



Exploring Early Childhood Teachers' Professional Identities Through Reflective Pedagogical Processes

Implications for Teacher Preparation and Professional Practice

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Abstract

This thesis-by-publication traces the identity journeys of six early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school long day care centres in the Northern suburbs of Sydney, Australia. Identity development is understood as a negotiated socially constructed encounter, shaped by interactions in time and place (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). With conflicting policy agendas influencing wider concept of the educational value of teaching in prior-to-school contexts, the nature of teachers' working lives is often ambiguously defined (Woodrow, 2007). Clearly, there is a need to explore how teachers attempt to construct and re-construct their professional identities given the potentially eroding influence of policy forces to status and self-concept. Not surprisingly, exclusionary policies defining 'teachers work' as occurring within school settings, along with increased "compliance, registration and regulation" (p. 237) of teacher preparation programs have seen prior-to-school spaces in Australia's educational landscape marginalised and surveilled, with 'professionalism' raised through the implementation of quality standards, streamlined curriculum and accreditation (Woodrow, 2007). Even so, these measures have done little to raise the status and wages of early childhood teachers, with the pedagogical value of "educational discourses" (p. 235) in prior-to-school contexts remaining less recognised within and outside of the educational community (Woodrow, 2007). In an attempt to disrupt this sideways positioning and re-imagine (for ourselves) our role and pedagogical discourse (Woodrow, 2007), I sought to develop an aesthetic framework of learning and reflection that emphasised the pedagogical complexities of 'teachers' work' whilst recognising the importance of teacher identity in affirming and strengthening concept of self-as-a-professional. Inspired by Creates' (1991) multi-modal forms representing place connections, bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001, 2004a, 2004b) and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) are fused with Creates' artistry to form a distinctly aesthetic methodology. Through teachers' creation of seven 'aesthetic frames', later re-presented and assembled by the researcher as installation, visual meanings are interrogated to uncover teachers' personal beliefs, knowledge and experiences influencing their identity development (see Weber & Mitchell, 1996). The researcher together with teacher participants constructed shared understandings of past and present images of self-as-teacher. As social readings of lives lived in spaces of negotiated meaning (Brady, 2008), images created offered teachers multiple "vantage points" for uncovering self and renewing seeing of wider forces influencing professional learning and practice (Mitchell, Weber, & Pithouse, 2009, p. 119). Revealed throughout this thesis is the importance of opening opportunities for teachers across

experience to engage with multiple aesthetic modes of reflection and representation to better understand teacher identity formation. Entering this journeying with teachers, the researcher, incorporating collaborative auto-ethnography with one of the participants, describes personal processes of constructing and representing knowledge about her own evolving professional identity as a teacher and researcher with “fullness of being, body, mind, emotion” (Kamanos Gamelin, 2008, p. 178). Including different creative forms of expression reveals multiple ways of “knowing, being *and* doing [emphasis added]” (Kamanos Gamelin, 2008, p. 185) identity work. Through reflective acts of thinking, questioning and creation, the relational and emotional nature of stories presented reinforce the value of aesthetic forms for documenting understandings of evolving teacher selves (Lavina & Lawson, 2019). As a process of self-exploration, the researcher’s encounter with auto-ethnography reinforces the need for self-attunement to better understand others (see Nancy, 2000). Such relational modes of inquiry enabled searching for meanings beyond the bounds of what was “already known” (Grosz, 2001, p. 61) when ‘seeing’ and interpreting “patterns of knowledge” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008, p. 87) emerging from participating teachers’ words and images of teaching. Pedagogical implications reveal the need for attentiveness to perspectives held and developed alongside others within and beyond educational settings. When attending to and re-evaluating significant events influencing identities, teachers’ awareness of social systems shaping evolving pedagogies and images was enhanced through processes involving individual and shared interrogation of teacher selves over time. Broadening concepts of ‘teacher’ and ‘teaching’ also recognises teachers’ stories as lived local encounters (Carter, 1995). As tangible threads, these stories raise consciousness within and outside educational research of the complex pedagogical challenges characterising teachers’ work in early childhood contexts.

Statement of Originality

This work represents original material that has not been previously submitted to a degree or diploma at any university. To the best of knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where appropriate reference has been made in the thesis.

I certify that all aspects of data analysis were completed by me. Publications 1, 2, & 3 with co-authors supported processes of thinking, however, I was primarily responsible for all aspects of work described in the articles and chapter including data collection, analysis, design, manuscript preparation, along with final editing and revision.

The research in this thesis was granted clearance by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research), reference number 5201400026, on 2 April 2014.

Leanne Lavina

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List of Publications

This thesis-by-publication integrates the following publications:

1. Lavina, L., Fleet, A., & Niland, A. (2017). The varied textures of an arts-informed methodology: Exploring teachers' identities through artful expressions. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 14(2), 143-163.
2. Lavina, L., Niland, A., Fleet, A. (under review). Assembling threads of identity: Installation as a professional learning site for teachers. *Teacher Development*.
3. Lavina, L., & Lawson, F. (2019). Weaving forgotten pieces of place and the personal: Using collaborative auto-ethnography and aesthetic modes of reflection to explore teacher identity development. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 20(6), 1-30.
4. Lavina, L. (2019). Peeling away the red apple. Seeing anew the images shaping teachers' identities. In A. Salamon & A. Chng (Eds.), *Multiple Early Childhood Identities*. Volume 5 in the *Thinking about Pedagogy in Early Education* series (pp. 65-81). London: Routledge.
5. Lavina, L. (in press). Place-based teacher identities: What connects across diverse personal and professional landscapes? *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*.

Each publication included in this thesis is the final published or submitted version. Formatting has been adjusted to maintain overall consistency across compilations.

NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY: THE NATURE OF IMAGINATIVE TRAVELS



Navigating the Journey

(Photo from Jakobson, 2014)

Introducing ways of thinking and representing

As an unfolding work of understandings about teacher identity, this thesis offers 5 publications, which, in different ways, contribute to what was known, challenged and uncovered about teachers' evolving identity journeys. I would like to make it known from the beginning that approaches (and representations) are artfully-assembled, narratively-structured, and meaning-focused. Casting aside conventional qualitative approaches, I have chosen to step inside the research *with* participating teachers. This has meant that the spaces introducing publications within this thesis assume a unique personal presence as I come to terms with my learning self as an emerging researcher. At times, this involves making sense of experiences (and resulting knowledge) brought forward to this study using poetry, imagery, and reflective musings as I attempt to unravel understandings of teachers' identity

journeys...and the research process itself. The organisational processes for these strategies are explained below.

Pushing “the boundaries of traditional research conventions” (Knowles & Promislow, 2008, p. 2); my aim is to invite a wider audience into the conversation by imagining new ways of positioning the voice of the researcher alongside participants. Through a storied approach to linking publications, I expand upon my thinking, processes of working, and lingering questions as they relate to each publication. With a focus on enhancing the concept of artful approaches to research (see also Gouzouasis & Lee, 2008), my experience of gathering and representing teachers’ identity ‘data’ is placed at the centre of alternative knowledge creation.

For instance, as non-linear invitations into processes of “attunement”, ‘Reflective traces’ (as thoughts from personal journal entries) are referred to as ‘Fragments felt out-of-frame’. ‘Sites of intersection’ (as more formal organisers) engage “deeper immersion” through unfolding aesthetic, poetic and textual refrains (Thomas, 2004b, p. 68). Linking thesis components, these approaches communicate differently. ‘Reflective traces’ offer insights into my own journeying and illustrate attempts to “tease out” (Butler-Kisber, Rudd, & Stewart, 2008, p. 279) understandings related to theories, methodologies and influences shaping knowledge creation. ‘Sites of intersection’ present contributions that extend upon ‘Reflective traces’ by clarifying “thinking and doing” (Butler-Kisber et al., 2008, p. 280) as encounter before meeting publications. Finally, ‘Threaded possibilities’ opens a space for re-encountering knowledge generated from articles, offering new ways of thinking about the pedagogical significance of integrating aesthetic modes of reflection as a part of teachers’ ongoing professional learning.

The power of ‘the visual’ to reveal deeper understandings of connectedness between events, people, and places influencing identity development, emphasises the need for greater listening to and seeing of these connections to strengthen teacher’s sense of self in ways that empower their voices within and beyond educational communities.



A Boundless Spirit

(Photo from Roventine, 2008)

*Invisible forms push and pull
focus is sharpened
A merging of emotions, energies
moving is quickened
Murmurs rise from within
listening to fullness
I embrace the surges
Sharp edges emerge, unrelenting
a reluctant retreat
keep stretching, reaching
Resurface, stand strong and sway
understand the shadows
return to lighter worlds
Unfolding threads call you
renew understanding,
deepen knowing, grow, transform.*

(Author) poem inspired by Suzanne Thomas (2004a)

Living between the seams...

To communicate the sense-making and organisation of this storied thesis, I offer an early sharing of my process. With multiple beginnings, I have included personal journal entries, referred to as 'Reflective traces', to tease out my stance as teacher and emerging researcher. Poetry and jottings are used as linked fragments to create *assemblages* (see Creates, 1991) of

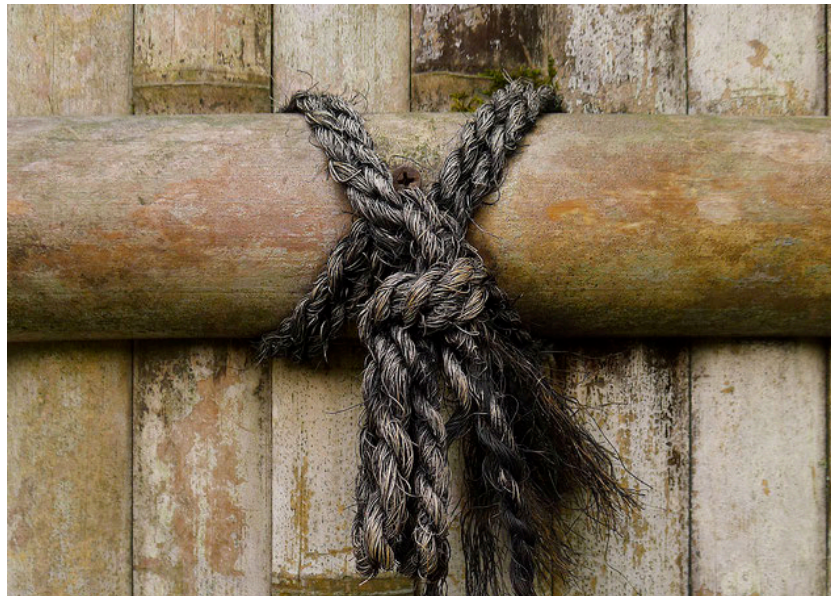
complexity, conversation, and connection (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008). Within these linkages, thoughts and experiences that had previously gone underground or ‘out of frame’ for months or even years are unraveled. Engaging this process has reawakened my experience with portraiture (see Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), whereby my intention is to acknowledge the importance of our ‘livingness’ before, within and beyond research journeys as attentiveness to lived matters. The interconnected nature of personal and professional experiences directly influences how we perceive and describe our stories and the stories of others (see Weber & Mitchell, 1996). With continual evolutions, stories exist as an unfolding. Hence, I refer to this thesis as one of ‘unfolding threads’. Imagery with poetic refrains inserted across sections of this thesis also embodies threaded qualities as I attempt to untangle knots of listening (Lahman et al., 2019; Leggo, 2001) to reveal stories of “fullness” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 112). Growing out of multilayered complexity, feeling and meaning are teased free to reveal authentic representations (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008).

‘Reflective traces’ are identified as reoccurring organisers for understanding intersections of knowledge, learning and experience (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008). As both immersive and evolving, these communicative sites of thinking and feeling orient how I have been inspired by arts-informed perspectives (see Knowles & Cole, 2008). Whilst it is necessary to be aware of “intellectual boundaries” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008), there are perils associated with choosing to adopt a ‘boundless spirit’. Navigating outside traditional research frameworks where the “pursuit of certainty” (Eisner, 2008, p. 5) is largely sought has meant deepening awareness of “different type of conversations” with different audiences (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 114).

Choosing a thesis-by-publication pathway has involved numerous rejections, extended pauses of anxious anticipation and ensuing ‘reluctant retreats’. This journey has not been an easy one. There is comfort, however, knowing that rejection heightens one’s alertness to boundary crossing as long-held scientific certainties of ‘what counts’ as research (see Eisner, 2008) are increasingly replaced with the view that understanding diverse ways of knowing and living requires “methods that allow for subjectivity, messiness, murkiness, emotions, complexity, expression, imagination and multiplicities” (Black & O’Dea, 2015, p. 13). Awareness of navigating creative and intellectual frameworks opens mindful seeing of both multiplicities and order; to re-engage how connections might be re-presented in ways that resonate with feeling and life (Black & O’Dea, 2015; Sameshima & Knowles, 2008).

The insertion of fragments across 'Reflective traces' throughout the thesis emphasise my ways to communicate knowing of boundaries and intentions to flex these through artful approaches presented in publications. As one might expect, this process is seen as both an "involved and evolving" encounter (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 115) as I grapple with ways to remain "grounded but not bounded" (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 118) through my 'testing' of wonderings and representations (see Black & O'Dea, 2015). Along the way, I affirm ownership "of my own meaning-making" (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 116) as provoking, artful and worthy of scholarly attention. Thus, the artfulness of offerings presented in 'Reflective traces' attempt to uphold my creative vision whilst "honour(*ing*) the adult learner [emphasis added]" through questioning intentionality (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 117). Offering my own experiences and learning, I seek to challenge personal understandings and representations of knowledge (see also Schaller, 2008). The gradual integration of multiple methodologies; including portraiture, bricolage, an artist's methods and auto-ethnography, reveal transformations in my thinking as the 'separateness' of parts increasingly flexes (see Leggo, 2008) to create an artfully distinct form of inquiring composed of multi-layered understandings, expressions and implications for teachers and early childhood education. As "developmental journeying" (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 118), these reflections connect publications and reveal processes of "negotiation and re-negotiation" as meanings and experiences shaping my intentions are enriched over time (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 118).

SITES OF INTERSECTION – THE FIRST INSTALMENT: *A MEETING OF KNOTS*



A Meeting of Knots

(Photo from Lars, 2010)

Brief overview: A meeting of knots

As a thesis capturing teachers' stories of practice, understandings of self-in-place are interwoven through aesthetic and textual forms of representation. With multiple entanglements, stories of past and present teacher selves are formed with others through exchanges in time and place. As continual 'unfolding', ideas and representations of identity evolve through multiple forms of creation, viewing and conversation. Culminating in a final installation, creative processes used in this research renew spaces for seeing self-in-relationship with others in ways that "connect and complicate" (Norman, 2008, p. 67) elusive aspects of personal and professional selves. What emerges from these artful forms of reflection are ways of thinking and working differently that deeply engage and transform understandings of teaching and experience.

Framing and re-framing

My thesis proposal asserted my research would seek to capture the stories of four to six early childhood teachers working at community-based long day care centres located near Macquarie University. Participating teachers were to be asked to keep a reflective journal. Four linking interviews would frame the content of journal entries as follows:

- **(1st interview) Gathering:** ‘preservice’ teacher metaphors of personal and professional identity
- **(2nd interview) Framing:** ‘early’ teacher metaphors for personal and professional identity
- **(3rd interview) Reframing:** negotiating professional images of self as teacher with children and the service
- **(4th interview) Revealing:** change and shifting images of teacher selves
- **(Focus Group) A storied installation:** sharing reflections on the process

These components were to form participating teachers’ written, conversational and visual representations of identity and practice, situating their personal and professional lives. I would then shape these into an installation for informal focus group reflection and discussion. As introduction to the study, I also intended to use a series of photo prompts of ‘teacher’ for participant reflection and creation of personally situated images of teacher.

After reflecting on the potential of photo prompts to lead teachers’ responses, this approach was dropped. I was also not entirely satisfied with my description of terms (i.e. metaphor) and processes (what? how? when?) for gathering information from participating teachers. Such obscurity could potentially limit engagement. There also appeared to be little space for collaborative consideration of meanings generated. These tensions limiting agency and voice bothered me deeply. I felt quite annoyed at my struggles to work out ‘the details’ in a manner that was both systematic and attentive to teachers’ experiences. Reading more about arts-informed approaches using multi-modal forms of collection and representation such as photos, drawings, narrative, artifacts and installation (see Black, 2011; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Cole, Neilsen, Knowles, & Luciani, 2004; Knowles, Promislow, & Cole, 2008; Neilsen, Cole, & Knowles, 2001), I found immediate resonance and possibilities to renew avenues. Discovering the place-based research by Knowles and Thomas (2002) heralded a moment of great excitement as I began to see ways of working that were artful, playful, risky, shared and empathetically-minded (see also Butler-Kisber, Rudd, & Stewart, 2008). I was particularly struck

by “artful way(s) of making connections [emphasis added]” to enliven responses and collaborative learning through image creation (Butler-Kisber et al., 2008, p. 285); choosing to interpret Butler-Kisber and colleagues’ (2008) argument as advocating for an ‘aesthetic sense of integrity’.

Knowles and Thomas’ (2002) reference to the work of photographer, artist and poet Marlene Creates profoundly shifted my understandings of research as purely “an intellectual scholarly endeavor” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 116). I had been tying myself in knots feeling there was a choice to be made. Approaches couldn’t possibly be scholarly AND artistic could they? Affirming there was such space for weaving artistry with rigour freed thinking, resulting in the development of a new ‘aesthetic framework’ featuring seven linked components for tracing teachers’ developing identities:

- (i) **First image of teacher** – *early memories of ‘teacher’*
- (ii) **Photo of teacher (EC context)** - *identifies professional image of self*
- (iii) **Photo of personal place** - *significant place of meaning*
- (iv) **Drawing self-as-teacher (preservice/early career)** - *representing personal understandings of early teacher self*
- (v) **Drawing self-as-teacher (present)** - *representing personal understandings of present teacher self*
- (vi) **Narrative (self-as teacher)** - *written expression of self-as-teacher and teaching experience*
- (vii) **Artifact (identity meaning)** - *physical object that reflects teacher identity*

Adapted from Creates (1991, as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002)

With refreshed perspective and a new ‘aesthetic framework’, I returned to my initial research questions:

- (i) How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?
- (ii) How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?
- (iii) How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations? (Feinstein, 1982)

Whilst these questions remained pertinent, I found they increasingly flexed as aesthetic renderings of teachers' identity development created new spaces of pause for perceiving meanings "sensorially, intuitively, *(and)* intellectually [emphasis added]" (Thomas, 2004b, p. 65).

Artistic travels

Conceptualising this thesis as a 'threaded' site of knots, tangles, weavings and coming-to-know self as emerging researcher, I adopt reflexive and artful approaches. Not only to grow how I think about arts-informed processes of researching, but also for developing attentive listening for significant meanings as they presented themselves (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008). Though some might say this has made my PhD travels more challenging and time consuming, I feel this mindfulness enhanced my relationships with participating teachers and created new possibilities for gathering and representing artful work. Even when faced with a stream of rejections, I remained true to my approach. I felt a deep responsibility to 'stay the path' and honour teachers' stories in ways that were heartfelt and true to their voices.

My thesis travels provided opportunity to encounter the identity journeys of 6 early childhood teachers working at long day care centres in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. Participating teachers were culturally diverse and included both early career and more established professionals, a brief glimpse of which I include below:

Lilly:

Lilly has a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education and works in a long-established 90-place community-based long day care centre in the grounds of a University in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Lilly was the team leader in the 3-4 years room. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on her 10 years of experience working as an early childhood teacher in different states in Australia, and how different undergraduate studies and early childhood contexts had impacted her identity.

Sue:

Sue is a 4 year degree qualified early childhood teacher working as a non-teaching director in a long-established 90-place community-based long day care centre in the grounds of a University in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Sue had recently transitioned into the director leadership role following over 10 years of experience working as an early

childhood teacher with young children aged birth-5 years. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on exploring the duality of her teacher-director identities and associated tensions as shifting images and understandings were revealed.

Abby:

Abby is a 4 year degree qualified early childhood teacher working as a non-teaching director in an established 90-place community-based long day care centre in the grounds of a University in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Abby had been working in the director leadership role for over 2 years following 8 years of experience working as an early childhood teacher with young children aged birth-5 years. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on her education in Sri-Lanka and the influence of the natural world in her metaphoric seeing and representation of self-as-teacher and director.

Sharmaine:

Sharmaine works as a 4 year degree qualified early childhood teacher in an established 90-place community-based long day care centre in the grounds of a University in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Sharmaine had worked in the same centre for 2 years and was recently sharing responsibilities as assistant director and teacher in the preschool room. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on her education in Malaysia, experiences as an early career teacher in Australia, and how different educational contexts had impacted her identity.

(Note: This excerpt also appears in Lavina, 2019)

Anne:

Anne works as a 4 year degree qualified early childhood teacher at a bilingual not-for-profit 90-place early education and care centre in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Anne had worked in the same centre for 1.5 years after receiving sponsorship from her employer. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on her education (and related travels) in Europe and her experiences as an early career teacher navigating a new educational context in Australia.

Jacqui:

Jacqui is a 4 year degree honours qualified early childhood teacher working as a non-teaching director in a well-established 60-place community-based long day care centre in the Northern suburbs of Sydney. At the time of our interviews, Jacqui had been a director in this centre for 4

years following extensive experience working in both prior-to-school and primary school contexts. During the 14 weeks of our project, conversations and representations focused on her early childhood in South Africa and her experiential shifts from primary to early childhood contexts of learning.

To clarify early childhood teacher qualifications in Australia, it is useful to briefly examine the effects of policy on the Australian early childhood landscape. Policy developments such as the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009), alongside the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education (COAG, 2008) calling for children's 'universal access' to quality early education before formal schooling, has resulted in the need for all teachers working in "center-based care" to hold a 4 year degree qualification (Gibson, 2015, p. 142). In collaboration between the Australian Children's Education and Care Authority (ACECQA) and universities, increased focus on infant care, particularly through implementation of the key EYLF principles 'belonging', 'being' and 'becoming' has also contributed to widening the scope of teacher preparatory and post-graduate programs (Neylon, 2015). As a sector often misunderstood in terms of service provision, responsibilities, educational value and staff qualifications (Australian Council for Educational Research, ACER, 2006), this relatively recent policy push serves to further professionalise early childhood education (Neylon, 2015). Given the positioning of "higher education institutes...as central protagonists to bring about cultural change" (Neylon, 2015, p. 37), the sector is looking for multiple forms of professional involvement from researchers and other specialists alongside "ongoing development for teaching, learning and practice" (Neylon, 2015, p. 37) to affirm its identity as pedagogically distinct, socially just and democratically minded (Moss, 2007). Even so, persistent issues related to low status, poor wages and high turnover have provided little incentive for prospective early childhood teachers to pursue university studies, or indeed for those working already within the sector to remain (Cumming, Sumsion, & Wong, 2015; Neylon, 2015).

With Australia's poor track record of investment in early childhood education relative to its international counterparts (see UNICEF, 2008) and demand for quality early education on the rise (OECD, 2014), increased economic investment along with substantial policy reform that recognises early childhood teachers' professionalism is needed (Neylon, 2015). If government funding was directed toward increasing salaries and improving working conditions for teachers working in the early years relative to school-based teachers (Productivity Commission, 2014; Neylon, 2015), considerable building of pedagogical capacity might be felt

and “recruitment and retention” of a highly qualified stable workforce realised (Neylon, 2015, p. 37).

Absorbing the largeness of these pedagogical and political tensions resonating through mind and body, I return to methodological matters as a means of organising my research pathway. With the complexities of early childhood education provision affirmed, I continue disentangling the concept and use of artful approaches, knowing that my encounters with familiar and newly –experienced methodologies will deepen understanding and aesthetic expression of “what and how *(I)* know [emphasis added]” about self and others (Black & O’Dea, 2015, p. 14).

As previously indicated in ‘Reflective traces’, earlier undergraduate research experience with portraiture developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) provoked return to this approach. Embracing representations that are socially situated, dialogue is negotiated, with portraits of aesthetic resonance evolving as “authentic and compelling narrative” (p. xv).

Early in my candidature I came across the concept of ‘the bricolage’ and began wondering if this multidisciplinary approach might be interwoven with portraiture. Extending on Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) conceptualisation of bricolage, Kincheloe (2001) describes bricolage as “concerned not only with divergent methods” but also with the adoption of “diverse theoretical and philosophical understandings” to better conceptualise interactions between concepts and evolving meanings (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679). In this sense, complexities associated with the “research act” as well as the “research design” are brought into view (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679). Adopting views critiquing aspects of self-in-research invite the researcher to consider more deeply how social and historic forces shape “relationships and connections”, and by extension, “interpretative windows...of analysis and interpretation” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 690). I was most interested in pursuing these “conceptual links” as a means of interacting differently with research processes (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 690). Understanding of these connections greatly assisted my seeing of Creates’ (1991) ways of working and viewing of installations as sites of tangled relational and geographic assemblages. Fusing portraiture, bricolage and an artist’s methods, the decision was made to trial methodological approaches with 2 teachers (phase 1), before implementing approaches with a larger group of 4 teachers (phase 2).

As I present in Publication 1 (Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017), integrating qualitative and artistic methodologies proved to be a very successful approach for exploring teachers’ developing identities. Furthermore, as my thinking (and expertise) developed, I began seeing

the methodology itself as a 'finding'. The practice of layering visual and textual forms of representation generated expressions that were at once reflective and transformative, with artistic processes renewing communicative possibilities for learning about and sharing understandings of teacher identity. Publication 2 (Lavina, Niland, & Fleet, under review) continues to explore the unfolding nature of the methodology, with teachers' seven 'aesthetic frames' as research installation viewed as "art form" for advancing "knowledge in unique ways", also opening inclusive avenues for viewing and participation (Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p. 287). Extending on the 'lived' phenomenological understandings explored in previous articles, Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019) signals a shift in thinking on self-as-teacher as I embark on a collaborative auto-ethnography project to better understand my experience transitioning to teacher-researcher. Engaging multimodal approaches, representations of past and present selves are situated through lived place-based understandings. These fragments mingle to disentangle readings of an evolving, socially situated self. Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) strips back myths associated with popularised images of 'teacher'. As one-dimensional constructs used to simplify teachers' thinking and work, narrow representations also influence our search for images to conceptualise personal understandings of teacher selves. Participating teachers were encouraged to 'create and claim' images outside stereotypes of 'teacher' as a means of generating new discourses to affirm connectedness between 'the personal' brought to their professional lives. As I have alluded to across publications, through exploration of different research directions, I became increasingly aware of the importance between place-based identities and teachers' identity development. Publication 5 (Lavina, in press) seeks to trace teachers' shifting stories-in-place(s), providing insights into significant personal and professional encounters shaping identities and pedagogies.

Whilst it may have been more prudent to follow an assured qualitative research pathway whereby each publication is clearly structured to 'do different things' to meet requirements i.e. paper 1 - introduction, paper 2 - literature review, paper 3 - methodology, paper 4 - findings, paper 5 - results and conclusion, I found this traditional approach less compatible with the unfolding nature of my methodology. Fortunately, a growing body of literature offers useful insights into approaches informing "the arts-informed thesis" as described by Knowles et al. (2008, p. 1). Delving into this creative realm brought light to my intentions to avoid reductionist forms of data presentation (Trent, 2002) and embrace approaches mindful of boundaries, yet filled with artful intentions. Thankfully, the *Macquarie University Higher Degree Research Thesis by Publication Policy* (Macquarie University, 2017) offers flexibility to re-imagine approaches by stating the thesis should include "a critical introduction to the work,

sections that link the papers together, and a concluding sections that synthesises the material as a whole.” As such, rather than stand-alone papers, this thesis includes publications interweaving literature reviews, methods, results and conclusions/discussions as they relate to different understandings of ‘placed identities’. I have also offered additional insights into my sense-making of themes and processes of working by including ‘Reflective traces’ and ‘Sites of intersection’.

My thesis’s title, *Exploring early childhood teachers’ professional identity through reflective pedagogical processes: Implications for teacher preparation and professional practice*, implies that ‘findings’ or ‘results’ will be offered to ‘answer’ these questions. Whilst I do offer descriptions, they are by no means neatly bound and packaged. What I did discover along the way, was that arts-informed work offers richness that “grows and develops, gently unfolding” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 112). I came to see that multi-layered tellings of data were necessary to appreciate the feeling qualities (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008) present in teachers’ representations. This meant thinking about how publications might be organised and connected as entangled themes emerged.

The publications

This thesis-by-publication integrates the following five publications, each one located in its applicable *SITES OF INTERSECTION* instalment.

1. Lavina, L., Fleet, A., & Niland, A. (2017). The varied textures of an arts-informed methodology: Exploring teachers’ identities through artful expressions. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 14(2), 143-163.

Located in: *SITES OF INTERSECTION: The first instalment*

2. Lavina, L., Niland, A., Fleet, A. (under review). Assembling threads of identity: Installation as a professional learning site for teachers. *Teacher Development*.

Located in: *SITES OF INTERSECTION: The second instalment*

3. Lavina, L., & Lawson, F. (2019). Weaving forgotten pieces of place and the personal: Using collaborative auto-ethnography and aesthetic modes of reflection to explore teacher identity development. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 20(6), 1-30.

Located in: *SITES OF INTERSECTION: The third instalment*

4. Lavina, L. (2019). Peeling away the red apple. Seeing anew the images shaping teachers' identities. In A. Salamon & A. Chng (Eds.), *Multiple Early Childhood Identities*. Volume 5 in the *Thinking about Pedagogy in Early Education* series (pp. 65-81). London: Routledge.

Located in: *SITES OF INTERSECTION: The fourth instalment*

5. Lavina, L. (in press). Place-based teacher identities: What connects across diverse personal and professional landscapes? *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*.

Located in: *SITES OF INTERSECTION: The fifth instalment*

The 'Sites of Intersection' in which the publications are placed serve as guiding traces, foregrounding stories to come by explaining how each publication works together as a whole. The never-ending back-and-forth-ness evident in these entries invite reflexivity and lay bare personal and professional perspectives informing my "knowing and telling" of teachers who participated in this research (Richardson, 2001, p. 251). Intersections also invite reader participation through discussion of multiple lenses embodying approaches to writing; researching and presenting accounts of teachers' lived experience (Richardson, 2001).

Each publication links to all three research questions:

- (i) How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?
- (ii) How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?
- (iii) How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations? (Feinstein, 1982)

Researcher presence

As a guide, my contributions "balance tensions associated with guidance and support" (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 111) to provoke attentive seeing of influences shaping past and present teacher selves. Working closely with participants, I listen for "fullness" (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 112) as multiple renderings of place-connected selves is created. Consciously focused on process to understand unfolding images, I seek engagement of "hearts...minds and spirits" to encourage creation of representations that move beyond

“satisfying the researcher’s interests” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 113) to meaningfully inspire and transform teachers’ understanding of identity. This is done in several ways.

Through conversations and “multiple (multi-sensory)” gathering of information (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 114), collaborative researcher-participant spaces are opened for recognising key events shaping professional learning and identity development. Of equal importance, social and cultural tensions influencing identity formation are revealed, transforming images of self-as-teacher and making more visible the deep personal and professional “selves” brought forward to teaching practice “at particular points” in time and place (Jenlick, 2014, p. xiii). What emerges from teachers’ stories is the importance of “understanding teacher identity” (Jenlick, 2014, p. xv) through individual and shared modes of involvement and expression. Raising pedagogical awareness across professional experience, image creation represented as individual aesthetic frames, and later as assembled installation, offer teachers critical insights into the concept of identity formed alongside others in ways that renew perceptions of self and practice in early childhood educational settings.

Publications have been purposefully sequenced to trace progressive development of my thinking throughout my candidature. This sequencing emphasises sense-making of relationships and evolving themes over time. As a ‘bringing-together’ of artful and scholarly processes, publications present my increasing confidence to tell stories in creative ways. Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019) in particular reflects my ‘breaking away’ from conventional structures to embrace risk and lay bare truths informing my learning teacher-researcher self. I have also been fortunate to receive feedback from the peer review process, which has been for the most part constructive. Alongside an amazingly supportive supervisory team, I felt free to explore my vision more deeply, this steady encouragement breathing life into my pursuit of multiple directions to tell more richly the details of teachers’ lives. For those considering a thesis-by-publication journey, I can say with some certainty that the road is often marred by unexpected bumps and reversals, inevitably disassembly and reassembly of parts small and large will occur along the way. However, there is much to be gained by embracing such an opportunity to learn about your emerging researcher self. Adopting arts-informed approaches involves a continual return to intentions to clarify the heart of unfolding matters (see Knowles & Cole, 2008). Remaining true to the artfulness of “ideas and work” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 117) is paramount when buffeted by boundaries of conventional representation (Black & O’Dea, 2015). As I have come to realise, however, mindfulness is key to navigation. When embarking on artistic inquiries that disrupt qualitative traditions, it is necessary to heighten consciousness “of reader accessibility and communicability”(Sameshima

& Knowles, 2008, p. 108). Whilst this may not eliminate challenges associated with process and presentation, I have found that building such awareness renews energies, bringing clarity to artful “way{s} of working [emphasis added]” (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008, p. 110). Perhaps I’ll leave considerations here. This is by no means an end...merely a pause. In fact I feel there is much more to say about thesis journeying, especially when driven by artistic processes. As an ‘unfolding’ encounter, I suggest there are further threads waiting for my seeing to reveal their meanings, seeking space and time to be disentangled.

REFLECTIVE TRACES: Fragments felt out-of-frame



Fuzzy Frays

(Photo from Robert, 2015)

*In the fuzzy frays
thoughts drift, sway
questions linger
directions scatter
whispers call, to where?
Once distant, grow stronger
sounds echo
a searching
Listen with heart
fill my mind, body
Dissolve hesitation, doubt
reach out
embrace the elusive
Light seen differently begins.*

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Leggo (2001) and Thomas (2004a)

Journal excerpt: Learning to know through knots

I never dreamed for myself the possibility of entering the academic world seven years ago. There simply wasn't enough time to make it happen. Teaching was everything. Consuming my mind, body and spirit, I loved the challenges, but perhaps it was taking too much? Busyness was creeping in, taking me away from 'knowing' something more? What exactly this 'more' was I couldn't say. For certain was an increased 'fraying' of self. As Susan Griffin notes, "I begin to hunger for something I cannot name...and in the effort to take in more, I become even more divorced from myself" (1995, p. 48).

When the opportunity came to enrol in the HDR (higher degree research) program I felt compelled to pursue a part of myself that I had turned away from. After teaching for several years in prior-to-school services, my Honours thesis tracing preservice teachers' creativity journeys from childhood to the classroom was gathering dust. Small fragments had begun to crumble away from my once solid creative/teacher self. Listening and sharing stories of teaching in lunchrooms, I wanted to do more than nod knowingly and offer the occasional insight as the demands of teaching lives were shared.

All the while I felt a quiet growing discomfort. How could I/we meaningfully address issues impacting teachers' sense of self and resilience? How could the locatedness of 'troubled thoughts' move beyond the lunchroom to find a space of greater importance? With the understanding that "it is difficult to maintain the time and location for nurturing the inner life" (Leggo, 2004, p. 30) of teachers when "teaching involves a constant drain on our resources" (Leggo, 2004, p. 30), I felt compelled to complicate popularised images of smiling happy faces and harmonious circle times. Whilst these images of 'teacher' communicate a sense of joy and connectedness at the heart of teaching, their proliferation in describing the entirety of what early childhood education (and the role of teachers) 'means' has also served to simplify the realities of our work with children (for further discussion see Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

We are much more than these representations. I was seeking a way to elevate both the emotional and intellectual aspects of our work. Who were teachers as thinking, feeling, knowing individuals? How did they 'arrive' at teaching? What were their stories? If we claim that seeing children's developing sense of self alongside others is important for nurturing their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical well-being (see *The Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF), DEEWR, 2009), why shouldn't there be equal attention paid to these inter-connected qualities across teachers' professional lifespans? As pedagogical frameworks are built on

teachers' shifting knowledge and situated experience (Cresswell, 2004), "relationship between place and pedagogy" requires further noticing as children's agency is directly impacted (Duhn, 2012, p. 99).

I wanted to understand how the many linked unfoldings of identities were formed and reformed, and like pedagogies, how they might be "open to change" (Duhn, 2012, p. 104). To do this, I needed to access more fluid forms for capturing intentionality beyond the written word. How to prompt consideration of life beyond the familiar 'script' of teacher? i.e. we know what we are 'meant' to say, therefore words of politeness and safety often creep into footnotes and reflections, burying questions and tensions. Though difficult to recognise, cultural conventions dull uncertainties. Expectations and assumptions of correctness hide tensions and limit possibility for renewed seeing of self and understanding (see Neilsen, L., 2004).

How could teachers find time and space to say and be 'more', just as we had done in the lunchroom? Would meaningful exchanges remain locked away with the coffee cups and tea bags as 'the stuff' of morning tea and lunch breaks, removed from larger significance? Or was there opportunity to delve into the messy and confronting aspects of selves and teaching in new ways? Might there exist a way to break free from the "limitations of conventions" (Neilsen, A., 2004, p. 57) of everyday experience? To seek the bits and pieces of everyday experience that "consciously" and "mindfully" (Neilsen, A., 2004, p. 57) assists understandings of our teacher selves and practice? This was my challenge.

Returning to my Honours thesis, I found the answer. The visual! What if uncertainties and questions were explored through image creation? What if we began to see life and teaching experience through visual ways of knowing? How might interwoven ways of layering words and imagery build understandings of place and self-in-place (Thomas, 2004a) to assist teachers' seeing of developing professional selves? Searching my honours project, I began re-examining how I had approached artistic inquiry. Working with four 4th year students enrolled in the unit 'Creativity, the Arts and Early Childhood' at Macquarie University, I explored the art processes of students in their creation of visual journals and storybooks. As a means of developing greater insight into their creative arts experience, these art understandings directly informed their confidence in teaching art.

Using visual metaphor and adopting portraiture as an artful narrative framework (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), this study had offered preservice teachers a powerful way into metaphorical thinking and presented a unique personal and shared means for creative

communication into their lives and into the dynamics of art experience (Lavina, 2007). Affirming where I had been and the artistic frameworks used was valuable; however, exploring teacher identity development would require different untangling of intersecting relationships, experiences and connections (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Weber & Mitchell, 1996).

Essentially, I came to the understanding that artistic inquiry for my PhD thesis would entail 'locating' often intangible "off the page" (McLaren, 2001, p. 62) aspects of teachers' stories of lived experience. The hope was that, in so doing multiple ways of representing knowledge and experience would be revealed, shifting reflective approaches to learning and transforming existing pedagogical frameworks (Black, 2011; Leavy, 2009). These were big intentions!

Deciding on an arts-informed approach for my PhD thesis, I began looking for methodologies to help describe and present the 'rootedness' of teachers' stories (and how they might intersect with my own). As meeting points "story and process unearth roots that tangle and traverse with the past and with the present" (Luciani, 2004, p. 40). Embracing narrative ways of telling and re-telling of experiences, I wanted to express the complexity of teachers' knowledge and images of teaching (see Clandinin, 1985). I also recognised the need to use multiple modes of representation that were at once contextualised, multi-dimensional and deeply felt (see *Bricolage*, Kincheloe, 2001, 2004a, 2004b).

Feeling out of my depth, I continued searching, struggling, learning. Was I making this process unnecessarily complicated? Surely one methodology would suffice? Which one, why? With numerous texts available on qualitative inquiry, a solution would present itself...right? Then on one particularly exasperating day the following comic script imagery flashed in my mind – "pre-packaged methodologies available today, research ready, easy installation"...a wry smile appeared on my face. I might have been mixing my metaphors, however, 'the greater message' of the image stuck. If I were to remain true to my intentions to disrupt knowing and invite possibilities, there would be no 'ready-made' inserts, methodological or otherwise, without consideration of content. Pausing was necessary. Slowing down and pushing aside the hurriedness of imminent deadlines, I embraced the possibility of accessing multilayered modes of inquiry.

