect with industrial discourses to relegate teachers' needs to secondary place in relation to those of their students.

particularly active parent who decided to take an issue to the local paper, I don't believe I would get much support from my employer. I might be pleasantly surprised, but I don't think I would be. So there you go.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ A pragmatic approach

These concluding words by Tina are particularly instructive as she suggests that it is the discourses of professionalism that drive her to do the work that she does with students and colleagues. Here Tina highlights discourses, perceived by her as being important to her employer, such as economic discourses, that she resists. Further, she identifies gaps and silences in the discourses aligned with her employer. The following statement, shared by Tina in an earlier research session, is a call for support from her employer:

Also you have to be prepared to fail. A lot of teachers have been very successful at school and then when we're hit by, "Here's a new teaching strategy, OK, I'll try it—nope I failed." You give up. I have a lot of respect for teachers—it's a very hard job, but we need a lot of support from somebody out there to keep us going, to develop our powers of reflection.

Always the "activist professional" (Sachs, 2000), Tina identifies the need for further support from her employer, but adopts a pragmatic attitude regarding the support she might expect.

Some concluding words

Tina sees the provision of high quality state education as a priority. Her broad goals for well resourced public education are matched by her commitment to social justice in her classroom. Tina's sensitivity to her students' interests, abilities and identities results in pedagogies which place the students centre stage.

Pedagogies of learning: Alice's story

Introduction to the commentary

As indicated in the previous chapter, the field texts used to create this narrative were the result of a substantive conversation held on 11 June 2002 between Alice and me. Further collaboration involving verbal and written communication has resulted in this narrative.

I suggested to Alice that we call this narrative, "Pedagogies of learning." It might seem a superfluous title given pedagogy's concern with teaching and therefore learning. However, what stood out for me in relation to Alice's story was her capacity and willingness to continually learn about herself, her students and what she needed to change in order to enhance students' learning.

Alice's narrative makes an important contribution to the key focus of these materials. As suggested throughout *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* the participant in these materials is invited to consider the discourses that appear to operate in relation to the pedagogies of the four teachers. It is proposed that such insight might be helpful in supporting analysis of your own practice in this regard.

Alice's critical reflection of her own practice in relation to a student whom she "labelled" a "bully" and her subsequent action is especially instructive. Alice moves between discourses, from teacher-as-infallible to teacher-as-critical learner. In doing so, Alice demonstrates forcefully her commitment to socially-just pedagogies.

Pedagogies of learning Alice's story

Alice's story is very much one of journeying—journeying from a secure middle class existence to a standpoint from which injustice is visible. Several influences have awakened Alice's sense of pedagogy as a vehicle for social justice. These influences have included her awareness of her own safe and secure childhood, some travelling, postgraduate study and several years teaching in a small country school which included a significant Indigenous population.

Some early influences

Alice reflects on her childhood as the “white picket fence childhood” which produced a “Brady Bunch, naïve, 2.2” mentality. She says that her parents are “very Christian people and very service-oriented,” qualities she admires. Alice comments that when she graduated from teachers' college she was “armed” with all of the knowledge she thought she'd need:

I thought everyone lived a very similar life to what I had lived until I went to my first school which was in the country. I then realised that there were various realms of economics in the world and opportunities in the world, along with differing perspectives and prejudices. My first posting at this school helped to open my eyes a little. And then during this time I took a year off and went travelling and this, too, reinforced the point that the world was a very diverse place.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Lifelong learning: for whose benefit?

These words by Alice strongly speak her into existence as a learner. In many ways discourses associated with “lifelong learning” have been appropriated with calls from organisations that their employees be lifelong learners without, in some cases, any substantive support for such activity. Further, a key premise on which these materials are based is that professional learning is essential and that such learning needs to be underpinned by a critical focus. Alice demonstrates learning with a critical focus later in the narrative.

Alice quickly became attuned to the implications for her classroom practice of the disparity of resources and opportunities. She says about teaching the range of students in her class, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous students:

My teaching days went from “Open up your maths book” to “OK, who hasn’t had breakfast this morning?”, “Where did everyone sleep last night?” and “Does anyone need to go and have a nap?”. I think that these early years of teaching created in me an awareness that I’m just one of many caring adults and that schools offer resources that you can use to establish good teams that can make a difference. I also realised that everyone has something to offer. So the best way is to aspire to working out how to bring out everyone’s goodness rather than focusing on kids who can or can’t achieve according to standardised testing and that sort of rubbish.⁶¹

When Alice took up her current position at an outwardly middle-class Catholic school located in a coastal area north of Brisbane, she said she was “branded” by some as passionate about a range of social justice issues. She also draws on the legacy of her first teaching appointment for the strong professional friendships she made. She says, “I still regularly phone, cry and scream, debrief—any of those things with these four people.” One of the people from whom Alice learnt much in this setting was a teacher-aide who had valuable knowledge of, and empathy for, the community.

⁶¹ Resisting discourses of measurement

Alice makes her resistance to “standardised testing” obvious here, referring to it as “that sort of rubbish.” In contrast to a students-as-deficit discourse constituted by testing, measurement and remediation, Alice embraces a discourse of students-as-diversity. The lack of authenticity associated with standardised testing resonates with Meadmore’s (1999) claim that “the present testing culture in Australian schools is one that is unabashedly political in its aim to raise standards” (p. 149). Ball (1999) proposes that the current focus on testing has led to teachers’ constitution as “pedagogic technicians.” Further, Meadmore (1999) claims that:

it is this kind of knowing, where continuous testing, benchmarking and “running records,” aided and abetted by market logic, are being increasingly used in contemporary schooling to bring schools, teachers and students up to the mark, that constitutes a *discontinuity* in assessment practices. (p. 150, emphasis added)

Alice’s resistance to discourses associated with externally-generated and organised testing is shared by Jemma who cites this demand as one of the reasons for her desire to move to a pre-school setting.

Aligned with this discourse of students-as-diversity is Alice’s concern to meet students’ social, as well as academic, needs. Her examples of questions she started to ask as she began to know her students better were based on her recognition that the student-as-learner discourses were sometimes secondary to her students’ needs related to shelter and/or more supportive home situations.

When Alice talks about her pedagogies and the areas of learning in which her upper school students engage she speaks passionately about a myriad of social issues and events. She acknowledges that there are social justice issues of immediate concern for her students at her current school, but that such issues tend not to be as obvious in comparison to her previous school. There are school-wide initiatives to address some social justice issues, but Alice concludes that predominantly school-wide responses tend to be of a “pastoral care” nature, such as contributing to villagers who lost family members, as well as possessions in the New Guinea tidal wave. But in Alice’s classroom she has acted in very concrete ways to address a social justice issue, that of bullying, with the initiative extending school-wide. Alice maintains that her actions are similar to those of the majority of her colleagues.⁶²

Addressing bullying—the students’ and her own

This example of Alice’s socially-just pedagogies also reflects her capacity to confront her own unjust practice. Alice’s involvement in a school-wide program to address bullying sprang out of “a particularly bad incident of bullying, involving a little boy in my class.” Alice discovered that this student had been the victim of bullying for three to four years. She develops a further picture of this student when she says:

I didn’t realise that he was leaving home some days at 5.30 a.m. in the morning to go to school a totally different way and getting home at 6.00 p.m. at night to avoid meeting up with some of my kids. I didn’t know any of that stuff, but kids in my class knew. I had 32 kids and 29 of them knew that this particular kid came to school every single day and got hassled every single day and it had gone on for years.

The distress that Alice experienced as a result of not knowing that one of her students had been bullied is obvious. She recounts the action she took when she became aware of the bullying:

I confronted the “bully” by saying that the feedback I was getting was that he was hassling Tim and I let him know that if he didn’t stop the bullying behaviour, he would be moved through the behaviour levels program established by the admin. And the child actually said to me, “I’m not bullying him—I’m just giving him some choices. It’s up to him to choose what he wants to choose.” I replied with the comment: “No, you’re really limiting his choices because if he doesn’t choose something that you like, then you feel right in dishing out the punishment.” And that kid looked at me and said, “How is that any different from what you’re doing to me now?” And I remember just sitting there and thinking, it was true. And I realised that I was doing the old, you know, probably well-intentioned and protective thing, protecting the child who had been bullied and standing up for them. But I

⁶² Discourses informing social justice initiatives

Undoubtedly, there is a multitude of ways in which teachers can practise what might be called socially-just pedagogies. Interestingly, Alice labels many of the school initiatives as being of a “pastoral care” nature. A feminist poststructural reading of this label might be to suggest that such initiatives operate within existing discourses, often promoting greater access and equity within existing structures, as opposed to resisting and challenging discourses. Significantly, it was as a result of the challenge to Alice by her student about her own *behaviour* that resistance to discourses occurred. A possible reading of this incident is offered below.

was probably just accentuating the pattern where the kid was trying to exert power over his victim and I was going to demonstrate how wrong that was by exerting my power over him. I remember driving home and thinking “Bloody hell, he’s right!”⁶³

This incident appeared to have a profound influence on Alice who says that, “Now I’m learning to sit back and watch, gathering information as best I can and looking at the dynamics of stuff as I try to work out strategies.” Alice reflects on what a significant learning experience this episode had been for her. She says that:

It’s funny—I was indignant at the time—and aghast. I remember driving home and thinking he’s got a point. I didn’t give that kid any other options bar the one I was promoting and if he didn’t back my option, which was to back off, then that’s OK: “You’re free to make a choice, but if you choose this, then this is what is going to happen to you.” I wasn’t giving kids free choices.

A concrete result of that experience was the development of a school-wide anti-bullying program implemented during that year. The issue was discussed at a class meeting and the class decided that they wanted to take some action. In collaboration with the Assistant to the Principal, Religious Education (APRE), Alice and her students wrote a formal education program. Following training by the APRE and Alice, the teaching teams taught weekly lessons to every class from pre-school through to Year 7.

⁶³ Teacher-as-fallible discourse

Alice’s example of reflecting on her own practice and learning from it offers a highly instructive example of what it might take to practise socially-just pedagogies and indeed how difficult such practice is. In this encounter with someone Alice had labelled “the bully” she reflects on how similar her actions had been to those of the student whom she had reprimanded. My reading of this episode is that Alice resisted the discourses aligned with the teacher as all-knowing and infallible. Alice, like many of us as teachers, experiences a powerful invitation to constitute herself as regulator of students’ behaviour. (These issues are explored further in Chapter 7.)

Further, in this narrative the reader is invited to understand the significant impact on Alice of her realisation that her student’s criticism of her practice was well-founded. I propose here that such realisation can only occur when a teacher makes spaces for the practice of socially-just pedagogies. Routinely, dominant discourses of the teacher-as-all-knowing do not provide spaces for student criticism and reconstruction of teacher practice.

The bullying program developed by the students was integrated into their own knowledge and skill development. Key aspects of the program involved supporting their fellow students to consider the way they treat others, their expectations of others and the extent to which some of these expectations or choices they offer others are unrealistic or inappropriate. Alice's students responded to the particular developmental levels of the students with whom they worked. For example, the pre-school lesson involved supporting the children to say, "I don't like that, stop it now," whereas the Year 5 response choices included options, such as "I" statements and assertive statements and so on. The Year 1 team taught every one of the series of 8 lessons using puppetry. Some of Alice's students used video snippets that they had recorded from programs, such as "The Simpsons." The program capitalised on the learning opportunities for the "teaching teams" themselves, as well as for their "students."⁶⁴

Each teaching team taught the same lesson to each class in the year level. The supervising teacher completed an evaluation form that was added to the team's teaching portfolio. This feedback was used to amend subsequent teaching episodes. Alice reserves her judgement as to the lasting benefits of the anti-bullying program, but two key observations seem relevant. Alice recounts that the key perpetrator of the bullying incident that sparked the program commented in a written piece of work that he felt that he was a better person for having participated in the program. Another Year 7 student claimed that he had observed his six year-old sister using an assertive statement promoted in the program when he was attempting to bully her at home!

When Alice speaks about what she and her class learn together she mentions people and events from which her students can acquire knowledge about the use and abuse of power and injustice generally. Like many of the teaching programs implemented by Alice, this approach is the result of collaboration with other year level teachers. In order to explore the narrative genre, Alice's class and the year level have studied Bryce Courtenay's (1999) *The Power of One: Young Readers' Edition*. They have also examined Nelson Mandela's inaugural speech, as well as investigating the roles of Steve Biko and Donald Woods in *Cry Freedom*. The lessons from Alice's integration of knowledge across key learning areas is strongly evidenced in her class's examination of the film based on Harper Lee's (1987) *To Kill a Mockingbird* at Easter. Alice and her teaching partners supported their students in examining the parallels

⁶⁴ What the anti-bullying program means for the students-as-teachers

The anti-bullying program devised by Alice and her colleagues speaks the students into existence in particular ways. The students' task to develop and deliver a series of anti-bullying lessons to students in other year levels constitutes the Year 7 students as producers of deep understandings about the nature of bullying, anti-bullying strategies as well as approaches suitable for students at particular year levels. The activity represents a strong invitation to engage in problem-solving curriculum, given the challenge presented to the Year 7 students to develop curriculum and pedagogy to accommodate the younger students' needs. Students' use of popular culture, such as the television program, *The Simpsons*, builds connectedness to the world through the anti-bullying program. Alice's promotion of deep understandings, problem-solving and connectedness to the world is aligned with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b).

between Christ and Tom Robinson⁶⁵ and people's responses to these men in each context. Alice adds, "Obviously this is a Catholic school, that's where those connections come from."

Alice's pedagogies are firmly grounded in trying to make connections with students' lives. According to Alice:

In my opinion, there's a great need to affirm, endorse, value and understand different social groups whether they be town kids, rural kids, farm kids—just cultural groups—wherever there's a story. I mean it sounds like a cliché but I know even in relation to myself, if I don't try to know who I am as a person, if I don't have an identity, all the maths books in the world won't make any difference.

A situational analysis conducted at the school a couple of years ago painted a very middle-class picture of the school. The results suggested that "the average student lives with both parents, has a computer, participates in extra-curricular activities, including sport outside school hours and Mum is normally home when the kids get home from school." Despite its middle-class façade and acknowledging that the survey was conducted a couple of years ago, Alice looks beyond to see that there are problems confronting her students and their parents which impact directly on the pedagogies she needs to practise. Alice says:

I know a family last year that had triplets and Dad lost his job and he's still unemployed. I know people struggle financially. I'm not so much aware of racial issues here—like at my other school where it was in your face from 8 o'clock in the morning. Now that's not a good or bad comment either way, but I'm sure there would be issues here that I don't find visible and as blatant as my other experiences at other times—kids in abject poverty, kids not eating, for example.

Alice concludes that just because social problems aren't as visible at her current school, she knows that this doesn't mean that they don't exist.

⁶⁵ Note: A character in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1987), Tom Robinson an African-American, was wrongly accused of rape. He was shot attempting to escape before "justice" could be served.

Students as active players in their curriculum

In Alice's classroom and school-wide there are many significant strategies to involve students in making key decisions. When it comes to showing what they know and can do with what they know, Alice's students exert considerable agency. She explains:

The kids can often pick their own topics and design their own project questions using process verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy. They organise their own timeframes. They organise their medium for presentations. They organise whether they work individually or with partners or in teams. We have conversations like: "Well, I'm not really good at writing stuff, so can I present my information by making a model?" And we talk about different people's learning styles and what's fair and just to expect for a project to let people show their intelligence in ways that best demonstrate their intelligence. So it's not a case of everyone else had to write a book report, but you get to make a book cover—they've got their heads around that sort of stuff.⁶⁶

Alice talks explicitly about the strategies she uses to share power with her students. The Year 7 Parliament has had a significant and positive impact upon decision-making and power-sharing in Alice's classroom. The school parliament is run by the Year 7 students with support from their teachers and in response to the needs of students throughout the school. The sharing of power is suggested by Alice who comments that, "I'll quite often go to Parliament and not even open my mouth for the whole forty minutes—not even 'Hurry up and sit down'—you just walk in and Parliament gets underway."

Alice talks in detail about how the Year 7 Parliament works:

The kids vote the Speaker in following leadership camp. Everyone [in Year 7] goes on leadership camp and we do team building, problem-solving, risk-taking and trust-building exercises. We examine preferential voting while we're there as well. And then we come back and they go through the process of a democratic election. And we look at not voting for the popular people just because they're the popular people. On camp we ask the students to note who does what. When we get back to school we call for nominations and, of course, kids have the choice to accept the nomination or not. We have a girl and a boy elected Year 7 captains and they are our Speakers of the House of Parliament and they alternate each week: one runs the school assembly on Wednesdays and the other runs Parliament on

⁶⁶ More than just talk about accommodating student diversity

Traditional schooling discourses do not provide spaces for teachers to support students to demonstrate what they know and can do with what they know in a variety of ways. Alice resists "egg crate" approaches to education, exploring here the ways in which she hands over as much power as possible to the students in relation to their assessment. Her promotion of student direction is a further example of alignment with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Supporting and promoting students to take control over as much of their assessment as possible demonstrates Alice's resistance to "normalizing [discourses which are directed at] ensuring that [the] individual exhibits normal patterns of development and behaviour, be they cognitive, physical, economic or whatever" (Symes & Preston, 1997, p. 223).

Fridays. We also have four school captains who do PR sorts of things and we also have sports captains.

Strategies are in place to encourage involvement of all Year 7 students in the parliamentary process. Alice adds:

This year a colleague organised for all of the kids [in Year 7] to receive badges. And all of them can pass a Bill through Parliament and all of them can organise parliamentary activities. They get committee time to work out Bill proposals and they take turns to present Bills. When Bills are passed they're presented to the Governor-General, who's our Principal, for assent. If the Governor-General has any concerns about anything, such as a workplace health and safety issue, he sees the students about making amendments—but this is rare. There is also Report Time in Parliament and Question Time. It's run just like the real Parliament—with one exception—it's not adversarial.

Not only is the class time for parliamentary activities embedded in the students' day, but provision is also made for teachers to provide assistance during lunch breaks. For example, the Year 7 teachers aren't given supervision responsibilities at lunch time because, as Alice says, "we're the parliamentary people." Students make appointments to work with the Year 7 teachers during these sessions if they need any special assistance in the development or execution of a Bill for Parliament.

Alice's commitment to socially-just pedagogies finds expression in not only supporting the Parliament but encouraging the students to engage in critical questions. She relates an example in which some girls in a sports committee proposed a girls' touch football game and in Question Time some proposed that girls lacked the skills for the game. The girls responded that they had already organised to have four weeks of training prior to the game. The Bill was enacted and the game was played with three girls breaking their arms during the season. Alice explores further what happened:

One of the questions in Report Time was "Do you think the reason there were three injuries to the girls was because football is a boys' game?" One of the boys from the Sports Committee responded in the following way: "No, I think there were injuries because the initial preparation time was too short. Injuries just happen in football."

Alice concludes that the students responded to the suggestion in a way that wasn't "gender-biased at all."

Hair-raising risk-taking

Issues of social significance are on the agenda when determining class activities. In the following example, as in the example of the Year 7 Parliament, Alice is part of a whole-school team. Over the last few years there's been a tradition at Alice's school that when the annual Leukaemia Foundation's *Shave for a cure* happens, all teachers do one of two things: they have their heads shaved or they perform a dare if the particular teacher's class is able to raise the amount of money that has been negotiated with the teacher. One year Alice dressed as a duck, a comparatively easy task given what she had to do last year. Last year a student suggested that she could peroxide her hair with the challenge from some students, "You always tell us about taking risks."

And Alice speaks passionately that it's not just about dressing as a duck or having a dramatic change to one's hair style—she's convinced it's connected to students' learning. The students did manage to raise the necessary \$1000 which meant that Alice had to perform the dare. Alice has since spent a considerable sum of money to "recover" her hair, but she sees that the students were impressed with the risk-taking

involved. She was pleased to support them to “own something, to really make a difference.”⁶⁷

Some concluding thoughts

Alice’s pedagogies are attuned to who her particular students are, as well as the issues in the world beyond that are relevant to them. Her pedagogies are characterised by her willingness to reflect on her own practice and to make changes when she needs to. Those changes are often accompanied by some significant values clarification. Alice doesn’t always choose the easy path but the path that she considers will lead to enhancing student learning outcomes.

⁶⁷ Not just rhetoric

This example suggests the expansive spaces that exist in Alice’s practice in order to demonstrate to her students her concern for those suffering serious illness, as well as her capacity to act on the world or as Alice says “to own something, to really make a difference.” This phrase reflects just a small window into Alice’s practice offered by this narrative. Alice takes up discourses that support her and her students to act on the world to reduce suffering and injustice.

6 Storylines that constitute pedagogies

Pedagogy is a lovely-sounding word and it scores well in scrabble.

(Participant comment, Socially-just pedagogy: a forum for sharing ideas, 18 September 2001.)

Ah, pedagogy is a word that demands that you somehow think about it—that you actually have to be reflective....you can say “Oh, I teach” and everyone pretty-well knows what teaching means but pedagogy is like—I can remember when I first read it—I thought, “What the hell is this?” You know and “Is that what it is? Oh, OK.” And then I’d come across it in another reading and I’d look at it again. I don’t know—it’s a difficult word but I think it does demand that you actually look at it and try to work it out...because if it isn’t an invitation to reflect then there’s no point in talking about it.

(Jemma—see Chapter 4)

Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore some of the meanings attached to the term “pedagogy.” One key point needs to be made at the outset: a specific strategy used in these materials is to support participants’ exploration of the nature of pedagogy itself and what might constitute socially-just pedagogies only *after* an examination of the four narratives presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and an investigation of some of the terrain that has shaped the thought and research processes underpinning the study in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Following an exploration of the term pedagogy in this chapter and a discussion of some the implications for socially-just pedagogies emerging from the narratives in Chapter 7, a series of professional learning activities is provided in Chapter 8. These activities, collectively grouped as “TEACH activities” provide opportunities for you, as a participant in these materials, to revisit and, if desired, challenge and reconstitute your own understandings of pedagogy and what might constitute pedagogy generally and socially-just pedagogies specifically. So it is to some descriptors of pedagogy, along with the discourses that are associated with them, that I turn next.

Towards a definition of pedagogy

The study of pedagogy is increasingly attracting attention from those in the academy, as well as people in schools and employing authorities. Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000) suggest the lack of resonance of the term with many educators when they make reference to “the somewhat clumsy term” (p. 96). Along similar lines, Lusted (1986) says that pedagogy is “an ugly word in print and on the tongue” (p. 3). The

scepticism with which some teachers view the term is suggested by the opening quote in this chapter.

Writing in 1986, Lusted proposes that “pedagogy is desperately undertheorised” (p. 3). Despite the work of people like Jennifer Gore (1993), this may still be the case. The contention here is that lack of theorisation results in oppressive circumstances. In other words, without some frame or lens, open itself to interrogation, the practice of pedagogy can be implicated in undemocratic processes and outcomes.

Gore (1993) invites her readers to consider the etymological origin of the word pedagogy, that is, the science of teaching children. Klein (1987) points out that the term, “pedagogue,” was used to describe “a man having oversight of a child or youth...an attendant slave who led a boy to school...a schoolmaster” (p. 187). Gore (1993) claims that this definition relates “to whom is being taught, [while] most commonly ‘pedagogy’ is used interchangeably with ‘teaching’ or ‘instruction’ referring, with various degrees of specificity, to the act or process of teaching” (p. 3). Further, Lusted (1986) proposes that pedagogy is often conceptualised as “coterminous with teaching, merely describing a central activity in an educational system” (p. 2), also adding that it often refers to “no more than a teaching style, a matter of personality and temperament, the mechanics of securing classroom control to encourage learning, a cosmetic bandage on the hard body of classroom contact” (p. 2). To return to an important thread running through these materials, accepting an understanding of pedagogy as merely synonymous with the teaching act, and without any consideration of the myriad ways in which this activity can serve the interests of some while marginalising others, is to deny the classroom, the school or the education enterprise generally as sites for democratic possibilities.

Continuing a central idea in these materials, any definition of pedagogy, or any other concept, is underpinned by particular discourses. As discussed in Chapter 2 and throughout Chapter 5, discourses comprise discursive practices which McLaren (1989) claims “refer to the rules by which discourses are formed, rules that govern what can be said and what must remain unsaid, who can speak with what authority and who must listen” (p. 180). According to Gore (1993), the term “pedagogy...[along with any other term we could propose] has no single meaning in and of itself, and that meaning is always struggled over and determined as it is constructed by particular discourses” (p. 4). Gore (1993) points out that the concept of pedagogy contains two distinct elements: instruction and vision. At least two points are relevant here. First, as suggested above, instruction as a practice cannot be a value-free or neutral activity. That is to say, particular forms of instruction serve the interests of some and marginalise the interests of others. In other words, pedagogy as instruction is informed by some vision or view of the world. Second, it seems that most views of pedagogy that are aligned only with “instruction” offer little explicit vision. Rather such definitions of pedagogy contain implicit visions or views of the world, usually aligned with maintaining the status quo. Pedagogy as science and pedagogy as an art are two such definitions.

Pedagogy as science

Broadly speaking, it is discourses of humanism or positivism that speak pedagogy into existence as “science.” In other words, it cannot be assumed as natural or given that pedagogy be viewed as science, but rather that particular storylines, which draw on scientific discourse, have constituted pedagogy in this way. Pedagogy as science, like any other conceptualisation of pedagogy, represents a particular invitation to truth. It is the nature of this invitation that is explored here. Specifically, storylines such as that based on psychology constitute pedagogy as science.

Psychology, with its focus on “learning theory and educational measurement traditions” (Collins, 1991, p. 6), have spoken pedagogy into existence in particular ways. According to Collins, such “traditions” have been associated with two major problems that emanate from the entrenched and privileged position that psychology has held. First, storylines constituted by psychology have “treated social reality as if it were like natural, physical reality” (p. 5) and “reified linguistic signifiers, such as intelligence, which are primarily part of an ideological ‘map’ of cultural values and purposes, as if such signifiers referred to things like rocks or trees” (p. 5). Second, Collins (1991) proposes that “the focus on the individual, inherent in the psychological tradition is directly responsible for much of the victim blaming which is endemic in our schools” (p. 6). The social justice implications of the constitution of pedagogy through storylines based on psychology is forcefully made by Collins (1991) when she claims that, “failure to learn could therefore be attributed to problems inside the child whereas the experienced curriculum and the broader school structure could be left unexamined as normal, indeed as, once again, natural” (p. 6). Eisner (1983) also rejects scientific, and in particular psychological, discourses as storylines for pedagogy, arguing that teaching or pedagogy as “an art” or “craft” is a more laudable construction.

Eisner (1983) rejects psychological discourses as constituting pedagogy, though not drawing on expression based on the constitutive capacity of language through discourses. Nevertheless, Eisner (1983) rejects the privileged storylines of psychology by carefully laying out the argument against Edward Thorndike’s (1910) application of psychology to the classroom. According to Eisner (1993), Thorndike “did about everything [having] studied children’s drawings...handwriting,...aptitude and motivation, he wrote yards of books and articles, but what he did most was study learning” (p. 6). The regimenting ways in which psychological storylines have impacted upon the experiences of students and teachers in schools is suggested in an extract from Thorndike’s (1910) lead article in the first issue of the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in which he wrote:

A complete science of psychology would tell every fact about everyone’s intellect and character and behaviour, would tell the cause of every change in human nature, would tell the result which every educational force—every act of every person that changed any other or the agent himself—would have. It would aid us to use human beings for the world’s welfare with the same surety of the result that we now have when we use falling bodies or chemical elements. In proportion we get such a science, we shall become masters of heat and light. Progress towards such a science is being made.
(p. 6)

To return to an idea explored in more detail in Chapter 2, Thorndike’s (1910) statement draws on what Lyotard (1984) might refer to as a “metanarrative.” Such a metanarrative represents a grand or all-encompassing story that supposedly applies to all contexts regardless of the socio-cultural or historical circumstances. Specifically, this narrative suggests that discourses associated with “a complete science of psychology” could provide information about a range of educational and other aspects of life, information about “everyone’s intellect and character and behaviour” (Thorndike, 1910, p. 618). Further, Thorndike (1910) explicitly compares psychology’s capacity to understand and control learning with the “surety” of predicting “other” scientific phenomena (p. 618). As far as metanarratives or grand narratives go, this is an exceptionally grand narrative. In other words, such a statement proposes a confidence that psychology can deliver educational understandings and strategies appropriate for all students in all places.

