

Emerging Critical Scholarship in Education

Emerging Critical Scholarship in Education: Navigating the Doctoral Journey

Edited by

Jean Rath and Carol Mutch

**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

Emerging Critical Scholarship in Education: Navigating the Doctoral Journey,
Edited by Jean Rath and Carol Mutch

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One.....	1
Introduction: Navigating the Doctoral Journey	
Jean Rath and Carol Mutch	

Section I : Mastering Methodology

Chapter Two.....	14
A Conversation with Steinbeck: Finding My Way to Postcritical Ethnography	
Esther Fitzpatrick	

Chapter Three.....	30
Developing a Method to Explore the Battles, Barricades and Beliefs of Drama Education	
Jane Isobel Luton	

Chapter Four.....	44
Parents, Policy and Playcentre: Developing a Critical Research Proposal	
Suzanne Manning	

Chapter Five.....	58
Get into the Groove: My Doctoral Dance	
Claire Coleman	

Chapter Six.....	70
Mastering Methodology: Commentary	
Peter O'Connor	

Section II : Tantalising Theory

Chapter Seven.....	78
Diasporic Chinese Youth's Sexual Subjectification: Arriving at Critical Scholarship	
Alex Li	

Chapter Eight.....	91
Goldilocks and the Theorists: Selecting Conceptual Models to Explore Preservice Teachers' Engagement with Disadvantage Jennifer Tatebe	
Chapter Nine.....	106
Critically Christian? My Epistemological and Spiritual Journey as a Sexuality Researcher Teguh Wijaya Mulya	
Chapter Ten	123
Metaphors and Mantras: Responding to the Personal Challenges of Writing a Theoretical Thesis Tanya Wendt Samu	
Chapter Eleven	138
Tantalising Theory: Commentary Roger Dale	
Section III : Examining Ethics	
Chapter Twelve	146
Unmarked Territories: Ethical Challenges in Archival Research Marek Tesar	
Chapter Thirteen.....	158
Ethical Complexities in Field Work: A Journey Into Values Education in a South African School Melanie Drake	
Chapter Fourteen	171
Tales of a Cross-Cultural Research Journey: Navigating Potholes, Roadblocks and Dead-Ends Donella Cobb	
Chapter Fifteen.....	184
Critical Educational Field Work in Iran: Traversing an Environment of Suspicion Saba Kiani	

Chapter Sixteen	194
Examining Ethics: Commentary	
Robin Small	

Section IV : Reflecting Practice

Chapter Seventeen	202
Giving Voice to Alternative Education Tutors: Journeying Towards	
Phenomenological and Poetic Methodology	
Adrian Schoone	

Chapter Eighteen	214
Understanding the Economies of Applied Theatre: A Responsive	
Relationship between Theory, Practice and Method	
Molly Mullen	

Chapter Nineteen	226
Writing Affectively: Queering the Doctoral Writing Journey	
James Burford	

Chapter Twenty	240
Passing Through a Metaphorical Funnel: A Teacher-Researcher's	
Doctoral Journey	
Martyn Davison	

Chapter Twenty-One	251
Reflecting Practice: Commentary	
Barbara M. Grant	

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: NAVIGATING THE DOCTORAL JOURNEY

JEAN RATH AND CAROL MUTCH

Starting points

The doctoral journey is fraught with stops and starts, crossroads and blind alleys, surprises and epiphanies. All successful doctoral students navigate a pathway through these events to reach their final destination. A key aim of this book is to explore examples of these routes in ways that honour individual stories and highlight the broader issues of uniting emergent research practices with doctoral candidates' individual reflexive projects. We have assembled a collection of chapters that draw on the lived expertise of both current and recent doctoral students, with section commentary chapters authored by experienced doctoral supervisors. Studying for any doctorate is a complex and demanding process with explicit and implicit requirements determined by the institution, yet also shaped by debates within the discipline. The paradigm differences within the field of education result in a particularly demanding disciplinary setting. This is most visible in the area of critical studies of education where the expectations of what constitutes satisfactory doctoral work are most complex and contested (Yates 2004). All the doctoral candidates included in this book work with critical topics, theories and methods; they face particular challenges—and we believe rewards—when pursuing work that will meet institutional and disciplinary expectations of “good” doctoral-level research. For the contributors to this book, the doctoral process is required to culminate in more than the award of a qualification to certify research competence. Their imperative is to demonstrate mastery of the disciplinary norms whilst simultaneously challenging dominant models and making authentic contributions to the benefit of broader society (Four Arrows 2008).