With growing confidence, I returned to portraiture, shared earlier in conversations with supervisors, to capture complexity and paint 'the real' (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) of teachers' lives, and bricolage to encourage deeper meandering and uncovering of multiple lived fragments of teachers' stories (Kincheloe, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). Recognising the social

construction of teachers' identities (Weber & Mitchell, 1996), a social phenomenological approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) would characterise description of identity development. As tools of data collection I would use drawings, photographs and narrative...potentially poetry. This was all well and good, but how to provide coherence between these different forms? Another pause followed, reminding me of the messiness associated with coming-to-know (and articulating) the creative languages of arts-informed research (see McNiff, 2008).

With my confirmation of candidature approaching, I was increasingly aware of wider pressures associated with legitimacy. As I was pursuing non-traditional research, would artistic representations developed thus far communicate the "cognitive aspects" of "art making as serious inquiry" (McNiff, 2008, p. 30)? Would explanations sufficiently convey the originality of my approach to enable further advancement in the program? Or would my efforts be dismissed?

And then my confirmation of candidature arrived. Meeting the academic panel in a shared space of thought, body, and voice, I was to communicate with some authority how theories and pathways of knowing once ill-formed in the shadows had transformed into traceable colour-filled forms. Through an artistic inquiry, I was hoping to shine a recognisable trail to show creative possibilities generated (McNiff, 2008) from my research on teacher identity. How to communicate the tangle of theories, methodologies and questions circling in thoughts? What would happen if I were unable to sufficiently untangle these 'knotted matters' to provide coherence?

Looking back on the panel discussion, I reflected that as teachers and researchers we are all seeking disentanglement through our work, to describe human experience in ways that illuminate, challenge and engage potentialities for the better (McNiff, 2008). Entering the world of academia is intimidating. Whilst several knotted matters of representation remained, many threads were beginning to reveal themselves. It was only later when I was introduced to the creative place-based research of Knowles and Thomas (2002) that knots finally unraveled and found form. Enter Marlene Creates. Who is she you ask? This is where I intentionally leave space, mindful that there is more to say before we arrive at 'Publication 1: At a glimpse'. Here, Creates' artistry as photographer, artist and poet is provided further introduction.



Knotted Matters

(Photo from Nedra, 2017)

*In moments I dwell in the knots
untangling knowing and knowledge
shedding words
seeking imagery
I enter ambiguity
Enlightening tensions lived beyond surfaces
embracing richness
patterns dance
disappear, reform
Dwelling in spaces, I invite the deep
energies enfold
thoughts form
at once lyrical
Fusing aesthetics illuminates experience
imagery reveals
livingness emerges
Entering creative terrains
I am enriched, attentive
Infinite meanings are opened
I listen to stillness
invite possibilities
Eyes closed I breathe in
senses roam
knots swirl
Feeling energies reach out to me
Boundaries blur, shadows dissolve.*

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Suzanne Thomas (2004b)

Journal excerpt: Dwelling in the deep

When thinking about how I make sense of a changing world and my place within it, I find myself thinking in poetics and imagery. Visualising flashing frames of self and experience alongside others helps me see beyond the edges of words to imagine forms not fixed, but in motion, deepening meanings I am yet to fully uncover from thoughts (see Leggo, 2001). Fusing imagery and metaphor (like the poem and photo from my journal entry above), I begin to attend to situations with renewed spirit and seeing, to “deal with experiences that seem inexpressible...as a way to convey the abstract” (Lahman et al., 2019, p. 828).

A dear friend and teaching colleague I worked with one particularly challenging year once gifted me a mantle sized seated figure. Head bowed and holding a book, her eyes were fixed to the page, immersed in the written word. I never did ask my friend the full meaning of this present, we both just smiled knowingly.

I am often found scribbling or pasting down something in a small journal. The form may have changed over the years, but the content remains the same. As a space where seemingly disparate threads mingle, ‘to do lists’ sit alongside creative possibilities and professional ‘tangles’. With multiple beginnings, thoughts, quotes, poems, and images jumble together. Each has its own usefulness, at least for me. Defying linearity, I often meander across these pages. The content welcomes and reminds me of potentials realised, possibilities imagined and ideas waiting to find form. At first glance an outsider might see a twist of entanglements without beginning or end. They might even ask how perspectives penned and imagery sourced or created yield tangible insights into my work as a teacher/researcher?

To answer this, and at the same time provide traceable connectedness of thought, I am reminded of the possibilities afforded by artful representations and self-reflection (see Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Through imagery we are offered a powerful medium for deconstructing complexities, seeing connections and addressing contradictions once hidden. When images are read “as text” (Weber & Mitchell, 1996, p. 303), opportunities arise for teachers to pull apart the complexities of teaching lives. The process of revealing in itself creates space for attentive listening to self and practice beyond “ideas presented...through conventional language” (Weber & Mitchell, 1996, p. 304). It would seem that in these times of streamlined “early childhood curriculum” (see Woodrow, 2007, p. 235), increased surveillance of teacher competence (Bradbury, 2012), and diminished concepts of professionalism (Woodrow, 2007), early childhood teachers need new pedagogical spaces of resistance to represent identity journeys which re-connect and enlarge views of self-as-teacher and teaching practice. As ‘critical witness’, inviting other teachers, researchers and the public into aesthetic and textual

weavings of professional reflections disrupts “ambivalences in people’s views of teachers” and renews value of early childhood education (Weber & Mitchell, 1996).

Publication 1 at a glimpse

The varied textures of an arts-informed methodology: Exploring teachers’ identities through artful expressions

Following introduction of the thesis and guiding questions, I present the first publication (Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017) as a significant starting point. Indeed, this work represents my initial encounter integrating multiple methodologies and subsequent development (and trial) of a new aesthetic framework for investigating teachers’ identities. Beginning with a brief description of teaching as a socially embedded undertaking, concept of self-as-teacher is seen to develop through multiple ways of feeling, seeing and experiencing professional and personal images of self with others.

As insight into processes informing gathering and representing, this publication reveals the unfolding nature of both the methodology and ‘results’, with multiple visual modes of inquiry used to analyse teachers’ identity development. In this sense, the article contributes to my research question *“How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?”* The usefulness of the methodology in accessing teachers’ self-images emphasises benefits associated with acts of creation, reflection, and discussion to deepen readings of influences impacting understandings of teacher self over time. Integrating multiple presentational and symbolic conceptualisations of identities (see Feinstein, 1982) created opportunities for different fragments of teaching and personal experience to be pieced together, creating space for understandings of teacher selves to unfold. Expressing identity journeying through these artistic lenses also goes a long way to address another research question: *“How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?”*

The aesthetic nature of data generated along with time for viewing, critiquing and analysing representations supported teachers’ concept of influences shaping teaching and practice. Transforming associations, “ideas, situations and feelings” (Feinstein, 1985, p. 27) expressed through metaphor assisted teachers’ intuitive seeing of meanings attached to events and experiences, yielding discoveries of teacher self that were at once altered and more deeply felt (Feinstein, 1985). As an uncovering, these artistic processes link my third research question *“How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore*

professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations?" (Feinstein, 1982). Furthermore, collaborative contexts of pedagogical reflection introduced possibilities for seeing anew socially situated experiences and events shaping identities. Although I wasn't sure whether the genre would actually be accepted as "academic work" (p. 295), the presentational and symbolic (see Feinstein, 1985) nature of this paper set in motion possibilities for creating "installation art-as-research" (see Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p. 287). Whilst this may have opened many questions for you dear reader, there is more to come as this 'unfolding' thesis continues.

PUBLICATION 1

The varied textures of an arts-informed methodology: Exploring teachers' identities through artful expressions

Lavina, L., Fleet, A., & Niland, A. (2017). The varied textures of an arts-informed methodology: Exploring teachers' identities through artful expressions. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 14(2), 143-163.

ABSTRACT

Understanding how teachers come to know and make sense of teaching is a challenging endeavor. Uncovering elusive strands of thinking through arts-informed approaches has the potential to transform personal understandings of teacher selves and professional practice across diverse early childhood contexts (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009). Drawing on an arts-informed methodology combining bricolage, portraiture, and an artist's methods, this article presents a seven-framed model for exploring teachers' identity journeys. Working with six early childhood teachers in community-based Australian Long Day Care settings, teachers use these frames as methodological tools for "developing and constructing" photos, drawings, narrative, and artifacts to make visible intangible perceptions of self-identity and experience (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 30; Langer, 1957). These artistic responses were treated as provocations to explore shared meanings and position arts-informed methods as valuable research spaces (Black & O'Dea, 2015) of learning, connection, and transformation (Black, 2002).

Introduction

The practices of teaching and conceptions of what it means to be a teacher are multi-layered undertakings, with shifting complexities beyond role and task definitions. Increasingly shifting social landscapes of learning and teaching means teachers must engage social, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of self alongside teaching and learning knowledge to better understand what it means to be a teacher (Beattie, 1995). At the same time, these social landscapes have become increasingly ambiguous, with complex socio-political conditions imposing ever-shifting demands on expectations of teachers' work (Hatch, 1999).

Opportunities for teachers to reflect on contextual issues and conflicts that directly impact teaching identities have potential to increase their resilience (Hamberger & Moore, 1997): an important consideration given the high attrition rates of early childhood (EC) teachers (Marsh, 2002; Sumsion, 2002).

Black (2002) suggested that to increase understandings of teaching, there needs to be consideration of the meanings and implications of experiences for teachers. Therefore, critically reflecting on self-as-teacher and the personal and professional meanings impacting teaching practice can aid construction of “public theories and personal images of teaching” (Black & Halliwell, 2000, p. 114), as well as make visible interconnected social and contextual forces impacting teacher commitment (Sumsion, 2002).

In this article, arts-informed methodologies are presented as valuable for exploring multiple visual representations of complex teaching experiences (Powell, 2010). Influenced by the work of Knowles and Thomas (2002), we introduce a multi-modal methodology that combines bricolage, portraiture, and an artist’s methods to understand teacher identities. Through interwoven ways of seeing, thinking, and doing, teachers were offered multiple opportunities to explore visual and textual representations of teacher self and practice through metaphor (Powell, 2010). This approach offered teachers opportunities to reflect on significant relational sites of experience influencing their professional identities. Teachers’ feedback on the benefits of engaging with this new arts-informed methodology acknowledged the value of the methodological process of this study. Teachers’ reflections on personally-generated data were seen as valued pieces of a carefully sequenced methodological process—designed to re-present and re-engage individual and collaborative understandings of professional identity journeys (Powell, 2010).

To consider teachers’ identities-in-place, where place incorporates “elements of geographical location, social consciousness, and the meanings derived from experience-in-place” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 124), we investigated arts-informed methodological approaches that contested traditional perspectives of what is valued as research (Black & O’Dea, 2015). The project by Knowles and Thomas (2002) used “an artist’s inquiry methods, elements, and theoretical perspectives” and presented possibilities for developing our multi-layered aesthetic framework for exploring teacher identities (p. 123). Taking inspiration from the creative works of Marlene Creates—an internationally acclaimed photographer, artist, and poet from Newfoundland, Canada—Knowles and Thomas (2002) worked with secondary school art students as they explored their perspectives of educational contexts through “multi-modal representational forms” (p. 124). Responding to Creates’ exhibitions *Places of Presence*:

Newfoundland Kin and Ancestral Land, Newfoundland 1989–1991 (1991) and *The Distance Between Two Points is Measured in Memories, Labrador 1988* (1990), which feature linked panels exploring emotional connections to self, storied histories, culture, and ancestral landscapes as significant sites of personal place (Creates, 1991), Knowles and Thomas explored the “lived experiences of school” through “Creates-like explorations of sense-of-place” (2002, p. 124). The decision to adopt a place-based approach in our work with teachers meant their voices were engaged across methods of data collection and analysis. Multiple opportunities were provided for exploring personal and collaborative understandings of identity journeys through the interrogation of meanings associated with representations of identity.

This article presents the effectiveness of the methodology itself as a research finding. Selected pieces of raw data from participant Lilly are used to illustrate a highly experienced teacher’s construction of personal and shared understandings of identity development. Using the “visual/textual enquiry process” of the methodology (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 30), Lilly explored her personal journey into teaching, and reflected on the potential benefits of investigating teacher identity development through “reflection and deconstruction” of the perspectives generated (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 33).

In what follows in part one of this article, we introduce reflection on experiences in teaching contexts. Then, with a view to generating arts-informed processes that bring together diverse forms of representation, in part two, we outline the purpose and significance of arts-informed methodologies, describing the integration of bricolage, portraiture, and an artist’s methods used in this study. The combination of these approaches provides multiple art forms to assist teachers’ explorations of the social nature of identity development in place and foregrounds a seven-framed aesthetic framework for exploring identity, given life through the contributions of six Australian EC teachers. In part three, we explore the relevance of each aesthetic frame for reflecting on identity and share focus group reflections on identity journeys and associated research processes. We conclude the article by considering the importance of this storied arts-informed approach (see Carter, 1993) for uncovering and understanding, anew, EC teachers’ identity journeys, and we offer implications for educators and wider researcher audiences.

Part 1: Reflecting on experiences

Black (2002) characterised the concept of teacher and the act of teaching as active processes of thinking and doing, embedded with personal and professional meanings and

experiences. Teachers' self-understandings, knowledge, and practice can be expressed through aesthetic ways of knowing and seeing; these meanings-in-action take place in ever-shifting contexts of practice (Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Eisner, 1997). In their research exploring the socialisation of teacher identity, Weber and Mitchell (1996) emphasised the power of visual narrative in which analysis of pre-service and in-service teacher drawings revealed the communicative value of images as text. This process was shown to elicit thoughts into pictures— reflecting personal beliefs, attitudes, and awareness of particular socio-cultural environments. As an expressive form, drawings offered a unique means for revealing elusive self-understandings not easily articulated (Weber & Mitchell, 1996), thereby highlighting the affordances of artistic expressions for understanding identity.

A teacher's identity journey can thus be seen through a social phenomenological lens constructed in contexts of rich social and visual experience. Combining teacher/researcher/creative lenses (Finley & Knowles, 1995), we create a methodological space for exploring teacher identity development through multi-layered visual representations (Powell, 2010). In this methodology, artistic representations offer personal renderings of teaching experience that are affective and insightful. Developing social and visual awareness is integral to making sense of the multi-sensory experiences in our everyday environments (Leavy, 2009). Engaging processes of reflection and creation, teachers in this study met and transformed personal and professional meanings through their visual images.

Part 2: Artful insights

The benefits of arts-informed approaches rest in their capacity to “see more in our experiences, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routine have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed” (Greene, 2000, p. 123). Therefore, as a new framework for exploring teacher identity development, this arts-informed methodology used a collation from each participant of one found image, two photos, two drawings, a narrative, and an artifact. In this style of professional reflection, visual tools provide a sense of immediacy and offer valuable feedback (Black, 2011; Mello, 2007). Each form of representation (referred to as a separate aesthetic frame) uses different media for gathering and analysing information about teacher identity and experience (see [Table 1.1](#)). Teachers' representations engaged many re-tellings of personal and professional teaching realities (Clandinin, 1985) and showed potential to unlock teachers' perceptions of themselves and their practice. The reflective space created in this methodology provided teachers with

personal and collaborative ways into seeing their identity development and provided powerful touchstones for revisiting personal images of self as teacher and the realities of teaching practice (Bateson, 1994; Lawrence- Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

To clarify the multiple methodologies informing this approach, we offer discussion of bricolage and portraiture. As arts-informed modes of inquiry, they provide context for our adaptation of Creates’ (as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002) artistic framework. Creates’ work has been used in other education-based studies, such as those by Bown and Sumsion (2007) and Fleet and Britt (2011), but has not yet been integrated into a larger methodology such as this. Volunteering teachers had different years of experience working in EC contexts and varying levels of confidence in their ability to engage with arts-informed reflective approaches. As teachers explored their identity journeys through personal and shared reflections in focus groups, the “potential of arts-informed enquiry” was evident; aesthetic frames revealed elusive place and experiential links influencing identity journeys (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 46). The process of creating the frames themselves also provided participating teachers a visual means for tracing and critically reflecting on experiences. The integration of these methodologies was seen as fundamental to developing an aesthetic phenomenology of place-based identities around teachers’ expressions of past and present selves—offering teachers visual modes for representing identity journeys as well as a creative frame for other researchers.

Table 1.1 Representing teacher identities through aesthetic frames: practical strategies

FRAME 1	FRAME 2	FRAME 3	FRAME 4	FRAME 5	FRAME 6	FRAME 7
First image of Teacher	Photo of Teacher (EC context)	Photo of personal place (location)	Drawing self-as-teacher (preservice/early career)	Drawing self-as-teacher (present)	Narrative (self-as-teacher)	Artifact (identity meaning)
Interview 1 (part 1) 20 min	Interview 1 (part 2) 20 min	Interview 1 (part 3) 20 min	Interview 2 (part 1) 20 min	Interview 2 (part 2) 20 min	Interview 3 (part 1) 20 min	Interview 3 (part 2) 20 min
To discuss-early memories of ‘teacher’	To discuss-identifies professional image of self	To discuss-significant place of meaning	To discuss-representing personal understandings of early teacher self	To discuss-representing personal understandings of present teacher self	To discuss-written expression of self-as-teacher and teaching experience	To discuss-physical object that reflects teacher identity

Note. Adapted from the creative works of Marlene Creates (as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002, pp. 121-132).

Methodological musings: Bricolage and portraiture

Bricolage brings together collections of diverse approaches and materials. To do bricolage is to embrace a multitude of complexities “of the lived world” (Kincheloe, 2004a, p. 2). Central to this approach is the view that “knowledge production always involves multiple acts of selection...developing a set of elastic criteria (and) tentative principles for selecting particular interpretations over others” (Kincheloe, 2004b, p. 100). In bricolage, the researcher approaches relationships carefully through a socio-cultural lens, mindful to go beyond one-dimensional meanings to realise deeper readings of experience. Adapting this approach, bricolage was used in this methodology to identify teachers’ identity understandings and development in particular social contexts (Kincheloe, 2004a).

We sought to merge “historiographical, philosophical, and social theoretical lenses” of bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679) with Creates’ (1990, 1991) artful forms of gathering and representing to express teachers’ evolving knowledge of identity development through seven aesthetic frames (described below). Creates’ phenomenological approach to exploring human experience of and relationship with place invites pause, a sense of inquiry, and a space to disentangle meanings (as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002). Using bricolage’s “divergent methods of inquiry,” which involve searching beyond superficial understanding of information and encounters (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 679), and the life-in-place works of Creates weaving “artistry into life history” across her creative process and representation (as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 122), seven different forms of information were gathered from teachers. These processes engaged diverse aesthetic ways of reflecting on and viewing (Bown & Sumsion, 2007) their placed identity narratives (Phelan, 2001). The design of these different aesthetic frames attempts to unify pluralistic perspectives of viewing, gathering, and representing teachers’ aesthetic and narrative information. In focus groups, the assembled framework, adapted from Creates (as cited in Knowles & Thomas, 2002), offered a visual/textual narrative of teachers’ developing identities:

- Aesthetic frame 1:** First image of teacher—Early memories of “teacher”;
- Aesthetic frame 2:** Photo of teacher (EC context)—Identifies professional image of self;
- Aesthetic frame 3:** Photo of personal place—Significant place of meaning;
- Aesthetic frame 4:** Drawing self-as-teacher (pre-service/early career)—Representing personal understandings of early teacher self;

- Aesthetic frame 5:** Drawing self-as-teacher (present)—Representing personal understandings of present teacher self;
- Aesthetic frame 6:** Narrative (self-as-teacher)—Written expression of self-as- teacher and teaching experience; and
- Aesthetic frame 7:** Artifact (identity meaning)—Physical object that reflects teacher identity.

In *portraiture*, emphasis is placed on ethnographic phenomenology and the framing of “the portraitist’s voice” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85) across all aspects of the research process. Portraiture is thus a vehicle portraying a picture of an individual or a research site in dimensions of complexity through publicising and sharing “intensely personal” (Loughran, 2006, p. 50) reflections to deepen dialogue, and exploring social realities in ways that “instigate positive and productive change” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 12). Merging artistic and scientific approaches to methodological inquiry, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) recognised the importance of developing an integrated narrative portrait to “capture the complexity” and give voice to the experiences and professional lives of participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv). In this study, portraiture’s “search for goodness” (Chapman, 2005, p. 32) brings authenticity to teachers’ visual and narrative representations of identity and “evokes identification” with experiences to clarify the complexities of teaching worlds (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 13).

Participants in this study are six degree-qualified EC teachers working at four community-based (not-for-profit) EC Long Day Care centers in Sydney, Australia. The decision to select community-based centers was twofold: firstly, they needed to be accessible, and secondly, identifying community-based services mediated the possibility of EC teachers’ identities being constrained by the potential profit motive of a company or private employer. This consideration is significant in the Australian EC context given current reforms, which have seen community services dramatically shifted to privatised businesses with a profit and shareholder agenda (Kilderry, 2006). Given the positioning of “children as commodities” (Pocock, Cox, Millei, Sims, & Press, 2014, p. 24), childcare is seen as related to productivity: Care for children while parents work, and is not recognised by all as integral to education (Pocock et al., 2014). In this political and social attitudinal context, exploring teachers’ constructions of identity is even more important as they are conceived across shifting social environments (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2005). Situating teachers’ experience within narrative meaning serves to

support insight into personal stories, events, and histories that we use to make sense of our work and our lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Data collection included two phases: phase one—small group, and phase two—larger group. Phase one was undertaken to trial the effectiveness of the methodology and moderate ambiguities related to “depictions or interpretations” of teachers’ developing identities (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 46). With this in mind, phase one involved working with two EC teachers over a 14-week period. To clarify developing concepts, teachers were continually asked to describe and authenticate conversational and representational forms of information gathered and analysed (Bown & Sumsion, 2007). Following positive response from teacher participants in phase one, methodological processes were repeated in the larger group (phase two) with another four EC teachers over a subsequent 14-week period. Teachers in each group were asked to keep reflective journals and participate in three interviews, with an additional final focus group discussion to share and reflect on personally relevant representations of identity. Each of the three individual interviews included discussion of journal entries made a week prior, and photographing (with permission) any visual images that teachers developed in relation to their identity-reflections. The final focus group involved assembling all seven aesthetic frames for teachers to share and trace the complexity of unfolding identity journeys.

As mentioned earlier, seven aesthetic frames (illustrated below) encapsulated teachers’ written, conversational, and visual representations of identity and practice. As an arts-informed component of the research process, each frame included photos, drawings, narratives, and an artifact. As evolving representation of teachers’ identities, these frames served to illuminate teachers’ private understandings of their personal and professional lives (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

For teachers in each group, representations of events and contexts influencing their identity development became part of an installation where seven aesthetic frames were displayed to illustrate personal journeys of identity. Following introduction of the installation, teachers discussed their identity journeys and shared personal reflections on the methodology in focus groups. Creating additional opportunity beyond individual interviews (see [Table 1.1](#)) for teachers to reflect on experiences broadened inner dialogue and engaged socialised understandings of identity and arts-informed methodologies (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003). The installation of seven frames was then locally publicised and shared with people outside the study to explore the “public face of self-study” and teacher identity (Mitchell, Weber, &

Pithouse, 2009, p. 120)— offering wider audiences insight into the realities of living and representing teacher experience (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003).

Part 3: A method for understanding identity

Apart from creating opportunities for teachers to reflect on aesthetic and dialogic images of their professional selves (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003), teachers were involved in the organisation and final presentation of their frames leading up to the focus group to “clarify their earlier responses” and our early “interpretations of the data” (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 36). To mitigate “over-interpretation or exaggeration,” each frame was accompanied with a transcribed description of aspects related to each frame of teachers’ identity journeys (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 36). Through Lilly, the following section presents our initial encounters interpreting teachers’ understanding of their identities using visual modes of inquiry, with early analysis of Lilly’s responses also used for “collectively conveying” the value of the methodology itself (Bown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 34).

Aesthetic frame 1: Memories of teacher: Situating past images

Images offer interpretive lenses for organising and making our thinking schemas and pedagogical approaches coherent (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, as cited in Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Therefore, it is useful for teachers to have opportunities to reflect on personal understandings and pictures of “teacher” to consider how these are embedded in practice (Black, 2011; Black & Halliwell, 2000). In this methodology, teachers were asked to source their original image of teacher prior to their first interview as a means of situating early memories and pictures of “teacher.” Such an approach recognises cultural constructions of “teacher” embedded across various forms of written, visual, and digital media—offering images that set expectations of teacher appearance, behavior, and attitudes long before our experiences at school (Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

Not surprisingly, most teachers in this study reproduced traditional representations of “teacher”; often, their early experiences involved a distanced view of the person as an authoritarian classroom persona. From this perspective, knowledge was largely seen as an essential tool for instruction and control. Lilly chose to represent the concept as both a yellow apple and a key. Her early kindergarten experience was symbolised through a stenciled yellow apple drawing (see [Figure 1.1](#)). An exercise in replication, the teacher’s disapproval of Lilly’s yellow apple representation (after she ate a yellow apple at recess) left an indelible mark on

Lilly's perception of teacher image. Consciously resisting the perpetuation of authoritarian styles of teaching remained a recurrent theme across Lilly's frames, with power relationships and children's agency closely examined through the yellow apple as an empowering symbol of possibilities and choice (see [Figure 1.1](#)). As Lilly comments in [Figure 1.1](#).

I think that was what I didn't want to do (gesturing to the yellow apple)... I always wanted to make sure that the children had a voice and that I made time to ask them why they've done something. Whether it is a behaviour or a creation or a something, there's an intent from the child...so that you need to find that.

Disrupting historical stereotypes of teacher-centered approaches to learning focused on rules and control (see Joseph & Burnaford, 1994), Lilly's selection of a key image symbolises a more passionate learner-centric teacher she encountered in high school. This teacher's commitment to the co-construction of knowledge revitalised Lilly's confidence as a thinker and learner beyond the school context and into university, as she explains with reference to [Figure 1.1](#):

she gave me the key to communicate myself and my thoughts... Pushing your thinking and making you do things differently. ...and without that...that sort of early ability to write an essay I wouldn't have felt as confident going into uni.

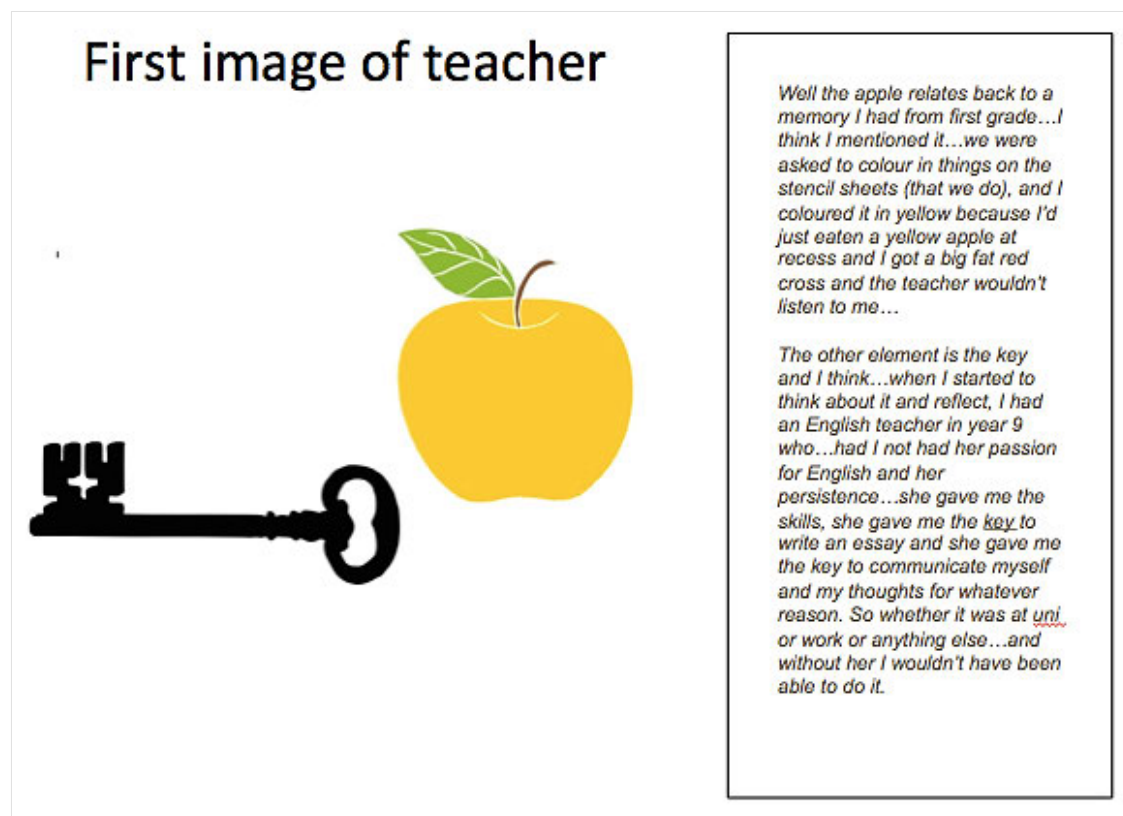


Figure 1.1 Lilly's first image of teacher

Sources: Yellow apple: <http://pixgood.com/yellow-apple-clip-art.html>;
key: <http://www.clipartbest.com/clipart-KijdLzeiq>.

In terms of situating the meaning of these early memories of teacher to understand her developing teacher identity, Lilly spoke in the group about the importance of reengaging personal processes of reflecting on visual representations and aesthetic processes to clarify experiences: "I don't think I would have found it or thought about it had I not had to draw it or create it in an image" (personal communication, February 12, 2015). Indeed, through discussion reflecting on the methodology itself, Lilly recognised the personal significance of creating visual components to reveal key influences on her identity development.

Aesthetic frames 2 & 3: The imaged self: Locating teacher self-in-place and a personal sense of place

Reflecting on place as a socio-historical construct, it is useful to note that even landscapes with conceivably "the same culturally standardised premises" can provoke different subjective readings for the individual as we imagine past histories in these spaces and attempt to make meaning of our own present reality (Brady, 2008, p. 503). Such a socio-historical framework of place is useful in making sense of educational contexts as this recognises negotiated lived meanings as both physical and cognitive endeavors (Brady, 2008).

Recognising the role of place as a socialised, material and physical space (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Kerkham, 2007) presents opportunities to investigate how this influences teachers' personal and professional sense of self, or becoming (Orr, 1992). Becoming or identity, like place, is perceived as ever-changing, with numerous iterations enmeshed in specific contexts. Creates (1991) emphasised landscapes as meaningful places of memory and connection to self and lives lived: The spatial and geographical textures of "particular points" (para. 4) seen as sites for exploring identity. Taking care to recognise the "spatial dimensions of teachers' narratives of identity" (Kerkham, 2007, p. 5), teachers in this study were asked to take a photo of self-in-place in order to locate a personal sense of place. Engaging this process speaks of the relationships, dialogue, and histories that make these sites distinct as personally meaningful representations of self and experience (Creates, 1991; Kerkham, 2007).

As a participatory approach, inviting teachers to engage with photovoice (Wang, 1999) in this methodology supports portrayal of lived experience "in creating and defining those very images that shape the public discourse" of teacher role and persona (p. 191; Mitchell et al., 2009). Faithful to Wang's (1999) visual methodology, teachers were provided with two related provocations prior to their first interview, which asked them to picture professional self in their current EC context and recapture a personally meaningful location (see [Figure 1.2](#)). By critically considering teacher self from multiple viewpoints and contexts, hidden aspects of self were brought to the surface across teachers' representations, with connections made across personal and professional experiences (Mitchell, Weber, & Pithouse, 2009).

Inviting an introspective look at self through images provides a visual dialogue for reflecting on what is known about self and acts as a catalyst for developing professional practice (Mitchell, Weber, & Pithouse, 2009).

Photo of Teacher (EC context)

identifies professional image of self



It's the sharing of...the cogs are kind of like the...not necessarily the skills, but they're bits that make me...they're bits of my brain that I had to use.

...

Pulling apart my brain and using it in different ways. It's that whole sharing and influencing of people. Because I think...you can't, whether it's the positive or the negative...the apple or the key, you're gonna be influenced by people and their behaviour and the way they engage, so that was kind of the reason why the image stuck with me.

...

So the head in the middle is me and the two profiles are the educators, the families and sometimes the children. They're the external people...As I said – children, family members, people that I've worked with, other teachers. Other people. The building and construction of myself as a teacher because it's sort of an ongoing process.

...

There's a lot of exchange and it's moving and it's...it is...it's a dynamic journey. Cause it is still a journey.

Figure 1.2 Lilly's photo of teacher (early childhood context)

Source: http://image.shutterstock.com/display_pic_with_logo/540784/116807278/stock-photo-business-education-and-corporate-management-training-programs-with-human-heads-made-of-gears-and-116807278.jpg

By encouraging teachers to access and produce self-images and engage in shared reflective dialogue around their meaning, “personal and public” worlds of identity were brought to the surface to interrogate the meanings of representations (Mitchell, Weber, & Pithouse, 2009, p. 119). For example, in **Figure 1.2**, Lilly chose cogs as metaphors to represent interconnected relationships in her EC context. Her decision to select a sourced photo of teacher became apparent in the focus group:

You can't capture it (in a snapshot), because in my head
I can picture specific families, children, incidents that have influenced how I
approach things now...the cogs are like the...
not necessarily the skills,
but they're bits that make me...
they're bits of my brain that I had to use.

Lilly's reflections support the methodology's potential for enlarging processes of reflection using symbolic representations to clarify teachers' textual and visual narratives of identity. As a multi-dimensional framework, inviting diverse modes of thinking about identity

formation in this methodology recognises the complexity of relationships influencing teachers' constructions of self and the personal and professional interactions shaping teacher identities (Marsh, 2003).

Aesthetic frames 4 & 5: The early and the present: Drawing teacher selves

Our intention to access Tidwell and Manke's (2009, p. 135) defining events of practice, where "particular moments in time...are perceived as significant occurrences" is reflected in aesthetic frames 4 and 5, "Drawing self-as-teacher (pre-service/early career)" and "Drawing self-as-teacher (present)" (see [Table 1.1](#)). Teachers were encouraged to think around less tangible representations—move beyond the literal to explore metaphoric visions of self (Bullough, Jr., 1991, 2010; Tidwell & Manke, 2009). In this methodology, the drawings of early and present images of teacher- self seek to tease out characteristic images of self in context as touchstones defining images of self-as-teacher at a particular time.

Drawings in this methodology provided artful tools for reflecting on what it means to be a teacher. As provocation, teachers discussed drawings of early and present teacher selves in their second interview; these "nodal moment artifacts" as representations of significant life events connect the familiar and abstract of identity journeys (Tidwell & Manke, 2009, p. 137). The intention of this approach with teachers was to encourage drawing experiences of teaching as a way of investigating personal understandings of identity development (Black, 2011).

Research in teacher thinking and knowledge formation through images and metaphors reveals deep personal connections to aesthetic responses that make meaning of professional experience (Black, 2002; Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Eisner, 1997; Sumsion, 2003). Drawings, like metaphors, offer powerful means of connecting similar and dis- similar relationships in ways that magnify previously unseen influences (Brown, 1966). It is often through these artistic forms of expression that unspoken or elusive connections find their full meaning beyond spoken or written texts (Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Ideas and relationships communicated through the image-making process offer powerful ways for extending processes of thought. As Weber (2008) noted, drawing as a reflexive medium has the ability to bring forth a multitude of ideas and wonderings, offering a unique clarity to abstract thought processes. Imagery as provocation elicits reflective processes that provide a catalyst for changes in the thought and action of educational practice (Haney, Russell, & Bebell, 2004).

As part of the methodology, drawings were seen as powerful forms of expression for unlocking the unexpected. For example, in **Figure 1.3**, Lilly chose yellow apples as personal metaphors of advocacy for children and families. In contrast to her own experiences of “teacher,” where efforts to draw alternate renderings of apple (i.e., yellow) were dismissed as wrong (see **Figure 1.1**), she chose to transform this initially negative symbol into a powerful metaphor of empowerment and voice for children. In her second inter- view, Lilly detailed the shift in meaning of the yellow apple as she defines teacher self through relationships of knowledge with children: “It doesn’t have to be red. Children can be what they want to be” (personal communication, August 29, 2014). In her drawing of present teacher self (see **Figure 1.3**), Lilly describes a “yellow apple orchard” learning community; here, the apple metaphor is a powerful touchstone for re- conceptualising significant shifts in thought and practice.

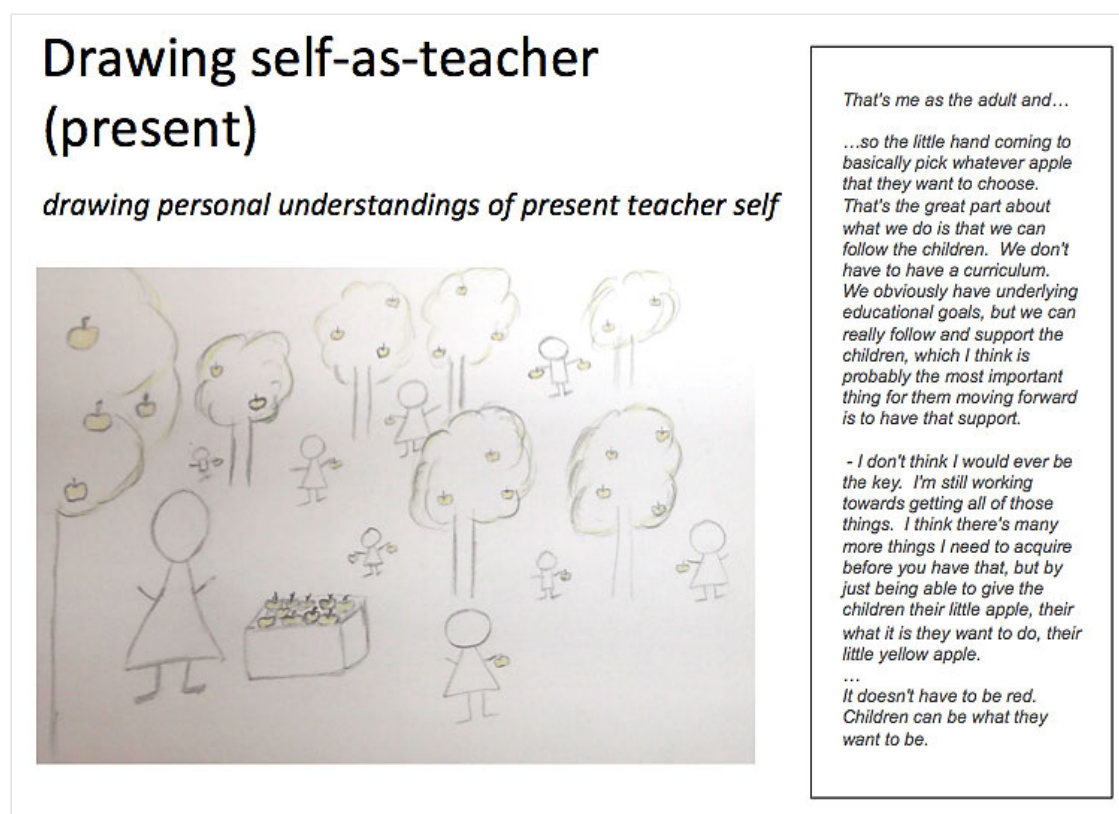


Figure 1.3 Lilly’s drawing self-as-teacher (present).

Bullough and Stokes (1994) suggested that metaphors inherently link with teacher identity. The metaphoric renderings teachers use to make sense of self and practice either support or impede children’s learning. This understanding moves metaphors beyond personal reflection to an expression of mutually evolving understandings of self in relationship with others. Therefore, it is important to interrogate different “conceptions of self as teacher” (Bullough & Stokes, 1994, p. 202).