Worth thinking about?

- How important to your classroom practice and understandings are storylines that draw on psychology?
- What aspects of students' lives, or your own life, are marginalised or silenced as a result of a focus on seeing the world through the lens of psychology?

Fraser and Nicholson's (1990) comments that draw on Lyotard's (1984) idea of the metanarrative are instructive here. They say that: "the stress properly belongs on the *meta* and not on the *narrative* [and that]...Enlightenment, Hegelian and Marxist stories...share with other nonnarrative forms of philosophy [a claim to legitimacy independent of] contingent, historical social practices" (Fraser & Nicholson, 1990, p. 22). Moreover, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, some discourses operate or collude with some other discourses, while operating in conflict with others. The operation of discourses in collusion can be seen in Eisner's (1983) claim that, "Thorndike's ideas work[ed] in conceptual tandem with [Francis] Taylor's" (p. 7).

Eisner (1983) points out that "during the same period the concept of scientific management, developed by Francis Taylor and applied to the problems of making industrial plants more efficient, also entered the educational scene" (p. 7). Again, although Eisner (1983) does not employ a theoretical framework that acknowledges the constitutive role of discourses, he explores the ways in which the concept of scientific management increasingly shaped life in educational settings. Employing a poststructural lens, explored in Chapter 2, it is arguable that teachers came to be spoken into existence through industrial metaphors. Consider Eisner's (1983) description of the impact of scientific management on the work of teachers and schools:

Teachers were regarded as workers to be supervised by specialists who made sure that goals were being attained, that teachers were performing as prescribed, and that the public who paid for the schools were getting their money's worth. (p. 7)

Worth thinking about?

- Do you think that Taylorism speaks you into existence as a teacher in today's school settings? If so, in what ways does this happen?

The invitation to see pedagogy as science is just that, an invitation. If as educators we conceptualise pedagogy as a science, scientific discourses constitute what can be said, what cannot be said, what can be done and what cannot be done. In other words, within the notion of pedagogy as science there is an invitation to accept a particular truth. The truth involves what knowledge is appropriate for students and teachers, what strategies are appropriate and inappropriate, what counts as success and failure and so on. Such a discourse provides a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980). Importantly, any other meanings attached to pedagogy, including and perhaps especially those that are privileged in these materials, also represent invitations to truth. Another "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980) associated with pedagogy is the idea of pedagogy as an art.

Pedagogy as an art

The construction of pedagogy as “an art” is another discursively produced conceptualisation of pedagogy that speaks students, teachers and schooling in general into existence in particular ways. Such a construction enjoys hegemonic status within the academy (see Eisner, 1983, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 1997) and employing authorities. To provide an example of the latter, a key Education Queensland (2001c) document, *Years 1–10 Curriculum Framework for Education Queensland Schools: Policy and Guidelines*, simply states that “pedagogy refers to the art of teaching.” The ASCD (1997) proposes that “pedagogy [refers to] the art of teaching, especially [the] conscious use of particular instructional methods” adding that “if a teacher uses a discovery approach rather than direct instruction...she is using a different pedagogy” (p. 77). In addition to conceptualising pedagogy as an art, at least two key points emerge here. First, the construction of pedagogy above suggests a focus on instruction rather than vision. Secondly, the ASCD (1997) suggests a traditional and hegemonic construction of pedagogy as related to “direct instruction” with any alternatives being described as “a different pedagogy” (p. 77).

As explored in the previous section, Eisner (1983) also proposes a conceptualisation of pedagogy as “an art,” rejecting the pedagogy as science notion by arguing that students cannot be regarded as stimuli to which responses are needed. Though using the term “teaching,” Eisner (1983) claims that:

Teaching is too dynamic for the teacher to stop in order to formulate hypotheses or to run through a series of theories to form a productive eclectic relationship among them as the basis for deciding on a course of action. (p. 10)

Specifically, Eisner (1983) lists four reasons for suggesting that teaching is an art. First, he claims that “no science of teaching exists, or can exist, that will be so prescriptive as to make teaching routine” (p. 11). Second, teachers need to read and react to the “dynamic structures of signification that occur” (p. 11). A third factor cited by Eisner (1983) is that teachers “must be able to call on or invent a set of moves that create an educationally productive tempo within a class” (p. 11). Finally, Eisner (1983) claims that “the *artistry* in teaching represents the apotheosis of educational performance” (p. 11, emphasis added). Eisner (1983) advances the analogy when he proposes:

Craftpersons and artists tend to care a great deal about what they do, they get a great deal of satisfaction from the journey as well as from the destination, they take pride in their work, and they are among the first to appreciate quality. (p. 13)

Though there is much that is laudable about the ideas expressed in above quote, the argument here is that such a construction of pedagogy fails to recognise the complex and diverse experience of the range of teachers in a myriad of settings. On his own admission, Eisner (1983) claims to propose an “unabashedly romantic image of teaching” (p. 12). It is suggested here that it is only through a conceptualisation of pedagogy as a socially-constructed or discursive activity that we can begin to propose what might be a meaningful definition of pedagogy.

Pedagogy as discursive activity

So while the focus of this study is to explore the discourses that might be aligned with socially-just pedagogies, it needs to be acknowledged that any definition of pedagogy is itself a product of particular discourses. Using the feminist poststructural lens adopted throughout these materials, the following definition of pedagogy is proposed.

Worth thinking about?

Consider my definition of “pedagogy”:

Within a frame that acknowledges that we shape ourselves and our actions through language, as well as being shaped by such language through the operation of discourses, pedagogies could be considered as dynamic engagements involving teachers and students in often competing and contradictory discourses. The central focus of these discourses is the production and exchange of knowledge. Given the struggle over discourses within any pedagogical intervention, issues of power always exist with pedagogies inevitably constituting political activity.

The above definition also acknowledges the work of Lusted (1986) who highlights the role of students as knowledge producers when he claims that knowledge is not what is offered but what is understood. Subsequently, he defines pedagogy as “the transformation of consciousness that takes place in the interaction of three agencies—the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they produce together” (Lusted, 1986, p. 3). Further, Lusted’s (1986) argument supports the notion of the “agency of the knowledge producers” when he claims that, “if knowledge needs to be conceived as produced in exchange, so too must all agents in its active production be conceived as producers, the divisions between...teaching and learning be dissolved” (p. 5).

A key point here is that “pedagogy” is used in this chapter to refer to more than the technical aspects of teaching. In contrast, what is proposed here is that pedagogy refers to the socially-constructed and, therefore, discursive interaction between the teacher, learners and the knowledge they produce together (Lusted, 1986, p. 3).

Smyth (1994) claims that “pedagogy is both a ‘political’ and a ‘practical’ activity” (p. 4). This idea is reinforced by Freire and Shor (1987) when they claim that, “besides being an act of knowing, education is also a political act [hence]...no pedagogy is neutral” (p. 13). Moreover, the feminist poststructural frame that underpins this work suggests that such knowledge, as well as the processes of its production, are the result of the interplay of complex and often contradictory and contestatory discourses.

Gore’s (1990) work, in particular, offers a useful insight into the conceptualisation of pedagogy as a social construction. To this end, Gore (1990) draws on the work of Lundgren to analyse a scenario involving a physical education lecturer and his tertiary students using a construct which she refers to as “pedagogy as text” (emphasis in original). Such a strategy is based on the belief that all pedagogical interactions can be viewed as “texts,” given Gore’s (1990) use of the term to “refer to the social signs which can be read, signs which indicate to us that a number of things are happening in any given social situation” (p. 103). Hence, such texts are meaningful in that they are located in particular socio-political and historical contexts. Such a perspective denies the view that pedagogy can be a neutral activity, but highlights it as a socially-constructed practice constituted by a range of often competing discourses, including those that enjoy hegemonic status and those that challenge the status quo. Robinson

(1989) encapsulates well the assumption, still dominant in schooling discourses, that it is the challenges to the status quo that are “ideological” when she says that: “once upon a time, the introduction of writings of women and people of color...were called ‘politicizing the curriculum.’ Only we had politics...(and its nasty little mate, ideology), whereas *they* had standards” (p. 319, emphasis in original).

In order to highlight the lens with which she views the scenario, Gore (1990) outlines some of the distinctive qualities of Lundgren’s (1983) conceptualization of “texts *for* pedagogy,” and “texts *about* pedagogy” (emphasis in original) and a category that she proposes, “pedagogy as text” (Gore, 1990). Drawing on the work of Lundgren, Gore (1990) says that texts *for* pedagogy” refer to texts from which teachers could teach, including the formal curriculum (p.103). Again drawing on the work of Lundgren, Gore (1990) reports that “texts *about* pedagogy” focus on describ[ing] and theoriz[ing] about pedagogy and curriculum for teachers and others” (p. 103). In contrast, a third type of text, that of “pedagogy as text...acknowledges multiple readings, multiple realities, and so provides a much fuller portrayal of pedagogy or curriculum than many texts *about* pedagogy (Gore, 1990, p.103). Further, Gore (1990) claims that this construct “insists that meaning is negotiated, found partly in the text and partly in the relation of the ‘reader’ to the text” leading to a “strong reflexivity” (p. 103), asserting that:

pedagogy as text can be taken as part of a critical theory: it can enable full critique (description), it can assist with the naming of alternatives for social transformation (prescription), and it has an immanent sense of its own history, its own limits (reflexivity). (p.103)

The notion that pedagogy, as practised by teachers as well as the examination of what constitutes pedagogy itself, is viewed here as a discursive construction, carries with it many implications for analysis. One significant implication of a framework that recognises the constitutive force of language through discourses is the operation of power. Several comments are warranted here to revisit concepts of knowledge and power explored in greater detail in Chapter 2. Discourses carry with them their own versions of what constitutes truth with the consequent effects of particular knowledge–power relations (Foucault, 1977). Moon (2001) offers further insights when he says that, “power is an effect of unequal relations between people that society recognises as belonging to certain groups. Social practices [or discourses] sort people into a variety of groups” (p. 172). Such power relations can therefore be considered as “unbalanced, heterogeneous, unstable and tense” (Foucault, 1978, 93). It is this lens of the constitutive force of language through discourses and its consequent implications for power relations between people that I find most helpful in working towards understandings of pedagogy and socially-just pedagogies in particular. Such an analytic frame raises questions which include:

- Whose knowledge is valued in a particular pedagogical situation?
- Whose knowledge is silenced or marginalised?
- Which discourses are operating to produce valued knowledges?
- Which discourses are operating to silence or marginalise particular knowledges?
- Who is positioned most favourably in terms of power in a particular pedagogical situation?
- Who is positioned least favourably in terms of power?
- What particular knowledge is most valued in a particular pedagogical situation?
- What particular knowledge is least valued?

Central to these questions are issues of power. As elaborated upon in Chapter 2, a Foucauldian framework posits the view that power is present in all social interactions.

The operation of discourses in their production of knowledge and truth carries with it relations of power. The essence of the relationship between discursive networks and power is suggested by Sneja Gunew (1990) who, drawing on the work of Foucault, claims that “power is reproduced in discursive networks at every point where someone who “knows” is instructing someone who doesn’t know” (p. 22). Further, “power is not an evil in the classroom, something to be shunned or overthrown” (Gore, 2002, p. 7). A central tenet of Gore’s (1993) text, *The struggle for pedagogies*, is that “both in critical pedagogy and in feminist pedagogy there have been two divergent streams of analysis, each producing silencing and regulating effects” (Yates, 1994, p. 431). Drawing on Foucault, Gore (1993) claims that the discourses operating in both critical and feminist pedagogies, like other pedagogies, operate to produce “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980).

As a consequence of the complex ways discourses operate, there is no recipe for socially-just pedagogy. Gore (1993) addresses this issue, which constitutes a thread running through this section, when she says:

As a teacher educator practicing critical and feminist pedagogy, I have wanted to believe that what I am doing is right—it is certainly more difficult to live with uncertainty. But now I am inclined to agree with the function and ethic for the intellectual Foucault proposes: that is, the attempt to constantly question the “truth” of one’s thought and oneself. (p. 11)

This notion might constitute the most important learning, for me at least, from this research: a journey towards socially-just pedagogies might be best made through a continual interrogation of the discourses, which speak us into existence and with which we speak ourselves into existence, as well as an interrogation of the subsequently discursively-produced truths which constantly vie for legitimacy. Consequently, in the following chapter issues which emerged from the commentaries accompanying the narratives are examined in the light of Davies’ (1994) call to “[see] with poststructural eyes” (p. 26). Yates (1994) explicates this process forcefully when she says that, “all that can be done is an ongoing deconstruction of the discourses that reduce our lives, our institutions, our assumptions; and attempt to disrupt the power/knowledge these embody” (p. 430). The necessity to reject one-size-fits-all pedagogies is well argued (see Orner, 1996, Davies, 1994, Ellsworth, 1989). The need to apply a critical lens to one’s pedagogies in terms of the discourses operating and the resultant knowledge–power relations underpins the further discussion which follows in Chapter 7 of some ideas which emerged, for me at least, throughout the commentaries. The notion that strategies or any particular formula will not prove useful in working towards socially-just pedagogies is suggested by Gore (2002) when she says:

overcoming the repressive power relations of pedagogical interaction will not be solved by the simple adoption of different classroom practices [and] the issue is not whether or not certain techniques are used but, rather, how the techniques are used and with what effects. (p. 7)

To reiterate, it is Gore’s (2002) proposal that it is only through an examination of “how [knowledge–power relations] are used and with what effects” (p. 7) that guides my investigation of these issues. So a key focus throughout Chapter 7 is the examination of the invitations to truth that underpin issues that emerge from the teaching narratives. It is in the face of such invitations to truth that the participant in these materials can make some conclusions as to the ways in which the teachers concerned find spaces to practise socially-just pedagogies.

In summary, it is clear that the term, “pedagogy,” means different things to different people. How we define pedagogy, or any other term, is informed by the broad meaning systems in our lives. To reiterate a point made earlier in this chapter, Gore’s

(1993) distinction that writing about pedagogy falls generally into two categories, instruction or vision, is an important point. What I want to do in to conflate these two categories. Definitions of pedagogy as vision offer very explicit views of the world to which particular educators aspire. In contrast, pedagogy as instruction focuses on strategies and techniques that teachers can use. Conceptualisations of pedagogy as science or an art fall ostensibly into the category of instruction. Importantly, however, views of pedagogy as instruction are informed by particular views of the world. It is through a feminist poststructural lens that acknowledges the constitutive force of language through discourses that a framework can be deployed to understand more clearly the effects of particular pedagogies.

7 Storyspaces for socially-just pedagogies

If you haven't got literacy and you haven't got numeracy and you haven't got thinking skills—and I could go on—you haven't got the keys to the power in society. Children have got to have these skills so that in the future they will have a better share of resources in this society and have better lives in this society.

(Tina—see Chapter 4)

Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore some of the ways in which teachers find spaces to practise socially-just pedagogies. As suggested in Chapter 6, the thread running through this discussion is based on the idea that invitations to truth result from the operation of particular discourses. The notion of the invitations to truth is drawn from Foucault's (1980) notion of "regimes of truth." To reiterate an idea explored in Chapter 2 and again in the previous chapter, discourses package knowledge into meaningful and coherent arrangements that, in turn, constitute what counts as truth. For example, if we are involved in strategic planning at our schools, particular knowledge is important and as a consequence what counts as truth is fashioned in a particular way. To draw on a more classroom-based example, if we consider that most of our students pass through certain cognitive stages at set ages, we are drawing on discourses or storylines associated with mainstream psychology. As a result there are strong invitations to truth related to what our students can and cannot do on the basis of psychological *evidence*. And this is certainly not to dismiss the insights that we can gain from psychological storylines, but to recognise such insights as produced from a particular discourse that may not be useful in understanding all students in all contexts. Storylines associated with psychology are explored in Chapter 6.

Teachers in classrooms, and indeed any people involved in any social activity, shape and are shaped by particular discourses: some discourses we embrace while others we resist. It is proposed here that the practice of socially-just pedagogies is aligned with a recognition of pedagogy as a discursive activity that involves an active taking up or resistance of discourses in settings that are always local, complex and changing. The narratives in Chapter 5 offer partial views of the pedagogies that are practised in the classrooms of the four teachers concerned. I refer to these narratives as providing "partial views" of the practice of these teachers because it is impossible for any text to say all that can be said about a particular topic.

Each commentary in Chapter 5 proposes some tentative notions about particular discourses that might be operating to support what could be labelled socially-just pedagogies, as well as discourses that might be operating to stymie such practice. These discourses are "categorised" as generative and regimenting discourses respectively. Such categories are used cautiously with no intention of fixity or

permanence. Indeed, it is important to reiterate a key idea, explored in Chapter 5 that discourses which might appear to operate as generative discourses for a particular person in a particular context might operate in different ways for another person. The same could be said with regard to those discourses categorised as regimenting discourses.

What follows is an exploration of some of the:

1. regimenting discourses which stymie socially-just pedagogies and which are not recognised or resisted by the four teachers (on the basis of the snapshots of their classroom practice afforded by the narratives)
2. regimenting discourses which stymie socially-just pedagogies and which are recognised and resisted by these teachers
3. generative discourses that these teachers take up in place of regimenting discourses.

As such, there are no recipes or definitive statements about socially-just pedagogies here but an exploration of the spaces that teachers have found to practise what might be called socially-just pedagogies and a suggestion of the spaces that these teachers might take up. To restate some methodological considerations explored in Chapter 3, this chapter does not offer an “analysis of data” in any traditional sense. Some of the discourses proposed as operating in these narratives may be familiar to those experienced by participants in these materials, some may not. More importantly, you are invited to explore a process that you might choose to apply to your own circumstances.

Regimenting discourses not recognised or resisted by teachers in these narratives

Despite the obvious commitments to socially-just pedagogies of the teachers whose narratives appear in these materials, there are, of course, powerful discourses which speak students (and teachers) into existence in ways reminiscent of Western schooling’s factory-like origins. And it is instructive to note that macro discourses, defined here as those operating at a societal and schooling system level, exert enormous sway over the discourses as they are played out at the micro- or classroom level. For example, as a result of discourses operating beyond the classroom, students are categorised into batches or year levels and their learning is measured in prescriptive ways. Such practices might appear to be natural and a *common sense* way of doing things. Both Jemma and Alice, for example, rail against discourses of measurement and conformity.

Broad schooling discourses that regiment and control are visible through “poststructural eyes” (Davies, 1994, p. 26) throughout the teaching narratives but not necessarily to the teachers involved. In terms of complicity in regimenting discourses, for example, the need to support students’ learning in conditions which often involve thirty young people in one physical space with one adult are key factors in determining which discourses will aid teacher “control” and student conformity. In such circumstances it is not surprising that teachers draw on some of the dominant discourses available which appear attractive and familiar. Kamler et al. (1994) remind us that “it is salutary to note...that the first infant school in Britain was opened at Westminster in 1819, and was based on the principles of Robert Owen’s school at his ideal factory complex in New Lanark” (p. 25).

Quite apart from the testing and measurement that is increasingly characterising Western classrooms, the very location of young people into age-based cohorts is a regimenting mechanism, that is a socially-constructed rather than natural phenomenon.

Walkerdine (1984) describes a range of significant changes in pedagogy from the late nineteenth century to the present. Specifically, Walkerdine (1984) proposes that the availability of population statistics led to a shift in organisational structures from school rooms to *classrooms*. In practice, this meant that groups of students were no longer mixed-aged groupings but same-age cohorts. This provides an example of the social constructedness of schooling practices which, given that they have been made, can be re-made to better serve student needs.

Take, for example, Jemma's abandonment of traditional forms of seating for students, that is, in rows with the students in full view of, and viewing, the teacher. The students are aware of the authority of the teacher, of the school and of what being a student means. That is to say that, even though the students are *located* at tables, they still remain under the teacher's gaze. Jemma's example of the way she sets guidelines for her students at the beginning of the year with the result that as the year progresses the "processes become internalised" with "the children know[ing] what's expected without there ever having to be a major deal" provides a case in point. Foucault's (1977) notion of disciplinary power is useful here:

Disciplinary power...is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assumes the hold of power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. (p. 187)

Foucault's (1977) notion of the Panopticon, explored in Chapter 2, illustrates the disciplining force of discourses. According to Sarup (1993), "the Panopticon is Foucault's apt metaphor for the anonymous centralization of power" (p. 81). Foucault (1977) draws on Bentham's nineteenth century plan for a structure in which individual prison cells are located around the outside of a building containing a central tower, to illustrate the uses of the disciplinary power of discourse. In the Panopticon the prisoners are able to be seen at all times, but because of backlighting, they are unable to see their observer. According to Foucault (1977), discourses have a similar disciplining effect upon those whom they speak into existence. So these broad schooling discourses of regimentation and conformity coexist with child-centred discourses in which teachers ascribe students as "free," agentic beings, whereas their thoughts and actions are constructed and constrained in powerful ways by those spoken into existence by more powerful discourses.

Like her counterparts in Australia and other places, Jemma accepts an invitation to truth which is underpinned by the authority of the teacher and the acquiescence of the students, but within an atmosphere of child-centredness. Despite the apparent agency of the students, the knowledge–power relations are always pitted in favour of the teacher. The invitation of these broad schooling discourses is so powerful that for most of the time and for most of its members, the class conforms to these arrangements. This is not to say that Jemma's disciplinary power, while controlling, cannot also be seen as generative. Jemma exerts power in order to structure the students' learning. What might be useful in our classrooms is an exploration of the knowledge–power relations and specifically the ways in which ostensibly "free" students are positioned. As Gore (1993) stresses, it is the effects of such knowledge–power relations that warrants our investigation (p. 7). The comment made by Jemma's student that "we can do anything" is another example of a discourse not recognised or resisted.

Students/girls “can-do-anything”

In examining the Year 2 student’s comment that they can do anything, useful parallels can be made with a similar call, drawn upon as a rallying point for the achievement of greater gender equity in schools. A “girls can do anything” approach emanates from a solidly liberal feminist platform in which there is little or no critique of existing structures or cultures. Rather such an approach presupposes a deficit in terms of girls’ capacities to succeed within masculine and masculinised contexts. This slogan was probably abandoned for two main reasons by those advocating gender reform. First, it fails to acknowledge the structural and cultural barriers that get in the way of success for girls and for others. For example, the inability of working-class or Indigenous girls to gain particular employment could be seen as their lack of the prerequisite “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1977). Hence, we need to look to the nature of the structures and cultures themselves and consider the ways in which particular groups are advantaged or disadvantaged. Second, such an approach places all girls into one category without recognition of their diversity in terms of ethnicity, class, location and so on.

A study by Teese, Davies, Charlton & Polesel (1995) entitled *Who wins at school? Boys and girls in Australian secondary education* presents a major challenge to the usefulness of the “girls can do anything” approach. In this study, Teese et al. (1995) propose that there is a range of factors, including socio-economic status that operate to influence the ways that gender impacts on the schooling outcomes of Australian students. Just in the same way that the “girls can do anything” approach marginalises the significance of structural and cultural barriers that intersect with gender to produce advantage or disadvantage, 2B’s “we can do anything” mindset might be silencing some key forces that operate in students’ lives.

That is not to say that as educators we should burden seven year-olds with consideration of the barriers that are getting in the way of their success! However perhaps as educators we need to be mindful of our role in contributing to unproductive notions about what is needed for “success.” Perhaps such statements that “we can do anything” are not innocent but fuel a belief that if particular individuals do not succeed that they are in some way deficit. And a key tenet of feminist poststructural theorising is that we are spoken into existence in particular ways and some of these social constructions position us more favourably than do others to succeed in certain areas.

The discourses underpinning notions that “we can do anything” intersect with those associated with liberalism which valorises the individual. McWilliam (1999) points out that “in the common sense of our Western culture, we are all *individuals* (p. 26, emphasis in original). Further, McWilliam (1999) suggests that our Western conceptualisation of those people in our *classes* as individuals first, rather than as members of particular groups, carries significant implications for pedagogy. “We try to engage with students as *separate* beings, each with identifiable ‘needs’ and abilities...[thus speaking teachers into existence as] know[ing] about the *norms* of any particular age and stage” (p. 26, emphasis in original).

The subsequent alliance between liberalism, modernist Western conceptualisations of teaching and psychology can be traced to this focus on the individual in contrast to other ways of being possible and practised in the world (see McWilliam, 1999 for a discussion of teaching practices complicit in the production of *individuals*). What might be said here is that the students in Jemma’s class in saying that they “can do anything” are operating within a discursive regime that lines them up on an apparently level playing field with a marginalising or silencing of the range of differences that position some more favourably than others to “do school.” A feminist

poststructural reading would suggest that Jemma's students are not alone in taking up a discourse that suggests that if individual students are *performing* at the norms that are expected of students at particular ages and stages, there exists some deficiency.

It could be claimed that socially-just pedagogies might be associated with a questioning of storylines which draw on psychology, and which are bolstered by an emphasis on individuality and a faith in liberalism as a deliverer of economic, social and political betterment. In contrast, socially-just pedagogies might involve an understanding of the various locations of the students in our class groups in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, physical dis/ability and so on. Such a lens would be compatible with a poststructural view of the world which acknowledges the role that language plays in creating the social realities in which we live.

Some regimenting discourses recognised and resisted by the teachers in these narratives

There are numerous examples throughout the narratives of teachers resisting very explicit regimenting discourses and working within generative spaces. For example, Jemma challenges the notion that schooling can be regarded as a business. Discourses of economic rationalism in relation to schooling are suggested in Jemma's challenging of economic discourses that she believes are becoming increasingly important at her school at the expense of educational considerations. Again, it is important to note that what occurs in Jemma's classroom and at her school is not the result of some ahistorical phenomena but is the product of contemporary socio-cultural and historical circumstances. Jemma draws parallels between the marketisation of her school environment and that of a child-care centre with which she has close links. This significant discursive shift with regard to the way in which child-care centres are spoken into existence is alluded to in the popular media in which a columnist, Anne Summers (2002), writes:

In what has become known as the corporatisation of child care, these private companies are aggressively edging out small private operators and the community-based not-for-profits from a sector that suddenly has become big business....Today the lobbyists [for Federal child care funding] are more likely to be men in suits, often with high-level Liberal Party connections, seeking to protect their investments in what is a rapidly expanding and lucrative industry. (p. 11)

Educational literature too contains challenges to this broad discursive shift from educational to business discourses as speaking schools and classrooms, teachers and students into existence. Smyth (1993) for example, questions the appropriateness of business discourses dominating what goes on in schools when he proposes that hegemonic business values privilege beliefs that:

- the only thing that matters is the bottom line
- profit and material gain are more important than compassion
- competitive individualism is to be valued above collaboration
- private rates of return rank ahead of the common good
- the strong should survive and the weak go to the wall
- what counts in the final analysis, is measurement of output or outcomes. (p. 12)

Economic forces, including the need to make increased profits from the schooling enterprise translates in very physical ways in Jemma's classroom. The importance of maximising revenue means that Jemma has 31 students in her classroom. She has a very strong sense of the ways in which the physical layout and space available for

learning in the classroom have a significant impact on the type of pedagogies she practises. Jemma's capacity to challenge the routine ways in which teaching and learning are spoken into existence is evidenced by her use of a bathtub in her classroom. That she encourages students to relax comfortably and cushioned in the bathtub shows a commitment to disrupt traditional schooling discourses—to some extent—that would have students regimented into rows. Teachers like Jemma carve out spaces, metaphorically (and literally in the case of the bathtub!), in the pursuit of socially-just pedagogies.