Yates (2004) argues that the contestation of educational knowledge, together with the discourse and genre requirements for systematic, self-critical methodologies, result in a problematic domain of knowledge and practice, which is difficult for doctoral candidates, supervisors and examiners. We are aware of the isolation and even “trauma” (Lee and Williams 1999) that many candidates experience when facing issues and dilemmas during the doctoral process. Thus, a further objective of this book is to share the chapter authors’ learning experiences in the hope that these will help alleviate anxiety for, and offer encouragement to, others. It is not our intention to provide a simplistic self-help guide to clearly map a proven route to doctoral success. We agree with Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson’s (2008) criticisms of the self-help genre’s constrained pedagogy and normalisation of existing power structures; this book seeks to offer a more complex story told in the context of doctoral candidates as engaged colleagues. Whilst the metaphor of the doctoral process as a journey is prevalent across the sector (see Pitcher’s (2011) report on the metaphorical conceptions held by candidates), our goal is to avoid the notion of planning for an easily mapped, unified progression. As Jerry Wellington (2010, 134) reminds us, the traditional structure for a doctoral dissertation “makes the process look more like a flow chart than perhaps a truer portrayal such as a spider’s web”. In order to represent a sense of the intertwined decisions that are taken during the pursuit of a doctorate we have supported authors to retain messiness and to avoid idealised tales. Furthermore, whilst our overall metaphor is of the doctorate as journey across uncertain terrain, in the spirit of understanding the doctoral process as varied and multi-faceted we have encouraged individual authors to use, and to question, a range of metaphorical descriptions (see Hughes and Tight (2013) for a critical analysis of the metaphorical terms used to describe the doctoral process). In this way the book provides a range of possible answers to the questions of how candidates experience doctoral studies, what is “critical” about each contributor’s research and how this affects what each person does as he or she researches.

The landscape

This book emerges at a time of heightened awareness of the role of the doctorate, with increasing attention being paid to the doctoral experience and the doctorate as a set of social practices. Whilst the PhD has traditionally been seen as the means by which future “stewards of the discipline” are developed (Golde and Walker 2006), in recent years changes across the higher education sector have led to an evolution of all

university research including diversification of the varieties of doctoral higher degrees and burgeoning numbers of doctoral candidates. Increasing scrutiny has been applied to the doctorate resulting in a noteworthy increase in the number of doctoral education focused research projects, conferences, books and articles in scholarly journals (see Michael Jones 2013, for a review of forty years of journal discussions of issues in doctoral studies). Major shifts have taken place in the conceptualisation and practice of doctoral work; not least the move away from the organising idea of “postgraduate research” and toward one of “doctoral education” (Boud and Lee 2009).

A major change across higher education internationally has been a rapid growth in student numbers and diversity at all levels (see Martin Trow’s (2006) thought-provoking review of the transition from elite, to mass, to universal provision). This has resulted in a broadened doctoral intake to include a range of candidates from more diverse backgrounds and cultures than was historically the case. In Aotearoa New Zealand indigenous people are entering doctoral programmes in increasing numbers. The Tertiary Education Commission (2007) has sought to engage with Māori groups to encourage indigenous doctoral candidates and increase recognition of indigenous knowledge within the academy. (Sue Middleton and Elizabeth McKinley (2010) note that intersections between Māori and “Western” knowledge are acute when negotiating the completion of doctoral-level work).

Challenges from trans-cultural, indigenous, feminist and other social justice oriented approaches to the accepted norms of academic endeavour have resulted in major paradigm differences within the discipline of education. As Lyn Yates (2004) points out, whilst there is broad agreement that quality research is systematic and well-designed, contributes to knowledge and achieves something that matters (either universally or specifically to an individual or group), education remains a “wide-ranging and hotly contested arena of research activity” (Yates, 2004, 71). In her quest to identify “good” educational research, she argues that difficulties are particularly severe for doctoral researchers using critical and post-critical approaches. We are sensitive to the points made by Erica McWilliam (1993) about the dangers of bringing new forms of writing to the educational thesis. She argues that the increasingly ephemeral nature of contemporary social theory produces particularly acute difficulties for doctoral candidates. They must either finish “*post haste*” or be condemned to a constant reworking of texts, which appear instantly out of date. She asserts (McWilliam, 1993, 202) that the traditional linear thesis form “fails to signal the embeddedness of theory in

the entire research task” and is “at odds with imperatives emanating from contemporary social theory”. Situated as they are within the nested contexts of department, institution and discipline—not to mention their personal and professional lives—doctoral candidates must perform a complex balancing act of conducting research and producing theses that show sufficient mastery of the norms to pass by disciplinary gatekeepers whilst, at same time, “doing something different”. The chapters gathered here are thus not “individualistic self-reflexive shenanigans” (Patai 1994, 62), rather they are examples of what Gary Anderson (2002, 22) calls “unfinished models of what rigorous, intentional, systematic, self-reflective practitioner research might look like”. They contribute to the broader debates within education; illustrate the unique confluence of professional understandings, academic practice and individual reflexivity for each author-as-researcher and highlight the particular issues facing doctoral candidates who seek to produce critical research that is recognisable within the university context.

