CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at Charles Sturt University
August 2014
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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services for nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

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Date:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to acknowledge and thank for their support and involvement in the research and writing of this thesis. I would first like to thank my supervisors for their patience, trust, gentleness, criticality, and foresight. I thank Stephen Kemmis especially for his encouragement, boundless generosity, and wisdom, and for helping me to see the wood and the trees. I thank Laurette Bristol especially for her incisive questions and sense of fun, and for constantly challenging me to look at things from different perspectives. I thank Lisa Given especially for her understanding, attention to detail, and for being there when I needed reassurance and guidance. I appreciate the willingness of all three supervisors to step with me into some unknown territory.

The participants in this research gave generously in many ways, and I thank them for their involvement and insights. I am particularly grateful to the six participants who appear in the thesis as Alex, Morgan, Bailey, Pat, Sam, and Jess for sharing this journey with me from the beginning. I was humbled by their generosity and trust.

There are a number of people who supported this work by providing invaluable feedback on various draft chapters along the way, as well as by providing sustaining encouragement and friendship. I thank Roy Sanders for his meticulous proofreading of the thesis. I also thank Jane Wilkinson, Annemaree Lloyd, Christine Edwards-Groves, Ros Brennan Kemmis, Heidi Smith, and Kelli Paterson.

I was fortunate to have fellow doctoral students with whom I could regularly discuss theoretical and practical issues explored in this thesis: Susanne Francisco, Letitia Galloway, Ela Sjölle, Barrie Irving, Doris Santos, Andi Salamon, and, in the beginning, Richard Wartho. Our conversations gave me invaluable opportunities to test ideas. I thank them for the intellectual jousting, inspiration, and friendship.

I also had the opportunity to converse with, and seek advice from, local and visiting scholars about this research. I am very grateful to Bill Green, Petri Salo, Pat Sikes, Hannu Heikkinen, Theodore Schatzki, John Sharp, and Matti Pennanen.

I thank Charles Sturt University and the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPLLE) for supporting my doctorate through a RIPLLE scholarship (and travel grant to attend an overseas conference and doctoral school). This made it possible for me to undertake the doctorate on a fulltime basis.

I also thank Brian Hemmings, Lisa McLean, and Annemarie Lloyd for their excellent support at Faculty level, and others in the Faculty of Education whose friendship and/or advice has made the journey less difficult than it may have otherwise been including Jacquie Tinkler, Brooke Scriven, Kim Woodland, Barbara Conlan, Becky Wilson, Debra Evans, RIPLLE staff, School of Education staff, the Doctoral Student support group, my Shut Up and Write buddies, the PEP research group, and the independent readers of my research proposal. I thank my students too. They are, after all the source of my motivation for doing this research.

Last but not least, I thank friends and family who supported and encouraged me throughout this time. (Thanks to Ros for the wonderful meals that sustained me in the final weeks). I am especially grateful to Stephen Evans for his love, patience, and strength. (Let’s go sailing, Stephen!)
ETHICS APPROVAL

Approval for this research was granted by Charles Sturt University Human Ethics Committee.

The approval number is 2012/015
ABSTRACT

Few would deny that we live in complex times. The fast pace of change, globalisation, technological advances, and the ‘knowledge explosion’, are but a few of many phenomena contributing to the complexity of our lives. University education plays an important role in helping people to understand, and negotiate, multiple complexities, and to respond to the social injustices that some of these complexities generate. What is needed in universities, in order to fulfil this role, is a kind of social-justice oriented, critically reflexive, and informed teaching practice: critical pedagogical praxis.

However, the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis in the contemporary university can be difficult given pressures associated with mass education, changing community expectations, and the influences of neoliberalism and managerialism. This demands an interrogation of practices in higher education, and a deeper understanding of critical pedagogical praxis, and how it is, or can be, enabled and sustained.

With this in mind, this research examined how a group of academics’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis (individually and collectively) within a particular Australian university were enabled and constrained by the conditions within their setting, and how the academics negotiated tensions between the conditions and their praxis-oriented goals. The research was conducted as a collaborative inquiry combining elements of critical participatory action research (Carr & Kemmis, 2009), institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 2005), and self-study (Loughran, 2004). Findings were drawn mainly from analysis of scholarly conversations between seven participating academics, interviews, observations of teaching practice, and reflective writing. Analysis involved a critical hermeneutic approach (Kogler, 1996) informed by three practice theories based on the work of Kemmis et al. (2014), Schatzki (2002; 2012), and MacIntyre (1981).

The research highlighted that university conditions can be a source of nourishment or tension for critical pedagogical praxis depending on whether they create and/or limit time and space for (a) building positive collegial and student-teacher relationships; (b) engaging in critical, reflexive inquiry, and rigorous critical conversation; (c) responding creatively and ethically to people and situations; and (d) engaging in professional learning and critically reflective pedagogical practice. The research suggested that, in order to reclaim universities as niches for critical pedagogical praxis, there is a need for some university arrangements to be more closely scrutinised and/or reoriented, and for new, more sustaining arrangements to be created. Stories of the lived critical pedagogical praxis of the participating academics provided important insights into how this can be achieved.
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Much has been written in recent times about contemporary universities being in, or approaching, a ‘state of crisis’ (e.g., Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Giroux, 2010; Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2013; Zipin & Brennan, 2003), or at the very least, facing profound challenges associated not only with the ‘massification’ of university education (Altbach et al., 2009) that began last century, but also with the penetration of a ‘market logic’ and ‘managerialism’ into higher education (Ball, 2012; Blackmore, Brennan, & Zipin, 2010; Calhoun, 2006; Connell, 2012; Davies & Petersen, 2005; J. Nixon, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Walker, 2002; Zipin & Brennan, 2003). Particular attention has been drawn to the influences of neoliberalism, a “market-centred policy logic” (Connell, 2013a, p. 1); the knowledge economy which construes knowledge as a “form of capital” important for economic growth (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 330); globalisation, the increasing “interconnectivity” of the world’s markets, businesses, culture and people (McCarthy, Pitton, Soochul, & Monje, 2009, p. 41); and new public management, a neoliberal managerial system (Olssen & Peters, 2005). These closely-linked phenomena are said (e.g., Olssen & Peters, 2005) to have been permeating universities all over the world for the last three to four decades, variously reshaping relationships between universities and societies, and transforming university functions, governance, culture, and programmes.

Some of the changes associated with these phenomena – and the market-centred thinking and managerial approaches that they promote or epitomise – include the “marketisation” of the university (Marginson, 2004, p. 2); the intensification of academic work (Davies & Bansel, 2005; Hartman & Darab, 2012); the creation of a ‘performativity’ culture (Ball, 2012; Green, 2012b); increased accountability pressures (Bleiklie, 1998; Shore & Wright, 2004); heightened competition (Davies & Bansel, 2007; J. Nixon, 2011), and the commodification of knowledge and education (Ball, 2012; Bullen, Kenway, & Fabey, 2010; J. Nixon, 2011). The effects of these mechanisms and/or by-products of neoliberalism, according to these dramatic narratives, have been numerous. Universities as institutions have become spaces for churning out certificated workers, students have become consumers (Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December; Porfillio & Yu, 2006), customers (Bode & Dale, 2012; Star & Hammer, 2008), or “the market” (Bode & Dale, 2012, p. 7), and university educators – whose autonomy and flexibility has diminished with the expansion of a
disposable academic workforce (Giroux, 2010) – have become parts of a market-driven machine (Bode & Dale, 2012, p. 9). Pedagogical practice has become something of a calculable and commodifiable, rule-following, instrumental, entrepreneurial, or virtual exercise rather than a knowledge-generating, transforming, educational endeavour. Within such a landscape, education is being compromised (McCarthy et al., 2009). The narratives are grim and serious.

The concerns being expressed via these narratives matter because of the important role of universities in society. As noted by J. Nixon (2011), “higher education is central to imagining and resourcing an educated public with the capability, reason and purpose necessary for a sustainable future” (p. 16). Universities are, in a sense, a public good (J. Nixon, 2011). They have a long tradition, for example, as sites of teaching, learning, and research; of knowledge generation and access to knowledge (Calhoun, 2006); of social critique (Bleichlie, 1998); and of cultural “continuity and creativity” (Calhoun, 2006, p. 10). Universities also play a role in the formation of a citizenry and its citizens (Giroux, 2010), and preparation for the professions (Habermas, 1989). The nature of universities, the kind of education that universities offer, and the relationship between universities and society, therefore, all have a constitutive bearing on society. If universities are in a ‘state of crisis’, the implications for future society must surely be worrying.

Critical pedagogical praxis, a kind of reflexive, informed, social-justice oriented pedagogical practice, has a paradoxical place in these grim narratives as both a casualty and a conduit to an alternative future. On the one hand, critical pedagogical praxis appears to be increasingly marginalised in favour of other constructions of pedagogical practice that flourish under contemporary neoliberal conditions. On the other hand, critical pedagogical praxis is necessary to address some of the issues that are outlined above. There is a need, therefore, to interrogate what is happening in higher education in terms of possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis (which also necessitates more clarity regarding the nature of critical pedagogical praxis itself), how critical pedagogical praxis is enabled and constrained, and how critical pedagogical praxis might otherwise be nurtured and sustained.

In this thesis, I examine possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis in the contemporary university from a local, site-based perspective, by reporting on research that focussed on the collective and individual efforts of a small group of academics to embody and nurture critical pedagogical praxis in an Australian university. The research echoes both the content and seriousness of the concerns expressed above,
since it reveals the extent to which a neoliberal rationality has penetrated a particular university environment and, relatedly, the ways in which critical pedagogical praxis has become increasingly difficult to embody and nurture in that environment. However, the thesis also offers a more hopeful narrative by showing how a group of academics has been able to embody and nurture critical pedagogical praxis on a personal level and collectively change some of the conditions within the university that prefigure critical pedagogical praxis or make it possible (or impossible) to enact. Through pedagogy, and through engagement in the academic community (as collective critical pedagogical praxis), this group of academics has been negotiating locally-experienced tensions and challenges in ways that ‘speak back’ to the neo-liberal agenda felt there (as elsewhere).

An important message emerging from this local narrative, as I demonstrate in this thesis, is that critical pedagogical praxis is an endangered species of pedagogical practice in higher education, but it has not, as Giroux and others might have us believe, altogether disappeared from university pedagogy. Equally, the university is increasingly becoming a hostile habitat for critical pedagogical praxis, but the practices, “practice architectures”—“cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements”—(Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, & Bristol, 2014, pp. 31-32), and practitioner subjectivities and capacity that make critical pedagogical praxis possible have not been completely eroded, and those that make it difficult are changeable.

Drawing on theoretical resources and empirical material, the thesis presents the case that changing (or continuing to change) current constraining university arrangements and practices needs attention if critical pedagogical praxis is to have a place of any consequence in the university of the future. It is incumbent on academics to see that such change does (and can continue to) occur. This means re-inscribing universities as sites of praxis, university conditions as conditions of possibility for praxis, and university pedagogical practice as praxis. The thesis provides insights that can potentially inform such a process of re-inscription. It does so by shedding light on the nature of critical pedagogical praxis and what can constrain and enable it, and by suggesting ways of addressing constraints, and collectively nurturing critical pedagogical praxis, using participant experiences as examples.

In the remainder of this chapter, I lay the foundations for the argument just outlined and introduce key elements of the research. I begin by explicating the notion of critical pedagogical praxis. I then provide a background and rationale for the
research. This is followed by an outline of the aims and the research questions, and a brief discussion of the nature and significance of the research. The chapter concludes with a description of how the thesis has been organised.

What is Critical Pedagogical Praxis?

Critical pedagogical praxis refers, in this thesis, to a particular kind of pedagogical practice: reflexive, informed and morally committed pedagogical practice that seeks to create spaces (e.g., through teaching and learning interactions) in which harmful or unsustainable practices and power relationships can be understood and reoriented, and in which new possibilities for action can emerge and be enacted. This interpretation draws on the notion of practice as praxis – that is, deliberative, informed, and morally-committed action (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a) – and more specifically, critical praxis¹, a kind of praxis that is informed by critical insights and that is highly sensitised to the history-making aspect of action, especially the social justice/ethical-political implications of action². It also draws on a view of pedagogical practice as a practice related to processes of teaching and learning (or processes of knowledge creation and/or knowledge exchange involving teachers and learners³, and including material arrangements that make the knowledge creation/exchange possible). Practice, in turn, is understood as a form of “socially established human activity” comprised of a complex and distinctive amalgam of “sayings”, “doings”, and “relatings” that cohere in relation to a “distinctive project” or purpose (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 31).

Critical pedagogical praxis, as I show in Chapter Three, is understood and used variously in education literature. In some cases it is associated with a critical pedagogy tradition (for example in the work of Breunig, 2009, 2011; T. Evans, 2009). I wish to point out that, while informed by that tradition, this thesis is not located entirely within it, partly because of reservations about how that tradition is sometimes represented and appropriated. I explore these reservations in Chapter Nine.

¹ Some might argue that the qualifier critical is superfluous in both critical praxis and critical pedagogical praxis because praxis and pedagogical praxis are inherently critical (e.g., Jacobs, 2008; Lather, 1991). As I show in Chapter Three, however, not everyone shares this interpretation of praxis. I therefore use critical in critical pedagogical praxis to make it explicit that a critical form of pedagogical practice as praxis is the focus of investigation.

² This draws on the “post-Marxian” and “post-Hegelian” understanding of praxis as “history-making action” articulated by Kemmis (2010a, p. 9).

³ The words teachers and learners are used here in a broad sense, that is, their use is not restricted to teachers and students in classrooms, and acknowledging that teachers can be learners and vice versa.
Background and Rationale

My interest in critical pedagogical praxis is linked to issues that have emerged in my own professional practice as an educator. Over my teaching career – as an English teacher, outdoor educator, and, more recently, as a teacher educator – I have come to see formal educational settings as *maybe-ing* arenas\(^4\): spaces in which people (teachers, students, mentors, mentees) as co-learners create, imagine and explore possibilities of how they, society and the world can be. Yet, I have also become increasingly concerned about the prevalence and consequences of a *must-be-ing* culture in educational institutions (in that much of what goes on amounts to rule-setting and rule-following, and revolves around ideas of how people and life *must be*), and the instrumental and marginalising pedagogical practice (however inadvertent) that perpetuates such a culture, sometimes with devastating effects.

I felt this concern rather acutely when I began working as a teacher educator in 2008. The transition into a higher education context from teaching in schools and outdoor education centres prompted me to reflect on my (then) current educational context and pedagogical practice in light of my experiences in other contexts and vice versa. At the time I also embarked on a Masters research project (Clayton, 2010) that exposed me to praxis-related literature and fuelled a developing critical consciousness (see Clayton, 2013). My experiences as a novice teacher educator, along with the critical insights gleaned through my Masters research, led me to see the importance of enacting critical pedagogical praxis in my own pedagogical endeavours within the university. I was also convinced of the need for critical pedagogical praxis to be enacted and nurtured in higher education pedagogy more generally. I had come to believe that critical pedagogical praxis represents a form of resistance to a *must-be-ing* culture that potentially stifles learning and creativity (and which I found myself bumping up against), and represents a source of possibility for a *maybe-ing* culture that potentially opens up opportunities for learning and growth. Yet, from my perspective, critical pedagogical praxis was not as ubiquitous as university rhetoric suggested, or as our current times demand.

My personal interest in critical pedagogical praxis was heightened by a preliminary review of higher education, praxis, and pedagogy literature during the conceptualisation phase of the PhD research reported in this thesis. This literature

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\(^4\) This is not original. I have tried in vain to track the source of the expression ‘maybeing arena’ which I came across in an Outdoor Education (OE) Masters course. It is possible that the term was coined by a researcher in the OE field.
confirmed that my concerns and experiences as a teacher educator were not unique. The story of accountability and performativity pressures, demanding workloads, budget constraints, and technicist educational discourses and practices was a global one.

The literature also confirmed the importance of praxis in higher education pedagogy. Praxis is argued to be relevant to how humans live their lives as ethical, social, and political beings. It is seen as crucial for the ongoing transformation of education and society (Braa & Callero, 2006; Grundy, 1987; Waghid, 2002) in terms of challenging traditions, practices and dominant discourses that potentially serve the interests of some at the expense of others (and of the planet, Kemmis, 2012a), and exposing and challenging the ‘taken-for-granted’ in our world so that we do not perpetuate the things we are trying to resist (Grundy, 1987; Russell & Grootenboer, 2008). Some suggest that praxis is synonymous with what it means to educate and teach well (e.g., Breunig, 2005; Francis, 1997; Grundy, 1987) or what is needed to adequately deal with dynamic, complex, and unpredictable teaching and learning environments (Grundy, 1987). Others advocate its necessity in higher education in view of both the challenges facing universities and the role of the university in society (Kemmis, 2012a; Hartman & Darab, 2012).

Although I encountered relatively little in the literature that explored the impact of university conditions and changes on critical pedagogical praxis in higher education specifically, there was sufficient comment, as I show in Chapter Three, to suggest that critical pedagogical praxis is needed now more than ever; that conditions in universities are making critical pedagogical praxis increasingly difficult to enact and nurture; and that a deeper understanding of critical pedagogical praxis and what makes it possible and/or difficult to enact and sustain in higher education is necessary. That so little attention had been paid to developing this understanding was, to me, an indication that this research was both timely and important.

Research Aims and Guiding Questions

With this in mind, I explored possibilities and challenges for the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education by examining, firstly, how a group of academics’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis were enabled and constrained by the conditions within their university setting, and, secondly, how the academics negotiated tensions between the conditions and their praxis-oriented goals. The aim was to generate insights into whether, and how, critical pedagogical praxis is being,
and can be, nurtured in higher education, and what might need to be changed or challenged in order that possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis can continue to emerge. The questions that guided the research were

1. What is the nature of critical pedagogical praxis?

2. How is critical pedagogical praxis enacted within a particular higher education setting?

3. What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting and how so?

4. How might enabling conditions be sustained and developed, and constraining or disabling conditions changed or negotiated? and an overarching question

5. How can critical pedagogical praxis be nurtured in higher education?

Two assumptions underpinning the first two questions were that (a) it is necessary to have an understanding of what it is we (academics) are wanting to nurture in order to understand how it can be nurtured, and (b) we do not understand critical pedagogical praxis, particularly in the context of higher education, as well as we might. The third and fourth questions presuppose that an understanding of how to nurture critical pedagogical praxis lies in knowing what constrains and enables it, and in actively ensuring that conditions conducive to critical pedagogical praxis prevail, exist, or can exist. This assumes that what makes it possible for practitioners to enact critical pedagogical praxis is a matter not just of individual practitioner capacity, but, also of the relationship between practitioner capacity and the “practice architectures” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 31) that shape and are shaped by practices, and that exist within, are brought to, or are created in, the sites of practice.

In addressing these questions, it was hoped that the research would contribute to ongoing endeavours to transform pedagogy in the broader higher education context, address gaps in the literature regarding critical pedagogical praxis in higher education, and build on research that has been conducted previously in my own setting. A further important aim was that of impacting positively on conditions, pedagogy, and learning in the research setting by informing practice and extending the self-knowledge of those involved.

Nature of the Research

The research was conducted as a collaborative, participatory inquiry involving a small group of academics, referred to as the Teacher Talk group, working within an
education faculty of a particular university. I was a member of this group at the time, as were two of my PhD supervisors. The inquiry combined elements of critical participatory action research (Carr & Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis, 2011a; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 2005) and self-study (Loughran, 2004).

The critical participatory action research (CPAR) aspect of the project included the ongoing collaborative self-inquiry of the Teacher Talk group. This occurred primarily through informal group meetings (Teacher Talk meetings) in which we engaged in critically reflective dialogue about our practices and our work conditions. It also occurred through informal, scholarly conversations, and the group members’ own reflective practice outside the Teacher Talk meetings. This extended to PhD supervision meetings between me and two of my three supervisors (i.e., those who were involved in the Teacher Talk group) to the extent that we engaged periodically in critically reflexive dialogue about my supervisors’ pedagogical practice in their supervision of my study. The institutional-ethnographic aspect of the research consisted in me interviewing each of the Teacher Talk members individually, observing some of the group members’ pedagogical practice (including what transpired in the Teacher Talk meetings), and experiencing, as a doctoral candidate, the pedagogical practice of my PhD supervisors. It also involved interviewing colleagues working in the same institution who were not part of the Teacher Talk group. Overlapping with the critical participatory action research and ethnographic elements of the research was a self-study dimension. This involved me examining my own pedagogical practice and experiences of university conditions as I attempted to embody critical pedagogical praxis in my teaching of a teacher education subject during the research period. Analysing documents, photos that I took in the setting, and observational notes that I made about events and circumstances during the research period, formed part of this self-study.

The combination of the three methodological elements (CPAR, institutional ethnography, and self-study), along with the interconnectedness between them via our multiple roles within the research setting as co-participants, educators and researchers (and in my case student), allowed the project to develop as a form of research “from within practice traditions” (Kemmis, 2011b, p. 6) and “research as praxis” (Lather, 1991, p. 51). As I explain in Chapter Five, this enhanced the self-forming and transforming potential of the research process. It also enabled a deep and richly
contextualised understanding of critical pedagogical praxis and the conditions that prefigure it.

The following sets of encounters with people and “material arrangements” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 16) in my university setting were the primary sources of empirical material:

1. co-participation in the Teacher Talk group;
2. interviews and follow-ups with individual Teacher Talk members;
3. observations of Teacher Talk members’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis in practice;
4. engagement in a supervision relationship (and reflexive study of supervision) with two of my PhD supervisors;
5. interviews with two colleagues of the Teacher Talk members; and
6. self-study of my practice as a lecturer in a teacher education course preparing pre-service teachers for secondary schools.

Analysis of empirical material generated through these encounters was complemented by reflexive analysis of the research project as an enabler (and/or constrainer) of pedagogical practice in the setting. A critical hermeneutic (Kinsella, 2006; Kogler 1996) approach to analysis was adopted. Details about particular strategies for generating, collecting and analysing empirical material are provided in Chapter Five.

The research was informed by a complex theoretical framework which drew together selected practice theories. This included Schatzki’s (2002) site ontology; the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014); and MacIntyre’s (1981) theories about the relationships between practices, institutions, traditions, and practitioners’ lives. Together these theoretical resources provided a useful set of lenses for critically analysing the conditions in the sites of our (participating academics’) pedagogical practice in relation to our praxis-oriented goals, our pedagogical practice, our academic lives, and our individual and collective agentic capacity, as well as to issues and historical-social conditions extending beyond our immediate setting and present circumstances.

In focusing on the perspectives and pedagogical practice of university educators, I am conscious that this account privileges the university educators’ views and agency in pedagogical encounters over the perspectives and agency of other human actors in these encounters (e.g., students). However, a focus on university educator practice was deemed an important starting point on the basis of a belief that
we need to understand our own practice, experiences and positions before we can understand those of others. An examination of student practices and perspectives would be relevant and important, but it was deemed not feasible and therefore beyond the scope of this research. It would certainly be worthy of future investigation.

Significance of the Research

The value of this research lies in its detailed, site-based analysis of an important and under-researched aspect of higher education pedagogy. The investigation has generated a number of insights into higher education pedagogy, university conditions, critical pedagogical praxis, and praxis research that serve to benefit both our university community, and higher education and educational research more broadly.

Specifically, the research reported here

- sheds light on how critical pedagogical praxis is enacted, enabled and constrained, and how constraining conditions are (and can be) negotiated and challenged in a particular setting;
- contributes to a broader understanding of the nature of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education and its complex relationship to other academic practices, university arrangements, and practitioner subjectivities and capacity;
- contributes to an understanding of higher education pedagogical practice, particularly in the areas of face-to-face initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy and doctoral supervision pedagogy;
- makes a theoretical contribution by critically and reflexively examining critical pedagogical praxis and conditions of praxis through practice theory lenses (Nicolini, 2013);
- contributes to the educational research community in terms of reflexive insights into researching praxis, particularly within practice traditions, and conducting research as praxis; and
- generates possibilities for future academic practice through a consideration of what might be done to address some of the issues that the research raises.

The research is also significant because of its illumination of the role that academic practices play in perpetuating and creating both constraining and enabling conditions for critical pedagogical praxis. It highlights the responsibility and capacity that academics have, through our individual and collective practice/praxis, to disrupt what one of the research participants called the “machinery of compliance”; machinery which, if left to follow its current course, could further limit possibilities for enacting critical pedagogical praxis and undermine our (or any) university’s own educational intentions.
It seems to me that this study also provides a source of hope and inspiration in the form of local stories of how critical pedagogical praxis is variously manifested and how the conditions that constrain it are variously negotiated and challenged. In giving an account of some of these stories, the thesis acknowledges, but moves beyond, the rather oppressive narrative of compliance, competition, cost-consciousness, and commodification of education that stalked the introduction to this chapter, and which I explore further in subsequent chapters.