Jemma's reflections appear to indicate that economic rationalist discourses exert a significant presence in her classroom. Further, it would seem that her subjectivities as an educator and a mother position her to challenge the material and emotional impacts of students being spoken into existence in terms of economics. This is not to say that economic considerations do not have a place in schools, but it is the pervasiveness of such a discourse in teaching and learning that is a moot point. In this case, it would seem that Jemma's resistance of economic discourses, which are described in her narrative in regimenting ways, reflects a commitment to socially-just pedagogies. Jemma challenges the ways in which students are spoken into existence, as well as the ways in which she is spoken into existence as a teacher as a result of a pervasiveness of economic discourses.

The regulating discourses associated with standardised testing are recognised and resisted, in terms of accepting an invitation to truth by both Alice and Jemma. These teachers refuse to accept the idea that externally-mandated standardised testing is associated with worthwhile learning in their classrooms. By doing so, they are resisting this particular invitation to truth, that is, the efficacy of one-size-fits-all testing with its claim to categorise students so that meaningful interventions can occur. Such resistance to this discourse has its limitations. If Jemma and Alice wish to continue their employment, such complicity is essential. Monica also provides an example of resistance to hegemonic discourses.

In the case of the Year 12 student who wrote a particularly violent text in response to a writing task, Monica resisted a dominant schooling discourse that suggests that such writing does not have a place as an assessment piece. Monica resisted this invitation to truth about what constitutes an assessment task, about what can be said, what cannot be said and so on. In resisting this discourse she supported the student to reflect on his own traumatic experiences of violence. There was a clear demarcation, however, of the extent to which Monica was able and prepared to resist the dominant schooling discourses. Her advice to the student was not to draw on these experiences in the writing task of the Queensland Core Skills Test.

Monica's experience suggests a key aspect of socially-just pedagogies: when do we challenge dominant discourses which in the short term might position our students or ourselves in less than favourable ways? As a dedicated professional with a sophisticated understanding of the need to support students to make connections between their language learning and the worlds they inhabit, Monica could resist discourses operating within the local context, but adopted a more pragmatic approach in her support of her student as he negotiated the regimenting mechanisms of the Queensland Core Skills Test. Monica demonstrates a very acute awareness of the discourses that speak her and her students into existence, as well as those that they draw on in order to constitute themselves. This is not surprising given that Monica teaches Year 11 and 12 English and has been engaged, and indeed has led, significant pedagogical reform as a result of syllabus changes. Engagement in such curriculum reform, with its emphasis on text deconstruction and reconstruction, appears to support teachers in their own critical reflection of their practice.

Generative discourses taken up in place of regimenting discourses

The teachers in these narratives work in a myriad of ways to support their students' learning in what might be regarded as socially-just ways. For example, the work that Jemma plans to undertake in terms of portfolios of student work, including digital images, reflects the complexity of re-presenting students' knowledge and skills. Jemma's action in relation to "Alex," a boy experiencing Attention Deficit Disorder provides an example of the complexity of working within and against particular discourses and the consequent invitations to truth. Jemma's actions appear to be in contrast to those of her colleague who constructed Alex as deviant, out of control, a behaviour management problem and so on. Jemma talks about the generative spaces which she found to support his learning. For example, she encouraged his leadership within the class in terms of art, expecting the best from him. The actions of Jemma's colleague from another school appeared to rest essentially on regimenting his behaviour. Jemma in contrast appeared to find generative spaces, but also drew on regimenting discourses. "Have you had him medicated?" her colleague asked to which Jemma replied that she had "for half the time." This feminist poststructural reading suggests the way in which complex, and often contradictory, discourses operate in our lives.

There are powerful discourses apparent in Tina's narrative that suggest the ways in which she resists particular discourses and takes up others in order to practise what we might call socially-just pedagogies. Tina's narrative draws attention to the strong invitation she feels exists within society to assume that those most affluent in our society deserve a better education than do those positioned less favourably. Tina's resistance to this discourse is apparent throughout the narrative. For example, she finds generative spaces in a range of discourses within and beyond the classroom. Within the classroom she engages in generative discourses that draw on critical literacy approaches which involve her own and her students' resistant reading of texts. Further, Tina makes the links for her students and for her colleagues in terms of the connections between literacy and numeracy and power within society. Beyond the classroom, Tina works with her employing authority to develop further professional standards for teachers with the resultant goal of improving state education. She also works with her union to develop policy and conditions to improve the conditions under which public teachers work. Tina's work beyond the classroom is explored later in this chapter with particular reference to Sach's (2000) notion of the "activist professional."

Alice, too, provides an instructive example of the way in which teachers resist regimenting discourses and work within generative spaces to practise socially-just pedagogies. Alice's actions as she worked with a student whom she had labelled "a bully" demonstrate her resistance to regimenting discourses that speak the teacher into existence as always being right. The "teacher-as-infallible" discourse might be a useful descriptor here. Dominant and traditional schooling discourses operate to ensure as far as possible that the teacher is regarded as the one who knows all and whose actions are always the preferred ones. When confronted with a student's challenge to her actions, Alice rejected the "teacher-as-infallible" discourse and interrogated her own actions and values in seeking to act in socially-just ways. The generative spaces that Alice found and worked within involved the student's engagement, along with his peers, in an anti-bullying program and a re-working of her own strategies in similar subsequent situations. Alice's resistance of regimenting discourses and her taking up of generative ones was probably influenced by a range of subjectivities, not the least of which is her capacity to learn new ways to do things and new ways of being.

Critical literacies—a generative discourse deployed by these teachers

A common theme underpinning the pedagogies of the four teachers is the use of critical literacy in their classrooms as a generative discourse. This is most obvious in Monica's classroom, but clearly a key discourse in the pedagogies of the other three teachers. Critical literacy approaches operate in generative ways in contrast to traditional literacy approaches. Such traditional approaches with their surety about what counts as truth and canonical knowledge operate in regimenting ways.

Critical literacy could be defined as a recognition that all texts, including written, visual and oral ones, are social constructions and as such re-present the viewpoints and interests of some groups and marginalise or silence those of other groups. Critical literacy supports the reader to read resistantly or "against the grain" (Cochran-Smith, 1991). In other words, texts, to varying extents, make persuasive invitations to the reader to accept the truth of particular viewpoints.

What is involved in the practice of critical literacy and how it is linked to the work of teachers like Monica to produce a "more just world" (Monica, Chapter 4) is suggested by Morgan (1997, pp. 1–2) whose comments are worthy of quoting at length:

Critical literacy critics and teachers focus on the cultural and ideological assumptions that underwrite texts, they investigate the politics of representation, and they interrogate the inequitable, cultural positioning of speakers and readers within discourses. They ask who constructs the texts whose representations are dominant in a particular culture at a particular time, how readers come to be complicit with the persuasive ideologies of texts; whose interests are served by such representations and such readings; and when such texts and readings are inequitable in their effects, how these could be constructed otherwise. They seek to promote the conditions for a different textual practice and therefore different political relations than present social, economic and political inequalities as these are generated and preserved by literacy practices within and beyond formal education.

Monica's words encapsulate this intersection between socially-just pedagogies and students' interrogation of texts, including an exploration of their own positioning, in such an endeavour when she says:

We talk about social justice in terms of text. Whose voices are marginalised in the text? Whose interest is best represented? Is this just? Is this fair? If you were writing this text from your encultured background would it be different? Why?

Tina's example of her students' critique of a news item about school sport provides a further example of the use of critical literacies as a generative discourse. Tina's practice demonstrates the ways in which critical literacies can be used to challenge hegemonic views about taken-for-granted activities such as school sport, supporting students to appreciate how such activities can serve the needs of some groups and marginalise the needs of others.

Some understandings related to socially-just pedagogies

My learnings from the narratives themselves, as well as the commentaries in Chapter 5 and the explorations in this chapter, which draw on feminist poststructural theorising, suggest that socially-just pedagogies are aligned with understandings by teachers generally that:

1. discourses operate in complex ways in school settings and in the wider society
2. teachers' own subjectivities influence and are influenced by discourses
3. some discourses operate in regimenting ways to inhibit socially-just pedagogies
4. some discourses operate in generative ways, to support socially-just pedagogies.

Further, my learnings from the narratives, commentaries in Chapter 5 and the explorations in this chapter suggest that the practice of socially-just pedagogies is related to key *action* areas based on:

1. the identification of discourses as they operate, resistance to those which are regimenting and inhibit socially-just pedagogies, and work within those identified as generative
2. work beyond the classroom in which teachers act to challenge and change regimenting discourses.

If the combined practice of the four teachers, whose narratives appear in these materials, is considered, examples of each of the above understandings and key action areas are apparent. To further the exploration in this chapter of generative spaces for socially-just pedagogies, I examine the nature of work beyond the classroom to challenge and change discourses which inhibit socially-just pedagogies. In order to do this, I draw on Tina's narrative and its resonance with Sachs's (2000) notion of the "activist professional."

Action for socially-just practice

In the above section I propose four important understandings, as well as two key action areas that I consider to be pivotal to the practice of socially-just pedagogies. It is in relation to the action in terms of work beyond the classroom to challenge and change regimenting discourses, which inhibit socially-just pedagogies, that I now turn. To consider such action in greater depth I utilise Sach's (2000) notion of the "activist professional." Drawing on the work of Preston, Sachs (2000) proposes that "in Australia, government policy regarding teacher professional development and the underpinning notions of teacher professionalism has been informed by two dominant discourses: democratic professionalism and managerial professionalism" (p. 78).

Claiming that the discourse of managerial professionalism is the more dominant of the two, Sachs (2001) describes it as tied up with demands for increased accountability, along with improved efficiency and effectiveness. Further, Sachs (2001) argues that policy-making related to devolution and decentralisation has fuelled managerial professionalism. Brennan (1996) provides a snapshot of what a professional constituted by this form of discourse might be like when she describes:

A professional who clearly meets corporate goals, set elsewhere, manages a range of students well and documents their achievements and problems for public accountability purposes. The criteria of the successful

professional in this corporate model is of one who works efficiently and effectively in meeting the standardised criteria set for the accomplishment of both students and teachers, as well as contributing to the school's formal accountability processes. (p. 22)

The examples of resistance in the teacher narratives in these materials—at least at the level of an invitation to truth—to standardised testing, large class sizes and so on reflect a rejection by these teachers of managerial professionalism. Sachs (2001) draws on the work of Apple (1996) who proposes a form of teacher professionalism, namely democratic professionalism, which emanates from teachers themselves as opposed to responses to impositions from employing authorities. Sachs (2001) describes this form of professionalism as “emphas[ing]...collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders” (p. 153). Brennan (1996) further elaborates this idea when she highlights that teachers who subscribe to this form of professionalism have professional interests and commitments between their own classrooms in order to act for the betterment of students and teachers generally. Sachs's (2000) notion of the “activist professional” is strongly aligned with discourses associated with democratic professionalism.

A key message in this chapter is that the practice of socially-just pedagogy must inevitably be connected to not only the resistance of regimenting discourses and work within generative spaces, but to specific action to challenge and change regimenting discourses. Examples can be drawn from Tina's narrative which explicates the characteristics proposed by Sachs (2000) as those of an activist teacher professionalism. What follows is an exploration of those characteristics,⁶⁸ along with a discussion of the ways in which Tina's narrative provides examples of these.

Inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness [of a range of groups pivotal to improvement of student outcomes] and collective and collaborative action (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Tina's narrative abounds with examples of the alliances she forges with a range of groups who have a vested interest in schooling. For example, Tina makes references to the ways in which she works with specific parents to support their children's engagement in school. Further, Tina discusses her work with her employer to trial and enhance the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (Education Queensland, 2001a). As well, Tina's work as a union representative in two main areas is outlined: she represents the union at her workplace, but also engages in union business at a deeper level through involvement in policy formulation. Tina's professionalism extends to membership in other professional groups, such as the Association of Women Educators who work to improve outcomes for women and girls in education. Involvement in the collaborative development of the narrative itself is testament to Tina's work with her university-based colleagues in education.

Effective communication of aims, expectations (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Throughout Tina's narrative there are examples of her capacity to articulate what she is working for in terms of the type of learning she wants for her students as well as those beyond her classroom, as well as the capacity of schooling to produce a more just society.

⁶⁸ Some of these characteristics have been combined from Sach's (2000) original in order to discuss Tina's practice more holistically.

Recognition of the expertise of all parties involved and creat[ion of] an environment of trust and mutual respect (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Tina's work as a teacher and an activist is typified by a recognition of the expertise of the range of groups with whom she works. While Tina appears to work towards creating an environment of trust with these groups, she appears to be suspicious of the trust she is able to have in her employing authority. At least two points are worth mentioning here. First, the fact that Tina draws attention to whether or not she can rely on support from her employer if she "made one mistake, talked out of turn and got a particularly active parent who decided to take an issue to the local paper," suggests her recognition of the need to operate in an environment of trust. Second, some degree of wariness might in fact be a worthwhile quality of an activist professional. Scott (1999) for example, talks of "wary trust," proposing that, "if scepticism is the antonym of trust, then certain forms of civic courage that have their origin in a calculated distrust of authority are valuable democratic resources" (p. 276).

Being responsive and responsible (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Throughout Tina's narrative the reader is invited to appreciate the ways in which Tina responds to issues associated with students' learning in both direct and indirect ways. In terms of matters indirectly influencing student learning, Tina is responsive to a range of issues, including the impact of masculinities of male students on their learning and that of her female students, the ways in which teaching standards can be used to enhance practice and so on.

Acting with passion and experiencing pleasure and fun (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Tina's practice and the talk about that practice are infused with passion, as well as a sense of pleasure and fun. Her passion is most overtly demonstrated in her actions to enhance state education so that the range of young people within society can have access to the best education possible. Tina notes that "public education needs to attract good teachers, to attract passionate teachers and to attract people who don't want an easy ride." Tina's specific concerns that students in public schools have literacy and numeracy skills, for example, so that "in the future they will have a better share of resources in this society and have better lives in this society" reflects the passion of her commitment to socially-just pedagogies. Further, as Tina shares her experiences as a teacher, the sense of the pleasure she experiences in her profession is obvious.

The activist professional: Some concluding comments

Tina's practice, as reflected in the narrative presented in these materials, explicates the role of the "activist professional" (Sachs, 2000). Tina is obviously committed to schooling as a vehicle for creating a more just society and works towards this both within and beyond her classroom. Tina provides an example of an activist professional who is able "to defend and understand [herself] better" (Sachs, 2000, p. 93). Further, Tina's work towards greater social justice can be understood further by Sachs' (2000) proposal that, "the activist professional creates new spaces for action and debate, and in so doing improves the learning opportunities for all of those who are recipients or providers of education" (p. 93). It is this work within and beyond our own classrooms that is a key focus of these materials. Specifically, the focus promoted in these materials to do such work is based on teachers' understanding of the discourses with which they are constituted and with which they constitute themselves. Some practical activities are provided in the following chapter to support participants in these materials to do just that.

8 From reflection to action

Pedagogy: more than TEACHing

A key invitation to participants in these materials is the notion that pedagogies are dynamic engagements involving teachers and students in often competing and contradictory discourses that are related to knowledge in some way. To reiterate a central idea explored in Chapter 6, particular constructions of pedagogy currently used are unhelpful and potentially harmful. The notion of pedagogy as “an art” for example neglects the key role that contemporary values, some of which are contested, about the role of the teacher, the role of the student and the type of knowledge that is deemed to be worthy, play in the practice of pedagogy. The notion of pedagogy as “science” is also unhelpful at best and harmful at worst. The notion of pedagogy as science is built within the storylines constructed by psychology with its reliance on ages and stages as categories into which learners must fit. An invitation in these materials is that pedagogies are the result of taking up particular discourses and rejecting other discourses. In this chapter, the participant in these materials is invited to consider their own pedagogies with the view to making changes where they consider such change is necessary.

This chapter consists of a range of practical strategies to support you to consider the pedagogies you practise with a focus on how these pedagogies might be reconstructed to enhance your students’ learnings. The decisions on whether to reconstruct your pedagogies and how to carry out such changes are yours to make. Consider the TEACH activities which follow as an invitation to reflect on your pedagogies and to take action in ways you consider appropriate. There is no suggestion here that these activities should be viewed as prescriptive or “the” way to explore socially-just pedagogies. To pursue such a path would contradict the intention of these materials. Hargreaves (1994) advocates judgement by teachers in their own professional learning when he says:

If teachers are told what to be professional about, how, where and with whom to collaborate, and what blueprint of professional conduct to follow, then the culture that evolves will be foreign to the setting. They will once again have “received” a culture. (p. 189, see also Nayler & Bull, 2000)

Working through the TEACH activities

The TEACH activities below are organised under five headings:

Tune into understanding and enhancing your pedagogies

Explore your own and others' pedagogies

Analyse your own pedagogies

Challenge your own pedagogies

Hone your own pedagogies.

There is provision in the accompanying text, *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces* (Nayler, 2003c) for you to record your own responses to the tasks in this chapter.

Tune into understanding and enhancing your pedagogies

A key question

Why bother investigating our pedagogies?

Possible responses

According to Education Queensland (2001b), “Community expectation for learning that prepares students for the complexity of modern life means teachers must continually renew their pedagogy and skills” (p. 9).

Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000) claim “we have developed the concept of ‘productive pedagogies’ as a way to reflect upon which pedagogies might make a difference for different groups of students....Our argument is that we must try to get an understanding of those pedagogies that make a difference and which thus incorporate conceptions of social justice into classroom practice” (pp. 96–97).

Activity

Task: Teachers at the movies

Background

Sometimes it’s easier to look at other people’s pedagogies before we look at our own. The following activity invites you to consider various pedagogies by examining characters from television and film. Specifically, this activity requires that you consider the discourses operating in relation to a fictional character. The idea of discourses is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Moon’s (2001) definition provides a good reminder. He says that “discourses do not offer neutral descriptions of the world. They represent the world from certain viewpoints. They also compete with one another for control of certain aspects of life” (Moon, 2001, p. 36).

Steps

1. Select one of the characters below with which you are familiar or another character who plays a teacher in film.

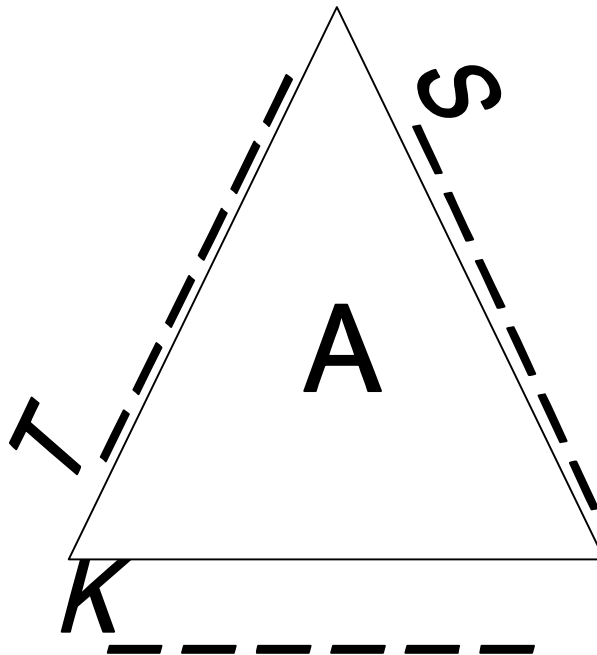
Characters from film

- John Keating from *Dead Poets Society*
- Jamie Escalante from *Stand and Deliver*
- Miss Riley from *October Sky*
- Jean Brodie from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
- Mark Thackeray from *To Sir with Love*
- LouAnne Johnson from *Dangerous Minds*

TEACH activities continued

Steps continued

2. Respond to the questions that follow.
 - a. How would you describe this teacher? How is the teacher spoken into existence? What are the particular discourses that appear to be operating? (For example, John Keating, is spoken into existence in terms of discourses associated with academic success, privilege and wealth, maintaining tradition and so on.)
 - b. How does the teacher speak her/himself into existence? (John Keating challenges discourses associated with rote learning and transmission teaching generally.⁶⁹)
 - c. How would you describe the pedagogies this teacher practises? How do they reflect the discourses that the teacher takes up? How do these pedagogies reflect the discourses the character resists?
 - d. Take this teacher to TASK! Use the diagram below to record what you consider to be (T) the role of the teacher, (S) the role of the student, (K) the knowledge that is valued and (A) the attitudes and values that underpin the teacher's pedagogies.



⁶⁹ Giroux (1993) examines his own class's exploration of the pedagogies evident in this film in a thought-provoking chapter entitled "Reclaiming the social: Pedagogy, resistance and politics in celluloid culture."

Explore your own and others' pedagogies

A key question

How can we explore our pedagogies?

Possible responses

One way of understanding our own pedagogies with a view to possibly “transforming” them is to write narratives or stories about teaching. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995):

What is missing in the classroom is a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories of teaching. The classroom can become a place of endless, repetitive living out of stories without possibility for awakenings and transformations. (p. 13)

Of course, writing narratives won't suit everyone and it is just one way of exploring our pedagogies. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) point out that like any narrative, a teaching narrative has a plot, setting, characters, theme and style (p. 3). Importantly though, teaching narratives “move beyond basic elements and into the realm of reflections on teaching” (p. 3). Such reflections upon teaching draw upon the writer's past experiences, articulate present concerns and offer some suggestion regarding improved practice in the future. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), time and place are central to a narrative. They say, “Time and place become written constructions in the form of plot and scene respectively. Time and place, plot and scene, work together to create the experiential quality of narrative” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8).

Activity

Task: Write on

Steps

1. Read some teaching narratives written by others before you start to write yours. There are a few suggestions following about where you can find some teaching narratives. There is provision in the companion text, *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces*, for you to record your reflections regarding narratives which relate to the pedagogies of Jemma, Monica, Tina and Alice. You'll also find comments there by these teachers about their own narratives and each other's narratives.
2. Choose a topic from those below—or use another topic—and write a narrative. Remember you can write the narrative for your eyes only. Alternatively, you might decide to share your narrative with a colleague. This colleague might respond orally or in written form to your narrative, giving you a great stimulus for further professional dialogue (see below for some material that explores the nature of narratives and their use in professional learning).

TEACH activities continued

Resources: Teaching narratives

- National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning. (1996a). *Case studies illustrating National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*. Sydney: Australian Teaching Council.
These are relatively short and focus on pedagogies across early childhood, middle and post-compulsory years.
- Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
The narratives in this text vary in length and focus on the learnings of the writers.
- Louden, W. & Wallace, J. (1996). *Quality in the classroom: Learning about teaching through case studies*. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder Education.
The narratives are organised around the *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching* (National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, 1996b).
- Narratives presented in Chapter 4 of these materials.
Collaboratively-developed narratives reflect the pedagogies of each of four practising teachers: Jemma, Tina and Alice (primary teachers) and Monica (a secondary teacher).

Possible ideas for teaching narratives

- A critical incident that led you to reconsider your role as a teacher*
- What matters most in teaching
- How your own experiences as a school student have shaped the teacher you are today
- The most challenging student you've ever had
- The most challenging school context in which you've ever worked
- An unresolved issue related to a student from a previous class. What issues regarding this student's learning continue to challenge you?*

*Modified from Jalongo & Isenberg (1995).

TEACH activities continued

If you'd like to read more about the nature of narratives and their use in professional learning, the resources listed below might be helpful.

Resources related to the narrative itself

- Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 5–12.
- Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2–14.
- Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- You'll find further references related to the value of narratives in Chapter 3.

Analyse your own pedagogies

A key question

What frameworks or lenses can we use to analyse our pedagogies?

Possible responses

There are numerous ways in which pedagogies can be “analysed.” Just two approaches are discussed here. First, Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) provide a possible framework (see Chapter 1 for further details). It is the contention here that the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) make available a teaching framework which integrates social justice within rather than separate from the pedagogical process (see Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000). The task, Report card time, supports you to use the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) to analyse your pedagogies. A second approach, which is used in Chapter 5, involves the writing of commentaries written alongside the narratives to propose the possible discourses operating in each. The task, Writing commentaries, adopts this approach.

Activities

Task: Report card time

Background

Consider completing this activity in relation to someone else’s pedagogies before you apply it to your own. You could complete a “report card” using a range of stimulus materials, other than a narrative about teaching. For example, you could use a unit of work, a video recording of your practice, a colleague’s observation notes of your lesson and so on. If you used a range of stimulus texts for developing your “report card,” you would see a pattern emerging in terms of your pedagogical strengths and areas for improvement in terms of your pedagogies.

Steps

1. Peruse the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in Table 5. (You might like to peruse the resources below before you start in order to enhance your understandings of the Productive Pedagogies.)
2. Use the resources below to clarify any terminology.
3. Look for examples of each element of the Productive Pedagogies in the narrative (or other form of text) under scrutiny.
4. Record a rating on the “report card” to reflect your view of the extent to which each element is practised, with “5” indicating high use of an element and “1” suggesting minimal use.
5. Jot down your reasons for selecting the particular ratings in the final column.

TEACH activities continued

Resources

- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001a). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study*. The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001b). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership—Teachers' summary* compiled by Land, R. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
You will find detailed discussion about the literature which informed the development of the Productive Pedagogies by referring to Chapter 1, “Theoretical rationale for the development of productive pedagogies: A literature review” in QSRLS (2001c).
- *A guide to Productive Pedagogies: Classroom reflection manual* (2002). The State of Queensland (Curriculum Implementation Unit, Education Queensland).
This publication will give you some ideas regarding “rating” the extent to which a particular element of the Productive Pedagogies is evident.
- In addition, there are references to the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) throughout the commentaries which appear in Chapter 5.

Table 5: Productive Pedagogies

Intellectual quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher-order thinking <i>Is higher-order thinking occurring during the lesson? Is there evidence of conceptual depth, not content?</i> 2. Deep knowledge <i>Does the lesson cover operational fields in any depth, detail or level of specificity?</i> 3. Deep understanding <i>Do the work and response of the students provide evidence of depth of understanding of concepts or ideas?</i> 4. Substantive conversation <i>Does classroom talk lead to sustained conversational dialogue between students, and between teachers and students, to create or negotiate understanding of subject matter?</i> 5. Knowledge as problematic <i>Are students critiquing and second-guessing texts, ideas and knowledge?</i> 6. Metalanguage <i>Are aspects of language, grammar and technical vocabulary being foregrounded?</i>
Connectedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Knowledge integration <i>Does the lesson integrate a range of subject areas?</i> 8. Background knowledge <i>Are links with students' background knowledge made explicit?</i> 9. Connectedness to the world <i>Is the lesson, the activity or task connected to competencies or concepts beyond the classroom?</i> 10. Problem-based curriculum <i>Is there a focus on identifying and solving intellectual and/or real-world problems?</i>
Supportive classroom environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Student direction <i>Do students determine specific activities or outcomes of the lesson?</i> 12. Social support <i>Is the classroom characterised by an atmosphere of mutual respect and support among teachers and students?</i> 13. Academic engagement <i>Are students engaged and on task during the lesson?</i> 14. Explicit quality performance criteria <i>Are the criteria for judging the range of student performance made explicit?</i> 15. Self-regulation <i>Is the direction of student behaviour implicit and self-regulatory?</i>
Recognition of difference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Cultural knowledges <i>Are non-dominant cultural knowledges valued?</i> 17. Inclusivity <i>Are deliberate attempts made to increase the participation of the diversity of students?</i> 18. Narrative <i>Is the style of teaching principally narrative or is it expository?</i> 19. Group identity <i>Does the teaching build a sense of community and identity?</i> 20. Citizenship <i>Are attempts made to foster active citizenship within the classroom?</i>

Source: Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001b). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership—Teachers' summary* compiled by Land, R. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland), p. 6.