In recent years debates have raged about the phenomenon of professional doctorates (e.g. Scott et al. 2004) with numerous comparisons being made of varieties of doctorate (Neumann 2005) and how doctorates are evolving (Huisman and Naidoo 2006). We agree with Catherine Allen, Elizabeth Smyth and Merlin Wahlstrom’s (2002) view that the EdD has helped to redefine PhD education, making the degree more responsive to the needs of educational stakeholders. Whilst differences remain between the intention and process of professional doctorates and the PhD, we concur with Pat Drake and Linda Heath’s (2011) assertion that, particularly in the disciplinary area of education, the construction of knowledge is not limited to the type of doctoral programme. Thus, the binary categorisation of doctorates is not helpful. Rather, our focus is on the common features amongst many of our contributors—in particular that, irrespective of their subject commitments, gender, nationality or other markers of diversity, they have existing professional and personal commitments to, and knowledge of, their areas of educational expertise. Almost all chapter authors meet Drake and Heath’s (2011) definition of being practitioner researchers. That is to say, they are insider researchers who have in-depth knowledge of their particular educational community with no necessity of being employed by a particular organisation. Each author, as a doctoral candidate, has brought to the research process both his or her existing experiences and professional expertise together with a passionate commitment to make a difference—to engage with critical approaches in education in order to address problems of direct relevance to their professional interests. Most contributors are “grappling with inherent

challenges of research methodology arising out of overt personal involvement” (Drake and Heath 2011, 6). As is evident in their chapters, all authors are expending both emotional and intellectual energy in order to engage authentically with their research topics in ways that will meet personal, professional, disciplinary and institutional expectations of research rigour.

Undoubtedly, the institutional context plays an important role in shaping the doctoral journey and researchers have emphasised the importance of inclusive departmental research cultures in contributing to the breadth of the doctoral experience and associated learning (e.g. Deem and Brehony (2000) highlighted the importance of peer and academic cultures for all candidates). All the chapter authors conduct their research as members of the University of Auckland’s School of Critical Studies in Education / Te Kura O te Kōtuinga Akoranga Mātauranga. The School aims to engage in teaching, research and practice centred on the place of education and its transformative potential in New Zealand society, the Pacific region and beyond (<http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/about/schools-departments/crstie>). Potential doctoral candidates are drawn to the School of Critical Studies in Education by its vision of a fair and just world and the place that critical scholars can play in challenging the status quo, highlighting social and educational disparities and offering alternative solutions. They are also drawn to the way in which the School attempts to “walk the talk” by providing learning, teaching, writing and presenting opportunities that model what a community of critical scholars might look like. This book is the culmination of many of these activities in which the candidates’ initial ideas were presented, critiqued, workshopped, revised, reviewed and crafted with support from the wider school community.

The journeys

Increasingly, practitioners and researchers are looking for ways in which the doctoral experience can include authentic opportunities for publication. We recognise that in addition to honing the craft skills of writing, doctoral candidates are exploring broader aspects of their emerging practices as researchers. Indeed they are writing their way toward ownership of their identities as researchers—this is demanding intellectual and emotional work (McAlpine and Lucas 2011). Kamler (2008) has argued for co-authorship with supervisors as a pedagogic practice to ensure that doctoral candidates receive adequate support to publish. However, bearing in mind Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson’s

(2008) call for alternate approaches and the success of authentic academic practice experiences, such as Nick Hopwood's (2010) "learning by doing" journal editorship scheme, we chose to engage doctoral authors in a structured process of proposal, draft, peer review, writing workshop, collegial review and editorial review. Our intent was to provide scaffolding and collegial support rather than formal instruction. We sought to facilitate an enriching space for participants to build upon their existing knowledge and skills in ways that explore the writing and review practices required to publish beyond the thesis dissertation (wherein any learning about dissertation writing was incidental). Throughout the production of the book, the candidates, their doctoral supervisors, colleagues and the editors interacted in supportive, but intellectually robust, ways to craft stories that were true to the author's original intent but also would resonate with readers at different stages of the journey or in different contexts. We have sought to both produce a high quality "research output" and support a meaningful pedagogic dynamic for all involved—including the editors!

The book has a fourfold structure, with sections dealing with in turn methodology, theory, ethics and reflective practice. Each section includes four chapters authored by current or recent doctoral candidates and a critical commentary by an experienced supervisor.