Organisation of the Thesis
This chapter (Introduction) identified the key aim of the research, which was to explore ways in which critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in higher education. It outlined the research questions and provided a brief context and rationale for the investigation. Critical pedagogical praxis was introduced as a species of pedagogical practice, and its relevance in the contemporary, neoliberal university was highlighted. In the chapter, I explained the significance of the study and briefly described the research approach. In doing this I revealed some of the assumptions that underpinned the investigation.

Chapter Two (Background: Why? Who? Where?) builds on Chapter One by providing further background to, and a more detailed rationale for, the research. The chapter is structured around three aspects of the research: why, who, and where. The Why relates to how the research connects to my own story and interest in praxis and higher education pedagogy. The Who introduces the group of academics who participated in the research (the Teacher Talk group). The Where attends to historical-cultural particularities of the university setting in which the investigation was conducted. The chapter both contextualises the research and provides an important foundation for key arguments that are developed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

In Chapter Three (Locating Praxis), I draw on selected research and theoretical works to explore how praxis and critical pedagogical praxis are conceptualised and represented in existing literature. I also locate praxis and critical pedagogical praxis in debates about university conditions in the contemporary university and their implications for higher education pedagogy. In the discussion I highlight what the literature reveals about how critical pedagogical praxis is embodied or actualised in universities, and about what constrains and enables critical pedagogical praxis. The discussion extends to gaps in the literature and how this research contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about higher education.
Chapter Four (Theoretical Framework) provides an explanation of the theoretical framework for this research. Specifically, the chapter introduces each of the three practice theories (Schatzki, 2001) that informed my analysis. It includes a discussion of the relevance of the practice theories to this study. Analytic possibilities afforded by the theories are highlighted in the discussion.

Chapter Five (Researching Praxis) is the first of two chapters which focus on the research approach and research processes. (The second is Chapter Nine - see below). In Chapter Five, I explain the overall approach; participant selection; ethical considerations and management of emergent issues; methods used, and steps taken, to generate and analyse empirical material.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight report and discuss key findings and issues that emerged from analysis of the empirical material generated in this research. Each of these chapters (as with Chapters Nine and Ten) opens with a short piece of poetic text intended to foreshadow, in a provocative way, some of the themes that emerge in the chapters.

Chapter Six (Living Praxis) focuses on the ‘lived’ critical pedagogical praxis of the participating academics. In the chapter, I show how critical pedagogical praxis was variously conceptualised, and variously enacted across three pedagogical contexts: face-to-face initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy. I also discuss the notion of collective critical pedagogical praxis and show how this was ‘lived’ by the participating academics through a community of practice: the Teacher Talk group.

Chapter Seven (Shaping Praxis) makes a shift to what appeared to constrain and enable the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis as described in Chapter Six. In the chapter, I discuss a range of university arrangements and individual practitioner capabilities and subjectivities that made possible and sustained the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis. I also discuss some of the major sources of tension between participating practitioners’ praxis-oriented aspirations, pedagogical practice and university conditions, and ways in which such tensions are negotiated.

The issues and key findings presented in Chapter Six are explicitly theorised in Chapter Eight (Theorising Praxis) in relation to the theoretical framework articulated in Chapter Four. I revisit the four guiding research questions and overarching questions, and offer responses to each in light of the findings presented in Chapters Six and Seven and the three practice theories informing the study. Conclusions are drawn about the nature of critical pedagogical praxis, the
circumstances and conditions under which critical pedagogical praxis can be realised and/or stifled, and conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis. I make the case that many practices and practice architectures within the university are eroding, or negatively affecting, the very things that are needed to enact critical pedagogical praxis, while simultaneously ‘provoking’ praxis. I also argue that positive action is being taken to disrupt these negative effects and to change practices and practice architectures that limit possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis. The implications of these conclusions for future practice and policy within the setting form an important part of this discussion.

A critically reflexive discussion of the research processes and my experiences of them form the basis of Chapter Nine (Mediating Praxis). As mentioned above, this is the second of two chapters dedicated to the nature of the study. It is partly an attempt to turn some of the research questions and the theoretical-analytical lens on the actual doing of the research, with a view to generating different insights about the topic. It is also partly, and relatedly, aimed at making transparent not only tensions associated with conducting research of this nature, but also the ways in which the research was mediating and being mediated by the conditions within the research site. With these goals in mind, I reflect in the chapter on some of the major complexities and challenges of researching critical pedagogical praxis, and of researching from within the professional practice community around which the research was based. I additionally interrogate the research project as a condition of pedagogical practice within the research setting.

The final chapter, Chapter Ten (Nurturing-Provoking Praxis), provides a brief summary of some of the key findings and issues presented in the previous chapters. The chapter includes a consideration of the significance of these findings in terms of contributions to existing knowledge; possibilities for future research; and implications for future higher education pedagogy and policy beyond the local context. The chapter, and therefore the thesis, closes with a drawing together of poetic threads woven into the last five chapters (i.e., the poetic text opening Chapters Six to Ten) into final thoughts about what lies ahead for university educators.

Together, the chapters present a telling story about the current state of affairs in at least one university setting (with relevance to other settings, I suggest), and what this means for critical pedagogical praxis and how it can be nurtured in higher education. As I have implied, it is not an entirely happy story, but it is an encouraging one. My elaboration of this encouraging story begins with a more detailed account of
the main characters, the setting, and my motivation for conducting this inquiry. This brings me to Chapter Two and the *why, who, and where* of the study.
CHAPTER TWO – BACKGROUND (WHY? WHO? WHERE?)

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre (1981) wrote that, “I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question, ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’” (p. 101). Not only does this statement suggest the kind of deliberation that is central to critical pedagogical praxis, it also invites an approach to practical questions that involves interrogating and understanding the narratives that we live and encounter in our inherited, social worlds. Thus, in addressing the question for this inquiry – *How can critical pedagogical praxis be nurtured in higher education?* – I focussed on past stories, unfolding stories, and the promises of future stories embedded in, and affecting, a particular Australian university. The stories included my own narrative as a university educator, the intertwining narratives of my colleagues and our students, our shared experiences and our workplace, and stories of critical pedagogical praxis, higher education pedagogy, higher education institutions, education and society. I hinted at some of these stories in the previous chapter. This chapter provides further background to, and rationale for, the research, by exploring, in greater depth, stories related to my interest in critical pedagogical praxis, the people involved in the project, and the research setting. To this end, I first extend the comments that I made in Chapter One about my personal motivations for conducting the investigation. These motivations, as mentioned, stem from my experiences as an educator in various educational settings, but in particular, as an educator in higher education. Secondly, I introduce the group of academics whose pedagogical practice and experiences of university conditions formed the basis of the inquiry. Then I take a historical-cultural look at the context of the particular university setting in which the investigation occurred, and in which my colleagues and I were located during the research period. At the end of this chapter I comment on how the *why* (related to my professional story), *who* (the participating academic group), and *where* (our University) of this research form an important part of the critical pedagogical praxis narrative that unfolds in subsequent chapters.

My Story

I stepped into academia at a very complex and challenging time for universities, although I did not then appreciate the extent to which this was so. It was also a significant moment in my professional life. In 2008, I moved from one end of Australia to another to take up a contract position as a lecturer in an outdoor education teacher education program. The ‘moment’ was particularly significant
because of where I had spent the previous two years. I shall elaborate, but first I wish to explain some of my experiences as an educator leading up to that point.

I began my teaching career as a high school English teacher in the 1980s and taught in secondary schools in Queensland for about thirteen years. During that time I had wonderful encounters with students in classrooms, but I also developed a sense that, while Australia’s education system was beneficial to many, there were plenty who were marginalised or let down by it, despite the best efforts and good intentions of the majority of teachers. I still remember the names and faces of students whose interests were not served by the kind of schooling they endured. Many were labelled ‘at risk’ and many were not.

It became particularly clear to me, during a practice-changing event, that schooling and teaching practice could be something other than ‘the way it was’ in the schools in which I had taught to that time. I was on my first extended Outward Bound wilderness expedition, with twenty of my year 11 and 12 students and an Outward Bound instructor, when I noticed how differently my students and I were relating in this unfamiliar environment, away from four classroom walls and expectations of how we were meant to be as students and teacher. Students who might ordinarily have been disengaged in the classroom appeared to blossom in the outdoors. I realised that teaching practice could look and feel very different from what I was seeing and doing in my work as an English teacher.

This forced me to question how my own practice and the practice of my colleagues might have been inadvertently contributing to the difficulties some of our students faced. Eventually, disillusioned with the schooling system in both private and public sectors, and partly seduced by the notion that outdoor education offered young people (and me) opportunities to explore different ways of learning and being (and in my case, different ways of educating), I studied to become an outdoor educator, and left a troubled-but-otherwise-happy career as an English teacher behind.

Stepping outside the classroom and ‘mainstream’ education allowed me to look at schooling from a very different perspective. I became even more convinced that school education and the teaching practices embedded in it were, on the whole, making little sense and doing a disservice to many young people, society, and particular groups in society. In the years that I worked in outdoor education centres, where school groups (students and their classroom teachers) visited for three to four days at a time to experience a community-oriented, experiential, nature-based and
adventure-based alternative to ‘mainstream’ education, I felt that students learnt more in a few days about life, humanity and themselves than they might in a few months at a school.

I carried these perspectives with me into another short but profound phase of my professional life. A sense of adventure, a love of the Australian bush, and a desire to work with and learn from Aboriginal people, led me to work in a remote Aboriginal community school, first as a secondary teacher, and then as a Deputy Principal. I found myself back in a large school setting, but, even so, many schooling practices that I took for granted as a classroom teacher in my early career, seemed strange, silly even, in an environment where many students had not yet been ‘normalised’ into the routines and expectations of being a student in an Australian school. This, combined with my exposure to alternative, sophisticated forms of education that were part of local family life, prompted me to think that much of what is generally considered to be ‘natural’ in terms of educational practice in schools, is not ‘natural’ at all.

More disturbingly though, I was overwhelmed by a realisation that the school, and, by implication, my own practice, was legitimising and perpetuating what I perceived to be exploitation and systemic and sustained disempowerment of a community about which I had come to care deeply. I felt that I represented a flawed education system and I was powerless do anything about it. Ironically, as a white person in a ‘position of power’, I was contributing to some of the community issues in a way that I could not reconcile. After two years of life in the community, characterised both by the struggles just mentioned as well as incredibly enriching, life-changing experiences, I left to lecture in an outdoor education program at the University of Tasmania. I saw teacher education as one opportunity to influence mainstream education in ways that I could not in schools or outdoor education centres. Perhaps I could make a difference in a round-about way: via educational research and/or the future practice of graduating teachers that I might (presume to) influence as a teacher educator.

This brings me back to the academic world into which I stepped in 2008. Australian universities had, by this time, experienced almost three decades of the kind of structural, programmatic and governance change that I referred to in Chapter One. Furthermore, universities had endured the widespread take up of new technologies generated through the global information technology (IT) revolution (Sharrock, 2007); the emergence of new disciplines (Sharrock, 2007); the merging,
rationalisation and restructuring of institutions (Harman, 2002; Marginson, 2004); “declining public funding relative to growth” in student enrolments (Sharrock, 2007, p. 8; see also Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December); and increased competition between higher education institutions (Marginson, 2004; Sharrock, 2007). The global financial crisis, the weight of which was being felt across Australia by 2008, served to intensify and extend some of the complexities and challenges already reshaping universities.

Given the challenges facing universities across Australia at the time, and which many argue are continuing (e.g., Blackmore et al., 2010; Bullen et al., 2010; Connell, 2013a; Hartman & Darab, 2012), it is no wonder that the space I stepped into was one in which people were doing their best to survive, as was the case – although for profoundly different reasons in some respects – in the community I had just left. I too would do my best to survive, make sense of, and move ‘beyond’ survival in this space of heavy workloads, ‘performance management’, constant policy and technological change, pressure to publish, and fiscal stringency in which I was learning to be a teacher educator and researcher.

Within this space, I conducted a self-study (as a Masters project) which looked critically at, among other things, the ways in which teacher educators and students in the outdoor education program in which I was lecturing were engaging with theory in practice (Clayton, Smith, & Dyment, 2014). During the investigation, I became familiar with the concept of praxis through the work of Shirley Grundy (1987) in Curriculum: Product or Praxis, and Stephen Kemmis and Tracey Smith (Eds.) (2008) in Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education. I realised that praxis was (a) what I had been striving to embody in my pedagogical practice in all the educational contexts in which I had previously worked, (b) what was largely missing in those contexts, and (c) what we were trying to foster in the university outdoor education program through our pedagogical approaches to exploring theory and practice.

Yet the study also revealed that, despite our (teacher educators’) intentions, our endeavours were somewhat constrained by the conditions in which we worked, and at times our practice undermined itself. The study raised more questions than answers about how conditions prefigure pedagogical practice. It also motivated me to undertake further research into how pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in a university environment, where rhetoric about university pedagogical practice is in tension with actual practice. My experiences as both a teacher educator and a post-
graduate student gave me a sense that universities are sites of a constant ‘maybe-ing/must-be-ing’ struggle. They paradoxically open up opportunities for praxis and shut them down; they try to promote critically reflective, ethically sensitive and responsible citizenship, yet discourage dissent.

My particular interest in critical pedagogical praxis was influenced by a belief that being resigned to doing the best under the circumstances (as I was in the Aboriginal community where I spent two years) is not enough if we really want to make a difference to the lives of students and society. If we do not deeply understand the conditions which shape our practice and how our own practice is implicated in them, and if we do not take action to resist or reorient those conditions, our practice becomes indifferent, silently reinforcing those conditions. As I have already suggested, critical pedagogical praxis is needed in higher education, as elsewhere, if university education is to be truly educational. This is especially so at a time of continuing global financial instability and growing threat of environmental devastation. It is also important at a time when a commitment to social justice and education for the good of society are being undermined by an unhealthy emphasis on market-driven reform and prevalence of the technical values of efficiency and competitiveness. Universities are uniquely placed to effect change in society through education, but their capacity to do so must surely be diminished if they work against their own intentions.

While my professional path is unique in many ways, the concerns that I have just outlined are not. There are many who have researched and written about these very issues (e.g., Calhoun, 2006; Connell, 2013a; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Kemmis, 2012b; J. Nixon, 2011; Walker, 2002), as I discuss in the next chapter. Many of my colleagues also share such concerns, and it is to a particular group of colleagues that I now turn. In my most recent university setting, I became part of a community of pedagogues and scholars who were interested in questions about praxis, pedagogy, higher education and social justice, although they arrived at these questions through very different life journeys. This community is central to the research reported in this thesis since its members became my co-participants and our inquiry was built around the experiences, practices, and critical, collaborative reflections of this group. The nature and project of the group were so intertwined with the findings of the study that I reserve more detailed explanation for Chapter Five, and provide here only a brief background to the group and its members.
The Teacher Talk Group

The collaborating academics involved in this project (co-participants\(^5\)) were members of a professional group called the *Teacher Talk* (TT) group. There were seven members at the time of the research. We all worked within the same university faculty, and were local (on-site) members of a much larger international, cross-institutional, collaborative research community linked to a program known as *PEP* (*Pedagogy, Education and Praxis*). This program is committed to “investigating the nature and conditions of pedagogy, education and praxis, and how they may be developed in different national contexts and various educational settings” (PEP document, 2011, April\(^6\)). A local arm of the PEP group was established in 2005 when a senior researcher in the Faculty extended an invitation to Faculty academic staff to meet about praxis, the aim being to develop a research group. The invitation attracted people who were interested in teaching as a “*moral enterprise, not just a technical enterprise*” (Teacher Talk group member, Interview 1: 7). The Teacher Talk group sprang organically from this local PEP group in 2008, and while membership of PEP and Teacher Talk has changed since those early days (as members have come and gone from the University), an interest in, and a commitment to, praxis and praxis scholarship remains common to its members\(^7\).

The Teacher Talk group met informally on a regular basis outside formal work hours (in the lounge room of two of the group members) with the aim of critically reflecting on and understanding, among other things, how conditions in our workplace influence our practices (including pedagogical practice) as academics and vice versa. In other words, we tried to “*understand ourselves in the circumstances in which we find ourselves*” (Group member comment, March 27, 2013). The reflective discussions of the group constituted a form of critical participatory action research (Kemmis, 2011a), were the subject of publications by past participants (e.g., Hardy, 2010a, 2010b), and were referred to by other researchers (e.g., Edwards-Groves, 2013; R. Nixon, 2012).

During the research period, the members of this group held a variety of teaching, research and leadership positions in different schools within the Faculty of Education, a faculty preparing students for various education-related professions, as

\(^5\) The co-participant role is explained in Chapter Five, ‘Research Participants and Consent’.

\(^6\) The document was entitled ‘The International ‘Pedagogy, Education and Praxis’ Research Collaboration’.

\(^7\) See Smith, Salo, and Grootenboer (2010) for an elaboration of both the local PEP group and the international network.
well as preparing librarians and teacher-librarians. The group members were also members of the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE), the research centre which supported the PEP research program as a RIPPLE research group. Each Teacher Talk member was actively involved in research projects, both within and outside of the PEP program. The professional backgrounds of the group members (in terms of disciplines, teaching experiences and research areas), and their time in employment at the University, varied widely.

I was the most recent member of the group, having joined the PEP program and the Teacher Talk group when I moved to Charles Sturt University to undertake doctoral research. I became involved with Teacher Talk and PEP through my association with RIPPLE (as a RIPPLE Scholarship recipient) and through my doctoral supervisors who are members of RIPPLE, PEP and the Teacher Talk group. That this project evolved through my encounters with these overlapping groups was not an accident given that members of PEP and Teacher Talk share a commitment to examining our own individual and collective critical praxis in the hope of making a difference.

As I show later in Chapter Six, attempts to embody our critical, praxis-oriented commitments are very much influenced by historical, material, sociocultural, and structural characteristics of the University in which the Teacher Talk group is located. This brings me to the where of the research and an introduction to some key characteristics of the University, as well some of the circumstances that were affecting our Faculty when this research was conducted. The section draws on case studies by Hatton (2002), a former academic staff member, and Hodgson (1996), a former Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Affairs), which document the establishment of the University and its aftermath. The section additionally draws on information gleaned from the University’s website, various University documents, and my own engagement in daily university life since arriving in 2011.

The University

Charles Sturt University is a large, multi-campus, regional, Australian university with more than 39,000 students (including almost 6,000 international students) and nearly 2600 staff (Charles Sturt University, 2014a). It was established in 1989 when, through an act of the New South Wales state parliament, two inland multi-school

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8 The Faculty of Education also supported the local PEP research program as a Faculty research priority area. Support for PEP and Teacher Talk will be discussed further in Chapter Seven in relation to conditions for critical pedagogical praxis.
colleges of advanced education (CAEs) were amalgamated. CAEs were post-secondary vocationally-oriented institutions associated with preparation for various professions including teaching. They no longer exist in Australia. The amalgamating CAEs were the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education (RMIHE) based in Albury and Wagga Wagga, and the Mitchell CAE based in Bathurst (Hatton, 2002). These two CAEs had previously been established through the amalgamation of various smaller educational institutions over many years. The University has since spread geographically, now having many campuses located across two eastern Australian states and one Australian territory. The University also includes Study Centres in two major Australian cities and a campus in Ontario, Canada. The main Australian campuses are situated in the traditional country of the Wiradjuri people.

While the University has recently expanded to coastal, metropolitan and overseas areas, it has retained the strong regional focus and commitment that it inherited from the amalgamated CAEs, and which, according to Hodgson (1996), the CAEs inherited from their “predecessor institutions” (p. 57). This regional commitment is explicit in one of the objectives included in the Act by which the University was established, that is, “the provision of facilities for education and research of university standard, having particular regard to the needs and aspirations of the residents of western and south-western New South Wales” (Charles Sturt University Act 1989, Section 7.2a). It is still reflected today in community-university relations, courses, facilities, staff recruitment strategies, research foci, student demographics, and admissions policies. It is also captured in the following mission statement which appears in our institution’s ‘University Strategy 2013-2015’:

For the Public Good
We are a university of the land and people of our regions. True to the character of regional Australia we have gumption, we have soul and we collaborate with others.
We develop holistic, far-sighted people who help their communities grow and flourish.
Acknowledging the culture and insight of Indigenous Australians, CSU’s ethos is clearly described by the Wiradjuri phrase: ‘yindyamarra winhanga-nha’ (‘the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’).
Harnessing technology, we thrive as a distributed yet connected community, engaging with people across Australia and the world. (Charles Sturt University (CSU), 2012, p. 2)

9 Australia is comprised of six states and two mainland territories, plus other territories.
10 An Australian Aboriginal nation.
11 See Hodgson (1996) for a history of the CAEs which amalgamated to form the university in 1989.
Efforts to attract and provide university access to regional-based students (and others who might otherwise be denied access to a university education (Hatton, 2002)), and/or prepare students for work in rural and regional areas, are an enduring preoccupation. Many of the domestic on-campus students are from regional areas, some being attracted by an ‘early entry’ scheme in which principals identify “academically talented students” in regional high schools and TAFEs who they believe could perform well at university (CSU, 2014b, para. 1). Many students are also ‘first generation’ university students (the first in their families to attend university) and/or come from low socio-economic backgrounds (Hoare, 2012). A small number (just over 2% in 2013) of the domestic students are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (CSU, 2013), although the University has policies in place to increase this proportion. Many of the domestic students are mature-age students who enrol in the University with Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector qualifications.

The University’s historical roots in the CAE system are evident in the emphasis still being placed on preparing students for the professions and achieving “‘educational outcomes’ related to securing jobs” (Hatton, 2002, p. 19). This strong vocational focus is embedded in the University’s “eight point graduate statement” which articulates the kind of graduates it “aims to produce” (CSU, 2006). The following three of the eight points particularly reflect this focus:

- Well-educated in the knowledge and skills of their discipline or profession;
- Work-ready and able to apply discipline expertise in professional practice; [and]
- Able to develop and apply international perspectives in their discipline or profession.... (“Graduate Attributes”, CSU, 2006)

The University’s advertising slogans, such as “CSU gets you the jobs you want” (Hatton, 2002, p. 19) and the ‘Learn to Earn’ television commercials launched in December, 2012, highlight this emphasis.

An important part of the University’s capacity to serve regional areas, as well as to extend its service nationally and internationally as reflected in its mission statement, has been the ‘delivery’ of distance education, another ‘carry-over’ from the amalgamated CAEs (Hatton, 2002). In 2013, the majority of students (around 61%) were off-campus or ‘distance’ students, while about 25% were on-campus students and approximately 14% of students were enrolled in mixed mode courses.
Increasingly, distance courses are shifting from print to online forms of educational interaction, while subjects available to on-campus students are being offered in ‘flexible’ or ‘blended’ modes. On-line learning platforms, or ‘learning management systems’ have therefore become, as in many universities (Coates, James, & Baldwin, 2005), central to learning and teaching practices within the University.

The University has a strong doctoral program, with two thirds of candidates studying externally. Doctoral studies can be undertaken full-time (three to three and a half years duration) or part time (six to seven years), and can be completed as a ‘Doctor of Philosophy by Publication’, or more traditionally as a ‘Doctor of Philosophy by Research’. The latter requires the completion of a doctoral dissertation based on an individual research program overseen and monitored by a supervision team. Typically the team consists of a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor (and occasionally more than one co-supervisor). As with doctoral programs in other Australian universities, the curriculum of PhD studies in the Social Sciences and Humanities (including Education) is very open, not usually requiring any coursework.

Being a multi-campus, regional-based university, formed through the amalgamation of CAEs, has presented not only many opportunities for the students and staff who have inhabited it, but also many challenges. These challenges are not necessarily unique to our university but, nevertheless, they impact significantly on day to day academic life. One of these is the issue of work intensity. On the one hand, there are demands for staff and students to maintain a working knowledge of the ever-changing learning platforms and administrative technologies supporting distance and ‘flexible’ education. On the other hand, there is the workload linked to the University’s “integrated administration system” (Hodgson, 1996, p. 82). According to this system, all four of the University’s faculties operate across campuses (under the management of Executive Deans). Divisions, centres and offices that provide administrative and academic support services to all of the faculties (and research centres which sit somewhat outside the faculty structure), similarly work across campuses. The extra layers of cross-campus administration within faculties amount to additional work for both academic and general (non-academic) staff (Hatton, 2002; Hodgson, 1996). Hatton (2002) particularly highlighted the “exceptionally heavy administrative roles” for Executive Deans (p. 14) because of the cross-campus arrangements. Extra demands are sometimes also placed on staff due to difficulties of recruiting people for specialised positions in regional areas.
A second, related issue is communication, especially with campuses being so dispersed. Technology has been very significant in addressing some of the communication challenges, so much so that Hodgson (1996) dubbed the University “a child of the technological age” (p. 101). Meeting via videoconferences and communicating via email are routine practices, while Skype and on-line forums are becoming increasingly common forms of communication. All of this contributes to a preoccupation with ensuring that technological and other systems being used on the various campuses are compatible with each other, and systems are continually being modified or upgraded. Despite the availability of advanced communication technology, there are times when meetings require staff, particularly those in management and/or leadership positions, to travel long distances on rural roads between campuses (Hodgson, 1996). On-campus students also travel on rural roads to and from campuses.