Artifact (identity meaning)

physical object that reflects teacher identity



*I think it's the ongoing journey. It's my green
- it's an art folio.*

... the reason why I like using pencil is I think it just - it has a smoothness and a simple sort of quality and it does come back to - I don't know whether it is that sort of - you know, like people who do drawings in pencil I think are just - they're so beautiful.

So for me, it's a more - pen's a very defined thing, whereas pencil I think you can sort of be a bit more creative with and by choosing an art folio that didn't have lines on it, I can map things and draw things without feeling like I'm breaking away from some sort of something. It just gives me a... I'm not in the grid. It's my piece of paper and I can do whatever I need to do with it for whatever that particular reason is.

... It's how I see myself moving forward. So there are ideas for what I want to do and achieve in the room. There are ideas for what I want to achieve within projects within the centre. There's even just a page where I feel like I can get myself a little bit sorted, like what are my priorities in the next few months? What do I need to concentrate on achieving at home? Have I dropped the ball a bit with the kids, and just sort of organising myself? So if this was to disappear I would feel very, very sad.

Figure 1.4 Lilly's artifact (identity meaning).

In the focus group, Lilly describes her complex searching for alternate metaphors (Tobin, 1990) to represent teacher self and practice; this process reveals new insights about visual forms of reflection. As Lilly comments:

I don't think I would have found it or thought about it
had I not had to draw it or create it in an image.
If I had to write, you can write about something,
but actually drawing something
took a lot more thought
and a lot more process.
I didn't realise I was going to have apple links all the way.
(personal communication, February 12, 2015)

Lilly's reflections clearly support the methodology's potential for developing additional processes of reflection to assist clarifying teachers' narratives of identity. Apart from providing teachers with opportunities to share identity journeys in the focus group, allowing time between interviews for teachers to carefully consider their identity development also assisted Lilly's uncovering of self-understandings informing personal approaches to practice "doing that was a really great process because it crystalises why you do what you do"

(personal communication, February 12, 2015). Supporting teachers' processes of reflection across the methodology framework also meant listening to teachers' ideas and symbolic expressions and looking for significant events and experiences informing how identities were formed across contexts (Black, 2011).

Aesthetic frame 6: The storied self: Narratives of teacher selves

Narrative as a medium for understanding the "storied lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) of teachers is well recognised in educational literature for exploring personal thinking, ideas, relationships, and meanings of teachers' lived experience (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). As part of our seven-framed aesthetic methodology, teachers were invited to write narratives of their personal teacher journeys. As methodological frames for understanding identity, teachers' creations of visual and written representations were used to support reflection on experiences (Gargiulo, 2007; Pink, 2006), bringing forth personal and professional knowledge to provoke self-awareness and development (Clandinin, 2010). While some narratives traced knowledge development and intuitive knowing through evolving theoretical understandings and teaching experiences (Black, 2002; Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1991), others used quotes, symbols, and poetry to explore self and self-in-practice across contexts of teaching and learning (Carter, 1993). Given the implicit nature of this knowledge, it was important to engage in shared reflective processes with teachers during interviews and focus groups to access and make visible understandings of identity and self-as-teacher (Black, 2002; Roth, Masciotra, & Boyd, 1999). In the focus group, Lilly spoke of the importance of making coherent personal experiences, knowledge, and understandings informing the life and practice of being a teacher to make sense of her identity journey (Carter, 1993; Olson, 1990). As Lilly comments:

I really struggled to not waffle on like we always do
and to just try and get my point across.
I enjoyed the experience of doing different things
so that's why I wanted to branch out and try to write in a different style
or a different way to challenge myself
and to kind of push myself to try something different.
It's kind of a little letter to self I think.
It's like a little reminder of what you've been doing for the last few years.
(personal communication, February 12, 2015)

As observed by Coulter, Charles, and Poynor (2007), "engaging in this ongoing dialogue through narrative inquiry turns storytelling into pedagogy allowing pre- service and practicing

teachers to problematise and change the nature of teaching and learning” (p. 121). Engaging a sense of story with teachers in this study focused on embracing the abstract and unexpected as the main script through which personal actions and meanings of teacher and teaching were understood. Therefore, making teachers’ beliefs and knowledge visible through narrative and personal metaphors afforded opportunity for reflection on beliefs and understandings about self and others in context as well as thinking and actions in practice influencing identity development (Grauer, 1998; Kowalchuk, 1999; Zimmerman, 1994). Situating teachers’ narratives of identity within social systems of knowing, becoming, and being “teacher” recognises the importance of teachers’ stories as “cultural resources” with layered readings (Esterberg, 2002, p. 189).

In “search-ing for the storyline that emerges from the material” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 10), we adopted a poetic form of analysis (see Becker, 1999; Smith, 1999) where teachers’ stories of identity were recognised as constantly evolving beyond traditional chronological narrative structures (Riessman, 1993). To enhance our listening of teachers’ stories, transcripts of individual and focus group interviews were re-presented through stanzas as a means of recognising the “meaning-making, rhythm, textual space and implicit intonation” of poetic analysis (Gee, as cited in Speedy, 2005, p. 287) to allow a multitude of hearings and to “thicken stories” (Speedy, 2005, p. 286). Further, poetic representations provided opportunity for teachers to consider potential contradictions between what was voiced and viewed to examine potential differences emerging from conversations and written language (Speedy, 2005).

Aesthetic frame 7: Artifact as symbol: Embodying lived selves

Following Creates (1990, 1991), the inclusion of an everyday artifact in this methodology was seen as a symbol for making sense of teacher selves and lives (Hoskins, 1998). When we engage with objects, we organize and build “ideas and emotions” (Turtle, 2007, p. 309) to make sense of experiences and ourselves. Objects, especially those with which we are deeply familiar, can be seen as socialised symbols of connection. In attaching a sense of emotional narrative to objects, we internalise meanings beyond aesthetics or function. Essentially, they can remind us of “the details of people’s lives” (Turtle, 2007, p. 4), provide powerful touchstones for thinking through personal memories, and connect “intellect and emotion” (Turtle, 2007, p. 5). Therefore, as part of the methodology, teachers were asked to identify an object that reflected their teacher identity. For Lilly, the art folio represented a line-free space for creative thought: “because quite often I don’t think in straight lines” (personal communication, February 12,

2015). The art folio also captured her flow of thoughts: “I can just start in the middle and work from it or I can start on one side and flow” (personal communication, February 12, 2015). Assigning importance to the ebb and flow of learning recognises that “we live our lives in the middle of things” (Turkle, 2007, p. 6) and use objects as vehicles for capturing and reconsidering images of self and experience.

Lilly’s state of flux echoes underlying principles of Creates’ (1985) “Fire and Water” installation; a work of burnt wood and driftwood—creative processes and materials representing the meeting of different elements and shifting emotional states like those voiced by Lilly. As Creates (1985) stated, “These materials not only are a kind of souvenir or memory of these two opposing elements, they also indicate where I’ve been” (para. 1). It is this same sense of connecting self with materials in place that affirmed our decision to ask teachers to search for an artifact with identity meaning: to embody a history of journeying identities (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

To uncover potentially hidden aspects of teacher identity, teachers’ artifacts were seen as “methodological tools” (Berihun et al., 2015, p. 2) to explore aesthetic, social, and unconscious modes of thinking through the meanings of objects. Consistent with Dewey’s (1934) assertion that aesthetic experience is not isolated to artwork creation but is a part of everyday life, teachers’ artifacts were identified and valued beyond their functionality (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). It was this sense of story and artifact as echo of self and lives that assisted in expanding teachers’ understandings of identity (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Engaging teachers in this process provided opportunities for the reconsideration of meanings assigned to physical objects of identity to consider how objects inform our understandings of teacher identity.

Methodology: Concluding reflections

With a focus on modes of creation and representation (Black & O’Dea, 2015), aesthetic processes (photos, drawings, narrative, and an artifact) were used for exploring identity. As provocations to encourage professional reflection, teachers’ creation of seven aesthetic frames offered spaces for looking within and across social environments to understand how they learn with children, families, and colleagues in EC contexts. As exemplified by Lilly, engagement in this methodology presented teachers with additional professional tools for understanding and reflecting on their teaching practice and professional identity development. For educational researchers and wider audiences, this arts-informed methodology offers

potential for uncovering rich internal constructions of teacher identity. Providing a platform for delving deeper into the social forces influencing the formation and expression of teachers' identities, these understandings contribute to the body of research on teachers' professional identity development. As multilayered pedagogical processes, aesthetic frames made explicit the many textures of teachers' thinking and provided valuable opportunities for teachers to deepen understandings of identities and practice. Drawing on multiple modes of representing identity, the aesthetic framework for research presented in this article assisted teachers' seeing of relational and contextual complexities influencing images of self-as-teacher while expanding professional tools of reflection.

REFLECTIVE TRACES: Fragments felt out-of-frame



On Being 'Neatly Bound'

(Photo from Snow, 2008)

*Images speak of 'same'
outwardly simple
neatly bound
lives quietly compiled
distilled, souls silenced
A deeper core calls
inner swells of being
brings restlessness
full and wild
mysterious stirrings
Sweep surfaces aside
separate what conceals
within is vulnerable
moving, feeling
deeper presence awaits
Away from hollow filters
life dances
unveils beauty, harshness
imperfection, connection
feeling worlds open.*

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Suzanne Thomas (2004a)

Journal excerpt: Impacting ‘truths’

Encouraged by positive feedback from my first publication, I decided to keep pressing forward with my intention to flex traditional forms of “text-based” data presentation and pursue the “multi-dimensional” potentials of installation-as-research (Cole & McIntyre, 2003, p. 4). Adding to the participatory nature of the methodology, I felt my creation of teachers’ aesthetic frames as assembled installation held much promise to transform audience accessibility and wider perceptions of teachers’ lives. For participating teachers, I was also curious how they would respond to imagery and narratives honouring their developing selves-in-place. As the installation captured significant moments of self-as-teacher, would stepping back and looking across frames reveal shifts in learning, seeing and positioning of teacher selves over time? Likewise, as audiences drifted across these frames would they see fragments that tell the light and shade of teachers’ experiences? Might there be realisation of the changing nature of identities captured through chronological depictions? Would there be closer looking at images capturing metaphors of teaching? What might these mean? Why were abstract symbols chosen to represent ‘the real’ of teachers’ lives? Would there be shared resonance and a sense of ‘stepping-into-frame’ as images were woven into stories (see Cole & McIntyre, 2003)?

With these questions tumbling back and forth in thoughts, I was jolted back to the fundamentals of ethics consent. With intentions to publicise teachers’ journeys of professional identity and include audience feedback, I was deviating from my original ethics application. Issues of consent and confidentiality for participating teachers and audiences would need to be revisited. This realisation meant returning to my original (earlier approved) proposal and requesting an amendment with the ethics committee.

Tracking back to the request form, I began searching within. How to express my intentions? Why was installation necessary? As I intended to wander off into ‘the deep’ of arts-informed processes and presentation, would this approach be seen as academic? Valuable? If inviting audience participation heightened understandings and moved research “beyond the academy”, how was I to specifically engage the audience beyond distanced viewer (see Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p. 289)?

In addressing these questions, my amendment outlined purpose of the installation design; the centralised layout of tables with assembled frames encouraging audiences to meander through teachers’ narratives of identity. Incorporating spaces to sit and reflect were also

considered necessary pauses as the ebb and flow of stories were encountered. Here, audiences would find an array of brightly coloured pencils, felt tip pens and markers for drawing, scribbling and writing confidential responses to the following:

After viewing the *threads of IDENTITY* installation:

Q1. What creative processes (thinking, writing, making, doing, seeing) are a part of your life? (*written and/or visual response*)

AND

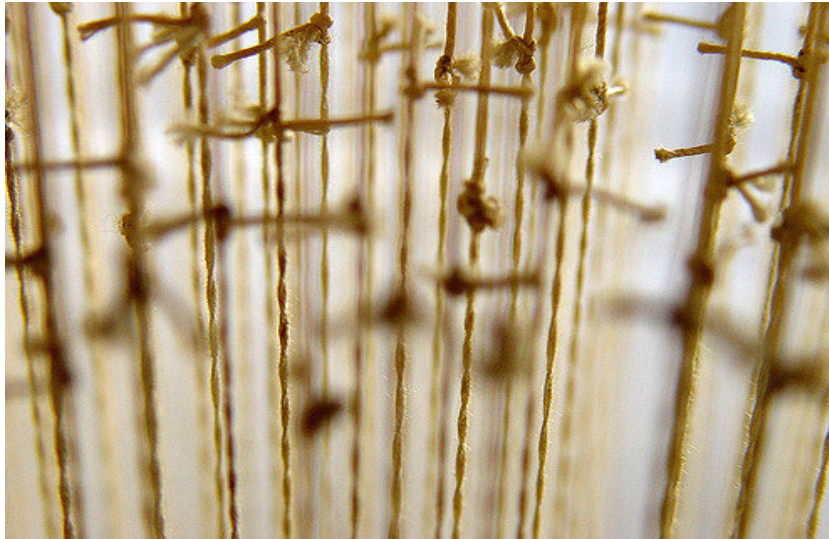
Q2. As a teacher, lecturer or other professional, what potential might these have for assisting you in 'living' your professional identity journey? (*written and/or visual response*)

The intention of questions was twofold- firstly to re-consider the creative potential in everyday activities, and secondly to open spaces for re-imagining how creative processes might assist personal seeing of professional self, thereby prompting identification with teachers' stories of identity. With audience participation mindfully navigated, I returned to teacher participants. At this point it would be easy to bemoan 'the process'; time was ticking away, however, drafting my reasoning for amending directions provided opportunity to pause and reflect on what I really hoped to achieve. It made me consider more deeply how teachers' narratives so candid, vulnerable, and felt, relied on my mindfulness to keep them safe and intact. As an early career researcher, such responsibility demands pause and serves as an important reminder of the trust placed in you. Submitting the amendment form, I waited anxiously, hopeful of a positive response, thankfully this was granted with little fuss and much curiosity. I felt buoyed! With ethics processes successfully navigated, my installation adventure began. The realisation of researcher actions impacting lives had affirmed my unwavering commitment to honour teachers' truths. With heightened awareness of ethical processes alongside "technical and logistical complexities" (Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p. 292), I re-approached participants for consent. As I re-connected with participating teachers sharing my/our research journey thus far and exchanging everyday complexities of teaching, I felt more strongly than ever the need to make visible 'teachers work' and lives by moving out of the classroom and bringing into view stories once elusive now found through aesthetic frames assembled as installation (Cole & McIntyre, 2008).

As yet, there are many questions and reveals that remain all too 'neatly bound'. Read as one, 'Sites of intersection' followed by 'At a glimpse' describe the nature and meaning of installation-as-research and share what happens as I unravel the pieces of people and place shaping teacher identities. Adopting "installation art-as-research" (Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p.

287), Publication 2 unites qualities that are both “rigorous” and “scientific” (Cole & McIntyre, 2003, p. 4). True to arts-informed methods where representations seek multi-dimensional forms for communicating knowledge about lives (Cole & McIntyre, 2003; Knowles & Cole, 2008), I look to the work of Cole and McIntyre (2003, 2008) and McIntyre and Cole (2008) for inspiration to sympathetically capture teachers’ identity journeys, but more on this as we move forward.

SITES OF INTERSECTION – THE SECOND INSTALMENT: *CREATIVELY THREADED*



Creatively Threaded

(Photo from Izzo, 2006)

Creatively threaded: At once immersive

As I have signaled in the previous ‘Reflective traces’, Publication 2 (Lavina, Niland, & Fleet, under review) represents my letting go of qualitative traditions around representation to embrace a journey of discovering ‘what it means’ to capture qualities of lived experience through installation. After encountering the deeply provoking installation research of McIntyre and Cole (2008), I found myself reflecting on ethical and methodological approaches informing the qualities of representations. Seeing the context of installation as a deliberate act of setting the scene to enhance audience “access and connect(ion) [emphasis added]” (McIntyre & Cole, 2008, p. 215), my intention was to open broader community dialogue (within and beyond early childhood education) into the teaching realities impacting teachers’ identities and lives. This meant finding ways of presenting images that were relatable; to evoke responses from audiences that supported multiple forms of meaning-making as representations were encountered and understandings generated (see McIntyre & Cole, 2008). I also remained

acutely aware of “the multi-faceted ethical commitment” underpinning the publicising of research-as-installation (McIntyre & Cole, 2008, p. 216).

In a performance room in the Institute of Early Childhood (Macquarie University), participating teachers were invited to view their seven aesthetic frames of developing identities as assembled installation in a focus group. Having previously discussed and viewed each of the seven frames separately in individual interviews, responses from the focus group were audio recorded, before professional and academic staff of the larger Department of Educational Studies at Macquarie University, students, and other members of the University community were invited to view and respond to the installation through written and visual responses.

As a process of layering “recurring substantive themes and significant issues” (McIntyre & Cole, 2008, p. 217), I discovered the often-complex storied qualities characterising teachers’ developing identities. Whilst stories of teaching were grounded in unwavering commitment and dedication to children’s learning, there also existed the hidden stories of professional and personal doubt as teachers found themselves, at times, overwhelmed with the demands of the role. Their stories acknowledged moments when they searched themselves in frustrated efforts for ‘answers’, whilst recognising the need to adopt an adaptive nature to the practice of pedagogical knowledge. All the while, simmering paradoxical tensions quietly filled the background of themes as constructions of ‘childhood’ and socio-political frameworks informing regulations and policies were noted as a ‘continual presence’ shifting ‘the script’ of what it means to be a teacher working with children in early childhood contexts (see Sumsion, 2002; Woodrow, 2007).

As stories lived and told (see McIntyre & Cole, 2008), arts-informed depictions presented offer broader conceptualisation of teachers’ lives. Using “alternative (to conventional) processes...and representational forms” (McIntyre & Cole, 2008, p. 216), personal and professional moments shaping developing identities are revealed. Involving a wider audience also deepens insights into the potentials of creative processes to transform purpose of our everyday experience; with the importance (and intellectual value) of “visual inquiry” (McIntyre & Cole, 2007, p. 309) elevated as rich ‘traceable’ forms to capture the “storied nature” (McIntyre & Cole, 2008, p. 223) of our lives with authenticity and emotional embodiment (McIntyre & Cole, 2008).

I now shift to ‘At a glimpse’ where I explain how Publication 2 (Lavina et al., under review) signals my shift towards more alternative methodologies, further revealing emerging themes

as ‘findings’ and inspiring my immersive encounter with artistic forms of auto-ethnography (see Publication 3) as I enter the research (with a participating teacher), and imagine new possibilities of thinking and approaching the many relational, place, and experiential matters of analysis.

Publication 2 at a glimpse

Assembling threads of identity: installation as a professional learning site for teachers

Having established my integration of bricolage, portraiture, and an artist’s methods to form a distinctly aesthetic methodology, the following paper, Publication 2 (Lavina, Niland, & Fleet, under review), introduces installation-as-research as accessible and purposeful encounter, reinforcing my commitment to present images of teachers’ stories that look more closely at the socio-cultural contexts of lives “situated and lived” (Cole & McIntyre, 2003, p. 4). Using installation, I seek to provoke artistic inquiry which preserves and enhances (Cole & McIntyre, 2003) the identity journeys of teachers in ways that reach beyond research audiences to invite wider understanding of experiences influencing identity development (and teaching practice) across time and place. Capturing moments of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (see also Cole & McIntyre, 2003), images tell stories of evolving identities as relationships and knowledge is re-traced in different contexts of personal and professional meaning.

Written early in my candidature, rationale and ‘findings’ presented in this paper provide some ‘answers’ to my research questions of identity concept, emergence, and accessibility (see questions 1 & 2). The metaphoric nature of imagery presented also made visible to participating teachers elusive patterns of thinking (see Feinstein, 1982) informing past and present approaches to practice, thereby addressing research question 3. Forged from experiences with people and place, reclaiming images of self assisted teachers’ connection with significant events, their re-telling using visual modes, creating new insights. As representations expressed through installation, the unexpected was revealed, strengthening analysis and transforming teachers’ seeing of self and pedagogy (see also the arts-informed methodology of Cole & McIntyre, 2003).

What I hadn’t anticipated (at the time) was the powerful impact this work would have on my research directions. This paper essentially instilled a passion for advancing my understandings of identity through immersion. Hence, I made the decision to pursue auto-ethnography in Publication 3 (see Lavina & Lawson, 2019). I wanted to continue reading more

deeply the layers of teachers' representations (see also Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008). In the process, I told myself, I would learn more about "position(*ing*) [emphasis added] myself within academia, as well as in the research" (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 129). As yet another 'intersection' of arts-informed research, I realised that adopting multiple forms of inquiry was not necessarily an added complication, rather, this approach "represent(*ed*) [emphasis added] both the complexity of the lives we study, and the lives we lead as academics and private persons" (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. xi). I will detail further auto-ethnographic unfoldings in the next 'Reflective traces'. For now, I ask you to join me in wandering through the research installation "*threads of IDENTITY*". In some ways this work is ongoing, for it signifies chapters continually lived and under review. Importantly, stories of teachers' lives have "been heard" and represented (Cole & McIntyre, 2003, p. 5). Through multi-layered telling "imaginative attention" (Cole & McIntyre, 2003, p. 5) to the work and lives of teachers is created, making visible the value of identity research. As you look across individual frames and the assembled installation you might also reflect on your own forms of creative expression and their significance in your life. Finally, in more general terms, research-as-installation might also prompt reflection "on some possibilities for your own work" (Cole & McIntyre, 2008, pp. 295-296). As you will discover, such re-presentation proved to be a revelation in my research. As renewed threads of seeing and presenting, these lively weavings assert creative presence, finding their way across stories to come.

PUBLICATION 2

Assembling threads of identity: Installation as a professional learning site for teachers

Lavina, L., Niland, A., & Fleet, A. (under review). Assembling threads of identity: Installation as a professional learning site for teachers. *Teacher Development*.

Notes:

- Given that ‘Teacher Development’ uses Chicago author-date reference style, this article has been re-formatted to APA style to maintain overall consistency across compilations.
- As reference to Thomas (2004) is differentiated as ‘a’ and ‘b’ throughout this thesis, the same system has been adopted in this article to assist reader identification of sources.

ABSTRACT

This article presents installation as a professional learning site for early childhood teachers to visualise relationships between key events, people and places influencing their professional identity journeys. Aesthetic processes of collecting, creating and representing the ways teachers see their evolving identities offers opportunities to reveal connections and influences that impact identity development. This investigation of teachers’ unfolding stories provoked the design of seven ‘aesthetic frames’ for uncovering and sharing what was revealed about self-as-teacher. Contributions from six early childhood teachers collected over a period of 14 weeks were viewed collectively as installation. Selected frames are offered in this article as storied forms of visual narrative that present participating teachers with opportunities for critical reflection. As an arts-informed research process, installation provided teachers with a uniquely aesthetic model for understanding and transforming their identity journeys.

Introduction: Visualising teachers’ identities

Understanding teacher identity involves more than acquiring a set of static self-concepts. In this article, identity is conceptualised as a fluid construct with multiple iterations influenced by shifting social and educational forces (Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011). Early work in the area of professional identity development by Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) identified the importance of biography and key personal relationships in shifting conceptions of teacher identity. Critical events and individuals were also found to influence how teachers

viewed their professional selves. Exploring interpersonal relationships, Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1986) emphasise how past experiences inform teachers' understandings of educational realities and approaches to practice.

If we consider concepts of 'teacher' and 'teaching' through a social lens, ever-changing educational environments present teachers with potentially conflicting ideologies, beliefs and approaches to practice (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009). To effectively make sense of these outer layers of influence, Korthagen (2004) suggests that teachers look within themselves to reflect on teaching motivations and personal qualities that together, balance the personal and professional self-as-teacher. In this way, teachers can engage in reflection-based professional development to identify forces of influence that reconnect with their teacher selves (Korthagen, 2004).

Within an arts-informed research space, the installation project reported on in this article uses aesthetic modes of storying to examine critical events and experiences influencing early childhood teachers' identity development. This approach is consistent with our intention to broaden traditional conceptions of scholarly research by employing multiple verbal and visual modes (Albers & Harste, 2007) to access, understand and represent educational research (Black, 2002). Influenced by the artistic work of Knowles and Thomas (2002) where visual arts processes were used to represent secondary students' sense-of-place, in this project images of self-as-teacher were sourced or created to trace past and present understandings of teacher identity.

Seven separate 'aesthetic frames' (drawings, photos, narrative and artifacts) were used as multi-modal processes to research teachers' thinking about their developing identities (Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017). As separate relational frames, they offered teachers a visual means for organising significant childhood experiences and professional experiences-in-place. Place was seen as a socially constructed landscape conceptualised across time and geography (Creates, 1991), where relationships formed in diverse social contexts of living and learning were examined for their role in identity formation (Knowles & Thomas, 2002).

Installation as research supports authentic depictions of evolving identities. When viewed collectively, they provide teachers with opportunities to identify shared challenges, and explore social forces that influence the realities of their lives and identity development. Apart from providing a site of engagement, the self-revealing qualities of identity representations through an installation provide teachers with a valuable platform for retracing and reinvigorating professional journeys alongside others (Cole & McIntyre, 2008). To gain insight

beyond individual teacher reflections, these aesthetic frames were thus arranged with teachers to form an installation, enabling teachers to influence the form, content and presentation of information gathered and analysed. This recognises arts-informed data as “process and product” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. x), as well as building understanding of teachers’ identity journeys through multi-representational forms.

Installation as visual inquiry

As a form of interactive arts-based research, installation is seen here as a valuable means of assembling fragments (Yardley, 2008) of early childhood teachers’ identity journeys. Using installation as part of an arts-based methodology seeks to elevate the importance of engaging “artistic knowing” (McNiff, 1998, p. 36), that is, “the interplay of text, image and imagination” (Martinez & Nolte-Yupari, 2015, p. 13) as a means of experiencing and understanding anew, the personal and professional formation of identities (Robinson et al., 2008).

This article presents selected aesthetic frames as case studies, to highlight the identity journeys of early childhood teachers working in the Northern suburbs of Sydney, Australia. Part 2 focuses on inviting diverse audience interaction to help generate greater understanding, providing a snapshot of teacher and public audiences who engaged with and reflected on the installation held at Macquarie University. Part 3 presents teacher memories and an exploration of identity journeys undertaken alongside the primary researcher. Read as successive frames, selected installation panels depict teacher selves explored through photo of teacher (early childhood context), drawing self-as-teacher (preservice/early career), and artifacts (with identity meaning). Part 4 analyses the value of installation as research and highlights the importance of engaging teachers in reciprocal cycles of meaning-making, from the initial design, through engagement with the installation, leading to clarification and transformation of understandings of unfolding identity journeys. Opening conversational spaces of connection across audiences through installation is seen to provide an authentic scaffold for exploring and extending teachers’ images of identity.

Part 1: Listening and learning: encountering teachers’ identities

As teachers and researchers, we have found ourselves drawn to arts-informed ways of knowing as they reveal new insights and possibilities into our inner selves and pedagogy (Hogan & Pink, 2012). Recognising the positioning of self-as-researcher is key to understanding the dimensions of voices framed in context and echoed across emerging aesthetic frames

(Kincheloe, 2001; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). With these ideas in mind, we were fortunate to encounter the installation works of Marlene Creates, an internationally acclaimed “environmental artist and poet who lives and works in Portugal Cove, Newfoundland, Canada” (Creates, 2013, para. 1). Through retelling stories, exploration of relationships and collection of artifacts, Creates’ collections capture lives-in-place and make clear the importance of authentically re-engaging self journeys to examine the textures of identities (Creates, 1990). The depth of her material and dialogic accounts, and the interwoven ways in which they are recorded and represented, offer valuable means for accessing multiple ‘sites’ of teachers’ identity development. Creates’ (1990) concern with the physical and relational significance of place also provides another ‘reading’ of how identities are shaped and understood in context (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Drawing on the works of Creates to develop our methodology, we developed the following aesthetic framework (see Table 2.1) (Lavina et al., 2017) focused on providing teacher participants with visual modes of seeing and expressing across three interviews. These processes allowed the primary researcher, Leanne, to collect and explore different materials with teachers to uncover the complex evolution of their ‘placed’ identity journeys, where place refers to identities formed in social contexts of meaning (Phelan, 2001):

Table 2.1 Installation as a representation of teacher identities: the seven aesthetic frames

THE SEVEN AESTHETIC FRAMES
Frame 1: <i>First image of teacher</i>
Frame 2: <i>Photo of teacher (early childhood context)</i>
Frame 3: <i>Photo of personal place (location)</i>
Frame 4: <i>Drawing of self-as-teacher (preservice/early career)</i>
Frame 5: <i>Drawing self-as-teacher (present)</i>
Frame 6: <i>Narrative (self-as-teacher)</i>
Frame 7: <i>Artifact (identity meaning)</i>

Source: Adapted from the creative works of Marlene Creates as cited in Knowles and Thomas (2002, pp. 121-132).

Note: An expanded version of this table appears in Lavina et al. (2017, p. 147).

The importance of place in locating teachers’ professional journeys is significant as it acknowledges the importance of teaching and non-teaching contexts as meaningful “lifeworlds” (van Manen 1990, p. 101) that shape learning and experience. The fluidity of place and baggage carried, dropped or transferred as part of identity journeys (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002) is drawn into focus as “we are rarely securely in place and ever seemingly out of place” (Casey 1993, p. xviii). With time for reflection and creation of aesthetic frames, six teachers were

asked to communicate their identity journeys through a range of visual and written modes prior to each interview, before coming together in a final focus group installation to view and share assembled aesthetic frames as a means of directly encountering dialogues and objects of meaning (Church, 2008). As a methodological approach, the process of creating individual frames and subsequent engagement with the installation as final assemblage, provided teachers with a creative research space to extend understandings beyond researcher-participant to activate more socially complex relationships of knowing and understanding self-as-teacher (Cole & McIntyre, 2008).

The section below begins with ways of exploring evolving self-understandings through installation. Teachers' aesthetic frames of identity are presented for teacher and public audiences as reflective creative forms of coming-to-know teacher selves (Church, 2008). In seeking alternate aesthetic modes to support teachers' reflective processes for understanding identity, installation is established as a legitimate aesthetic form of research, with teachers' aesthetic frames functioning as "embodied affectual encounters" (Scarles 2010, p. 905) of identities experienced and felt across time, place and space(s) (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003).

Part 2. Unraveling threads of meaning: the personal and professional of identities

As an emerging arts-informed methodology, installation-as-research is receiving increasing recognition for its potential to represent knowledge in different ways to engage diverse audiences (Cole & McIntyre, 2008). For instance, McIntyre and Cole (2008) embarked on the research installation *The Alzheimer's Project*. With a participatory orientation, these researchers chose to display their personal encounters with Alzheimer's through installation. With a focus on seeing beyond the illness to capture the emotionality of life journeys, the chronological organisation of different components offered relational sites to examine "personal power and the changing nature of dependence" (Cole & McIntyre, 2008, p. 295). Together these sites formed a moving tribute to families affected by Alzheimer's.

McIntyre and Cole's (2008) work clearly shows the powerful possibilities afforded through publicising the identity journeys of teachers, as well as our responsibility as researchers to honour teachers' journeys within any public representations. Searching for a way to weave these elements, a large, well-lit room was secured at the Department of Educational Studies (formerly the Institute of Early Childhood) in Macquarie University. Tables were assembled across the centre of the room in rows the length of each teachers' seven aesthetic frames, to encourage both an overall and detailed viewing of installation components from different

perspectives. Resisting the walls in order to invite spaces for participation and reflection, social and quiet spaces were differentiated by assembling separate viewing and reflection areas so audiences could expand understandings through immediacy with others and seek offset seated areas for feedback and introspection on the installation (Pink, 2007; Scarles, 2010). To reflect minimalist stripped back (Perselli, 2005) presentation, brown paper was wrapped around each row of tables. Following earlier feedback from teachers as to the authenticity of information gathered and represented, the A3 foam core colour prints of the aesthetic frames were positioned back-to-back along the centre of tables with string woven across tabletops symbolising 'threads of identity' (see Figure 2.1).



Figure 2.1 Installation with reflection areas

Moving through the installation with participants, we quietly wondered if we had succeeded in creating representations true to our intention to move beyond reductionist presentations of 'data', to embrace installation as an artistic expression rich with emotionality and space for interpretative voice(s) (Trent, 2002). An initial reflection by (teacher participant) Lilly shed some light on this question: "...the fact that people could have conversations and talk about the links and things was really important because that 'art gallery experience', unless you know somebody very well, you're very unlikely to comment with them"; and from a visitor in the teacher audience- "Seeing all these creative ideas makes me think 'above and beyond' my identity. This is something I will take with me and continue to implement".

These responses reinforce the value of adopting many sided (Richardson, 1994) artistic approaches to "reading the pieces" (Trent, 2002, p. 46) and making meaning of teacher

identity journeys through installation; this process opened deeply personal ways of seeing evolutions of teacher self and thinking about practice.

Voices seen and heard: reconceptualising representations

In this section we analyse audience feedback, seeking to understand how visual representations can provoke critical inquiry. Installation as research can be seen to expand both process and product approaches associated with arts-informed inquiry, inviting unexpected aspects of emotionality that are void of “collapsed...delineated interpretation” (Trent, 2002, p. 41). As researchers working alongside teacher participants in this process, our presence sits within aesthetic decisions made to synthesise teachers’ visual and textual representations of identity through aesthetic frames. In ‘framing’ diverse texts in relationship with teachers, we “must consider these elements as part of the whole text and think about how the audience will respond” (Albers & Harste 2007, p. 12). Inviting a wider teacher audience from the University to view the installation was key to verifying the accessibility of teachers’ representations. In recognising symbolic meanings (Albers & Harste, 2007), viewers were able to visualise relevance across evolutions of professional identity and link ‘the personal’ with their professional experiences. As a valuable knowledge thread, this feedback was reintegrated into understanding research installation as methodology (Trent, 2002). It was with this energy that the primary researcher designed the invitation below to foreshadow this research installation as a distinctly participatory experience:



Figure 2.2 Invitation to installation: *threads of IDENTITY*

The following questions were placed in the reflection area for participants and teacher audiences to reflect on their encounters with the journeys represented. These were developed as a means of drawing a wider audience into the research project- positioning teachers, or teachers of pre-service teachers actively within the research rather than passively as 'consumers'.

After viewing the *threads of IDENTITY* installation:

Q1. What creative processes (thinking, writing, making, doing, seeing) are a part of your life? (*written and/or visual response*)

AND

Q2. As a teacher, lecturer or other professional, what potential might these have for assisting you in 'living' your professional identity journey? (*written and/or visual response*)

Some responses from the University audience were:

Q1.

R: Storytelling and yarnning...interior and exterior 'arranging'. It keeps me sane.

S: Creativity for me is about embracing and creating the future as well as holding on to, and re-creating the past.

Q2.

R: I can think in patterns, I look for balance, all the colours and images and symbols create harmony in the place and the mind, express meanings and feelings in ways that others can understand.

S: Creativity can make my job both easier and more difficult at the same time, it also gives me hope.

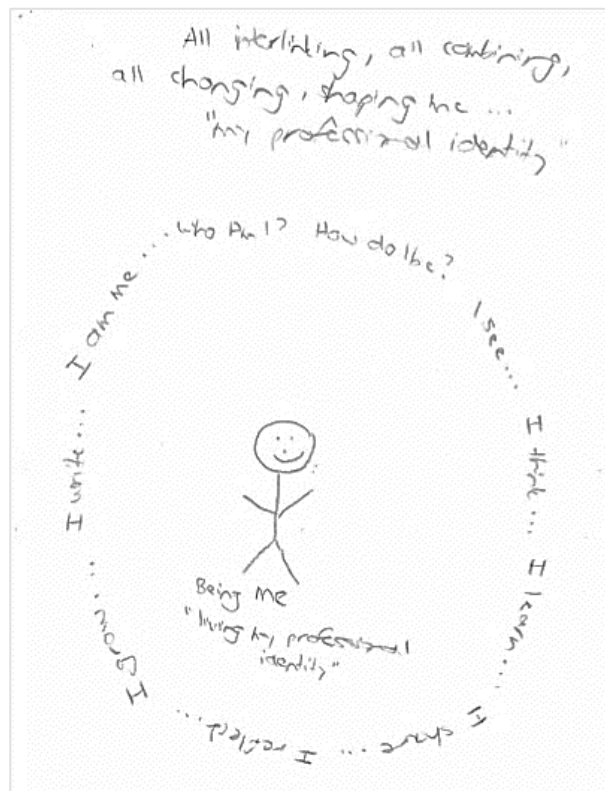
Reflections on responses

These audience responses reflect multiple forms of creativity conceptualised in “...utterances and images” (Eisner, 2008, p. 5), with shape-making, patterning and story engaged as meaning-making processes that both preserve and communicate a sense of self and evoke a sense of hope and purpose. These audience responses formed a powerful platform for situating teacher voice, inviting diverse forms of feeling, experience, and knowing (Langer, 1957) into the installation conversation. As aesthetic forms embedded with relational significance, individual identity components provided tangible pieces to unlocking personal understandings of professional journeys.

For example, in response to Q1, one of the participants (Sue) wrote:

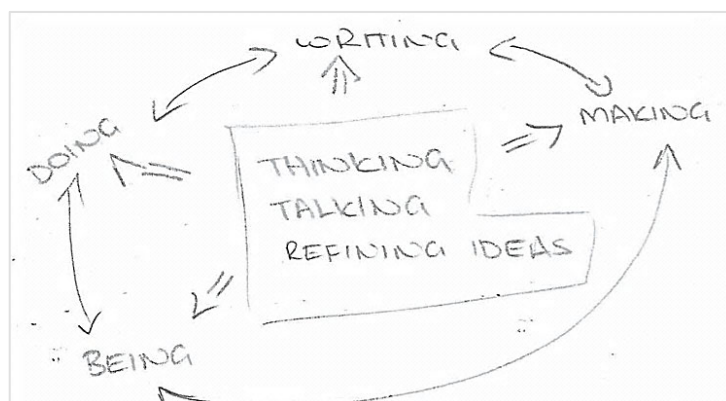
Often when I think of an idea I brainstorm it out through a mind-map and work backwards to find my starting point. Doing and living my ideas, seeing. Seeing-body of possibilities, seeing other’s ways of doing.

Which was then followed in her response to Q2:



Making meaning of unexpected responses

An unexpected and valuable thread from participant responses was Lilly's thinking around how creative processes give 'time' to pause, reflect and refine personal ways of thinking and seeing pathways.



She subsequently commented:

Anything that forces you to sit and think/create/refine – to stop and assess yourself will help you realise your achievements/reset your goals/dream your dreams.

Reflection and introspection are important aspects of arts-informed inquiry that were carefully considered in the gathering, analysis and assembly of installation as research. Engagement with diverse aesthetic forms of exploring identity provides "...stimulus for the unfolding of thought and the ongoing process of interpretation" (McNiff, 2008, p. 35). The importance of inviting multiple forms of reflection is also evident in Sue's response (see Q1) where through word and image she details cyclical processes of re-encountering self-understandings. As a primary focus of the installation, 'seeing' self and experience as a living continuum also offers a means to encourage deeper exploration of personal meanings and learning. These 'pictures' provide creative insights (see [Part 3](#)) that offer transformational approaches into understanding identity journeys (McNiff, 2008).

Part 3. Collecting and creating images: representations of 'teacher'

As part of the installation process, participating teachers were asked by the primary researcher to source a 'first image of teacher' (see [Table 2.1](#), Frame 2). Broad interpretations of 'teacher' were encouraged to open up personal memories residing within or outside traditional definitions of teacher and learning (Frantz Bentley, 2011). Initial conversations also

invited teachers to embrace the concept of ‘narrative’: to re-consider the potential interpretative qualities of images as holders of visual meanings (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014). This approach is consistent with visual methodologies that recognise the value of emotionality within research conversations. These “affective qualities” (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 32) offer meanings beyond rationalised understandings of experience.