In the first section, *Mastering methodology*, authors grapple with the challenges of arriving at a research methodology that accommodates the kind of personal, professional, reflective, ethical and representational commitments of critical approaches. Esther Fitzpatrick deploys a fictional account of a conversation with the renowned, North American, author John Steinbeck to examine the fitness of postcritical ethnography, to both perform and investigate the tensions inherent to her research with Pākehā educators in Aotearoa New Zealand. Jane Isobel Luton draws on her extensive practitioner experience to illustrate the way in which contradictions, disappointments and moments of despair have become key entryways to her use of performative inquiry in order to place practitioners of drama education at the centre of her research. Like other chapter authors, Luton and Fitzpatrick seek to engage in a deep way with theory, practice and emotion whilst being rigorous in describing the uncertainties, complexities and challenges of their research journeys. From inclusion of this messiness emerges the importance of informal as well as formal learning in order for doctoral candidates to engage with the untidiness of early steps on the doctoral path. In their chapters Suzanne Manning and Claire Coleman, each in the early stages of the doctoral journey, take up the theme of slippage between the expected and lived experience of arriving at an acceptable methodology. Manning builds on her experience

within New Zealand's early childhood Playcentre movement, and some serendipitous exploration of the methodological literature, to illustrate her approach to arriving at a methodology far removed from her initial intentions. Claire Coleman's transition to parenthood has coincided with her "doctoral dance" to produce a research design capable of bringing together process drama and critical pedagogy to work with and for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Here, and elsewhere in this volume, there is a focus of the doctoral process enabling the completion of "life tasks" (Levinson 1986) beyond the academic arena—a process which continues as researchers embark on their post-doctoral careers. Throughout this section, as the commentator Peter O'Connor notes, there is a theme of supervisors and candidates co-navigating the evolving terrain of doctoral-level research as well as the successful completion of an individual research project.

The second section, *Tantalising theory*, considers the role of theory in facilitating and challenging the doctoral candidate's route. As in the first section, the role of broader life tasks and production of a coherent self is highlighted, and, as Roger Dale points out in his commentary, there are broader academic debates at play here than the disciplinary conversations within the arena of educational research. Alex Li, near the start of her doctoral journey, writes of her exploration of, and commitment to, the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of her sexuality research with Chinese diasporic youth. Jennifer Tatebe's imaginative use of the traditional childhood fable, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, provides a cautionary tale of selection of a theoretical framework to explain how preservice teachers engage with issues of disadvantage. Teguh Wijaya Mulya considers his personal intellectual and spiritual journey as he embarks on a reflexive project to reconcile his evolving understandings of poststructuralism, queer theory and Christian faith. Tanya Wendt Samu, writing at the end of her doctoral journey, provides a highly reflective account of how producing a theoretical thesis has enabled her to gain personal and professional leverage to encourage the kinds of social justice changes to which she is committed. We are reminded of Pat Drake and Linda Heath's (2011, 6) statement that much of the work that emerges during such personal and committed research "requires drawing on emotional as well as intellectual resources and working out what one thinks can be a painful and messy business as well as an intellectual one".

In the third section, *Examining ethics*, we have encouraged authors to consider that there is no one correct answer with regard to how ethical issues should be resolved. Indeed, we recognise that maintaining tension rather than seeking resolution may on occasion be the more ethically

sound approach. As Robin Small reminds us in the commentary, formal ethical processes may be an integral component of the doctoral journey, yet they are rarely sufficiently inclusive to cover every eventuality. To help others negotiate within and beyond the requirements of institutional ethics committees, this section provides some reflective practice pointers to help doctoral candidates and their supervisors develop an ethical approach capable of helping them to determine what actions to take in the unpredictable and evolving situations they encounter. Marek Tesar's chapter exemplifies this approach, in providing an account of the (still unresolved) complexities of ethics and truth in archival research. The remaining three chapters in this section are accounts of ethical practice in doctoral fieldwork. Melanie Drake describes her journey into values education in a disadvantaged school in South Africa. Her story shows how careful compliance with institutional ethics processes might be insufficient preparation for fieldwork, which may call upon the researcher to question personal ethics and even the nature of research itself. Donella Cobb's focus is the challenges and frustrations of cross-cultural ethical processes in an unnamed low-income nation; she reminds us that the ethical map drawn before departing on the doctoral journey may not match the territory in the field. In the final chapter of this section, Saba Kiani reflects on the ethical issues that arose when researching in the politically sensitive context of Iran and of ethical language translation.