A third issue relates to the University’s identity, which warrants an historical detour back to 1989. The University was created in the context of significant higher education reform in Australia in the late 1980s. Introduced by the federal Minister of Education at the time, John Dawkins, this reform (see Australian Government, 1988), included the establishment of the ‘Unified National System’ of higher education which saw the reduction in the number of higher education institutions via the merging of CAEs, in some instances with one another to form new universities, and in some instances with existing universities (Harman, 2002). In the case of our university, as mentioned, two similar CAEs were merged, one of which was itself the product of an earlier amalgamation.

Research into mergers has shown that they are highly “emotive and potentially stressful events which affect almost everybody involved” (Cartwright & Cooper, 1994, p. 56; see also Becker et al., 2004; Gleibs, Mummendey, & Noack, 2008; Harman, 2002; Stephenson, 2011; Ursin, Aittola, Henderson, & Valimaa, 2010). This being so, it is significant that the University was born of such a process. Hodgson (1996) and Hatton (2002) painted the University’s creation as ultimately successful, but very painful, and suggested that for some years after 1989, the pain was still being felt. Both noted concerns expressed by staff – who transitioned from the CAEs into the newly formed university – about potential loss for their own campuses of autonomy and regional identity during and after the amalgamation process. The “atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion” that, according to Hodgson (1996, p. 69), characterised the amalgamation process, may have long since subsided,
but the legacy of the University’s merger history is seemingly still having residual effects and has found resonances in more recent merger activity in the University.

That the merging institutions were CAEs is also significant. There are two related reasons for this. Firstly, the new administration was responsible for building the institution’s credibility and character as a university. To this end, the first Vice-Chancellor employed strategies to reduce the amount of “overteach[ing]” and to promote research activity amongst staff (Hatton, 2002, p. 20) – many of whom had primarily teaching backgrounds – since the CAEs were teaching-oriented rather than research-oriented institutions (Hodgson, 1996):

Because we come from a CAE background we overteach … and I think this is partly because the staff feel very secure standing up giving a lecture … We are trying to reduce the amount of teaching as we move more to self-directed learning, we are asking staff to do more research, to do less teaching, that is a threat to some staff, they don’t want to do that. I think that this remains a persistent problem in the institution … (Former Vice-Chancellor as quoted in Hatton, 2002, p. 20)

While there was resistance by some staff, as implied by the Vice-Chancellor, and some staff members felt that teaching was not valued in the new institution (Hatton, 2002), many embraced the opportunity to research (Hodgson, 1996) and a dual teaching-research focus characteristic of other Australian universities has endured. Secondly, with the introduction of the Unified National System, academic staff were not only coming to terms with their new identities as teacher-researchers, but also with what being part of a university meant for the professionalisation (Green, 2009b) of their disciplines.

It is apparent that the timing of the amalgamation (in the late 1980s) and the cost saving nature of the national reform that led to it (Connell, 2013a; Harman, 2002; Hatton, 2002; Marginson, 2004), also had a bearing on the University’s identity. Both arguably locate the University’s establishment within a neoliberal frame. The national reform came with various pressures to “find efficiencies”, make shifts from “collegial to corporate” governance models (Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December, pp. 7-8), and to adopt other modes of operation commensurate with neoliberal ideals. It also came with an expectation that the new universities would “build themselves up as much by competing for industry funding as through public support” (Marginson, 2004, p. 6).

According to Connell (2013a) “a neoliberal policy regime had been established” in Australia by the mid 1980s (p. 102). Others have supported this claim (e.g., Marginson, 2004).
Both Hatton’s (2002) and Hodgson’s (1996) studies highlighted the entrepreneurial and managerialist manner in which the University responded to such pressures. For instance, the integrated structure referred to earlier, was, in the first Vice-Chancellor’s words, as much “in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness” (Blake, as quoted in Hatton, 2002, p. 4), as it was an attempt to unify the University. Hatton (2002) made clear the Vice-Chancellor’s drive to assert a university identity amidst competition and to be responsive to a “constantly changing” market (Blake, as quoted in Hatton, 2002, p. 16). Hodgson (1996), whose very title as ‘Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Affairs)’ is reflective of a corporate ethic, expressed concerns about the University’s capacity to keep in step with its competitors. He commented on the University’s increased purchasing power because of its size as a new institution while being disadvantaged by many years of CAE funding (which was significantly lower than the level of funding available to universities in the same period\(^\text{13}\)). If the University is a “child of the technological age”, as Hodgson commented (1996, p.101), then it is also a product of neoliberalism. This is ironic given its strong community roots.

Much has changed since 1989, and since the mid 1990s when Hatton (2002) and Hodgson (1996) conducted their case studies, although the University still faces the challenge common to many universities of “stay[ing] afloat and keep[ing] mission intact” (Sharrock, 2007, p. 9). The University has not only expanded and diversified, it has undergone significant structural, course and staffing profile changes (including the casualisation of its staff to the extent that the University “now has the highest level of estimated casuals in Australia” (Cervini, 2014). Perhaps such expansion and change, (and rate of change) is due to an entrenched entrepreneurial ethic which we saw played out in the ‘Learn-to-earn’ television commercials mentioned earlier, or is a response to an ever-changing milieu, including changing national economic and political conditions, which so profoundly impact on contemporary government-funded universities such as ours. Perhaps it is on the basis of an inherited and enduring educational commitment to the University’s students, their communities and society more generally. Most likely, it is a result of all of these things.

Some of these changes have coincided with the timing of this research project and warrant particular mention because of their impact on members of the Teacher Talk group. One of these occurred at a university level. Part way through the project,\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) This concern is consistent with Marginson’s (2004) observation that the new universities formed through the introduction of the Unified National System “started from behind” (p. 6).
a new central automated timetabling system, using Syllabus Plus Enterprise software, was being introduced to manage the scheduling of on-campus classes, staff, and teaching and learning resources (including rooms). Previously, academic timetabling had relied on manual and paper-based processes that took account of staff requests for specific times, specific days and specific rooms for their subjects. The new system, in contrast, relies on a computer program to generate the timetable, not on the basis of staff requests, but on matches between available rooms/facilities and data pertaining to anticipated class size, type of room required, duration/dates of the subject, and particular staff members.

There were also major changes occurring at a faculty level at this time, and specifically in the Faculty of Education in which the members of the Teacher Talk group were located. Our Faculty is one that offers a range of courses, many of which are distance courses, in teaching and education, Indigenous studies, information studies, and until 2014, human movement. Like the other faculties within the University, it operates across multiple campuses and comprises a number of schools and centres. Generally speaking, course design and review are managed at a faculty level, while subject development, implementation and review occur at a school level (usually in teams). Some subjects are offered in more than one course and some courses are offered by more than one school, frequently at more than one campus. This means that teaching teams can work across campuses within the same school as well as across schools. During the research period, a faculty restructure and a major review of course offerings impacted significantly on some cross-campus operations.

In the first year of the project, the number of schools within the Faculty was reduced from six to five through the merging of two schools. This merger brought with it the kind of stress and uncertainty that I earlier associated with mergers. The two merging schools were located in different regional areas and had been autonomous to an extent: although both were overseen by the Dean and an executive team, and allowances were made for cross-campus teaching arrangements in some of the courses, each had its own identity and campus-specific ways of operating. The merger meant that the new school was now operating across two campuses at all levels, not just in relation to teaching. This necessitated a restructure of the middle management positions, including a reduction to one Head of School position, as well as a rationalisation and reassignment of duties and responsibilities for both academic

14 The School of Human Movement Studies has recently moved to Faculty of Science.
and general staff within the newly-formed school. It also meant changes to administrative procedures and the nature of meetings.

Coinciding with this transition was a major review of existing degrees/courses, leading to the planned discontinuation of some courses and the development of new and markedly different ones. Most of the members of the Teacher Talk group were ‘housed’ in one of the merged schools affected by this restructuring and overhaul of course offerings. The specific ways in which these changes affected our pedagogical practice are explored in Chapter Seven where I discuss findings related to what constrained and enabled efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis.

This brief explication of why the research was conducted, who the research primarily involved, and where the research was undertaken has brought three intersecting narratives into view. These are my professional story, the story of the Teacher Talk group, and the story of the University. In spotlighting my story I have attempted to shed further light on why critical pedagogical praxis and conditions for critical pedagogical praxis matter from a personal perspective, and on what informed my interpretations throughout the research.

Background information about the Teacher Talk group, meanwhile, provided a glimpse of the nature of the participating group and its pre-existing commitment to praxis and education. As I later show, not only does the group constitute an important practice architecture for the pedagogical practice of its group members, but group members’ backgrounds and interests have a bearing on how university conditions are responded to and understood. In Chapters Six and Seven, I present a more detailed analysis of pedagogical practice and University conditions, and make the case that praxis-oriented goals can be frustrated in a University that, despite a tradition of commitment to social justice and ‘the public good’ (as the University mission statement suggests), and a kind of openness to critical inquiry, in some respects it struggles to realise its aspirations. Some of the issues raised in this chapter – such as the multi-campus structure of the University and its rurality, the centrality of technology to the University’s operations, the intensity of work and pace of change, and the University’s complex identity as a community-oriented yet neoliberal institution – are related to this struggle and the consequent effects on possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis.

A fourth narrative was also alluded to throughout this chapter: the story of what is happening and has been happening in universities beyond our local context. It
is to this narrative (or collection of narratives) that I turn in the next chapter where I examine literature related to praxis, pedagogy and higher education. The discussion further contextualises this research, and locates it in relation to the ongoing conversations about pedagogical practice in universities and the conditions that make possible or constrain particular kinds of pedagogical practice, including critical pedagogical praxis.
CHAPTER THREE – LOCATING PRAXIS

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the importance of narratives, or stories, to understanding how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in higher education. To gain a better sense of the narratives that were most relevant to understanding pre-conditions for critical pedagogical praxis in our university, and to develop a deeper understanding of those narratives, I reviewed literature related to higher education, praxis, practice theory, higher education pedagogy, and critical pedagogical praxis in higher education. The bodies of literature related to praxis, higher education, and higher education pedagogy are particularly vast since they have been the object of inquiry and scholarly discussion for many years. Thus, the literature reviewed represents only a selection of relevant works. The selected literature provided insights into the kinds of questions that were important to ask when interpreting stories, both in the literature and in my immediate context. It also revealed what stories might be missing in the literature, and why the story that I present in this thesis is worth telling. This chapter is a synthesis of insights and key themes that were discerned in the review process.

I begin the chapter by examining interpretations of a construct that is central to the notion of ‘critical pedagogical praxis’: ‘praxis’. As part of the discussion, I look briefly at ‘praxis development’, at what makes praxis possible, and at the relationship between praxis and ‘pedagogical practice’ in formal education. The discussion reveals the disparate and sometimes conflicting ways in which praxis is understood, which has a bearing on how critical pedagogical praxis is conceptualised and represented. Next I locate notions of praxis and critical pedagogical praxis within debates about university conditions and ‘higher education pedagogy’ (hence the title of this chapter). I do this by discussing the functions of universities, conditions in the contemporary university with reference to neoliberalism, and competing constructions of ‘higher education pedagogical practice’. In the final part of the chapter, I explore representations of how critical pedagogical praxis is manifested, constrained and enabled in higher education. The chapter concludes with comments about what appears to be under-explored or missing in the literature, and how the research reported here aimed to help address these gaps.

Praxis and Education

In this research, I was interested in how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in higher education. However, I have chosen to begin this chapter with the concept of
firstly, because an understanding of praxis is central to an understanding of critical pedagogical praxis, and, secondly, because of the relevance of praxis to my own narrative. I acknowledge that others (e.g., Breunig, 2005, 2009; T. Evans, 2009), because of their different histories, have begun explorations of critical pedagogical praxis from alternative starting points, such as critical pedagogy and critical theoretical traditions.

Praxis and Praxis Development
Since Aristotle’s use of the word ‘praxis’ in ancient Greek times, it has been reinterpreted and appropriated in many different ways (Connor, 2004) such that praxis is understood differently “in different intellectual and cultural traditions” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 4). Because of the plurality of interpretations, the discourses associated with praxis can be somewhat confusing. There are distinctions in the literature, for instance, in terms of the extent to which praxis is considered morally and/or politically committed, individual and/or collective, and inherently critical or inherently pedagogical. In addition to this, there are some writers (e.g., Parkes, Gore, & Elsworth, 2010; Walker, 2002) who appear to write about what sounds like praxis without ‘naming’ it as such.

Kemmis (2010a) offered two “principal meanings” (p. 9) of praxis, which are helpful in negotiating the varying conceptualisations and associated discourses. One meaning follows Aristotle’s usage: “action that is morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 4). The second meaning, which Kemmis (2010a) described as “post-Marxian” and “post-Hegelian” (p. 9), involves the notion of ‘praxis’ as “socially responsible, history-making action” (Kemmis, 2012c, p. 147). I wish to discuss both of these before referring to other interpretations, but note that some authors, including Kemmis (e.g., in Kemmis 2010a; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis & Smith, 2008a) draw on both meanings, recognising that they are related and complementary.

As Bernstein (1999) and Nicolini (2013) have pointed out, there is some ambiguity in Aristotle’s writing about praxis (see Aristotle, trans. 2011, bk. 6; Bernstein, 1999, xiii). To understand Aristotelian praxis, then, it is helpful to look, as many authors have done (e.g., Bernstein, 1999; Carr, 2005; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Dunne, 1997, 2005; Gadamer, 1981; Grundy, 1987; Kemmis & Smith, 2008a; MacIntyre, 1981; Nicolini, 2013), at Aristotle’s distinctions between praxis and other types of action (i.e., what praxis is not). Aristotle (trans. 2011) distinguished praxis
from ‘making action’, which the Greeks called *poiesis*. Making action engages *techne* (technical skill\(^{15}\)). Kemmis (2012a) explained that “*poiesis* produces something external to the person making it” and is guided by the “technical aim of producing an excellent product” (p. 87), whereas praxis is motivated by ‘internal goods’, such that the doing of it is an end in itself. Poiesis involves the “skilful application of rules of procedure” (Grundy, 1987, p. 176) while praxis demands moral judgement, agency and situational insight (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a, 2008b).\(^{16}\)

Aristotelian praxis, then, can be understood as action related to an individual “living well in a broad personal, familial or socio-political context”\(^{17}\) (Squires, 2003, para. 11), and being committed to ‘right action’, not in a rule-following sense of ‘right’, but in the sense of acting in ways that are “morally defensible and justifiable” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 9). Praxis, according to this conceptualisation, is guided by *phronesis*, a “moral disposition to act truly and justly”\(^{18}\) (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 33) in the interests of human kind (Kemmis, 2012b; Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 7).\(^{19}\)

On the basis that determining what is ‘right action’ in a given situation cannot be carried out independently of the particularities of the situation itself, Grundy (1987), following Aristotle, argued that praxis necessarily involves deliberation or reflection on the choices available to the actors in the doing of praxis. This implies that praxis is relevant in situations where the choices to be made have moral consequences.

Post-Marxian and post-Hegelian understandings of praxis, in contrast, involve people in action being aware that their actions have historical significance (Kemmis, 2010a) beyond immediate moral situations. In this sense, praxis is action that is not just “considered”, but also “consciously theorized” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190).

Some post-Marxian understandings are concerned with emancipatory, transformative agendas, and are, according to Grundy (1987), suggestive of “political action in a more radical sense than what was meant by the original Greek” (p. 60). These more radical forms of praxis represent a conscious commitment to effecting

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\(^{15}\) Note that *techne* is translated/interpreted variously as a technical skill, craft, disposition, technical rationality, technical reasoning.

\(^{16}\) Following Aristotle, many of these authors also make a distinction between praxis and *theoria*, related to contemplation and theoretical reasoning (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a). In this chapter, for reasons of space, I have refrained from exploring the concept of *theoria* (or *episteme*, the disposition to seek knowledge for its own sake (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a)).

\(^{17}\) In Aristotle’s society, the socio-political world revolved around the *polis*.

\(^{18}\) There is some contention as to whether *phronesis* is a disposition (Carr, 2004; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Grundy, 1987; Kemmis, 2012c), a kind of knowledge or wisdom (Kinsella, 2012), an intellectual virtue (MacIntyre, 1981), or some of, or all of, these things. See Kinsella and Pitman (2012a; 2012b) for a discussion of this debate. In this thesis, I am treating *phronesis* as a disposition.

\(^{19}\) It is important to acknowledge the exclusion of slaves and women in Aristotle’s times.
social change, that is, actively reconstructing the social world in ways that simultaneously counter injustices and oppressive practices, and make it possible for those who might otherwise be oppressed to be empowered (Freire, 2008; Grundy, 1987). In Santos’s (2012) terms, following Arendt, this means making new beginnings.

Implicit in emancipatory views of praxis is the assumption that understanding and just intentions are not sufficient for overcoming injustice and irrationality (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). What is important is that action changes the world and people’s understanding of it. This sense is evoked in Marx’s (1924/2002) eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” Not surprisingly, this more overtly political version of praxis, which has sometimes been called ‘emancipatory praxis’ (Grundy, 1987; Lather, 1991), ‘critical praxis’ (Breunig, 2005; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Leistyna, 2004), ‘liberating praxis’ (Mayo, 2004), and ‘revolutionary praxis’ (e.g., Small, 1978, after Marx), implies not only action by an actor – as in ‘personal’ or ‘individual’ praxis – but also action by social groups, as in “collective praxis” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 9). Praxis of this kind is oriented by a “critical disposition”, that is, a disposition towards emancipation from suffering and injustice (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 23), and informed by critical insights (Grundy, 1987) and critical consciousness (Freire, 2008; Grundy, 1987) regarding how actions affect, and are affected by, ideologies that oppress or cause harm. It reflects sensitivities to unjust power differentials embedded in institutions, traditions, and social practices. Some feminist readings of praxis (as exemplified by Lather’s earlier work – 1991) might be said to align with post-Marxian interpretations because of their emancipatory and critical (or post-critical) leanings.

Other authors have taken praxis to mean something that does not resemble either an Aristotelian or a post-Marxian understanding. For instance, it is not uncommon to find ‘praxis’ used in discussions about theory and practice in which ‘praxis’ is represented as an integration of theory and practice, sometimes without the suggestion of moral deliberations or historical consciousness being relevant to theory-practice relationships (e.g., Raiola, 1998). Within such discussions, ‘praxis’ is used interchangeably with a version of ‘reflective practice’ that appears to be more technically focused on ‘What works?’ than it is on questions of moral, political, or historical consequences. ‘Praxis’ is also sometimes used interchangeably with ‘practice’. This is so in some European traditions where praxis can denote “any social
action undertaken in the knowledge that one’s actions affect the well-being and interests of others” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 4; see, for example, Ax & Ponte, 2010); or, as in the case of Sweden, “an unwritten agreement particular to jurisprudence and politics”, or a customary way of doing things (Rönneman, Salo, & Furu, 2008). However, ‘practice’ and ‘praxis’ are also used interchangeably within ‘Anglo-American’ literature in cases where a technical kind of action (poeisis) is implied. I leave these notions of praxis aside in the remaining discussion, since praxis of the Aristotelian or post-Marxian kind, or a combination of the two, aligns more closely with the concept of critical pedagogical praxis explored in this thesis.

Drawing on both post-Marxian and Aristotelian meanings of praxis, some writers have highlighted the reflexive nature of praxis. Many have referred to Freire’s (2008) notion of “action full of thought and thought full of action” (e.g., R. Evans, 2007, p. 554; see also Grundy, 1987; Usher & Bryant, 1987) and commented on the reflexive way in which action and reflection build upon each other (Freire, 2008). Valli and Price (2000), for instance, claimed “in praxis, knowledge and action are tightly interwoven and mutually transforming” (p. 268). This dialectical and constructivist notion is captured to some extent in Carr and Kemmis’s (1986) representation of praxis as “informed action which, by reflection on its character and consequences, reflexively changes the ‘knowledge-base’ which informs it” (p. 33).

Kemmis (2012b), Kemmis and Smith (2008a), and others (e.g., Dunne, 1997; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) have linked this reflexive nature of praxis to self-formation. They have argued that ongoing action-reflection experientially informs people’s ways of understanding themselves, their world and their impact within it. Small (1978), drawing on Marx’s notion of revolutionary praxis, noted a dialectic also between the self-forming processes of the individual in praxis, and the changing circumstances of the social world as it is being constructed and reconstructed through that praxis. In this sense, praxis “is always a process of becoming” (T. Smith, Salo & Grootenboer, 2010, p. 56).

As well as being self-forming, praxis has been described as inherently risky (Arif, 2009; Grundy, 1987). Carr and Kemmis (1986), for instance, commented that “praxis is always risky; it requires that the practitioner makes a wise and prudent...
practical judgment about how to act in *this situation*” (p. 180). This implies that each situation in which a practitioner makes a judgement about how to act is unique – presenting, as it must, a new set of particularities – and that the judgement, in light of ensuing consequences, can turn out not to be so wise (i.e., for the ‘good’) after all. This means, of course, that the enactment of praxis presupposes that there are choices regarding how to act in this or that situation, and that the actors *can* act on those choices (Arif, 2009). In other words, for praxis to be possible there must be choices over which to deliberate. This notion is reflected in Aristotle’s suggestion that “nobody deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise, or about things that he himself [sic] cannot act on” (Trans 2011, Bk 6, Ch 5, 33-34, p. 120).

Also of significance to this study, and to more recent discussions of praxis, are the ways in which ‘praxis’ is conceptualised in relation to ‘practice’. Praxis has been conceived, for instance, as a *particular way of engaging in* a selected set of practices such as those associated with a certain profession (e.g., Rasanen, 2009). This has implications for what it might mean to “act in *praxis*” (Kemmis, 2012b, p. 97) in a professional context. Kemmis (2012b) suggested:

> …it means acting well in response to the uncertain demands of particular situations that arise for the practitioners ... using ... all the technical skill and tactical cleverness at one’s disposal, and drawing on the wisdom one has learned from reflection on one’s experience in a range of different kinds of circumstances and with a range of different kinds of practical problems that arise in the conduct of the practice. (p. 97)

What might also be added to this, I suggest, and perhaps this is implied in Kemmis’s statement, is ‘drawing on the insights of those whose interests are most affected by the “acting”’.

In slight contrast to this, praxis has also been described as a *particular kind of* practice (e.g., R. Evans, 2007; Kemmis & Smith, 2008b; Smith, 2008; Usher & Bryant, 1987). Kemmis and Smith (2008b) and others have used ‘practice’ as a “more general and encompassing [term] ... applying to a wide variety of activities and actions in social settings” (p. 6), and used ‘praxis’ to refer to activities and actions in social settings of the kind (in terms of intent) discussed in this chapter thus far. As I explain in the next chapter, thinking about praxis as a kind of practice (in the sense of

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22 As indicated, in some contexts ‘praxis’ and ‘practice’ are represented synonymously. In this paragraph, I am referring to works that acknowledge a distinction between practice and praxis.
professional practice) presents possibilities for understanding how praxis, and specifically critical pedagogical praxis, develops and is enabled and constrained.

This brings me to praxis development. In the first two chapters of Enabling Praxis: Challenges for Education (Kemmis & Smith (Eds), 2008), Kemmis and Smith (2008a, 2008b) addressed the question of how praxis is nurtured, learned, or developed through a conceptual exploration of praxis and praxis development. Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) extended this discussion in the third chapter by introducing the theory of “practice architectures” (p. 57), which I discuss in detail in the next chapter of this thesis. The message emerging, especially from the second chapter (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a), is that praxis develops experientially, that is, in the doing of it. This argument has been taken up by Kemmis elsewhere (2010c; 2012c), for example, in his suggestion that “we are prepared [for praxis] by experiencing the irreversibility of our own actions, and the irreversible consequences of our actions” (2012c, p. 154). Kemmis (2010c) posited that phronesis similarly develops through experience of praxis: “It is by living well and reflecting on our attempts to live well that we learn how to live well and, through this experience, we develop the disposition to live well....” (p. 421). The conclusion arising from this line of thinking is that “developing praxis [in the context of professional practice] requires opportunities for professional action and reflection on experience” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a, p. 29). Furthermore, nurturing praxis cannot be a matter of establishing and passing on/learning a set of rules, which, if followed, lead to the embodiment of praxis.