Through a participatory research method similar to photo voice (Wang, 1999), teachers were positioned as active decision-makers in the research process: selecting, analysing and composing personally meaningful symbolic representations of ‘teacher’. These images were revisited across individual and shared participatory cycles (interviews, then installation and focus group). The images served as touchstones of memory and metaphor, assisting teachers to locate their personal voice, providing both a place to return to, and a scaffold for situating and more clearly seeing, their unfolding identity journeys (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014).

Practical strategies for accessing teachers’ images and understandings of self-as-teacher were explored across 3 interviews, (each scheduled two weeks apart), which generated data for the installation. In **Table 2.2**, aesthetic frames 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (photos or drawings), along with 6 (a narrative) and 7 (an artifact with identity meaning), show differentiated visual strategies for exploring identity development across memory, context, and experience. These aesthetic frames invite audiences to ‘picture’ teacher identities as evolving constructions that are complex, deeply personal and socially embedded across lived experience.

Table 2.2 Installation as a representation of teacher identities: practical strategies

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES
Interview 1 (60 min) - Discuss the sourcing/creation of frames 1, 2, & 3 (photos or drawings) <i>Earliest memories of teacher, development of professional self, and place-based meanings influencing identity development</i>
Interview 2 (40 min) - Discuss the creation of frames 4 & 5 (drawings) <i>Evolving representations of professional self</i>
Interview 3 (40 min) - Discuss the sourcing/creation of frames 6 & 7 (narrative and artifact) <i>Narrative journey of teaching experience presented alongside object with identity meaning</i>

Note: An expanded version of this table appears in Lavina et al. (2017, p. 147).

Voice: Sue’s photo of teacher (EC context)

How do photographs ‘communicate’ our view of self and our world (Schutz, 1970)? How can decisions made around ‘self-as-subject’- including positioning and framing of context alter intended meanings? How can the complexity of self-as-teacher be represented in a single

image? In asking these questions we chose to focus on participant choices made in “the crafting of the image, not just the content depicted” (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014, p. 30). In this way photos were positioned as “powerful resources for portraying what cannot be articulated linguistically” (Eisner, 2008, p. 5). To support teachers’ understandings of image content (drawings, photos) as multi-layered aesthetic forms of communication, the primary researcher held informal conversations with participants prior to commencing data collection (see Table 2). We were curious as to how participants would interpret this aspect of the research design: it was deeply personal, revealing, and with potentially self-identifying aspects that were open to wider audience viewing(s). We wondered, would this influence participant approaches and representations?

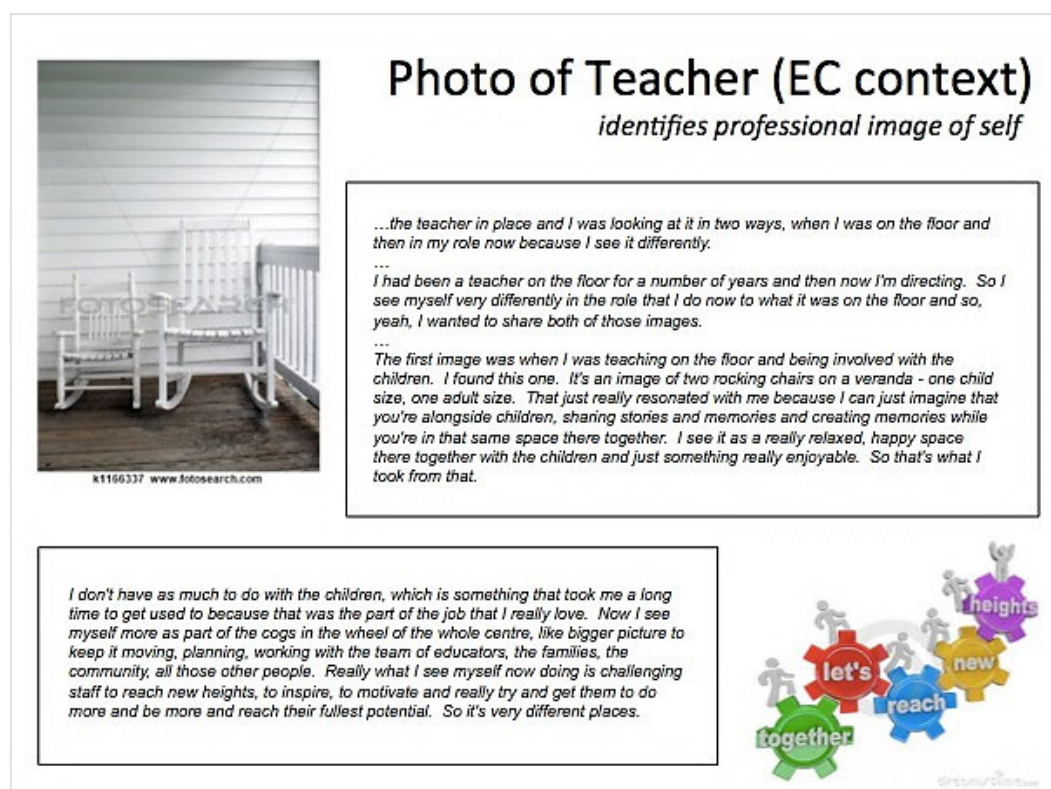


Figure 2.3 Sue's photo of teacher (early childhood context)

Sources: Adult and child rocking chairs: <http://www.fotosearch.com/CSP116/k1166337/> ;
 Together let's reach new heights: <http://www.gograph.com/illustration/together-lets-reach-new-heights-team-on-gears-gg59693775.html>

Teachers were encouraged to explore multiple aesthetic ways of representing self as a means of coming to understand their identity journeys. In viewing participants' choices for Frame 1- first image of teacher (see Table 2.1) - Leanne, (the primary researcher) was initially taken aback to see stock images from the Internet. Hoping to open space for creative introspection, she had anticipated self-identifying photos of teacher identities as in Bown and

Sumsion (2007). Given the consistency of stock image responses, she wondered whether her approach was unclear and in need of revision? A shared 'unpacking' of Sue's frame 2: "photo of teacher" (interview 1, part 2) in the focus group revealed the following:

- (i) Teacher participants had approached this task with a clear intent to communicate meanings through metaphor, with "inexpressibility" (Feinstein, 1982, p. 48; Ortony, 1975) beyond literal representations inviting another layer of complexity:

Sue:

In my image of teacher in place [referring to frame 2], I have the adult chair and the child's chair because I really see it as being in the moment together and just enjoying that time. It just shows that closeness and the relationship. In terms of my teacher in place for the director's role, I have cogs intertwined and people. So it's people working together to support each other, to challenge each other...you rely on everybody else around you and the community to support you.

- (ii) Sue organised her thoughts through a relationship lens: with understandings, knowledge, and personal experiences of teacher emphasising "connectedness" (Carey, 1998, p. 287). The decision to remove self from the frame was a conscious effort to visualise meanings with greater objectivity. In speaking with her focus group, Sue said:

I also think that when it comes to reflecting on yourself, for me, I don't know about you, Lilly, it's easier to step back and take yourself out of the frame to be able to visualise your meaning. I found it easier to find images that I felt represented that because I wasn't in there...

We liken this process to the spirit of collage, where relationships of learning are explored "...between themselves and others, and between the past and the future" (McDermott, 2002, p. 57). It is this approach to pedagogy that informed these teachers' compositional choices and chosen visual metaphors of self-in-relationship with others (McDermott, 2002):

Lilly: (focus group)

Some professions are very happy to be up front and centre – 'I'm the most important and the most knowledgeable', whereas perhaps early childhood teachers see themselves as part of the environment, not necessarily being the centre of attention.

Sue: (focus group)

(maybe) Different to our first slide where we both had teachers as this power keeper of knowledge that were front and centre to really being embedded in

part of the community and the environment, so you don't stand out as much per se?

After initial discussions with Sue, the duality of her identities- as teacher and non-teaching director became apparent. Given the fluidity of these identity 'boundaries', multiple identities were expressed alongside each other in text and visual representations. This consistent thread across Sue's aesthetic frames (see [Figure 2.5](#)) also reflects the unfolding nature of the methodology and our commitment to embrace non-linear processes to research and more deeply understand identity journeys (Burns, 2004).

Frame 4: Drawing of early teacher self

This frame connects participating teachers' generic definitions of 'teacher' with their early images of themselves as teachers. To reflect on this they were asked: when 'picturing' your early teacher self what images come to mind? How can you draw past understandings, feelings and knowledge of self-as-teacher? What key experiences could you bring forth to your preservice drawing?

With an emphasis on personal meaning-making rather than artistic representation, teachers were encouraged to explore personal metaphoric schemas (Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) for drawing their early teacher identities. As an introspective process, pictorial representations require time for participants to reflect on ways of approaching materials and compositions (Mitchell et al., 2011). With this in mind, up to two weeks for the creation of drawings was built into practical strategies (see [Table 2.2](#)) for gathering information from teacher participants. Initial conversations around visualising past selves were held to prompt drawing responses.

In discussing the formation of her early teacher identity, Anne illustrated a "dialogic web of relations" (Marsh, 2003, p. 5) as she built trust and connection with children, teachers and families during her preservice internship:

Anne: (interview 2, 19 November 2014)

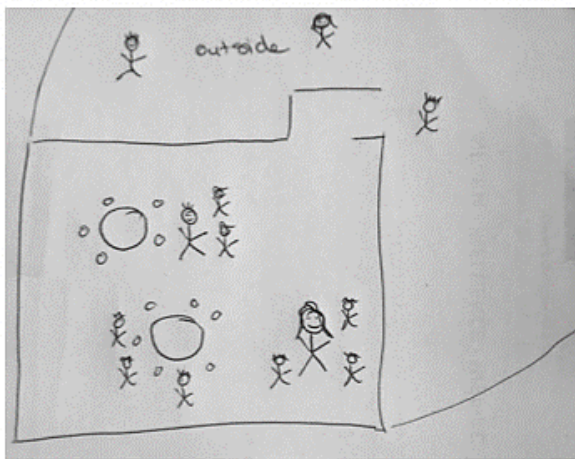
...I really loved it and the team and everyone were really nice and the families, and the kids and all in all just a perfect experience.

...I learned a lot by playing with the kids, being with the kids and also talking to my workmates...They helped me lots and I saw myself as a person who studies, but remember this one situation, my room leader (said) it's really good to see you're handling all these situations...you just get it. You do it and you know what to do...and we trust you. At that moment was so good for me because I

knew okay, I'm doing the right things. That is what I'm studying. That's what I want to do after I finish my studies. I was still learning.

Drawing self-as-teacher (preservice/early career)

drawing personal understandings of early teacher self



...what it is, it's my best work experience I had during an internship in Germany for three months and I extended it for four months, because I really loved it and the team and everyone were really nice and the families, and kids and all in all just a perfect experience. It is an inside room that you can see and you can see that there are stairs away going out to the outside and three little people, like children, playing outside. But there is no teacher. That was allowed. It is allowed in Germany.

...
I learned a lot by playing with the kids, being with the kids and also talking to my workmates in my work.

Figure 2.4 Anne's drawing self-as-teacher (preservice/early career)

Expressing growing confidence in shared discourses of practice (Marsh, 2003), Anne's feeling of belonging seeped into her drawing (see [Figure 2.4](#)), with togetherness and freedom nurtured through a smiling depiction of 'borderless' supervision: "(children) were able to play outside by themselves...but there is no teacher. That was allowed." (interview 2, 19 November, 2014). The interaction of "meaning and actions" (Marsh, 2003, p. 7) where "ways of thinking, speaking, and interacting" (Marsh, 2003, p. 7) were exchanged with more experienced mentors, validated Anne's emerging sense of competence and identity as a teacher and reinforced her developing pedagogical framework.

Focus Group reflections

Focus group interviews supported the generation of shared meanings in visual representations of the professional image of self. As Sue commented – "I think there's a lot of similarities in mine with Lilly's as well, because to me the similarities I see between the two that it's all about partnerships" (personal communication, 12 February, 2015). The decision to include an installation viewing, followed by sharing of aesthetic frames in the focus group, provided these teachers with multiple opportunities to see and deeply reflect on complex

aesthetic iterations (Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014) of self-as-teacher. As deliberate (shared) strategies, the selection of stock images by Sue and Lilly, whilst unanticipated, also allowed them to communicate in greater depth the complexity and emotionality of relationships in context. In terms of accessing the full meaning of representations, the “Photo of teacher” aesthetic frame emphasised the importance of opening up conversations to enhance personal and audience (teacher/researcher) understandings of images (Lorenz, 2010). This meant that choices were examined, symbolism clarified and reflections consolidated. It also reinforced the socialised nature of these teachers’ identity journeys, and re-opened opportunities to discuss representational similarities between their journeys.

Drawings provide a means for making sense of our histories, experiences and developing sense of self. It was this search for the essential qualities of identity representations that guided Leanne’s (primary researcher) conversations with teachers. We were keen to explore both the “abstract and concrete” (Weber, 2008, p. 43) of teachers’ images. What symbolism was conveyed in teachers’ drawings? How were early experiences of ‘teacher’ and personal forms of teaching practice being incorporated into this frame? How were teachers using this retrospective look at self to make sense of personal identity journeys? And, did creating self-portraits (in this study definitions of ‘portrait’ were broadened beyond likeness to include metaphoric aspects of self) allow insights into past understandings and knowledge of “emerging identity” that would otherwise be difficult to access (Spouse, 2000; Weber & Mitchell 1996, p. 303)?

Engaging deeper meanings

The focus group provided a shared context for looking at different perspectives and experiences of identity. Discussing and viewing images as stories captured in a singular ‘frame’ invited another layer of meaning for teachers, unlocking deeply personal aspects of learning, knowledge of self, and practice which they saw in their drawings (Weber, 2008). For instance, Lilly became very contemplative when she recalled composition choices made for her “early teacher self” drawing (see [Table 2.1](#), Frame 4), making note of the one-on-one nature of interactions with children largely removed from contextual influences. Characteristic of her practice at this moment in time, creating this image also encouraged previous understandings of self to be re-situated and objectively explored (Weber, 2008). Alongside her image, Lilly’s reflections provide an “authentic and complete glimpse” (Weber, 2008, p. 46) of understandings of self and the social influences shaping self-formation and practice:

Lilly: (focus group)

When I first started I didn't really know I wanted to be an early childhood teacher, I had no understanding of the role of community. I knew you needed to work with other teachers and with families and children, but in those first couple of years I had no idea how much influence they would have on me as a person and on me as a teacher.

Images as sources of connection that provoke us to “pay attention to things in new ways” (Weber, 2008, p. 44) was directly felt by Sue who, until our focus group, had not recognised the importance of relationships-in-place in her “early image” of teacher (see [Table 2.1](#), Frame 4). The act of viewing and sharing revealing this essential understanding:

Sue: (focus group)

Now that I'm looking at it I can see the connection to my previous image of the greenery and the forest and what I spoke about, so it's got an adult and a child holding hands and then the words happy, learn, find and grow, journey, passion, which I think pretty much sums it all up.

The process of visualising and representing self through pictures introduced a less familiar lens for teachers to express the emotionality of personal identity journeys. Drawings of “early and present” images of teacher evoked highly contextualised ways of seeing experiences and reflecting on practice (Weber, 2008). As discussed in the focus group:

Sue:

...it's the thing we're most comfortable in (narrative). I don't feel 100 per cent comfortable, Lilly doesn't feel 100 per cent comfortable drawing and putting her drawings out for the world. So it was a really nice - it's almost cathartic (to have created the drawings before the narrative). It was like you've gone through this big thing and you've had all these discussions and you're thinking about yourself and then you can just pop it all down on paper. It was just like yep, that's how I'm feeling right now, so a sort of snapshot.

Lilly:

...the drawings and the images were so concise and captured everything just so easily I really struggled to not waffle on (in the narrative) like we always do and to just try and get my point across.

For Lilly and Sue, the combination of creating and critiquing their aesthetic frames across visual, verbal and written text enabled identity meanings to be more fully understood and clarified, as design and composition decisions were made to best reflect “stand alone” qualities of evolving identities in place and time (Albers & Harste, 2007, p. 14).

Framing artifact with identity meaning

What makes certain objects memorable? If we put aside obvious aspects such as design, fashion and necessity, what qualities are we left with? Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981, p. ix) speak about objects in our immediate environment as signifiers of connection to “past memories, present experiences, and future dreams”. In clarifying what objects might mean for teachers in this study, we returned to the work of Marlene Creates. Of particular inspiration was her installation: *Places of presence: Newfoundland kin and ancestral land, Newfoundland 1989-1991*. At its heart, this series explores memories of family through lived landscapes. As distinct places of memory, shared stories, memory maps, and artifacts were included as touchstones of histories experienced and felt across generations (Creates, 1991). It was this installation that prompted us to consider the inclusion of artifacts. As collected fragments that we carry and assemble to make sense of experiences, they have the potential to represent our aspirations, relationships and understandings of self, all of which can be considered to be operating alongside more obvious aspects of functionality (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Objects are inherently linked to ways we think and feel, essentially shaping “the identities of their users” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 1). The inclusion of artifacts in this research sought to explore how identities are expressed through our selection of and interaction with objects. For Sue, the inclusion of multiple artifacts reflected the duality of her identities as an early childhood teacher and currently as a non-teaching director. Beyond functionality, she spoke of her first artifact...a slightly ‘worn’ USB stick as “everything when I was teaching on the floor” (personal communication, 22 September, 2014). This discrete object functioned as companion, travelling between home and work and offered a place of return to clarify thoughts and prompt future directions:

Sue: (interview 3, 22 September, 2014)

As I was working through documentation, I would find readings and ideas - as I was studying, making notes and things to bring back to work - even as I had a reflective diary I would make notes in my phone when I couldn't sleep and email them to myself. Then I would save them on here so that I knew what I was doing. That went everywhere and if I lost that, I would have died.

Likewise, Sue’s second artifact, a diary, reflects her role as director and serves as a physical reminder of knowledge and social systems of connection. Interestingly, the accessibility of this object as a symbol invited different “activity of interaction”

(Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 174) which appeared to greatly influence its meaning as an organiser of thought and professional growth.

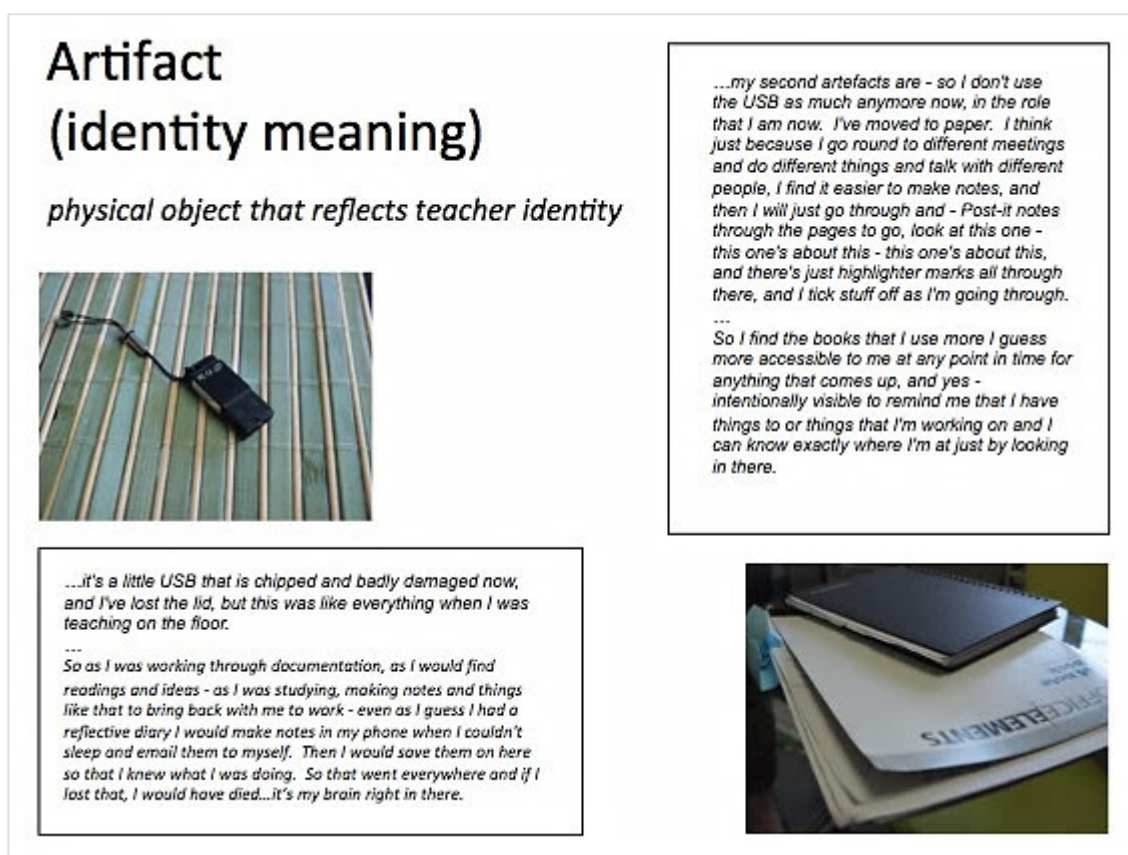


Figure 2.5 Sue's artifact (identity meaning)

For Anne, her "old (European) pillow case" (interview 3, 5 December, 2014) provided a visual patchwork of learning and emotional connection as different places were visited and educational milestones achieved:

Anne: (interview 3, 5 December, 2014)

I've been to Russia to teach as a volunteer...I grew up in Stuttgart and that's where I had my first experiences with children and I also did a prac there. I did a prac in Cologne and lived there for a while, did two pracs there actually, and I studied in Freiburg. I did another prac in South Africa. Now just one piece is missing for Australia.

...

Well it connects me to my family and it represents all I love and all I have seen and gone through. I have travelled a lot and every travel was because of my education.

As an enduring symbol of learning and emotional memory, Anne's pillowcase represented aspects of past and emerging selves, connecting her with personal achievements, goals, and significant relationships (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Renewed seeing of significance

Consistent across conversations shared in interviews and the focus group was the significance of teachers' chosen artifacts as meaningful extensions of self. As 'place keepers' of professional selves for teacher (Lilly) and non-teaching director (Sue), they symbolised purpose of thought and future possibilities. As Sue expressed: "It's a visual cue for me as well to remember to go back through and revisit and go back to ideas that I had, so discussions about where I'm tracking and what I need to do to keep on goal-setting for the future" (personal communication, 12 February, 2015). Extending on this in the focus group, Lilly also acknowledged that there are aspects of her chosen artifact (a green A3 'line free' visual diary) that "grow outside of teacher (as) there are other roles I have at work as well..." (personal communication, 12 February, 2015). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton speak of this relationship as engaging "different modes of transactions" (1981, p. 175) which move beyond identified social and cultural constructions of object purpose, to embrace new ways of thinking that further "a person's goals...through interactions with the object" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 182). For Lilly, this meant the way she chose to perceive her artifact (diary) and the events within were enhanced through the creation of an embodied framework for understanding self and practice. Similarly, Anne emphasised the 'living' qualities of her pillowcase as a storied canvas upon which her memories and aspirations were captured and renewed (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Part 4. Installation as research methodology: inviting the unexpected

In reflecting on the value of installation as a powerful research site for revealing insights both expected and unexpected about teachers' identity journeys, it was clear that for Lilly and Sue, the coming together of different aesthetic frames presented unique insight into understanding diverse aspects of their travelled selves, a reflective undertaking infrequently represented in research in this way. Following viewing of the installation, these insights were further clarified in the focus group:

Lilly: (focus group)

Yeah. You can see it just comes through, so it was nice for me to come back and go oh, so that's why she is like she is (Sue). You can read that from it, so

that was nice, during the installation, to have that reflection on someone else as a teacher. You get to see where it comes from.

Sue: (focus group)

I found it really comforting to look back at the installation and see my whole journey mapped out because it's not something that we actively do the whole time. Then I found the installation itself in getting an understanding of Lilly...seeing those similarities across our journeys, which I guess is why we work so well together. There were some differences, but for me I saw mostly similarities and I found that really empowering and strengthening for me in my teacher director self to know that we are on the right path and we do share the same goals and values.

The installation provided an invitation to explore multiple views of self and an emerging view of similarities across journeys. For Lilly and Sue, such insight served to affirm their professional directions. Reflecting on their choice of particular images over others as symbols of self, also offered these teachers a means to better understand “what they might mean” (Nutbrown, 2011, p. 235), in this way deepening their personal understandings of identity. With a focus on potential meanings, the following section explores “pausing to see and understand identities” and “reflection and transformation” as crucial sense-making processes that these teachers engaged with throughout this research.

Pausing to see and understand identities

When employing installation as research methodology, taking time to pause and untangle unfolding images of identity was key given the aesthetic nature of representations, and diverse symbols of self selected or created by teachers for expressing their teacher identities. As visual forms of reflection were largely unfamiliar for participating teachers, pauses were needed between interviews to wonder, reflect and shape each aesthetic frame.

To fully realise these pieces of self in ways that were authentic, connected and symbolic, teachers needed to feel at ease as representations, conversations, and viewings included public audiences beyond those directly involved in the research process. As researchers and teachers, we felt a deep sense of responsibility to respect the significance of these stories and to represent them as authentically as possible. This process involved emailing teachers transcripts, attaching aesthetic frame drafts to view, and forwarding article content emerging from these gathered forms of information for comment (Lavina et al., 2017). The resulting effect of this reciprocal meaning-making being that Leanne (primary researcher) became a

trusted travelling companion walking back and forth between identity journeys of then and now. As Lilly comments:

Lilly: (focus group)

...I think that's a reflection of the process that you made us both feel very comfortable to just lay it all out there. And just go for it. It was a really enjoyable process and one that we felt - well, I felt quite safe in just exposing myself.

Opening up “different ways of knowing” (Martin & Booth, 2006, p. v) processes of reflection and representation supported teachers as they delved into reflective spaces of seeing self previously hidden from view (Hunt, 2006):

Lilly: (focus group)

Definitely challenging. I found myself sitting down outside in the sunshine just dumping thoughts and trying to figure myself out, which was nice because you don't often have time to reflect on you. Doing that was a really great process because it crystalizes why you do what you do. You know why you're doing things but with the whole apple thing I hadn't realized that one teeny tiny thing that happened a hundred years ago would really still impact on...

Reflecting on words from Lilly, the process of “sitting down” and “dumping thoughts” formed essential foundation for these teachers’ organisation of personal identity journeys. This explorative process presents identities as “the seas of stuff and experiences” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 8). The act of searching for, creating and returning to symbolic considerations of identity with different audiences, provided Lilly and Sue with a critical lens to view and re-view their developing identities over time (Nutbrown, 2011).

For Anne, the process of representing and reflecting on different teaching experiences across countries with Leanne (primary researcher) clarified pedagogical tensions experienced in her current workplace and provided impetus to examine the extent to which roles and responsibilities were eroding her resilience and enthusiasm (Sumsion, 2002). Depicting a distressed and severed self-image, Anne’s overwhelming sense of responsibility and accountability is felt through the juxtaposition of “roles and responsibilities” on one side, “split” from smiling children on the other side (see [Figure 2.6](#)). In her second interview, Anne expressed this frustration:

Anne: (interview 2, 19 November, 2014)

I have to think about the ratio, the policies. I've got to use learning framework, the washing the sheets, lists, ticking off lists, regulations and QF (quality framework). That's all in my head every single day and it just gets more and more and more instead of less. The time with the kids is getting less and less. On the other side I drew the kids, just the kids, nothing else, me and the kids, all one half. I would love to have that side with the kids more than the other side. But in reality it's not.

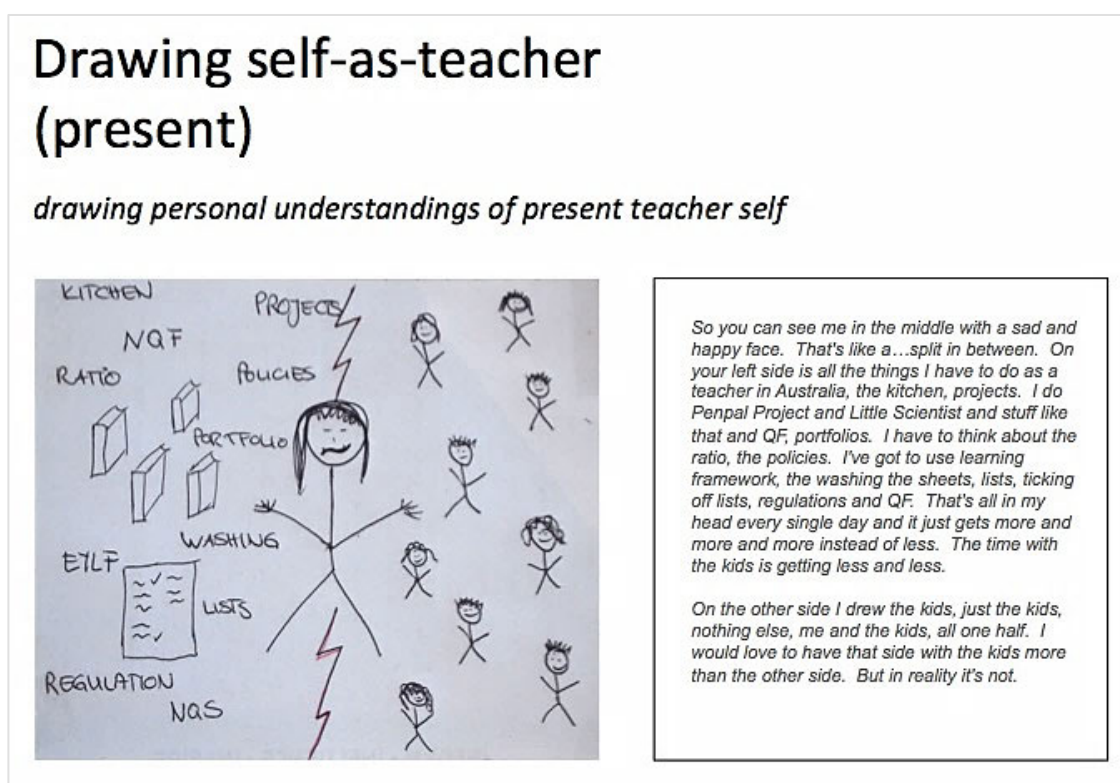


Figure 2.6 Anne's drawing self-as-teacher (present)

As Jennifer Sumsion's (2002, p. 881) powerful case study has shown, a teacher's commitment may be at risk and "sense of agency" depleted when there are conflicting ideologies beyond the "personal-professional landscape" (Sumsion, 2002, p. 881) of the classroom. With Anne's child-centred ideals under threat, Leanne (primary researcher) wondered whether visual, textual and dialogic tools explored in interviews had provided her with a sufficiently responsive framework to make sense of, and see differently (Cole & Knowles, 2008) the relationship between internal and external forces impacting her identity and teaching practice (Marsh, 2002). Had she found a way to effectively balance responsibilities? Or were "conflicting demands" (Sumsion, 2002, p. 883) and time constraints escalating her sense of despair?

In interview 3, the benefits of sharing images and conversations of evolving professional experience became clear, as Anne shares:

Anne: (interview 3, 5 December, 2014)

It all links to each other. It's funny because this morning I glued in the picture from last time where I had the sad face. I glued it in and it's like, oh no that's not me at the moment. I turned the page and I was like, woo-hoo, that's much better.

...since I have talked to you for a second time and since I have talked to my boss I just changed my routine as well. I went to a training as well last week, to a [major] training, and I'm so much more easy now, like easy-going with the kids.

Anne's example above highlights the importance of encouraging collaborative ways of 'picturing' and untangling the complexity of roles and responsibilities impacting the work of early childhood teachers (Sumsion, 2002). Incorporating linked aesthetic frames in this methodology captured Anne's evolving experiences of identity and offered new insights into self-as-teacher. The process of examining social dimensions of 'teacher' in each aesthetic frame (Marsh, 2003) prompted Anne to seek collegial conversations as a way to enhance "workplace dynamics" (Sumsion, 2002, p. 881) and sustain her professional image of self.

Reflection and transformation

Just as viewing collective pieces clarifies unfolding stories (Nutbrown, 2011), the coming together of aesthetic frames in this study inevitably grew in complexity as pieces were assembled. When we began writing around emerging findings we stopped to consider: Were we on the right track in thinking that visual ways of reflection offered rich opportunities for teachers to see self and practice? What sense had teachers made of the process? Were these ways of exploring identity sustaining? Could they be transformational? Was this approach accessible for others working within and outside early childhood contexts?

As an initial measure of 'testing' the integrity of installation as research methodology, we returned to the various elements of our seven aesthetic frames to consider how image and text worked together to "enhance the possibilities of information gathering and representation" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, pp. 60-61). We also reflected on the communicative and aesthetic aspects of aesthetic frames as installation. It was important to consider how these frames worked together to draw out teachers' understandings of identity journeys, to connect familiar and unfamiliar qualities of self and experience (Cole & Knowles, 2008). To explore authentic qualities (Chapman, 2005), Leanne shared processes of "form and method" (Cole & Knowles,

2008, pp. 62-63) with teachers during individual interviews, before returning to their voices in the focus group to consider and expand further what they had shared about their identity development and the value of installation as method in this research.

So what had this experience offered teachers? Had it been influential in situating identity understandings? Had visual ways of reflecting prompted a reconsideration of practice? Clarified identity journeys?

Conversations shared in the focus group identified a number of benefits for teachers. Interestingly, perceived benefits extended beyond self to considering other members of the 'early childhood team', thereby highlighting the inherently collaborative nature of working in prior-to-school early childhood education and care contexts.

Overall, exploring identity through this aesthetic framework offered:

- (i) A collaborative reflective tool for seeing multiple aspects of self *with* others in early childhood contexts

Sue: I think as a process for - if this is a reflective tool process that educators can do, the power of doing it together would just be amazing. I really enjoyed it.

- (ii) A supportive framework for professional development

Anne: I'm looking at the pictures and it's so not what it's like at the moment. It's so funny how six months can pass and everything changes because you're growing as we said before.

...

That's like today I can really feel how it changed from the picture.

- (iii) An inclusive approach for inviting diverse voices

Sue: I would think that this is much more accessible because you get to see everybody's different perspectives. Some people may struggle to write or express themselves in other ways, whereas this is a universally understood medium. I think it's really powerful.

Anne: I think giving educators something to talk and to express themselves like the installation shows the society and other people what it's really like (to be a teacher).

These reflections highlight installation as a valuable research methodology for bringing together “images/space/words” (Thomas, 2004a, p. 7) in ways that reveal and enliven meanings of identity. The thoughtful weaving of visual and textual elements provided an evolving scaffold for teachers to “dwell in” (Thomas, 2004a, p. 12) and re-experience known images of self, with new identity images emerging through the creation of aesthetic frames, each frame providing different ways of seeing and thinking about identity experiences and representations. Connections were often further defined through conversations with the primary researcher, the act of viewing and reflecting on ‘frames-in-progress’ also provoked critical reflection.

Closing thoughts on installation

Engaging teachers in this research provided new perspectives on seeing selves and journeys that included the unexpected, sought the good, and recognised the significance of past and present ‘everyday ordinary moments’ in shaping the pedagogy and practice of teachers. Installation as research methodology has the power to reveal the many facets of self and experience that come together to make sense of identity journeys. Whereas in more traditional research methodologies it is the findings that allow both participants and audiences to build understanding, installation and arts-informed inquiry allow participants to build these understandings through their involvement with the processes of the research (for discussion on arts-informed inquiry see McKay & Sappa, 2019). By focusing on aspects of process and representation that called upon diverse forms of textual and visual responses, interpretations from teachers were highly evocative and honest. The installation itself as an aesthetic and communicative medium provided a space to reflect on “ideas and constructs” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 63) by including diverse audiences as a part of the meaning-making conversation. Positioning teachers as meaning-makers throughout the inquiry process meant that they were encouraged to question and thoughtfully critique personal understandings and developing representations of identity experience. Apart from serving to unite aesthetic qualities of the installation, the thoughtful presence of Leanne, the primary researcher *with* participants meant that authentic insights into personal identity journeys were revealed (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

The aesthetic frames as installation acted as diverse renderings that could be read and connected across audience viewing. They revealed the transformative possibilities of arts-informed approaches that step outside linear forms of gathering, interpreting and representing information.

REFLECTIVE TRACES: Fragments felt out-of-frame



Placing Childhood

*In my childhood
I felt the soft and scrunch of leaves fallen
textures glossy, rough and smooth
fingers explore cracks, creases and curves
the fragrance of spring in bloom, freshly cut grass.
Chirping sparrows and the coos of nesting doves
delight found in dewy spider webs.
The gentle touch of breezes, warmth of sunshine
dappled rays stream through green canopies.
Ponds of quiet, clusters of swaying reeds
the wading of ducks, buzzing of flies
miniature worlds of beetles, bugs and butterflies.
Climbing, dangling, reaching up to the sky
branches spiral upward, weaving wooden hands
the silence of resting, peaceful and still.*

(Author) poem

Journal excerpt: Auto-ethnographic returns to the wattle tree

'Arriving' at auto-ethnography was unexpected- in the sense that yet again such an approach signaled my intentions to explore new methodological terrain. As an emerging researcher I felt myself breathing deeply and questioning. Was auto-ethnography, which I perceived as a "perspective and framework for thinking about the world" as gradual unfolding necessary (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128)? Was my knowing (and ultimate integration) in 'the process' so vital a part of the research that it required uncovering and interpretation? (see Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008). Discussion with my supervisory team affirmed what I already knew, that I had been changed as a result of "my experience as an involved and situated researcher" and that indeed my input was "an integral part of the research and writing process" (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128).

Adopting auto-ethnography tapped into a growing push from within to lay bare understandings about teacher participants and myself as a new researcher- I wanted to see and represent differently ways of being and living narratives of 'teacher' (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). At the same time I was all too aware that another methodological detour off my carefully detailed doctoral pathway signaled additional ethics approval. Again, the doubts and uncertainties began to rumble. Further justification of approaches would be needed. But before I skip too far ahead, I'd like to take you, the reader, back with me to the conversation that prompted my 'relocation' from outside to within the research. It began with words. A passing idea exchanged over coffee that grew as connections were explored and the details of experiences added. As I sat informally chatting with a teacher participant about her new role as a Director, the seed of an idea presented itself, one which grew into our collaborative auto-ethnography article. "Wouldn't it be interesting to write about our new identities...me as Director and you as Researcher?!" She exclaimed with a half questioning quizzical expression. "We could use the same methodology you developed with teachers (in your research) for an article." Smiling, I nodded thoughtfully. She had hit on something stirring inside my thoughts for some time. I wanted to invite multiple 'placed' perspectives underpinning teachers' identity journeys, to reveal stories of complexity and emotion. Adopting an auto-ethnographic approach not only provided additional "insight into some of the issues and questions" involved in the creation of teachers' aesthetic frames, it also revealed my presence as active in the creative process through "interaction with and interpretation of" (Scott-Hoy, 2003, p. 268) experiences shaping my beliefs, values and thinking about the world.

What began as an exercise in ‘treading lightly’ soon found deliberate steps the more I read about artistic auto-ethnography (see Ellis & Scott-Hoy, 2004; Scott-Hoy, 2003). I quickly recognised with renewed vigour, the importance of writing (and drawing) my way into the research. Not only did artistic auto-ethnography capture aspects of teachers’ lives lived in view, the nature of ‘picturing’ connections and questions through aesthetic forms assisted seeing of lives hidden, bringing immediacy to the voices of participating teachers and reflecting my own in the process (see auto-ethnographic positioning Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008).