Barbara Grant in her commentary to accompany the final quartet of chapters, *Reflecting practice*, remarks on the importance of thinking about being reflective both *of* and *for* practice. Each chapter author is aware of the educational and practice debates to which they wish to contribute and of the institutional and disciplinary expectations placed upon them; nevertheless, they are reflexively critical about academic norms and are prepared to take risks with their own chapter texts in order to represent the emergent approaches to critical educational research that are part of their doctoral journeys. Adrian Schoone writes of his initial discomfort in using "alternative and unexpected" methodologies; yet he has the courage to script a text that "performs what it announces" (Lather 1991, 11) by including poetic layers that require the active participation of readers. James Burford's chapter also embraces performative textual risk—his stated aim is to disorient readers so that they will engage affectively with his dual foci of doctoral writing studies and queer studies affect—with the reader invited to experience the sense of "everydayness" of his doctoral "jaunt". Martyn Davison's piece also includes a strong sense of the everyday; however, his is the unsettled everydayness of a teacher-researcher seeking to reconcile his positions as researcher, student, agent

for educational change and practitioner. He offers the story of his doctoral journey in the spirit of helping future teacher-researchers, who need to develop what Pat Drake and Linda Heath (2011, 31) refer to as “multiple integrities”. This need is echoed in Molly Mullen’s chapter as she addresses the challenges and rewards of adopting a critical educational standpoint to researching the work of applied theatre practitioners.

The range of approaches to knowledge generation and application represented in each section arises from the need to address diverse settings and agendas. We believe that it is a hopeful sign of the richness of the emergent approaches to educational research that are necessary in order to navigate a field of complex nested contexts, shifting policies, and diverse stakeholders with evolving understandings, knowledges and interests. As our doctoral candidates complete one journey and embark on the next, they will draw on the strength and determination they have ably demonstrated and find ways to critically engage with the social and education issues that they meet on their way—and in doing so contribute to creating a more fair and just society.

Acknowledgements

In Barbara Grant’s concluding commentary she emphasises the potency of the supervisor-candidate relationship in not only mapping the doctoral process but also accompanying the candidate during the years required to complete the doctoral journey. Whilst we see the authors’ contributions to this book as an additional learning opportunity beyond the supervisor-candidate dyad, we acknowledge the important role that supervisors have taken in providing feedback and guidance as part of the process of conceptualising chapter content and developing forms of writing. We would like to thank them for their support and also thank the University of Auckland’s School of Critical Studies in Education for its sponsorship of events and practical support to see the book to completion. Coralie McCormack, Iain Hay, John Morgan and Cathy Fagan each reviewed a section of the book, we and the chapter authors are grateful for the considered and helpful feedback they provided.

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abundance, strength and determination, and is believed to ensure a safe journey over water.

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The Editors

Jean Rath's main research interest is academic practice (teaching, research and service) and the experiences of early-career academics including doctoral candidates. She has particular expertise in the use of writing as a method of inquiry to investigate culture, memory and reflective practices. All her work is underpinned by an enduring interest in issues of identity, narrative, social justice and pedagogy. Jean is a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning at the University of Waikato Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato and is an Honorary Research Associate of the University of Oxford's Learning Institute.

Carol Mutch is currently Head of School and Associate Professor in the School of Critical Studies in Education at the University of Auckland. Part of her role is to build the research culture and outputs in her school and this book contributes to that goal. Her career has included teaching, educational leadership, policy advice, research and evaluation. She has published books, chapters and articles on educational history and policy, curriculum development, citizenship and social education and research methodologies. Her current research interests focus on the role of schools in disaster response and recovery following the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes.

SECTION I:
MASTERING METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER TWO

A CONVERSATION WITH STEINBECK: FINDING MY WAY TO POSTCRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

ESTHER FITZPATRICK

In this chapter, Esther Fitzpatrick explores questions regarding methodological and ethical choices researchers need to consider in the initial stages of their study. Through a fictional scripted conversation with John Steinbeck, she highlights the tensions inherent in a doctoral journey. Importantly, she positions the doctoral researcher as a central character in the unfolding story using a postcritical ethnographic approach. Through the scripted conversation the researcher's own beliefs, bias, and assumptions are made apparent. Fictionalising the script illuminates the message, whilst allowing the complexity of the process to be evident. It also connects the reader to the experience.

Fumbling muddling
Conscious of my lack
I come back to Steinbeck
A ghost to whom I speak
A ghost whom I admire
A ghost who writes on my mind.

(Fitzpatrick 2013)

This chapter tells the story of how I conversed with others as I considered and designed a study to critically explore my research question: What does it mean to be a Pākehā educator? Defining myself as Pākehā, I represent what is usually understood as the white European partner in New Zealand's bicultural relationship with Māori—the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. As an emerging researcher I looked to mentors/guides/critical friends to enlarge my understanding of the role I was about to undertake, represented here through a fictional conversation with John Steinbeck, the Nobel Prize winning American author. For the

purpose of my study I required a methodology that would enable me to engage in an in-depth exploration of individual stories of contemporary Pākehā educators, whilst acknowledging my central role as both Pākehā and educator. I adopted a postcritical ethnographic approach.