Kemmis and Smith (2008a) suggested that, in addition to developing relevant dispositions (such as phronesis and a critical disposition23), developing praxis requires that professionals “deliberately seek ... to locate themselves in the professional field and traditions of their practice” (p. 29), and, as active participants in a professional community, engage with and develop the traditions that inform their field. The authors mentioned engagement in professional associations, but they also implied scholarship. They argued, too, that praxis develops through explicit and critical investigation of people's own practice, observations of others’ practice,

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23 Kemmis and Smith (2008a) commented that episteme (a “contemplative disposition” (p. 21) linked to theoria) and techne (“a disposition to act in a true and reasoned way according to the rules of a craft” (p. 23) linked to poiesis) are also important dispositions for practitioners to have, since theoria and poiesis are both relevant in professional practice. See pp. 21-31 for a detailed explication of this argument.
conversation about practice, and “learning to learn from one’s own experience” (p. 33).

I wish to explore a final point before discussing praxis and education, and that pertains to the observation shared by some authors that praxis is ‘endangered’ (Dunne, 2005; W. Green, Hibbins, Houghton, & Ruutz, 2013; Kemmis & Smith, 2008b; Macintyre-Latta & Kim, 2010). This is a theme that is woven through this thesis in relation to critical pedagogical praxis. It is highly relevant to my later discussion of university conditions and their impact on pedagogical practice. From Dunne’s (2005) perspective, praxis is under threat because technical rationality (linked to techne) has “established an hegemony” (p. 373) in modern societies. This kind of rationality was associated by Dunne with

...the goal of mastery and maximisation: everything becomes a means over which one aspires to exercise total control – a control defined in terms of optimal effectiveness in achieving ends, and optimal efficiency in realising most benefit with least cost. (p. 374)

Invoking the notion of a “practitioner-proof mode of practice” (p. 375), Dunne argued that what is compromised in an environment characterised by control, efficiency and accountability, is space for practitioner discernment and judgement. Pitman (2012) similarly described how concerns with control and accountability posed threats to phronesis and therefore to the professionalism of practitioners. Following Dunne (1993/2005), Kemmis and Smith (2008b) argued that praxis is being “edged aside ... by a form of practice that amounts simply to following rules” (p. 5). As the next section attests, these observations have significant implications for education.

**Praxis, Education, and Pedagogical Practice**

Praxis is argued to be important in education, and to pedagogical practice, for a number of reasons, not the least of which are its relevance to how humans live their lives as ethical, social, and political beings, and its self-forming nature. Some reasons relate to the recognition of education as uncertain, complex, ethical and political (Carr & Kemmis, 2009; Grundy, 1987). Pedagogical practice is regarded as more than a performance of technical skills, pre-set procedures to achieve prescribed outcomes, and transmission of knowledge (e.g., Dunne 1997; Grundy, 1987) because these are not sufficient or necessarily appropriate means of responding to the many “uncertain practical situations” (Kemmis, 2012c, p. 151, following Reid, 1978) that pedagogical encounters and the general realm of education present. In uncertain practical situations, Kemmis (2012c) argued,
It is not clear what the best *means* are to deal with the situation, nor, more importantly, is it clear what the appropriate *ends* are in the situation – what we should be aiming to do…. One must first decide – by practical deliberation – what *kind* of situation we are encountering, what is at stake, and how we might best respond. (p. 151)

The “what is at stake” in Kemmis’s statement suggests that informed, critical, and moral deliberation is required in determining what is most appropriate given the circumstances. Dunne (2005) highlighted how complex and political this can become, and why the ends – and not just the means – may be uncertain, that is, since the interests ‘at stake’ can be competing:

A problematic situation ... may be a point of intersection for several lines of consideration and priority which, while running in different directions, are interwoven tightly in a complex web. Attempts to unravel any one of these strands ... may only introduce greater tangles in the others. In education, for example, a practitioner or policy-maker may face a situation where academic standards, considerations of safety, psychological needs, and the demands of social equity, in relation to a diverse set of students and their parents, pull in contrary directions, but where *some* decision has to be made. In attempting to resolve problematic situations of this kind, one is not calculating the efficiency of different possible means towards an already determined end. Rather, one is deliberating about the end itself…. (p. 381)

The importance of praxis in relation to education has been emphasised on the basis of concerns about present-day *society* combined with recognition of the role that education plays in ongoing social transformation (and reproduction). Praxis is regarded as important for countering the impact of technical rationality as mentioned above (e.g., Carr, 2005; Dunne, 1997, 2005; Gadamer, 1981; Grundy, 1987; MacIntyre, 1981; van Manen, 1977), individualism (MacIntyre, 1981), new forms of colonialism (Bristol, 2008, 2010, 2012), ‘scientism’ (Habermas, 1972, as cited in Carr, 2005, p. 339) and other perceived ‘ills’ of modernity (Carr, 2006) and postmodern times (Kemmis, 2012b).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the term and idea of praxis has found its way into education discourses and practices, and that pedagogical practice has come to be understood by many as a form of praxis. This is reflected in references to ‘pedagogical praxis’ (Jacobs, 2008); ‘educational praxis’ (Bristol. 2008; Furu, Rönnerman, & Salo, 2008; Kemmis & Smith, 2008a; Small, 1978, 2005); ‘pedagogy as praxis’ (Russell & Grootenboer, 2008); and ‘pedagogy of praxis’ (Gadotti, 1996).

Kemmis and Smith (2008b) suggested that “educational praxis” is what educators are engaging in when they “take … into account not only … their own
interests, but also the long-term interests of society and the world at large” through their practice (p. 4). This represents a more comprehensive view of educational practice and praxis than some views, in that it refers to practices that unfold in and beyond the pedagogical encounters between teachers and learners. Carr & Kemmis (1986; 2009) used ‘educational praxis’ in a general way as well, although incorporating practices associated with education (e.g., educational research practices, administration practices) that can be, but are not necessarily, pedagogical. A more specific connection to pedagogical practices is generally what is connoted in the phrase ‘pedagogical praxis’. Some writers, though, such as T. Evans (2009), used ‘pedagogical praxis’ and ‘educational praxis’ interchangeably.

Grundy (1987) portrayed pedagogical praxis as an approach to educational practice that is focused on learning as meaning-making rather than artefact production. Grundy explained that deliberation in the action of teaching involves exercising personal judgement in light of the pedagogical context – rather than acting only in accordance with rules – and drawing on theoretical insights to guide action. Other notions of pedagogical praxis are examined later in this chapter in a discussion of critical pedagogical praxis. For the moment, I turn my attention to higher education, and lay the groundwork for a discussion of conditions for critical pedagogical praxis in university settings.

Higher Education and Pedagogical Practice

While perhaps universities have remained unchanged in some respects since the Middle Ages, when the first European universities were established, few would disagree that they also have changed – and are changing – considerably in many respects. Calhoun (2006) observed that universities are “undergoing a deep transformation in both their internal structure and their relationship to the rest of society” (p. 7). Others have made similar observations (e.g., Blackmore et al., 2010). Much of the literature reviewed for this research highlighted changes in recent times in response to a range of phenomena: mass demand for education, or ‘massification’ (Altbach, 2004; Calhoun, 2006; Sharrock, 2007); widening participation and diversification of student needs and expectations (Houston, Mayer, & Paewai, 2006); the information technology revolution (Sharrock, 2007); and neoliberalism (Davies, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2005; Davies & Petersen, 2005; Marginson, 2004; Ryan, 2012) and other related phenomena (e.g., the ‘knowledge economy’, globalisation, and ‘new public management’; Olssen & Peters, 2005). These phenomena, according
to many authors, have changed the conditions of universities and the kind of pedagogical practice that is demanded, enacted and possible within them (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Walker, 2002). Before discussing conditions and pedagogical practice in detail, and in order to contextualise that discussion in terms of what universities are for and what they do, I first consider what has been said about the functions of the university.

Functions of the University

Each university necessarily has its own nuanced functions and role within its local and national community. However, some authors have identified basic functions that are common, or ought to be common, to universities generally. These functions, I believe, are captured in four broad, overlapping themes that are relevant to both education and research. The first relates to knowledge (or “knowledge work”, Bullen et al., 2010, p. 54). Knowledge-related functions of the university are represented in terms of knowledge generation (J. Nixon, 2011), “acquiring scientific knowledge” (Habermas, 1989, p. 107), the dissemination of knowledge (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009), and “public access to knowledge” (Calhoun, 2006, p. 13). These functions are linked to the university’s cultural role in society (Bleiklie, 1998), for instance in the “transmission of culture” (Habermas, 1989, p. 107) and contributions to “cultural self-understanding” (Parsons & Patt, 1973, as cited in Habermas, 1989, p. 121), and to the “continuity and creativity of culture” (Calhoun, 2006, p. 10).

The second theme relates to the university’s civic purpose (Giroux, 2010; Walker, 2002). Authors such as Altbach et al. (2009), Calhoun (2006), Giroux (2010), and Walker (2002) have highlighted the functions of a university in terms of its civic mission through the formation of citizens who can participate meaningfully in public life (contributing to democracy and serving society), and the formation of a society characterised by a healthy, “inclusive democracy” (Giroux, 2010, p. 190). Along these lines, J. Nixon (2011) commented on the university’s role in facilitating, encouraging and sustaining the “imaginative task of learning to live together in a world of difference” (p. 117). Also relevant to a civic purpose is the university’s role in offering a social critique (Bleiklie, 1998; Giroux, 2010; Shore & Wright, 2004), informing the “public political sphere” (Habermas, 1989, p. 107), provoking public debate (Giroux, 2010; Shore & Wright, 2004), and framing public debate, for example, by keeping alive the question, “What constitutes the public good?” (J. Nixon, 2011, p. 1) and helping to address social issues (Giroux, 2010).
The third theme relates to *preparing people for professions* (e.g., Bleiklie, 1998; Calhoun, 2006; Habermas, 1989) – that is, the formation of professionals, or professional education – and indirectly, the formation of the professions (e.g., Lee & Dunston, 2011). According to Bleiklie (1998), in earlier times this involved the education for “top civil-service posts” and “learned professions” (p. 305).

The fourth theme relates to the university’s *economic role* in terms of providing and/or “producing educational and research services” (Bleiklie, 1998, p. 306) and products that are of economic benefit to the societies they serve. This includes the generation of new technologies and innovations (Calhoun, 2006).

The functions of the university reflected in these four themes (the generation and dissemination of knowledge, the formation of professionals and professions, the formation of citizens and a democratic society, and the provision of economically-beneficial products and services), are related to each other in complex ways. Together they position universities as cultural (Bleiklie, 1998), educational, and political institutions whose work constitutes a public good (J. Nixon, 2011).

Universities are said to have changed in a number ways with regard to their functions in society. One of these is the extent to which university education is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake (Candy, 2000) – reflected, for example, in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s (1767-1835) ‘idea of the university’ as it was realised in post-World War II Germany (Bleiklie, 1998) – relative to the pursuit of knowledge to serve specific economic, political and/or social ends. Habermas (1989) noted, for instance, the interest, within an economically-oriented environment, in “technically-usable knowledge” (p. 106). Barnett (2000) has offered what he believes ought to constitute “new knowledge functions” in an “age of supercomplexity”. These include “offering completely new frames of understanding (so compounding supercomplexity); help[ing] us comprehend and make sense of the resulting knowledge mayhem; and ... enabl[ing] us to live purposefully amid supercomplexity” (p. 409).

In terms of the university’s role in preparation for the professions, a significant difference from earlier decades (and centuries!) is the diverse array of professions and disciplines that have emerged over the centuries (Sharrock, 2007) and continue to emerge. Furthermore, the number of professions requiring a university education has increased (Schwandt, 2005), as has the emphasis on producing qualifications (Habermas, 1989) or, in Calhoun’s (2006) terms, “credentialing elites” (p. 9).
The extent to which contemporary universities fulfil, or still aspire to meet, the functions outlined above has been questioned by authors such as Giroux (2010) and Calhoun (2006). For instance, Giroux made the point (which I contest in later chapters of this thesis) that universities have “largely abandoned” their civic purpose (2010, p. 186), while Calhoun (2006) lamented a shift away from a focus on “the public good”, and a shift towards “the provision of private benefits” (p. 10). Bleiklie (1998) has taken a different (and, from my perspective, more apt) line in arguing that various functions of the university are still relevant (each carrying its own “layer of expectations” (p. 305)), but economic functions have become dominant, especially since the 1980s. This view accounts for the construal of the university as a “corporate enterprise” (Bleiklie, 1998, p. 311), of the knowledge work and what it generates as economic commodities (Ball, 2012; J. Nixon, 2011), and of the educational work of universities as the “production of highly skilled labour” (Brennan, King, & Lebeau, 2004, p. 7) or “techno-preneurs” (Bullen et al., 2010, p. 63). It is additionally reflected in new market-related imperatives for universities captured by Altbach (2004) in the words “educating people for the new economy” (p. 5).

Bleiklie’s view about the dominance of economic functions within universities in the last three to four decades is widely shared (e.g., J. Nixon, 2011; Shore & Wright, 2004; Walker, 2002). As I show next, this dominance has generated a great deal of concern because of the implications for university conditions and practices. Many (e.g., Connell, 2013a, 2013b; Davies & Petersen, 2005; Giroux, 2010) have described adverse effects on education and research, attributing the increasing emphasis on economic goals to the ascendancy of neoliberalism and its permeation of the contemporary university.

Neoliberalism and the Contemporary University

Although the term ‘neoliberalism’ is explained in many different and conflicting ways, it is commonly used to refer to a set of political-economic assumptions and practices that foreground market-based values and ideals in social relations (Ball, 2012; Brown, 2003; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Giroux, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Roberts, 2013; Ryan, 2012). According to Harvey (2007), neoliberalism encompasses the proposition that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Although the origin of the term ‘neoliberalism’ is obscure, Plehwe (2009) noted that it started to
appear in the 1930s “in multiple contexts, eventually to become established as the main designation of a new intellectual/political movement” (p. 12). What was then denoted by the term has since changed and diversified (Plehwe, 2009). Friedrich von Hayek (Austrian economic philosopher) and Milton Friedman (University of Chicago’s School of Economics) are among some of the economists said to have shaped contemporary interpretations of neoliberalism (e.g., Harvey, 2007; Peters, 1999). Neoliberalism was popularised in the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister, 1979-1990) and Ronald Reagan (United States President, 1981-1989), although it has also been linked to the reforms of Deng Xiaoping in China (Chinese Leader, 1978-1997) and Augusto Pinochet in Chile (President, 1973-1990) (Harvey, 2007). Its reach now extends to “those capitalist countries participating in the global economy” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252), although manifesting differently in different countries (Connell, 2013a). This includes Australia, where it was first embraced by the Hawke-Keating Labor Government (1983-1991), and where it is commonly referred to as “economic rationalism” (Davies, Gottsche, & Bansel, 2006, p. 306).

Neoliberalism is generally associated with emphases on market mechanisms as the optimal way of organising exchanges of goods and services (Thorsen, 2010); increased competition (Davies & Bansel, 2007); privatisation (Peters, 1999); nation states assuming a role in creating or preserving appropriate market conditions (Harvey, 2007; Olssen & Peters, 2005); “transfer of responsibility for social welfare from the state to individuals” (Klees, 2002 as cited in McCarthy et al., 2009, p. 43); commodification of services (Connell, 2012); and individualism24 (Connell, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2009; Peters, 1999). Public sector institutions, including many educational institutions such as universities, have been significantly affected by neoliberal influences (Ball, 2012; Calhoun, 2006; Davies & Bansel, 2005; Davies & Petersen, 2005; Giroux, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Roberts, 2013; Ryan, 2012).

Australian universities, which are “modelled on the British tradition of a western style university” (Nagy & Burch, 2009, p. 228; see also Marginson & Considine, 2000), have experienced a kind of “neoliberalising” process, to borrow

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24 Some authors (e.g., Apple, 2006, 2013; Brown, 2003; Kemmis, 2012b) commenting on neoliberalism have attributed the rise of individualism, at least in part, to the influence of neo-conservatism. Other authors have suggested (e.g. Davies, Gottsche, & Bansel, 2006; Plehwe, 2009) that neoconservatism is not distinctly different from neoliberalism, and that it is the American term for what is basically neoliberalism. In this thesis, I have chosen not to use the word neoconservatism in the discussion.
from Ball (2012, p. 25), largely through external government policy reforms on the one hand (Connell, 2013a; Marginson, 2004), and, on the other hand, the internal adoption of managerial systems based on ‘new public management’. Marginson (2004) described a series of government reforms in Australia, beginning in the 1980s, amounting to “the marketisation of higher education” (p. 2). The 1988 Unified National System, which led to the establishment of our University in 1989, was one such reform. Other neo-liberal inspired reforms (Connell, 2012; Marginson, 2004) included the reintroduction\(^{25}\) of a university fee system through the Higher Education Administration Charge (HEAC) in 1986, and Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in 1988 (Marginson, 2004). HEAC involved the payment of an administration charge of $250 per full time student\(^{26}\), while HECS involved a “uniform charge levied on all students”\(^{27}\) (Marginson, 2004, p. 5). Marginson (2004), citing his work published elsewhere, described these fee schemes as

...the first steps in a long series of policy changes that layered more and more aspects of market competition onto the public higher education institutions, while simultaneously modernising and strengthening Canberra’s capacity to steer the system (Marginson, 2003). (p. 5)\(^{28}\)

From Marginson’s perspective, these fee schemes signalled a shift in emphasis from collective to “individualised benefits of higher education” (2004, p. 5) and a changing relationship between Australian universities and the government. Some (Bullen et al., 2010; Marginson, 2010) have explained such a shift in terms of a ‘knowledge economy’. From a ‘knowledge economy’ perspective, knowledge (and “knowledge work” – Bullen et al., 2010, p. 54) is seen as a commodity that can be bought, sold, and distributed (Bullen et al., 2010). Knowledge, thus conceived, is a “form of capital” linked to the economic growth of nation states (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 330), raising the stakes for governments in university affairs.

Australian policy changes and government initiatives (following the introduction of the fee schemes) noted by Marginson (2004), comprise a long list


\(^{26}\) The HEAC schemed ceased from January 1, 1988.

\(^{27}\) HECS was a loan-based scheme for which students could defer payment until their future income reached a prescribed threshold (Chapman, 2001). HECS was modified in 1996 and then replaced in 2005 by HECS-HELP, a similar user-pays, loan-based scheme.

which I am reproducing here to convey a sense, as Marginson did, of how extensive
government attempts to “steer the [higher education] system” in Australia have been:

the official declaration of inter-university competition by Dawkins (1987-1988); the successive steps in the deregulation of international and post-graduate fees (1985-1995); competitive bidding for innovation funds and staff development (1988); the centralisation of research support and its redistribution as project grants on a competitive basis, and the distribution of a proportion of operating funds on the basis of institutional research performance (from 1988); national quality assurance (1993-1995, and again from 1999); the Hoare inquiry on university governance (1995); the Vanstone cuts to funding, HECS increases and the introduction of up-front undergraduate fees (1996); the West report (1997-1998).... the Nelson inquiry (2002) and reform proposals (2003). (Marginson, 2004, p. 5)

More recent initiatives include the Higher Education Support Act in 2003, the Higher Education Review in 2008 (known as the ‘Bradley review’); revision of the HECS scheme in 2005; establishment in 2011 of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), a national body responsible for accreditation and evaluation of performance of institutions (Australian Government, 2009); and the abolition of a tuition fee discount in 2013. The Federal Government earlier this year (2014) announced a proposal for further changes to the student fee scheme and university funding arrangements, for example, deregulation of student tuition fees.

In Australia, and elsewhere, the penetration of a neoliberal rationality – or ‘market-oriented logic’ for those who do not use the term ‘neoliberal’, but whose message suggests neoliberalism (e.g., Aspromourgos, 2012; Walker, 2002) – has been, according to many accounts (e.g., Connell, 2013a; Nagy & Burch, 2009; J. Nixon, 2011; Ball, 2012), characterised by significant operational, cultural and programmatic changes in and to universities. In the following paragraphs, I mention changes and implications that are most relevant to the arguments that I develop in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Funding arrangements regarding higher education are one of the most significant changes affecting important dimensions of the operations of universities, including teaching and researching. On one level, universities have experienced declining government funding relative to the growth of student numbers, for example in New Zealand (Houston et al., 2006) and Australia (Nagy & Burch, 2009; Neumann, 2007; Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December; Sharrock, 2007; Zipin & Brennan, 2003), meaning universities have had to rely increasingly on student
contributions through university fees and the ability to attract fee-paying students\textsuperscript{29}, as well as funds sourced from elsewhere (e.g., private industry, competitive grants). This has led to fiscal constraint within universities (Altbach et al., 2009; Lee & Dunston, 2011), fund ‘chasing’ (Calhoun, 2006), and competition between institutions (Ball, 2012; Marginson, 2010; Sharrock, 2007) for students, funding (for teaching and research), and status. The situation in Australia presently is that universities are “desperately underfunded” (B. Green, 2012a, p. 11). On another level, funding has become increasingly linked to outcomes and performance, evidenced in Australia by the budget allocations for research students based on student numbers being replaced with an outcomes-model of funding (Neumann, 2007). Such funding arrangements and challenges have implications for the ways in which universities are managed, which have also changed.

Many authors have, somewhat critically, described a shift in models of university governance from collegial to corporate and hierarchical management, for example, along the lines of ‘new public management’ (Bleiklie, 1998; Christopher, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Schwandt, 2005; Shore & Wright, 2004). New public management is a managerial model that, according to Hood (1991), has the following “doctrinal components”: “hands on professional management”; “explicit standards and measures of performance”; “greater emphasis on output controls”; decentralisation; “greater competition”; “private-sector styles of management”; and “stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use” (pp. 4-5)\textsuperscript{30}. New public management has been described by Olssen and Peters (2005) as a form of “neoliberal governmentality” (p. 324). Accompanying the shift in governance models has been an increasing “intensit[y] of managerialism” (Schwandt, 2005, p. 3) and emphasis on accountability, transparency, self-regulation, performativity (Ball, 2012; Green, 2012a) and “cost-consciousness” (Shore & Wright, 2004, p. 105). The widespread instalment in Australian, New Zealand and British universities of performance management practices, quality assurance measures, “benchmarking” (Shore & Wright, 2004, p. 100), and audits is testament to this significant managerial shift (see Christopher, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Shore & Wright, 2004).

\textsuperscript{29} In Australia, public universities can offer places to overseas students that attract full fees at the discretion of each university (King, 2001). The proposed changes to fees in the recent Federal Budget announcement involve the lifting of fees for domestic students now as well (up to the full fee rates for overseas students). Most post-graduate courses in Australian universities are fee-paying (Australian Government, 2014).

\textsuperscript{30} See Hood (1991) for a more detailed account of these components.
Accompanying shifts in university management models has been constant internal restructuring and change, as universities have attempted to address financial pressures and to decentralise and/or rationalise operations. Tight (2013) used the expression “institutional churn” (p. 11) to describe the excessive change being experienced in contemporary British universities. Comments made in the literature about the high rate of change elsewhere (e.g., Clegg, 2009) suggest that this is a global issue, however. It is certainly an issue in our setting, as I alluded to in Chapter Two and as I explore in Chapter Seven.

The resultant impact of governance changes and structural changes on academics’ working conditions has been a cause for concern. This is particularly so in terms of the increased intensity of academic work (Davies & Bansel, 2005; Kenny, Fluck, & Jetson, 2012) associated with the extra layers of bureaucratic procedure (Ball, 2012; Houston et al., 2006), the rise in student-to-staff ratios and therefore class sizes (Altbach et al., 2009; Hardy, 2010a; May, Strachan, Broadbent, & Peetz, 2011, July), and more being expected of academic staff in less time (Hartman & Darab, 2012). Expectations placed on academics to publish (Hatton, 2002; Ryan, 2012) and to attract research funding (Mcinnis, 2000) are examples of this. The addition of extra teaching sessions to an academic year is another example (Hartman & Darab, 2012). Ball (2012) commented on the increasing amount of time spent on “making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do, rather than doing it” (p. 19). He also conveyed a sense of how heavily scrutinised and measured academic work in universities has become:

Our days are numbered – literally – and ever more closely and carefully. Increasingly ‘we are governed by numbers’ (Ozga, 2008)….