Table 6: The report card

Report card forbased on (narrative or other stimulus text)

Completed by

Productive Pedagogies element	Your rating (1–5)	Reasons for awarding this rating
Intellectual quality		
Higher-order thinking		
Deep knowledge		
Deep understanding		
Substantive conversation		
Knowledge as problematic		
Metalanguage		
Connectedness		
Knowledge integration		
Background knowledge		
Connectedness to the world		
Problem-based curriculum		
Supportive classroom environment		
Student direction		
Social support		
Academic engagement		
Explicit quality performance criteria		
Self-regulation		
Recognition of difference		
Cultural knowledges		
Inclusivity		
Narrative		
Group identity		
Citizenship		

(Source of Productive Pedagogies: QSRLS, 2001b)

Comments

..... 's pedagogical strengths appear to be in the areas of

.....

There may be room for improvement in the area of

.....

Signed:

TEACH activities continued

Task: Writing commentaries

Background

This technique of writing a commentary is used in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5 I represent each narrative with a commentary along the bottom half of each page. I wrote these commentaries by considering how the people in the narrative (teacher, students and others) appeared to be spoken into existence and how they spoke themselves into existence. I drew on relevant literature where I could. Below is an extract from Chapter 5.

An extract from Alice's narrative:

The kids can often pick their own topics and design their own project questions using process verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy. They organise their own timeframes. They organise their medium for presentations. They organise whether they work individually or with partners or in teams. We have conversations like: "Well, I'm not really good at writing stuff, so can I present my information by making a model?" And we talk about different people's learning styles and what's fair and just to expect for a project to let people show their intelligence in ways that best demonstrate their intelligence. So it's not a case of everyone else had to write a book report, but you get to make a book cover—they've got their heads around that sort of stuff.

The commentary that I wrote:

More than just talk about accommodating student diversity

Traditional schooling discourses do not provide spaces for teachers to support students to demonstrate what they know and can do with what they know in a variety of ways. Alice resists "egg crate" approaches to education, exploring here the ways in which she hands over as much power as possible to the students in relation to their assessment. Her promotion of student direction is a further example of alignment with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Supporting and promoting students to take control over as much of their assessment as possible demonstrates Alice's resistance to "normalizing [discourses which are directed at] ensuring that [the] individual exhibits normal patterns of development and behaviour, be they cognitive, physical, economic or whatever" (Symes & Preston, 1997, p. 223).

Steps

1. Read the following texts.
2. Write a commentary on each of the texts using the guiding questions.
3. How are people spoken into existence and/or speak themselves into existence in similar/different ways?

TEACH activities continued

Some practice examples

Genre: Fictional newspaper article

Putting spelling back on the agenda

Yesterday the Minister for Education, Alice Hunter, announced plans for a new program to raise literacy standards in state schools. From the beginning of next semester all state primary schools will be required to ensure that students undertake weekly spelling quizzes. Launching the program yesterday, the Minister claimed that the school-administered spelling tests would raise literacy standards and restore the public's faith in schools as delivering the basics to our young people.

Now write your commentary here. Who is spoken into existence here? How are they spoken into existence? How do they speak themselves into existence? What discourses are operating here?

Genre: Letter to the editor

Dear Editor

I am appalled to hear of the Minister's plan to insist that primary schools introduce weekly spelling tests. This seems to be a very old-fashioned approach to literacy in 2003! At our school we've been doing professional development in which we've been exploring the range of literacies that our students need for the complex worlds in which they live. My teaching colleagues and I believe that we should focus on developing students' capacities to read and write critically. We also think that the Minister's policy neglects the importance of visual literacies and the role that technology plays in young people's lives. After all students can use spellcheck on their computers.

Let's have more faith in teachers to make professional decisions.

Concerned teacher
(Name withheld)

Now write your commentary here. Who is spoken into existence here? How are they spoken into existence? How do they speak themselves into existence? What discourses are operating here?

Who else might have a view on this issue? What might their view be? What discourses might underpin such views?

TEACH activities continued

Steps

The above task demonstrates that you can write a commentary on any text that you want to understand in more detail. Follow these steps:

1. Reread your own teaching narrative looking for the ways in which you or others are spoken into existence, as well as the ways in which you and others speak yourselves into existence.
2. Write a commentary capturing these ideas or swap with a colleague and each write a commentary on the other’s narrative.
3. Use the split-page format to show your narrative with the commentary alongside.
4. Don’t feel that you have to incorporate any ideas from educational literature into your commentary—a bonus to your learning if you do.

Task: Linking your report card with your commentary

Background

This task requires you to think about your pedagogical strengths and areas for improvement explored in your report card and consider what discourses might be associated with each. For example, if you “scored” well on your report card in terms of supporting students to have substantive conversations, it might suggest that you speak your students into existence as key agents in their own and each other’s learning rather than drawing on traditional schooling discourses which speak students into existence as passive recipients of the teacher’s knowledge. If you “scored” poorly on the narrative element, it might suggest that you speak yourself into existence as associated with an expository or telling approach to teaching, rather than as someone who draws on their own life experiences to share stories with their students. Remember you would have to gather a wide range of texts, that is, narratives, work units, observation notes by others and so on to obtain a reasonable picture of the variety of pedagogies you practise. In one session, for example, a colleague may only observe one or a couple of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) elements: other elements will be visible in other texts emerging from different times and contexts.

Steps

1. Reread your own commentary and peruse your “report card” completed by you or a colleague.
2. Use the following table to link your report card with your commentary:

Strengths identified in your report card which draw on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b)	Can you propose what discourses speak you into existence in order to produce such strengths? What discourses are you resisting in order to produce such strengths?
Areas for improvement identified in your report card which draw on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b)	Can you propose what discourses speak you into existence in order to create such areas for improvement? What discourses are you resisting?

You’ll find an appropriately-sized template to complete this action plan in *Pedagogies: A participant’s journal of storylines and storyspaces* (Nayler, 2003c).

Challenge your own pedagogies

A key question

How do we work out what aspects of our pedagogies we need to challenge?

Possible response

My learnings from this research, discussed in Chapter 7, are suggested in part by the four points listed below:

- discourses operate in complex ways in their school settings and in the wider society
- teachers' own subjectivities (determined by gender, ethnicity, age and so on) influence and are influenced by discourses
- some discourses operate in regimenting⁷⁰ and socially-unjust ways, that is, they inhibit socially-just pedagogies
- some discourses operate in generative ways, that is, they support socially-just pedagogies.

Activity

Delving into discourses

Steps

1. Consider the learnings outlined above. Reread earlier chapters if necessary.
2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - a. What are the subjectivities (gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location and so on) that are visible in your narrative?
 - b. What are the discourses that seem to operate in regimenting ways in your narrative, that is, what are the discourses that seem to get in the way of what you might define as socially-just pedagogy?
 - c. What are the discourses that seem to operate in generative ways in your narrative, that is, they support what you might define as socially-just pedagogy?

⁷⁰ This is not to say that all regimenting discourses are complicit in socially-unjust practice. Many aspects of classroom organisation could be constructed through regimenting discourses that do not necessarily inhibit socially-just practice.

Hone your own pedagogies

A key question

How do we bring about change to create more socially-just pedagogies?

Possible response

In addition to the learnings mentioned in the “challenge” phase, my learnings from this research also suggest that the practice of socially-just pedagogies is related to key *action* areas based on:

- the identification of discourses as they operate, resistance to those which are regimenting and which inhibit socially-just pedagogies,⁷¹ and work within those identified as generative
- work beyond the classroom in which teachers act to challenge and change regimenting discourses.

Activity

Background

The steps that follow are not meant to trivialise the complexity of initiating change for social justice. Rather they meant to stimulate discussion.

Steps

1. Consider the following questions:
 - a. On the basis of the TEACH activities what changes to your pedagogical practice, if any, would you like to make? What changes can you make within your own classroom?
 - b. What changes to your pedagogy require action by you and/or others across the whole school?
 - c. What changes to your pedagogy require action beyond your school?
 - d. Which avenues might you use to initiate change beyond your school?
2. Formulate an action plan.

Action Plan for	
Action I plan to take	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When?• How?• Why?• Nature of any support needed•

You'll find an appropriately-sized template to complete this action plan in *Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces* (Nayler, 2003c).

⁷¹ This is not to say that all regimenting discourses are complicit in socially-unjust practice. Many aspects of classroom organisation could be constructed through regimenting discourses that do not necessarily inhibit socially-just practice.

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Storylines and storyspaces:

A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies

Folio Item 3 (Part B): Pedagogies: A journal of storylines and storyspaces

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Submitted in September 2003 in partial completion of an Education Doctorate
(University of Southern Queensland)

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1 Introduction to a journal of storylines and storyspaces

Overview of journal¹

This journal provides spaces, both physical and philosophical, for recording reflections that emerge directly or indirectly from engagement with the text, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. The journal is not meant to be prescriptive in any way. The participant in these materials is reminded that I've posed particular questions and made particular comments. Other questions could have been posed. Other comments could have been made. Appropriate reflections might be about what is not written here as much as what is written here.

There are three main types of stimulus for your reflection:

- the questions included in the “Worth thinking about?” boxes throughout *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*
- the practical professional learning activities contained in Chapter 8 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*
- comments from educators during the development of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

Comments made by the teachers whose narratives appear in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* and other interested educators are indicated throughout by the symbol: .

Revisiting some key concepts

Before an exploration of some of the learnings that might result for participants engaging in these materials, it is useful to revisit several key concepts examined in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. These concepts relate to subjectivities and discourses. According to Alloway (1995), we are all “spoken into existence” and speak ourselves into existence in particular ways. For example, as teachers there are discourses which speak us into existence and with which we speak ourselves into existence. James Gee (1990) illuminates our understandings of discourses when he writes that discourses refer to “socially accepted association[s] among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of socially meaningful group” (p. 143). Lankshear (1994)

¹ This particular chapter contains reflections related to Chapter 1 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, as well as an introduction to the journal, so that subsequent chapters in this journal align with those in the main text.

Revisiting some key concepts *cont'd*

says that, “through participation in Discourses² we take up social roles and positions that other human beings can identify as meaningful, and on the basis of which personal identities are constituted” (p. 6).

To continue the example of teaching, the operation of discourses means that some things can be said and others cannot, some things can be done and others cannot be done. In most instances no-one articulates these opportunities or constraints but the power of discourse is so strong that, for the most part, people know how they should speak and not speak, what they should do and not do and so on. For example, in relation to teaching, discourses associated with academic knowledge are important, but not equally important, in all teaching contexts. The role of academic knowledge and skills may operate as a more powerful discourse in a non-state secondary school whose students come from affluent backgrounds than in some other contexts. Discourses of caring align with discourses of teaching generally, but again, their importance or value will vary according to the socio-cultural and historical context. Discourses of caring might operate more powerfully in an early childhood setting than on a football field. This is not to say that discourses of caring are not important on the football field but rather this is an invitation to consider what type of discourses are valued in particular contexts. Associated with this notion is the idea that we all take up and/or resist particular discourses. Our subjectivities contribute to determining which discourses we take up and which discourses we resist. The importance of language in our lives, through the operation of subjectivities and discourses, is suggested by Adams St Pierre (2000) when she says, “we word our world” (p. 484).

It is through engagement with particular discourses and rejection of others that human beings take up certain subject positions. Weedon (1997) describes subjectivities as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 32). In contrast to the humanist view of the individual as “unique, fixed and coherent” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32), the feminist poststructural theories that frame these materials propose that subjectivities are “precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak (p. 32). (See Chapter 2, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* for a further exploration of these key ideas.)

² Lankshear (1994, p. 10) draws on the distinction made by Gee (1990) between “Discourse” and “discourse.” Discourse with the upper case “D” refers to social practices which speak people into existence in particular ways. In contrast, discourse with the lower case “d” refers to “language (saying, listening, reading, writing, viewing) components of a Discourse. It is the first of these two definitions that is used in these materials. It is, however, spelt with a lower case “d” throughout these materials.

Making some of my own subjectivities explicit

So a key idea underpinning these materials is the notion that our stories of teaching and in particular the pedagogies we practise are inevitably and inextricably bound up with who we are as people or our subjectivities. Such subjectivities relate to our gender, class, ethnicity, ability, where we live, our sexuality and so on. These subjectivities shape and are shaped by discourses also related to our gender, class, ethnicity and so on. Gore (1993) offers insights into this complex area when she suggests that, “subjectivities are largely influenced by struggles for power around issues of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability, size and no doubt other oppressive formations of which I am currently unaware or which I am currently unable to name” (p. 106).

Some of the subjectivities, which have influenced the particular discourses that I have taken up, as well as those that I have resisted, are suggested in the extract from my research journal (Naylor, 2003a) below.

For many years...I was fascinated by the nature of pedagogy, though I didn't use that term. However, I saw with the increased currency of that term, despite it being regarded as a “somewhat clumsy term” (Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000, p. 96), an opportunity to explore, critique and enhance this socially-constructed activity we'd called “teaching.”

It is hard to pin-point when this fascination with teaching began, or when I entered the “field of inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), but I believe that it started well before I commenced my formal teaching career. Even before I started school in 1962, I was engaging in the discourses of both the teacher and the student: “playing school” was a common childhood pastime for my sisters and me. Interestingly, I have no recollection of my brother joining in this activity: possibly he saw teaching as “women's business.” My early years of primary schooling were overwhelmingly positive, attending two rural state schools in South-East Queensland. The first two years or so of my primary schooling were spent at a small school on the Darling Downs, followed by a further five years at another even smaller school in Wide Bay. Both of these schools were sites of pleasant and not-so-pleasant learning experiences.

By Year 6 my classmates and I were thrust into the role of teacher following the arrival of a new, but ready-to-retire tyrant. It soon became our job to devise and record activities for younger students. It was during this time that I realised that school could in fact be a very nasty place. The Panopticon (Foucault, 1977) lived at this one-teacher primary school in rural South-East Queensland. Upon our arrival by bus well before 8 a.m. each morning, we were compelled to sit on long wooden benches some distance from our classroom but in our teacher's line of sight as he prepared and ate his breakfast. It is only now as I write that I think that this principal must have been concerned with his duty-of-care responsibilities, but not sufficiently so, to be motivated or able to get to the classroom ahead of the “bus children” as we were known. One of my before-school tasks during this period was to ensure that one of my schoolmates, deemed by the principal to have a “speech impediment” (though no trace of this exists today), conscientiously practised saying the phrase, “red rabbits run round.” We both tired easily of listening to “wed wabbits wun wound” and I think that, even if the letter “r” had figured more prominently, this activity would not have engaged our hearts or minds.

School days were long, unpleasant days during this last 18 months of my primary school education. Another unpleasant memory I have of these last years of primary school relates to the principal's insistence that we stood in front of him at very close range to recite poetry. This “learning” always took place around lunch-


time and inevitably flecks of his sandwiches would land on my face, distracting me from whatever compelling and lyrical verse I was reciting.

My overwhelming memory of this time is one of despair that one person could so negatively affect my experience of schooling. As I look back on these times, I think that this experience of schooling impacted significantly on my view of what teaching should and shouldn't be: there had to be more justice and there had to be more fun. And yet my perceptions and experiences of injustice were largely confined to being a student in this teacher's class. For example, I was only marginally aware of class differences and their impact on how we were "spoken into existence" (Alloway, 1995, p. 9) and how we spoke ourselves into existence.

The main class distinction was between the "town kids" and those of us who lived—and worked, even as students—on nearby farms. In terms of being constituted and constituting ourselves as gendered beings, it seems in hindsight (though maybe naively) that the gender boundaries were not policed as strongly as they might have been at a larger school or in a contemporary setting. For example, all of the students who were big enough played softball, probably our major team sport. Without such a "whole-school approach," we would never have had enough players for a game. Tennis was the other sport that occupied the space that might in another place have been taken up by football. However, I must have crossed the gender boundaries because I recall regularly being called a "tom-boy" as I grew up. It actually seemed to be a pretty good thing to be. Nevertheless I spent many afternoons after school—with slate and slate pencil—writing "I must not slide down the stairs." This example highlights many things, including teaching practice in which what we were not permitted to do figured more prominently than what we were permitted to do.

I was acutely aware then and now of the gendered nature of the Wednesday afternoon curriculum. While the girls learned what seemed to be an endless variety of ways to make a decorative (and occasionally functional) mark on a fabric with thread, the boys toiled above us in the regular classroom space to construct cane baskets. Cane featured in another way as well during our Wednesday afternoon segregated curriculum. Caning as a punishment was meted out to the boys during these sewing/basket-making sessions, but only in the midst of the boys who were also only the ones eligible for this inducement to their learning. Not even the witnessing of this punishment/behaviour modification strategy was allowed for girls. As I struggled to produce an adequate representation of what the local matriarch called a "lazy daisy stitch," my female classmates and I heard the sombre tones of the caning event. (Nayler, 2003a)

The brief journal extract above raises many issues related to pedagogy that could be explored. What is important here, however, is my attempt to make explicit the development of my subjectivities which were shaped by growing up in the country and attending small schools, my gender, class and so on. These subjectivities have influenced my engagement in and resistance of particular discourses related to the pedagogies I practise. These subjectivities have also been shaped by particular discourses.³

³  Responding to a brief overview of my subjectivities included in Chapter 1, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, Tina comments that, "I think this is the first time I have ever read an author acknowledge their own subjectivity."

Key questions in this journal

This text presents you, its reader, with a significant challenge to explore the following questions in relation to your own life:

- How do YOUR subjectivities, that is, your “sense of [yourself and your] ways of understanding [your] relation to the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32) in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and so on influence the pedagogies you practise?
- Which discourses do you resist in your professional practice? How are these decisions related to your subjectivities?
- In which discourses do you engage in relation to your professional practice? How are these decisions related to your subjectivities?
- Which discourses are associated with what you might label as socially-just pedagogies? Which discourses might inhibit such practice?
- What opportunities do you see in the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b⁴) to enhance your practice of socially-just pedagogies?

There is no fixity or permanence intended in relation to these materials. My understandings, as well as those of others involved in this research, are continually changing, along with our changing subjectivities. Throughout this journal you will see comments made by the “co-investigators” whose narratives are a focus of these materials. In addition, you will see comments made by other interested educators.

The invitation to reflect on your practice using the above questions as a lens is yours to take up or to reject. Remember that I have posed particular questions and made particular comments: you may wish to consider your own questions. You might find that posing your own questions is more useful than responding to those provided here. For the most part, this journal consists of questions posed throughout *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Other questions have been inserted, however, in order to support the reader’s understandings, along with invitations to revisit particular concepts outlined in the main text.

A final point needs to be made in this introduction: examining ourselves and our pedagogies using this type of lens is complex and involves risk-taking. Exploration of our own subjectivities and the discourses with which we constitute ourselves and which constitute us requires an examination of our meaning systems and values. There can be no strict boundaries around our personas as teachers: this is about who we are as people and where we stand in terms of engagement in socially-just practice. A completed journal might be one measure of your engagement with these materials, but the thoughtful reflection of your practice might be a more worthwhile one. Ursula Le Guin’s (1973) words are helpful here: “It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters in the end” (p. 150).

From this point onwards, there are spaces, physical and philosophical, for you to record your reflections.

⁴ When reference is made throughout these materials to the findings of the QSRLS, the full report is cited (QSRLS, 2001a). When reference is made to the actual elements of the Productive Pedagogies, reference is made to the summary version produced (QSRLS, 2001b). This is because slight changes were made to the wording of the elements and the summary version represents the latest version.

Danger: proceed with caution

Are you practising your preferred pedagogies? If not, why not? What, if anything, gets in the way of the practice of your preferred pedagogies?

Are you invited to practise pedagogies in particular ways by particular people, groups or organisations? How would you describe these invitations? Which invitations do you take up? Which invitations do you decline?

Socially-just pedagogies: haven't we got them already?

Has the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999) influenced the pedagogies you practise? If so, in what ways?

Which of these goals are especially relevant to the context in which you work? Which of these goals present particular challenges for you? If so, in what ways?

Ain't it a grand story!

Ever read a policy document or framework developed by your employer and thought that it doesn't address your class or your context?


Ever been compelled to implement a policy or program that was not suited to your class or school context?

2 The big picture: Theories that frame these materials

Meaning systems in our lives

What are sources of *your* own meaning systems?⁵

Where does your knowledge of the world come from?

⁵  According to Tina, these are “daunting questions but very useful, that is, [they] involve a lifetime of reflection.” About the whole of Chapter 2, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, Tina comments:

Phew—tough chapter! I might have to re-read bits or all as I progress! I do realise the necessity of having a background such as this however.

Meaning systems in our lives *cont'd*

How do you work out what's "true" and what's "false"?

Is reality something "out there" for you to discover or is it something more elusive?

European pre-humanist meaning systems

Consider the meaning system that underpins the actions of Anna Frith, Geraldine Brooks's (2001, p. 215) central character in *Year of wonders: A novel about the plague*. This novel explores the lives of seventeenth century villagers living in Eyam, Derbyshire. During this year the Plague decimates the village's population, including Anna's own children. As you read the extract consider this character's challenging of the meaning system that she acknowledges has influenced her life and the lives of her neighbours. Record your reflections here.

How enlightening was the Enlightenment?

Can you think of examples of your classroom practice in which your strategies didn't suit the range of individuals and groups in your class or cohort? For example, addressing gender-related issues will have varying requirements depending on the particular intersections of your students' subjectivities. Strategies for working towards gender-equitable outcomes for girls living in rural locations will differ from those for their urban counterparts. Initiatives to support Indigenous working-class boys will vary from those required for Anglo middle-class boys and so on.

Can you think of some of the ways in which subjectivities related to gender, ethnicity, location and so on operate in your classroom to produce different needs?

Some poststructural views of the world

When you think about how you are "spoken into existence" (Alloway, 1995, p. 9) as a teacher, what are the dominant storylines? For example, are you spoken into existence as a carer, transmitter of academic knowledge, critical friend and so on?

Some poststructural views of the world *cont'd*


How significant are what we might call managerialist or economic rationalist discourses in storylines that construct you as a teacher?

Smyth (1993, p. 12) makes a cogent argument for the inappropriateness of managerialist or economic rationalist discourses dominating schools when he challenges the values of the business sector as suitable for schools. He summarises hegemonic business values as including notions that:

1. the only thing that matters is the bottom line
2. profit and material gain are more important than compassion
3. competitive individualism is to be valued above collaboration
4. private rates of return rank ahead of the common good
5. the strong should survive and the weak go to the wall
6. what counts in the final analysis, is measurement of output or outcomes.⁶

There are numerous practices that could be found in schools that are shaped by discourses of economic rationalism. For example, a school's decision to charge other schools a fee for professional development delivered by their staff provides one example. In this case, discourses of professionalism are outweighed by discourses of economic rationalism, that is, the need or desire to make money.

Record your reflections here.

⁶  According to Tina, these values are “interesting in terms of accountability—but there needs to be a balance.”

Some poststructural views of the world *cont'd*

What other practices might be occurring in a school in which discourses of managerialism or economic rationalism are dominant?

What might be said and done and not said and done in a school in which these discourses operate powerfully?

Are other discourses marginalised by managerialist or economic rationalist discourses at your school? Can you explain further?

3 The research process: Social justice in action

Some questions to support reflection

Smyth (1994) proposes four questions that might be useful for teachers in their reflection of practice. These include:

1. Describe...what do I do?
2. Inform...what does this mean?
3. Confront...how did I come to be like this?
4. Reconstruct...how might I do things differently?⁷


Think about an aspect of your pedagogy that you'd like to change. Examine it more closely by using these questions. Then reflect on the questions themselves.

Describe

Inform

Confront

Reconstruct

⁷  According to Tina, “These are good professional development questions. The ‘confront’ and ‘reconstruct’ questions are tough—Alice does these really well” (see Alice’s narrative, Chapter 5, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*).

Some questions to support reflection *cont'd*

Reflections on the questions themselves

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently?

Evaluating the research methodology presented here

You might want to revisit some key terms, such as epistemology and subjectivism in Chapter 3, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* before you continue here.

Is the epistemological base, that of subjectivism, appropriate for this research? Indeed, does a subjectivist epistemology underpin this research? What changes would you propose?

Are the theoretical perspectives of feminist poststructural theory:

—appropriate for this research?

—evident in this research?

What changes would you propose?

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently? *cont'd*

Is the methodology of discourse analysis:

—appropriate for this research?

—evident in this research?


What changes would you propose?

Are the methods of narratives as co-created field texts, together with commentaries:⁸

—appropriate for this research?

—evident in this research?

What changes would you propose?

⁸  I've used a technique in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* that draws on the work of Lather & Smithies (1997). They say that they adopt the split page format, which I've used in Chapter 5, to avoid “drown[ing] the poem of the other with the sound of [their] own voices, as the ones who know, the ‘experts’ about how people make sense of their lives and what searching for meaning means” (p. xvi). [According to Vera, “this is a great image.” She goes onto say that:](#)

Firstly, I love the idea of the *awareness of another* who has a unique poetry all of their own; that someone can see that another person not only has a story/point of view/set of experiences but is so accepting of it as to be able to see that the way it is lived is so rhythmical, systematic, original, creative, fluid, harmonious as to be interpreted as poetry. Beautiful!!

Secondly, a very real danger lies in those of us in “expert” positions—and by this I mean *anyone* who has more “perceived knowledge” and who is viewed as an expert in their particular discipline, culture, hierarchy or organisation (such as teachers to parents; dog instructors to hopeless dog owners; counsellors to clients; government departments to individuals)—ignoring/dismissing/minimalising/drowning out/reframing the other’s experiences to fit to their own explanations. It is very disrespectful even though it is generally done with the best of intentions. No matter what the circumstances, experts can only be there as an aid to assist others in the interpretation of their experiences, not do it for them. And, sometimes, the expert may be of no use at all and, as such, is not an “expert” at that particular time. (emphasis in original)

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently? *cont'd*

Devising your own research plan

Consider the following questions in relation to a research project you might undertake.

What can you find out about this topic from the literature? What material and human resources could you access to support your investigation into the literature related to this topic?

What would you call your research project?

What would be your overall research question (e.g. *What enables me to practise socially-just pedagogies and what gets in the way?* or *What do my socially-just pedagogies look like?*)?

What would the aims and objectives of the research be?

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently? *cont'd*

Why would this research be important? To whom would it be important? Who would be interested in the findings/learnings?

How would you gather or create evidence/data/field texts to address your research question?

How would you analyse your evidence/data/field texts?

With whom would you share your findings/learnings? How would you share your findings with others?

Reconstruct...How might such research be done differently? *cont'd*


Record any other key ideas related to your proposed research plan.


4 Socially-just pedagogies: Teachers' narratives

Speaking teachers and students into existence

Consider the pedagogies of each of the teachers whose narratives appear in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

How do you think Jemma⁹ speaks herself into existence as a teacher? How is she spoken into existence by other people and by institutions and practices?

⁹  According to Tina, “I like Jemma’s honesty, her realism—a good example of the complexity of teaching.”

 In Jemma’s narrative I’ve used the heading “teachers constructing students for success or otherwise.” Vera asks “Can we ‘construct’ people?” My response to that question is that we are spoken into existence and speak ourselves into existence through language in the form of discourses. The theoretical frame on which I draw in order to explore the pedagogies we practise relies heavily on this notion of the social construction of people, practices and institutions. What is exciting about this way of seeing the world is that we can work towards reconstructing people, practices and institutions in more socially-just ways.

Speaking teachers and students into existence *cont'd*

How do you think Monica speaks herself into existence as a teacher? How is she spoken into existence by other people and by institutions and practices?

5 Storying the stories: Exploring spaces for socially-just pedagogies

Reflecting on the commentaries

Consider the commentaries that accompany each narrative in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. In this section you are invited to consider these commentaries in terms of:


- what you found to be useful in understanding pedagogies generally
- what you found not be useful in understanding pedagogies generally
- what reflections you would make about your own pedagogies as a result of engaging with these narratives


and for a special challenge...


- how you would rewrite these commentaries using the feminist poststructural frame that underpins these materials
- how you would rewrite these commentaries using a different theoretical frame and how would you describe the frame you use.