To represent my experience I scripted a fictional conversation providing me with the performative capability to connect the reader with my struggle in a critically reflexive way (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Spry 2011b). Scripting a conversation engaged me critically with questions regarding the methodological and ethical choices I needed to consider throughout the initial stages. Fictionalising the script was a way of illuminating the message, whilst allowing the complexity of the process to be apparent. It was also a strategy for connecting the reader to my experiences in order to evoke an emotional and intellectual response (Eisner 1997; Schuck et al. 2012; Spry 2011a). Script-writing involved a cyclic integration of theory, relevant literature, personal experience, analysis and key ideas (Saldaña 2003). The process meant reducing the data corpus from the volumes of methodological readings I was engaged with, down to those ideas that resonated. I read and reread text, creatively writing and playing with ideas, to become familiar with the meaning and feeling of the words (Saldaña 2003; Sallis 2008).

A Critical Methodology

The study involves the use of three ethnographic methodologies to generate rich detailed histories of being a Pākehā educator: Autoethnography, Duoethnography and Performance ethnography; explained more fully in the scripted conversation. I have found these methodologies particularly useful as I explore and challenge the dominant political and powerful discourses that occur in multiethnic societies. My aim is to contribute to issues of social justice through providing and critically analysing richer stories of Pākehā identity construction.

A critical aspect of my research is to perform, and simultaneously investigate, these ethnographic methodologies to inform future practice. Critical ethnographic methodologies have the potential to ask and engage with important questions about our global lives (Spry 2011b), expose dynamic interactions between power, politics and poetics (Madison 2012) and produce new understandings. Further, these methodologies allow for the complexity of human behaviour, whilst also potentially disrupting the façade of normalcy (Breault, Hackler and Bradley 2012).

Postcritical Ethnography

Ethnography provides me with a strategy for exploring cultures and societies while being responsive to how local understandings and perspectives influence and mediate human experience and interaction (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Ethnography demands that I immerse myself deeply into the everyday life of Pākehā to probe how Pākehā “negotiate and contest meaning in the course of their interactions with each other” (Higgs 2009, 9) and with others who are non-Pākehā.

Critical ethnography is concerned with my ethical responsibility to pay attention to issues of unfairness or injustice with a focus on social change (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). My assumption is that the standard story of Pākehā suppresses new and emerging ways of “be-coming” for both Pākehā and non-Pākehā; instead maintaining long-established hegemonic power structures. As a critical ethnographer I aim to explore beneath surface appearances to disrupt standard stories, and to unsettle neutral and taken-for-granted assumptions (Madison 2012, 5).

Postcritical ethnography acknowledges the importance of identifying and contextualising my position as researcher. It extends the goals of critical ethnography to include “positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and representation” (Noblit 2004, 198). As demonstrated throughout the scripted conversation, I am involved in on-going critical reflection to ensure my own beliefs, bias, and assumptions are apparent throughout the study (Madison 2012). Madison argues that postcritical ethnography is a move to contextualise the position of the researcher and that “positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (8).

I returned repeatedly to a poem of John Steinbeck that has influenced my own practice as a teacher educator. I believed that same poem had a message for researchers in education. It is this belief that has motivated me to script a fictional conversation with Steinbeck to explore performative writing and connect the reader with my concerns on developing an ethical research practice. Steinbeck’s replies throughout the script are constructed from several fictional and nonfictional sources. Interwoven through the conversation are my own poems, stories and voices of other researchers as significant others who have spoken to me throughout this process. These layers of conversation keep the text in motion and invite the reader to engage reflexively with the process (Rath 2012). I imagine if Steinbeck and I had shared a conversation it would have begun with me sharing my favourite Steinbeck poem, and I would call him John ...

Like Captured Fireflies

In her classroom our speculations ranged the world.
 She aroused us to book waving discussions.
 Every morning we came to her carrying new truths, new facts, new ideas
 Cupped and sheltered in our hands like captured fireflies.
 When she went away a sadness came over us,
 But the light did not go out.
 She left her signature upon us
 The literature of the teacher who writes on children's minds.
 I've had many teachers who taught us soon forgotten things,
 But only a few like her who created in me a new thing a new attitude, a new
 hunger.
 I suppose that to a large extent I am the unsigned manuscript of that teacher.
 What deathless power lies in the hands of such a person?
 John Steinbeck (1955)

Scripted conversation**Characters**

ESTHER: Doctoral candidate

JOHN: John Steinbeck

SHADOWS ON THE BEACH: Other significant researchers, theorists,
 John's son.