All of this brings about a profound shift in relationships, to ourselves, to our practice, and the possibilities of being an academic. (p. 18)

This has affected academics’ professional autonomy (Blackmore et al., 2010), and their sense that what they are doing is autonomous (Olssen & Peters, 2005), meaningful work (Ball, 2012). Ryan (2012) drew on Gora and Whelan’s rather extreme zombie analogy to create a sense of the impact of such challenging conditions on academics. A disturbing image is evoked of academics “shuffling” along like zombies “to the beat of a corporatist drum” (Gora & Whelan, 2003, as cited in Ryan, 2012, p. 3).

Adding to the pressures and stress felt by academics in an “increasingly demanding environment” (Houston et al., 2006, p.17) has been casualisation: a rising
level of employment of casual staff (Courtney, 2013; Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; May et al., 2011, July; Percy & Beaumont, 2008). Reupert, Wilkinson, and Galloway (2010) drew attention to challenges experienced by casual academic staff themselves, such as drops in income and being on the “periphery of the community of practice” (p. 41). Others have noted the lack of job security (e.g., May et al., 2011, July) and the added workload for full-time or continuing staff (Percy & Beaumont, 2008). The difficult conditions were acknowledged by the Australian Government in a response to the 2008 ‘Bradley Review’:

Over time, the attractiveness of an academic career has diminished through factors such as a lack of job security caused by increased casualisation, increasing workloads and lower salaries compared with other sectors... (Australian Government, 2009, p. 23)

Academic culture is also believed to have been affected by the changing conditions (as Ryan’s use of the academic zombie analogy implies). Giroux (2010), Olssen and Peters (2005), and others have argued that an emphasis on performativity and accountability has displaced a traditional culture of open and critical dialogue, debate and inquiry. Olssen and Peters (2005) posited that with an increased level of concern for their “market reputation”, universities “have become increasingly intolerant of adverse criticism of their institution by the staff” (p. 327). Lack of professional trust has been identified as an emergent issue (Nagy & Burch, 2009). Olssen and Peters (2005) legitimately asked, “...under arrangements of managerialised accountability, what happens to the presumption of trust that public servants will act in the public good?” (p. 324). What has also emerged is a culture of competitiveness (Giroux, 2010; Houston et al., 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005) and individualism (Calhoun, 2006; Kemmis 2012b).

Related to changes in academic culture, are changes with respect to what knowledges are valued, as suggested in the previous section. Bullen et al. (2010) referred to a “privileging” (p. 61) of commodified and applied knowledge, while Calhoun (2006) surmised that what ‘counts’ as knowledge, or what comes to be regarded as ‘useful knowledge’, is linked to who is paying for the ‘commodified’ knowledge. The restriction of what ‘counts’ as knowledge to what is measurable, knowable, and economically valuable, does not leave much room for creative engagement in the exploration of knowledge (Gibbs, Angelides, & Michaelides, 2004), nor practitioners’ inquiry into their own practice (Hardy & Boyle, 2011), nor
professional judgement (Ball, 2012), all of which, according to much of the literature discussed earlier, are important for praxis.

The toll that the combined changes to university funding, governance, structures, working conditions, academic culture, and knowledge work have taken on teaching, learning and research within universities in recent times has been profound according to numerous authors. The changing and challenging conditions and their effects position universities as sites of struggle. For some, the struggle has reached a point of crisis (e.g., Altbach et al., 2009; Giroux, 2010; Zipin & Brennan, 2003). While opinions diverge in terms of how desperate conditions have become, or whether, and the extent to which, academics are victims, agents of change (Houston et al., 2006), or complicit (Ball, 2012; Davies, 2005) in the changing university climate, there is widespread concern about the future of university education. The implications for teaching and learning are particularly relevant for the inquiry reported in this thesis, and it is to this that I now turn. Specifically, I discuss some of the competing constructions of pedagogical practice that have emerged within the neoliberalised (Ball, 2012) institutions that universities, I am persuaded, have become.

**Competing Constructions of Pedagogical Practice in Universities**

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, there is a vast body of literature on higher education pedagogy. Even though I reviewed only a selection of relevant works for this research, the selection revealed that there are numerous ways in which pedagogical practice is constructed in higher education. Many constructions are viewed as competing with each other and/or at odds with particular university functions. Here I focus only on those that are central to the arguments developed in Chapters Six to Eight. I have chosen to organise them around the following themes:

- pedagogical practice as a technical exercise;
- pedagogical practice as an economic exercise;
- pedagogical practice as a virtual activity;
- pedagogical practice as knowledge and identity work;
- pedagogical practice as critical dialogue, resistance, subversion, and interruption; and
- pedagogical practice as praxis.

These themes are not mutually exclusive. Rather, some are overlapping and inter-related. I discuss each briefly before locating critical pedagogical praxis.
First is the construction of pedagogical practice as a *technical exercise*, which relates directly to my earlier discussion of technical rationality and techne. Walker’s (2002) reference to “technicist” discourses in universities as “the current dominant language of university teaching as a technical performance with predictable and measurable aims, objectives, outcome and performance indicators” (p. 45) is illustrative of this kind of construction. A further illustration is Giroux’s (2010) depiction of university teaching as efficient artefact production. Giroux (2010) pointed to instrumental, rule-following approaches to pedagogical practice, which are induced, according to Hartman and Darab (2012), when conditions of compliance, surveillance, and heavy workloads prevail. High workloads leave little time for reflection (Hardy, 2010b; Hartman & Darab, 2012), while a culture of compliance means that judgements that affect pedagogy and curriculum are made less on the basis of moral consequences (Giroux, 2010), and more on the basis of “satisfactory customer ratings and management appraisals” (Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December, p 14). On this view, educators are “reduced to the status of technicians” (Giroux, 2010, p. 191). Technical or technicist constructions have been linked to transmissive approaches to teaching (Hartman & Darab, 2012), standardised curricula and pedagogy (Connell, 2013b), the compartmentalisation of knowledge through the unitisation and modularisation of the university curriculum (Gibbs et al., 2004), and what Hartman and Darab (2012) referred to as “speedy pedagogy” (p. 56). This term signifies the effect of the compression of learning into shorter timeframes: “delivery of intellectual content in short chunks…. that only enables students to view snapshots rather than the fuller picture, let alone engage in reflection and/or praxis” (Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 56).

Related to technical constructions of pedagogical practice are neoliberal constructions of pedagogical practice, that is, as an *economic exercise*. This is captured in Bode and Dale’s (2012) description, based on discourse analysis of an Australian university’s “Organisation Change Impact Statement”, of curriculum design and delivery being transformed “from a pedagogical into a marketing endeavour” (p. 7). It is also echoed in Giroux’s (2010) notion of “bare pedagogy”: a “new pedagogy emerging in higher education focussed on market-driven competitiveness and even militaristic goal setting”31 (p. 184), and “an instrument of

31 Giroux (2010) made quite a strong case about the influence of militarism in universities in the United States. Deeming it not to be very relevant to the particular research context reported on here, I have refrained from engaging with this argument in the thesis.
neoliberal legitimization” (p. 191). The literature reviewed contains portrayals of students as consumers or customers (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December)32, or being moulded into entrepreneurs and resources for the economy, or being treated as commodities, as reflected in Apple’s (2012) reference to “the neo-liberal emphasis on making the world into a vast supermarket so that everything – even our students – can be bought and sold for profit” (p. xxix). Learning, on this view, is conceived as a sellable product (Bullen et al., 2010; Calhoun, 2006; Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December), reflecting the knowledge-as-commodity perspective previously discussed in relation to the ‘knowledge economy’.

Another way in which pedagogical practice is constructed relates to the impact of technology on higher education: pedagogical practice as a virtual activity. This notion is reflected in the description by McCarthy et al. (2009) of the “virtualisation of educational processes” (p. 47) drawing on Cantor and Courant (2003, as cited in McCarthy et al., 2009). By this, McCarthy et al. meant the increasing constitution of educational interactions by virtual (on-line) activity. They argued that a tendency toward virtualisation stems from preoccupations with, among other things, “speed”, “efficiency” and “information craving” (p. 47).

Next is the construction of pedagogical practice as knowledge and identity work. The following statement by B. Green (2005) exemplifies this notion of pedagogical practice in relation to doctoral education, one of the areas of pedagogy that I bring into focus in Chapter Six: “doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production” (p. 153). Petersen (2007) conceptualised supervision as “the production of subjectivity” (p. 485; see also B. Green 2009a, 2012b), while B. Green (2009a) described doctoral education as a space of “being and becoming... a new academic identity” (p. 7). (See also Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2007)33. Walker (2002) offered two alternatives to technical constructions of pedagogical practice based on the notion of identity work of both teachers and students: (a) a “pedagogy of recognition” (Nixon, Ranson, Martin, &

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32 Not all authors have described images of students as customers in pejorative terms. Sharrock (2007), for instance, taking a management perspective, argued that the notion of students as customers is not problematic. Rather, he argued, there is an adjustment issue: “…many of the problems of the sector lie in its incapacity to adjust to the changed world of knowledge-creation in which we live” (Abstract). He also stated that “the new emphasis in Australian universities on enterprise management and program rationalisation is a rational response to new market and policy circumstances” (p. 8). This, it seems to me, exemplifies precisely how neoliberal ideals are being ‘sold’.

33 B. Green (2005), Petersen (2007), and Bradbury-Jones et al. (2007) conceive of doctoral education as pedagogy (although more recently B. Green (2012b) has written about it as curriculum). Not everyone writing about doctoral education shares this understanding (B. Green, 2005).
McKeown, 1997, as cited in Walker, 2002, p. 45), based on the notion of “recognition from others” (p. 45) and acknowledgement and valuing of diversity and difference; and (b) “an Arendtian pedagogy” (p. 48) based on Arendt’s ideas of renewal and change, “the ‘political’ in our lives, the ways in which people are bound together, and what this tells us about what we are capable of” (p. 49). Learning, from this perspective, is conceptualised as “the construction of active/agentic personhood, of studenthood and a cultural formation under particular structural conditions of possibility, and of how we live in the world” (p. 49).

Overlapping with the constructions just mentioned are constructions of pedagogical practice as critical dialogue, resistance, subversion, and/or interruption. These constructions put critical dialogue (and to an extent, critical action) at the centre of pedagogical interactions, and recognise that teaching is not innocent or neutral (Simon, 1992). They also conceptualise educators and students as agents of change (Breunig, 2005). This notion of practice is evident in such pedagogical traditions as social justice pedagogy (Parkes et al., 2010), radical pedagogy (Sweet, 1998), and critical pedagogy (e.g., Braa & Callero, 2006; Breunig, 2005; Chun, 2009; T. Evans, 2009; Giroux, 2010; Lambert, Parker, & Neary, 2007; McArthur, 2010).

Constructions of pedagogical practice as praxis are the last of those that I have chosen to include here. There are numerous authors whose work reflects understandings of praxis along Aristotelian and post-Marxian lines, including Arnold, Edwards, Hooley, and Williams (2011, December; 2012, December), Braa and Callero (2006), Breunig (2005), Clayton, Smith, and Dyment (2014), T. Evans (2009), Francis (1997), Hooley (2013), Jacobs (2008), Paugh and Robinson (2011), T. Smith (2008), and Waghid (2002). I wish to spotlight one example that I revisit in Chapter Seven. Hartman and Darab (2012), drawing on Payne and Wattchow (2009, as cited in Hartman & Darab, 2012), called for “slow pedagogy” as a challenge to “speedy pedagogy” (Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 56), mentioned above. Conceptualising slow pedagogy as a “kind of critical praxis” (Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 58), the authors argued that it allows for deep cognitive thinking, reflection, creativity, experiential encounters that are compromised by the kind of ‘speedy pedagogy’ that conditions of compliance evoke. I discuss other examples of pedagogical practice constructed as praxis in the next section of the chapter in relation to critical pedagogical praxis.

The constructions of pedagogical practice in higher education that I have just outlined are but a few of a great many in the literature reviewed. Some of these
notions are antithetical to others and authors have indicated as much. For instance, Giroux’s (2010) depiction of ‘bare pedagogy’ creates an image of what remains when instrumental and neoliberal thinking strip pedagogical practice of criticality, moral judgement and social responsibility. Technical and neoliberal notions have been described by several authors (e.g. Giroux, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Walker, 2002) as displacing the more critical, praxis-oriented views of pedagogical practice: ‘speedy pedagogy’ is privileged over ‘slow pedagogy’ (Hartman & Darab, 2012); critical pedagogy is “wither[ing]” with the ascendance of ‘bare pedagogy’ (Giroux, 2010, p. 184). In a slightly different vein, McCarthy et al. (2009) implied that on-line interaction is “displacing face-to-face interaction ... embodied decision making and community feeling” (p. 47), potentially “rob[bing] students of the experience of the clash of ideas out of which emerges empathy with others and a desire for compromise” (Cantor & Courant, 2003, as cited in McCarthy et al., 2009, p. 47).

As I demonstrate next, critical pedagogical praxis could be located within any one of the last three themes just outlined (i.e., pedagogical practice as knowledge and identity work; pedagogical practice as critical dialogue, resistance, subversion, and interruption; and pedagogical practice as praxis). In Chapter One, I introduced the notion that critical pedagogical praxis is both a casualty of current conditions and a conduit to an alternative future. It is partly a casualty, as I show in Chapters Seven and Eight, because it is in direct competition with constructions of pedagogical practice connected to the first two themes (pedagogical practice as a technical exercise; pedagogical practice as an economic exercise), and indirect competition with the third theme (pedagogical practice as a virtual activity). It is partly a conduit because, like those constructions of practice posed in response to concerns about neoliberal and technical influences, critical pedagogical praxis represents one way in which those influences might be challenged.

Critical Pedagogical Praxis (CPP) in Higher Education

In Chapter One, I provided a working definition of critical pedagogical praxis as

* a kind of pedagogical practice that is reflexive, informed and morally committed pedagogical practice that seeks to create spaces (e.g., through teaching and learning interactions) in which harmful or unsustainable practices and power relationships can be understood and reoriented, and in which new possibilities for action can emerge and be enacted. 
This definition, developed for the study, was informed by Aristotelian and post-Marxian notions of praxis, and education literature related to praxis as discussed above. Just as there are many constructions of higher education pedagogical practice, and multiple interpretations of praxis, so there are differing conceptualisations of ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ (e.g., Breunig, 2009, 2011; T. Evans, 2009) and various terms used to describe the kind of practice that conforms to this definition. This includes ‘pedagogical praxis’ (Jacobs, 2008), ‘classroom praxis’ (Braa & Callero, 2006), and ‘critical praxis’ (Arnold et al., 2011, December, 2012; Francis, 1997; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Hooley, 2013; Paugh & Robinson, 2011).

Because of how variously critical pedagogical praxis is named, and/or because of the contested meanings of the terms involved, discerning from literature how critical pedagogical praxis is manifested in higher education is a complex task. The task is made difficult by two additional factors. Firstly, according to many of the authors just listed, what makes praxis and critical pedagogical praxis different from other kinds of practice relates to the intent and motivations underpinning the actions involved in that practice. Intent and motivation are not visible in and of themselves. As Russell and Grootenboer (2008) indicated, praxis is not necessarily something that can be seen, heard, or recognised from an observer perspective, because “any given action or practice can be moved or enacted from a range of different motivations” (p. 114). Thus, an important part of what makes critical pedagogical praxis ‘critical’ may not be observable, since actions alone do not identify it. The second reason is that it is a kind of practice that is, by definition, responsive to situations and contexts, not governed by rules. Therefore, as Ponte and Ax (2008) highlighted, and as alluded to previously, “it cannot be marked out as set rules, procedures and outcomes” (p. x).

These two characteristics of praxis create challenges for researching and communicating about praxis and critical pedagogical praxis.

Having said this, there is a growing body of work that endeavours to investigate or discuss critical pedagogical praxis in higher education, even if sometimes by another name, as noted above. A number of authors, many writing from a personal perspective, provide a sense of how it is enacted and manifested in higher education, with varying degrees of idealism, I might add, in terms of what can be achieved through/in pedagogy.
How CPP is Manifested in Higher Education

The manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis explored in the literature reviewed reflect some or all of the following themes: (a) deliberate use by university educators of pedagogical spaces to effect social change; (b) reflexivity and self-transformation embedded in collaborative inquiry; and (c) framing of practices by a moral purpose or educational project. A few examples of literature reflecting the first two themes are presented in this section. The third theme is interspersed throughout the discussion.

As explained above, a characteristic of praxis in a critical sense is an orientation towards social change (Grundy, 1987) in the interests of social justice. One of the ways in which this is enacted in higher education is through use, by university educators, of pedagogical spaces to bring about such social change, and, in some cases, environmental change as well. This assumes that those interacting in the pedagogical space (e.g., students) will possibly be influenced, changed (through learning), empowered or prompted to act (for example in their everyday lives or in their professions) in ways that directly or indirectly (but certainly positively) impact on their social and physical environments.

T. Evans (2009) exemplified the notion of using pedagogical spaces to effect change in a description of her pedagogical goals and approaches in the context of “interdisciplinary, sustainability-oriented courses” (p. 8). T. Evans described deliberate attempts to enable students to become agents of change as part of her overarching commitment to creating a more sustainable world. This involved developing student understanding of exploitative “global systems of power” (p. 8) through a range of learning activities designed to disorient the students’ world views. T. Evans used written texts and film to induce “disorienting dilemma[s]” (Mezirow & Assoc., 2000, as cited in T. Evans, 2009, p. 8) in order to challenge student assumptions and transform their ideas. By examining the relationships between various systems (e.g., global finance systems, the oil industry, and other cases) and social phenomena (e.g., “growth of Third World megacity slums”, p. 8) in both class discussions and reflective writing assignments, students were prompted to consider how systems work and whose interests they serve. Through this, and service learning work with community groups, students started to question why “systems have remained hidden from their view for much of their lives” (p. 8). This led to a process of “naming” and “renaming” the world in terms of identifying what “inform[s] our unsustainable social paradigm” (p. 9) and identifying “desired action” (p. 9) to address issues of exploitation.
The kind of ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ that T. Evans (2009) described amounts to a form of critical consciousness-raising based on an assumption that students’ critical awareness is linked to agency and a willingness and capacity to effect change in their immediate environment (and perhaps beyond). Braa and Callero (2006) similarly described practice (as ‘classroom praxis’ within a sociology course) aimed at developing student critical social consciousness, and like T. Evans, provided a first-person account revealing a social justice perspective. Braa and Callero (2006) detailed learning experiences which they designed to promote counter-hegemony and to challenge practices in society that might be unethical or unjust. However, their approach reflected a greater emphasis on political action than that described by T. Evans (2009), since students engaged not only in service activities and internships in community organisations, but also participated in forums, protests and other activist projects; students were encouraged to examine their political struggles and successes against traditional structures. The authors identified “community contact” as well as “critique, praxis and dialogue” (p. 362) as central to the described pedagogy.

What was also central for Braa and Callero (2006) was the nature of the teacher-student relationship throughout the course. They characterised the relationships as a “partnership” between “critical co-investigators” (p. 363). This notion of partnership and being ‘co-investigators’ has been discussed by other authors whose work I come to shortly.

The descriptions by Braa and Callero (2006) and T. Evans (2009) reflected an emphasis on students being and becoming critically aware and informed citizens, which connects with the civic purpose of university education discussed earlier. They also reflected a goal of nurturing student critical praxis. Such a goal similarly underpins forms of critical pedagogical praxis characterised as collaborative self-inquiry.

Collaborative self-inquiry is another way in which critical pedagogical praxis is enacted in higher education according to the literature. Collaborative self-inquiry is presented as an important way of interrogating and transforming one’s own practice (Hardy, 2010b), especially in light of consequences in and of practice, and of what might be influencing practice and constructions of practice. Reflexivity, informed by a critical consciousness (Grundy, 1987), is considered central to collaborative inquiry. Whether the self-inquiry is conducted collectively by academics, or by academics and students, there is a sense that dialogue, relationships based on critical
‘friendship’, and concerns about impacts on and implications of practices for others, are regarded as crucial.

Reflections by Francis (1997) on her pedagogical practice as a teacher educator illustrate this well. Francis (1997) described collaborative inquiry in the context of pedagogical encounters with her students. Her ‘critical praxis’ was characteristic of an ongoing collaborative inquiry in the sense that the lessons involved collective articulation and interrogation of personal theories (hers and those of her students). It also involved collaborative examination of students’ microteaching experiences, and Francis’ teaching of them, in terms of the cultural impact on practices. By making her deliberations, theoretical orientations and reflexivity the subject of scrutiny in the lessons, and relating with students as a ‘co-learner’ and ‘critical friend’, Francis (1997) actively confronted some of the uneven power relations inherent in student-teacher relations. She did, however, recognise there were challenges associated with this.

Arnold et al. (2012, December) similarly described collaborative inquiry involving teacher educators and students (as pre-service teachers). (See also Hooley, 2013.) ‘Critical praxis’ has been both the object of their ongoing inquiry, and what they hope to nurture within their own practice and that of their students, thus blurring their research and teaching practices. For these authors, praxis “brings together the ideas of ideology critique, self-reflective consciousness and emancipatory action for the public good” (2012, p. 7). The authors described multilayered collaborative processes which included “habitus-field analysis” (p. 2) drawing on the work of Bourdieu; pre-service teachers tracking their practice experiences; and teacher educators writing and analysing vignettes. What is particularly unique about this research is the location of initial teacher education in a school setting. I come back to this shortly in relation to enabling conditions for critical pedagogical praxis.

The works included in this section represent the multiple forms that critical pedagogical praxis can take in terms of pedagogical approaches, transformative agendas, and emphasis on action. Common to most of the authors is a belief that how (and the extent to which) critical pedagogical praxis is manifested in higher education is dependent on a range of factors related to conditions surrounding pedagogical practices and the nature of critical pedagogical praxis itself. Many of these authors have identified factors that can shape, foster and sustain critical pedagogical praxis, and/or lead to tensions and challenges that make the realisation of critical pedagogical
praxis more difficult. Enabling and constraining conditions, as examined in the literature, are presented next.

Enabling and Constraining Conditions

According to Carr and Kemmis (1986), social reality is not only something that is created by people’s actions and their interpretations. It also sustains, shapes, and limits particular interpretations and actions. The world that is transformed through critical pedagogical praxis, then, is the very world that shapes actions and interpretations associated with critical pedagogical praxis. This world has socially, historically, culturally, discursively, and materially influenced the extent to which critical pedagogical praxis has been ‘allowed’ to flourish in higher education. In the paragraphs that follow, I consider some aspects of the sociality of universities that have been identified as enabling, constraining or enabling and constraining critical pedagogical praxis (and praxis more generally, where relevant) in higher education.

Enabling Conditions

A common theme in the literature pertaining to critical pedagogical praxis in higher education is the key role that a strong learning community plays in fostering praxis. Collectively, the literature suggests a particular type of learning community: one characterised by “conditions of cooperation and commitment among a dedicated faculty” (Braa & Callero, 2006, p. 360); a spirit of trust and respectfulness (Gibbs et al., 2004; Hardy, 2010b); concern for the creation of ‘safe’ spaces (Breunig, 2005; Hardy, 2010b); a culture of mentoring (Gibbs et al., 2004); a self interest that is inseparable from the interests of humanity (Gibbs et al., 2004); and scholarly dialogue and activity that promotes collaborative and individual self-inquiry into pedagogy (Hardy, 2010a, 2010b; Jacobs, 2008).

Gibbs et al. (2004) paid particular attention to the importance of a strong learning community, although more so in the context of praxis in a general sense rather than specifically critical pedagogical praxis. They argued that mentoring, involvement and trust are especially important. They stated that, through trust, “a dialectic can develop that facilitates our creative engagement in the process of becoming with others” (p. 187). The authors also identified self-trust as crucial in terms of people being able to trust their own judgements in determining what is ‘right’ action.

Whereas Gibbs et al. (2004) built their arguments on supposition, Hardy (2010b) presented some clear ideas of what might support praxis development by
drawing on lived experiences of academics involved in the kind of learning community that Gibbs et al. (2004) imagined. Hardy made particular note of the need for a safe environment in which opinions could be expressed without fear of negative repercussions. He described the benefits of regular discussions, modelled on an action research approach that enabled “explicit interrogation” (p. 139) of pedagogical practices. However, he also acknowledged the need for further research exploring how such collaborative processes can be sustained.

Location or setting (that is, the physical site of practice) was an enabler of praxis according to Arnold et al. (2012, December) in their site-based pre-service teacher education program. They explained how the collaborative inquiry processes described earlier in this section, and efforts to nurture and embody praxis, were supported by the on-site conditions of the school environment. In their words, aspects of the site which were sustaining of a progressive and changing approach to teaching and learning involve a respectful and semi-autonomous working environment, open and respectful communication amongst all participants, cohesive and supportive practitioner groups, integrated school-university programs and ‘open door’ access for pre-service teachers to the experience and advice of mentors, principals and university personnel. (p. 15)

What the authors described is suggestive of a supportive and community-oriented set of arrangements where relationships and autonomy are emphasised.