At this point I’d like to take you back to thoughts on my childhood, which I had considered permanently shelved in memory. With an additional ethics amendment pending, and being aware of work by Scott-Hoy and Ellis (2008), I began questioning- what relevance could my “personal storytelling” be to the act of “doing social science research” (p. 129)? How could I justify such an alternative approach shifting traditional boundaries of “typicality and generalisation” (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128)? How would I convince the committee to embrace “subjectivity” as a means of “understanding what happened and why” (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128) through multiple voices, representations and interpretations (Bochner, 1994)? Inspired by the auto-ethnographic storying of Scott-Hoy and Ellis (2008) I pushed forward in search of my “holistic and natural” [my emphasis] (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128) place within the research. Beginning with poetry (see poem “*Placing Childhood*”, p. 83), I slowly began peeling away layers of memories and re-tracing my childhood as a means of renewing “perspective” to “deeply consider the complexity of my lived experiences” (Moore, 2018, p. 592).

Poetry and imagery have always assisted my seeing of “the aesthetic qualities of human experience”; indeed through this process of “sensory attunement” (Wiebe, 2015, p. 153), I sensed understandings of my evolving self and relationships between people and place in new ways. I came to see that through ‘poetic picturing’ I was able to cut through surfaces and engage my present being in ways that transformed personal understandings of people, places, objects, and events (Lahman et al., 2019; Wiebe, 2015). Engaging in this process deepens attentiveness to relationships and the unexpected as part of “knowing human experience” (Wiebe, 2015, p. 155). After coming upon the work of Scott-Hoy (2003), I began to see how I might explain what led me to artistic auto-ethnography. Likening the work of a researcher to that of an artist (Wolcott, 1995, as cited in Scott-Hoy, 2003, p. 269), Scott-Hoy’s (2003) painterly approach focused on sensing ‘the details’ of experiences by revisiting and “clarify(ing) [emphasis added]...experience” through art-making. Featuring the same creative sensibilities, the aesthetic methodological framework created for tracing teachers’ identity

development in this research (see Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017) seemed an appropriate approach to capture my 'coming-to-know' as emerging researcher, situated *with* teachers. The decision to choose multiple aesthetic forms to capture knowledge remained a deliberate act to assist understanding of "important issues and events" through diverse forms of representation (see Eisner, 1991, p. 245). Exploring experiences shaping my personal and researcher self through accessible artistic modes of expression was also important to consider as forms chosen "influence what...(the audience) [my emphasis] were likely to experience" (Eisner, 1991, p. 8). Therefore, decisions impacting forms chosen needed to be explicitly described as they also revealed my "belief about knowledge", (Scott-Hoy, 2003, p. 270), that is, how "knowledge is made" (Norris, 1997, p. 92), thereby influencing perceptions and how the audience is "likely to experience" (Eisner, 1991, p. 8) the nature of 'teachers work'. As Norris (1997, p. 92), asserts, "the form must be integral to the work, and arise from it". I will share more about this process in the following 'Sites of Intersection'. For now, join me as I meander back in time to a place of textural wonders, of sights large and small, real and imagined...this was the world of my childhood.

In making my aesthetic/teacher/researcher self (Finley & Knowles, 1995) visible, it is important to revisit some of those memorable early experiences with the sensory sights, sounds and textures of home as these have greatly influenced how I see and think about the many facets within and outside of self that shape my teaching and researching practice (Finley & Knowles, 1995). The following reflective conversation offers insights into my adult 'teacher/researcher musings', as I endeavour to re-discover my 'creative child-self'. This life history vignette draws together my aesthetic ways of being in the world across forms of expression, representation and ideas of space as a place of living identity (Frantz Bentley, 2011).

I vividly recall afternoons as a young child spent up a large sprawling black wattle tree (see image "[Placing Childhood](#)", p. 83). Immersed in the fluffy yellow canopy, I would inhale the scents of my front yard whilst silently observing and listening to the hum of passing bees gathering pollen from golden orbs. Below, a soft yellow carpet of fallen blossoms beckoned welcome, eventually meeting my toes as hunger, dusk, or both called me away from the treetop. Secret places of home such as mum's sewing box also captured my imagination: a woven treasure trove of patterned fabrics, colourful threads, lolly-like buttons and silky ribbons delighted my sense of aesthetics. Drawing, as a natural extension of 'making' sense of line and shape in my early years took the form of delicate mythological creatures, these juxtapositions of realism and the abstract revealing my playful entry into mythological worlds. Contemplating

these memories much later, it is only now that I begin to fully realise the significance of my aesthetic environment in shaping my feelings and perceptions of personal place, my creative beginnings (Finley & Knowles, 1995).

Returning to the present with memories in hand, I was convinced I had found my way into the research using multi-modal forms of representation to reveal self as researcher (see Black & O'Dea, 2015). Relief swept over me. With my resolve to pursue artistic auto-ethnography sharpened, I returned to the ethics amendment sitting on my desk. Writing my way through the various sections came easily. I felt released from the pressure to replicate traditional forms of social science research concerned with "theory generation" and "generalisation" (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128). Noting to self more than anything, I remember stating how aesthetic tools were vital to how I generated and processed ideas, that these modes enlarged my attention in ways that revealed "the whole picture for the audience" (Scott-Hoy, 2003, p. 273).

The value of seeing multiple sides of self-as-teacher/researcher seemed reasonable to justify, however potential murkiness emerged when describing the fully identified presence of my co-author teacher/director...who was also a research participant. Treading ethical ground that risked identity exposure required careful navigation! Understanding the need to keep portrayals separate and anonymity intact, all forms of information (visual/text) presented in other articles was kept separate. With the details of research processes described, boxes were ticked and signatures inked, before 'the form' was swiftly emailed to the ethics committee. I sat quietly for a moment bemused at my response to the efficiency of academic process. There was so much hanging on this amendment, the 'me' in the research yearning to step forward as a presence inquiring affectively, to seek different understandings of self and others through processes of co-creation (Plawski, Szwabowski, Szczepaniak, & Węziejewska, 2019). Working with a research participant as 'we' rather than 'I' would also provide a platform for examining what collaborative autoethnography is and what it reveals about our teacher identities from 'being within' as well as reflectively describing new knowledge potentially generated from collaborative autoethnographic exchange (Plawski et al., 2019). As Plawski et al. (2019, p. 1003) acknowledge "autoethnography was and is (*about*)...staying in the experience, neither smoothing it, ordering it according to an academic view, nor jumping to the soothing level of theory [emphasis added]". Yet as a result of digital efficiencies, a quick click had lightly whisked away this document. Its weighty matters seemingly unfelt. I had nothing 'tangible' to hold onto as my stomach churned. Had I done enough? I felt certain questions would come. It was with some surprise when minimal clarifications were requested. With another hurdle passed,

energy which had been held in mid-motion was again propelled forward and I continued on my...now *our* way.

SITES OF INTERSECTION – THE THIRD

INSTALMENT:

WEAVINGS OF YOU AND ME



Weavings of You and Me

(Photo from Maestas, 2009)

*Fragments reveal time and place
moments voiced, shared, forgotten.
Journeys near and far
closeness, relatedness, separateness.
Awake to placed encounters
feeling threads weave their knowledge.
Looking is stilled, suspended
Inside and outside knowing roused.
Matters of heart, mind and body
provoke all senses, affirm.
As lingering presence
stories remember who we were, who we are.*

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Suzanne Thomas (2004a)

Weavings of you and me...

It seems only fitting to begin with a poem describing my thoughts on how we live our lives through the stories we tell about our professional and personal selves (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994). Indeed, Clandinin and Huber (2002) suggest “identity is a storied life composition, a story to live by” (p. 161). As Scott-Hoy and Ellis (2008) remind us, using artistic auto-ethnographic methods, multiple forms of creative expression are blended to broaden ways of thinking about social science research beyond the situated meanings of words. For instance, integrating “performance, visual arts, and embodied narration” invites participation, evokes meaningful response, and builds upon what is seen and experienced (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 133). In Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019), found images, personal drawings, and life narratives are shared between two authors and offered to the audience as a means of exploring shifting identities of ‘teacher’. Establishing stance as artistic auto-ethnographer, I am positioned firmly within and connected to my research. As a process of uncovering, I emerge from a safe distancing to address the audience as “storyteller on and off the canvas” (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 135); what follows is a ‘painterly’ approach that connects pieces of “words and pictures” (p. 136), making spaces for attending to experiences and perspectives in new ways. As previously mentioned in ‘At a glimpse’ for Publication 2, my interest in artistic auto-ethnography grew from an enriched attentiveness to teachers’ “feeling and thinking” (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 137) processes as they created and contributed to the research. Installation proved to be such a powerful method for capturing (and elevating) the ‘ordinary’ of their stories. I felt it could be applied to artistic auto-ethnography to study my identity as an emerging researcher and what I could learn about my life that might enrich portrayals of teachers’ lives, as per Scott-Hoy and Ellis’ (2008) auto-ethnographic process. Integrating collaborative voices with my co-author and teacher/director also highlighted the evolving nature of “auto-ethnographic expression” with shifting interpretations and realisations emerging as our work progressed...but more of this in the pages to come.

Publication 3 at a glimpse

Weaving forgotten pieces of place and the personal: Using collaborative auto-ethnography and aesthetic modes of reflection to explore teacher identity development

This article captures my experience with artistic auto-ethnography. With a collaborative orientation, my co-author and I explore shifting ‘pictures’ of our teacher identities, addressing my first research question which was “*How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?*” Also contributing to the methodology, this publication illustrates the power of artistic auto-ethnography for opening new understandings and approaches about coming-to-know self-as-teacher. Creating a methodological space of co-construction, “life and work” connections were identified and articulated through imagery, conversations and absences (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 136). Accessing images of self and practice (see research question 2) through artistic auto-ethnography also allowed a meeting of stories and images, this process integral to the research project (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008).

As intersections of personal and professional selves were explored and tensions revealed, we discovered that images helped us to pay attention to our teacher selves in extended ways (see research question 3) (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, 1996). Drawings revealed the emotionality of journeys, describing with transformative energy, struggles of learning and change (see also auto-ethnography and ‘The artist’ Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 134). The absence of children in particular frames signaling dis-connection and upheaval associated with teaching worlds continually reconstructed (Weade & Ernst, 1990), as ‘truths’ informing available discourses of teaching, images of children and construction of teacher identities are made vivid (Gibson, 2015; Sondergaard, 2002) through image creation.

Through artistic auto-ethnography, we learnt that our histories and the histories of “those around us” assisted our “looking” at the forces shaping our experiential and knowing selves (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 134). The integration of arts-informed approaches allowed us to step inside the emotionality of our storied experiences to provoke new ways of picturing thinking about people, places, events (Bochner & Ellis, 2003) and their relatedness to our evolving teacher selves. Exchanging collaborative artistic renderings of voice and experience, Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019) shows the learning that is possible when storied accounts of teaching experiences are composed and shared through aesthetic modes of expression, renewing “understanding *(of)* [emphasis added] ourselves and our worlds narratively” (Clandinin & Huber, 2002, p. 161). As a deliberate ‘uncovering’, auto-ethnography

strips away ambiguities to situate self within the research (see Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008), bringing immediacy to our stories of identity, inviting audience identification and response. The visual nature of framing and re-framing 'pictures' of teacher identities draws attention to the details of experience and symbols used to define ourselves. Before I give too much away of visual musings of 'teacher' to come in Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019), I ask you to take a moment to dwell within the frames that follow and think about us, Leanne and Fiona as teachers, storytellers AND people.

PUBLICATION 3

Weaving forgotten pieces of place and the personal: Using collaborative auto-ethnography and aesthetic modes of reflection to explore teacher identity development

Lavina, L., & Lawson, F. (2019). Weaving forgotten pieces of place and the personal: Using collaborative auto-ethnography and aesthetic modes of reflection to explore teacher identity development. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 20(6), 1-30.

ABSTRACT

How do we develop understanding of our teacher identities and what can aesthetic modes offer to assist reflection and learning about shifting images of identity? These questions provoked our auto-ethnographic project. As two experienced early childhood teachers, we found ourselves transitioning into new professional terrain as teacher-researcher and teacher-director. This progression represented a significant shift in how we conceptualised, enacted, and located our respective identities. Using a new aesthetic framework, we explored what was known about our professional lives at key moments of “self and the other in practice” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 12). We discovered that our histories matter, place matters, as do relationships made within these social spaces. This work opens opportunity for collaborative dialogue and critical reflection on self-as-teacher. Situating self- understandings within social systems of learning recognises forces influencing identity development (Hickey & Austin, 2007) and expands pedagogical frameworks for navigating sociopolitical complexities of educational realities.

Introduction: Picturing Teacher Identity

Teaching and developing concepts of self-as-teacher involves interactions that are inherently relational. As our professional understandings of teacher self develop, we are guided and shaped in social contexts of learning that influence both our thinking and practice (Flores & Day, 2006). Sachs (2005, p. 15) describes teacher identity through developing expectations of “‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place

in society.” Accessing and sharing teachers’ insights from these socialised processes of becoming ‘teacher’ opens multiple sites of ambiguity as we struggle to identify the meaning of socio- political discourses that underpin lenses of viewing, negotiating and adopting images and experiences shaping our teaching lives (Marsh, 2002).

As part of a larger project, this article presents the identity journeys of Leanne and Fiona; two Australian-based early childhood teachers. Adopting aesthetic processes of thinking, drawing, speaking and writing identity, we seek to untangle and unify borders of meaning across intersections of past and present images of teacher self-in-place (Marsh, 2002). Using a newly developed aesthetic framework (see Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017), seven linked components provided us with multi-modal forms of representation to reflect on our teacher identity development. These included: early memories of teacher (photo), professional image of teacher self (photo), place of personal significance (photo), early image of teacher self (drawing), present image of teacher self (drawing), expression of self-as-teacher/teaching experience (narrative), and an artifact with identity meaning. Inquiring through these artistic forms of expression, we explore contexts and experiences influencing constructions of our teacher selves (Jenkins, 2008) and negotiate the duality of identities felt whilst transitioning to new roles of teacher-researcher (Leanne) and teacher-director (Fiona). Engaging arts-informed approaches, we critically reflect on personal understandings of teacher self by using “systematic artistic process” (McNiff, 2008, p. 29) to explore identity development. This methodology was chosen as “arts-informed research...enhance(s) [emphasis added] understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). In the process, we seek to engage meanings beyond “a splash of colour or an illustrative image” (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 27), to open more critical readings of situations and experiences influencing our evolving identities (McNiff, 2008). As “art-based tools and ways of knowing” provoke reconsideration of “habitual responses” (McNiff, 2008, p. 37), additional insights are revealed and the unexpected valued through “creative process” (McNiff, 2008, p. 40). Resisting linearity and “standardised procedure” (McNiff, 2008, p. 39), arts-informed approaches embrace “the unfolding of thought” as meanings are examined and interpreted (McNiff, 2008, p. 35). Adopting this same mindfulness in our project, multi-layered images of self-as-teacher were created to revisit assumptions about self and experience (Gillis & Johnson, 2002); thereby expanding upon ways of connecting identity understandings (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

Documenting significant personal experiences of identity through past and present aesthetic frames of ‘knowing’ teacher-self (see Lavina et al., 2017) illustrates the value of

multi-layered approaches into understanding teacher identity development beyond simplistic conceptualisations. This framework-as-resource provides a dynamic method for examining the discourses of self and teaching that influence practice (Marsh, 2002).

Adopting auto-ethnography as a “multivoiced form” (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 435) of visual and textual description presents accounts of identity development beyond a singular reading. Compilations challenge intersections of the personal and social as meanings of experience are interrogated to forge new understandings of self and practice (Denshire, 2014). Opening opportunity for conversation, collection, creation and reflection across these modes assists teachers to develop strong and resilient identities and offers a platform for sharing questions, provoking inquiry and establishing collaborative support systems to sustain images of teacher self in early childhood contexts (see Lavina et al., 2017). In this article, we consciously strive to situate our teacher identity development through a sociological place-based framework wherein we go beyond “the writing of selves” (Denshire, 2014, p. 833) to explore spaces or silences “in both ourselves and others” that influence identity development (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 818). Engaging diverse forms of image creation, we search the relationship “between visual images and words” to critique the “kinds of stories...images tell” of our teaching experiences (Weber, 2008, p. 50). These often overlooked fragments strip back self-protective layers to reveal the person-in-the professional (Denzin, 2003). In this way, we attempt to look within ourselves to make meaning of our lived experience (see van Manen, 1997) and enhance understandings of our teaching and learning selves. While we see this process as deepening our self-understanding, presenting ‘data’ through different aesthetic and textual forms allows for different readings of teaching experience, invites a wider audience (for example, Barone, 2000; Sparkes, 2002) and contributes to knowledge exploring the complexities of educational contexts.

The adoption of an auto-ethnographic approach using aesthetic modes of creation and reflection provokes teachers to consider and re-consider forgotten pieces of place and the personal influencing their identity formation. Using the aesthetic framework as a springboard, our sharing of stories visualised through aesthetic frames invites teachers to make connection with our experiences and enlarge ‘seeing’ of an evolving teacher self “that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” of ‘teacher’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Multi-modal compositions exploring our developing teacher identities offer renderings that are deeply personal and located within social interactions of knowledge and practice (Ellis, 2009). These vivid pictures ask teachers to reflect on and create their own

storied images, in the process, retracing “experiences buried under...conscious reasoning” to more deeply understand the social construction of identity (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 131).

Early Childhood and Teacher Identity: Positioning Context

Early childhood teacher identity is recognised as an evolving construct shaped by the interaction of personal and contextual frameworks of influence (e.g., Beltman, Glass, Dinham, Chalk, & Nguyen, 2015). As identity is continually reshaped in relationship with others, there are multiple, often hard to define nuances shaping identity: “teacher identity is hard to articulate, easily misunderstood and open to interpretation” (Olsen, 2008, p. 4). Whilst there have been several studies looking at pre-service and early career teacher identity development through visual methodologies (Beltman et al., 2015; Sumsion, 2002; Weber & Mitchell, 1996), these focus on early childhood teachers working in school contexts. Apart from Black’s (2011) case study of ‘Andrea’, an early childhood teacher working in a privately- owned childcare centre with 4-year-olds, there is a noticeable absence of Australian-based studies examining identity journeys of early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school contexts. Identifying potential reasons for this research gap means taking a closer look at the ideological and socio-political forces influencing early childhood education in Australia.

A draft report from the Productivity Commission (2014) does little to assert the importance of early years learning for children under 36 months; with recommendations suggesting minimal qualifications are needed to work with infants (Productivity Commission, 2014). Accepting the Productivity Commission suggestion of nannies and au pairs as favourable over highly- qualified educators heralds the return to historical images of children as fragile beings needing of maternal care and protection (Brennan, 1998). Arguably, this deficit image of young children speaks of the “economics and convenience of the system to meet family work pressures” and strongly contradicts the strong and capable image of young children presented in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF, DEEWR, 2009) a teaching and learning framework for early years educators working with children aged birth-five years (Cheeseman, Sumsion, & Press, 2015, p. 41). If we accept these sociopolitical ideologies of ‘care,’ ‘education’ and ‘image of the child,’ what are the implications for early childhood teachers’ identity development? Are we largely perceived as caretakers of children before they enter school to begin ‘real’ learning? How do we resist such ideologies to continue advocacy efforts and maintain a strong sense of professional identity?

In Australia, many studies have considered challenges associated with attracting and retaining highly qualified early years educators. Reasons for workforce shortfalls, specifically in

long day care prior-to-school settings are numerous and relate to low professional status: wages which are disproportionate to work responsibilities, qualifications and expertise; a lack of opportunities for professional advancement; workplace pressures and burnout (Noble & Macfarlane, 2005; Sumsion, 2005; Warrilow et al., 2002). As a result, teacher identities have become unstable constructs, with pictures of self-as-teacher influencing approaches to practice as well as decisions to leave the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector (Schepens, Aelterman & Vlerick, 2009). Given that a strong professional identity potentially mediates attrition rates for early career teachers (Cattley, 2007), it makes sense to identify notions of childhood and teaching motivating teachers' entry to the ECEC sector. In this way, teachers are provided means to critique potentially romanticised images of working in early childhood contexts.

Sumsion's (2003) case study of early childhood teacher attrition illustrates powerfully the diverse perspectives needed for navigating complex teaching realities. As habitual ways of organising thinking about experiences, Phelan (2001) also identifies prevailing discourses of "...teaching, schooling and society" (p. 584) transmitted through teacher education that limit recognition of alternate discourses for understanding and conceptualising teaching practice. Such argument provides a substantive platform for exploring early childhood teachers' identity development in prior-to-school contexts. Addressing this research gap also brings into view understandings of sociopolitical discourses, which allow teachers greater insight into narratives shaping their identity. Creating opportunities for teachers to identify and potentially disrupt current pictures of pedagogy and practice gives additional tools for reflecting on identity development and resituating understandings of what it means to be an early childhood teacher (Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011).

Aesthetic Journeying with Auto-ethnography: Collaborative Looking at Teacher Selves

There has been much interest in auto-ethnography as a means of better understanding and transforming understandings of self and situated experience (e.g., Denshire, 2014; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006). For teachers, the power of such an approach rests in creating new dialogical spaces of subjectivity and collaboration where meaning is centred on the inclusion of voices and representations that embody "biography with social structure" (Denzin, 2006, p. 421). In this way, we open memories of our teaching-learning selves and reconsider beliefs of 'teacher' and 'teaching' that have influenced our identity development (Vasconcelos, 2011). Positioning our pedagogical and identity reflections through this lens acknowledges the subjectivity of "writing and our talk" (Denzin, 2006, p. 422); that is, "we enact the worlds we

study” (Denzin, 2006, p. 422) by looking back and interpreting experience alongside evolving worlds of teaching. Acknowledging the cyclical nature of teaching and learning enlarges personal understandings of “people and experiences” that have shaped the formation of our teacher selves (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 416). Likewise, auto-ethnography is characterised by self-awareness and introspection as the unfolding fabric of stories is told (Ellis, 2004). As a useful approach to the study of teacher education and identity, Hickey and Austin’s (2007) Australian based auto-ethnographic exploration of teacher identity construction illustrates the benefits of using this approach as a means of “exposing the mediating role that social structures play in the construction of identities” (p. 21). Working with a large number of undergraduate teachers alongside a smaller group of graduate teachers, students were prompted to re-examine assumptive understandings of self and experience. Processes of inquiry focused on making “explicit that which had been submerged into the implicit, experienced as the everyday and judged as the ordinary” (Hickey & Austin, 2007, p. 25), the surfacing of these renewed self-understandings prompting re-examination of social forces impacting the development of teachers’ identities.

In their concluding remarks, Hickey and Austin (2007, p. 27) contend that auto-ethnography offers a valuable means of supporting self-understandings through examination of relational dynamics and “social practices”, this approach also supporting critical re-examination of pedagogical approaches informing practice. Seeing great value in the interrogation of identity conceptualisations “through memory-based lived experiences” (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 436), we took inspiration from Hickey and Austin’s (2007) study and consciously focused on multiple ways of exploring the meanings of experiences as they related to our identity formation. Adopting auto-ethnography to explore our teacher identities provides us with a powerful research space for thinking/creating/reflecting on the aesthetic nature and form of our teacher identity journeys. The collaborative (and visual) nature of this approach invites new ways of publicising our knowledge, pedagogy, and practice through aesthetic forms. In this way, the details of our identity representations and interpretations are understood as residing within interlinked social systems, where orientations of teacher identity occur inside and outside early childhood learning contexts (Moore, 2004). Along the way, the audience is invited to walk with us as we uncover links between what is known and unknown about our teacher identities to enable a closer examination of past and present experiences influencing our ongoing development as learners and teachers. The narrative evolutions of auto-ethnography expressed through aesthetic modes of reflection offer teachers across

stages of professional learning a valuable means for re-examining identity representations over time.

The Project: Facing and Placing our Teacher Identities

Our experiences of identity reflect our ongoing work with children, families, and educators in community based Long Day Care services in Sydney, Australia. With a focus on auto-ethnographic artistic forms of storying, we share individual and collaborative reflections on journeys of self-as-teacher and our practice. We learn about questioning normalised images of teacher that impose tensions on who we ought to be as professionals (Weber & Mitchell, 1995) and seek to untangle what was “consciously and unconsciously” felt about key events shaping our identities (Slattery, 2001, as cited in Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 135). Whilst we resist presenting absolute answers about the educational worlds of teachers (see Eisner, 2008), our visual and textual stories of identity serve as provocations to broaden conversations into teachers’ lives. Adopting this approach invites emotionality and personalises “life and work” connections (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p.136). In so doing, we hope to make visual forms of auto-ethnography accessible to audiences within and outside of educational research (Scott- Hoy & Ellis, 2008). The integration of “words and pictures” serves as a deliberate attempt on our part to “let go of ...categories and open up possibilities” (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 136); the meeting of arts-informed and auto-ethnographic approaches (see Mullen, 2003) seeks to reframe the uncertainties and challenges of teaching lives within and outside the classroom (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997).

With emphasis on visual forms of symbolism, we examine personal and professional sense of place as socialising constructs that influence how our identities develop and with whom (Alsup, 2006). Using auto-ethnography and a recently-developed aesthetic framework for representing our teacher identities (see [Table 3.1](#)), we reveal deeply-held personal understandings and memories of identity, the aesthetic framework providing a clear structure to guide us through past and present images of teacher, allowing for greater objectivity and expansion of aspects influencing our identity development. This does not mean, however, that evolving conceptions of our teacher selves are in any way neatly understood. Visualising self in relation with others involves collaging “images, faces, colours, and textures, creating a representation of the experience” (Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 325). In this way we recognise our subjective “interpretation of the world” as ever-present within our representations of identity (Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 326). Given our earlier outline of complex social and political forces shaping the Australian early childhood sector, we explore the messiness of our lived

experiences in these contexts. As such, there is shared understanding that the aesthetic framework developed and used elsewhere in a larger identity project (Lavina et al., 2017) is approached here with the same sense of adaptability, so whatever is discovered/created/enacted can come together in ways that move beyond the safety of surface self-truths (Griffiths, Malcolm, & Williamson, 2009), to explore the interrelated nature of place-based histories and their influence on our learning and teacher selves (Samaras et al., 2007).

As a means of inviting complexity, challenging normative knowing (e.g., van Manen, 1997), and embracing uncertainty, the aesthetic framework used for our auto-ethnographic project assists to uncover deeper truths about our professional selves beyond written texts that arguably produce ‘removed’ reproductions of self from “our immediate lived involvements” (van Manen, 1997, pp. 126-127). Producing images of symbolic meaning invites “transformed consciousness”, “without being confined by the use of language” whereby new insight is generated through image creation and later viewing (Scott-Hoy, 2000, pp. 335-336). Using seven different representations of our teacher identities as process and product (see [Table 3.1](#)), we are provided a place of return to retrace and transform our thinking about pedagogy and practice. As connecting fragments, past and present images alongside reflective writing and conversation vignettes “become an extension of the picture,” becoming a “companion tool” for organising perspectives of identity influencing our continuing identity journeys (see Lavina et al., 2017; Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 335). Apart from encountering new depths of knowing our teacher selves, we highlight the value of insights generated and the potential benefits of future projects with early childhood teachers to enlarge personal understandings of self and enhance their repertoire of tools for coping with uncertainties. Closing thoughts emphasise the importance of collaborative professional spaces that support reflection through visual representations, alongside the familiarity of words (e.g., Scott-Hoy, 2000; Griffiths et al., 2009), with artistic storytelling through auto-ethnography viewed as an evocative approach to research and professional development that makes vivid the voices of teachers (Scott-Hoy, 2000). Engaging aesthetic forms of identity work is highlighted as a means of developing diverse discourses for understanding self-in-practice and reinforcing early childhood teachers’ resilience and strong sense of professional identity.

Framing Identity: An Arts-informed Approach

As primary researcher in a larger project exploring early childhood teachers’ identity journeys, Leanne collaboratively developed an aesthetic framework with multiple visual tools

for accessing and representing past and present teacher identities (Lavina et al., 2017). A biographical approach (e.g., Furlong, 2013) integrated with an artist's methods (Creates, 1991) was used to support recognition of self and society as impacting past images and present representations of self-as-teacher (Gee, 2000). Artifacts as socialised symbols of self and journey were also included as touchstones of place to connect personal and professional contexts of identity development (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Looking specifically at the development of diverse identities, this framework was used to explore our formative identities as teacher-researcher and teacher-director. The seven aesthetic frames indicated in Table 3.1 represent different forms of identity information collected during our investigation.

Table 3.1 A framework for representing teacher identities: the seven aesthetic frames

FRAME 1	FRAME 2	FRAME 3	FRAME 4	FRAME 5	FRAME 6	FRAME 7
Image	Photo	Photo	Drawing	Drawing	Narrative	Artifact
<i>early memories of 'teacher'</i>	<i>identifies professional image of self</i>	<i>significant place of meaning</i>	<i>representing personal understandings of early teacher self</i>	<i>representing personal understandings of present teacher self</i>	<i>written expression of self-as-teacher and teaching experience</i>	<i>physical object that reflects teacher identity</i>

Notes:

- Adapted from the creative works of Marlene Creates as cited in Knowles and Thomas (2002, p. 121-132).
- An expanded version of this table appears in Lavina et al. (2017, p. 147).

Analysing Identity Journeys: A Meeting of Thoughts and Processes

Over a three-month period, we came together to discuss our reflections and representations of identity. This experiential approach connects formative memories with collaboration as a means of integrating personal and professional identity knowledge and learning (Dewey, 1938/1963). The idea of considering linked experiences of identity across time and place recognises the socialised nature of expressing identities in lived situations of teaching and learning, where “identity construction not only affects experience, it also depends on experience” (Alsup, 2006, p. 78). In our final discussion, we each examined critically all seven aesthetic frames with particular focus on aspects of socialisation and power relationships influencing our identities. This important step recognised the illusive visibility of teachers’ thought as hidden within discourses assumed in particular contexts (see Marsh, 2002, 2003). The use of sourced images alongside drawings of self-as-teacher served to disrupt comfortable discourses and beliefs about teaching philosophies and developing identities. Situating teacher narratives (frame 6) toward the end of our project meant that pre-

determined scripts of ‘teacher’ were interrogated prior to writing our responses, the previous sourcing and creation of images (see frames 1-5) helping us to recognise and connect the different textures of our experiences. Images also supported our objective distancing as we looked to understand our self-knowledge predominantly through a visual perspective, thereby distinguishing subtle events of influence previously unseen (Weber, 2008). Through this lens, aesthetic frames were examined for content, where symbol systems used to represent experiences of teacher and developing teacher-self were identified and analysed.

Discussions were primarily used to describe representations and confirm symbolic meanings, thereby placing clear emphasis on the unique visual characteristics of images (Beltman et al., 2015; Rose, 2012). As each frame had a specific focus tracing our identity development over time, we looked for key elements in each frame that were found to influence our personal and professional selves and the ways in which these multiplicities overlapped. We also sought to interrogate visual absences and situate their potential identity meanings in relation to those symbols represented at particular points in our teacher journeys. For instance, in Fiona’s aesthetic frame 5, an absence of children communicates initial distancing felt when assuming her new role as non-teaching director. In the same way, our chosen artifact(s) were examined through multiple lenses of identity. Following a series of informal chats and emails, initial categorisation of themes was done independently before we came together to discuss and further clarify potential combinations. Any variances or evolutions of themes were re-examined until there was shared agreement of categories (Beltman et al., 2015).

Revealing Identity Journeys: Unexpected Images Surface

Themes were identified through the analysis of each of the frames as shown in Table 3.2. Leanne and Fiona’s aesthetic frames 1, 3, 4 and 5 will be included to illustrate elements of evolving identities present across visual representations.

Table 3.2 Analytic framework for identifying and describing themes

Aesthetic frame	Theme	Description
Frame 1: Image <i>early memories of ‘teacher’</i>	Seesawing stereotypes	Chosen image(s) depicts a socialised conception of teacher
Frame 2: Photo <i>identifies professional image of self</i>	Symbolic seeing(s) of self	Chosen image(s) uses visual and/or textual metaphors to represent self-as-teacher
Frame 3: Photo	Greening time	Chosen image recognises the importance of unhurried

<i>significant place of meaning</i>		time to experience green spaces as places of connection and reflection
Frame 4: Drawing <i>representing personal understandings of early teacher self</i>	The eagerness of 'us'	Drawing reflects relationships of learning with children and/or collegial partnerships
Frame 5: Drawing <i>representing personal understandings of present teacher self</i>	Stepping back, moving forward	Drawing includes reflections and aspects of re-defining self as a means of navigating collaborative relationships
Frame 6: Narrative <i>written expression of self-as-teacher and teaching experience</i>	Poetic presence	Narrative written in a poetic style to capture the emotionality of teacher identity journeys
Frame 7: Artifact <i>physical object that reflects teacher identity</i>	Placing the pieces	Artifact captures a sense of personal and professional identity story



Figure 3.1 Leanne's early memories of teacher

Sources: Sources: 'Paintbrushes photo'. Some rights reserved by LexnGer – Brushes; 'Glasses photo'- cropped version'. Some rights reserved by Louis du Mont – Glasses; 'Nun photo- cropped version.' Some rights reserved by [CO]2 – Nuns). All sizes of photos are available for download under a Creative Commons license.

Seesawing Stereotypes

Aesthetic frame 1 - Our first images of teacher were markedly different. Whilst we both used conventional symbols of 'teaching' and 'teachers' to represent early memories of teacher (Leanne: glasses, open smile; Fiona: books, apple) (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 310), the meanings of these objects and qualities were transformed in contrasting ways in response to our experiences of 'teacher.' For instance, Leanne's photo-collage captured early memories of her 'preschool nun'. Discussions with Leanne affirmed teacher qualities experienced were warm, happy, welcoming and supportive; an engaging, rosy-cheeked bespectacled mature figure that had nurtured her interests in drawing and painting (see [Figure 3.1](#)). As Leanne comments- "Days were largely spent at the easel, hence the positioning of paintbrushes in the foreground; desks were for drawing!" Fiona's collage of photos however, appeared to depart from relational and creative arts experiences. Her depiction of books stacked and shelved capturing her experience of teacher as "holder of knowledge" (see [Figure 3.2](#)). As a formalised seeing and experience of 'teacher,' Fiona's inclusion of a desk symbolised the teacher's station of authority where information was transmitted (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, 1996); this physical space and beyond to the blackboard remained the teacher's territory. As Fiona recalls, "...the stack and the pile of books...it's got all the different areas that teachers should be an expert or have complete knowledge on and then they instruct or share their knowledge with children." Fiona's decision to include a red apple in frame 1 stemmed from her memory of apples being gifted to the teacher. As Fiona comments, "I don't know what child gave the teacher an apple, but I just remember seeing one...it just reinforced that image." As a symbol of teacher presence and power, this object was prominently positioned on the teacher's desk (Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

Such symbolism illustrates sociocultural representations of 'teacher' and highlights the need to contest popularised readings and search for images outside homogenised manufactured stereotypes (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). What struck us the most when analysing our first images of 'teacher' were the contrasting symbolic tools used to represent teachers' work and the polarising learning dynamics we experienced as a result of either open or more traditional approaches to schooling.

Casting ourselves back to early experiences of 'teacher' also meant we were able to examine and unpack the power these images hold in constructing or re-constructing our own images of self-as-teacher. For Fiona in particular, rather than seeking to push aside or bury potentially negative memories of teacher, she chose instead to recognise associated

stereotypes as situated images of a particular time and place (Weber & Mitchell, 1996). For both of us, this meant examining shifting social landscapes of teacher thinking and learning to better evaluate evolving symbols of self-as-teacher as socialised expressions of knowledge and thought (Elbaz, 1991). Returning to our chosen images meant consciously separating “teacher identity...with teacher role and function” (Sutcliffe, 1997, p.89) with discourses of learning in educational contexts shaping formation of teacher identities (Weber & Mitchell, 1996).

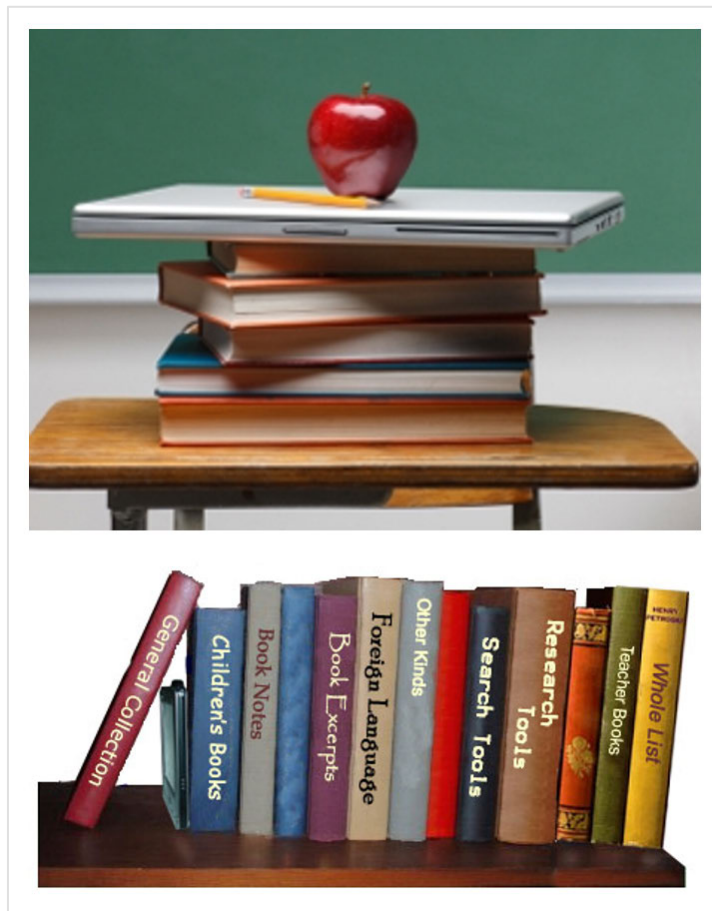


Figure 3.2 Fiona’s early memories of teacher

Sources: School books and apple-
https://solutions00.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/school_books_and_apple.jpg ; Bookshelf-
http://www.drscavanaugh.org/ebooks/libraries/ebook_libraries.htm

Greening Time

Aesthetic frame 3 – Images selected for this frame of significant places embodied the sights and smells of our surrounding green landscapes (see **Figure 3.3**). Qualities of escapism, a sense of freedom and endless hours for exploring imaginary green worlds pervade our memories and discussions of these photos. For Leanne, her personal place as a young child was perched high in the branches of a black wattle tree in her front yard. As Leanne comments, “I remember this as a place of peace and solitude where I would explore tiny worlds of insects and wattle blossoms, my own little haven of miniature wonders.” Likewise, Fiona identified the bushland at the back of her house as “A space for playing, creating and imagining” with her siblings; a place “without imposed adult-bound rules and time restrictions” where she was “free to relax and just ‘be.’”