Scene One

It is a summer evening at a beach holiday house. Rays of early evening sunlight illuminate Esther, who is sitting on the deck mulling over what she has read and written that day for her research proposal. Enter John Steinbeck who walks across the deck and sits beside her. He relaxes back into the chair, crosses his legs, and lights a cigarette. They stare out at the ocean together and begin talking, slowly and dreamily. Somewhere on the beach, hidden from view, are other significant characters listening in on the conversation; researchers, theorists—fellow dreamers.

ESTHER: (*Dramatically.*) I love your poem about the fireflies. I always wanted to be that teacher. To listen to the stories those children and others brought to me “cupped and sheltered in their hands like captured fireflies”. Now I am involved in a research project that involves listening to and gathering stories—about what it means to be Pākehā educator.

JOHN: (*Kindly and thoughtfully.*) It was written for you. It was written for all teachers, educators, and researchers who are involved in the business of listening and interpreting the stories of others. “I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit” (Steinbeck 1955).

Pause.

John turns and focuses his gaze on Esther.

JOHN: (*In a sceptical tone.*) But I do wonder. What is a Pākehā? And why is listening to their stories worthy of your attention?

ESTHER: (*Sits up straight. Her face adopts a serious expression.*) Where do I begin? A multivalent term, fraught with a myriad of contentious meanings and sentiments, Pākehā are usually understood as the white European partner in New Zealand’s bicultural relationship with Māori—the indigenous people of New Zealand (Bell 2009). Understanding the development of such an identity in New Zealand is a significant undertaking since it is complicated by recent globalisation, polyethnic communities and a bi-cultural relationship between two Founding Peoples; indigenous Māori and Pākehā Settler (Bell 1999). The development of an identity for Pākehā is even more complicated by their history as colonists, their hegemonic position in society, and for some their ignorance of White privilege (Addy 2008).

The sound of seagull cries rises and fades. Esther glances over at the shadows on the beach. These shadows shout out to her:

AWATERE: You have no culture (1984)

HOEY: What culture you have is borrowed or appropriated from Māori (2004)

TURNER: Pākehā are in a place of internal exile (2000)

ESTHER: (*She turns back to John with urgency.*) To answer the second question: Pākehā are an emerging ethnic group who have no other home. A form of multicultural education has persisted in New Zealand that emphasises the authenticity of minority groups—further essentialising ethnic groups—and mostly ignores the existence of Pākehā. The concern here is that this practice further isolates and stereotypes particular groups which can result in racism. Pākehā consistently demonstrate that they struggle with articulating a positive ethnic identity and a sense of belonging (Bell 2009).

Esther stands, steps forward and talks directly to the reader.

Here is a poem I wrote nearing the end of my last research project of my own journey of becoming Pākehā:

ONTÔS
 “To be”
 I am I was I will be
 The truth
 Travelling becoming
 An identity
 In flux in-between entangled
 Belonging
 Becoming
 Me

(Fitzpatrick, 2011)

JOHN: (*Leaning forward. Mock bow.*) Thank you for your detailed description of Pākehā.

Esther sits back down smiling.

JOHN: (*Quizzical look on his face.*) How do you propose to go about listening to the stories of Pākehā educators and interpreting them as truthfully as you might? How will you tell of those traits we also detest, tell of our failures, our self-interest and yet be ethical to your participants? As to your poem (*John points to Esther*):

Remember as you travel through life and continue this journey of becoming, the journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find that after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. (Steinbeck [1962] 1997)

Enjoy.

ESTHER: (*Picks up her pad and pen. She looks at the words on the page.*) I am exploring the stories of Pākehā educators and how being a Pākehā influences our practice. This will involve three ethnographic projects: autoethnography, duoethnography and performance ethnography. Using a postcritical ethnographic framework I will be paying particular attention to how as educators we “write on children’s minds” (Steinbeck 1955).

Turns to John.

Reading through some survey questions last week—exploring the relationship between adolescent understandings of ethnic-racial identity

and school experience—I was struck with how we unconsciously write on children’s minds. This survey was given to hundreds of adolescent children in New Zealand, including Pākehā. I wondered how they interpreted the following questions.

Esther reads off the page. Dramatically:

I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for the majority culture.
I dislike many of the things that the dominant culture represents
People from the dominant ethnic group are vicious and nasty...
(Worrell et al. 2010).

The sound of seagull cries rises and fades. Esther glances over at the shadows on the beach.

A lone voice from the beach instructs:

MOIN SYED: My recent research on the impact of the survey on participants would suggest these Pākehā students would be made to feel uncomfortable and internalize the negative images portrayed about their ethnic group—or become resistant altogether (Syed, Juan, and Juang 2011).