Hartman and Darab (2012) also stressed the importance of community. However, they particularly drew attention to the importance of time. Hartman and Darab made a case for “slow scholarship” (incorporating slow pedagogy discussed earlier). They argued that time is necessary so that “the mind has time to be creative” (p. 58) and so that people can “engage with ideas through deep reflection, experiential learning, and reflexivity, ultimately resulting in critical insight, creativity, and innovation” (p. 58).

Interestingly, Russell and Grootenboer (2008), and Hardy (2010b) illustrated how factors can both stimulate and constrain praxis. Russell and Grootenboer (2008) discussed personal revelations that emerged from pedagogical moments in which they experienced “uncertainty and dissonance” (p. 112). Their revelations brought to the fore moral and ethical issues that prompted the authors to reconstruct their pedagogical practice. Along similar lines, Hardy (2010b) explained how academics’ “struggles to make sense of” (p. 138) a new ‘top down’ flexible learning initiative at a particular university, stimulated academics’ praxis in the form of collaborative
inquiry focused on examining their own pedagogical practice. These narratives demonstrate that constraints and tensions can potentially be enablers by compelling people to examine and reframe their pedagogical practice, thereby invoking critical pedagogical praxis. This is an important theme that I develop further in later chapters of this thesis.

**Constraining Conditions**

Not surprisingly, many of the (neoliberal) university conditions discussed earlier in the chapter have been raised as constraining factors for critical pedagogical praxis and praxis. Jacobs (2008), for instance, raised “top down demands” (p. 257) and accountability pressures as inhibitors to critical pedagogical praxis in the context of information literacy pedagogy. Gibbs et al. (2004) identified the tensions between “demands of an economically effective model of higher education” (p. 183) and learning communities, which are deemed important for nurturing praxis in a general sense. They suggested that economic drivers and individualistic thinking can lead not only to a culture of distrust and disunity, making collaborative initiatives and scholarly dialogue more difficult to sustain, but also to compliance and passivity at the expense of agency and criticality.

Wilkinson, Olin, Lund, Ahlberg, and Nyvaller (2010), drawing on work by Marginson and Considine (2000), highlighted similar impacts in relation to ‘leading praxis’ in the following example:

…Iris’s leading praxis is the act of an isolated individual swimming against the tide of a highly performative, individualistic culture within her university. Her understanding and commitment to social justice and the collective learning of all students emerges from a deeply felt commitment to equitable and socially just practices which have been at best marginalised in the entrepreneurial terrain of contemporary Australian universities. (p. 77)

Wilkinson et al. (2010) noted that what can be put at risk by the “tide” (experienced by ‘Iris’), is people’s capacity to exercise professional, ethical judgement, and ultimately their professionalism as practitioners. T. Smith et al. (2010) have added to this debate by suggesting that people’s “creativity and energy can be difficult to maintain” in circumstances where there is misalignment between their personal praxis and “demands of a workplace” (p. 57).

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34 Seo and Creed (2002) have described praxis (in general terms) being provoked in institutions generally. I discuss this idea in more detail in Chapter Seven.
Some discussions of institutional challenges to praxis have focused on pragmatic concerns. These have included students studying in isolation via distance education (Gibbs et al., 2004); the physical environment of universities (e.g., classroom layouts, physical resources, building design) and the expectations implicit in them (Russell & Grootenboer, 2008); busy workloads and work intensification, as discussed above, leaving little time for reflection (Hardy, 2010b; Hartman & Darab, 2012); and university regulations and established routines, especially regarding teacher-student relations and pedagogical practices (Russell & Grootenboer, 2008).

Russell and Grootenboer’s (2008) explanation of the effects of routinisation in a university institution is particularly poignant. They posited that while the development of routines in formal learning environments is inevitable, “the repetition of routines that reliably produce expected outcomes can diminish praxis to poeisis” (p. 112) since the repeated successes associated with the actions (i.e., it ‘works’) can mean that there are fewer reasons to look for alternative actions or to examine each situation, the routine actions, their consequences, and the ‘taken-for-granted’. The actions become part of a “shared script” (p. 120) that all concerned habitually follow, and in this sense, the actions become rule-following.

University policies and practices surrounding assessment have also been identified as constraining factors. Jacobs (2008) raised the potential danger of rubrics and standards “guiding” pedagogy to the detriment of “creative, critical, and visionary thinking” (p. 257). Others have argued that competitiveness (Braa & Callero, 2006) and power differentials between teachers and students (Francis, 1997) are potentially exacerbated by grading policies that demand a formal grade for each student. Francis (1997) pointed out that this has contributed to reflective learning tasks being completed merely for compliance reasons. These factors are significant when considered in light of the already confronting nature of critical reflection (Edward-Groves & Gray, 2008; Francis, 1997), arguably a constitutive element of critical pedagogical praxis.

Conclusion

The literature discussed in this chapter provides a sense of what critical pedagogical praxis is, and how critical pedagogical praxis is realised in some higher education contexts. It also provides a glimpse of the factors that interact in complex ways to form the social, political, and economic conditions (both enabling and constraining) for critical pedagogical praxis in higher education generally. From this it is possible
to gain a sense of the broader narratives that are relevant to how critical pedagogical praxis may be sustained, or not sustained, in higher education. These broader narratives include the story of universities and their place in society (including the relationship between universities and national economies and governments), the challenges of institutional education in contemporary neoliberal times, and the traditions of pedagogical practice that contemporary practitioners have inherited.

While the literature provides some helpful insights, it also highlights the need for continuing research in the area of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education. However, there is clearly a need for further exploration of the concept of critical pedagogical praxis because of its complexity on the one hand, and the multiple intellectual traditions regarding ‘praxis’ on the other. There is also a need for contextualised examination of the factors that constrain and enable critical pedagogical praxis, and of how those conditions constrain and enable critical pedagogical praxis. While various constraining and enabling factors have been the subject of scholarly conversation, there does not appear to have been any comprehensive and systematic research into the complex relationships between relevant factors. The ways in which practices of university educators are, and can be, implicated in the constraining and enabling conditions for critical pedagogical praxis is an area that is also under-explored. Studies that investigate these aspects of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education, in ways that capture the complexities between relevant factors, are crucial, I suggest, if we are to better understand how to nurture it.

Together this work compels higher education pedagogues to consider the specific ways in which critical pedagogical praxis is embedded in our own pedagogical practice and enacted in our own environments. It also encourages consideration of whether and how the factors and conditions revealed by the literature are relevant in our own professional contexts and whether and how the broader narratives penetrate our local narratives. To assist me in the exploration of such questions, during the initial planning stage of this research I explored three practice theories (Kemmis et al., 2014; MacIntyre, 1981; Schatzki, 2002) that I believed could provide more penetrating pathways into many of the issues raised in this chapter. These theories provided the basis of a theoretical framework, which was developed during the proposal phase of the project. The framework is outlined in detail in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The expression *practice theories* refers to a family of theories that are related by virtue of their concern with practice (B. Green, 2009c; Nicolini, 2013). Although multiple and diverse (B. Green, 2009c; Nicolini, 2013; Schatzki, 2001), practice theories share an assumption, according to Schatzki (2001), that “such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and historical transformation occur within, and are aspects or components of, the field of practices” (p. 2), the *field of practices* being “the total nexus of human practices” (p. 2). Practice theories are either “general and abstract accounts of practices” (Schatzki, 2001, p. 3), or they are accounts that refer to fields of practices (Schatzki, 2001, pp. 3-4). Nicolini (2013) suggested that practice theories also share a tendency to draw attention to “the importance of activity, performance, and work in the creation and perpetuation of all aspects of social life” (p. 3); “the critical role of the body and material things in all social affairs” (p. 4); and “individual agency and agents” (p. 4; see also Hager, 2013).

Theories focussing on practice and relationships between practices, material entities, individual agency and agents, and other aspects of social-material-cultural life, were fitting for this study given the aim of understanding critical pedagogical praxis (as a kind of practice), as well as what enables and constrains it, and how it is enabled and constrained. Practice theories prompt thinking about both the subjective and the intersubjective (the shared space between actors); both the individual and the social (Nicolini, 2013); and on what people are doing, how they think while doing, and what is done (B. Green, 2009c, following Kemmis, 2005). This was deemed important for capturing and understanding the “happening-ness” (Kemmis, 2010a, p. 10), “doing-ness” (B. Green, 2009c, p. 43), and complexity of critical pedagogical praxis, and how it is mediated, constituted, sustained, and nurtured. Many of the characteristics commonly ascribed to practice are equally relevant to praxis according to interpretations of praxis in the literature referred to in Chapter Three. For instance, practice is described as *social* (Dunne, 2005; B. Green, 2009c; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Schatzki, 2001), *situated* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Nicolini, 2013; Schatzki, 2002, 2012), *mediated* (Kemmis, 2009; Schatzki, 2001), *experiential* (B. Green, 2009b), *embodied* (B. Green, 2009c; Kemmis, 2009; Lloyd, 2006; Schatzki, 2001; Hopwood, 2013), *consequential* (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 4), *emergent* (Hager, 2013; Hopwood, 2013), *open-ended* (Schatzki, 2002), and *uncertain* (B. Green, 2009a; Hopwood, 2013). Therefore,
an approach to analysing critical pedagogical praxis in our University that accounted for these aspects of practice and praxis, that is a practice approach (Schatzki, 2001), seemed apt.

In particular, this research drew on MacIntyre’s (1981) conceptualisation of the relationship between practice, traditions, institutions and the “narrative unity of a human life” (p. 240); Schatzki’s “site ontology” (2002, p. 138) and related theories (2001, 2005, 2003, 2006, 2012); and the theory of “practice architectures” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 57; Kemmis et al., 2014). These theories do not provide the only pathways into the key issues. They were chosen because of their potential to shed light on how praxis is constituted in the setting studied in the research, and, relatedly, the relationships between praxis, practice conditions, arrangements, sites, practitioners, traditions, and institutions (i.e., the university).

This chapter outlines aspects of the three practice theories that were most relevant to the research project, highlighting what they each, and collectively, afforded in terms of analytical possibilities within the project. I first discuss the theories one at time, considering their relevance and implications for the study, and then briefly comment on how they relate to each other and how they informed the research.

Practice, Practitioners’ Lives, Traditions and Institutions

In After Virtue, Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) explored practice from the perspective of moral philosophy. His analysis of relationships between practice, practitioners’ lives, traditions and institutions was overtly “value laden and political” (Knight, 1998, p. 11), shifting between arguments about what is and what ought to be, in social life. Behind his argument was a conviction that virtues are central to the story of how practices are sustained and characterised. I discuss his theories regarding virtues later. First I consider how MacIntyre (1981) conceptualised ‘practice’ and how practice relates to the lives, traditions and institutions within which practice is embedded. In my discussion of MacIntyre’s theory, I adopt MacIntyre’s (1981) singular and plural use of the words ‘practice’ and ‘practices’. Mcintyre used the singular noun ‘practice’ in an encompassing sense, as in ‘farming practice’ or ‘fishing practice’, rather than to denote an individual action or combination of actions that might comprise the practice of farming and fishing. He used the plural term ‘practices’ to suggest the

35 The use of ‘practice’ rather than ‘practices’ in reference to MacIntyre’s work is deliberate as I explain shortly.
range of types of practice (i.e., including fishing practice, farming practice, painting practice and so on).

MacIntyre (1981) defined ‘practice’ as:

... any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve that excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (p. 175)

This definition reveals a number of important notions about practice that were relevant to this study. One notion is that practice involves the realisation of ‘goods’. According to MacIntyre, the goods of a practice can be either internal or external. Internal goods of a practice are intrinsic to the practice itself and can only be “had” (p. 176) by engaging in that particular practice. On the other hand, external goods are “always some individual’s property and possession” (p. 178). Money, status, and power were identified by MacIntyre (1981) as examples of external goods. These ideas regarding the goods of practice aided examination, in this research project, of the nature of critical pedagogical praxis, especially in terms of the internal good of praxis in general, in relation to the particular goods of pedagogical practice in higher education.

Possibilities for examining the nature of critical pedagogical praxis were also opened up by considering pedagogical practice in light of MacIntyre’s (1981) notion that internal goods are realised in the pursuit of excellence. Pursuit of excellence in the practice of painting, for example, is the good of a “certain kind of life” (p. 177) of a painter. The “internal good” (p. 177) of painting is the kind of ‘good’ associated with “sustain[ing] progress” in the practice of painting and “respond[ing] creatively to problems” (p. 177) in the practice. According to MacIntyre, the pursuit of excellence is guided by “standards of excellence” (p. 175), which, in the case of painting, relate to excellent performance of painting, and excellence in the products of painting. To enter into a practice is to accept and, importantly, to extend those standards. These ideas prompted thinking about what count as “standards of excellence” of pedagogical practice in universities, how standards of excellence evolve under changing conditions, and how critical pedagogical praxis is situated in relation to these standards of excellence.
The third of MacIntyre’s (1981) notions that is relevant to this research is that our ability to achieve excellence is transformed through the practice, as are our lives. According to MacIntyre, goals are changed in response to what transpires in the practice, or what MacIntyre referred to as the “history of the activity” (p. 180). For MacIntyre, the goals that we pursue in life through practice, are part of what gives our lives “narrative unity” (p. 240; see also p. 203). Embedded within a single human life, he says, are characters and a plot with a beginning, middle, and end. The pursuit of excellence in practice forms part of the plot or narrative structure. Central to the narrative unity is a quest for “the good” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 204) (telos), which relates to how best we can “live out” (p. 203) the unity in our lifetime. Ultimately, this is linked to our individual telos, or “true good in society with others” (Knight, 1998, p. 8) and the good of humanity. A concern for the good of humanity is central to the notion of praxis (see Chapter Three). Thus, MacIntyre’s ideas proved useful for thinking about the relationship between practitioners’ lives, practitioners’ concern for the good of humanity, and their enactment of, or capacity to embody, critical pedagogical praxis.

MacIntyre (1981) argued, furthermore, that the narrative structure of human lives, and people’s ideas of what constitutes the good of humanity and the internal goods of practice, stem from their being embedded in traditions. The traditions MacIntyre referred to included moral traditions, social traditions and traditions of practice. Regarding traditions of practice – or “practice traditions” (Kemmis, 2010a, p. 18) – MacIntyre (1981) explained that when people “enter into a practice”, they “enter into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have preceded [them] in the practice” (p. 207). They encounter a tradition which, for MacIntyre, was an “historically extended, socially embodied argument[s]…about the goods which constitute [those] tradition[s]” (p. 207). MacIntyre (1988) elaborated this notion as follows:

A tradition is an argument extended though time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least part of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted. (p. 12)

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36 The notion of unity in a human life is problematise by some authors (e.g., I. Young). I return to this issue in Chapter Nine.
37 MacIntyre’s articulation of this idea changes within the text such that it is not always clear whether he thinks this is or ought to be the case.
The survival and character of traditions, according to Macintyre (1988), depend on how such internal and external conflicts (p. 12) unfold, and the extent to which “fundamental agreements” (p. 12) are challenged and/or sanctioned through ongoing activity. Through practice, practitioners “confront” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 207), learn from, and become the bearers of traditions, while traditions come to represent practices and ways of thinking about what we (humans) do and how we are in the world. In this research, the notion of tradition was relevant to the constructions of pedagogical practice that have found expression in our university setting, and provided a means for understanding how critical pedagogical praxis has come to be embodied, regarded, constrained, and threatened over time in relation to other constructions of pedagogical practice.

MacIntyre’s (1981) account of the role of institutions, as “bearers” of practice traditions (p. 181) was also helpful in this regard. He argued that institutions play a distinct role in sustaining and organising practices, yet they also ‘corrupt’ and ‘threaten’ practices because they are concerned primarily with external goods (e.g., money, status) rather than internal goods. In MacIntyre’s opinion, a characteristic of external goods is that the “more someone has of them, the less there is for other people” (p. 178). He believed, therefore, that competiveness tends to pervade the culture of institutions, further threatening interests in internal goods and the good of humanity. Competiveness and preoccupations with external goods, MacIntyre argued, affect whether decisions in practice are made primarily on the basis of instrumental reasoning (concerned with “finding the most efficient means by which to achieve given ends but unconcerned about the substance of those ends” (Knight, 1998, p. 6)) or practical reasoning (associated with praxis (Kemmis, 2010b)). This raises the question, if only temporarily, of whether institutions (functioning on the basis of instrumental reasoning and the pursuit of external goods) and praxis (guided by practical reasoning and the pursuit of internal and common good) can actually coexist.

Certainly MacIntyre’s ideas suggest that institutions and the goods and ends of practices are in a constant state of tension with each other, providing one way of understanding some of the challenges facing contemporary universities explored in the previous chapter, such as the tight university-economy coupling. The tensions

38 This was a question that I asked myself at different times in the project. However, the evidence generated through the research, as I show in Chapters Six and Seven, suggested that institutions and praxis can and do co-exist.
between institutions and practices that MacIntyre pointed to were an important consideration in interrogating the tensions evident in our university (as an institution) and the implications of such tensions for possibilities regarding the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis. It prompted the decision to look closely in the study at the coherence and tensions between the goods and ends of pedagogical practice (as critical pedagogical praxis) and the goods and ends of the university.

For MacIntyre, “the virtues” (p. 181) had a role to play in addressing some of the tensions he noted. MacIntyre (1981) said that institutions and practices

…characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideas and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution. …. Without …[the virtues], without justice, courage, and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions. (p. 181) 39

While I have reservations about the notion of a “single causal order” (p. 181), I was interested in MacIntyre’s (1981) argument (after Aristotle) that ‘the virtues’ enable people to achieve goods internal to practices: virtues “sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good” (p. 204) and ensure that the quest for the good is a quest for the good of humanity. Because of the link between interests in the good of humanity and the moral commitment of praxis, MacIntyre’s ideas about the role of the virtues raised questions for this study about what virtues (e.g., justice? courage? truthfulness?) might be important in order to sustain efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis within our university, and, therefore, how the virtues themselves might be developed and sustained.

Practices and Sites of Practice

Theodore Schatzki’s ontological account of practice offers a very different perspective from the moral philosophy perspective of MacIntyre (1981), although there are a few areas of overlap between their theories, which are pointed out in this chapter. Practices 40, as conceived by Schatzki (2012), are “open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus[es] of doings and sayings” (p. 14). The sayings and doings (actions 41) that comprise practices are linked by four aspects of a practice that “form its organization” (Schatzki, 2002, p. 77):

39 The phrase ‘the virtues’ is no longer in common usage. However, MacIntyre’s central thesis is based on disappearance of ‘the virtues’ as they were referred to in previous times.
40 Schatzki uses the term ‘practice’ in a more general sense than is implied in the definition provided in the Introduction of this thesis.
41 These can include mental actions.
practical understandings (understandings of how to carry out actions and recognise actions composing a practice);

rules (“explicit formulations” that direct or instruct people to “perform specific actions” (2002, p. 79));

teleoaffective structures (hierarchically-ordered, acceptable or expected “ends, projects, tasks” (2002, p. 83) for which the actors perform particular actions; and acceptable or expected emotional expression and moods in the performance of actions); and

general understandings (“abstract senses” related to the “worth, value, nature or place of things” (2012, p. 16), e.g., the intrinsic worth of helping a student with an assignment). (Adapted from Schatzki, 2002, pp. 77-86 and Schatzki, 2012, p. 16)

According to Schatzki (2012), “doings and sayings belong to a given practice when they express some of the understandings, teleoffective components, and rules that make up the organisation of that practice” (p. 16). These internal organisers of practices are inherently ‘normativising’ since they are based on what is expected and acceptable in the performance of practice. This has implications for the reproduction and transformation of practices (2002, pp. 77-81), and so is relevant to how pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis can be sustained. In this research, the four kinds of internal organisers identified by Schatzki were helpful for understanding the nature of praxis, practice and therefore critical pedagogical praxis, particularly in relation to internal tensions of critical pedagogical praxis.

Schatzki’s (2002; 2003; 2005; 2006; 2012) ‘site ontology’ holds that practices are social phenomena, and as such, are always located within sites. Sites can include “spatial location”, “temporal location” (as in “clock time” or in the course of something occurring over time), “activity-place space” (as in physical setting of an activity), or “teleological location” (in relation to the “hierarchies of ends, purposes, and tasks” of human projects (Schatzki, 2003, p. 176)). Sites can also be phenomena in which the practice exists, or of which the practice is an intrinsic part (2003). Practices can, themselves, be the sites of other practices (2002) (e.g., pedagogical practice can be the site of assessment practices). They can also be located in multiple sites at one time. This became helpful for thinking about the situatedness and the sociality of critical pedagogical praxis, and for thinking about the physical, temporal,

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Schatzki refrains from using ‘actors’ for those whose actions constitute practices, I presume because some theorists regard non-human entities as ‘actors’ as well. Also, other human participants in the sites would be actors in some sense. My use of ‘actors’ is not intended to exclude these possibilities as much as to foreground, for reasons of clarity, the people whose actions are part of the performance of the practice.
and teleological location of our pedagogical practice (i.e., by identifying the sites of our practice).

For Schatzki, practices and the sites in which they transpire are mutually constitutive. Therefore, the site of a practice is inseparable from the practice itself (2005). The intelligibility of a practice lies in the site as much as in the practice and the “mental condition” (2002, p. 81) of the participants in the practice (the actors). The actors are also, therefore, intrinsically part of the sites in which their practices are performed (Schatzki, 2003). The practices are a reflection of both the actor’s sensitivities and his or her responsiveness to the “state of affairs” (2012, p. 17) in the site. In other words, people act because of, or in light of, something to do with the site. People also act “for the sake of something”; for “some way of being” (2012, p. 19), for example, “being fair” (2006, p. 1871).

Further to this, Schatzki (2012) highlighted that when people are responding to “states of affairs” (p. 17) in their practices, they are moving from a past state, which they encounter in the present, toward a “projected” (p. 19) future way of being. This all happens in the moment of practice, which means that the actor’s past, present and future are implicated in that moment. Furthermore, how the actor makes sense of the state of affairs in deciding how to act is related to the person’s mental condition (Schatzki, 2002, p. 77) (including, for example, moral commitments, sense of justice, idea of the ‘end’ of a practice, praxis stance), which is itself shaped through his or her past life experiences (Schatzki, 2002).

These ideas were appropriated in this study to make sense of the relationship between the practitioners and their practice and praxis, and the role played by practitioners’ life narratives and subjectivities (including motivations and intentions) in sustaining and nurturing critical pedagogical praxis. Accordingly, analysis involved trying to understand (a) the “states of affairs” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 17) within sites to which we (co-participants) were responding through our practice; (b) the ways of being for the sake of which we were acting (2012) in our pedagogical work; and (c) the histories implicated in the sites (especially in relation to our own lives and the lives of other actors in the sites).

Schatzki also conceptualised what goes on in and between sites and practices in a way that emphasised the materiality of practices. He depicted sites as “bundles” of practices and “material arrangements” (2012, p. 16). The term ‘material arrangements’ refers to how human lives “hang together” within sites via “chains of action” (2005, p. 472), shared mental states, and shared actions. It also incorporates
the material layout, connectedness of non-human with human entities, and communication networks (see Schatzki, 2005, p. 472). Schatzki used the word ‘bundle’ to reflect the inseparability of practices (e.g., teaching practice) and material arrangements (e.g., classrooms arrangements) within a site: “practices effect, use, give meaning to, and are inseparable from arrangements while ... arrangements channel, prefigure, facilitate, and are essential to practices” (2012, p. 16). The notion of prefiguration43 importantly suggests that arrangements do more than make a practice possible: they channel “the flow of activity by qualifying the possible paths it can take” (2002, p. 44), for example, by rendering the activity more or less expensive, more or less difficult, or more or less time-consuming (2012), and of particular relevance in this research as I discuss in Chapter Seven, more or less risky, legitimate, educational, and just. “Practice-arrangement bundles” (p. 21) and sites connect and overlap with other bundles and sites through links between practices, between arrangements, and between practice-arrangement relationships (2012). Practices can prefigure other practices through these relationships.

These insights aided analytical exploration of the relationships between our pedagogical practices, material arrangements in the sites of our practice, and interpenetrating sites and practices. As I explain in more detail in the next chapter, analysis entailed looking at the ways in which pedagogical practice was shaping, but also dependent on and being altered by, arrangements ranging from relationships between students and university educators, to, among other things, layouts of furniture, events, learning technologies, curriculum review processes, policy documents, staffing and the academic timetable. How the sites of critical pedagogical praxis were located in, and impacted by, broader sites (e.g., university policy reform in Australia; university-economy relations) was also considered in the analysis.