Reflecting on the commentaries cont'd


Reflections on Jemma's commentary¹⁰

¹⁰  In one section of the commentary I compare the way in which “Alex’s” former teacher constructed him as a behaviour problem, a deviant and so on with the approach taken by Jemma. Jemma acknowledges her need to “manage his behaviour” but draws out his strengths so that he can experience success. Vera proposes that, “the government’s attitude to giving funding for special needs kids encourages diagnosis (labelling) and [therefore] a failure-driven view of [students] that focuses on what kids can’t do.

 In another section of Jemma’s narrative I propose that Jemma’s discontent with the school’s policy of “seem[ing] to take all the children with problems” appears at odds with other discourses. Tina comments that, “good teachers like Jemma are seen by principals as the best ones to educate/cope with kids with special needs—so they get more [of these students]. [It’s] a “real catch–22”—the reality is these teachers burn out.”

 I respond in the commentary I’ve written to Jemma’s desire to have “ready access to a toilet and a kettle” as locating teachers on the “professional fringe” (see Chapter 5, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*). Tina responds strongly to this analysis:


Yes! Hear! Hear! My friend, Stella, would be happy to be able to go to the toilet when she needs to! No wonder we have trouble getting the general public to see us as professionals when we have such constraints on our professional decision-making.

 Jemma’s comments, “What do *they* mean?” and “What’s *the* definition of pedagogy?” prompt the following reflection from Tina:


The whole national push for professional development standards for teachers seems to be around describing what we do and therefore being able to demystify it for the public, and communicating it to each other. I think this will be good for us industrially as it is not good enough to just say, “teaching has changed.” If we can specify how, and embed that in our own theory, I think that we could have a better chance of getting the kind of respect and resourcing Jemma talks about. But while everything I hear and read says teachers should run the standards, this is just not happening. It will take a revolution in teachers’ mentality to do this “owning.”

Reflecting on the commentaries *cont'd*


Reflections on Monica's commentary¹¹

¹¹  A key aspect of Monica's narrative is her rejection of some of the discourses that are associated with Catholicism in preference for taking up those discourses which she considers are associated with "seeing the future with hope" (see Chapter 5, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*). Monica talks about her rejection of those Catholic discourses associated with guilt about "missing Mass on Sundays" for example. Vera suggests that:

a large part of the [Catholic] church has moved in this way with discourses within [or constituting] the Church changing and broadening. The Church is in the middle of its own struggle with feminism and it is a bit slow!! A huge number of Catholics would support Monica's [stance]...perhaps you should acknowledge this. Perhaps Monica's voice is a voice for the Church's struggle within itself.

 Pivotal to Monica's story about socially-just pedagogies is her use of critical literacy. Tina comments:

If I were to select the most important skill we teach kids, it would be critical literacy. Isn't it great that the *English Senior Syllabus* explicitly calls for it! Lately, I'm adding critical numeracy as increasingly important. Numbers, like cameras (particularly during war) do lie! Trouble is—it's bloody hard to teach!

 Tina also responded to Monica's use of real-life or life-like tasks, encouraging her students to reject the notion of their tasks as "assessment" or "schoolwork." According to Tina:

Isn't it funny that the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) talk about connectedness but education systems in some ways make it easier for teachers just to accept the status quo and set unrelated assessment tasks. To do what Monica does is time-consuming and possibly stressful. Regimenting discourses can make life simpler or they can frustrate some teachers.

Monica's acceptance of her student's use of his experiences of violence in which he witnessed the brutal slaying of his parents and her subsequent suggestion that the student not draw on these experiences for his writing in the Queensland Core Skills test led Tina to further comment:

Learning how to use the system and to "play the game" can help kids! I think teaching them this helps them grab a bit of power in our society. Balancing it as Monica does helps them use that power to improve society.

Reflecting on the commentaries *cont'd*

Consider the following reflection made by me in *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*:

Again, the constitutive role of language in our lives is captured by Monica's invitation to her students to view themselves as "lived texts." As is often the case with learning, learning in this research project occurred in unexpected ways. Monica's description of the way in which she invites her students to see themselves as "lived texts" proved a useful lens for understanding my own life beyond this research. During the week in which I shared the substantive conversation with Monica my son Sam told me a story which illustrates powerfully the notion of people as "lived texts." Seventeen year-old Sam, dressed in black and with no hair, was approached by a young Indigenous male one evening in the City. What this young male did next conveys a sense of the way he "read" Sam as a "lived text." He raised his arm in a Nazi salute and called "Zeig Heil!" Undoubtedly, the young Indigenous male had experienced oppression and "read" Sam as someone complicit in that oppression. "Actually, I've got cancer," Sam replied to which the other responded, "Gee, sorry mate."

Using the phrase, "lived text," how would you describe yourself?


How do you think others might "read" you as a lived text? In particular, how might students read you as a lived text? How might parents/carers read you as a lived text? How do these constructions vary from the way you see yourself or the ways in which your close friends see you?

Reflecting on the commentaries *cont'd*


Reflections on Tina's commentary

Reflecting on the commentaries *cont'd*

Reflections on Alice's commentary¹²

¹²  Alice expresses strongly a view that “standardised testing” makes poor educational sense. Tina agrees with Alice’s comments saying:

I recall reading somewhere that employers have indicated that they give higher value to creativity, problem-solving and working co-operatively in teams. I’ve yet to see that on the Year 7 test!

 A central aspect of Alice’s narrative is the way in which she reflects on her own actions in dealing with a student whom she refers to as a “bully.” The comments made by the student led her to conclude that she too acted as a bully. Tina reflects on the commentary in which I suggest that dominant discourses of the teacher-as-all knowing do not provide spaces for student criticism and reconstruction of teacher practice, claiming that Alice is “brave.”

6 Storylines that constitute pedagogies


Exploring your views on what constitutes pedagogy

In her narrative Jemma explores in some detail her understandings of the term “pedagogy.” She says:

Ah, pedagogy is a word that demands that you somehow think about it—that you actually have to be reflective and you have to really think, “Oh my God, what do they mean and what’s the definition and how do I associate it with what I do?” Teaching is teaching. I think because there needs to be a new word because the teaching word is—depending on the area you come from—like from the parent point of view that may have a completely different bias to what a staff member thinks teaching is to what the outside community thinks teaching is and I think teaching is so devalued these days that at least “pedagogy” stumps a few people, it mystifies them. It’s a word, it’s a difficult word to even say, particularly if you’ve got a speech defect. So, yeah, I guess it demands you look into it before you actually make an opinion. I mean you can say “Oh, I teach” and everyone pretty-well knows what teaching means but pedagogy is like—I can remember when I first read it—I thought, “What the hell is this?” You know and “Is that what it is? Oh, OK.” And then I’d come across it in another reading and I’d look at it again. I don’t know—it’s a difficult word but I think it does demand that you actually look at it and try to work it out...because if it isn’t an invitation to reflect then there’s no point in talking about it.

Exploring your views on what constitutes pedagogy *cont'd*

Record your response to Jemma's understandings in relation to the term, "pedagogy" here.¹³

¹³  Tess made the following comment about Jemma's narrative, making particular reference to her reflection of the term "pedagogy":

The narrative is good—it's very good. I could identify with what she talks about. But I think that stuff at the end about pedagogy is unnecessary. I think it glamorises teaching. You know, teaching is just teaching. You don't need that other stuff.


A possible response to the comment made by Tess could be that, as Jemma suggests, the term "pedagogy" invites reflection. Its renewed use in recent times might also highlight the socially-constructed nature of pedagogy. Lingard, Mills & Hayes (2000), for example, define the term as referring to "the interrelationships between teacher practice and student outcomes, all located within a particular socio-political environment" (p. 96).

Pedagogy as science

How important to your classroom practice and understandings are storylines that draw on psychology?¹⁴

What aspects of students' lives, or your own life, are marginalised or silenced as a result of a focus on seeing the world through the lens of psychology?

Do you think that Taylorism speaks you into existence as a teacher in today's school settings? If so, in what ways does this happen?

¹⁴  According to Tina, "it occurs to me that when we supervise pre-service teachers at prac, we see pedagogy very much as science."

Pedagogy as discursive activity

Consider my definition of “pedagogy”:

Within a frame that acknowledges that we shape ourselves and our actions through language, as well as being shaped by such language through the operation of discourses, pedagogies could be considered as dynamic engagements involving teachers and students in often competing and contradictory discourses. The central focus of these discourses is the production and exchange of knowledge. Given the struggle over discourses within any pedagogical intervention, issues of power always exist with pedagogies inevitably constituting political activity.

Record your reflections here.

7 Storyspaces for socially-just pedagogies

Regimenting discourses

Consider the regimenting discourses operating in your professional life that influence the pedagogies you practise. You might want to revisit the concept of regimenting discourse explored in Chapter 7, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Remember that all regimenting discourses might not be aligned with socially-unjust practice.

Record your ideas here.

Generative discourses

Consider the generative discourses operating in your professional life that influence the pedagogies you practise. You might want to revisit the concept of generative discourse explored in Chapter 7, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

Record your ideas here.


Critiquing the storyspaces identified

Chapter 7, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, identifies what might be considered spaces for the practice of socially-just pedagogies, as well as the discourses that might be associated with socially-unjust practice. Select some points or themes from this chapter with which you disagree and outline your arguments below.

Activist professionalism

In this chapter I draw on Sach's (2000) notion of activist professionalism to explore Tina's practice further.¹⁵ Consider your own practice in the light of the headings (condensed in some cases from Sach's (2000) original) below. You might want to revisit Chapter 7, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* or refer to Sachs (2000).

Inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness [of a range of groups pivotal to improvement of student outcomes] and collective and collaborative action (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

¹⁵  When Vera read Tina's narrative she commented: "What doesn't this woman do?" Beyond the flippant and complimentary nature of this comment, what can be said about what can be reasonably expected of teachers? Tina's response when she read my analysis of her practice using Sach's (2000) lens was "No wonder I'm so exhausted by the time I get home!" On the same page, in response to an example of Alice's practice, Tina comments, "I could learn a lot from Alice!" These two comments taken together say much about Tina's capacity and predisposition to keep learning and growing.


Activist professionalism *cont'd*

Effective communication of aims, expectations (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Recognition of the expertise of all parties involved and creat[ion of] an environment of trust and mutual respect (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Being responsive and responsible (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

Acting with passion and experiencing pleasure and fun¹⁶ (Sachs, 2000, p. 87)

¹⁶  When Tina read my analysis of her practice in which I drew on Sach's (2000) notion of the "activist professional" she made further comments:

On a personal note, I'm glad you mention the pleasure and the fun aspect of my practice. I think questioning and challenging the way society runs things must be sold to kids, and humour and fun are a good way to do it.

8 From reflection to action

Pedagogy: more than TEACHing

A key invitation to participants in these materials is the notion that pedagogies are dynamic engagements involving teachers and students in often competing and contradictory discourses that are in some way related to knowledge. To reiterate a central idea explored in Chapter 6, particular constructions of pedagogy currently used are unhelpful and potentially harmful. The notion of pedagogy as “an art” for example neglects the key role that contemporary values, some of which are contested, about the role of the teacher, the role of the student and the type of knowledge that is deemed to be worthy, play in the practice of pedagogy. The notion of pedagogy as “science” is also unhelpful at best and harmful at worst. The notion of pedagogy as science is built within the storylines constructed by psychology with its reliance on ages and stages as categories into which learners must fit. An invitation in these materials is that pedagogies are the result of taking up particular discourses and rejecting other discourses. In this chapter, the participant in these materials is invited to consider their own pedagogies with the view to making changes where they consider such change is necessary.

This chapter consists of a range of practical strategies to support you to consider the pedagogies you practise with a focus on how these pedagogies might be reconstructed to enhance your students’ learnings. The decisions on whether to reconstruct your pedagogies and how to carry out such changes are yours to make. Consider the TEACH activities which follow as an invitation to reflect on your pedagogies and to take action in ways you consider appropriate. There is no suggestion here that these activities should be viewed as prescriptive or “the” way to explore socially-just pedagogies. To pursue such a path would contradict the intention of these materials. Hargreaves (1994) advocates judgement by teachers in their own professional learning when he says:

If teachers are told what to be professional about, how, where and with whom to collaborate, and what blueprint of professional conduct to follow, then the culture that evolves will be foreign to the setting. They will once again have “received” a culture. (p. 189, see also Nayler & Bull, 2000)

Working through the TEACH activities

The TEACH activities below are organised under five headings:

Tune into understanding and enhancing your pedagogies

Explore your own and others' pedagogies

Analyse your own pedagogies

Challenge your own pedagogies

Hone your own pedagogies.

Tune into

understanding and
enhancing
your pedagogies.

A key question

Why bother investigating our pedagogies?

Possible responses

According to Education Queensland (2001):

“Community expectation for learning that prepares students for the complexity of modern life means teachers must continually renew their pedagogy and skills” (p. 9).

Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000) claim “we have developed the concept of ‘productive pedagogies’ as a way to reflect upon which pedagogies might make a difference for different groups of students....Our argument is that we must try to get an understanding of those pedagogies that make a difference and which thus incorporate conceptions of social justice into classroom practice” (pp. 96–97).

Activity

Task: Teachers at the movies

Background

Sometimes it's easier to look at other people's pedagogies before we look at our own. The following activity invites you to consider various pedagogies by examining characters from television and film. Specifically, this activity requires that you consider the discourses operating in relation to a fictional character. The idea of discourses is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Moon's (2001) definition provides a good reminder. He says that “discourses do not offer neutral descriptions of the world. They represent the world from certain viewpoints. They also compete with one another for control of certain aspects of life” (Moon, 2001, p. 36).

Steps

1. Select one of the characters below with which you are familiar or another character who plays a teacher in film.

Characters from film

- John Keating from *Dead Poets Society*
- Jamie Escalante from *Stand and Deliver*
- Miss Riley from *October Sky*
- Jean Brodie from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
- Mark Thackeray from *To Sir with Love*
- LouAnne Johnson from *Dangerous Minds*

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Steps continued

2. Respond to the questions that follow.
 - a. How would you describe this teacher? How is the teacher spoken into existence? What are the particular discourses that appear to be operating? (For example, John Keating, is spoken into existence in terms of discourses associated with academic success, privilege and wealth, maintaining tradition and so on.)

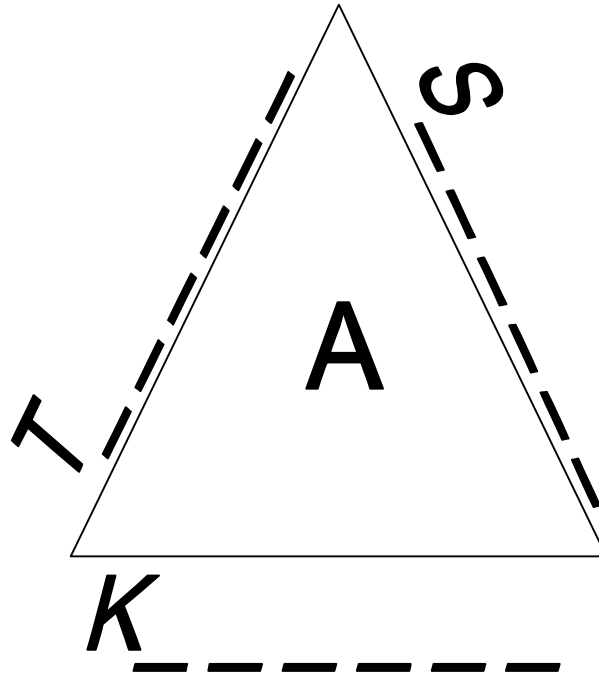
- b. How does the teacher speak her/himself into existence? (John Keating challenges discourses associated with rote learning and transmission teaching generally.¹⁷)

- c. How would you describe the pedagogies this teacher practises? How do they reflect the discourses that the teacher takes up? How do these pedagogies reflect the discourses the character resists?

¹⁷ Giroux (1993) examines his own class's exploration of the pedagogies evident in this film in a thought-provoking chapter entitled "Reclaiming the social: Pedagogy, resistance and politics in celluloid culture."

TEACH activities *cont'd*

- d. Take this teacher to TASK! Use the diagram below to record what you consider to be (T) the role of the teacher, (S) the role of the student, (K) the knowledge that is valued and (A) the attitudes and values that underpin the teacher's pedagogies.



Record any reflections here.

Explore

your own and others'
pedagogies.

A key question

How can we explore our pedagogies?

Possible responses

One way of understanding our own pedagogies with a view to possibly “transforming” them is to write narratives or stories about teaching. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995):

What is missing in the classroom is a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories of teaching. The classroom can become a place of endless, repetitive living out of stories without possibility for awakenings and transformations. (p. 13)

Of course, writing narratives won't suit everyone and it is just one way of exploring our pedagogies. Jalongo & Isenberg (1995) point out that like any narrative, a teaching narrative has a plot, setting, characters, theme and style (p. 3). Importantly though, teaching narratives “move beyond basic elements and into the realm of reflections on teaching” (p. 3). Such reflections upon teaching draw upon the writer's past experiences, articulate present concerns and offer some suggestion regarding improved practice in the future. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) time and place are central to a narrative. They say, “Time and place become written constructions in the form of plot and scene respectively. Time and place, plot and scene, work together to create the experiential quality of narrative” (p. 8).

Activity

Task: Write on

Steps

1. Read some teaching narratives written by others before you start to write yours. There are a few suggestions below about where you can find some teaching narratives.
2. Choose a topic from those below—or use another topic—and write a narrative. Remember you can write the narrative for your eyes only. Alternatively, you might decide to share your narrative with a colleague. This colleague might respond orally or in written form to your narrative, giving you a great stimulus for further professional dialogue (see below for some material that explores the nature of narratives and their use in professional learning).

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Resources: Teaching narratives

- National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning. (1996a). *Case studies illustrating National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*. Sydney: Australian Teaching Council.
These are relatively short and focus on pedagogies across early childhood, middle and post-compulsory years.
- Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
The narratives in this text vary in length and focus on the learnings of the writers.
- Louden, W. & Wallace, J. (1996). *Quality in the classroom: Learning about teaching through case studies*. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder Education.
The narratives are organised around the *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching* (National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, 1996b).
- Narratives presented in Chapter 4, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*
Collaboratively-developed narratives reflect the pedagogies of each of four practising teachers: Jemma, Tina and Alice (primary teachers) and Monica (a secondary teacher).

Possible ideas for teaching narratives

- A critical incident that led you to reconsider your role as a teacher*
- What matters most in teaching
- How your own experiences as a school student have shaped the teacher you are today
- The most challenging student you've ever had
- The most challenging school context in which you've ever worked
- An unresolved issue related to a student from a previous class. What issues regarding this student's learning continue to challenge you?*

*Modified from Jalongo & Isenberg (1995).

TEACH activities *cont'd*

If you'd like to read more about the nature of narratives and their use in professional learning, the resources listed below might be helpful.

Resources related to the narrative itself

- Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 5–12.
- Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2–14.
- Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- You'll find further references related to the value of narratives in Chapter 3, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*

Record any reflections here.

Analyse

your own pedagogies.

A key question

What frameworks or lenses can we use to analyse our pedagogies?

Possible responses

There are numerous ways in which pedagogies can be “analysed.” Just two approaches are discussed here. First, Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) provide a possible framework (see Chapter 1, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, for further details). The task, Report card time, supports you to use the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) to analyse your pedagogies. A second approach, which is used in Chapter 5, involves the writing of commentaries written alongside the narratives to propose the possible discourses operating. The task, Writing commentaries, adopts this approach.

Activities

Task: Report card time

Background

Consider completing this activity in relation to someone else’s pedagogies before you apply it to your own. You could complete a “report card” using a range of stimulus materials, other than a narrative about teaching. For example, you could use a unit of work, a video recording of your practice, a colleague’s observation notes of your lesson and so on. If you used a range of stimulus texts for developing your “report card,” you would see a pattern emerging in terms of your pedagogical strengths and areas for improvement in terms of your pedagogies.

Steps

1. Peruse the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in Table 1. (You might like to peruse the resources below before you start in order to enhance your understandings of the Productive Pedagogies.)
2. Use the resources below to clarify any terminology.
3. Look for examples of each element of the Productive Pedagogies in the narrative (or other form of text) under scrutiny.
4. Record a rating on the “report card” (in Table 2) to reflect your view of the extent to which each element is practised, with “5” indicating high use of an element and “1” suggesting minimal use.
5. Jot down your reasons for selecting the particular ratings in the final column.

TEACH activities cont'd

Resources

- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001a). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study*. The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001b). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership—Teachers' summary* compiled by Land, R. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
You will find detailed discussion about the literature which informed the development of the Productive Pedagogies by referring to Chapter 1, "Theoretical rationale for the development of productive pedagogies: A literature review" in QSRLS (2001c).
- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001c). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: Supplementary Material*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
- *A guide to Productive Pedagogies: Classroom reflection manual* (2002). The State of Queensland (Curriculum Implementation Unit, Education Queensland).
This publication will give you some ideas regarding "rating" the extent to which a particular element of the Productive Pedagogies is evident.
- In addition, there are references to the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) throughout the commentaries which appear in Chapter 5, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*.

Record any reflections here.

Table 1: Productive Pedagogies

Intellectual quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher-order thinking <i>Is higher-order thinking occurring during the lesson? Is there evidence of conceptual depth, not content?</i> 2. Deep knowledge <i>Does the lesson cover operational fields in any depth, detail or level of specificity?</i> 3. Deep understanding <i>Do the work and response of the students provide evidence of depth of understanding of concepts or ideas?</i> 4. Substantive conversation <i>Does classroom talk lead to sustained conversational dialogue between students, and between teachers and students, to create or negotiate understanding of subject matter?</i> 5. Knowledge as problematic <i>Are students critiquing and second-guessing texts, ideas and knowledge?</i> 6. Metalanguage <i>Are aspects of language, grammar and technical vocabulary being foregrounded?</i>
Connectedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Knowledge integration <i>Does the lesson integrate a range of subject areas?</i> 8. Background knowledge <i>Are links with students' background knowledge made explicit?</i> 9. Connectedness to the world <i>Is the lesson, the activity or task connected to competencies or concepts beyond the classroom?</i> 10. Problem-based curriculum <i>Is there a focus on identifying and solving intellectual and/or real-world problems?</i>
Supportive classroom environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Student direction <i>Do students determine specific activities or outcomes of the lesson?</i> 12. Social support <i>Is the classroom characterised by an atmosphere of mutual respect and support among teachers and students?</i> 13. Academic engagement <i>Are students engaged and on task during the lesson?</i> 14. Explicit quality performance criteria <i>Are the criteria for judging the range of student performance made explicit?</i> 15. Self-regulation <i>Is the direction of student behaviour implicit and self-regulatory?</i>
Recognition of difference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Cultural knowledges <i>Are non-dominant cultural knowledges valued?</i> 17. Inclusivity <i>Are deliberate attempts made to increase the participation of the diversity of students?</i> 18. Narrative <i>Is the style of teaching principally narrative or is it expository?</i> 19. Group identity <i>Does the teaching build a sense of community and identity?</i> 20. Citizenship <i>Are attempts made to foster active citizenship within the classroom?</i>

Source: Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001b) *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership—Teachers' summary* compiled by Land, R. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland) p. 6.

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Table 2: The report card

Report card forbased on (narrative or other stimulus text)
 Completed by

Productive Pedagogies element	Your rating (1–5)	Reasons for awarding this rating
Intellectual quality		
Higher-order thinking		
Deep knowledge		
Deep understanding		
Substantive conversation		
Knowledge as problematic		
Metalanguage		
Connectedness		
Knowledge integration		
Background knowledge		
Connectedness to the world		
Problem-based curriculum		
Supportive classroom environment		
Student direction		
Social support		
Academic engagement		
Explicit quality performance criteria		
Self-regulation		
Recognition of difference		
Cultural knowledges		
Inclusivity		
Narrative		
Group identity		
Citizenship		

(Source of Productive Pedagogies: QSRLS, 2001b)

Comments

..... 's pedagogical strengths appear to be in the areas of

There may be room for improvement in the area of

Signed:

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Task: Writing commentaries

Background

This technique of writing a commentary is used in Chapter 5 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. In this chapter I re-present each narrative with a commentary along the bottom half of each page. I wrote these commentaries by considering how the people in the narrative (teacher, students and others) appeared to be spoken into existence and how they spoke themselves into existence. I drew on relevant literature where I could. Below is an extract from Chapter 5.

An extract from Alice's narrative:

The kids can often pick their own topics and design their own project questions using process verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy. They organise their own timeframes. They organise their medium for presentations. They organise whether they work individually or with partners or in teams. We have conversations like: "Well, I'm not really good at writing stuff, so can I present my information by making a model?" And we talk about different people's learning styles and what's fair and just to expect for a project to let people show their intelligence in ways that best demonstrate their intelligence. So it's not a case of everyone else had to write a book report, but you get to make a book cover—they've got their heads around that sort of stuff.

The commentary that I wrote:

More than just talk about accommodating student diversity

Traditional schooling discourses do not provide spaces for teachers to support students to demonstrate what they know and can do with what they know in a variety of ways. Alice resists "egg crate" approaches to education, exploring here the ways in which she hands over as much power as possible to the students in relation to their assessment. Her promotion of student direction is a further example of alignment with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Supporting and promoting students to take control over as much of their assessment as possible demonstrates Alice's resistance to "normalizing [discourses which are directed at] ensuring that [the] individual exhibits normal patterns of development and behaviour, be they cognitive, physical, economic or whatever" (Symes & Preston, 1997, p. 223).

Before writing a commentary on your own and someone else's narrative, write a commentary on one of the following texts.

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Some practice examples

Genre: Fictional newspaper article

Putting spelling back on the agenda

Yesterday the Minister for Education, Alice Hunter, announced plans for a new program to raise literacy standards in state schools. From the beginning of next semester all state primary schools will be required to ensure that students undertake weekly spelling quizzes. Launching the program yesterday, the Minister claimed that the school-administered spelling tests would raise literacy standards and restore the public's faith in schools as delivering the basics to our young people.

Now write your commentary here. Who is spoken into existence here? How are they spoken into existence? How do they speak themselves into existence? What discourses are operating here?

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Genre: Letter to the editor

Dear Editor

I am appalled to hear of the Minister's plan to insist that primary schools introduce weekly spelling tests. This seems to be a very old-fashioned approach to literacy in 2003! At our school we've been doing professional development in which we've been exploring the range of literacies that our students need for the complex worlds in which they live. My teaching colleagues and I believe that we should focus on developing students' capacities to read and write critically. We also think that the Minister's policy neglects the importance of visual literacies and the role that technology plays in young people's lives. After all, students can use spellcheck on their computers.

Let's have more faith in teachers to make professional decisions.

Concerned teacher
(Name withheld)

Now write your commentary here. Who is spoken into existence here? How are they spoken into existence? How do they speak themselves into existence? What discourses are operating here?

Who else might have a view on this issue? What might their view be? What discourses might underpin such views?

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Steps

The above task demonstrates that you can write a commentary on any text that you want to understand in more detail. Follow these steps:

1. Reread your own teaching narrative looking for the ways in which you or others are spoken into existence, as well as the ways in which you and others speak yourselves into existence.
2. Write a commentary capturing these ideas or swap with a colleague and each write a commentary on the other's narrative.
3. Use the split-page format to show your narrative with the commentary alongside.
4. Don't feel that you have to incorporate any ideas from educational literature into your commentary—a bonus to your learning if you do.

Task: Linking your report card with your commentary

Background

This task requires you to think about your pedagogical strengths and areas for improvement explored in your report card and consider what discourses might be associated with each. For example, if you “scored” well on your report card in terms of supporting students to have substantive conversations, it might suggest that you speak your students into existence as key agents in their own and each other's learning rather than drawing on traditional schooling discourses which speak students into existence as passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge. If you “scored” poorly on the narrative element, it might suggest that you speak yourself into existence as associated with an expository or telling approach to teaching, rather than someone who draws on their own life experiences to share stories with their students. Remember you would have to gather a wide range of texts, that is, narratives, work units, observation notes by others and so on to obtain a reasonable picture of the variety of pedagogies you practise. In one session, for example, a colleague may only observe one or a couple of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) elements: other elements will be visible in other texts emerging from different times and contexts.