JOHN: (*Leans back in chair. He shakes his head and frowns.*) You are speaking in some other language? I can’t understand much of what you have said other than it involves a lot of stories about **you!** Why are you in the centre of this research? Is it just going to be a whole lot of navel gazing—“poor wee Pākehā me”? “Where did this discontent start? You are warm enough, but you shiver. You are fed, yet hunger gnaws you. You have been loved, but your yearning wanders in new fields. And to prod all these there’s time, the Bastard Time!” (Steinbeck [1954] 2008).

Pause. John laughs. Leans forward again.

As to the survey questions—these remind me of what provoked me to write the “Like Captured Fireflies” poem. (*John stands. Takes a step forward. A smaller shadow stands alongside him.*) My eleven-year-old son came to me one day ...

“SON: (*tone of patient suffering*): How much longer do I have to go to school?

JOHN: About fifteen years.

SON: (*despondently*): Oh! Lord—Do I have to?

JOHN: I’m afraid so. It’s terrible and I’m not going to try to tell you it isn’t. But I can tell you this—if you are very lucky, you may find a teacher and that is a wonderful thing.

SON: Did you find one?

JOHN: I found three. "They all loved what they were doing. They did not tell—they catalyzed a burning desire to know. Under their influence, the horizons sprung wide and fear went away and the unknown became knowable. But most important of all, the truth, that dangerous stuff, became beautiful and very precious". (Steinbeck 1955)

Pause. The shadow of John's son exits. John slowly sits down again. Sinks into chair. Esther leans forward.

ESTHER: (*Loud whisper.*) Perhaps I misrepresented what I am doing. I am very aware of the concerns—that this type of research is sometimes misunderstood as indulgent. (*She sits back into chair.*) For example starting out on this research I became fascinated by the stories of my ancestors. I am now a complete ancestry on line convert. I mentioned my concern to a critical friend and her answer was "it is important to know my whakapapa" (my ancestry). (*Laughs. Pause.*) As part of my research I am creating a wire Pākehā sculpture and while playing around with wire one afternoon I started to think about these ancestors:

Esther stands and addresses the reader with emotion.

Wire

*I am drawing out the wire
It is neatly bound like my Grandma's yarn of wool
I am imagining how I will weave my wire Pākehā
I draw out the wire carefully
Knitting, weaving, tukutuku koru
I draw more wire and remember
An ancestor who drew wire
In Thurgoland
An ancestor who used wire
In Sheffield
An ancestor who manipulated wire
In Auckland
To make my Poppa's crib
And then I think of number eight fencing wire
And remember
An ancestor who won a bet
Building fences
In Christchurch New Zealand
My mother's chicken wire
Chinese bantams, Rhode Island red
And then I remember running a race
Across the paddocks
Dodging the cow pats*

Smeared with paspalum
ZAP
My first electric fence.

Esther sits down. Pours him a glass of wine. They sit in silence for a moment. Then Esther explains. Careful with her words. John sits forward drawing on his cigarette thoughtfully.

I begin by telling my stories of becoming Pākehā and then weave these stories in a critically reflexive way through the whole process. I begin with *my* story—to make transparent in the larger story how I am situated—so others can comment, juxtapose their stories against, and add to this script. This provides an opportunity for the voice of the researcher to be identified (Chang 2008) and enables me to explore personal knowledge to inform educational philosophy and pedagogical practice (Starr 2010). Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010) define autoethnography as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (1).

Pause. Esther leans forward conspiratorially. Looking about furtively to check who is listening. She continues in a low whisper.

One ethical dilemma is the tension between telling those stories (or versions of) I am proud of and those I would rather hide away, such as the story of Goldie and Me...

I am sitting in a special room in Auckland library. Before me is a box that contains the history of one side of my family. I am prowling excitedly through the contents. I have always liked to play the part of detective uncovering secrets. I read a story about a great-great-uncle who was best friends with Frederick Goldie (a famous New Zealand artist in the nineteenth century). The story paints a marvellous picture of my relative, his exploits as a conservationist, gardener, photographer and painter. But what I especially enjoyed reading about was his relationship with Māori who gifted him many treasures. Goldie also gifted my relative with several of his paintings. It was a stunning story ... until I turned the page. After he died his wife burnt everything, everything, yes I know what you are asking ... everything.

JOHN: (*Smiling.*) How and why do we select particular stories to tell? This is a marvellous story. I can imagine which part of this story is the firefly cupped and sheltered in your hand and which is locked up in a box in a cupboard in a museum. “When speaking for others just remember no man really knows about other human beings. The best he can do is to **suppose** that they are like himself” (Steinbeck [1961] 2000).