The final Schatzkian observation that I wish to mention relates to the evolution of practices. Schatzki argued that whether practices change or persist can depend on whether the relevant arrangements prefigure the “repetition or redirection of the doings and sayings” (2012, p. 17) that compose those practices. Additionally, change can be influenced by the extent to which the practices and the arrangements within a site cohere or compete with each other. The extent to which practice-arrangement bundles cohere or compete with intersecting bundles within more

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43 Schatzki preferred to use the notion of ‘prefiguring’ rather than ‘constraining and enabling’ (see Schatzki, 2012). I do not see the terms ‘constraining’ and ‘enabling’ as problematic if they are not used too narrowly or dichotomously. Therefore, I have referred to constraining, enabling and prefiguring conditions in this thesis.
encompassing sites is also relevant to change (2012). Following this line of thinking led me to ask whether, and what, intersecting practice-arrangement bundles might cohere and compete with constructions of pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis. This provided a usefully different pathway into issues of competition (and coherence) within our university setting from that afforded by MacIntyre’s work.

Practice Architectures

The theory of practice architectures proposed by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008), and developed further by Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson, and Hardy (2012) and Kemmis et al. (2014) is a theory about how practices prefigure, and are prefigured by, the sites in which they are located. It draws on both the theoretical work of MacIntyre (1981) and of Schatzki (2002), for example, in terms of site ontology and Schatzki’s conceptualisation of sites. While not as widely known and cited in practice theory research as the theories just outlined, the theory of practice architectures is being used by an increasing number of authors as a lens for interpreting how professional practices are enabled and constrained in varying fields of professional practice. This includes vocational education (e.g., Brennan-Kemmis & Green, 2013), nursing (Hopwood, Fowler, Lee, Rossitera, & Bigsby, 2013), teacher mentoring (Heikkinen, 2011, March), pre-service teacher education (B. Hemmings, Kemmis, & Reupert, 2013), higher education (Taylor, 2012), educational leadership (Edwards-Groves & Rönnerman, 2012), and professional learning in universities (Hardy, 2010a, 2010b; W. Green et al., 2013). To my knowledge, no one has used the theory to address questions about critical pedagogical praxis in higher education.

Like Schatzki’s work, the theory of practice architectures focusses on the sociality and materiality of practice. It conveys the sense that practices, and, importantly, praxis, “are always situated” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 50) in circumstances and conditions, in physical space-time, and in history. To elaborate, practices are not just shaped by the experience, intentions, dispositions, habitus, and actions of individuals (Kemmis et al., 2012; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014), they are also shaped intersubjectively by arrangements, circumstances and conditions “beyond each person as an individual agent or actor” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 37; see also Kemmis et al., 2012), that is, by “extra-individual conditions” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 37). According to this theory, extra-individual conditions, practices, and individual actors interrelate and are enmeshed
with each other in complex ways in *cultural-discursive, material-economic* and *social-political* dimensions of the social world (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008), or dimensions of intersubjectivity (Kemmis et al., 2014). It is the attention drawn to the three dimensions of the social world, to which I return shortly, that made the theory of practice architectures especially useful for analysis in this study since it attends to what is not explicitly dealt with in Schatzki’s work about practice: *power*.

From the perspective of the theory of practice architectures

a practice is a form of socially established cooperative human activity involving characteristic forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people relate to one another and the world (relatings), that ‘hang together’ in a distinctive project. (Kemmis & Brennan-Kemmis, 2014, April)

In this view of practice, the “project” in which the sayings, doings, and relatings “hang together” is “the thing that is being undertaken” when a practice is performed (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, & Edwards-Groves, in press). It encompasses the intent of the actors in practice, the ends of the practice (which may not necessarily be attained), and the actors’ actions (as a nexus of “sayings”, “doings” and “relatings”) (Kemmis et al., in press).

The addition of “relatings” to Schatzki’s “sayings” and “doings” as actions that compose practices was significant for the research reported in this thesis. While “relatings” are implicit in “sayings” and “doings”, Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) added “relatings” to account specifically for those aspects of practices connected to relationships between people (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 38) and between people and the material world. This foregrounds such relational aspects of practice as “solidarity”, “power” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 30), inclusion/exclusion (Kemmis, 2009), how people are positioned in relation to others and things, and trust, which are of particular relevance to critical pedagogical praxis. The conceptualisation of practice in terms of sayings, doings, relatings, and the project of a practice was helpful for gaining a keener sense of the nature of critical pedagogical praxis.

The theory of practice architectures asserts that practices and praxis are prefigured by, or constrained and enabled by, cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political arrangements with which practices are “enmeshed” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 14) in the sites of practice. A further assertion is that practices and arrangements exist simultaneously in, and mediate each other in, three dimensions of the social world, or “three dimensions of intersubjectivity” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 23). These three dimensions are, as noted above, the cultural-discursive, the material-
economic, and the social-political (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Cultural-discursive arrangements are realised in the cultural-discursive dimension (“semantic space” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32)), that is, “in the medium of language” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32). They are

the resources that make possible the language and discourses used in and about this practice; these arrangements enable and constrain the sayings characteristic of the practice (for example, constraining what it is relevant to say, or – especially – what language or specialist discourse is appropriate for describing, interpreting and justifying the practice). (p. 32)

In a university setting, cultural-discursive arrangements that prefigure pedagogical practice could include a shared language (e.g., English) or specialist discourses related to particular disciplines (e.g., critical literacy) or professions (e.g., teaching).

Material-economic arrangements are realised in the material-economic dimension (“physical space-time” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32)), that is, “in the medium of activity and work” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32). They are

the resources that make possible the activities undertaken in the course of the practice; these arrangements enable and constrain the doings characteristic of the practice (for example, by constraining what can be done amid the physical set-ups of various kinds of rooms and indoor and outdoor spaces in a school). (p. 32)

Again in relation to a university setting, material-economic arrangements that prefigure pedagogical practice could include lecture theatre layouts, office spaces, staffrooms, staffing arrangements, timetables, employment contracts, and learning platforms for on-line learning.

Both cultural-discursive and material economic arrangements overlap with each other and with social-political arrangements. Social-political arrangements are realised in the social-political dimension of the social world (“social space” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32)) that is, “in the medium of power and solidarity” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32). They are

the resources that make possible the relationships between people and non-human objects that occur in the practice; these arrangements enable and constrain the relatings of the practice (for example, by the organizational [sic] functions, rules and roles in an organisation, or by the communicative requirements of the lifeworld processes of reaching shared understandings, practical agreements about what to do, and social solidarities (Habermas, 1987a). (p. 32)
In a university setting, social-political arrangements relevant to pedagogical practice could include teacher-student relations, team-teaching arrangements, research collaborations, line-management structures, and face-to-face teaching-learning modes.

Combinations of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that shape or prefigure practices and praxis are referred to as “practice architectures” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 57). As indicated in the excerpts above, they constitute the pre-conditions that make practice possible and prefigure the unfolding of the practice and praxis. In other words, they are the *mediating conditions* of practice and praxis. Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) argued that practice architectures are neither fixed, nor stable. Rather, they evolve through practitioners’ ongoing individual and collective practice and praxis. This, importantly, acknowledges the role of human agency in constructing practice architectures. Kemmis (2009) explained that

some practice architectures are more durable than others. Some have the weight of living and consciously remembered traditions of thought and action justifying them; some stay the same over time merely by habit; some are kept in their course by coercion or ideology; some are kept in place by rules and sanctions, by regulation and compliance mechanisms. (Kemmis, 2009, p. 34)

Kemmis’s comments highlight that practice architectures are themselves mediated by the sayings (encompassing thinking), doings, and relatings of people as they engage in practice and participate in practice traditions.

Drawing attention to the three dimensions of intersubjectivity and the practice architectures that constrain and enable practices heightens sensitivity to the less innocent, and perhaps less just, elements at play in the sites of practice, but also to the more optimistic and more human elements at play⁴⁴. It invites a critical reading of the impacts and moral and political implications of the dynamics between people, practices and arrangements in sites of professional practice, including what is not immediately visible. I regarded this kind of critical reading to be consistent with the intent of critical pedagogical praxis, and important for unveiling some of the more subtle mediating conditions and arrangements that could be making particular kinds of pedagogical practice, like critical pedagogical praxis, more or less difficult/easy to enact in our University setting. Material-economic and social-political architectures

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⁴⁴ Adding ‘relatings’ to Schatzki’s ‘sayings’ and ‘doings’ has a similar effect.
were of particular interest in light of the neoliberal and managerialist narratives regarding higher education pedagogy discussed in Chapter Three.

Also of relevance to this research was the notion of “niche” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 37), which appears in more recent discussions of the theory of practice architectures. The term is used by the authors in the sense of an “ecological niche” (p. 37). Just as an ecological niche is “necessary to a biological organism, making its life possible” (p. 37), particular practice architectures are necessary for a practice to exist. The necessary architectures – the “conditions of possibility” (p. 31) for a practice – form the niche for that practice (Kemmis et al., 2014). This was relevant to the research because of the interest in the sustainability and flourishing of a particular kind (or species) of pedagogical practice (i.e., critical pedagogical praxis) in a contemporary university setting.

The theory of practice architectures led me to think that investigating how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured must take into account what goes on in the intersubjective spaces that comprise the sites of our practice within the university setting, the mediating role of practice architectures in these spaces, and how practice architectures are held in place by the practices and practice traditions that are embedded within the university. Are these spaces conducive to critical pedagogical praxis? Do they constitute a university that is a ‘niche’ for critical pedagogical praxis? What are the conditions of possibility that make it a ‘niche’? What, if anything, is missing, thereby preventing critical pedagogical praxis from persisting or being sustained? What architectures might need to be changed, resisted, reoriented, created, abandoned and/or critiqued through our individual and collective practice and praxis in order to nurture critical pedagogical praxis? The theory of practice architectures made it possible for such questions to be asked and, as I show in Chapter Eight, addressed in this thesis.

This links to ‘ecologies of practices’, an account of practices that Kemmis and colleagues have been developing in conjunction with the theory of practice architectures (e.g., in Kemmis et al. 2012; Kemmis et al., 2014). This account focusses particularly on relationships between practices, including interdependencies. It is based on the idea that practices are living, or like, living entities (Kemmis et al., 2014) that “coexist in ecologies of practices that are living systems” (Kemmis et al., 2012, p. 34). I used the notion of ‘ecologies of practices’ more in a metaphorical sense than an analytical sense in this research (e.g., referring to critical pedagogical praxis as an endangered species of pedagogical practice, following Dunne’s (2005) work on praxis), so I have refrained from elaborating on it in this chapter.
The Three Practice Theories Juxtaposed

These three theories complement each other in important ways. *Site ontology* draws attention to the sites, situatedness, materiality and evolution of practices, while MacIntyre’s work (1981) draws attention to the moral dimensions of practice, and the narratives and traditions that might be embedded in and impacting on those sites. The *theory of practice architectures* opens up further analytical possibilities through attention to the possible social-political, material-economic, and cultural-discursive impacts that the various traditions, arrangements, practices, and narratives embedded in or implicated in the sites of practice have on each other. Although the three theories are not unified – in some respects they are in tension with each other – “mobilized together” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 213)\(^{46}\), they provide a useful set of lenses, or framework, for critically examining the multiple (and potentially competing) factors that have a bearing on possibilities for enacting critical pedagogical praxis in a university setting.

The theories encouraged closer consideration, for instance, of the inherited traditions, including practice traditions, associated with critical pedagogical praxis, and of how people might enter into practice traditions, than was evident in the literature discussed in the previous chapter. The theories also encouraged consideration of the lives of practitioners whose narratives are enacted in pedagogical practice. In exploring the notion of a “narrative unity of a human life” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 240), and the past, present, and future dimensions of a person’s actions in practice (Schatzki, 2012), MacIntyre and Schatzki remind readers of the importance of our own life history in the unfolding, and evolution, of practices. Thinking about the relationships between practices, arrangements, sites, institutions, and the traditions in terms of the narrative unity of a human life\(^{47}\), creates a picture of people moving in, through and out of various social relationships and arrangements, impacting on them via their sayings, doings, and relatings, and being impacted by them, as their lives unfold. Gaining a sense of this in my own university, and considering the implications for how critical pedagogical praxis is enacted, became an important analytical concern in this research.

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\(^{46}\) I am borrowing from Nicolini (2013) in conceptualising the framework in this way. Nicolini used the expression “programmatic eclecticism” (p. 213) to refer to a research approach which draws on multiple practice theory lenses and methodological resources.

\(^{47}\) In drawing the ideas of Schatzki and MacIntyre together in this way, I am not suggesting that Schatzki would accept the notion of the ‘narrative unity of a human life’.
The theories helped to identify what was prefiguring our pedagogical practice, to determine which of those things prefiguring pedagogical practice were significant in terms of constraining and enabling the embodiment of our practice as critical pedagogical praxis, and to examine how those things were constraining and enabling. All three of the theories, in differing ways, pointed to how practices evolve and are sustained via the tensions that exist between practices and the lives, arrangements and entities with which they are enmeshed. They additionally helped to generate insights into (a) the ways in which the conditions and arrangements in our workplace were being negotiated, shaped, and held in place by university educators’ practices, and (b) what might need to change and continue in the setting to sustain and nurture critical pedagogical praxis.

The three theories, importantly, aided investigation of the nature of critical pedagogical praxis itself. They did so, firstly, by providing a lens for identifying the sites of pedagogical practice and analysing the ways in which critical pedagogical praxis was enacted in those sites. Secondly, the theories informed thinking about the relationship, including tensions, between practice and praxis, and between pedagogical practice and critical pedagogical praxis. In particular, the theories prompted questions about whether there are (or can be) characteristic sayings, doings, relatings, and projects (Kemmis et al., 2014) of praxis and critical pedagogical praxis, and whether or not praxis and critical pedagogical praxis are (or can be) internally organised (Schatzki, 2002). Can we think about critical pedagogical praxis, for instance, in terms of standards, as in “standards of excellence” (MacIntyre, 1981, p.175), and rules, as in one of four forms of organisation of a practice (Schatzki, 2002)? Such questions are addressed in Chapter Eight in light of empirical evidence generated by the research.

The questions raised by the theories additionally informed reflexive analysis of the ways in which the research project itself became part of the relationships, stories and conditions that were examined. For instance, questions such as ‘How is the research process impacting on what is unfolding in the practice and conditions being investigated and vice versa?’ and ‘How is my own narrative as a researcher, and the theoretical framework and beliefs about praxis that are becoming part of my narrative, implicated in what is being studied?’ were fundamental to my reflexivity as a researcher. Table 4.1 provides a summary of some of the key analytical questions that the three practice theories prompted me to ask in the hermeneutic process.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theorist/ Theory</th>
<th>Conceptual tools</th>
<th>Key analytical questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MacIntyre (1981)</td>
<td>Standards of excellence</td>
<td>Are there standards of excellence that are definitive of critical pedagogical praxis? In what ways are the standards of university pedagogical practice being extended and changed?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Internal and external goods of practice</td>
<td>What goods/ends are educators pursuing? What are the goods of critical pedagogical praxis? Are there internal goods of critical pedagogical praxis that are distinct from internal goods of pedagogical practice? What are the goods of the institution?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Virtues</td>
<td>What virtues are relevant to sustaining critical pedagogical praxis and a quest for ‘the good’?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationship between practices, traditions, institutions and the narrative unity of a human life</td>
<td>What traditions are relevant to possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis? How are traditions relevant? What pedagogical traditions are thriving in the university? What traditions are being extended and challenged through the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis? How is critical pedagogical praxis sustained and threatened by the institution? How is pedagogical practice organised and corrupted by the institution? Do the goods of the institution cohere with the goods of critical pedagogical praxis? How are the practitioners’ lives and aspirations relevant to their responses to circumstances and how they embody critical pedagogical praxis?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Saying and doings?</td>
<td>What are educators saying (and thinking) and doing in the pedagogical encounters? What sayings and doings are specific to critical pedagogical praxis?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Practical understandings, rules, teleoafffective structures, general understandings</td>
<td>Does critical pedagogical praxis have such structures (as distinct from pedagogical practice)? Are there tensions for enacting pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis on this basis?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Material arrangements</td>
<td>What material arrangements comprise the sites of, and prefigure pedagogical practice? What material arrangements are central to critical pedagogical praxis? How are material arrangements changed through critical pedagogical praxis?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Practice-arrangement bundles</td>
<td>In what ways are practices and arrangements inseparable? Where are the boundaries between pedagogical practice and the material arrangements?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ends</td>
<td>For the sake of what (including ways of being) are educators acting?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>States of affairs</td>
<td>What are the states of affairs to which educators are responding?</td>
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</table>
|                  | Encountering past states in | What histories (including aspects of life histories) are
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<th></th>
<th>the present</th>
<th>Prefiguration</th>
<th>Evolution of practices</th>
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<td></td>
<td>relevant to the current pedagogical situations? What past states are educators moving from?</td>
<td>What paths of action in practice (and kind of pedagogical practice) are made possible, difficult, risky, appropriate by material arrangements? How are key material arrangements and other practices in the setting prefiguring pedagogical practice?</td>
<td>What sayings and doings are being repeated and redirected? What intersecting practices, arrangements and practice-arrangement bundles cohere and compete with constructions of pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of practice architectures (Kemmis &amp; Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014)</th>
<th>Saying, doings And relatings</th>
<th>As for Schatzki above.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project(s) of a practice</td>
<td>How are educators relating (with whom and with what)? What ways of relating are characteristic of critical pedagogical praxis? How are people positioning selves and others? What roles do power and agency play in what educators are doing?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice architectures (cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political arrangements)</td>
<td>What is motivating educators in their practice? What are the ends of the practice? What is holding the sayings, doings and relatings of an educator’s practice together?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Niche; conditions of Possibility</td>
<td>What cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political arrangements are significantly prefiguring pedagogical practice? What cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political arrangements specifically enable and constrain the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis? What is holding the practice architectures in place? What is the role of human agency in constructing the practice architectures?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the sites of pedagogical practice a niche for critical pedagogical praxis? If not, what are they a niche for? What conditions of possibility make a site a niche for critical pedagogical praxis?</td>
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Despite the benefits of the theoretical framework I have outlined, frameworks are limited in their ability to account for all the nuances and complexities of a dynamic, contradictory world. They are also limiting in the sense that they narrow the perspectives of the world being examined. This can have unintended consequences. A particular concern for a practice theory framework, for example, was one articulated by Wilkinson et al. (2010), that is, the potential to reify practice and lose sight of “agentic tensions” (p. 78) when emphasising the structured nature of practices.

So, while I was consciously being informed by the theories throughout the investigation, I was also attempting to problematise them to explore (a) tensions between our lived experiences, the empirical material, and the theories; and (b) assumptions that have been made in the literature, and that my colleagues and I were
making, about what critical pedagogical praxis is. Investigating praxis as a kind of practice was at once problematic and generative of insights into some of those tensions and assumptions.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the three key practice theories that served as “practice lens[es]” (Gherardi, 2009, p. 115) in this research. It highlighted the analytical possibilities afforded by each of the theories, and how the theories complement each other in terms of investigating critical pedagogical praxis. The chapter also hinted at some of the tensions between the theories, which I discuss further in Chapter Nine where I reflect on the use of the theoretical framework. Together with the literature discussed in Chapter Three, the theoretical framework informed the formulation of the research questions, and how I went about answering them. How I went about answering them is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCHING PRAXIS

The central aim of this research was to explore possibilities and challenges for the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis, and how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in higher education. To do this I examined how the Teacher Talk members’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis were enabled and constrained by the conditions within our university setting, and how we collectively and individually negotiated tensions between the conditions and our praxis-oriented goals. The investigation was guided by five key research questions:

1. What is the nature of critical pedagogical praxis?
2. How is critical pedagogical praxis enacted within a particular higher education setting?
3. What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting, and how so?
4. How might enabling conditions be sustained and developed, and constraining or disabling conditions changed or negotiated? and the overarching question
5. How can critical pedagogical praxis be nurtured in higher education?

The ways in which I went about achieving the aim of the research and addressing these questions forms the basis of this chapter. This is the first of two chapters dedicated to the nature of the investigation. The second, Chapter Nine, provides a more reflexive comment on complexities and challenges surrounding the research process.

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the general approach to the research, locating the investigation in relation to relevant research traditions. It then reveals more about the participants in the study, and why they were selected, followed by ethical issues and how they were addressed. The next part of the chapter is dedicated to the six sets of encounters through which empirical material for analysis was generated and/or collected. The chapter closes with some brief comments about the writing of the thesis.

General Approach

In order to develop a deep and richly contextualised understanding of critical pedagogical praxis, and the conditions that prefigure it in a way that was self-forming and transforming as well as informative, the research was conducted as a critical, collaborative, participatory inquiry. The inquiry was informed by a number of research traditions, in addition to the selected practice theories discussed in Chapter Four. The
main traditions were critical participatory action research (Carr & Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis, 2011a; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 2002, 2005), self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran, 2004), and critical hermeneutics (Kinsella, 2006; Kogler, 1996; Schwandt, 2000; Thompson, 1981)48.

**Critical participatory action research (CPAR)** is participatory and ‘critical’ in nature. Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014) suggested that CPAR, at its best, is a “social process of collaborative learning for the sake of individual and collective self-formation, realised by groups of people who join together in changing practices through which they interact in a shared social world” (p. 20). It involves the participants in that process (in this case, the Teacher Talk group members) “learning about the real, material, concrete, particular practices of particular people” (p. 20) in their place (i.e., in terms of “how things work” there, “how things have come to be”, and the consequences of the practices “and the practice architectures that support them” (pp. 67-68)) with the aim of helping them “transform (1) their understandings of their practices; (2) the conduct of their practices; and (3) the conditions under which they practise ...” (p. 67). Through this process, constructed as a “communicative space” (p.16, citing Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), it becomes possible to discover, and find ways to address, “untoward consequences” (p. 16).

Like CPAR, “institutional ethnography” (D. Smith, 2002, p. 18; 2005) takes, as its starting point, people’s “experience in and of the actualities of their everyday living” (D. Smith, 2005, p. 9). *Institutional ethnography*, according to D. Smith (2002, 2005), explores social relations embedded, and implicated, within an institution from the perspectives of the people participating in those social relations. It focusses particularly on people’s “doings” (2005, p. 36), how their doings are situated in social relations, and how doings are “coordinated” (2005, p. 36)49 by social relations which may not be “wholly visible” (2002, p. 19) to people going about their everyday activity. (This makes it compatible with CPAR and the three practice theory lenses comprising the theoretical framework for this research.) The inquiry develops on the basis of experiences, issues

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48 The research was also informed to a lesser extent (and loosely) by narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Sikes & Piper, 2010) and case study (Stake, 2010) traditions.

49 D. Smith (2005) places a significant emphasis on how activities and social relations are mediated, coordinated (and represented) by ‘text’ in its material form (see p. 228). My focus in this inquiry on mediating arrangements and conditions takes into account, but moves beyond, the role of texts, by attending to a range of important cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008).
and tensions that emerge as the participants in those social relations engage in their daily ‘work’ (D. Smith, 2002). In the research reported in this thesis, the inquiry proceeded from the ‘standpoint’ of a group of university educators (Teacher Talk group) and our everyday work and experiences within a university institution, treating ‘lived’ tensions associated with our attempts to enact and embody critical pedagogical praxis in higher education pedagogy as a point of departure, and ongoing tensions and experiences as lines of ethnographic inquiry.

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) described self-study as “a mongrel: the study is always of practice, but at the intersection of self and other, and its methods are borrowed” (p. 15). Commonly, self-studies ‘borrow’ methods associated with action research, ethnography and narrative inquiry (T. Smith, 2006). In a sense, the activities of the Teacher Talk group, as a form of CPAR, were also a form of collective self-study. However, in this thesis, I use the expression ‘self-study’ to denote the analysis of my own experiences and practices as a university educator in parallel with, and in relation to, other elements of the investigation being conducted in the same setting. I particularly focused on the tensions between my aspirations, my pedagogical practices and the conditions I experienced, for the sake of my own professional learning as an educator, and in the hope that my story might contribute to an understanding of the key issues investigated in this research.