TEACH activities *cont'd*

Steps

1. Reread your own commentary and peruse your “report card” completed by you or a colleague.
2. Use the following table to link your report card with your commentary:

Strengths identified in your report card which draws on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b)	Can you propose what discourses speak you into existence in order to produce such strengths? What discourses are you resisting in order to produce such strengths?
Areas for improvement identified in your report card which draws on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b)	Can you propose what discourses speak you into existence in order to create such areas for improvement? What discourses are you resisting?

Challenge

your own pedagogies.

A key question

How do we work out what aspects of our pedagogies we need to challenge?

Possible response

My learnings from this research, discussed in Chapter 7 of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*, are suggested in part by the four points listed below:

1. discourses operate in complex ways in their school settings and in the wider society
2. teachers' own subjectivities (determined by gender, ethnicity, age and so on) influence and are influenced by discourses
3. some discourses operate in regimenting ways with some of these discourses inhibiting socially-just pedagogies
4. some discourses operate in generative ways, that is, they support socially-just pedagogies.

Activity

Delving into discourses

Steps

1. Consider the learnings outlined above. Re-read sections of *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* if necessary.
2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - a. What are the subjectivities (gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location and so on) that are visible in your narrative?

- b. What are the discourses that seem to operate in regimenting ways in your narrative, and seem to get in the way of what you might define as socially-just pedagogy?

TEACH activities *cont'd*

- c. What are the discourses that seem to operate in generative ways in your narrative, that is, they support what you might define as socially-just pedagogies?

Hone

your own pedagogies.

A key question

How do we bring about change to create more socially-just pedagogies?

Possible response

In addition to the learnings mentioned in the “challenge” phase, my learnings from this research also suggest that the practice of socially-just pedagogies is related to key *action* areas based on:

1. the identification of discourses as they operate, resistance to those which are regimenting and aligned with socially-unjust pedagogies, and work within those identified as generative
2. work beyond the classroom in which teachers act to challenge and change regimenting discourses.

Activity

Background

The steps that follow are not meant to trivialise the complexity of initiating change for social justice. Rather they are meant to stimulate discussion.

Steps

1. Consider the following questions:
 - a. On the basis of the TEACH activities, what changes to your pedagogical practice would you like to make? What changes can you make within your own classroom?

- b. What changes to your pedagogy require action by you and/or others across the whole school?

TEACH activities *cont'd*

c. What changes to your pedagogy require action beyond your school?

d. Which avenues might you use to initiate change beyond your school?

2. Formulate an action plan.

Action Plan for

Action I plan to take	When
	How
	Why
	Nature of any support needed

9 Annotated reference list and recommended reading

Adams St Pierre, E. (2000). Poststructural feminism in education: An overview. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(5), 477–515.

This is a challenging read but is recommended for those who want to enhance their understandings of feminist poststructural theorising.

Alloway, N. (1995). *Foundation stones: Construction of gender in early childhood*. Carlton, Vic: Curriculum Corporation.

This is a very readable introduction to discourses and how they operate. Recommended for everyone—not just those working in the early childhood sector.

Bigelow, B., Harvey, B., Karp, S. & Miller, L. (2001). *Rethinking our classrooms: teaching for equity and justice*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

This publication from the Rethinking Schools movement in the United States is full of practical classroom activities, some of which are relevant largely to the American context but it also includes activities worthwhile for the Australian context. The focus, as its title suggests, is on pedagogies for equity and justice.

Brooks, G. (2001). *Year of wonders: A novel of the plague*. London: Fourth Estate.

This novel explores the lives of villagers living in Eyam, Derbyshire in 1666 when the Plague decimates the village's population. The reflections of one of the novel's characters, Anna Frith, are instructive in exploring the meaning systems that we draw on to determine what constitutes truth.

Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(1), 5–12.

In this article Carter explores the potential of stories to reflect the “complexity, specificity and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal [in education]” (p. 6).

Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. (1995). *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes: Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series, Vol. 15*, Teachers' College Press, New York.

Clandinin and Connelly provide support for those pursuing narrative research and respond to issues, such as the validity of narrative as a research methodology.

Annotated reference list and recommended readings cont'd

- Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
This is a key text which invites the reader to consider theoretical and practical issues related to the use of the narrative.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (1991). Learning to teach against the grain. *Harvard Educational Review*, 61(3), 279–310.
Cochran-Smith's argument is that a useful reform strategy is to involve student teachers with experienced teachers to practise "teaching against the grain."
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, D. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(4), 2–14.
"In this paper [Connelly and Clandinin] briefly survey forms of narrative inquiry in educational studies and outline certain criteria, methods, and writing forms, which [they] describe in terms of beginning the story, living the story, and selecting stories to construct and reconstruct narrative plots" (p. 2).
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
This is a very useful introductory text for researchers. One of its most useful applications for early researchers is the exploration of four research elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods.
- Davies, B. (1994). *Poststructural theory and classroom practice*. Geelong, Vic: Deakin University.
Davies skillfully uses feminist poststructural theorising to explore everyday classroom situations.
- Education Queensland (2001). *Queensland State Education 2010*. Brisbane: Office of Strategic Planning and Portfolio Services.
This document articulates a strategic direction for Education Queensland in the face of changing social and economic circumstances.
- Education Queensland (2002). *A guide to Productive Pedagogies: Classroom reflection manual*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Curriculum Implementation Unit, Education Queensland).
As its title suggests, this booklet supports classroom practitioners to reflect on their practice using the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) as a lens.
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This is a very readable introduction to key changes in schooling, family life and society generally in the period that Elkind refers to as postmodernity.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
Foucault draws on the development of institutions including prisons to explore the regulatory nature of discourses.

Annotated reference list and recommended readings cont'd

- Gee, J. P. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. London: The Falmer Press.
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- Gore, J. (1993). *The struggle for pedagogies: Critical and feminist discourses as regimes of truth*. New York: Routledge.
This key contribution to the field invites the reader to consider all forms of pedagogy as constituting regimes of truth. Gore focuses particularly on feminist and critical pedagogies.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers: changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.
- Jalongo & Isenberg with Gerbracht (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
A very readable collection of teacher narratives.
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As the title suggests, Jones explores the necessity of making explicit who has created a particular text and importantly the location, in terms of subjectivities, from which they write.
- Lankshear, C. (1994). *Critical literacy*. Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Occasional Paper Number 3. Belconnen, ACT.
A very useful exploration of critical literacy.
- Lather, P. & Smithies, C. (1997). *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Powerful stories about women's experiences with HIV/AIDS. It is the methodology of the split-page format that I have drawn upon in my own work.
- Le Guin, U. (1973). *The left hand of darkness*. St Albans: Panther.
- Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001a). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study*. The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
This report "identifies productive approaches to classroom pedagogy and assessment, features of effective leadership within schools, and positive ways to enhance the professionalism and professional learning communities of teachers [as well as the] specific challenges for teachers, administrators and the educational system in improving on the patterns of practice identified in the study (p. 3).

Annotated reference list and recommended readings cont'd

Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001b) *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: A strategy for shared curriculum leadership—Teachers' summary* compiled by Land, R. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
Provides a summary of the final report (see above).

Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., Mills, M., Bahr, M., Chant, D., Warry, M., Ailwood, J., Capeness, R., Christie, P., Gore, J., Hayes, D. & Luke, A. (2001c). *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: Supplementary Material*. Brisbane: The State of Queensland (Education Queensland).
This publication contains theoretical papers written by QSRLS members during the course of the research.

Lingard, B., Mills, M. and Hayes, D. (2000). Teachers, school reform and social justice: Challenging research and practice. *Australian Educational Researcher* 27(3), 93–109.
The writers explore the early work of the QSRLS and locate the need for enhancement of teachers' pedagogies within the broader social justice agenda.

Louden, W. & Wallace, J. (1996). *Quality in the classroom: Learning about teaching through case studies*. Rydalmere, NSW: Hodder Education.
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Lusted, D. (1986). Pedagogy: Critical accounts of media education. *Screen*, 27(5), 2–14.
A landmark article in which the author challenges hegemonic instrumental views of pedagogy as teaching.

Macey, D. (2000). (Ed.) *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London: Penguin.
A useful reference guide to educational terms relevant to critical and emancipatory pedagogies.

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Martinez outlines emerging social, economic and political trends and their impacts on equity issues.

McWilliam, E. (1999). Individuality in education. In D. Meadmore, B. Burnett & P. O'Brien (Eds.), *Understanding education: contexts and agendas for the new millennium*, 26–31. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Prentice Hall—Sprint Print.
McWilliam critiques a dominant and oppressive educational paradigm in which the individual is seen as ascendant.

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An exciting and challenging introduction to feminist research.

Annotated reference list and recommended readings *cont'd*

- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (1999). *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. Retrieved 30 September 2002 from <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/index.htm>.
- Mishler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Mishler provides a guide to research interviewing and the use of the narrative.
- Moon, B. (2001). *Literary terms: A practical glossary*. (2nd edit.) Cottesloe, WA: Chalkface Press.
Moon makes accessible a broad range of terms pivotal to poststructural literary criticism.
- Morgan, W. (1997). *Critical literacy in the classroom: The art of the possible*. London: Routledge.
Morgan explores the practical and theoretical dimensions of critical literacy.
- National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning. (1996a). *Case studies illustrating National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*. Sydney: Australian Teaching Council.
A collection of very brief teacher narratives.
- National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning. (1996b). *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*. Sydney: Australian Teaching Council.
- Nayler, J. (2003a). *A research journey: Reflective journal*. Unpublished doctoral folio item.
A journal in which I explore the development of my early subjectivities.
- Nayler, J. (2003b). *All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies*. Unpublished doctoral folio item.
This paper argues the case for teachers' engagement with feminist poststructural theorising in relation to the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b).
- Nayler, J. (2003c). *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces*. Unpublished doctoral folio item.
The text for which this one is a companion text. It provides theoretical and practical perspectives for an audience committed to exploring the complex ways in which subjectivities and discourses shape and are shaped by their pedagogies.
- Nayler, J. & Bull, G. (2000). Teachers are supposed to teach not learn: Exploring the need to support teachers' professional growth. *Change: Transformations in Education*, 3(2), 53–65.
The need to support teachers in their professional learning is based on the identification of four key roles: collaborative learner, creator of knowledge, designer of purposes, and participant in power-sharing.

Annotated reference list and recommended readings cont'd

- O'Dea, J. (1994). Pursuing truth in narrative research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 28, 161–170.
O'Dea challenges the legitimacy of empirical quantitative truth, arguing the importance of artistic literary truth.
- QSRLS see Lingard et al., 2001a, 2001b and 2001c.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Reinharz brings together a broad range of feminist research methodologies, highlighting their historic origins.
- Sachs, J. (2000). The activist professional. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1, 77–95.
Sachs explores what she labels activist professionalism, a concept which offers potential for enhanced individual and collective teacher professional growth.
- Sarup, M. (1993). *An introductory guide to post-structuralism and post-modernism*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
As the title suggests, this text provides a useful introduction to the complex terrain of poststructuralism and postmodernism.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. The University of Chicago Press.
Shors links theory and practice related to critical education and in doing so highlights the links between critical pedagogy and democracy.
- Smyth, J. (1994). The practical and political dimensions of teaching. *Education Links*, 43, pp. 4–8.
As the title suggests, Smyth argues for a conceptualisation of teaching as both practical and political, and provides a useful lens for teacher reflection.
- Sparkes, A. (1992). The paradigms debate: An extended review and a celebration of difference. In A. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions*, 9–60. London: The Falmer Press.
Sparkes explores the nature of paradigms, outlining key elements of positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms.
- Symes, C. and Preston, N. (1997). Assessment and examination: Getting a measure of the subject. In C. Symes and N. Preston (Eds.), *Schools and classrooms: A cultural studies analysis of education* (2nd edit.), 221–245. Melbourne: Longman.
A very useful introductory text for students of education in which critical and emancipatory approaches to schooling are explored.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. (2nd edit.). Oxford: Blackwell.
A landmark text in the exploration of feminist poststructural theorising.

Appendix

Rationale for including the paper, *All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies*

The inclusion of the paper with the above title as an appendix in this item provides a strong statement of the learning that I have experienced and needed to experience as part of this study. These two papers bear similar titles but reflect divergent understandings. The inclusion of this paper, which was written approximately one year before its successor, also suggests the important role that anonymous reviewers play in supporting the learning of prospective contributors to refereed journals.

Despite my explicit statement throughout the paper, *All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies*, that my research was informed by feminist poststructural theorising, in hindsight this appears not to be the case. Instead this paper draws its theoretical support from critical theorists (Habermas, 1971, Kemmis, Cole & Suggett, 1983, Shor, 1992 and Smyth, 1992) whose work impacted strongly on my early theorising of socially-just pedagogies. An anonymous reviewer's comments support this view:

The paper starts by setting out a number of concerns about critical pedagogy, especially its universalising tendencies, and arguing that these can be addressed through poststructural theorising, especially that informed by feminism. And yet, later in the paper the focus seems to be back on critical pedagogy. Thus the early work of Smyth (surely not redolent of postmodernism) is used. Certainly feminism appears to be absent. The paper

would benefit from a closer connection being drawn between the argument in the first section and the latter parts of the paper. (December, 2002)

The juxtaposition of these two papers suggests that my theoretical understandings have changed considerably since writing the earlier paper. Some of the ways in which I now consider critical theory inadequate as a theoretical support for understanding and acting on the world in terms of working for socially-just pedagogies are explored in Chapter 2, *Pedagogies: Storylines and storyspaces* (Folio Item 3, Part A). While I believe that a lack of maturity regarding my theorising created this mismatch between my intended theoretical frameworks and those actually deployed, another contributing factor might rest with the construction of the Education Doctorate program itself.

The *data* that was drawn upon in the earlier paper was gathered at a forum which was held to gain some understandings of teachers' conceptualisations about the nature of pedagogy generally and socially-just pedagogies in particular. There was one major reason for conducting this forum: a "pilot study" was a course requirement of the Education Doctorate at the University of Southern Queensland.

The forum did not fulfil the role of a pilot study in any traditional sense. That is, there was no testing of a research methodology or instruments that were then refined for use in the major research. Rather the forum contributed to the first two phases of my research journey, that is, gaining an understanding of the meanings teachers and non-teachers attached to the labels, pedagogy and socially-just pedagogy, as well as contributing to my research relationships. A key point here is that the notion of a "pilot study" belongs to particular research paradigms. For example, a pilot study falls most comfortably, though not exclusively, within a positivist research paradigm and not into

one informed by feminist poststructural theorising. It is the contention here that the data gathered from the forum exerted a strong pull towards theorising underpinned by critical theory. Conversely, the data gathered at the forum, and indeed the very concept of “gathering data” was foreign to the feminist poststructural theoretical frameworks I was also developing simultaneously. One-line comments from forum participants about the nature of pedagogy, for example, did not lend themselves to discourse analysis as did the narratives developed later in the project. As a result, the second paper reflects a greater harmony between my theoretical frameworks, informed as they are by feminist poststructuralism, and the texts co-created with my co-investigators during the course of the research.

At the heart of this comparison of two papers is learning—my learning about appropriate research paradigms: appropriate research paradigms for particular research constructions, such as a pilot study and indeed appropriate research paradigms to suit my feminist views of the world.

All dressed up and no place to go: Exploring teachers' understandings in relation to new pedagogies

Introduction

This paper is informed by the early findings of a much larger study which focuses on teachers' understandings of socially just pedagogy. In this research collaboratively developed teaching narratives are being analysed to explicate the discourses that promote socially just pedagogy, as well as those discourses that stymie such practice. The research participants engaged in a series of two focus groups. The focus groups were designed on the basis of initial understandings developed as a result of an open forum to which teachers and non-teachers were invited. The forum was directed by the research question: "What does socially just pedagogy look like?" Subsequent to the focus groups, a small group of participants engaged in what we have termed "substantive conversations". It is from these that the teacher narratives are being developed.

Pedagogical research abounds with claims that what is taught in schools, the ways in which it is taught, and importantly, the ways in which learners benefit from being taught serve the interests of some and not others (Alloway, 1995; Davies, 1989, 1993, 1994; Daws, 1991; Gilbert & Taylor, 1991). Given this apparent incapacity of schooling to deliver equitable outcomes for students, a more socially just pedagogy may be informed by a range of theories, in particular those related to critical theory, as well as feminist and post-structural theories as discussed further below.

Drawing from some relevant literature

Lather (1998) points out that "critical pedagogy" was "originally grounded in a combination of Frankfurt School, Gramsci, and Paulo Freire" (p. 487) and "emerged in

the 1980s as a ‘big tent’ for those in education who were invested in doing academic work toward social justice” (p. 487). Despite the diverse representations of what collectively can be labelled “critical pedagogy”, McLaren (1989) claims that the various forms are united in one objective, that is, “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (p. 160). Further, he asserts that critical pedagogy resonates with the Hebrew concept of “tikkun” which means to heal, repair and transform, with everything else being commentary (p. 160). Additionally, McLaren argues that “schooling for self and social empowerment is *ethically prior* to a mastery of technical skills, which are primarily tied to the logic of the marketplace” (p. 162, emphasis in original). The broadly based political, economic and social agendas of pedagogies that locate themselves under the umbrella of “critical pedagogy” are alluded to by McLaren (1998) when he claims that:

Critical pedagogy is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state. Developed by progressive teachers, literacy workers, and radical scholars attempting to eliminate inequalities on the basis of social class, it has sparked a wide range of anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic classroom-based curricular and policy initiatives. This follows a strong recognition that racism, sexism, and homophobia are exacerbated by capitalist exploitation. (p. 435)

It is the contention here that critical pedagogy referred to above, conceived as it was within modernist traditions, provides an inadequate response given today’s post-

modern conditions. It appears that it is precisely that broad social, economic and political agenda proposed above that limits the capacity of modernist-influenced critical pedagogy to act in meaningful ways in today's contexts. That is to say, it is the "commitment to social transformation in *solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups*" (McLaren, 1989, p. 162, italics added) that is challenged by the feminist and post-modern notions that also inform this research and which elsewhere have come to influence the critical agenda (Giroux, 2000). Elkind (1997) draws some powerful comparisons between the modernist times in which categories such as class were rallying points for action, and the post-modern times which require different, particularised and local responses:

This era [that of the modern] was built on three seminal ideas, which nurtured the intellectual flowering of that historical epoch. These seminal beliefs were in *progress, universality, and regularity*. Modern education...gives abundant evidence of its modern heritage.

...Postmodernity stresses *difference* as much as progress, *particularity* as opposed to universality, and *irregularity* in contrast with regularity. (p. 27, p. 28, emphasis in original)

In short, it is argued here that the critical pedagogies theorised and practised by a range of critical educators, including Freire (1993), McLaren (1989) and Shor (1992) are inadequate on their own to respond to post-modern conditions described by Elkind (1997). Further, some aspects of modernist-influenced critical pedagogies are problematic given today's conditions. Ironically, it is the very strength of the appeal of critical pedagogies, that of collective action on the basis of class membership, that poses a problematic vehicle for achieving socially just pedagogy within post-modern

contexts. Based on his research, which focused on a Native American university professor who was suffering from AIDS, Tierney (1994) calls for research that exposes the multiple realities that exist in the world. Further, he calls for a focus on a political agenda of redressing discriminatory practices and attitudes. Tierney's work offers a sound way forward when he claims that he "use[s] critical theory not in opposition to postmodernism but as a way to give political purpose to the postmodern project", advocating that those committed to socially just education "assume a postmodern stance informed by critical theory" (p.100). Of course, Tierney is not alone in his call for pedagogical theory and practice which draws on both critical theory and post-modern perspectives.

Post-structural theorising, especially that informed by feminism, offers a way forward in terms of interventions for social justice. A key post-structural notion involves the rejection of objective truth for all times, as well as the security of the grand narrative. In other words, post-structural theorists reject any beliefs in the existence of a body of immutable facts that happen to be "out there" waiting to be discovered or that grand narratives can reflect the particularity and specificity of people's lives and events. Nicholson (1989) refers to this as "a crisis in the authority and the conceptual systems of Western culture" (p. 98) and Lather describes it as "the disappointed hopes engendered by optimistic confidence in the continuing progress and imminent triumph of Enlightenment reason" (quoted in Weiner, 1993, p. 50). It has been the use of the "grand narrative" or "discourse" that Lyotard (1989) challenges as inadequate to explain the complex, interconnected and sometimes contradictory events which vary across time and space.

“Legitimate” knowledge couched within a structuralist framework draws heavily upon the notions of universal reason, the scientific and industrial base, as well as a world in which autonomous individuals contribute to humanity’s steady progress. Cherryholmes (1988) writes that “structuralism”, a “pervasive and often unacknowledged way of thinking [which] has influenced twentieth-century thinking, in important ways...promises order, organization, and certainty” (p. 30). In contrast, post-structuralists “question the possibility of truths that are objective in the sense of being necessary, universal, and unchanging” (Nicholson, 1989, p. 198). Post-structuralists place emphasis on the language and discourses which we use to constitute ourselves, our knowledge of the world and, importantly, our constructions of reality. It is necessary to look specifically at the impact of such post-structural theorising on critical theory.

The universalising qualities of critical theory, which categorise people rigidly according to class or other aspects of their identity, are challenged by Sarup (1996) and Lather (1998). Sarup attacks the “historicist nature of Marxism, when he claims that “rejecting the Marxist theory of history as the progress of a single narrative of class struggle, the grand narrative of History, poststructuralists stress the heterogeneous and the discontinuous” (p. 67). This leads Sarup to conclude that “instead of the unity of the working class (the agent of universal emancipation) we have heterogeneous social movements, the new communities of interests” (p. 75). Sarup’s claims are supported by those of Lather.

Lather (1998) proposes that given critical pedagogy “as an ensemble of practices and discourses with competing claims of truth, typicality, and credibility”, “tensions with feminist pedagogy were always there” (p. 487). Lather claims that “these erupted into

visibility in Elizabeth Ellsworth's 1989 piece" (p. 487). Ellsworth (1989) in a landmark paper, "Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy", challenges critical educators to abandon abstract language and strive to find better ways to carry out emancipatory work that confronts the specific realities in which students live and study. Critiques such as that by Ellsworth are reflective of the moves towards a more particularised and localised en-action of critical pedagogy. Lather (1998) calls for a move away from "abstraction and universalization" (p. 488) that hitherto have been dominant in the discourses associated with critical pedagogy. Ellsworth asks "What diversity do we silence in the name of 'liberatory' pedagogy?" (p. 299).

At the heart of these critiques of critical theory by Sarup (1996) and Lather (1998) and the attempted translations to practice by Ellsworth (1989) is a challenge to what counts as knowledge. Such challenging also relates to asking what is required by particular learners to serve as meaningful knowledge, as well as the action that might be required to ameliorate oppressive conditions under which people are living.

Methodology

The methodology used here is best described as interpretive research. The literature reviewed for this study is that informed by critical perspectives, which are in turn informed by critical theory, feminist and post-structural theories. The invitation to teachers to share their understandings of socially just pedagogy locates this particular research discourse as critical. The forum, however, is bounded by its interest in teachers' reflections and understandings as to what constitutes socially just pedagogy, as opposed to a study designed not only to gather research but to create critical social change. The

study reported here, with its acceptance of a social world as created and understood by the research participants, locates this work in the realm of interpretive research.

Key method: the forum

The key method used to gather data in the early stage of this research was a one and a half hour forum, which was attended by teachers and other educators. An open invitation was extended to primary, secondary and special education teachers from state and non-state schools to attend a forum in order to share their understandings of socially just pedagogy. Forum participants were invited to reflect and share their own understandings, as well as to respond to stimulus materials containing a range of conceptualisations of socially just pedagogy.

Stimulus materials constituted the key instrument used in the forum.¹ This research instrument was designed to generate discussion and written reflections. The forum consisted of several distinct phases. Participants were invited to orient themselves in terms of the topic and other participants by sharing, with a range of participants, their reactions to a set of sentence stems related to pedagogy. Participants' introduction of themselves to others in the group also involved their sharing of the role of pedagogy in their professional practice. Following an outline of the key purpose of the forum, the proposed processes, the proposed outcomes and the invitation to negotiate these, participants contributed to two graffiti boards. The first graffiti board was constructed from participants' definitions of the term, "pedagogy", with the second board made up of their definitions of "socially just pedagogy". Participants were then invited to consider a set of criteria for "socially just curriculum and classroom practice" proposed by Bigelow, Harvey, Karp and Miller (2001, pp. 2–4). Group discussion followed which was

stimulated by four questions which are outlined in Table 1. Finally, participants were invited to comment in written form upon the extent and nature of their reflection on their own pedagogy as a result of the forum.

Table 1

Four key questions

Question 1	What is socially just pedagogy?
Question 2	What are some key criteria for socially just pedagogy?
Question 3	What makes socially just pedagogy possible?
Question 4	What makes socially just pedagogy impossible or very difficult?

The population sample for this study comprised teachers and other educators. Importantly, the population sample was determined by participants' own identification as those interested in investigating their own pedagogy. The sample was further limited by geographical boundaries as the forum was held in suburban Brisbane. Considerable interest existed among non-teaching educators to participate in the forum. It was decided that the forum should include all interested educators but that the data analysis should reflect a distinction between teaching and non-teaching educators. Further, it was decided that the participation of non-teaching educators would act as a stimulus to the teachers' discussion. The most notable aspect of the population sample is its diversity in terms of the range of activities related to pedagogy in which they were engaged at the time of the forum. Four of the 15 participants were from primary or secondary school settings with the remainder including outcomes-focused curriculum educational advisors, senior education officers, a teacher educator, a private educational consultant, as well as several

other educators working in government departments, other than education, but with a focus on young people. See Table 2 for a fuller description of forum participants.

Table 2

Profiles of forum participants

Professional role	Sector	State/non-state
Teacher	Primary	State
Teacher	Secondary	State
Teacher	Primary	Non-state
Teacher	Primary	Non-state
Outcomes education curriculum advisor	Primary and secondary	State
Outcomes education curriculum advisor	Primary and secondary	Non-state
Outcomes education curriculum advisor	Primary and secondary	State
Teacher educator	Primary and secondary	State
Education officer (leadership & development)	Primary and secondary	State
Review officer (statutory curriculum authority)	Secondary	State & Non-state
Professional role	Sector	State/non-state

(table continues)

Table 2 continued

Policy officer (government dept other than education)	Primary & secondary	State
Research officer (government department other than education)	N/A	State and non-state
Private consultant	Primary and secondary	State and non-state
Behaviour management team leader	Primary and secondary	State
Teachers' union research officer	Primary and secondary	State

Data collection and analysis

Two main sources of data were gathered during the forum: a taped record of the whole-group discussion and participants' written reflections during the forum. Participants were given time during the forum to record their reflections. Reflections were of three main types: responses to sentence stems, specific questions and evaluation of stimulus material.

The two key sources of data, whole group discussion and participants' written reflections, were analysed to determine the dominant themes that characterised teachers' understandings of socially just pedagogy. While the focus of this forum was on teachers' understandings, data collected from non-teaching participants have been included in order to highlight similarities and differences in relation to teachers' understandings. Data

collected from both participants' verbal and written comments were analysed to identify particular themes. Several significant themes emerged which are discussed in the results below.

The purpose of this interpretive research was to identify the understandings of a particular group of educators who participated in a forum on a set date. Given the interpretivist paradigm (see Sparkes, 1992) in which this research is located, traditional conceptualisations of validity are not applicable. Smith (1984) makes a cogent argument in this regard when he claims that: "For interpretive inquiry, the basis of truth or trustworthiness is social agreement; what is judged true or trustworthy is what we can agree, conditioned by time and place, is true or trustworthy" (p. 386). Popkewitz (1984) reinforces this point when he states that "What is 'real' and valid is so because of mutual agreement by those who participate" (p. 42). In summary, what is being "measured" in this study is the nature of participants' understandings with regard to socially just pedagogy.