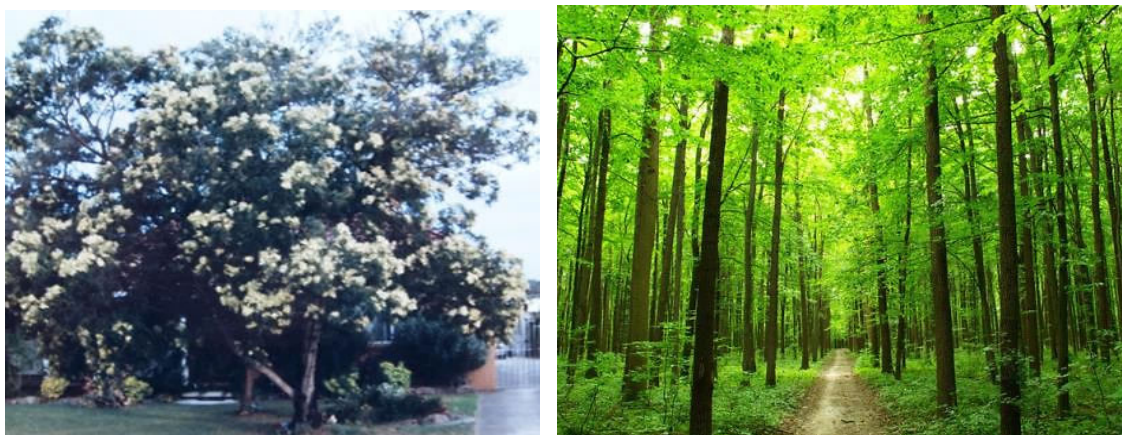


Figure 3.3 Leanne's photo - significant place (left) and Fiona's photo - significant place (right)

Source: <https://financialpostcom.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/green-forest.jpg?w=620>

Whilst there were differences in terms of how we experienced green spaces i.e. solitary (Leanne) and social (Fiona), what we found compelling was the shared importance placed on felt aspects of experience, of “deepening the person-place relationship” (Cameron, 2003, p. 100); these natural worlds nourished our imaginations and sense of connection with the environment. There was also a sense of flow, of pausing to look at the little things of flora and fauna through each of our senses. As adults (and teachers) reflecting on the significant green spaces of our childhoods, we see how place-based relationships have assisted us in situating our sense of self and instilled within us a care for preserving and nurturing understandings of our local natural environments (Cameron, 2003). These motivations have been brought forward to our work with children and families, where we seek to emphasise relationships ‘in’ and ‘of’ place, so children have ongoing opportunities to experience nature in ways that invite wonder and respect for “the outside and all it entails” (Robertson, 2011, p.12), so they too can see the possibilities afforded by extended discovery of the fragile living details that make a “natural play space” (p. 11) within and beyond the playground.

The Eagerness of Stepping Back, Moving Forward

Aesthetic Frames 4 and 5 proved to be the most conceptually challenging for both of us. How to capture the duality of roles and identities experienced over time? Beginning with Frame 4, our early career drawings captured a shared sense of enthusiasm upon entering the teaching profession (see Figure 3.4). For Leanne, her use of colour and symbolism reflected sense-of-self enacted with others in a teaching team (3 interlinked green ‘canopy’ figures); “I always saw my role in relationship with colleagues and children, we worked as a team...and I think we all learned ‘something more’ about ourselves and each other as a result.” This unified

metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) served to make-sense of interdependent ways of developing pedagogy and practice. Influenced by her childhood experiences with nature, she chose to represent a sense of growth and nurturance between teachers and children (child 'seedling' outstretched). At the same time, Leanne was clear in her image of the child as strong and resilient (Rinaldi, 1998), with teachers viewed as an equally strong presence in a "fertile space" (Jovanovic & Roder, 2012, p. 124) of discovering, learning and growing with children (Rinaldi, 1998).



Figure 3.4 Leanne's drawing: representing personal understandings of early teacher self

Likewise, Fiona's early career drawing communicated 'togetherness' and a sense of enthusiasm. Her use of two scaled smiling figures holding hands conveyed her focus on collaborative adult-child relationships of learning. Embracing the concept of journeying with children, Fiona comments "I wanted to make a difference in their lives, to continue developing my knowledge and support of children's growth and learning." Adopting 'enabler' as an organising schema assisted Fiona's seeing and understanding of her teacher self at this point in time (Bullough & Knowles, 1991). More comfortable with written forms of reflection, Fiona acknowledged challenges associated with symbolically representing her identities. As she comments, "I find myself questioning; what am I trying to say through my pictures?" Initially, she spoke of the need to include key words that had particular resonance. Following further unpacking of intended symbolism, she felt that further engagement with visual forms of reflection would necessitate 're-capturing' of early and present images of teacher self to more effectively express her sense-making of visual meanings of identity (Weber & Mitchell, 1996).

As such, we include Fiona's Frame 5 here to illustrate her process of recognising and resituating understandings of looking and creating images that convey the multi-layered qualities of her identity journey (see [Figure 3.5](#)). For instance, she noted that engaging with visual forms of expression brought renewed clarity to picturing her shifting identities over time (see Weber, 2008). As Fiona comments, "In viewing my pictures I saw myself in a different light, clearly saw myself with my eyes open." Indeed, she described this process as searching her current (Frame 5) image as teacher/director for intended meanings that needed to be communicated (Weade & Ernst, 1990)—such as the shift from 'enabler' with children (Frame 4) to 'driving force' in a distributed leadership model; where a sense of vision, inquiry and collaboration is sought with children, the teaching team, families and community (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd, 2012). Recognising the absence of time spent learning and being with children (now that she is in the role of a 'non-teaching' Director), she expressed a sense of mourning the loss of her teacher identity, "In revisiting this process, I mourn my teacher identity; the connections, and being more 'carefree' with time..." It was clear that after creating and viewing her image, Fiona's understanding of potential metaphors captured within images was heightened. In our discussions, this was further emphasised in her recognition that perhaps only "a part, but not the whole" of her meaning was reflected, that her images, just like the 'chapters' of her identities reflected across frames are "continually under construction" (Weade & Ernst, 1990, p. 139-140) and that these threads assist us in weaving together new identity possibilities. As Fiona reflected, "I began to understand my challenges/limitations/misconceptions that clung to me and I had carried unconsciously over time...I was able to freely swim to the surface and explore possibilities that lay ahead- forming a new identity."

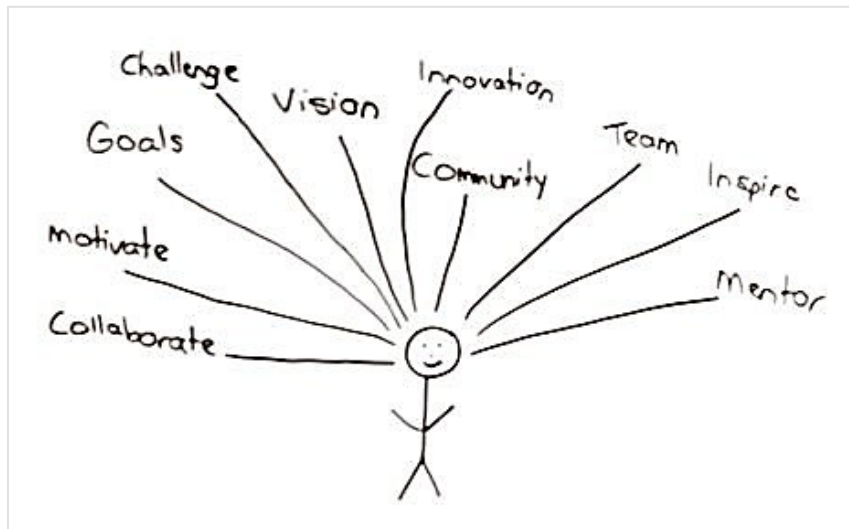


Figure 3.5 Fiona's drawing self-as-teacher/director, representing personal understandings of present teacher self

In her Frame 5, Leanne also experienced a 'stepping back.' Originally, she had conceptualised a single image, but upon meeting the aesthetic challenges of representing her teacher- researcher self, she chose to create a triptych to illustrate the back-and-forth of experiencing different identities in place. As she explains, "Initially I struggled to capture the fluidity of 'becoming' an early career researcher. Inevitably, there is a process of continual exchange between identities as I negotiate teacher-researcher worlds in search of my own space." Her initial image of 4 different coloured figures (green, purple, blue, red) both connected and extended her early image of teacher self. In explaining her use of colour and symbolism, Leanne continued to include a green figure to reflect teacher self (as in Frame 4), however, she identified complexities in defining a 'singular self' as her role was inextricably linked to internal and external relational forces. She described these forces as contextual lenses called upon for seeing and situating understandings of teacher self and practice (Marsh, 2003). As Leanne comments- "figures represent connections to community and support services (purple), ongoing professional development and learning (blue) and relationships sought and strengthened with colleagues, families, and other early childhood professionals (red)." As in her Frame 4 image, Leanne's primary focus remained on supporting children's learning. However, just as Frame 5 included a many-sided view of seeing the influences shaping teacher self, this understanding was also reflected in her image of children, with 4 outstretched figures featured in the centre. In explaining this perceptual change, Leanne cited her encounters with the learning philosophy of Reggio Emilia and 'the hundred languages of children' (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998, 2012), where children are seen as having a vibrant sense of agency, powerful voice and diverse ways of thinking. As Leanne commented:

I wanted to recognise the multiple languages children engage to ask questions and communicate their understandings and interests. Mirroring outstretched arms of children and adult figures also conveys shared 'willingness' to engage in respectful relationships of learning where listening with intent is valued.

As context also informs pedagogy and practice, creating a sense of receptiveness in the spaces between child and adult figures featured was intended to reflect possibilities enacted as we "respond to the gifts of children" (Gandini, 2011, p. 11). This positioning reflected Leanne's sense of livingness shared with children and families in early childhood contexts.

Leanne chose to represent identity transitions in the form of a light globe, where thinking (globe) and knowledge/creativity (pencil) became essential "tools of thought" (Root-Bernstein 1987, p. 17) needed to begin a new research journey in her doctoral program. What was unanticipated was the singularity and potential sense of isolation associated with doctoral research journeys (Ali & Kohun, 2007), this realisation necessitating a conceptual shift from more collegial forms of situating teacher-self understandings and identity. As a result, she chose to emphasise an absence of the personal when initially representing her researcher self, with no figures depicted. As Leanne reflects, "I wasn't totally prepared for the solitary nature of research. Coming from a space of collegiality and relatedness within a group, seeing self in a more isolated role was quite a departure from previous ways of thinking and 'being.'" This absence speaks of Leanne's sense-making of new scholarly territories and social dynamics encountered whilst pursuing doctoral research (Pyhältö, Toom, Stubb, & Lonka, 2012). Whilst this period of transition created discomfort and uncertainty at times, she also indicated that the multi-layered glow and outward shine of the bulb reflected the warmth and supportive presence of her supervisory team who assisted her developing sense of membership in academia (Pyhältö, Vekkaila, & Keskinen, 2015). As Leanne comments, "I am so thankful to have a dynamic team who complement each other's interests, strengths and personalities... their combined 'glow' has enabled me to shine."

In her final image of self-as-teacher/researcher (Figure 3.6), Leanne spoke of the globe's perceptual shift in meaning, highlighting a more enlightened self-interior (Hogan & Pink, 2012) to bridge her creative being and thinking across educational and academic contexts. As Leanne reflects:

Repositioning child-adult relationships within the globe is personally significant as this symbolism re-affirms my purpose alongside teachers and children. The 'glow' of the globe which may have flickered with uncertainty at times, now

shines brightly as I increasingly adopt a sense of ‘comfortable presence’ within research spaces.

This renewed sense of identity-in-place signalled her return to early childhood symbolism, shown through the reappearance of figures, to once again reflect her continuing journey of learning, researching and writing with teachers to improve the lives of children.

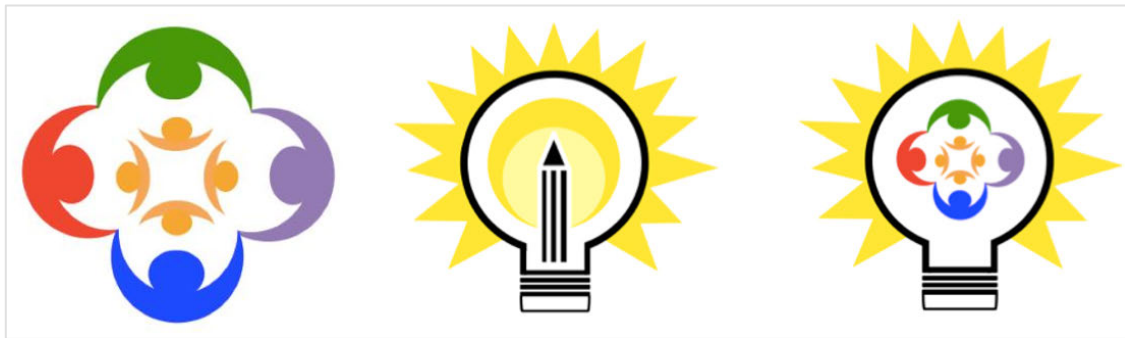


Figure 3.6 Leanne's drawing self-as-teacher/researcher, representing personal understandings of present teacher self

Personal Reflections: What We Thought We Knew about Ourselves

When we began this auto-ethnographic project, there was a shared sense that exploring our identity journeys through visual processes of reflection could potentially yield something ‘more’ in our understandings of identity journeys and self-as-teacher. Exploring images that traced our early experiences of teacher, experience in place and evolving sense of self-as-teacher, brought into being chapters of self and experience that we thought concluded. What we learned, was that history matters. These chapters were not disparate, neatly organised memories of little consequence. They continued to speak in our thoughts and actions. These (often forgotten) fragments carried with us, speak in discreet ways and remain part of us, embedding themselves in our thought and practice. Where and how we have travelled, and those influential companions encountered along the way, each played a role in shaping how we presently came to see and experience the world (van Manen, 1997; Schutz, 1970). Sharing our inner identity journeys with each other revealed this understanding and more.

Imaging is Different

In speaking about our early childhood teacher identities, we both agreed that written forms of reflection were comfortable pedagogical spaces of safety where we asked ourselves hard questions about children's (and our own) learning, about theories made and tested, and thought carefully about how dialogues were engaged and valued. We felt confident in our

capacity to readily use these schemas to refine thoughts about self and practice and to critically examine the flow of teaching and learning (Siraj-Blatchford, 2012). Given our acknowledgement of the importance of words (Griffiths et al., 2009), making conscious efforts to depart from them to invite visual forms of facing the vulnerabilities of self and associated challenges of practice, required peeling back the edges of easy-fit stereotypes to find our own aesthetic sense of voice. Doing so meant that we were able to closely examine the power of images for creating and generating essential understandings of identity. Stepping outside the familiarity of words to invite the visual meant that what we discovered was deeply felt, revealing, and transformative. Thinking through images showed us the immense potential of aesthetic spaces for investigating and re-connecting learning about self, pedagogy and practice. It also affirmed that reflection can occur in multiple aesthetic modes (Griffiths et al., 2009), and that combining these modes offers much in re-defining and further nourishing personal images of teacher needed to make sense of ever-shifting identity journeys (Weber & Mitchell, 1996).

Contextualised Self-portraits

Whilst aesthetic frames do not capture the entirety of our teacher and personal selves, the aesthetic framework used here and elsewhere (see Lavina et al., 2017) embodies an auto-ethnographic approach where “specific focus on turning points” shaping professional identity development are examined within sociocultural understandings (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010; Winkler, 2017, p. 1). Offering a reflexive place of return (Humphreys, 2005; Lincoln & Denzin, 1998), these frames offer artistic representations that capture significant moments in our identity development; whereby understandings of our teacher selves and practice were challenged, stretched or heightened in response to identified stages of significance. Where “discovery...and retell[ing] an epiphany” (Saldana, 2003, pp. 224-225) broadened understandings beyond superficial study (Pelias, 2003). Using this process, we hoped to bring to our lived stories wider relevance; to engage teacher and qualitative academic audiences so that they might “feel ethnographic ‘truth’...and thus become more fully immersed – morally, aesthetically, emotionally and intellectually” (Richardson, 1994, as cited in Bochner & Ellis, 1996, p. 4).

Embracing nontraditional representations can prompt others to share our aim to “re-envision what it means to conduct research and to engage in scholarly production” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 122). Merging elements of Creates’ artistry (see Creates, 1991), aesthetically rich representations of “lives-in-context” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 123), moves our

aesthetic framework beyond data, to embrace aesthetic modes of inquiry where the audience is prompted to identify with and further explore multi-modal forms of representation. As shared conversation pieces, aesthetic frames embrace “challenges, struggles, insights, and new perspectives” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 127) gained as a result of renewed seeing of our teacher selves, our searching for “points of resonance” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 127) defining key shifts in thinking, being, and enacting our roles as ‘teacher.’ Such reflexivity enhances seeing of multiple voices, providing greater authenticity in stories presented and prompting audience identification (Winkler, 2017). By focusing on how we have come to understand ourselves and teaching practice (see Jackson & Mazzei, 2008), we invite others to see themselves in our experiences, with the understanding that “culture flows through all of us” (Winkler, 2017, p. 8). Using artistic auto-ethnographic approaches (see Scott-Hoy, 2000), we hope to provide a reflexive framework for mobilising “deep learning, the kind of learning that fosters personal agency” (Vasconcelos, 2011, p. 437). In this way, the audience enters a dialogic space where teachers’ stories of identity are emotionally felt. Our intention to capture multiple dimensions of teaching experience prompts teachers and other academic audiences to take ownership of “...their own stories” (Siegesmund & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008, p. 244).

Collaborative Auto-ethnography

Collaboratively exploring our identities through an aesthetic framework created a space where past and present images mingled to reveal shadowy depths of knowing self that had long been obscured (Griffiths et al., 2009). Presenting memories of self and teaching through representations that echoed “life history-like researching processes” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 122), created responsive aesthetic frames for capturing identity. Creation and viewing of aesthetic frames involved searching for ‘visual fit’ between images, metaphors and meanings (Weade & Ernst, 1990) as we focused on the “coherence of the images with the text” and portrayals of place-based identity relationships (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 126). At times this left us contemplating how to capture pictures of teacher-self as we wondered if ‘readings’ would reflect our intentions. In the end, we found that by talking through the meanings of our images, we learnt a great deal about each other and ourselves, this process in itself freed us to express “deeply felt knowledge” (Spouse 2000, p. 260) about our teacher identities. The process of creating through “artistic auto-ethnography” (Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 322) enlarged our ways of seeing links that have influenced conceptualisation of our teacher selves. As “...an authentic means of both introspection and expression” (Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 322), artistic auto-ethnography offers alternate ways of visualising experience by capturing elusive thoughts through representation. Whilst some might question the value of visual approaches (see Denzin &

Lincoln, 1994), there is growing acknowledgement that the visual provokes different ways of seeing and understanding experience. “No text can do everything at once. The perfect ethnography cannot be written” (Eisner, 1991; Denzin, 1997, p. 287). Arguing this point further, Scott-Hoy (2000, p. 323) wrote:

In an ever-changing world...there is a need to continue to push the boundaries of ethnography, in seeking to find forms of expression which are more accountable to subjects, more honest, more engaging and more likely to achieve the goal of empowering, understanding and improving lives.

In our auto-ethnographic journeying, working with visual modes of reflection assisted ‘finding’ and re-connection with our teacher identities. Embracing visual forms of reflection prompted us to let go of words and search for images that captured the ‘feeling’ aspects of our identity development. Whilst we returned to narrative to explain the meanings of experiences depicted, the visual remained our primary mode of identity representation to “evoke emotional responses from the audience” (Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 340). Acknowledging the cultural construction of images within time and place (see Chaplin, 1998) means we are also aware that our identities as teacher-researcher and teacher-director will continue to evolve, as will the culturally embedded images we use to express understanding of them. Given the discomfort such tensions of representation may present (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), our publicised ‘snap-shot’ of identities (experienced so far) both invite and challenge audiences to better understand ‘lived’ intersections of teaching journeys (Denzin, 1998), with meanings residing within social systems of learning and being in the world.

Looking Forward: The Continuing Journeying

So what space might aesthetic forms of reflection occupy in our everyday practice and have we been changed as a result? For Leanne, collaborative ways of exploring her visual self served to connect teacher-researcher identities and supported aesthetic ways of understanding learning-teaching experience. She continues seeking visual ways of exploring teachers’ understandings of identity in her research and remains committed to motivating others to pursue aesthetic modes of representation as a means of expanding knowing about self and the world. Apart from nourishing “perceptivity,” that is, “seeing what most people miss” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 92), multi-dimensional forms of gathering and representing (see Knowles & Thomas, 2002) identity prompt introspective insights into the emotionality of lived experience (Scott-Hoy, 2000). For Fiona, using multiple visual modes for exploring identity provided another way of seeing pieces of her teacher-director self, the visual

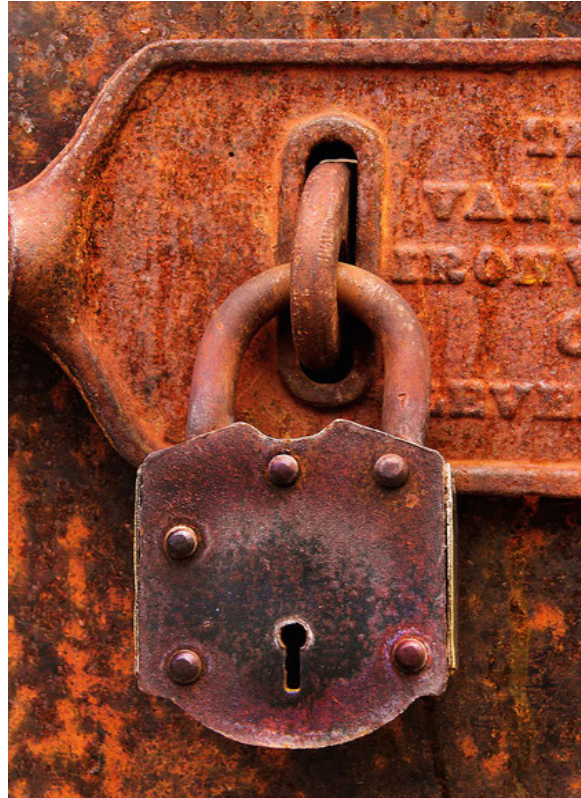
reaffirming concept of identities taking form in specific social contexts of knowledge and learning (for example, Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Inspired by our collaborative approach, Fiona has begun using aesthetic processes of reflection with her teaching team to encourage better understandings of teacher selves and deepen pedagogical relationships.

Our experiences with this new framework illustrate the power of using aesthetic modes as they seek richness, provoke thought and imbue reflections with greater presence (see also Knowles & Thomas, 2002). Placing emphasis on the emotional and relational nature of teaching journeys also opened opportunities to experience our identities through multiple personal and professional lenses, thereby connecting and bringing forth different aspects of self that have shaped our identities in time and place. We encourage others to take this journey as such ‘coming-together’ takes you from spaces of comfort to encounter new aesthetic territories of thinking and practice (Griffiths et al., 2009), and as we both discovered, there is much more to be learned.

Concluding Thoughts: Wider Implications

For teachers and qualitative academic audiences, using artistic auto-ethnography assists seeing of ‘the person’ behind the professional, and moves identity understandings beyond sociological methods focused on “rational order in the world” (Hochschild, 1983, as cited in Scott-Hoy, 2000, p. 339) to engage pictures of teachers that explore multiple aspects of place informing approaches to learning and teaching (see Knowles & Thomas, 2002). The “organic processes” of this multi-modal approach (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 131) resist ‘containment’ or programming of individual responses (Ellis, 1991) to explore the uniqueness of educational pathways taken and pedagogies adopted in teaching lives. As representations that have the power to transform approaches to pedagogy and practice, we urge those involved in educational research and teacher education to increase the prominence of visual forms of reflection in their methodologies and programs. In this way, modes of representing teachers’ identities are expanded to embrace “inquiry processes and methodological designs” (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 131) that reveal different meanings of teaching, prompting audiences beyond the educational community to begin interrogating prevalent images of early childhood teacher as ‘caretaker’ (see Weber & Mitchell, 1995, 1996). Building upon these understandings with an informed public audience can change how society sees our role, elevating the status (and ultimately the working conditions) of early childhood professionals.

REFLECTIVE TRACES: Fragments felt out-of-frame



On the Outside

(Photo from arbyreed, 2012)

*Feeling the gaze
my heart beats faster.
Looking has slowed, now fixed
collective eyes consider the new teacher.
With what?
Caution, hesitation, something else?
Eyes roam, assessing exteriority
up, down, and back again.
A point of rest finds focus on
my boots.
Looking has its own telling
an anomaly is present.
Swallowing hard
my confidence is shaken.
Introductions blur
keep smiling.*

*Words sweep past my face
murmurs caught on the breeze.
Feeling apart,
the 'me' behind outer layers is
politely dismissed.
Orientation done
a knowing sigh escapes.
My image doesn't 'fit'
I am on the outside.
With entry denied
belonging is questioned.
Recasting layers would be hard
the language of clothes had spoken.*

(Author) poem inspired by the work of Weber and Mitchell (1995)

Journal excerpt: What's in the picture?

In sharing the poem above I wanted to highlight my shaky entry into the world of early childhood education. Not merely as a tale of misadventure (there are positive developments that follow), but rather, to illustrate the power of dress in shaping our images of 'teacher' (see Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Coming from a graphic design background, I have always been fascinated by the communicative nature of the visual, particularly when it comes to the presentation of information and environmental design. With my serendipitous detour to early childhood education, I naively thought superficial baggage associated with self-packaging was behind me. However, as these 'beginnings' show, I had neglected to take into account prevailing images of 'teacher' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). What I considered to be tailored, slightly 'arty' attire (and my expression of individuality) had inadvertently disrupted a widely accepted non-threatening image of 'teacher' (see Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Stepping outside the archetype, I faced the very real prospect of being dismissed as an anomaly to the 'norm' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

Several weeks later after I had settled in and developed more familiar relationships with colleagues, the issue of dress...particularly 'the boots' came up and was openly discussed. As it turns out, my tailored black clothes (with flamboyant stitching) paired with calf length black boots had signaled concern. The sight of this 'dress' had intimidated and communicated a formal 'top-down' approach to teaching, learning, and nurturing team relationships (for discussion on leadership styles see Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley, & Shepherd,

2012). I was astounded. Ten years on, my colleagues and I still laugh about this ‘moment’ of stripping away booted misconceptions of self and pedagogy. Whilst I continue to wear clothes with artful splashes, and variations of ‘those boots’ in colder months, I do so with greater awareness of what they might mean to different people. As I discovered, understanding the visual codes of ‘teacher’ is important. Not only to uncover perceptions shaping interactions and expectations, but also, these images can diminish *who* we are as people and *how* we are as teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). I knew that I wanted to raise this issue in my research.

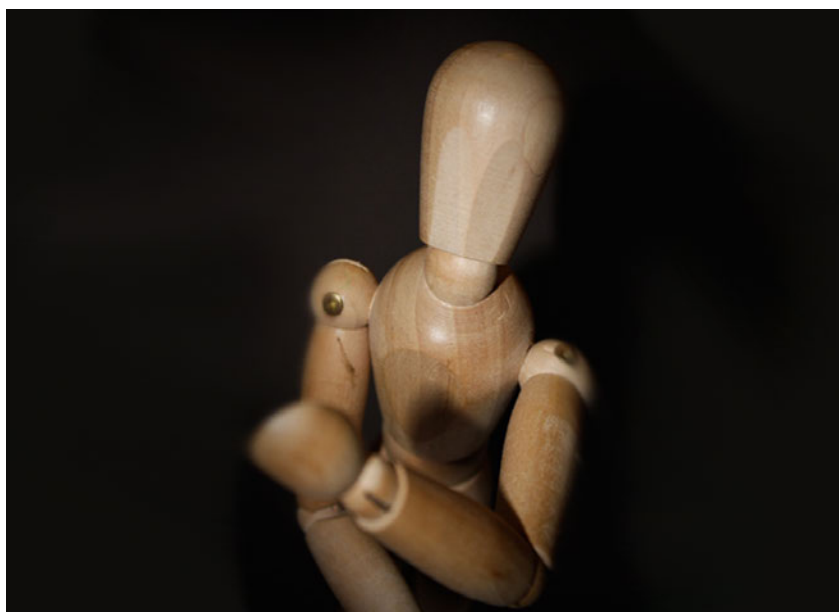
In need of deconstruction as noted by Weber and Mitchell (1995), I have long felt that the meanings behind popularised representations of ‘teacher’ are highly standardized. For instance, if a conservative image of teacher remains widely held, how does this affect teachers’ image of self? Who are we dressing for? Are we dressing solely for others to earn respect? Is “dressing well” a statement of the power and authority we exert over others (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 64)? Do we feel the need to conform to a particular ‘type’ of dress to achieve social acceptance? In this sense, has the dress (and image) of teacher been reduced to a one-dimensional form? If so, what are the consequences for teacher identity? Weber and Mitchell (1995, p. 55) assert- “clothes link social expectations and cultural variations to individual interpretation and expression” directly impacting “...beginning teachers’ sense of identity and...children’s perception of teachers”. With this knowledge in hand I was more than a little curious to pursue the analysis of teachers’ “clothing as text” (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 55).

Upon entering the doctoral program, one of the first discussions shared with my supervisor focused on the symbols of ‘teacher’. We both agreed that this area of research provided valuable links to teacher identity, was largely under-represented, and in need of further study. It was from this point that I began developing my methodology. I was determined to use aesthetic modes of reflection to explore how easily we slip into acceptance (and replication) of the “outfit” of teacher, instead of challenging what it actually means to us personally as teachers and people (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 70). Would there be other selves buried beneath stereotypes yet to be drawn? Using ‘the visual’, could understandings of teacher self be disrupted to form new images of life under “the banner of ‘teacher’” (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 71)? This is where Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) begins.

SITES OF INTERSECTION – THE FOURTH

INSTALMENT:

FORMS OF ERASURE



Forms of Erasure

(Photo from Gabe, 2009)

Forms of erasure

As I was assembling articles to form my thesis, I did initially question whether I had made the right decision positioning “Peeling away the red apple” as my ‘number 4’. After all, it had been travelling with me from the beginning, and as you are about to see, decidedly contests familiar ‘texts’ of teacher. As you read your way through, perhaps you might agree that casting off comfortable outfits of old takes time. We all need time to think about whether or not the outfit still ‘fits’ (see Weber & Mitchell, 1995). This is also true for the images we hold of teachers past, our present teacher selves, and who we hope to be as people and professionals in the future. Teachers themselves found they were immersed in a ‘refitting’ process when they became involved in this research. Likewise, I also travelled alongside and within their shoes as images revealed ideological linkages “to their social context” (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 130). Therefore, I suggest Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) sits comfortably where it is.

Looking back for a moment, previous 'Reflective traces' described the seamlessness within which "image texts" reinforce and perpetuate widely accepted concepts of 'teacher' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 128). As a 'living' example, my vignette highlights how teachers themselves, whilst not the original authors of popularised images, can unknowingly replicate "the cumulative cultural text that they embody" (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 130). In this sense, there is potential narrowing of personal concepts of teacher by assuming widely agreed forms (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Sharing my entry into early childhood education also illustrates how attentiveness to images can shift when new images are presented to interrupt "everyday conceptions of teacher" (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 128). So how do we make sense of teacher images? In what ways might chosen images influence teacher identities? For instance, my image offered interruption to the norm, opening wider interrogation of what constitutes 'teacher'. I felt at the time (and in many ways still do) that there is limited recognition of self to be found in prevailing stereotypes (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Reflecting back, I also wonder what might have happened had my personal image been ultimately rejected in this context. As a new graduate, was there real risk of identity erasure? I also wondered about the experience of other teachers? Had they encountered similar experiences? How do we possibly begin 'placing' constructions that serve to produce limiting (often fictitious) accounts of self (Walkerdine, 1990)? Returning to Weber and Mitchell (1995, p. 131), they offer the following- "By directing one's own 'teacher gaze' back and forth from popular images to oneself as teacher, it is possible to conduct a dialectical close reading that includes and situates the individual within the cumulative cultural text."

With this same sense of back-and-forthness, Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) examines the importance of understanding "what we make of images" and what we 'do' with them as a means of finding forms representative of self with others (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 130). More than this, through attentive unraveling of teacher images (see research question 1), we are better able to situate images of professional selves in ways that offer insights into past constructions and their influence on present self-understandings in particular social contexts (see research question 2).

Central to my approach in Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) is an attitude of attentiveness focused on capturing teachers' individual texts of self-as-teacher. Needless to say, the methodology itself remains a vital aesthetic thread for revealing challenges associated with "subconscious images" and their influence on the "intellectual and affective life" of teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 131).

The following 'At a glimpse' offers description of the project undertaken. Designed to provoke stirrings that challenge stereotypes, teachers were encouraged to identify teacher

images and their influence on past and present teacher selves. Through teachers' interactions with imagery sourced and generated, greater awareness of possible 'readings' was encouraged (see research question 3). With concept of 'teacher' open for continual review, encounters inviting fluidity and transformation became the revised text of 'self-as-teacher' (see Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

Publication 4 at a glimpse

Peeling away the red apple: Seeing anew the images shaping teachers' identities

The following chapter (Lavina, 2019) marks a significant touchstone exploring the influence of images in shaping teacher identity and practice. Using an aesthetic methodology (see Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017) developed early on in my candidature, I wanted to provoke critical readings of representations often accepted as "the model" of 'teacher' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. xi). This publication argues that our immersion in teacher stereotypes from an early age, (and the persistence of these images into adulthood), inadvertently affects how teachers see themselves as professionals and people working with young children. Designed to simplify the perception, value, and work of teachers, the persuasiveness of popularised images is hard to resist and all too easily establishes a set of "certain expectations" that teachers need to live up to or dismantle when confronted with the realities of the classroom (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 3).

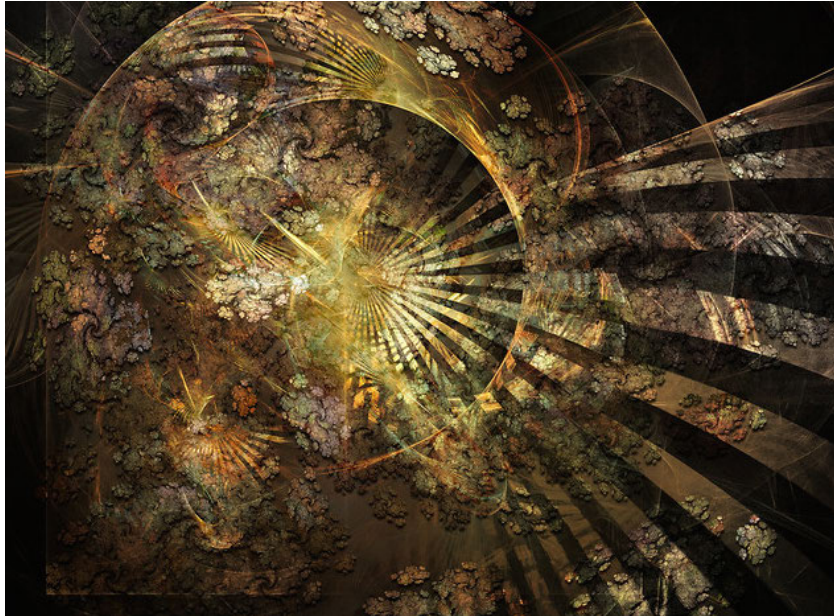
With these tensions in mind, the aesthetic nature of the methodology was used in Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019) as both introduction and scaffold for teachers to uncover convenient myths and search within for imagery embodying their true teacher selves (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Beginning with recollection of stereotypes often encountered in childhood, participating teachers were encouraged to tease free connections and ambiguities associated with images of 'teacher'. Using these understandings, past and present images of self-as-teacher were created and assembled to critically evaluate the potential influence of representations over time on developing identities. Anchored by Sharmaine's personal teacher journey, this chapter describes teachers' multi-modal narratives of identity and teaching. Consistent with publisher word-length requirements, images are omitted. Therefore, I invite you to delve into the aesthetic dimensions of words as descriptions of teachers' imagery step outside dominant positioning (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). In this chapter, teachers' own texts reclaim identities. Reflecting self as person AND professional, they offer situated interpretations

that “dissolves...polarities” to meaningfully capture their life and work (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 139).

Pages 125-138 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material under copyright. Removed contents published as:

Lavina, L. (2019) Peeling away the red apple: seeing anew the images shaping teachers' identities, in Andi Salamon, Angela Chng (Eds.), *Multiple early childhood identities* (pp. 65-81). Routledge.

REFLECTIVE TRACES: Fragments felt out-of-frame



Sensing Space

(Photo from Helen, 2010)

Spaces that sense...
voices, movements, light and shade.
Delicate surfaces and whispers.
Spaces that mingle...
rough and smooth edges.
Wood, stone, metal and glass.
Spaces that seek...
the rumble of laughter and quiet of silence.
Together, alongside and alone.
Spaces that renew...
imagining, possibilities and wondering why.
Questions and theories.
Spaces that green...
roaming, hiding and discovering.
To find and be found in nature.

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Suzanne Thomas (2004a)

Journal excerpt: Travelling pieces of self

Orr (2013) claims that, through our experiences in a place we come to better understand others, and ourselves, stabilising sense-of-self. In telling my story of place, personal and professional selves are seen as inseparably woven in a particular *landscape* (see Orr, 2013); the nature of my 'inhabitation', that is, how I make sense of the social and natural systems of place, directly influencing personal constructions of identity (Orr, 2013). It was this concept, along with the creative works of Creates' (1991) installation *Places of Presence*, which led me to pursue identity connections to place in Publication 5 (Lavina, in press), not merely as "nostalgic interest": but as 'living' stories of teachers' experience; intersecting relational and spatial histories that "are elusive, fragile, and improbable" at first glance (Creates, 1991, para. 3). Situating teachers' stories of identity development across shifting *places* recognises the processes of adaptation that occur as we learn "how to behave" and present our teacher selves in new socio-cultural contexts (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 398).

Place connectedness is a concept that moves me to my core, revealing a vulnerable ever-shifting self I remain at odds with at times; so much so, that I have found it quite challenging to write about. Leading up to this section of my thesis, there have always seemed to be errands to run, rooms to clean, and a steady stream of tea breaks taking me away from discussion of place links to identity. Pushing aside avoidance strategies and stripping away self-protective layers, I now share the importance of 'seeing' place significance as a means of getting to the heart of why the social, cultural, and geographic aspects of place merit discussion alongside teacher identity. Returning to autoethnography in Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019), you may recall reference to my wattle tree and the small details of nature, sparking imaginative childhood wonderings and a sense of well-being within the natural world. Indeed, as I indicated in that article, these traces continue to find their way into my teaching practice, and my life. I recently wrote a poem reflecting on the importance of my connectedness with the green aspects of place and how this links with heightening sensory attunement in early childhood environments:

Without question, green spaces remain a powerful touchstone, connecting both my ecological embeddedness and ancestral sense of place (Orr, 2007). Therefore, I find myself stumbling for words to adequately describe the emotionality associated with shifting geographic, social, and cultural landscapes. Indeed, such transience has characterised my life experience in recent years. As a former 'Sydney-sider', that is, a person living in Sydney, leaving traces of professional and personal self behind has heightened awareness of how I

have 'lived local' through my attachments to people, groups, communities and geographies (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015). Adopting a place-based perspective, it might easily be argued that the seemingly relentless sprawl of built urban environments centred on 'architectural markers of progress' such as unit blocks, housing estates and shopping centres inhibits true "place...affinity" (Orr, 2007, p. 50) with the natural environment, and in many respects I tend to agree. Whilst such structures offer essential conveniences and services, it could be said that their homogenous characteristics serve to preserve "a sense of habitat shaped by familiarity" rather than an "affinity for what nature-not humans has done in a particular location and the competence to live accordingly" (Orr, 2007, p. 50). Having spent my childhood in the rolling gum-spotted hills of the Hunter Valley- often referred to as 'wine country'; a move to Sydney 18 years ago ignited a very real sense of "deplacement" as nature was replaced with concrete (Orr, 2013, p. 184). Working in the city and living in an apartment block, gone were the sights and smells of green; the seasonality of nature, crops and farm produce. As preserved fragments, green spaces awaited visitation when time permitted. Towering clusters of glass and steel swallowed this newly encountered landscape. In sharp contrast to the unyielding presence of skyscrapers, human movement on the ground bended and weaved its way through 'hardened' streamlined networks. With a sense of coming from and going 'elsewhere', one never stood still (Orr, 2013; 2007). In the beginning, such an environment felt as if it needed to be 'survived'. Several years later, when finances allowed, moving into a 'tree house' adjoining a National Park in the outer suburbs rekindled place connectedness, and I began my personal process of standing still in a place to feel the essential livingness of being where I am (Orr, 2007). As Orr suggests- "I do not think that one can plan to become attached or centred in a place. It takes time, patience, and perhaps poverty, but most certainly a great deal of necessity" (2007, p. 50).

Moving forward, I now live between two families and countries in a place where language, socio-political, cultural and educational systems differ from my experience. At times, I have found these "interconnected dimensions" shaping people and place to sharply contrast with my personal beliefs, values and knowledge, resulting in what might be described as a fragmented place-based identity (Ardoin, 2006, p. 112). Whilst I sense my shifting identity will require time and effort to fully accommodate understanding of my new surrounds (see Orr, 2007), I find myself listening to 'the details' of *this* place- nuances of sounds, textures, people and animals in lightness and darkness (as I did in my childhood and early adulthood), in the hope that I find ways to understand "the mysteries" of this place and my situatedness within it (Orr, 2007, p. 52).

Returning once more to Orr, I am reminded of the fact that “time” and “commitment” (Orr, 2007, p. 50) is necessary to “become an inhabitant and not merely a resident” (Orr, 2013, p. 188). Living in an archipelago with high levels of poverty and social disadvantage, I am acutely aware of the little things we do every day that impact nature and “our relationship to our own places” (Orr, 2013, p. 188). The other day I investigated my home’s wastewater treatment system, which essentially amounted to a concretised hole in the ground with a channel directing waste out to sea...I was horrified; aghast that my actions had resulted in a boggy mess underfoot that threatened to contaminate a protected marine reserve! After solving ‘the problem’ bucket-by-bucket into the septic tank, I calmed down sufficiently to fully examine why this event had so disturbed me. It was the automated sense of detachment associated with my earlier actions. When living in Australia, I’d never given great thought to residential water waste, or ‘grey water’, as the consequences were largely hidden from view. Systems were in place for networks to contain and channel waste “somewhere else” (Orr, 2013, p. 184) for ‘someone else’ to deal with. Reflecting on this reality, I have come to realise that in some ways the ‘hiddenness’ of systems i.e. foods and materials imported, exported, waste moved or transported elsewhere, inhibits our seeing of ‘bondedness’ “to other places” (Orr, 2013, p. 186). Arguably, in the “abstractness” of these activities, opportunity to identify ways of improving processes and developing “greater self-reliance” is also diminished, with little care for place beyond what local experience is able “to gratify” (Orr, 2013, p. 186).

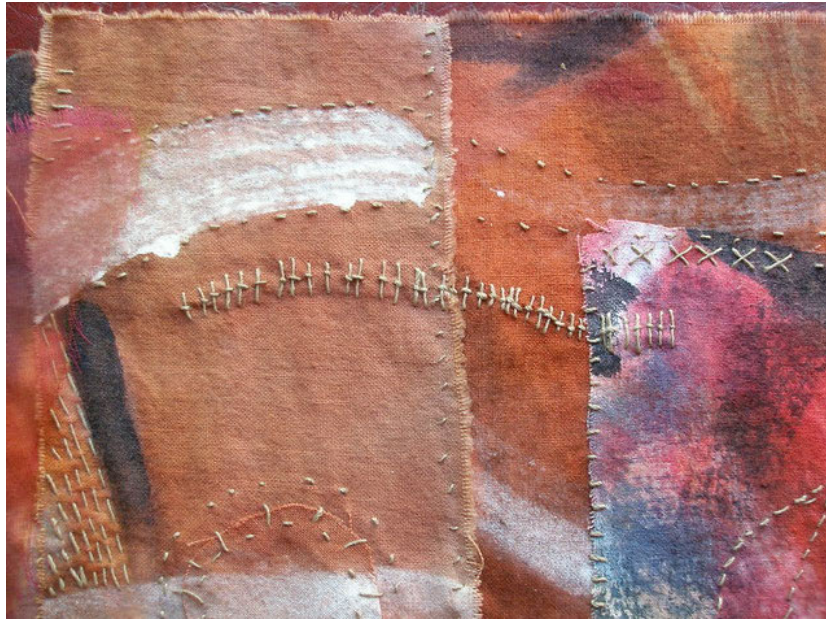
Such an event reinforced growing realisation that this island was slowly becoming ‘my place’. I cared about what happened to it, I held myself accountable for actions rippling beyond the boundaries of my ‘home’. Even though “distances in culture, worldview and perspectives...still separated me from many of the people around me” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 391), I felt from others genuine curiosity about my presence as neighbour and visiting ‘play-learn’ teacher to a local nursery school (for children aged 3-5 years) in my community. As my intentions to stay rather than ‘just visit’ become more widely known, I find conversations more easily move beyond pleasantries, to discuss grittier educational issues affecting children and families. The fact that I also experience the same frustrations associated with ‘brown outs’, no water, seasonal flooding and traffic chaos (in motorised and animal forms), also seems to lessen my ‘outsideness’. Whilst my ‘whiteness’ remains a visible difference, my hope is that as I continue cultivating personal and professional relationships, my presence here, and indeed this place, will gradually become ‘less strange’. There is still some way to go, but as I have come to understand, feeling ‘local’ takes time. As an evolving ‘lived’ dialogue, connectedness cannot be rushed (Orr, 2007). In this sense, my personal story of teacher self-in-place will continue to

build and shed different 'parts' as I "journey toward a new teaching self" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 387).

SITES OF INTERSECTION – THE FIFTH

INSTALMENT:

LIVING THREADS



Patching Place(s)

(Photo from Joy, 2010)

*Floating in spaces of silence,
I seek to unite disparate geographies.
To see beauty in fragmented experiences
displaced across time and place.
Soaring above the present,
memories take flight and long for familiar threads
of sounds, smells, and textures farewellled.
Hidden from the wide-awake world
traces scatter across wistful thoughts,
past belongings beckon my return.
Living across geographies pulls and probes,
ever changing, ever moving, seldom still.
Shifting sands of consciousness
stir feelings deep within,
pieces of self are left, not forgotten.*

(Author) poem inspired by the poetry of Suzanne Thomas (2004a)

Patching place(s)

My fifth and final publication in many ways expands upon the methodological approach developed in Publication 1 (Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017). Consistent with earlier thinking to recognise connectedness between personal and professional experiences-in-context (Knowles & Thomas, 2002), I explore in greater detail, place as a socio-cultural 'site' of stories past and those continually unfolding (Weade & Ernst, 1990). In so doing, I seek teachers' perspectives on significant place-based experiences influencing how they have developed seeing of their teacher selves within ecological systems of understanding (see Orr, 2013). Returning to the work of Creates (1991), the design of my methodology was inspired to provoke broader concepts of place within and beyond the classroom. Asking participating teachers to situate reflections on teacher selves across professional and personal experience (see 'place' questions Lavina, in press), presents opportunities for pieces of histories that may have been left behind or forgotten to resurface...at least that was my intention. Given my own 'placed' experience with shifting socio-cultural geographies (see previous 'Reflective traces'), I felt that pursuing a place-based approach had potential for unearthing struggles and intensities of experience secretly held, especially when beliefs and values potentially disrupt the flow of established social systems of thinking and 'being' a teacher in a particular context (see research question 1) (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). With emphasis on 'shiftedness', that is, how 'concept of place' (and our sense of connectedness) shifts given the prevalence of increasingly mobile selves (see Orr, 2013), exploring where we have been, where we are, and where we are going as people and professionals, seems crucial for assisting self-understandings (Gross & Hochberg, 2016), and supporting a more stable sense of teacher identity (Lavina, in press).

Consistent with previous methodological layering, my Creates (1991) inspired aesthetic methodology (Lavina et al., 2017) alongside *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2001) and *portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) provided the flexible framework needed to bring together, tease apart and re-form multiple aesthetic dimensions of teacher selves being 'pictured' through a variety of media across time and place, (see research questions 2 and 3). Whilst Publication 5 (Lavina, in press) may seem to 'neatly wrap' place-based forms of data analysis, the finality of reflecting on the last pieces of 'data' left me wondering about fragments that never quite made the page, or became lost in publisher requirements and word counts. Whilst I have maintained a thematic form of data analysis throughout publications, I intend to bring further clarity to my selection and interpretation of data in the following 'Reflective traces'. Deciding 'what counts' (and revealing my process) is important, as I deliberately chose to step outside conventional linearity and objectivity to invite emotionality and sensitivities to data

representation and analysis (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008). What this means is that navigation becomes less certain as stories are gradually threaded, with emerging traces sparking *feeling* connections within the participant and the researcher as relatedness is seen and significant entanglements explored (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008). For now, I introduce my fifth publication as a significant place-based encounter. Indeed, 'unlocking' understandings of connection between people, places, spaces and objects renew seeing of challenges often associated with socio-cultural forces influencing personal and professional journeys of identity development (Lavina, in press).

Publication 5 at a glimpse

Identity and place-based teacher identities: What connects across diverse personal and professional landscapes?

My final publication (Lavina, in press) explores connections between self and place in ways that recognise our embeddedness in shifting socio-cultural systems of thinking, behaving, and living (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004; Orr, 2013). Provoking different ways of seeing teacher selves in place beyond relational aspects of 'being', geographic characteristics of the environment are also seen as entangled with how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and enact pedagogies in particular contexts (see Gross & Hochberg, 2016). What becomes evident in this process is the 'livingness' of big and small interactions occurring within and beyond the classroom, and the affects on teacher identity when differing values or pedagogical approaches are encountered (Lavina, in press). Conscious seeing of storied selves as situated within social and physical landscapes of understanding is seen to support teachers' sense of 'belonging' in a place (see Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, 2000), with aesthetic modes of reflection (see Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017) discussed as a useful framework for strengthening teacher identity and pedagogy to sustain self and practice.

PUBLICATION 5

Identity and place-based teacher identities: What connects across diverse personal and professional landscapes?

Lavina, L. (in press). Identity and place-based teacher identities: What connects across diverse personal and professional landscapes? *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*.

ABSTRACT

Given that identity continually evolves within socio-cultural contexts of meaning, is there any perceived connectedness between place-based identity and the development of teacher identity? How might shifting personal and professional stories of experience influence teachers' sense of place, whereby place is conceptualised through interconnected ways of living and working in time and place with others in early childhood contexts? In this ongoing Sydney-based project, six teachers working in prior-to-school (long day care) settings critically reflected on and represented their identity journeys across professional experience. Using a new place-based framework for exploring identity development, teachers traced their encounters with place(s), with multi-modal forms of representation and reflection supporting teachers' re-examination of significant biography events and social-cultural locatedness. Using aesthetic ways of thinking and representing, this article provides insight into the place-based nature of early childhood teachers' lives and work, illustrating the interwoven nature of teacher identity often formed 'out of view'. Challenges associated with shifting personal and professional terrains are clarified, opening possibilities for renewal of pedagogies and transformation of identity

Introduction

There has been much interest in exploring teachers' identity development, with stories of teachers' lives predominantly forming this important body of research (Carter, 1993; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, 2000). Whilst teachers' stories of experience concretise socio-cultural nuances shaping teaching lives in diverse educational contexts (Kelchtermans, 1993), increasing examination of shifting socio-political forces show connection between teachers' conceptualisation of their roles and lived experiences (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Cumming, Sumsion, & Wong, 2015; Woodrow, 2007). Understanding teachers' work within

socio-cultural frameworks is crucial to understanding how teachers form a “teaching self” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 387) within educational and larger societal communities, where a “sense of rootedness, responsibility and belonging” is integrated across experiences with others in context (Orr, 2013, p. 184). In this sense, place is seen as encompassing “a variety of...social, economic, and political...microsystems”, whereby concept of place is understood as an interrelated “ecosystem” of geographic and relational aspects (Orr, 2013, p. 186). Widening concepts of teaching, teacher self and ‘the classroom’ through these linkages reveals what can be learned about teacher identity and “the notion of place itself” in teachers’ thinking and practice (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 388).

Looking closely at Sumsion’s (2003) longitudinal case study using metaphors to explore the initial burgeoning and eventual career decline of an early childhood teacher, we are offered layered readings into the importance of situating “cultural storylines...and practices” beyond the confines of the classroom (p. 67). Indeed, by denying the relational nature of teaching and retreating inward when faced with disparate practices, Sumsion (2003) found possibilities for identifying and expanding discourses of practice were limited. Curtailing “active engagement in place” essentially restricts knowing of self and others, the effect being detachment of self from place (Malpas, 1999, p. 177). Similarly, Carter (1995, p. 326) discusses the importance of framing teacher stories within “local understandings”, whereby emphasis is placed on teachers’ frameworks of experience, with pedagogical choices and practices viewed as an “interplay of self and situation” (p. 327). Encouraging teachers to situate images of teaching alongside more extensive educational discourses also avoids being held captive by personal stories, expanding knowledge and experience (Grumet, 1988). Whilst these examples position the classroom as a space for teachers’ work dialogued within broader educational worlds of knowledge and socio-cultural exchange, they do not explicitly identify the importance of ‘place’ as location embodying personal histories and a grounded sense of self (Orr, 1992).

‘Place-based education’ has received increasing scholarly attention from educational theorists such as Gruenewald (2003, p. 3), merging geographical ways of “living and learning” (Green, Cormack, & Nixon, 2007, p. 77) in place to connect teachers’ “seeing, knowing and understanding” of pedagogy and practice in place (Cresswell, 2004, p. 11). Given Cresswell’s (2004) understanding of place in terms of geographic connectedness to the environment, specifying place as lived and observed is key to affirming place significance beyond homogenised networks of commercial and residential built-scapes (Orr, 1992). Recognising how ordinary interactions contribute to a centred or displaced sense of being and belonging

“in a place” (Orr, 1992, p. 125) affirms how we effect and are affected by the relational, political and physical dimensions of place (Gruenewald, 2003; Malpas, 1999). Human experiences of place are becoming increasingly mobile, that is, we often journey between spaces of home and work as “resident(s) [emphasis added]” rather than “inhabitant(s) [emphasis added]” without consciously experiencing landscapes or communities (Orr, 2013, p. 188). Such pervasive “loss of place” re-ignites discussion of teacher identity, as this displacement directly “affects all aspects of education and teaching”, affirming the central importance of “place in teaching” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 388).

Conceptualising place as a “complex mosaic” of social and geographic experiences shaping teachers’ lives and work (Orr, 1992, p. 125), this article examines the identity journeys of six early childhood teachers in Sydney, Australia. Potential personal and pedagogical challenges are highlighted along with opportunities resulting from shifting teaching lives across local (Australian) and international landscapes (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). Using an aesthetic place-based framework (Lavina et al., 2017), teachers’ stories of identity development are presented through events of personal and professional significance where understandings of firmly-‘placed’ teacher selves are seen as evolving along a continuum of intra and interpersonal experience (Casey, 1993; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004; Lavina et al., 2017).

Anchored by frames capturing Abby’s teaching journey, participating teachers’ stories of identity begin with a brief overview of the Australian early childhood educational landscape. Often characterised by arbitrary socio-political forces at local and national levels, shifting political priorities impinge on teachers’ professional identities within both personal and wider community understanding.

Teacher identity is then discussed in terms of place-connectedness, with “knowledge of a place- where you are and where you come from...intertwined with knowledge of who you are” (Orr, 1992, p. 130). Relating teachers’ sense of place to ‘belonging’, discussion of Australia’s national curriculum framework, the *Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF): Belonging, Being and Becoming* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2009) follows as it influences teachers’ place-based identities of lived experience (Erwin, 2017; Orr, 1992). Outline of the aesthetic framework of the methodology is next, with teacher recruitment and the nature of information collection described. Themes characterising teachers’ place-based identities are then developed as negotiated understandings between the researcher and teacher participants.

Reflection on the value of place in education as it relates to teachers' identity development, belonging, and pedagogical orientation is discussed. Place is shown as integral to untangling understandings of self and practice in early childhood contexts. Finally, the aesthetic framework used in this research is discussed as a useful tool for engaging teachers' reflection on place-connections. As a means of unlocking deeper examination of teachers' identity development, linking visual modes of reflection is seen to strengthen pedagogical frameworks for sustaining practice.

Early childhood education in Australia: Shifting socio-political discourses

To better understand the politics positioning contemporary images of early childhood education in Australia, we need to examine briefly several historic discourses, political decisions, and community attitudes affecting the work of early childhood teachers. Research suggests a strongly feminised workforce, with pedagogies of nurture and care contributing to undermining early childhood education and reducing teachers' professionalism to 'women's work' (Wong, 2006). With media coverage and political action appearing to reinforce 'natural' mothering discourses associated with the theory and action of work in early childhood (see Cannella, 1997), "the primary image of mothering" appears to prevail (Sumsion & Barnes, 2010, p. 40). On the surface, nurturing discourses might appear appropriate when situated with attachment theories (Cannella, 1997), however, many contest, that such care imagery has seen the complex pedagogical nature of teachers' work in early childhood contexts pushed "to the margins of legitimacy" (Woodrow, 2007, p. 236) (see also Ailwood, 2008; Cannella, 1997; Wong, 2006), with prior-to-school early learning services seen as 'place holders' before 'real' education begins at school (Cheeseman, Sumsion, & Press, 2015; Woodrow, 2007).

Differentiated prior-to-school service types such as long day care centres (operating up to 11 hours daily 50 weeks of the year) and preschools (often attached to and/or aligned with school hours and terms of operation) have also resulted in salary gaps and community misconceptions, creating pedagogical divisions between prior-to-school service types (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Cumming, Sumsion, & Wong, 2015). For instance, teachers working in preschools earn higher salaries when compared to teachers with the same degree qualification working in long day care. Different working conditions seemingly reinforce dichotomies of 'care' (long day care) and more school-focused preparatory 'education' (preschool), arguably "narrowing definition of 'teacher' as one who works only with classes of children in school settings" (Woodrow, 2007, p. 236). Even so, teachers working in preschools

have yet to achieve pay parity or improved working conditions comparable with their school-based counterparts (Bretherton, 2010; Productivity Commission, 2014). These problematic conditions ultimately perpetuate “status differentials”, lowering the perceived professionalism of teachers working in prior-to-school services, leading to erosion of identities, resilience, and determination to remain in the prior-to-school sector (Cumming et al., 2015, p. 8; Woodrow, 2007). As a result, undergraduate early childhood teachers in the early stages of their program appear to envisage employment in primary schools (Ashton & Elliott, 2006, as cited in Woodrow, 2007), suggesting that “pay and conditions” greatly influence career pathways (Woodrow, 2007, p. 239).

As children’s learning and development within socio-cultural systems of meaning is “often poorly understood and minimised”, engaging community-oriented discourses to effect policy change is needed, whereby the importance of highly educated early childhood teachers is emphasised (Cheeseman, Sumsion, & Press, 2015; Woodrow, 2007, p. 240). The introduction of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) in 2009 addressed many of these concerns, promoting children’s capabilities and sense of agency along with a focus on reciprocal relationships with families and communities (DEEWR, 2009). Changing care discourses through policy initiatives such as the EYLF reclaims the learning value of early childhood education and reinforces it as an “important pedagogical space” (Woodrow, 2007, p. 240). Although concepts of early childhood education continue to be negotiated, and teacher identities “buffeted by competing policy discourses” (Woodrow, 2007, p. 240), capacity-building “through sustained critical reflection on practice” (Cumming et al., 2015, p. 12) can affirm personally meaningful and contextually relevant discourses of professionalism (Osgood, 2010). In turn, a culture of ‘resisting norms’ is supported, building resilience and sustaining professional identities (see Fenech, Sumsion, & Shepherd, 2010).

Placed identities: Embodiments of geography, relatedness and experiences

As teachers’ identity development is “negotiated, lived, and practiced” (Gross & Hochberg, 2016, p. 1244), exploring teachers’ connectedness with place and formation of professional-identities-in-place(s) seems an important avenue to pursue, given that strong teacher identity directly affects feelings of self-efficacy, especially for early-career teachers (Gross & Hochberg, 2016). Aligned with Fenech and colleagues’ (2010) reconstruction of early childhood settings as pedagogical sites of normative resistance and professional capacity-building (see also Lenz-Taguchi, 2006), ‘place’ offers additional understandings necessary for

making sense of teacher identities. This may strengthen pedagogies through recognition of multiple content, relational, and environmental knowledges brought forward to teaching in early childhood contexts (Gross & Hochberg, 2016). Inseparable from these aspects is the influence of culture in shaping our beliefs, language, learning, and knowledge within a place (Apple, Lemus, & Semken, 2014). As “place-based knowledge” is given meaning through a “richer understanding of culture and place”, teaching approaches need to consider how diverse knowledges ‘in place’ inform practice (Apple et al., 2014, p. 2).

Valuing place through a “multitude” of tellings recognises the inherent complexities associated with notions of place and avoids simplifying points of view as “there are as many natural worlds and senses of place as there are different people” (van Eijck & Roth, 2010, p. 880). Therefore, this research assumes a holistic framework for viewing and reflecting on teachers’ identity development within and outside formal contexts of learning, as the ‘self’ teachers bring to the classroom reveals multiple values and understandings of teaching, learning and living in a place, directly influencing pedagogy and practice (Lavina et al., 2017). Specifically, the extent to which teachers engage possibilities embracing “eco-systemic” (p. 77) connectedness beyond “the...human world” (p. 78) largely determines the ‘margins’ of place explored with children and the meanings assigned to seeing self in physical and relational spaces of experience (Green, Cormack, & Nixon, 2007).

Placing belonging: Situating teacher identity

To better understand connectedness with place as central to the formation of strong identities, I return to the EYLF, where overarching principles of ‘belonging’, ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ are discourses for integrating “ecological well-being and sustainability...as well as citizenship and personal agency” in teachers’ work with young children (Erwin, 2017, p. 59). As teachers working in early childhood contexts live out these ideologies with children, they become deeply embedded ways of negotiating teaching and learning worlds (Erwin, 2017). Therefore, exploring teachers’ stories of experience as they relate to their developing identities and sense of belonging in a place (Gross & Hochberg, 2016) is important for identifying cultural, social and physical conditions (Sobel, 2004) that affirm perceptions of personal and professional selves. Pedagogical frameworks are constructed within this dialogic exchange as teachers live the “place worlds” (Basso, 1996, p. 7) they conceptualise (van Eijck & Roth, 2010). To support teachers’ exploration of place and its influence on their teacher identity development, a new place-based aesthetic methodology was developed for

uncovering and revisiting histories of self, learning and teaching experience (Lavina et al., 2017) as described below.

A place-based framework: Locating understandings of teacher identities

This research used an arts-informed approach to explore the identity journeys of six degree-qualified early childhood teachers working in prior-to-school long day care settings (see Lavina, 2019). Of the six participating teachers, four had a level of familiarity with the researcher having worked at the same or 'sister' long-day care centre. The other two had no previous relationship with the researcher. All participants worked at community-based not-for-profit long day care centres in Sydney. Two were early career teachers, one had over 10 years experience in the sector. The other three were currently assuming specific leadership roles i.e. assistant director/director. Creation of this place-based aesthetic framework took inspiration from the works of Marlene Creates (1991) a photographer, artist and poet from Newfoundland, Canada, who explored connectedness with place alongside personal histories shaped by larger social influences. Re-imagining Creates' work as interpreted by Knowles and Thomas (2002), my project sought to capture teachers' place-based stories of experience using multi-modal forms of representation. As lived accounts of learning and teaching in early childhood contexts, these stories offer honest insights into the socio-cultural forces influencing identity development. Given the complex political realities impacting early childhood education in Australia, deeper understanding of the influence of place in teachers' identity development brings light to immediate lived events and broader national interests affecting teachers' identities.

Using found images, drawings, photos, narratives and artifacts, teachers involved in this 14 week project created 'aesthetic frames' depicting their evolving identities over time (see Lavina et al., 2017). Specific questions introduced at each interview (further described below) served to progressively draw out teachers' developing understandings of self and practice over time. Similar to the approach adopted by Knowles and Thomas, it was hoped that inviting teachers from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, family structures, and teaching experience would reveal "their varied experiences of place" and identity development in place in "multiple and authentic ways" (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 125). Over 3 interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on questions and create representations as follows:

Interview 1

1. What is your earliest memory of 'teacher' (photo/sourced image).
 - 1.1 How do you picture your professional image of self (photo/sourced image)?
 - 1.2 In what ways have your learner experiences influenced your present self-image?
 - 1.3 Identify a place of personal significance (photo/sourced image/drawing). What makes this place memorable?

Interview 2

- 2.1 Draw a picture of your pre-service/early career and present teacher self.
- 2.2 Describe your personal understandings of these representations.

Interview 3

- 3.1 Create a narrative of self-as-teacher and teaching experience.
- 3.2 Identify and discuss an artifact (object) that reflects your teacher identity (see Lavina et al., 2017).

During data collection, at least a week was left between interviews for teachers to create and reflect on developing representations of evolving identities. As most participating teachers had not previously expressed self-understandings through visual media, informal interviews were seen to open 'meaning points' of discussion to clarify representations and ensure authentic interpretations (Bown & Sumsion, 2007). As an additional measure, to ensure teachers were comfortable with adopting visual modes of reflection and representation, I made myself available in the lead-up to interviews for potential discussion of personal meanings associated with image-making processes. This step was important in affirming the communicative value of images (rather than artistry) associated with teachers' creation of visual imagery (Weber, 2008).

As I am concerned with uncovering and renewing understanding of the contexts of teachers' identity development beyond local sites, a final focus group followed by a public installation viewing of teachers' assembled aesthetic frames was held at Macquarie University. Extending audiences beyond participating teachers ensured that representations of teachers' thought and work were honored as felt and immersive 'frames' (Knowles & Thomas, 2002). As a platform of engagement, education students, academics, and other interested early childhood professionals/administrators were invited (Lavina, Niland & Fleet, under review). Multiple textures of teachers' stories were "witnessed" as "collective enquiry" (Knowles &

Thomas, 2002, p. 129), giving voice to teaching worlds so often marginalised in prior-to-school (long day care) educational contexts.

Place-based identities: Organising the telling of frames

Thinking through seven linked representations as outlined above, teachers traced their experiences of identity development in place. Analysis alongside the researcher involved moving between the seven 'aesthetic frames' of teacher selves to identify the symbolic meanings and narrative qualities these shared stories expressed (Bullough, 1991, 2010). Far from being confined to researcher interpretation, teachers were active in untangling meanings and assessing for themselves the extent to which events had influenced understandings of self, knowledge, and teaching experience, as in processes used by Knowles and Thomas (2002). This involved objective viewing and discussion of 'aesthetic frames' across interviews, the focus group, and installation, with intersections between personal experiences and teaching lives individually and collaboratively examined (note strategies in Denzin, 1998; Lavina et al., 2017; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). As windows into teachers' thinking, multiple forms of imagery renewed insights into everyday teaching experiences (Leavy, 2009), the visual nature of creation and reflection processes connecting missing pieces (see Greene, 2000) of 'self and self-in-place' influencing teachers' identity development. As reflections were shared and various forms of visual and textual information assembled, "points of resonance emerged and connections began to unfold" (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 126).

The reflective nature of the installation itself, along with the visibility of self-in-frame, assisted teachers' uncovering of "connections...between interior and exterior landscapes" of experience; with concepts of place and developing identities understood through "self and place, self and world" relationships (Knowles & Thomas, 2002, p. 127). As teachers engaged with and revisited aesthetic frames, the following four 'identity-in-place' themes were collaboratively identified: Relatedness - with nature, with others, with 'belonging', and with artifacts. Whilst these themes sometimes intersect, collectively they capture teachers' understandings of developing identities over time and within place. Participating teachers affirmed themes of resonance proposed by the researcher in personal interviews, and/or collectively in the focus group. As I further reflected on themes informally identified in conversations, developing theme labeling and analysis was also shared with teachers to ensure accurate representation and authentic accounts of their teaching lives-in-place (Bown &

Sumsion, 2007). As multi-layered place-based stories of teaching experience and identity development, aesthetic frames reveal the power of place in shaping teachers' stories.

Below I introduce Abby's frames as they relate to place themes. Along with selected aesthetic frames from other participating teachers, they illustrate journeys of evolving teacher identity, with "place-consciousness" - connection between educational and larger socio-cultural contexts of meaning, influencing sense of belonging and being in a place (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 642). Following analysis of themes identified in teachers' frames, I offer my reflections on "what might be learned from these stories" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 390). In this discussion, personal histories, knowledge, and relationships are all seen as related issues influencing placed pedagogies and the identities of early childhood teachers. Finally, opportunities to revisit and affirm place-based understandings through multiple aesthetic modes are presented as valuable for supporting teachers' stable sense of self in place.

Identity-in-place: Relatedness with nature

Abby's strong sense of identity was directly linked with the "physical and biological patterns" (Orr, 1992, p. 129) of her childhood in Sri Lanka. When reflecting on her earliest memories of 'teacher', images of rule-bound, strict and distanced teacher-learner relationships prevailed. Indeed Abby's place "on top of the hill" at the back of her house was identified as a place to re-examine power relationships and "be who you are in that place" (personal communication, October 16, 2014). In this sense, Abby's belonging was attached to specific landmarks, with 'the hill' setting the stage for re-imagined teacher-student scenarios where she envisaged herself in a role of authority (see also Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). As Abby comments in

Figure 5.1:

Behind my house there's a hill; on top of the hill like we have rocks and trees. I go there, I wear my mum's sari, I go out there and teach to the grass. That's always, that's my place. I go up there. That's my place when I'm happy, that's my place when I'm sad.

...

I will take my two little brothers with me. They had to be the students, [I would be a] strict teacher. So I'd sit there and then I'd teach them. I'd teach them everything. [They need] to listen.

A lot of things, discipline, "You need to sit down", "You need to listen to me, you need to cross your legs" ...So things like that and then if they're not here, I'll teach the grass; I talk to the grass.

Photo of personal place (location)

significant place of meaning



REFERENCE:
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d7/Crace_Hill_rocks.jpg

This is the place is similar to the image, similar to - because this is similar one, I can't get the exact one [photo].

I had to ring my dad the other day to get him take a photo there because my house, behind my house there's a hill, on top of the hill like we have rocks and trees. I go there, I wear my mum's sari, I go out there and teach to the grass. That always, that's my place. I go up there, I - that's my place when I'm happy, that's my place when I'm sad.

So I always go up there and - because my mum, when she come from shopping or somewhere she take off her sari and put on the wrap. I just grab her sari, I wear it because I know the way she wears it, I copy her. I put the sari on, I am going up in this ruler. I'm taking the ruler with me.

She did a lot of volunteer work in school so she went to all the school to volunteer work there. She was teaching Buddhism at school and she comes back and then I'll go up to the grass area, I will take my two little brothers with me. They had to be the students, [I would be a] strict teacher.

Figure 5.1 Abby's photo of personal place (location)- significant place of meaning

Source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d7/Crace_Hill_rocks.jpg

The enduring influence of place on “cognition, personality, creativity, *and* [emphasis added] maturity” (Shepard, 1977, p. 32) was revealed in Abby's comments of later return to her “space...up the hill” with her young children to share personal experiences of “dramatic play” from her childhood (personal communication, October 16, 2014). As a young child, Abby created an ‘amphitheatre’ to act out developing understandings of self-in-place with others. Time to immerse herself in this place as a young child and return as an adult and mother appeared to affirm personal qualities and professional ambitions as centre director. As Abby comments:

It's about living who you are in that place. Giving you the confidence up there. Because that's my space and that's up the hill. When you are sitting up there, there's a rock and when you sit on the rock you can see all the houses down below and my house down there; you can see neighbours and all the other houses and you're at the top.

So you're like, you're the leader up the top and you can see everyone; you teach all the houses, you can teach to all the trees and the grass and the rocks, everything, because you are the top. That's how it gave me the I know, I want

to [do the] same, I don't know, with the leadership role today because I'm the leader up there and also I'm the teacher up there. (*personal communication, October 16, 2014*)

Abby's coming-to-know self and self-in-place through engagement with "natural features" (Cameron, 2003, p. 101) of the land was a theme closely echoed by other participating teachers. Like Abby, Sue's place connection began in her childhood where days with siblings were spent in "bushland...playing, creating, imagining" free from rules (*personal communication, August 22, 2014*). Sue reflected that this way of 'being-in-place', "about being carefree, relaxed and happy" directly linked with her sense-of-self as a new centre director. When describing interactions with teachers and children, Sue's focus on nurturing creativity and responsiveness remains a consistent thread:

I always try to find what makes me happy and do what makes me happy. As a professional I try to encourage that in others, whether it's staff or the children. When I was teaching I would always try and recreate that for children so that they had a sense of wonder; they could be creative, they didn't feel like they were being watched or having rules imposed upon them by teachers or the powers that be, so that they do have that freedom and happiness and they are relaxed while they're here with us. (*personal communication, August 22, 2014*)

Place understandings echo "the rhythms of individual life" (Shepard, 1977, p. 32). As early career teachers who have recently begun living and working in Australia, Anne and Sharmaine linked iconic landmarks of Australia as significant markers of personal and professional change. As Anne comments in [Figure 5.2](#):

For my studies, I applied for my work here in Australia for six months contract only, on a working holiday visa, and I got a sponsorship after that, because my boss said, "Yes, you are really good, and we want you here, and you're a German speaker, so that's us as well". Now I'm living here, and when I was on the Harbour Bridge, one-and-a-half years ago I decided, to stay here, because of the kids, because of that Harbour Bridge thing, so that's all connected with each other, if you know what I mean. (*personal communication, November 12, 2014*)

Photo of personal place (location)

significant place of meaning



...the other significant place I wanted to show, but I have forgotten to print it off, is the Harbour Bridge. I mean, everyone knows how the Harbour Bridge looks like, and I will print out a picture, because through the kids, I got to live here.

For my studies, I applied for my work here in Australia for six months contract only, on a working holiday visa, and I got a sponsorship after that, because my boss said yes, you are really good, and we want you here, and you're a German speaker, so that's us as well. Now I'm living here, and when I was on the Harbour Bridge, one-and-a-half years ago I decided, (1) to stay here, because of the kids, because of that Harbour Bridge thing, so that's all connected with each other (Photo of Teacher), if you know what I mean.

Yes, if my boss wouldn't say, okay, I'm sponsoring you because you're really good, I wouldn't be here. But if I wouldn't have been on the bridge and had that thought, and like I felt the happiest I ever have in that one moment last year. If I wouldn't have felt that way, I wouldn't ask for sponsorship, so it's all connected to each other.

Figure 5.2 Anne's photo of personal place (location)

For Sharmaine, place connectedness and identity was also strongly linked with uniting “past and present” selves across places (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 396). For instance, when describing her Malaysian self-in-place, Sharmaine recalled celebrating personal and family achievements, with an image of a food-laden table expressing a sense of fun (see Figure 5.3) (see Lavina, 2019). As Sharmaine comments: “So I like to celebrate [things] in my personal space; I like to celebrate. If my brother got an A in his exam, I would say ‘let’s go out and have a feast’ because it’s something that’s worth celebrating” (personal communication, October 16, 2014). This same sense of ‘festive spirit’ is evident in her photo of a Christmas tree. As a newly encountered experience, Sharmaine explains the significance of celebrating Christmas in Australia:

So that's a picture of here celebrating Christmas which we never did it at home, back home, because with our cultural background we are Buddhist so we never celebrated Christmas. When I came here I started to join a few church groups and last year it's my first time celebrating Christmas as I understand its meaning and things like that. (personal communication, October 16, 2014)

Photo of personal place (location)

significant place of meaning



Yes, so I'm - with this picture that I'm having here, so you can see these first two picture is quite festive. So I like to celebrate [things] in my personal space, I like to celebrate. If my brother got an A in his exam I would say let's go out and have a feast because it's something that's worth celebrating.

...even things as simple as you were able to complete, just complete, that task. I don't know what's the end result but you completed that task and that's something worth celebrating.



So that's a picture of here celebrating Christmas which we never did it at home, back home, because with our culture background we are Buddhism so we never celebrated Christmas. When I came here I started to join a few church groups and last year it's my first time celebrating Christmas as I understand its meaning...

...
Yeah, it was really exciting and feel really blessed and you started to appreciate things around you and tiniest thing you learn to appreciate it as well. So from my own personal space I'm a very festive person. I like people around, I like to talk to people very loud and being happy or excited about things for them and for myself, yeah.



But then I also have this side of me where I really calm, I just wanted to be away from everything and I wanted to be just myself and be quiet and feel safe and just quiet and that's it, nothing else. So - and in terms of - this is my own personal self [in it's] place - but in terms of looking at myself at teaching I guess these two side come together.

...
I wanted that in the environment that everyone feel like we are a family and we - we are not related to each other but in terms of that we are a family. We need to feel that we are connected to each other...

So children, when I come - sometimes I do ask them that today is one of the day that I need you guys to be a bit calm, a bit more quiet and in a certain context I would like you to be like that, too. But at the same time I celebrate the tiniest achievement in this learning environment with them.

...
I think the sense of quietness, the stillness, happens when I'm in Australia. I think this environment, as you can see this picture is one with a picture that I took in Melbourne, that quietness and the - it's what this environment provide.

When I was in Malaysia - and on the other hand this sense of celebrating, that loud side of me, is what I got it from Malaysia because we have a big family. For my own family I have my dad's side, my dad's the only child but my mum's side she had 10 siblings. Yeah, and we have, we would have my grandma's birthday, my mother's days, Chinese New Year, even on the school holiday we always hang out together and there is 30 of us every time with my cousins and we go out together.

So, and I guess that sense of wanting to celebrate everything come from that.

Figure 5.3 Sharmaine's photos of personal place (location)

Alongside imagery capturing multiple inner pictures of a 'festive self', Sharmaine included a beach scene to represent her 'quieter' Australian sense-of-self (see [Figure 5.3](#)) (see Lavina, 2019). As a series of images read together, they reveal Sharmaine's "transition from one cultural setting to another" whereby, a "new teaching self" has emerged (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 387); these inner-qualities called upon in her teaching. Sharmaine comments:

So from my own personal space I'm a very festive person. I like people around, I like to talk to people very loud and being happy or excited about things for them and for myself, yeah.

But then I also have this side of me where I [am] really calm, I just wanted to be away from everything and I wanted to be just myself and be quiet and feel safe and just quiet and that's it, nothing else. So...this is my own personal self [in it's] place - but in terms of looking at myself at teaching, I guess these two sides come together.

...

I think the sense of quietness, the stillness, happens when I'm in Australia. I think this environment, as you can see this picture is one with a picture that I took in Melbourne, that quietness and the - it's what this environment provides.

When I was in Malaysia - and on the other hand this sense of celebrating, that loud side of me, is what I got it from Malaysia because we have a big family. (*personal communication, October 16, 2014*)

Sharmaine's multitude of selves affirms that "knowing who you are" is inextricably linked with "knowing where you are" (Shepard, 1977, p. 32). Closer reading of Sharmaine's images reveals the complex inner and outer negotiations needed to meaningfully 'locate' self in a new socio-cultural context (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). Anne is also seen to be creating her own sense of place as a "communal task and an individual one" within a new educational context (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 391). As Anne comments:

I know the rules in Australia, but I am quite free with the kids. I would let them climb a little bit, as long as I know they can do it. But even if they fail, I have arguments saying, "That's how they learn, that's how they grow. If they don't experience, they will never know". So I try to balance what I have learned in that childcare centre (in Germany) from them, from my teachers there, or from my workmates, to the Australian rules and regulations and system. (*personal communication, November 12, 2014*)

Through teachers' use of imagery, "external and internal 'realities'" (Weber, 2008, p. 43) of place and self-in-place were revealed, stimulating reflection on place meanings "being made

at the meeting points of history, representation, and material practice” (Raffles, 2002, p. 7). Developing teachers’ understanding of “presence” in these spaces “through human and more-than-human encounters” generated opportunities for envisaging “...entirely new ways of being and becoming” (Duhn, 2012, p. 102). As unencumbered spaces for making sense of an unfolding self (see Duhn, 2012), natural open places from childhood appeared to resonate for Abby and Sue. Whilst reflecting on their teacher identity development, they began to see “their life’s journey in a different light” with forms of pedagogical thinking made “more conscious” when viewed through the lens of their significant place (Cameron, 2003, p. 101). As a symbol of change, ‘place’ in Anne and Sharmaine’s stories is understood in terms of personal and pedagogical adaptation, their stories revealing processes of ‘placing’ understandings of teacher (and personal) selves in the context of new educational and broader socio-cultural environments (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004).