Findings from the forum

The data gathered reveal some clear-cut patterns in terms of participants' understandings of what constitutes socially just pedagogy. It is possible to discern quite distinct differences in such understandings in terms of those that have "critical" connotations and those that promote "access", that is, in terms of opportunities with regard to learning styles, strategies and so on. It is also instructive to consider participants' definitions of pedagogy. These definitions reveal further distinctions in terms of the ways in which they are informed by either "technical" or "emancipatory" knowledge (Habermas, 1971).

One of the most significant themes that emerged from the analysis of participants' understandings of socially just pedagogy was that of critical versus non-critical perspectives. Two of the four teachers proposed definitions of socially just pedagogy, which could be described as promoting critical perspectives, while two others suggested definitions that could be labelled as promoting access. Comments that have been labelled as being critical in this analysis are those that make some reference to challenging the status quo or existing structures and cultures in order to eliminate injustice or oppression. Comments that have been classified as promoting access include those that refer to the provision of a range of teaching styles and strategies in which students are afforded maximum opportunities for learning. One teacher, proposing what has been labelled here as a critical perspective, described socially just pedagogy as "facilitating learning in a way that mitigates against injustice, oppression and domination. Another critical definition proposed by a teacher was one in which "pedagogy sees education as a tool to develop a better world for all, not just for a privileged few". One of the other two teachers participating in the forum proposed a non-critical perspective which emphasised access. This teacher suggested that: "socially just pedagogy is a set of belief systems, structures, organisational practices and methodologies that ensure equity of opportunity and 'best response' to each individual's needs". A definition proposed by another teaching participant reflects the detached and often cynical way in which many teachers regard discussions of pedagogy when claiming that: "Pedagogy is a lovely-sounding word and it scores well in scrabble."

A quite clear division can be seen in descriptions of socially just pedagogy proffered by non-teaching forum participants, with a minority or three out of nine

representing critical perspectives, while the remaining six proposed what could be described as a pedagogy that promotes access. An example of a critical perspective proposed by a non-teaching participant is that of a pedagogy that "should encourage students to 'trouble' the deep assumptions, structures and practices that produce injustice, and to explore these to foster justice". A comment reflective of the non-critical perspectives made by non-teaching participants was that in which socially just pedagogy was described as "taking into account different learning styles, allowing expanded opportunities and working on the assumption that not all people will learn the same thing at the same time or in the same way". A further definition that suggests an access perspective is one which calls for "equal opportunity for all diverse groups, use of a variety of strategies to target all learning styles, and [the use of a] context that suits students' interests and needs".

A further insight from this study regarding the scope of the term, socially just pedagogy, was captured by a teaching participant with whom the group appeared to agree. This participant claimed that:

There are two key themes. One is looking at the child, or the student that you're working with and all of that—their background, distinct characteristics that the particular student brings and social justice being applied that way and the other is the outcomes from the educative process.

It is the contention that definitions categorised here as "technical" (see Habermas, 1971) are those underpinned by an objective view of the world and which are used to establish and maintain control. Definitions labelled as technical thus have a focus on how the activity is carried out without any consideration of what might be problematic aspects

of such activity. For example, the two teaching participants who proposed definitions suggested that pedagogy was "the art and science of teaching" and "the variety of teaching and learning practices in a classroom, including teaching strategies and approaches, and organisational practices". Only two of the nine non-teaching participants proposed definitions that it could be argued were underpinned by emancipatory knowledge. Habermas's emancipatory form of knowledge challenges the social constructedness of practical and technical forms of knowledge and their implication in the oppression of particular societal groups. Some non-teaching participants challenged the unproblematic notions of definitions of pedagogy when they claimed that pedagogy involved "the facilitation of learning and enabling oneself and others to reframe knowledge in productive ways" and that pedagogy was "concerned with the theorising and practising of effective teaching and learning, contested, of course". The majority of written comments from other non-teaching participants who put forward definitions of pedagogy were reflected in the following: "what we used to call 'methodology'; all teaching/learning activities" and "the educational practices evidenced in classrooms by teachers, strategies (outcomes) and assessment (reporting)".

There was considerable debate throughout the forum regarding the relative importance of knowledge as it can be framed within areas or disciplines as opposed to a view of knowledge as a social construction. A teaching participant suggested that the criteria proposed by Bigelow et al. (2001, pp. 2–4) might be missing "traditions of knowledge and ways knowledge is organised". This participant went on to say that:

[Teachers and students] really need to understand how knowledge works, the role of knowledge [because] the way knowledge is organised is a really

important part of pedagogy. If pedagogy is about encouraging people to frame their knowledge, then you've really got to understand the knowledge.

The need for more support for teachers to practise socially just pedagogy was flagged by teaching and non-teaching participants alike. A non-teaching participant, who had recent classroom experience, claimed that she "got tired and social justice went out the window".

The need to support teachers was also expressed by a non-teaching participant who made reference to the challenging nature of working for justice in any area of society. This participant made the following written record:

Teachers in many cases are scared of what socially just pedagogy means (they probably don't use this language—so they are scared about what questions they may be asked—what involvement may be required of them.) They have not been required to “behave” like this—they have not been used to students asking questions of them—questions they may not be able to answer. This is a real challenge for them. There are teachers out there who are comfortable with this—they are trying to move in this direction—they need to be supported and they need to be supportive of others who are struggling to move this way.

It is proposed here that calls from forum participants, including teachers and non-teachers, for greater support for the teaching profession in its pursuit of socially just pedagogy are addressed by Education Queensland's implementation of the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a).

Implications for engagement in new pedagogies

The forum provides evidence of a range of teacher attitudes and knowledge bases that are significant in teachers' capacities to successfully implement the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a). It is argued here that those teachers who perceive pedagogy as a socially constructed activity with emancipatory meanings and who consider that socially just pedagogy involves critical understandings are well placed to successfully take up the Productive Pedagogies in their classrooms. Conversely, those teachers who see pedagogy as a technical activity, that is, constituted by a range of teaching strategies and for whom socially just pedagogy is associated with enhanced access, including access to resources and learning styles, potential to reform classroom practice using these new pedagogies will not be realised. An extension of this paper is to explore briefly the ways in which the Productive Pedagogies are underpinned by a social justice focus and, as a result, require that teachers bring critical understandings to engagement with this framework.

The Productive Pedagogies emerged from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Education Queensland, 2001a), a study commissioned by Education Queensland. Almost 1000 lessons over a three-year period were observed and "rated for evidence of 20 elements of 'productive pedagogies'" (Education Queensland, 2001a, p. xiii), supplemented with interviews with administrators, participating teachers and other senior staff. In addition, student assessment pieces were collected and analysed. Informed by the concept of "authentic pedagogy" developed by Newmann and Associates in the Center on the Organisation and Restructuring of Schools (see Education Queensland, 2001a), the study involved observing and rating classroom lessons on a set

of five-point scales for evidence of twenty elements of Productive Pedagogies. The study proposed that these elements, which were present in varying degrees within schools observed, could be grouped into the four dimensions of intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment and recognition of difference.

As well as establishing a correlation between the dimensions outlined above and improved student learning outcomes, the QSRLS (Education Queensland, 2001a) provides direction to Education Queensland with regard to the professional needs of Queensland teachers. The report concluded that although levels of social support are satisfactory, pedagogical reform in Queensland schools requires a focus on “intellectual demandingness” (Education Queensland, 2001a, p. xiv), as well as enhanced repertoires of practices for accommodating diversity within the classroom. The scope of this paper does not allow a detailed exploration of the values and beliefs that underpin the Productive Pedagogies. However, an examination of some elements will illustrate the spaces for socially pedagogy that the Productive Pedagogies could provide if teachers successfully engage with them.

Within the dimension of intellectual quality the element, knowledge as problematicⁱⁱ, provides a litmus test to determine whether teachers approach the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a) with the necessary critical understandings. In the “Theoretical rationale for the development of productive pedagogies: A literature review” (Education Queensland, 2001b), the research team makes the distinction between “knowledge as problematic” and “knowledge as given” (p. 5). They claim that the latter involves the “typical and traditional treatments of knowledge within schools” in which knowledge is presented as “a given body of facts, a

body of truth to be acquired by students” (Education Queensland, 2001b, p. 5). In contrast, they claim that “knowledge as problematic” is informed by a conceptualisation of knowledge as “being constructed, and hence subject to political, social and cultural influences and implications” (Education Queensland, 2001b, p. 5).ⁱⁱⁱ Such a conceptualisation of knowledge requires teachers to use a critical lens. This critical view of knowledge is underpinned by post-modern notions of knowledge, explored earlier in this paper, which challenge knowledge as “universal and unchanging” (Nicholson, 1989, p. 198).

The Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a) have a strong social justice focus. Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000), key members of the QSRLS team, claim that they “have developed the concept of ‘productive pedagogies’, as a way to reflect upon which pedagogies might make a difference for different groups of students” (p. 96). Further, they state that they “use the somewhat clumsy term ‘pedagogy’ to refer to the interrelationships between teacher practice and student outcomes, all located within a particular socio-political environment” (p. 96). The Productive Pedagogies have been developed to support teachers to respond to the needs of diverse groups of students in their classrooms by teachers who understand that they work in particular socio-political contexts. Such a commitment to diversity is underpinned by post-modernity’s emphasis on difference, particularity and irregularity (Elkind, 1997, p. 27). To engage successfully with the Productive Pedagogies teachers need two key understandings: that their classrooms and schools operate within particular socio-political contexts, and that ongoing deconstruction and reconstruction of practice is required in order to respond

adequately to those contexts. Importantly then, pedagogy is both a political and a practical activity (Smyth, 1994, p. 4).

The need for teachers to use a critical lens in their engagement with the Productive Pedagogies is captured by Smyth (1994) talking about teachers' need for critical dispositions generally:

To act critically is not as some would have us believe, to act only in a negative or carping way. The sense in which it is used here draws attention to irrational and oppressive elements within the way society is structured, and that make it difficult for people to make informed decisions and arrive at considered choices. (p. 4)

The argument in this paper is that although pedagogy contains a technical focus with its concerns for the micro-skills of teaching, socially just practice of pedagogy must exist within a critical or emancipatory framework. The following comment by a "classroom veteran" and quoted by Bigelow et al. (2001) provides a useful focus: "We can teach for the society we live in, or we can teach for the one we want to see" (p. 4). This suggestion offers two key notions: in this teacher's view current society does not equal a vision of a just society, and that teaching or pedagogy can have a role in creating a better society. Such aspirations are not based on the technical capacities of teachers, but on their knowledge and skills in relation to supporting their students to identify and redress injustice where possible. Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) cast light on this issue when they draw an analogy between education and football:

Education is like football in the sense that different people prefer the game to be played in different ways. Here two ideas are relevant: style and code.

Dogged determination and controlled virtuosity are differences of style. Preferences between styles can only be tested where there are agreements about code. Differences of code are more fundamental: they are agreements about how the game is to be played. (p. 8)

Kemmis, Cole and Suggett (1983) further assert that “The problem is that people tend to construe differences between codes in education as differences of style. And that hides the fact that there are profound disagreements about what education is and what it is for” (p. 8). In short, if teachers are to successfully take up new pedagogies, or specifically the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a), their practice needs to be informed by deep understandings of what constitutes intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment and recognition of difference. For example, they need to encourage their students to view knowledge as socially constructed and therefore problematic. They also need to scaffold “substantive conversations” (Education Queensland, 2001a) in their classrooms so that power can be shared and deep understandings developed. These are just two examples drawn from the Productive Pedagogies. Further, it is proposed in this paper that support must be provided for teachers who may be ill-equipped to take on such new pedagogies. The need for professional support for teachers’ learning is poignantly captured in the following words by a teaching participant in the forum:

Also you have to be prepared to fail. A lot of teachers have been very successful at school and then when we're hit by, “Here's a new teaching strategy, OK, I'll try it—nope I failed.” You give up. I have a lot of respect

for teachers—it's a very hard job, but we need a lot of support from somebody out there to keep us going, to develop our powers of reflection.

Professional support for new pedagogies

Given that the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a) involve considerable professional judgement and action on the part of teachers, for example, to determine what constitutes a substantive conversation in their classroom or to explore the problematic nature of knowledge with which they and their students engage, they need to be key agents in their own professional learning. Such learning needs to “accommodate teachers’ needs and aspirations...[be] part of a continuous process...and [be] one in which teachers exert considerable agency” (Nayler and Bull, 2000). In contrast, what Goodman (1995) refers to as “medical” and “purchase” models of professional development result in a “teacher as technician model” (Butler, 1992, p. 221). So what is being advocated here is the provision of professional support to teachers so that they may enhance their knowledge and skills, and in some cases, challenge existing knowledge and skills, in order to engage successfully with the Productive Pedagogies.

That schools must provide environments for such learning-in-context is acknowledged in the QSRLS (Education Queensland, 2001a) and beyond. The QSRLS recommended that, “schools should be encouraged to create and support teacher professional learning communities inside schools through processes and structures which encourage collaboration and reflective dialogue around classroom practices and deprivatised practice within the development of a coherent school philosophy” (p. 104). There is extensive literature which proposes structures and cultures to promote learning among members of educational communities (Aviram, 1996; Cooper and Henderson,

1995; Costa and Garmston, 1994; Kofman and Senge, 1993; Senge, 1990). Varying labels are applied to such structures and cultures for learning. Senge (1990), for example, calls for “learning organisations”, Cooper and Henderson (1995) propose “collaborative learning communities” and Costa and Garmston (1994) explore the notion of “renaissance schools”. Sergiovanni (1992, p. 205) points to a key characteristic of such learning communities when he proposes that, “the metaphor for schooling must change from organization, instructional delivery system, processing plant, clinical setting, market garden, and so on to community”. Sergiovanni’s (1992) statement raises two key issues that need to be addressed in terms of teachers’ successful engagement with new pedagogies through some form of learning community.

First, such learning communities need to support teachers’ professional growth in relation to maintaining a critical lens. That is to say such communities need to continuously ask whose interests are served by particular knowledge, learning strategies, resources and so on, as well as whose interests are not. Smyth (quoted in Day, 1993, p. 86) proposes that in order to “develop and sustain a critical form of teaching”, reflective processes need to build on four key questions:

1. What do I do? (describing)
2. What does this description mean? (informing)
3. How did I come to be like this? (confronting)
4. How might I do things differently? (reconstructing)

Smyth, Hattam, McInerney and Lawson (1997) recognise the difficulties that teachers encounter in attempting to find “enunciative space” for their learning. They argue that for teachers to exert agency over their learning they need to find spaces within

schooling discourses beyond those currently privileged which include “vocationalism, accountability, testing, performance appraisal, devolved responsibility, school charters, league tables, re-centralised curriculum frameworks, and other extraneous limitations on teachers’ work and students’ learning” (Smyth et al., 1997, p. 4). This need for teachers to find their own spaces within the privileged agendas of their schools leads to the second key question that needs to be addressed.

A second issue that needs to be addressed relates to the tension that exists between the Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a) as a privileged agenda currently in Education Queensland schools and the proposal that teachers exert agency over their own teaching practice and associated learning. This is somewhat of a paradox. It is the contention in this paper that the Productive Pedagogies provide a pedagogical framework to accommodate the particular needs of the diverse range of students. Simultaneously, this paper also calls for teachers to maintain, or in some cases, develop a critical focus regarding their practice. Therein exists the paradox: embedded within this framework is a focus on teachers as critical agents in their classrooms. Consequently, as educators we need to work within the context of the “top-down” nature of the promotion of the Productive Pedagogies, while promoting where possible teachers’ agency to take up these new pedagogies with a critical lens.

The very nature of this tension can also be linked to the cynical response made by one of the participants referred to earlier. The link is through the sense of teachers’ professional identity. Billig, Condor, Edwards and Gane (1988) referred to this as an ideological dilemma and Rossi (1999) also noted the same phenomenon amongst teacher education students. It is one thing to “expect” teachers to move toward a certain

disposition when it comes to pedagogy but quite another that they will actually do it. Even a comprehensive and wholesale change to the way an education system delivers its service is no guarantee that individual teachers will make a willing transition. Giddens (1991) helps to explain this. His notion of a “protective cocoon” describes the resistance often encountered in systemic educational change and yet as he says, as human actors, we constantly reinvent ourselves by reordering our narratives (Giddens, 1991). Some of Giddens’ subsequent work (see 1994 and 1997) emphasises this because as he says we now live in what he calls a post-traditional society. So even in teaching, certainties that were once seen to be immovable cannot be taken for granted. There is a necessity to reorder narratives so that our social practice is in harmony with broader social change. The notion then, of a core self (and therefore by implication a core professional self) is untenable. Rather our professional identity is something that will be in constant transit. It is this, which offers hope to the professional development requirements of the Productive Pedagogies movement in Queensland and at a more mundane level lies at the heart of a lifelong approach to learning. Lifelong learning is inevitable as the nature of the work of teachers (and therefore the nature of their professional identity) shifts with time.

It’s a good trick if you can do it: Some concluding thoughts

This paper has attempted to do several things. First, the outcomes of a forum session which served as a prelude to a larger study have been discussed and these show that within this particular group, the commitment to socially just pedagogy is indifferent to the point of cynical at worst and uninformed but with good intentions at best. Secondly the nature of systemic educational change in Queensland has been discussed and we have indicated that this level of change is dependent upon a socially critical orientation that is

underpinned by a social justice agenda. The trick as we see it, is to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to invest in Productive Pedagogies (Education Queensland, 2001a) and therefore a commitment to socially just practice in an overt way. We feel this requires professional development providers to invest in the professional identities of teachers so that professional growth within systemic educational change is a partnership with ownership retained in teachers' hands. This offers some scope we feel, for a transition to Productive Pedagogies as a socially just educational initiative in a way that maintains a professional sense of self within teachers and yet which moves the educational discourse to a genuine socially critical orientation.

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ⁱ The stimulus materials included some criteria for socially just curriculum and classroom practice proposed by Bigelow, Harvey, Karp and Miller (2001, pp. 2–4).

ⁱⁱ During the series of two focus groups, which were conducted at six sites subsequent to the forum referred to in this paper, there were more queries from participants about what this element meant than any other element.

ⁱⁱⁱ Another focus group comment illustrates the lack of familiarity that some teachers have with the concept of socially constructed knowledge. When invited to reflect on an example of their own socially just practice and later to explore it further by drawing on the Productive Pedagogies one teacher lamented that as he had chosen a mathematics example many of the elements [related to the socially constructed nature of knowledge] were irrelevant. However, as Bishop (1990) claims “mathematical ideas, like other ideas, are humanly constructed. They have a cultural history” (p. 52).

Storylines and storyspaces:

A folio of learnings related to socially-just pedagogies

Folio Item 4: All dressed up with no place to go: Theoretical understandings for new pedagogies

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Abstract

This paper argues that the Productive Pedagogies, which emerged from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS, 2001a), provide opportunities for teachers to enhance student learning outcomes in socially-just ways. Further, it is argued that feminist poststructural theorising serves well teachers' successful engagement with these pedagogies. This argument draws on a doctoral study which explored the discourses that might support socially-just pedagogies, as well as those discourses that might inhibit such practice. One of the four narratives collaboratively developed during this study is drawn upon in this paper. Feminist poststructural theorising is explored in two key ways. First, the research project and specifically the commentaries that accompany each narrative are informed by such theorising. Second, it is argued that the practice of the teacher, known here as Monica, is also informed by feminist poststructural theorising. Specific examples of the ways in which Monica's pedagogies promote intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001b) are explored in this paper. Importantly, the paper argues that for successful engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (2001b) a conceptualisation of pedagogy as discursive activity is helpful. Furthermore, the need to support teachers' professional learning in this area is advocated so that they are positioned to access the opportunities offered by the Productive Pedagogies (2001b). Without such professional learning, teachers might be all dressed up with no place to go.

An earlier paper, bearing a similar title but informed by divergent theoretical understandings, is included as an appendix here. The rationale for including this paper is also provided in the appendix.

We talk about social justice in terms of text. Whose voices are marginalised in the text? Whose interest is best represented? Is this just? Is this fair? If you were writing this text from your encultured background would it be different? Why? And I have no doubt that the boys have responded particularly well here. The boys have responded amazingly to reader response theory.

These words were spoken by a secondary school English teacher, known in my research as Monica, during a substantive conversationⁱ we shared in June 2002 (see Nayler, 2003b for the full narrative). Monica's narrative is instructive on a number of levels. First, Monica's narrative provides examples of the Productive Pedagogies which emerged from the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) (Lingard, Ladwig, Mills, Bahr, Chant, Warry, Ailwood, Capeness, Christie, Gore, Hayes, & Luke, 2001aⁱⁱ). Second, Monica's narrative resonates with feminist poststructural theory. The central argument of this paper is that opportunities available within the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) to enhance student outcomes in socially-just ways are well served by drawing on feminist poststructural theoretical frameworks. Conversely, it is argued that technicist or humanist theoretical foundations prevent teachers' successful engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). A key notion in this paper is that pedagogy is a political activity and it is argued that feminist poststructural theorising offers a lens with which to view such activity and importantly to take action for social justice.

Overview of the paper

In order to argue that feminist poststructural theoretical frames support teachers' engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b), several key areas are

explored. First, an outline of the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) is provided with specific reference to the ways in which such a framework provides opportunities to promote social justice. Second, the theoretical understandings associated with feminist poststructuralism, which inform this research project and which inform Monica's pedagogical practice, are explored. Third, an overview of the research project is provided. Fourth, specific examples are used from Monica's narrative to illustrate the ways in which the pedagogies she uses resonate with feminist poststructural theorising and which align with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). These examples support a (re)conceptualisation of pedagogy as discursive activity. Finally, it is argued that teachers need support in their professional learning in order to utilise the opportunities afforded by the Productive Pedagogies (2001b).

Productive Pedagogies

The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS, 2001a) was commissioned by Education Queensland. Almost 1000 lessons were observed over a three-year period and 'rated for evidence of 20 elements of "productive pedagogies", a concept developed out of the research' (QSRLS, 2001a, p. xiii) and supplemented with interviews with administrators, participating teachers and other senior staff. In addition, student assessment pieces were collected and analysed. Informed by the concept of 'authentic pedagogy', developed by Newmann and Associates in the Center on the Organisation and Restructuring of Schools (QSRLS, 2001a), the study involved observing and rating classroom lessons on a set of five-point scales for evidence of the twenty elements or 'productive pedagogies' (QSRLS, 2001a, p. xiii).

The QSRLS (2001a) proposed that these elements, which were present in varying degrees within schools observed, could be grouped into the four dimensions of

intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001a). This framework for reflection and improvement of teachers' practice is a major vehicle for pedagogical reform in Queensland state education (Education Queensland, 2001) with considerable interest in this study from the non-state education sector.

As well as establishing a correlation between the dimensions outlined above and improved student learning outcomes, the QSRLS (2001a) provides direction to Education Queensland with regard to the professional needs of Queensland teachers (this issue is taken up in the final section of this paper). The report concludes that although levels of social support are satisfactory, pedagogical reform in Queensland schools requires a focus on 'intellectual demandingness' (QSRLS, 2001a, p. xiv), as well as enhanced repertoires of practices for accommodating diversity within the classroom.

The Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) have a strong social justice focus. Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2000), key members of the QSRLS team, claim that they 'have developed the concept of "productive pedagogies" as a way to reflect upon which pedagogies might make a difference for different groups of students' (p. 96). Further, they state that they 'use the somewhat clumsy term "pedagogy" to refer to the interrelationships between teacher practice and student outcomes, all located within a particular socio-political environment' (Lingard, et al., 2000, p. 96). The Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b, see Table 1) have been developed to support teachers to respond to the needs of diverse groups of students in their classrooms by teachers who understand that they work in particular socio-political contexts.

Table 1. Productive Pedagogies

Intellectual quality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Higher-order thinking <i>Is higher-order thinking occurring during the lesson? Is there evidence of conceptual depth, not content?</i> 2. Deep knowledge <i>Does the lesson cover operational fields in any depth, detail or level of specificity?</i> 3. Deep understanding <i>Do the work and response of the students provide evidence of depth of understanding of concepts or ideas?</i> 4. Substantive conversation <i>Does classroom talk lead to sustained conversational dialogue between students, and between teachers and students, to create or negotiate understanding of subject matter?</i> 5. Knowledge as problematic <i>Are students critiquing and second-guessing texts, ideas and knowledge?</i> 6. Metalanguage <i>Are aspects of language, grammar and technical vocabulary being foregrounded?</i>
Connectedness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Knowledge integration <i>Does the lesson integrate a range of subject areas?</i> 8. Background knowledge <i>Are links with students' background knowledge made explicit?</i> 9. Connectedness to the world <i>Is the lesson, the activity or task connected to competencies or concepts beyond the classroom?</i> 10. Problem-based curriculum <i>Is there a focus on identifying and solving intellectual and/or real-world problems?</i>
Supportive classroom environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Student direction <i>Do students determine specific activities or outcomes of the lesson?</i> 12. Social support <i>Is the classroom characterised by an atmosphere of mutual respect and support among teachers and students?</i> 13. Academic engagement <i>Are students engaged and on task during the lesson?</i> 14. Explicit quality performance criteria <i>Are the criteria for judging the range of student performance made explicit?</i> 15. Self-regulation <i>Is the direction of student behaviour implicit and self-regulatory?</i>
Recognition of difference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Cultural knowledges <i>Are non-dominant cultural knowledges valued?</i> 17. Inclusivity <i>Are deliberate attempts made to increase the participation of the diversity of students?</i> 18. Narrative <i>Is the style of teaching principally narrative or is it expository?</i> 19. Group identity <i>Does the teaching build a sense of community and identity?</i> 20. Citizenship <i>Are attempts made to foster active citizenship within the classroom?</i>

Source: QSRLS (2001b, p. 6).

Such a commitment to diversity is underpinned by postmodernity's emphasis on difference, particularity and irregularity (Elkind, 1997, p. 27). It is the contention here that for teachers to take up opportunities offered by the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b), two key understandings might prove useful: that their classrooms and schools operate within particular socio-political contexts, and that ongoing deconstruction and reconstruction of practice is required in order to respond adequately to those contexts. To reiterate a key point in this paper, it is argued that the theoretical perspectives offered by feminist poststructuralism provide generative frames for teachers' engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in these two key ways.

Some theoretical underpinnings

According to Adams St Pierre (2000), 'we word our world' (p. 484). The apparent simplicity of this statement belies the complexity of the theoretical frameworks, informed by feminist poststructuralism, that led Adams St Pierre (2000) to articulate such a view. A key poststructural notion involves the rejection of objective truth for all times, as well as the security of the grand narrative. In other words, poststructural theorists reject any beliefs related to the existence of a body of immutable facts that happen to be 'out there' waiting to be discovered or that grand narratives can reflect the particularity and specificity of people's lives and events. Nicholson (1989) refers to this as 'a crisis in the authority and the conceptual systems of Western culture' (p. 98) and Lather (1991) describes it as 'the disappointed hopes engendered by optimistic confidence in the continuing progress and imminent triumph of Enlightenment reason' (p. 87). It has been the use of the 'grand narrative' or 'discourse' that Lyotard (1989) challenges as inadequate to explain the complex, interconnected and sometimes

contradictory events across time and space. In other words, general or overarching stories cannot *capture* local and diverse events as humanist or technicist storylines would invite us to believe.

Our Western institutions, including our schools are built on the notion of 'legitimate' knowledge as that which draws heavily upon the notions of universal reason, the scientific and industrial base, as well as a world in which autonomous individuals contribute to humanity's steady progress. Cherryholmes (1988) writes that 'structuralism', a 'pervasive and often unacknowledged way of thinking [which] has influenced twentieth-century thinking, in important ways . . . promises order, organization, and certainty' (p. 30). In contrast, poststructuralists 'question the possibility of truths that are objective in the sense of being necessary, universal, and unchanging' (Nicholson, 1989, p. 198). Poststructuralists place emphasis on the language and discourses which *we use* to constitute ourselves, our knowledge of the world and, importantly, our constructions of reality. The ways in which *we are* constituted by discourses is also a focus of feminist poststructural theorising.