Identity-in-place: Relatedness with others

Adopting the view that teacher identities are formed in places where “our lives...and our relationship to them colours who we are”, identities in educational contexts are either enhanced or restricted based on place connectedness within and outside of “educational experience” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 625). For participating teachers, awareness of early learning contexts as “socially constructed places” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 627) involved tracing identity development over time, with photos and drawings used to tease out early and present understandings informing thinking and pedagogy.

As experienced early childhood teachers, Lilly, Sue, and Abby all used metaphor to capture their present sense of ‘moving forward’ through reciprocal relationships. Using sourced images, Lilly (see Lavina et al., 2017) and Sue chose human figures positioned within a network of cogs (see Lavina et al., under review). As Sue commented while reflecting on her new role as Director and her figures/cog image:

Now I see myself more as part of the cogs in the wheel of the whole centre, like a bigger picture to keep it moving, planning, working with the team of educators, the families, the community, all those other people. Really what I see myself now doing is challenging staff to reach new heights, to inspire, to motivate and really try and get them to do more and be more and reach their fullest potential. (*personal communication, September 1, 2014*)

Adopting an ecological-systems view of her teacher self-in-place, Abby recognised the need to remain “responsive to the ecological, political, ideological, sociological, and perceptual

dimensions of places” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 635). Describing educational contexts as sites of continual change and renewal, exchange between local and wider socio-political influences were seen to directly impact how Abby enacts her role. Attending to “patterns” of flow between human and natural environments within and outside of educational experience (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 625), Abby appeared to situate understandings of place and self within pedagogical systems of “perception and...participation” responsive to socio-political and ecological change (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 645). As Abby comments in [Figure 5.4](#):

In the natural environment I saw my teacher (self). The steps there I thought as the structured way, that's my manager (self). You can climb up.

There's a structured step for you to climb up but around that there there's a lot of things happening in the natural environment. There are changes, season changes...

You change; the environment changes because especially in early childhood, there is always change. We get new families, new children, new staff, resources and curriculum change and laws and regulations change. I think that's the natural...

...

That's what I see as the natural environment; there are always changes. You see flowers in one stage; you'd only see branches or - the season changes in there. People and animals come and go. It's like the teachers.

(personal communication, October 24, 2014)

Photo of Teacher (EC context)

identifies professional image of self



REFERENCE:
<https://s-media-cache-sd0.pinimg.com/736x/f4/59/f4c6921315737892c70cfe3da93579e.jpg>

The journey started as a teacher and now currently as the manager. It's two different journeys, I think, when I look at it. It's only two months in this position. I'm still learning things and still exploring this position at this stage. As a teacher your interaction is different but when as the manager; your thoughts and your interaction is different as well. It's embedded in that your manager position embedded in your teaching position but it's in a different way if I had look because teaching I see a lot of exploration, creativity. It's there, it's fresh.

The management, I see it's very structured. You still create. You can be creative but very structured, very authoritative, if I say that. We have a hierarchy here because we work under some managers and there is a hierarchy and there's a pressure, there's a - if I say more structured. Whereas with the teaching you are a researcher, you are a thinker, you're going for a journey. You feel like you're going for a journey as a teacher.

In that context I thought this is suited for me. I put this one because there's the steps very structured. As the manager there's - that's why I put there in a natural because I'm a keen person of natural environment. In their natural environment I saw as my teacher. The steps there I thought as the structured way, that's my manager. You can climb up. There's the steps.

Figure 5.4 Abby's photo of teacher (early childhood context)

Most teachers in this project used a combination of representational and symbolic imagery to make sense of their teacher selves in educational contexts. As an early career teacher working in a new leadership role in a new country, Sharmaine expressed challenges in representing herself for this part of the project. Observed in comments below, Sharmaine is seen to be actively negotiating various socio-cultural and pedagogical understandings to develop a stronger sense of place and identity-in-place (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). As Sharmaine comments:

I am not only looking for my place in this country, I am also looking for my place in this workplace. I couldn't, I'm still figuring - is this work for me that I come in at nine o'clock, clock in and then clock out at five o'clock? Or is it more than that? Is it, or am I managing people or developing relationships with people?

...

As second in charge of the centre...it's more than just work, it's...it's about hope, it's about hoping for future, it's about imagining what our future would be like. It's more than just coming in and working and leaving and then going home.

I think at the moment with the set-up of my role, with the set-up of the workplace, there's improvement for that. So I couldn't quite find my sense of self, that image of place in this workplace yet, and I'm hoping that I will find

one, one day if I manage to change it. (*personal communication, October 16, 2014*)

Reflecting on Sharmaine's comments, coming-to-know yourself "in place" involves "serious work of negotiating, creating, and telling ways of living meaningfully" with others (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 411). Creating opportunities for teachers to visualise self through multiple personal and professional dimensions throughout the project helped Sharmaine see relatedness between "personal identity and "professional role" as 'teacher' (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008, p. 41). As Sharmaine commented in the focus group – "Through this journey I noticed that everything that happens in your life becomes part of you and it influences you as who you are and also influences you as who you are as a teacher" (*personal communication, July 21, 2015*).

Teachers' stories and depictions of self-in-place illustrate the importance of making place connections that value personal histories of self alongside pedagogies of learning and teaching. In so doing, understandings of identities are enriched as we attach meanings to the places where relationships are formed and nurtured (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). In addition, enabling "telling of a new professional and personal story" assisted early career teachers (Anne and Sharmaine) to meaningfully situate self within new educational and socio-cultural contexts (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 411), furthering stable construction of their teacher identity.

Identity-in-place: Relatedness with 'belonging'

In this research, the concept of belonging was linked to place connectedness and strong identity-in-place. For teachers, "meaningfulness" was experienced to a higher degree the longer time was spent in a place, especially when congruency was felt across relationships and professional pedagogies (see Gross & Hochberg, 2016, p. 1243). For instance, Lilly spoke of an intertwined sense of place where the personal and professional came together to form a dynamic understanding of place. As Lilly comments:

I think it has to intertwine. I can't see myself working somewhere that I didn't feel connected to and I think sometimes you have to be connected to the people that you're working with to have the...I am trying to think of a better word...to be brave enough to kind of keep pushing yourself and for me this is a place where I've come back to as a very different teacher. I've also come back here as a Mother now and so it is a very different experience, but for me it's just kind of that whole circle...I've been here I've done this and now my kids are connected to here now. (*personal communication, August 22, 2014*)

Likewise, Abby recognised community dimensions associated with her new leadership role and spoke of balancing institutional and relational aspects to affirm her teacher/director identity and renewed 'sense of place'. As Abby commented:

Yeah, it's been hard and easy because I came from a group of teachers to manager in the same environment. You've been there and you know what's happening with the other people and the other teachers in the room and then manager, you need to act as a manager...you are a manager now, not the same level as your other colleagues anymore and you need to earn the trust and the respect and the relationship. (*personal communication, October 24, 2014*)

For Anne and Sharmaine, a greater sense of belonging was realised through their participation in this project. For Anne, reflecting on her teacher identity in interviews boosted her resilience and provided courage to stand behind pedagogical approaches when facing resistance. Reflecting on a particular event, Anne commented: "If they [children] want to carry the sand from that spot to the other one that's their game. If you disturb the game you disturb their learning. I was like, [Anne] you've got it - Anne, you've got it in you" (*personal communication, December 5, 2014*) (see Lavina et al., under review). In the focus group, collaborative discussion and reflection on Sharmaine's identity journey clarified for her the diverse personal and professional understandings brought to her teaching. As Sharmaine commented:

I think your teacher image - I don't know, I'm still a new practitioner after three years at work [laughs] - for myself I think my teacher image and my personal life can't be separated. It's linked so closely to each other that it's really hard to separate them. That's what I find sometimes. So both of them have influence from each other so whatever you have happen in your personal experience will influence how your teacher image is, will influence your philosophy as well. (*personal communication, July 21, 2015*)

Self-evaluating pedagogical effectiveness alongside meaningful interactions appeared to enhance teachers' feelings of belonging to "a group" (Gross & Hochberg, 2016, p. 1253). Teachers' affinity with "their place" (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 399) was seen to strengthen sense of belonging within their respective early childhood communities, enhancing teacher identity.

Identity-in-place: Relatedness with artifacts

Artifacts tell the stories of our lives (Hoskins, 1998). “As companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought”, artifacts were seen as objects connecting teachers’ personal and professional selves, clarifying past and present identities as connections were explored and significance to evolving selves affirmed (Turtle, 2007, p. 5). This was particularly the case for teachers who had moved across shifting geographic and socio-cultural contexts. For instance, Abby chose a pair of gold earrings gifted down the generations to connect family (mother) and cultural traditions (becoming a woman) with new professional beginnings in Australia. As Abby commented:

This is something very close to me. This is my grandma, my dad's mum, gave it to my mum to give it to me. Reason is this, in my culture when you get your first period, you are welcomed into a new life.

...

Because this is a new beginning. When I received this symbol as a new beginning. So wherever I go I take this with me. Because even when I come over here (to Australia), it's a new beginning for me. I left my families and whatever I owned, even my job, my previous job, as accountant, I left everything. Then I came and I came here, it's a new beginning for me, so I think it's a symbol. When I take - when I go somewhere I take that as - I try to wear that when I start a new job. Because, I don't know, with me, it's a new beginning and help me do - give me courage, yeah. (*personal communication, November 11, 2014*)

As a significant identifier of “life transition” (Turtle, 2007, p.5), Abby’s earrings remain a symbol of her life experiences in Sri Lanka, their continued presence keeping alive memories of “relationship(s) and emotional connection(s) [emphasis added]” (Turtle, 2007, p. 5) (see [Figure 5.5](#)).

Artifact (identity meaning)

physical object that reflects teacher identity



This is the old thing I got actually here. I went through to find something that I got - I got a few old things but they're not so close to me. This is something very close to me. This is my grandma, my dad's mum, gave it to my mum to give it to me. Reason is this, in my culture when you get your first periods, it's you are welcome into a new life. So actually that time I just started my high school. Because high school - there's a lot of things between these two earrings. It actually came from my mum, who was passed away two years ago.

Other thing, when I first started high school and this is welcoming as well. Another thing is, we said you are welcome to a new life as a grown up girl. So that's one thing. So there's more responsibility coming with this, you are not a young girl running around here and there. It's coming that you're a more responsible girl now.

... Womanhood, yes. So a symbol of womanhood, you are a woman now, you need to look after yourself, yeah. So there's more responsibilities coming if you are the oldest, your young siblings, you need to look after them. This happened even before your first periods.

... When I received this symbol (earrings) as a new beginning. So wherever I go I take this with me. Because even when I come over here it's a new beginning for me. I left my families and whatever I owned, even my job, my previous job, as accountant, I left everything. Then I came and I came here, it's a new beginning for me, so I think it's a symbol. When I take - when I go somewhere I take that as - I try to wear that when I start a new job. Because, I don't know, with me, it's a new beginning and help me do - give me courage, yeah.

Figure 5.5 Abby's artifact (identity meaning)

Further, for Lilly (see Lavina et al., 2017) and Sue (see Lavina et al., under review), objects brought together “intellect and emotion”, with artifacts chosen to organise daily experience and intellectual endeavours (Turkle, 2007, p. 5). Describing feelings of being “at one” with their diaries, these objects assisted conceptualisation of developing pedagogies alongside personal experiences (Turkle, 2007, p. 9). As accessible spaces to “weave a matrix of possibility” (Hlubinka, 2007, p. 79), both spoke of thoughts intertwined and possibilities revisited over time. As they separately commented:

Lilly:

It's how I see myself moving forward. So there are ideas for what I want to do and achieve in the room. There are ideas for what I want to achieve within projects within the centre. There's even just a page where I feel like I can get myself a little bit sorted, like what are my priorities in the next few months? What do I need to concentrate on achieving at home? Have I dropped the ball a bit with the kids, and just sort of organising myself? So if this was to disappear I would feel very, very sad. (personal communication, September 1, 2014)

Sue:

(As a director) I find the books that I use more accessible to me at any point in time for anything that comes up, and yes - intentionally visible to remind me

that I have things to do or things that I'm working on and I can know exactly where I'm at just by looking in there.

...(Reflecting on her previous teaching role)

if I had a USB now, I don't think it would work for me because working with the adults I need to be quicker and more responsive, and I don't have the time to plug in a USB and look that kind of stuff up, whereas I have everything on hand right there, right now.

(personal communication, September 22, 2014)

Artifacts hold deep emotional significance as we “make objects part of ourselves” (Turtle, 2007, p. 10). Teachers’ artifacts revealed “the things that mattered” in their lives, with objects telling stories of self and place as they made sense of teaching journeys (Turtle, 2007, p. 10). As pedagogical organisers, artifacts revealed the educational worlds of these teachers and appeared to re-affirm identities-in-place when revisited. Viewed as symbols of cumulative experience, assigning personal significance to artifacts recognised relationship between past and present experiences, with multiple personal and professional meanings renewed as different situations were encountered over time (Turtle, 2007).

Reflections on ‘placed’ identity frames: Connections and affirmations

Teachers’ stories across professional experience and backgrounds enabled multi-layered understandings of knowing self-in-place to be uncovered, highlighting complexities associated with making sense in “new settings” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004, p. 410). Given that teacher identity was stabilised when feelings of self-efficacy and belonging with others was felt in place (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004), increased focus on practicing and refining pedagogies seems crucial for consolidating teachers’ awareness of meaningful place connections as integral to their work. Given “construct(*ing*) and maintain(*ing*) group memory [emphasis added]” of documentation is central to revisiting and renewing learning alongside others (Kang & Walsh, 2018, p. 275), aesthetic forms of professional reflection deserve equal attention. Similar to capturing and sharing children’s learning, “revisiting is important for learners at all levels” (Kang & Walsh, 2018, p. 275). When reflecting on development of their teacher selves, awareness of teachers’ learning over time was renewed as significant memories of teaching-in-place were accessed, organised, recorded and displayed as installation. This research reveals the value of making sense of teaching experience through visual modes and provides teachers opportunity to appreciate the complexity of teaching journeys. More deeply understanding teacher self-in-place also helps teachers realise the wide-ranging pedagogical implications associated with

their work with children. The collaborative component of this project in the focus group and installation added richness and depth to teachers' understandings of 'placed identities', reminding us of the learning that is possible when thinking is shared.

Implications for teachers' professional learning

Projects such as this tracing identity development alongside place-connectedness could also greatly assist pre-service and early career teachers' 'coming to know' self-as-teacher, (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). As Sharmaine and Anne's stories suggest, integrating individual and collaborative forms of reflection provides a pedagogical space needed for early career teachers to clarify uncertainties associated with teaching in new contexts. Just as documentation contributes to teachers' reflection and analysis of practice (Calderhead, 1992), integrating visual forms of pedagogical reflection into teacher educator programs would make the "content and process" (Kang & Walsh, 2018, p. 262) of image creation less intimidating. By directly involving pre-service teachers "in all aspects" (Kang & Walsh, 2018, p. 274) of reconstructing, creating and reflecting on past and present significant events of identity development-in-place, possibilities for meaningfully connecting pre-service teachers' professional and personal selves would be enriched. Just as documentation supports teachers' collaboration and connection with children, families and colleagues (Goldhaber & Smith, 1997), aesthetic forms of representation draw together understandings of people and places influencing identity development, affirming the importance of seeing more broadly, teachers' professional journeys. Creating visual constructions over time of teacher selves and situating significance beyond an "add-on" to other forms of documentation (Kang & Walsh, 2018, p. 274) supports authentic teacher reflection, elevating visual modes of representation beyond the fringes of legitimacy to be seen as integral to teachers' thought and practice in the classroom. Teachers (and indeed teams of teachers) across experience working in prior-to-school early childhood contexts would benefit from adopting this model of inquiry as part of documenting their ongoing professional learning and team building.

Creating and revealing self-knowledge through the visual

Finally, the visual nature of the methodology itself also appeared to support understanding of interrelatedness between personal and professional lives. As teachers created and reflected on aesthetic frames, they were able to 'see large' the values, beliefs, experiences, and knowledge brought forward to their teaching (see Lavina et al., 2017). Through multiple forms of aesthetic expression, the significance of experiences-in-place shaping teacher identities was revealed (Marsh, 2003). Revisiting frames as both individual

components and a final assemblage also supported self-reflections, with teachers' identity journeys viewed as social constructs situated in time and place (Creates, 1991; Knowles & Thomas, 2002).

Raising awareness of early childhood education

As the concept of early childhood education remains contested ground in prior-to-school contexts, consideration of these stories within and outside of education circles raises socio-political perceptions of the educational importance of teachers work in prior-to-school spaces, offering other teachers reflective avenues for exploring identities-in-place in ways that meaningfully connect relationships, renew pedagogies, and sustain images of self-as-teacher.

THREADED POSSIBILITIES – AN ARTFUL UNFOLDING: WISPY DEPTHS



Wispy Depths

(Photo from Linksvayer, 2017)

*Moving away from neatness
wispy depths are awakened.
Stories occupy new spaces
divides are questioned.
Pieces resist separateness
possibilities murmur and merge
Matters of connection bind us
to each other and our world.*

(Author) poem inspired by the work of David Orr (2013)

Journal excerpt: Wispy depths of data

As alluded to in the poem above (and in the previous 'Sites of intersection'), the generation of data and making sense of 'the pieces' can be overwhelming. This is especially so when researchers deliberately position themselves within the research (see Barone & Eisner, 1997), as is the case here. Whilst I have adopted storied approaches (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983) to assist understanding of teachers' construction of identities (see Bruner, 1987), I have also "explore(d) [emphasis added] and produce(d)[emphasis added] a variety of 'artful portrayals'" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 229) alongside participating teachers to assist my listening for meaning or *resonance* (Conle, 1996, p. 297) as stories of identity have been shared. Using an aesthetic methodology with artful influences (see Creates, 1991), teachers' representation of identities beyond "traditional texts" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 230) invite emotionality, thereby situating readers more intimately within the work, enabling "new ways of doing"(Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 230) and seeing identity development. Whilst this way of working has brought light to many entanglements, I do not presume that this section of the thesis heralds 'the end'. Rather, as an artful unfolding (see Black & O'Dea, 2015), the multiple aesthetic potentials of image and text reflected in Publications 1-5 "have the capacity to pull the reader/viewer into a world that is recognisable enough to be credible, but ambiguous enough to allow new insights and meanings to emerge" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 231). Therefore, encouraged as I might be to continue drawing on and further expanding potentialities of this thesis for future publications (i.e. there is one on 'the personal' of researcher journeying with participants and another exploring 'aesthetically placed pedagogy' being written), I remain mindful to provide you, dear reader, with a sense of 'coming together', after having journeyed with me. At this point in the thesis I am also required to offer "a concluding section that synthesises the material as a whole" to meet University requirements for thesis-by-publication (Macquarie University, 2017, Schedule 1).

Returning to my 3 guiding research questions, the following section offers insights into threaded layers of 'findings' revealed thus far in this work. This is done with the expectation that themes clarified for the reader capture meaningful fragments to guide key understandings of teachers lives (Weade & Ernst, 1990); that these 'details of experience' communicate aspects of identity development in ways that "contribute to sense-making" (Weade & Ernst, 1990, p. 139) of teachers' pedagogy and practice within social systems of learning.

Bringing threads together: Revisiting research questions

Returning to research questions, I am aware that these were penned quite early in my candidature:

- (i) How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?
- (ii) How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?
- (iii) How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations? (Feinstein, 1982)

At the time, thoughts and visual processes of my honours thesis lingered, nudging me towards artful representation (see 'Reflective traces', Excerpt- 'Learning-to-know through knots'). Using this previous work as a starting point, these questions emerged with the knowledge that I wanted 'the visual' to capture understandings of teachers' evolving identities. Grounded in experiences from teaching practice (see 'Reflective traces', Excerpt- 'Learning-to-know through knots') and frustrated by the apparent absence of identity research focusing on prior-to-school early childhood teachers (see Lavina & Lawson, 2019), I was determined to pursue new aesthetic directions *with* teachers to bring light to our lives and work in these contexts. In so doing, I hoped other interested teachers and scholars might recognise aspects of self in stories represented. I anticipated aesthetic forms of reflection might reveal new possibilities for capturing and renewing understandings of identity AND pedagogical approaches in our work with children. Yet, as previously mentioned in my confirmation of candidature meeting (see 'Reflective traces', Excerpt- 'Learning-to-know through knots'), I hadn't tied down the framework for capturing teachers' understandings of identity. It was only when I was introduced to the work of Marlene Creates (1991) that I was able to refine strategies for gathering and representing teachers' narratives of identity (see Lavina, Fleet, & Niland, 2017) in ways that supported the essential aesthetic qualities of research questions. What emerged from methodological weavings integrating bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001), portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) and an artist's methods (Creates, 1991), was the immersive nature of the methodology. Using a multi-layered aesthetic approach opened attunement to the affective dimensions of experience, revealing the socially situated nature of identities and pedagogies developed in time and place (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004; Knowles & Thomas, 2002). The methodology itself became a finding (see Publication 1- Lavina et al., 2017). As indicated in the initial (and subsequent) 'Sites of intersection', such unexpected

beginnings led me to push established boundaries of scholarly process and representation, with exploration of installation-as-research (Cole & McIntyre, 2008) (see Publication 2- Lavina, Niland, & Fleet, under review) and collaborative artful auto-ethnography (Scott-Hoy, 2000) (see Publication 3- Lavina & Lawson, 2019). Aesthetic understandings of teacher selves uncovered in Publication 3 (Lavina & Lawson, 2019) prompted a closer look at popularised images potentially shaping the concept and personal generation of 'teacher image' as offered in Publication 4 (Lavina, 2019). Following identification of stereotypes influencing drawings of 'self-as-teacher', a deeper consideration of place (Orr, 2013) (see Publication 5- Lavina, in press) was needed to situate socio-cultural understandings of evolving teacher identities as encouraged by Elbaz-Luwisch (2004). As I have mused throughout this thesis, stepping off familiar qualitative pathways has added time to my project, but I am hoping you have found (as I have) that my seeing of teachers' experience has been enlarged as a result. The interwoven nature of publications has meant that unfolding themes are linked across this thesis. As aesthetic entanglements of identities-in-place, the separateness of 'parts' fuses together as a whole, with each publication informing the other.

Reflecting on the key creative minds across scholarly and artistic disciplines guiding my way, I began with Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) concept of "portraiture". Encountering the complexities of this 'science meets art' approach opened artful methods of capturing voices in context, to reveal deeply personal processes for portraying contextualised 'portraits' of teachers' identities (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Using Kincheloe's (2001) "bricolage" alongside portraiture, I sought to embrace multiple situated meanings of experience using diverse materials and social lenses of knowledge. The work of Knowles and Thomas (2002) provided introduction to an artist's methods (see Creates, 1991), which, along with Thomas (2004a), awakened within me a desire to step outside the comforts of methodological tradition. Inspired by Knowles and Cole (2008), embracing aesthetic dimensions of knowing and feeling also supported my intention to create representations that were both artistic and scholarly. Closer examination of socio-cultural 'lived' frameworks opened place-based understandings from Orr (2013), with work from Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) providing useful approaches for explaining the complex relational nature of teachers' lives and work.

Whilst these names have been 'in the room' with me at various times throughout my candidature, it is the reassuring faces (and thinking) of my PhD supervisory team who have supported numerous 'detours', as 'well-worn paths' were glimpsed and farewelled along the way...hence my returns to the Ethics Committee as revised approaches were interrogated to

ascertain their potential ethical and academic robustness. Interestingly, teachers themselves have prompted such 'off-grid' adventures like the collaborative auto-ethnography project with Fiona (see Lavina & Lawson, 2019). I'd like to think my own meanderings *with* them has eased opening of perspectives deeply personal and heartfelt. Essentially, teachers made this project their own as they grappled with deeper meanings of identity beyond surface 'seeing' of evolving selves (Powell, 2010). This meant that at times there were 'gaps' in representations i.e. the absence of Sharmaine's present image of teacher self (see Lavina, in press) and differences in approaches i.e. some chose narrative, another chose poetry to express understandings of storied selves (Carter, 1993). As an emerging researcher, what strikes me is the importance of both providing AND taking the time to deeply consider the "many forms...of knowing" expressed through art (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 1). Indeed, by paying attention to "art...as a form of knowledge" (Eisner, 2008, p. 3) and positioning aesthetics through multiple thinking, feeling and material 'frames of experience' (see Creates, 1991), teachers' understandings of self and self-as-teacher have found new voice through assembled parts i.e. the seven aesthetic frames (see Lavina et al., under review). My active 'being within' the methodological aspects of this project i.e. the collaborative auto-ethnography project (Lavina & Lawson, 2019), has also heightened seeing of self as person, teacher, and new researcher within complex entanglements of people and place. As I have mentioned throughout this thesis, re-engaging such personal realisation through the arts has profoundly affected my concept and handling of 'data'. As teachers' identity threads progressively emerged for deeper consideration, 'wispy depths' of teacher selves beyond surface knowing found form and were given meaningful representation through the aesthetic framework (Lavina et al., 2017). As provocation and touchstone, the multi-modal components of this methodology artfully supported my research questions; providing a valuable orientation for my study as diverse possibilities for data gathering, representation and analysis were pursued...AND as I went along, the value of my presence within the research process itself.

Returning to my questions:

- (i) How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?
- (ii) How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?
- (iii) How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations? (Feinstein, 1982)

Different approaches have been used in this thesis to address these questions: the 5 publications offering a complementary lens for viewing and collating as ‘working assemblage’ of various aspects of identity explored. Specifically, in Publication 1 (Lavina et al., 2017), my intention to develop an aesthetic framework for accessing teachers’ images of identity was driven by the understanding that the socio-political and pedagogical complexities of early childhood teachers’ work is grossly underestimated...and underrepresented. With my design background, I felt that aesthetic forms offered unique possibilities for accessing often intangible threads of understanding self and practice. Therefore, my first question *‘How do early childhood teachers conceptualise their identities?’* prompted motivation to develop an aesthetic approach for capturing teachers’ concept of self-as-teacher (see research question 2). Whilst it may have been easier to isolate ‘a’ research question to ‘a’ publication, I have found the experience of creating arts-informed work to involve qualities of collage; whereby “layering” and “weaving” characterise the purpose of questions. As points of focus inviting interrogation, responses to questions and researcher analysis seek “deeper interpretation” (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 271) of representations (i.e. aesthetic frames) as both fragments and collective assemblage (i.e. installation). In so doing, further possibilities have been afforded for “elaborat(ing) [emphasis added] relationships among the data” (Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999, p. 18). Adopting this multi-layered approach also marked my intention to explore teachers’ thinking about identity using worded (i.e. research questions, conversations) and imaged (drawing, collage, artifact, installation) processes to encourage nuanced understandings to be revealed (Butler-Kisber, 2008). As “conscious and unconscious” ideas about self and practice were captured and interpreted (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 269), the flexible potentialities of the aesthetic framework for tapping into and uncovering greater depths of thinking and feeling about shifting identities was seen. Therefore, to maintain an aesthetic sense of integrity (see Butler-Kisber, 2008) all three questions are woven across each publication.

The adoption of an unfolding approach to knowledge generation is evident in my first publication. For instance, there is an aesthetic focus, with the social ‘placed’ aspects of ‘what it means to be a teacher’ positioned in full view as shifting contexts of teaching experience were explored. Using the visual, I endeavoured to gather teacher-generated imagery that reflected the raw emotionality and challenges associated with work in Long Day Care (LDC) prior-to-school early learning contexts. Seeking multi-modal narratives beyond stereotypes, participating teachers were encouraged to explore images of self-as-teacher beyond literal understandings (see research question 3). When embarking on this publication, I felt that the generation of such visual forms of knowledge offered transformational possibilities for

deepening known and hidden depths of 'teacher'. Indeed, this proved to be the case for participating teachers, with evolving representations of past and present teacher selves assisting personal realisation of connectedness between key events and relationships (see research question 3). Additionally, for educational audiences and those interested in teacher identity, aesthetic modes of representation and analysis were found to offer valuable modes for expanding pedagogical reflection and supporting teachers' professional development and practice (Lavina et al., 2017).

Following early positive feedback from participating teachers on the value of the aesthetic framework developed for tracing teachers' identity development, I approached the methodology itself as a finding (Lavina et al., 2017). Emerging from this perceptual shift of process and representation was the affirmation that installation-as-research was a legitimate artistic AND scholarly site (see Cole & McIntyre, 2008) for engaging teachers' concept and understanding of evolving identities (see research questions 1&2). Further developed in my second publication (Lavina et al., under review), this research has revealed how (the seven) aesthetic frames as assemblage (see Creates, 1991) can bring additional light to teachers' stories of identity through diverse forms of representation (Lavina et al., under review) (see research questions 2&3). Furthermore, as a participative site of critical reflection, teachers and other audiences were thoughtfully positioned as the meaning-makers, rendering insights *with* the researcher, thereby signalling a qualitative shift away from more traditional synthesised approaches to data presentation (Trent, 2002). Adopting a multi-voiced approach to researcher-participant relationships also meant negotiating the meanings of linkages.

Recognising 'the personal' of teachers' thinking about self and practice brings me back to my second research question:

- (ii) How do these identities emerge and by what means can we access personal images teachers have of themselves and the ways they think about their practice?

As discussed previously, teachers' journeys of identity were deeply personal, filled with emotionality, and at times revealed uncertainties about self and practice (Lavina, in press). Such candid accounts required courage to communicate and involved 'meeting' more vulnerable selves as stories were shared. With this knowledge, I knew my presence in this research would evolve. At the time, I remember wondering how to remain "neutral or authoritative" in this study when I felt "part of it" (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128)? With my own vulnerabilities as an emerging researcher in full view, I knew I needed to explore my own understandings of self-as-teacher/researcher to better understand the varied visual and

textual pieces of identity journeys placed before me. What was affirmed somewhere in-between what was ‘known’ and ‘felt’ about my professional and personal histories, was that my aesthetic methodology had succeeded in “record(*ing*) [emphasis added] my research in a way readers can know and feel the complexities of the concrete moments of lived experiences in their bodies” (Ellis, 2004, as cited in Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008, p. 128). Indeed, the choice of aesthetic forms added richness to the telling of teachers’ stories and assisted my positioning as *involved* storyteller within the research (Scott-Hoy & Ellis, 2008).

Returning to my design roots early in my candidature, I developed the third question:

- (iii) How does metaphor as a reflective tool enable teachers to explore professional images of self and in what ways can metaphor expand meanings and synthesise more complex associations? (Feinstein, 1982)

Intent to explore identity through images (and symbolic meanings) of ‘teacher’ and ‘teaching’ (see Publication 4) (Lavina, 2019), I wondered whether or not I had pushed academic boundaries too far by broadening the interpretation of metaphor through the use of aesthetic frames. After all, questions proposed alongside methodological strategies (i.e. the aesthetic framework) directly contrasted “logical positivism and technical rationality” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). Deciding to embrace arts-informed research reflected my motivation to pursue an unfolding undertaking focused on “creating new understandings” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). Describing ways of approaching arts-informed research, Cole and Knowles offer the following guiding purpose-

...to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible (2008, p. 59).

Locating literature advocating various artistic ways of working (see Cole & Knowles, 2008) affirmed my intention to ‘see’ the generative knowledge value of everyday ‘meaningful moments’ for enhancing lives within “the academy...and...communities” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 60). In so doing, “multiple dimensions that constitute and form the human condition” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 60) are activated. Bringing together “head and heart” (Gablick, 1991, p. 11), I wanted to challenge traditional “separated” paradigms of ‘what counts’ as research and widen perceptions of relatedness to community ‘lived’ experience (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 60). With value for ‘working differently’ in-hand, I felt confident to explore a range of complementary approaches to uncover teachers’ understandings of identity. Early encounters

with Knowles and Thomas' (2002) Creates-inspired multi-modal framework for exploring students' 'placed selves', greatly influenced my own methodological design for capturing teachers' identity evolutions. Ultimately, introduction to Creates' (1991) artistry resulted in the creation of an aesthetic framework (see Lavina et al., 2017). Weaving multi-dimensional starting points characteristic of bricolage (Kincheloe, 2004a), and using portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to capture representations of experience rich with aesthetic sensibility and narrative meaning, my research approach could be described as a continual process of unfolding.

As I have touched on throughout this thesis, arts-informed ways of working and representing have been influenced by the work of an artist (Creates) and artful approaches from Black, Cole and Knowles, Kincheloe, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, McIntyre and Cole, Scott-Hoy, Weber and Mitchell, Elbaz-Luwisch and Orr to name but a few. Therefore, I am a little hesitant to assign a 'label' to my approach as this potentially resurrects boundaries I have tried so hard to push past. Whilst I have been guided by social phenomenology i.e. the social construction of self, I have also adopted a uniquely aesthetic approach to understanding relational interweavings with others *in* 'place'; positioning myself within the research to further sensitize my listening to teachers' stories of identity. Therefore, whilst the research strategies I have used (and developed) are discernably arts-informed, they are neither one form nor another within this genre. Rather, they are guided by an aesthetic consciousness which is focused on uncovering and weaving together unfolding understandings of teacher self and experience.

Such aesthetic looking at teachers' developing images of self and practice brings me back to my fourth publication where teachers were encouraged to acknowledge and transform teacher stereotypes as part of 'owning' personal processes of picturing teacher selves (Lavina, 2019). As was discovered in this project, letting go of stereotypes to assume personal authorship of teacher-generated imagery allowed a deepening of stories, opening multi-dimensional *feeling* insights into the complex work (and lives) of teachers (Lavina, 2019). Consistent with my approach to broaden concepts of qualitative research, my fifth and final publication taps into identity imagery created or sourced using the aesthetic 'place-based' framework developed to pull apart socio-cultural understandings of *being* a teacher in time AND place. Such connections have often been de-centred from teacher identity work (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004), a notable exception in contemporary educational scholarship being the work of Kapadia Matsko and Hammerness (2014). More often, 'place-based education' with children has occupied greater prominence (see Gruenewald, 2003; Schmidt, 2017). Increasingly,

I found myself asking- ‘what about teachers’ sense of connectedness to the places where they are living and working?’ ‘Surely this would impact identity formation, pedagogies chosen, and ultimately teaching practice?’ As discussed in Publication 5 (Lavina, in press), we are living increasingly “displaced” lives (Orr, 1992, p. 126), that is, more often than not, we don’t “live and work” (Orr, 2013, p. 184) in the same place, resulting in a growing sense of ‘place ambivalence’ as people, architectural ‘markers’ and geographies are by-passed on our way ‘elsewhere’ (Orr, 2013). Casey (1993, p. xvii) describes this “postmodern” reality as disorienting and displacing, and I wholeheartedly echo his dismay. Using my aesthetic framework, I sought to untangle the varied pieces of teachers’ stories travelling across contexts of lived experience. For participating teachers, a stable concept of their personal and professional selves was strongly linked to positive “relatedness with others” (Lavina, in press). Additionally, early career teachers who were experiencing new cultural and pedagogical contexts, identified the need for personal adaptation, pedagogical support, and time to re-position a ‘shifted’ concept of professional and personal self with others. Feedback on the aesthetic dimensions of the methodology highlighted its usefulness in revealing connectedness between people, places and events, with shared ‘telling’ of personal and professional histories seen as vital for stabilising and growing image of self-as-teacher.

Recognised challenges

As highlighted throughout this thesis, early childhood education in Australia has been defined historically by shifting socio-political ideology and policy. Ambiguities across service types have seen diminishing educational value for prior-to-school early learning. At the same time, popularised ‘mothering’ (Sumsion & Barnes, 2010) and ‘feminising’ (Wong, 2006) narratives perpetuated in political and media arenas have contributed to undermining community perceptions of early childhood education (Cannella, 1997). As a result, the pedagogical nature of teachers’ work in these contexts continues to be placed in the shadows (Cheeseman & Torr, 2009; Cumming, Sumsion, & Wong, 2015). With salary, workplace conditions, and status dividing the perceived ‘professionalism’ of prior-to-school early childhood teachers when compared to their school-based counterparts (Bretherton, 2010; Productivity Commission, 2014), teacher identity, resilience, and commitment to remain in the sector have been eroded (Cumming et al., 2015; Woodrow, 2007). So, where do we go from here?

With creative unfoldings in hand...

Keeping stories of ‘the personal’ at the forefront of images associated with early childhood teachers, alongside situated pedagogical relevance, seems a useful way to humanise the complexities of a profession often dismissed as a ‘place-holder’ of learning (Cheeseman, Sumsion, & Press, 2015; Woodrow, 2007). Interrogating personal understandings about our learning selves through aesthetic assemblages such as the aesthetic framework (Lavina et al., 2017) used in this study, affirms connections between relationships and events influencing teacher identity development. When considering the core principles “belonging” “being” and “becoming” outlined in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (DEEWR, 2009) for guiding learning approaches with children, it is worth considering the relatedness of these principles to teachers’ sense of self. As teachers and people, recognising our ‘placed’ embeddedness with others in early childhood contexts ultimately affects feelings of belonging, self-efficacy (Gross & Hochberg, 2016) and the scope of learning offered for children (Apple, Lemus, & Semken, 2014).

From the beginning, I have maintained that a pedagogically robust workforce confident in speaking out about the educational value and complexity of work in early childhood contexts (Weber & Mitchell, 1995) needs teachers who have sound understandings of their teacher selves. This means working to support new creative avenues for opening up aspects of self and practice to forms of identity inquiry. Engaging in arts-informed processes to trace evolving identities-in-place offered teachers in this study reflective opportunity to redefine self-as-teacher, re-establishing personal links to pedagogical understandings and practice approaches. As we went along, greater awareness of relational and geographic entanglements influencing identities became more apparent. Engagement in aesthetic processes of creating, sharing, and critiquing of emerging teacher selves were seen as vital in reassessing personal and professional aspects of self being brought to early childhood teaching contexts.

Therefore, making visible for diverse educational and public audiences the complex nature of teacher identity journeys elevates both the communicative value of aesthetic reflective forms, and highlights the pedagogical value of teachers’ professional learning. As suggested in this thesis, earlier adoption of aesthetic models of pedagogical reflection in teacher education programs and other sites of professional learning could ignite, in new ways, the minds, hearts and hands (Sameshima & Knowles, 2008) of teachers so that actions extending from within powerfully situate our voices as legitimate, pedagogically informed, advocacy-focused, and

ready to embrace the interrelatedness of our lived experience with children, families and communities.

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Appendix: Ethics Approval



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03 April 2014

Associate Professor Alma Fleet
Institute of Early Childhood
Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University
NSW 2109

Dear Associate Professor Fleet

Re: "Exploring early childhood teachers' professional identities through reflective pedagogical processes: Implications for teacher preparation and professional practice"

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response was reviewed by the Executive of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Human Sciences and Humanities).

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and your application has been approved.

Details of this approval are as follows:

Reference No: 5201400026

Approval Date: 02 April 2014

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

The following documentation have been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities):

Documents reviewed	Version no.	Date
Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Application	2.3	Jul 2013
Response from Associate Professor Fleet addressing the feedback from the HREC		01 Apr 2014
Invitation to participate - advertisement		
Invitation to participate - Information and consent form		
Photo prompts		
Introducing Metaphor		
Letters of Introduction to KU Macquarie Park Children's Centre & SDN Northern Suburbs Children's Education and Care Centre		
Document outlining the Methodology		

Please ensure that in all future correspondence with the HREC all documentation has a version number and date.

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>

2. Approval is for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval of this protocol.

3. All adverse events must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Chief investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat should you have any questions regarding your ethics application.

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (the National Statement) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.