Despite a recognition of the somewhat uneasy alliance between feminism and poststructuralism (see Fraser & Nicholson, 1990), 'feminists and others representing disadvantaged groups use poststructural critiques of language, particularly deconstruction, to make visible how language operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world' (Adams St Pierre, 2000, p. 481). Further, Weedon (1997) suggests the appeal of poststructuralism to feminists when she writes, 'once language is understood in terms of competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning to the world, which imply differences in the organization of social power, then language becomes an important site of political struggle' (p. 23). The central mechanism

through which feminist poststructuralists engage with language as a site of political struggle is through a recognition of the discourses that constitute us and with which we constitute ourselves. Kress (1985) provides a useful definition:

Discourses are systemically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension—what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organises and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about, in that it provides descriptions, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions. (pp. 6–7)

We are all then ‘spoken into existence’ (Alloway, 1995, p. 9) and speak ourselves into existence in particular ways. As teachers, mothers, fathers, teenagers, Australians, Muslims and so on we are variously constituted so that our social roles are identifiable and meaningful (Lankshear, 1994, p. 6). Concepts such as pedagogy are also spoken into existence in particular ways. Pedagogy as an art, for example, could be regarded as a hegemonic or taken-for-granted discourse in contemporary Western settings. Another pervasive discourse is that of pedagogy as science. Both of these discourses provide for particular ways of viewing the world, along with understandings as to what is more possible to say and not say, as well as understandings as to what is more possible to do and not do (Davies, 1993). Associated with these possibilities and constraints are ideas about who can speak with authority and who speaks without authority, thus, making some forms of knowledge more powerful than others. Importantly then, particular

discourses rely on specific forms of knowledge. Moon (2001) suggests the way in which power is inevitably implicated in the operation of discourses and knowledge when he proposes:

Power [therefore] is an effect of unequal relations between people that society recognises as belonging to certain groups. Social practices sort people into a variety of groups. . . . Because power is an *effect* of social structure, and not an absolute force imposed from above, nobody is completely powerful or powerless. But people have different degrees of power, depending upon how they are 'located' in society. People's 'location' in society is not entirely fixed, of course, but nor is it freely changeable. (p. 172, emphasis in original)

Gore (1993) alludes to the relations of power that always exist in any context and the competition for meanings when she says, 'pedagogy (indeed, any term) has no single meaning in and of itself, and that meaning is always struggled over and determined as it is constructed by particular discourses' (p. 4). The implications of specific discourses or storylines speaking pedagogy into existence in particular ways can be illustrated by examining the pedagogy as science discourse.

Pedagogy as science represents a particular discourse or storyline in which what counts as knowledge draws heavily on psychology. Psychology, with its focus on 'learning theory and educational measurement traditions' (Collins, 1991, p. 6), has spoken pedagogy into existence in particular ways. According to Collins (1991), such 'traditions' have been associated with two major problems that emanate from the entrenched and privileged position that psychology has held. First, storylines constituted by psychology have 'treated social reality as if it were like natural, physical reality'

(Collins, 1991, p. 5) and ‘reified linguistic signifiers, such as intelligence, which are primarily part of an ideological ‘map’ of cultural values and purposes, as if such signifiers referred to things like rocks or trees’ (Collins, 1991, p. 5). Second, Collins (1991) proposes that ‘the focus on the individual, inherent in the psychological tradition is directly responsible for much of the victim blaming which is endemic in our schools’ (p. 6). The social justice implications of the constitution of pedagogy through storylines based on psychology are forcefully made by Collins (1991) when she claims that, ‘failure to learn could therefore be attributed to problems inside the child whereas the experienced curriculum and the broader school structure could be left unexamined as normal, indeed as, once again, natural’ (p. 6).

It is proposed here that the pedagogy as science discourse is a constraining one resonant of technicist or humanist theoretical frames (see Nayler, 2003b). Furthermore, such storylines may not support teachers to take up opportunities afforded by the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in order to practise socially-just pedagogies. In contrast, the argument in this paper is that feminist poststructural theorising can support such engagement. Before offering specific examples, an overview of the research project is provided.

Socially-just pedagogies: Exploring the spaces—the research project

The central research questions of the research project, Socially-just pedagogies: Exploring the spaces, include:

1. What discourses might be associated with socially-just pedagogies?
2. What discourses might inhibit socially-just pedagogies?
3. What do socially-just pedagogies look like in practice?

The research journey, conducted in partial fulfilment of an Education Doctorate, consists of five key stages. These stages include:

1. developing my understandings as a researcher, including those related to feminist poststructural theories which are explored briefly in the preceding section
2. forming research relationships with others through conducting a forum as well as a series of two focus groups at each of six sites
3. co-creating field texts through individual substantive conversations between researcher and ‘co-investigators’
4. learning from the teaching narratives and developing commentaries using a lens informed by feminist poststructural theorising
5. sharing the learnings to ‘inspire action’ (J. Austin, personal communication, 6 September, 2002) through a range of publications including this one.

In order to provide a context for drawing on Monica’s practice, these phases are elaborated upon.

In the initial phases of my research, development of my understandings involved not only interrogation of the literature, but also gaining an appreciation of teachers’ understandings of what constitutes pedagogy and socially-just pedagogies. In order to develop these latter understandings and to promote research relationships, two activities were conducted: an open forum was held, as well as a series of two focus groups at each of six school sites. While the field texts created as a result of the forum and the focus groups were not used in the later collaborative development of the four extended narratives (see Nayler, 2003b) that form the central focus of this research, the forum and the focus groups were valuable in my development of rapport with the co-investigators.

The field texts used to create the narratives were produced through substantive conversations. While I have outlined in detail elsewhere (see Nayler, 2003b) what was involved in these substantive conversations, several points are warranted here.

Each substantive conversation lasted two hours and participants in the substantive conversations became known as ‘co-investigators’. My co-investigators had all participated in the series of two focus groups and had self-identified as those practising socially-just pedagogies. It was the literature related to ‘semi-structured interviews’ that informed the nature of these scheduled interactions between the researcher and each co-investigator. Open-ended questions were used to support co-investigators to talk about how they practise socially-just pedagogies, what such a term means to them, along with how they describe their practice using the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) as a lens. Importantly, the co-investigators were invited to direct the discussion. The questions used to stimulate the substantive conversations were shared with co-investigators prior to the discussion. These substantive conversations could be further described as informal and friendly.

Each substantive conversation was taped, transcribed and used as a basis for the collaborative development of the four narratives. A draft of each narrative was shared with the relevant co-investigator. Subsequent collaborative development of each narrative involved verbal and written communication, with each co-investigator deleting, adding and modifying text to achieve a narrative with which each was satisfied.

It is important to stress that the narratives are the product of both the researcher and the co-investigator. As suggested elsewhere (see Nayler, 2003b), it needs to be acknowledged that I asked particular questions and responded in particular ways to

responses made by my co-investigators. Furthermore, I selected particular examples from the field texts and re-presented them with particular language. Hence, my subjectivities, especially in terms of my agenda to pursue an investigation of socially-just pedagogies are implicated (Jones, 1992) in all of the narratives in both explicit and implicit ways (see Nayler, 2003a). It is in this sense that the narratives themselves are a form of analysis.

Issues of validity and generalisability associated with this research are explored in detail elsewhere (see Nayler, 2003b). No claims are made in this research that definitive statements about teachers' practice can be made on the basis of the four narratives. What is claimed here is that there is value in particular stories about particular people in particular contexts. The literature on the use of narrative in educational research abounds with challenges to the assumption that the pursuit of truth is pivotal, with a range of other criteria being put forward (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Van Manen, 1990, Bruner, 1991). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) for example, call for narratives that fulfil the criteria of 'adequacy' and 'plausibility' (p. 8). Van Manen (1990) argues that the aim in narrative research is to build an 'animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, intentions, behaviours and experiences as we meet them in the life world' (p. 19). Bruner (1991) provides a particularly cogent argument when he claims that:

Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve 'verisimilitude'. Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity' rather than by empirical

verification and logical requiredness, although ironically we have no compunction about calling stories true or false. (pp. 4–5)

In short, it is argued here that the teachers' narratives collaboratively developed in this research are powerful and useful texts in terms of resonance, that is, their capacity to evoke key aspects and themes in teachers' lived experiences.

A subsequent phase of the research involved the development of commentaries to accompany each narrative. These commentaries are informed by feminist poststructural theorising and are presented elsewhere (Nayler, 2003b) in split-page format informed by the work of Lather and Smithies (1997). Given that this is not a research project in which *data* are *analysed*, in any positivist sense with the certainty inherent in such storylines, commentaries are offered in the hope that they will provide insights into the discourses that might or might not be operating. Monica's narrative, introduced in the opening lines, is drawn upon in the next section to highlight the generative possibilities that feminist poststructural theorising offers in relation to successful engagement with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b).

It is important to make explicit that feminist poststructural theorising features in two key ways in the following section. Such theorising forms the basis for the research lens I have used in this work. Second, it is argued here that Monica's practice in the classroom is informed by such theorising as well. It was Monica's narrative that stands out in this regard in comparison to those of the other three co-investigators. In the first part of the following section I use feminist poststructural theorising to make some proposals about Monica's subjectivities. In the second part of this section, specific

examples of Monica's practice are discussed to argue that Monica herself draws on a feminist poststructural frame.

Productive Pedagogies in action: Monica's story

Monica is an English teacher and administrator at a large metropolitan Catholic school for boys. She works at a school known in this research as St Marcellin's School. Her subjectivities or the 'conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions . . . [along with] her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon, 1997, p. 32) shape her pedagogies. Subjectivities related to gender, religion and an early career in poor rural communities (see Nayler, 2003a for a fuller exploration of these subjectivities) appear to implicate themselves (Jones, 1992) in Monica's pedagogies. In order to suggest what role Monica's religious subjectivities might play in her practice, several key ideas from the narrative are shared.

My use of a feminist poststructural frame to explore Monica's subjectivities

Monica's claim not to be the 'archetypal Catholic' appears to influence her pedagogies significantly. The ways in which Monica resists some discourses associated with Catholicism and takes up others is suggested powerfully when she says:

My life experiences, because of the conservative religious background of my parents, were necessarily constricted and it took me a long time to come to grips with the fact that, as a woman, I had the right to own or not own Catholic practices. And I'll be quite frank with you and say that it took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of pre-marital sex. It took me a long while to come to grips with the permissibility of missing Mass on Sunday and not be racked with guilt. And I think what I've been lucky enough to be able to do is to reflect on how I've seen other people and ask

myself: ‘Are they happy? Are they balanced? Is the way they are just? Is that what Christ would want?’ And I think in my heart of hearts, it’s not. And that’s why I think I’m so open to what Marcellin Champagnat is on about.

Monica reflects on the spirituality that now informs her pedagogies at St Marcellin’s School. She compares her education at an all girls’ school, where young women couldn’t have shiny shoes and where many behaviours resulted in feeling guilty, to the spiritual legacy of Marcellin Champagnat, a Catholicism which Monica describes as being more caring and more intellectual. Monica describes the founder of the order to which St Marcellin’s School belongs:

He’s on about journeying with people. He’s on about understanding people at their most humane, human level. He’s on about sharing their pain but seeing the future of hope and I don’t think my Catholic background was ever one of hope. It was always one of moralistic judgement and that doesn’t fit easily with me and I don’t believe it’s healthy. And so I suppose that’s why I feel at home within Champagnat’s philosophy. And that’s what I want the boys to feel.

Monica’s exploration of the Catholicism of her childhood in contrast to the Catholicism she now embraces provides an instructive example of the usefulness of feminist poststructural theorising as opposed to theorising within a humanist frame. Poststructural thinking which ‘shifts attention away from the unitary non-contradictory selves that we each struggle after as a result of our immersion in humanist discourses’ (Davies, 1994, p. 3) supports an understanding of ‘Catholicism’ as constituted by a range of discourses including some that are contestatory. Rather than accepting the whole package of what Catholicism has meant for her throughout her childhood and

teaching career, Monica appears able to identify those discourses of Catholicism that are generative and with which she speaks herself and her students into existence in positive ways. Monica's rejection of some regimenting discourses of Catholicism and her taking up of more generative discourses suggests her capacity to appreciate the constitutive force of discourse and her agency in rejecting some subject positions and adopting others. For example, after much struggle, Monica rejects a subject position which invites her to condemn 'pre-marital sex' or 'missing Mass on Sundays'.

The power of discourses as 'socially accepted association[s] among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group' (Gee, 1990, p. 143) is shown by Monica when she says that, 'it took a long time to come to grips with the fact that, as a woman, I had the right to own or not own Catholic practices'. Monica describes the discourses that now constitute her and with which she constitutes herself as a Catholic as 'more caring and more intellectual'. For example, Monica takes up a subject position which constructs her as 'journey[ing] with her students' in which she draws on the strength and ideals of St Marcellin, on whose heritage the school is built, to inform her pedagogy.

Generative discourses and regimenting discourses are contrasted by Monica when she speaks of 'seeing the future with hope', rather than the Catholicism of 'moralistic judgement' that exerted such an influence on her as a schoolgirl. Such a comparison provides a contrast in terms of what might be counted as truth. The Catholicism of 'moralistic judgement' and the Catholicism associated with seeing the future with hope each represents particular invitations to truth. There is no suggestion here that Monica's religious subjectivities are the only ones that influence her

pedagogies. For example, Monica recognises the ways in which the new *English Senior Syllabus* (Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, 2002) has influenced her own and her team's pedagogical reform. Feminist poststructural theorising suggests that subjectivities operate in complex, contradictory and unstable ways. It is within that context of partiality and 'proceed[ing] with caution' (Nayler, 2003b, p. 8) that examples of Monica's pedagogies are presented. The narrative, from which examples of Monica's pedagogies are drawn, offers, and can only offer, a partial re-presentation of her practice. Yet these examples illustrate the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in action.

Monica's use of a feminist poststructural frame to inform her practice

Monica's pedagogies are focused strongly on supporting her students to engage with texts that are meaningful to their lives in ways that led them to sophisticated understandings of themselves and the worlds they negotiate. Furthermore, her pedagogies are aimed at supporting her students to make positive changes in the world. In doing so, Monica's pedagogies resonate with the dimensions of the Productive Pedagogies which include intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001b). One of the strong features of Monica's pedagogies is her use of critical literacy.

The critical literacy approaches used in Monica's classroom offer a window into her pedagogies that resonate with the dimensions of the Productive Pedagogies listed above (QSRLS, 2001b). Monica's approaches are informed specifically by Thompson's (1987) reader response theory and informed generally by the *English Senior Syllabus* (Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies, 2002). Monica supports her students, from Year 8 to Year 12, in mixed ability and extension classes, to interact with texts using Thompson's (1987) hierarchy of engaging with a text.

Thompson's (1987) hierarchy provides for engagement with texts at a level that is a non-reflective, reactive response at its most elementary level through to empathising with characters, analysis and so on to the sixth stage which involves the ability to be self-reflective. In Monica's own words she 'didn't dumb it down' for any of her students with the result that her Year 8 students can talk in sophisticated ways about their responses to texts. For example, her students are able to speak about Gillian Rubinstein's (1984) *Foxspell*, not just in terms of plot, characterisation and themes, but make comments, such as, 'I was able to empathise with Todd when his Dad ran away because that's how I felt when my father left too. It made sense to me'. The intellectual quality (QSRLS, 2001b) inherent in Monica's teaching is illustrated in her pedagogical approaches with her older students as well.

Monica's scaffolding of narrative writing provides a good example of intellectual quality and of a focus on higher-order thinking (QSRLS, 2001b) in particular. She explains 'the task' to her students, placing the associated criteria sheet in context by inviting connectedness (QSRLS, 2001b) to their everyday lives. Monica introduces the narrative 'task' to her students by saying:

Yes, I have to have a task and criteria sheet when I go for my driving test or when I write my master's paper, but narrative is not just a piece of assessment. Narrative is the story of your life: it's the cup of tea you had for breakfast, it's the way you smiled at someone in the yard. So when you write narrative what you are actually doing is making connections.

The following example illustrates further Monica's use of feminist poststructuralism, as well as the intersections with 'connectedness' called for in the *Productive Pedagogies* (2001b). In this example, Monica supports her students to write

narratives by making intertextual connections, a poststructural literary method to link texts produced within the broader culture (Moon, 2001). Monica's students read *In cold blood* by Truman Capote (1994) about the family of four who was murdered in Kansas in 1959. In this narrative students explored the impact of the murders on this very conservative community—a town that had 32 churches at the time. The students were asked to transpose their reading into images through a collage using whatever they wanted—a CD cover, something from a magazine—a McDonald's wrapper if they wanted to. Each student then wrote a brief paragraph justifying his collage and exploring its symbolic meaning. The collages then became 'step-off points to write the narratives'. One student presented an image of the four members of the Clutter family who were murdered, placing an image of a gun diagonally through the four victims. The narrative that this collage generated was a piece about the fracturing of a relationship. Monica comments that, 'I have no way of knowing whether it was autobiographical or not. It was a narrative and that was what I asked for, but it was a very powerful piece of writing'.

As well as promoting intellectual quality and connectedness to students' lives (QSRLS, 2001b), Monica's pedagogies nurture a supportive classroom environment (QSRLS, 2001b). For example, there are many occasions in Monica's classroom when students making connections with their lives would not be possible without the existence of a supportive learning environment. Monica talks about the ways in which her students draw on their life experiences in order to engage with texts with the result that some students find the experiences highly confronting. In response Monica proposes:

I always say to them, 'You don't have to go where you are uncomfortable. If this is too hurtful, don't go there'. It's not my intention to hurt anyone. 'If

every time you think of this particular part of the novel, you want to cry, then don't go there. It's too close to you. It's not meant to be something that locks you up, it's meant to be something that frees you'.

Pedagogies that promote recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001b) are suggested by Monica's commitment to diversity:

Over the years that episode [in which a student wrote a very violent text which Monica subsequently learned portrayed the brutal slaying of his own family] has put another spin on socially-just pedagogy for me—the whole notion that we as a white culture cannot stand in judgement of others. We know little of the experiences of some of our students. They have a right to their voice. And if in my role as an educator I can journey with them, even for just a short while, then hopefully that will be some support for them.

It is the contention here that the examples drawn from Monica's narrative suggest pedagogies informed by feminist poststructural theorising. Monica's explicit discussion, of the complex ways in which language works through discourses, as well as the consequent power relations, offers further resonance with feminist poststructural theorising. Monica talks here about the approach she uses to discuss the ways in which we are all 'spoken into existence' (Alloway, 1995, p. 9), as well as the ways in which we speak ourselves into existence:

What I do is draw the shape of an umbrella on the board and I put in the spokes of the umbrella. I suggest to the students that in any one of these areas, there is a contestation of discourse which brings with it powers and limitations, freedoms, responsibilities and accountabilities. I propose to them that if they are responsible thinking people then they know how to move

between those discourses. And we talk about discourses having power, permission and privileges.ⁱⁱⁱ

Monica's highly sophisticated exploration of the role that language plays in our lives includes two significant invitations that resonate with feminist poststructuralism. Using the metaphor of an umbrella, Monica proposes to students that a multiplicity of discourses operates in each of her students' lives, with each discourse accompanied by particular 'powers and limitations, freedoms, responsibilities, and accountabilities'. She also introduces the notion that these discourses are often contestatory, that is, particular discourses might not align with some other discourses. Take for example, Monica's students at an all-boys' Catholic school. Significant discourses in their lives might relate to being a son, a student, a part-time employee, a partner, a Catholic or a follower of some other faith-based system, an adolescent, a footballer (or other sportsperson) and so on. Some of these discourses will speak Monica's students into existence in ways that conflict with the ways in which they are constituted as a result of other discourses.

It could be argued that at this point Monica's pedagogies are focused on supporting the students to deconstruct or unpack the discourses operating in their lives. However, the second key invitation to understanding in this example involves Monica's move beyond this deconstructive phase, to propose that 'responsible, thinking people know how to move between those discourses'. Monica's pedagogy here provides generative spaces for her students to '[see] through poststructural eyes' (Davies, 1994, p. 26) in order to:

[make] visible both the systemic practices and the moment-by-moment work through which relations of power and powerlessness are played out. For me, this tends to increase the will to act, and the capacity to act, since it becomes

possible to see the multiple and complex discourses and practices through which any particular situation is being put in place and held in place.

(Davies, 2000, p. 166)

The liberatory or generative possibilities are further explored by Sawicki (1991) who comments that, 'freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized, and classified' (p. 27). Monica appears to use the lens of discourse theory as a basis for pedagogies that promote intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom environment, and recognition of difference (QSRLS, 2001b). In doing so, Monica practises and promotes socially-just action within and beyond the classroom. Two key implications of this paper are addressed briefly in the following section. These implications relate to the (re)conceptualisation of pedagogy, and what might be useful to support teachers' professional learning.

Implications for teachers' engagement with new pedagogies

(Re)conceptualisation of pedagogy

First, a significant learning from an examination of Monica's practice is the usefulness of conceptualising pedagogy in ways that represent it as a complex discursive activity. That is to say, storylines of pedagogy as an art or pedagogy as science might be too constraining to support enhancement of student learning outcomes in socially-just ways through the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). Drawing on feminist poststructural theorising and Monica's pedagogical understandings, a generative conceptualisation of pedagogy might acknowledge that:

we shape ourselves and our actions through language, as well as being shaped by such language through the operation of discourses, with pedagogies considered as dynamic engagements involving teachers and students in often competing and contradictory discourses. The central focus of these discourses is the production and exchange of knowledge. Given the struggle over discourses within any pedagogical intervention, issues of power always exist with pedagogies inevitably constituting political activity.

(Nayler, 2003b, p. 129)

To reiterate a key point, my argument is that a conceptualisation of pedagogy similar to the one above, along with the associated understandings of knowledge, the constitutive force of language and so on, would support teachers to take up the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) in meaningful ways. In contrast, storylines or discourses that construct pedagogy as an art, or a science, or mere instruction might

carry with them prescription that makes socially-just pedagogical practice, even that which draws on the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b), difficult to achieve.

Support for teachers' professional learning

It is argued here that engaging with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) by using the generative possibilities offered by feminist poststructural theorising would involve support for teachers' professional learning. Such professional learning involves risk-taking by teachers. Monica makes a powerful statement about the professional learning associated with the critical literacy approach she takes when she says:

As a contemporary literary theory, reader response theory, is incredibly liberating for our students and for our staff who are prepared to engage with it. It is incredibly confrontational for teachers of any age who see themselves as authority figures. And there's a point about social justice in that too, isn't there?

Monica goes on to say, 'I never feel threatened. In fact, I feel enriched because the boys are able to speak their existence, their narrative, their stories, their experiences into being'.

That Monica has the capacity and predisposition to make changes to her pedagogies is highlighted in the following example:

I hope I always want to change. The day I don't want to change is the day I should leave the classroom. But I can't predict what the changes will be. There will be changes, but given the interactive professionalism of our team, we'll be making changes together. Recently I presented a professional development session to some English teachers in Northern Queensland. I told them that they needed to understand that the copy of the Year 12

English syllabus, to which we'd refer during the session, was already out-of-date. 'Why are you showing it to us?' they retorted. I explained that I was using it because it was the most up-to-date version, but that criterion 3, for example, would be changed. But some of those teachers found that hard to accept—they don't want to change. I've discovered that you have to go through the pain to get the passion.

Feminist poststructural theorising offers generative possibilities for engaging with the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) but some teachers might require material and intellectual support to access such possibilities.

Support for teachers' professional learning

That schools must provide environments for such learning-in-context is acknowledged in the QSRLS (2001a) and beyond. The QSRLS (2001a) recommended that, 'schools should be encouraged to create and support teacher professional learning communities inside schools through processes and structures which encourage collaboration and reflective dialogue around classroom practices and deprivatised practice within the development of a coherent school philosophy' (p. 104). There is extensive literature which proposes structures and cultures to promote learning among members of educational communities (Aviram, 1996, Cooper & Henderson, 1995, Costa & Garmston, 1994, Kofman & Senge, 1993, Senge, 1990). Varying labels are applied to such structures and cultures for learning. Senge (1990), for example, calls for 'learning organisations', Cooper and Henderson (1995) propose 'collaborative learning communities' and Costa and Garmston (1994) explore the notion of 'renaissance schools'. Sergiovanni (1992) points to a key characteristic of such learning communities when he proposes that, 'the metaphor for schooling must change from organization,

instructional delivery system, processing plant, clinical setting, market garden, and so on to community' (p. 205). Sergiovanni's (1992) statement raises a key issue that needs to be addressed to support teachers in their decisions to take up or ignore the opportunities afforded by the Productive Pedagogies (2001b).

Such learning communities need to support teachers' professional growth in relation to maintaining a critical lens. That is to say, such communities need to ask continuously whose interests are served by particular knowledge, learning strategies, resources and so on, as well as whose interests are not. Smyth, Hattam, McInerney and Lawson (1997) recognise the difficulties that teachers encounter in attempting to find 'enunciative space' for their learning. They argue that for teachers to exert agency over their learning they need to find spaces within schooling discourses beyond those currently privileged which include 'vocationalism, accountability, testing, performance appraisal, devolved responsibility, school charters, league tables, re-centralised curriculum frameworks, and other extraneous limitations on teachers' work and students' learning' (Smyth et al., 1997, p. 4). Teachers' capacity to find their own spaces within the privileged agendas of their schools is pivotal to their engagement with any framework that might enhance student learning outcomes in socially-just ways.

Some concluding comments

It is proposed here that the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) represent an invitation to teachers to enhance student learning outcomes in socially-just ways through improved practice. A further proposition is the need for teachers to approach such an invitation with critical understandings. These critical understandings involve a conceptualisation of pedagogy as not merely a technical activity but as a social practice constituted by a range of discourses which vary according to the context.

The invitation in this paper is for teachers to consider their practice not just as practical activity but as political activity (Smyth, 1994). In contrast, traditional pedagogies, informed by technicist or humanist storylines, speak the teacher into existence as all-knowing and students as passive recipients of taken-for-granted knowledge. It is in this sense of the ways in which discourses carry with them power in varying degrees that pedagogy is regarded as political activity. It is the taking up or resisting of particular discourses that is pivotal to the practice of socially-just pedagogies (see Nayler, 2003b). The invitation to work towards socially-just pedagogies through an understanding of discourses, especially as they operate in local contexts, will involve different and greater professional learning for many teachers.

The Productive Pedagogies framework (QSRLS, 2001b), like any other framework, represents an invitation to truth. Such an invitation to truth means that particular knowledge is valued while other knowledge is not. It is the proposition in this paper that without a range of support mechanisms, including theoretical understandings informed by feminist poststructuralism, the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b) will remain an underutilised resource: teachers will be all dressed up with no place to go.

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ⁱ The term, ‘substantive conversation’ is drawn from the Productive Pedagogies (QSRLS, 2001b). This element is advocated by the researchers in order to challenge traditional classroom discourses in which ‘interaction typically consists of a lecture with recitation where the teacher deviates very little from delivering information and routine questions, and students typically give very short answers’ (QSRLS, 2001c, p. 5). In contrast, ‘in classes with substantive conversation there is considerable teacher–students and student–student interaction about the ideas of a substantive topic, the interaction is reciprocal and it promotes coherent shared understanding’ (QSRLS, 2001c, p. 5).

ⁱⁱ When reference is made in this paper to the findings of the QSRLS, the full report is cited (QSRLS, 2001a). When reference is made to the actual elements of the Productive Pedagogies, reference is made to the summary version produced (QSRLS, 2001b). This is because slight changes were made to the wording of the elements, with the summary version representing the latest version.

ⁱⁱⁱ Monica acknowledges the influence of David King’s workshops at English Teachers’ Association of Queensland conferences and in particular his use of the idea that discourses have ‘power, permission and privileges’.