This research thus contained elements of self-study, institutional ethnography, and CPAR. Each of these elements of the research was approached hermeneutically (Gadamer, 1975/2004), or in the vein of critical hermeneutics to be more precise, since the focus was promoting critical understanding (Loftus & Trede, 2009), especially “about the fix we are in” (Kinsella, 2006, p. 8) regarding higher education pedagogy. In the tradition of hermeneutics, which regards interpretation and inquiry as “conversation” (Kinsella, 2006, p. 2) or dialogic encounters with “the other” (i.e., authors or agents) (Kolger, 1996, p. 171), the research developed through six sets of encounters:

1. co-participation in the Teacher Talk group;
2. interviews and follow-ups with individual Teacher Talk members;
3. observations of Teacher Talk members’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis in practice;
4. engagement in a supervision relationship (and reflexive study of supervision) with two of my PhD supervisors;
5. interviews with two colleagues of the Teacher Talk members; and
6. self-study of my practice as a lecturer in a teacher education course preparing pre-service teachers for secondary schools.

Co-participation in the Teacher Talk group and my ongoing relationship with two of my PhD supervisors constituted the critical participatory action research dimension of the research. The interviews, observations, and aspects of the self-study constituted the institutional-ethnographic dimension of the research, and the self-study constituted the self-study dimension of the research. These aspects of the research were interpenetrating and overlapping in complex ways due to the multiple roles of Teacher Talk group members as co-participants, educators, researchers (and in my case, doctoral candidate) within the research setting. The implications of this complexity become clearer with the detailed explanations of each set of encounters presented later in the chapter.

The six sets of encounters made it possible to explore the interplay between practices and mediating conditions, practitioners’ lives and subjectivities, and consequent possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis in the University in ways that align with the critical hermeneutic tradition. This included endeavouring to deepen and qualify understanding (Outhwaite, 1975) of the social-political implications of current higher education practices, and to make traditions explicit and call them to account (Kinsella, 2006; Loftus & Trede, 2009). It also included acknowledging researcher vulnerability (Kinsella, 2006) in terms of the ideological frames and, to use Rich’s (2001) words cited in Kinsella (2006), “tangles of oppressions” (Kinsella, 2006, p. 8), within which researchers interpret the world and communicate ideas.

Through the six sets of encounters, and the combination of the three methodological elements (CPAR, institutional ethnography, and self-study), the project developed as a form of research “within practice traditions” (Kemmis, 2011b, p. 6), underscored by what D. Smith (2005) expressed as a “commitment” to beginning and developing inquiry “in the very same world we live in, where we are in our bodies” (p. 2). This allowed access to aspects of pedagogical practice, such as the “here-and-now-ness”, the ‘happening-ness’ the ‘lived-ness’ of practice in real life” (Kemmis, 2011b, p. 7), that might not have been easily seen or understood from an ‘observer’ standpoint (Kemmis, 2011b). The sets of encounters also increased the potential for the research to become a form of praxis. According to Lather (1991), praxis-oriented research aims to encourage, on the part of those involved, self-reflection and deep understanding about their situation, and to foster empowerment needed for change. This was deemed important from ethical and educational perspectives in terms of the self-forming benefits
to the participants, and the transforming benefits to the educational community and broader communities to which they belong.

In keeping with the notion of research as praxis (Kemmis, 2010a; Lather, 1991) as well as the research traditions I have mentioned, the investigation was conducted in a way that was reflexive (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Kuntz, 2010; Pillow, 2003), deliberative, emergent, and flexible (Robson, 2002); as well as morally-committed and critically-oriented. I did what it made sense to do and what seemed practically and ethically reasonable given, among other things, the co-participants’ reflexive insights (Clayton, 2013; Gildersleeve, 2010), the nature of phenomena being studied, the evolving particularities of the research context, the circumstances surrounding the PhD, and my experiences and capacities as a researcher. At times, this meant being playful (in the spirit of praxis), for instance, with the approach to analysis, to see what new insights might emerge. The research process is explained more extensively shortly. First I provide details about the research participants.

Research Participants

There were three main participant groups in this study. One group comprised the seven members of the Teacher Talk group. I refer to the members of this group as the co-participants because I was part of this group and our pedagogical practice was the focus of the investigation. The second group included two colleagues of the Teacher Talk group members, referred to as colleague participants. The third group included students of two of the Teacher Talk members, referred to as student participants. The colleague and student participants were important to the study, but not as directly involved in the research.

Information about the co-participants was provided in Chapter Two and will be expanded in Chapter Six. I only wish to add here that four of the seven co-participants had been members of Teacher Talk from its inception. The gender make-up of the group during the research period was six females and one male. Some previous (male and female) members of the group had moved to other universities by the time I arrived at the University, and were not part of this study.

I chose to conduct the research with the Teacher Talk group for a number of reasons. Firstly, prior to the commencement of the research, the group members were trying to embody praxis in their pedagogical work, and by virtue of their participation in Teacher Talk (over some time), were collaboratively inquiring into the impact of various
aspects of the university setting on their efforts. In this sense, the “project” (Kemmis & Brennan-Kemmis, 2014, April) of Teacher Talk – and the commitments of individual members to researching, understanding, and embodying praxis – already aligned in many respects with the research questions being addressed by this study. Secondly, the group members represented a cross-section of different pedagogies within higher education, such as undergraduate pedagogies, post-graduate pedagogies, supervision pedagogies, and distance education pedagogies. This made it possible to explore critical pedagogical praxis in a range of pedagogical sites, in the Schatzkian (2002) sense of the word, and from a range of perspectives. This relates to a third reason: the group was large enough to reflect a diversity of insights and experiences, yet small enough to enable an appropriate level of collaboration and depth of analysis.

Another significant factor in choosing to work with the Teacher Talk group was my relationship to the group and its members. Soon after I commenced my PhD research studies, I was invited to join the Teacher Talk group because of my interest in critical pedagogical praxis. By that time I had established relationships with the group members by virtue of my being supervised by two of the group members, and via my association with the ‘Pedagogy, Education and Praxis’ Research Group (PEP) in the Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education (RIPPLE), as the holder of a RIPPLE scholarship (for PhD studies). These relationships presented many opportunities – and risks, which I discuss in the next section – including the opportunity to explore collective critical pedagogical praxis from within particular practice traditions (Kemmis, 2011b), in this case, the practice tradition of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education.

My co-participants, as members of Teacher Talk, were co-researchers in the investigation to the extent that they were involved in the CPAR dimensions of the research. Apart from engaging in reflective, analytical discussions about our practices and conditions in the University, our joint research project included collaboratively establishing group protocols for the project; suggesting possibilities for observing practice; raising issues to be explored further; and periodically participating in reflexive discussions about the project, empirical material generated within the Teacher Talk meetings, and my analysis. The group members were also co-researchers to the extent that they annotated their interview transcripts and individually commented on various findings, draft chapters, and the research process.
My two PhD supervisors involved in the project as co-participants were essentially co-participants and co-researchers in this investigation. This was so because of their participation in Teacher Talk and because our supervision meetings became a space of critical and collaborative reflection on their supervision practice. Both of these activities, as mentioned, relate to the CPAR dimensions of the project. This added to the complexity of the research relations as I discuss shortly in relation to ethical considerations. Their involvement as co-participant-researchers allowed critical pedagogical praxis in doctoral supervision pedagogy to be examined collaboratively from within a supervision relationship – as it was developing – from both supervisor and doctoral candidate perspectives. As expected and intended, this arrangement notably pushed at some of the traditional boundaries of critical participatory action research, doctoral research and supervision pedagogy.

The colleague participants were included in the research in order to gain access to perspectives that could supplement (by providing a balance to) the perspectives of the co-participants and therefore enable deeper insight into some of the key issues that were emerging in the research. It was also a way of determining whether the concerns expressed by the Teacher Talk members were unique to the Teacher Talk group. One of the colleague participants was a senior member of the Faculty working on a different University campus. She was chosen partly because of her familiarity with the university subject I was teaching during the project. Her location on an alternative campus was also seen as potentially useful in that she offered an ‘off-site’ perspective of key issues. The other colleague participant was based on the same campus as the Teacher Talk group and had ‘lived experience’ of the Faculty changes (such as the school merger) that were identified as significant in the early phases of the research. Both colleague participants were familiar with the programs, conditions, and teaching practice of some of the members of the group.

The student participants were enrolled in undergraduate teaching degrees and students of two members of Teacher Talk, Morgan and Bailey50. The students became indirect participants by virtue of their participation either in one of two face-to-face workshops where I observed Bailey’s pedagogical practice, or in one of three one-on-one face-to-face consultation meetings with Morgan, where Morgan’s pedagogical practice was being observed. The two workshop groups comprised students undertaking a primary teaching degree course, although at different year levels. Fourteen students (all

50 Pseudonyms.
female) were present in one workshop, and seventeen (male and female) were present in the other. The student consultation meetings involved three female students who had arranged to meet with Morgan about their assessment during a residential program. The three students were in the same class group and in their final year of their teaching degree course. Although the practices of the Teacher Talk group members were the principal focus of the study, since the unfolding practices of students influence how the practices of teachers unfold and vice versa, the interactions of student and teacher practices were of interest in the observed workshops and consultation meetings.

Ethical Considerations

Due to existing relationships between the co-participants as well as the potentially risky nature of critical collaborative inquiry, the need for sensitivity and measures to safeguard the participants and others implicated in the study (including the institution itself) were of paramount importance. Those relationships, and a critical approach, had the potential to create tension in terms of the impact of the study on existing relationships (Zeni, 2001) and vice versa. In this section, I outline some of the key ethical considerations and safeguards that were put in place to minimise and manage ethical issues. These safeguards were consistent with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), 2007) and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (NHMRC, Australian Research Council & Universities Australia, 2007). Ethics approval was obtained prior to collection and generation of empirical material.

Participant Consent

Participation in the project was voluntary, and written informed consent of all participants was obtained prior to the generation and collection of any empirical material pertaining to them. The process of informing, consulting, and obtaining the consent of

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51 The students were ‘on-campus’ students. However, due to time demands and scheduling issues regarding subjects and the practicum, the subject was offered in blended mode with residential schools, which involved intensive, short on-campus programs of five days duration, whereby students attended daily sessions.

52 I have been deliberately vague here about the year level or course in keeping with an ethical commitment made to the participants.

53 Charles Sturt University’s ‘Code of Conduct for Research’ currently defers to Part A of this document.
the participants/participant groups differed in order to respond to the different forms of their involvement.

Co-participants were initially consulted about the project at a Teacher Talk meeting six months prior to the commencement of the project, and before the research proposal was submitted to the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the Faculty for approval. This preliminary discussion was held to gauge the group members’ interest in being involved. The conversation focused on the general aims and nature of the proposed project, and the implications for participants and other stakeholders. From this discussion, a list of group protocols was generated. These group protocols were subsequently agreed to by all group members, collectively signed (see Group Protocols, Appendix A) and submitted with the ethics application, which the co-participants also read and co-signed. The protocols formed a “working agreement” (Balakrishnan & Cornforth, 2013, p. 588) of sorts, that is, the basis of an ethical framework for how the group would work together throughout the project. In addition to the initial meeting and exchanges with the (then potential) co-participants regarding the group protocols and the ethics application, I spoke with each person individually to provide them with a further opportunity to discuss any concerns they might have about being involved. Each expressed eagerness to participate. Once approval for the project was granted, co-participants indicated consent by completing an individual consent form (Appendix B – Sample Consent Form). The signed ethics application (which was essentially a detailed research proposal) functioned as an ‘Information Statement’ for the co-participants.

I approached both colleague participants to participate several months into the project. One was approached via phone conversation which was followed up with an email invitation. The other was invited to participate via email, which was followed up with an in-person conversation. Information Statements (Appendix C – Sample Information Statement) and Consent Forms were emailed to both colleague participants.

In the case of the student participants taught by Bailey, a week prior to the observed workshop I visited one of their lectures to inform them about the project. During this visit, I distributed and explained Information Statements and Consent Forms and gave students an opportunity to ask questions. All students in both class groups provided consent to participate, although not all students were present on the day of the workshops.
Different arrangements were made to negotiate consent with Morgan’s students because of the ‘off-campus’ nature of the particular subject and because of the nature of the consultation meetings. Once the students had contacted Morgan to arrange a consultation meeting (on a day put aside for consultations as part of the assessment preparation process for the subject), Morgan emailed the students to explain that I would be observing her practice during meetings in cases where students were happy for me to be present. All gave informal consent via email for me to be present. On the actual day, before the meetings commenced, I discussed the project with each student individually. Students had the opportunity to read the Information Statements and ask questions about the project before signing Consent Forms.

*Implications of a Critical, Collaborative, Participatory Approach*

Given the confronting nature of collaboratively theorising, self-reflecting, and challenging assumptions, it was important that an environment of trust, openness and support among the participating group be nurtured (Balakrishnan & Cornforth, 2013; Lather, 1991). The group protocols referred to earlier were reflective of this commitment. Some of the co-participants were involved in the development of key theories (including the theory of practice architectures) that came under scrutiny through the research process. This compounded the complexity of the research and increased the personal stakes for those participants, adding to the need for sensitivity and respectfulness in managing all aspects of the research. A key implication of collaborative involvement for the co-participants was the potential for extra burden in terms of time commitment. Therefore, the extent and nature of each co-participant’s involvement was negotiated on an individual basis and constantly monitored to ensure that the time burden did not outweigh the benefits of participation.

A further consideration was the requirement of a PhD thesis to be an account of a PhD candidate’s own work, and an expectation that it would make a substantive, original contribution to knowledge (Neumann, 2007). Given this requirement, in combination with the fact that the research was conducted in the context of a group project involving my supervisors, questions about authorial responsibility, and my autonomy as a researcher, were relevant. To address this, the following commitments were made:

- making sure that any aspects of the research based on the contributions of others (including my supervisors) were appropriately acknowledged in this thesis;
- clarity of our role descriptions throughout the study;
• agreement amongst the co-researchers to be mindful of the requirements and expectations of a PhD thesis (see Group Protocol 2.4, Appendix A); and

• agreement amongst the co-researchers that I would take primary responsibility for the interpretations presented in this document, but that co-researchers would have the opportunity to determine whether those interpretations were fair, relevant, and accurate (Kemmis & Robottom, 1981). (See Group Protocols 6.1 and 6.2, Appendix A).

Pre-existing and Dependency Relationships
The ethical implications of pre-existing relationships between primary participants warranted careful consideration. In some cases, these relationships constituted ‘dependent relationships’ (NHRMC, 2007) (e.g., the relationship between myself as supervisee and my two supervisors), which complicated the power relations already inherent in research relations between participants and researchers (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; McNamee, 2001; Pillow, 2003; Zeni, 2001). Pre-existing relationships included my relationships with my PhD supervisors; colleague-colleague relationships between group members; husband and wife relationship between two group members (not including me); and mentee-mentor relationships within the group. There were also varying degrees amongst the group members of seniority in the Faculty, duration of group membership, and roles in the group. These pre-existing relationships and power differentials may have contributed to ‘unspoken’ hierarchies and solidarities characteristic of established groups (Barbour & Schostak, 2005) and thus influenced the way participants engaged in the research process. For instance, there was a concern, initially, about group members’ decisions to be involved in the project out of respect for, or sense of loyalty towards, others in the group who were committed to the project. We agreed to respect the individual needs of each participant and ensure that pressure was not placed on others to become or remain involved (cf. Locke et al., 2013, p. 113). This is indicated in the Group Protocols.

Although we considered it unlikely, there was also a risk that tension could develop between Teacher Talk group members, and affect pre-existing working and personal relationships, and group cohesion more generally (cf. Tickle, 2001, p. 355). The group agreed to closely monitor the impact of the research on existing relationships, to adhere to group protocols, and to work through issues openly and respectfully, involving a neutral party if necessary54, in order to avoid any adverse effects of the research. I

54 Before commencement of the project, the University Ombudsman agreed to assume this role if it was needed (and it was not).
assumed a key responsibility in terms of managing and monitoring these research relations. To this end, I regularly spoke to the Teacher Talk group and individual participants (including in interviews) about their experiences of the research process.

The combined supervisor-co-participant role of two of my PhD supervisors presented the possibility of conflicting interests. For instance, it was possible, however unlikely, for tension to arise between supervisor responsibilities (e.g., regarding my PhD candidature, the institution, the research community), any vested interests my supervisors had in seeing the PhD study through to successful completion, their loyalties and interests as members of the Teacher Talk group, and their rights as participants to privacy (A. Hemmings, 2006), autonomy (McNamee, 2001), and fairness (Kemmis & Robottom, 1981). These issues were carefully considered and discussed before beginning the project. We agreed to open, respectful management of any ethical issues that might arise from, and affect, the supervision relationship. This meant ensuring that processes were transparent and well documented, hence the creation of detailed meeting minutes.

Given the complexity of the dependency relationship associated with supervision, and on advice from the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, arrangements were made to have an additional co-supervisor join the supervision team. The primary role of this co-supervisor was that of ‘critical friend’, allowing me to periodically discuss and seek feedback about the project with a supervisor who was not a participant in the study, and whose research was not connected to it. An academic colleague located at another university also acted, in confidence, as a (non-supervisor) ‘critical friend’.

Since the co-participants were senior and/or experienced researchers who had been working together for some time, and I was relatively inexperienced and new to the environment, one of the challenges of the project was maintaining an appropriate balance between my autonomy as a PhD researcher, and fostering a sense of co-participant ownership of the research processes (Halquist & Musanti, 2010). Careful and respectful negotiation with the co-participants, for the sake of research integrity, the research relations, and my credibility as a researcher, were needed to address this challenge.

Existing student-teacher relationships were also relevant to the participation of student participants in this study. In order to avoid students feeling coerced (because of these relationships) into participating in the study, care was taken to make explicit the
voluntary nature of research participation and that non-participation or withdrawal would not result in disadvantage to them. Also, as a person who was not known to the students prior to the research, I took responsibility for negotiating student participation and consent, issuing and explaining consent forms and information statements, and fielding questions about the research.

*Identifiability and Confidentiality*

Maintaining the anonymity of participants and the institution in this project was a complex issue due to the involvement of two of my PhD supervisors and me as co-participants. This involvement automatically identified the supervisor co-participants, our University as the relevant institution and, by association, the other co-participants. This was always going to be a concern in light of the ‘critical’ nature of the project (potentially involving critique of university conditions). The co-participants were aware of the anonymity issues associated with this project and considered them carefully in reaching their decision to participate. Even so, a number of measures were put in place to address the complexities surrounding the participation of the co-participants so that the well-being and privacy of all concerned could be appropriately safeguarded.

One of these measures was the use of pseudonyms in reports about the research, and acknowledgement of co-participant contributions in footnotes. Accordingly, pseudonyms have been used for the co-participants throughout this thesis. An additional layer of anonymity has been established in particular sections of Chapters Seven to Nine via the substitution of ‘TT member’ or ‘co-participant’ for pseudonyms. This was deemed prudent in light of the sensitivity of some of the issues that emerged in the research encounters, for example, in the confidential space of interviews. In some places in the thesis I have described situations in very general terms for similar reasons.

A further safeguard for the co-participants was the management of access to, and confidential treatment of, the empirical material, and discretion regarding how I discussed the project with others, especially in our University.\(^{55}\) Only members of the Teacher Talk group had access to material generated in Teacher Talk meetings and other Teacher Talk forums (such as the project website and email correspondence between group members). Only the individual participants concerned and I had access to empirical material generated outside these forums. For example, individual Teacher Talk

\(^{55}\) Despite the measures outlined, there could not be a guarantee that other participants would themselves be discreet about their participation (cf. Balakrishnan & Cornforth, 2013).
group members had access only to empirical material generated in their own interviews and/or observations, unless otherwise negotiated with the participants concerned. A list of safeguards for the co-participants (Teacher Talk group members) is presented in table form in Appendix D.

The wellbeing and privacy of the colleague and student participants was of equal importance, although the risk of them being identifiable in the research was much lower than for the co-participants. Anonymity of the secondary participants in written empirical material, analysis, or representations of empirical material was achieved through the use of pseudonyms in the case of student participants, and the designation ‘Colleague participant’ in the case of the colleague participants. Access to empirical material pertaining to colleague and student participants was restricted in accordance with the signed consent forms.

Dependability and Credibility

As well as having an ethical responsibility to participants, our institution, and others who might be associated with the study, as a researcher I had an ethical responsibility to potential audiences to ensure that the research was dependable and credible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Given the dynamic nature of human practices and perceptions, rather than establishing “stability over time” in this project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 257), dependability was achieved through detailed tracking of the inquiry process so that its “quality and appropriateness [could] be scrutinised” (p. 257). To this end, records were kept of all empirical material, procedures and analysis. The research process and strategies, and emerging interpretations, were regularly discussed with my supervisors, and periodically discussed with members of the Teacher Talk group.

Credibility was similarly important. In this study, ‘credibility’ partly related to consistency between the actual perspectives of the participants, and how I have portrayed those perspectives (Mertens, 2005). Accurate and credible representation of participants’ views was promoted through checking my interpretations of the participants’ responses with them during interviews and meetings and through the “member checking” (Mertens, 2005, p. 254) processes, which I explain in the next section. I invited co-participant feedback on draft chapters of the thesis as part of the member-checking process.

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56 An example of this is the sharing of the diagrams produced in the second round of co-participant interviews. The diagrams were shared at the follow-up meeting with the Teacher Talk group with the permission of the group members.
Being embedded in the research as a co-participant presented the risk, highlighted by Zeni (2001), of ‘seeing’ in the investigation what I wanted to see. This, of course, was relevant to all co-participants. Stake (2010) pointed out that self-study is often criticised for being “self-serving, self-protecting, promotional, advocating the home point of view” (p. 163). Using a range of strategies to generate empirical material, using varying types of empirical material, and drawing on a range of perspectives was important in this regard. For instance, including the perspectives of colleagues of the primary participants who were not part of the Teacher Talk group, helped to provide a balance given the difficulties of clarifying “taken for granted assumptions and blind spots in…[our] own social culture” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 9), that is, the culture of the Teacher Talk group. This was particularly relevant in light of the already similar views about praxis that had drawn the group members together. I also reviewed literature that reflected very different perspectives from those represented in the research linked to the Teacher Talk group and my supervisors, including work aligned with different research paradigms. Additionally, I exposed ongoing interpretations to scrutiny by presenting the findings and research processes at Faculty research and graduate studies forums, and at national and international conferences (see Appendix E for the titles and other details of these presentations).

My evolving researcher subjectivities (including how my interpretations were influenced by my supervisors and other members of the Teacher Talk group) were monitored and reflected upon in a number of ways. One was via periodic “peer debriefing” (Mertens, 2005, p. 254) with ‘critical friends’ – including my additional co-supervisor as mentioned – with a view to creating space for my assumptions about aspects of the research to be confronted. Another was through the reflective research journal mentioned previously in relation to the self-study aspect of the project. Although time consuming to maintain, the journal was considered an important means not only of reflecting on my teaching practice, but also of reflexively tracking interpretations and remaining alert to the influences on shifts (or not) in my thinking as the research unfolded. For instance, I recorded my thoughts about my co-participant role, the impact of my research activity on the setting and vice versa, evolving interpretations of empirical and theoretical material, and the relationship between the research and my pedagogical practice. Ongoing discussions with supervisors about my interpretations were similarly helpful.
Generation, Collection and Analysis of Empirical Material

The investigation involved engagement with, and analysis of, resources, including relevant scholarly literature, theoretical resources (e.g., the practice theory lenses comprising the theoretical framework), various government documents as cited and discussed in Chapters Three and Four, historical texts, and web-based information about the University. Primarily, though, the research aims were achieved through my engagement in the six sets of encounters listed above. These encounters were spaces of critical analysis and interpretation in themselves. However, they also generated empirical material that could be systematically analysed in light of the resources just mentioned (and vice versa), in a deliberative, emergent, and flexible way (Robson, 2002).

The generation and analysis of the empirical material was a “hermeneutic endeavour” (Grundy, 1987, p. 185), with decisions about how to proceed next in the research process being made, as noted above, on the basis of my ‘reading’ and interpretation (and, to an extent, that of the other co-participants) of what was emerging, unfolding and being encountered, and of what had previously transpired, in the research. The process involved “progressive focusing” (Stake, 2010, p. 129, following Partlett & Hamilton, 1977), that is, progressively clarifying, reshaping questions, and narrowing the scope of analysis to focus on key emerging issues. It also involved “zooming in” and “zooming out” at times (Nicolini, 2013, pp. 219-223) as new questions emerged. For instance, it became clear early in the research that I needed to ‘zoom out’ to understand more about what was prefiguring co-participants’ pedagogical practice generally, before ‘zooming in’ on what was enabling and constraining efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis specifically.

In the paragraphs that follow, I explain how empirical material was generated, collected and analysed in relation to each of the six sets of encounters, one at a time. In reality, some of the encounters were more overlapping than might appear in the discussion. As a case in point, Alex and Morgan did not cease to be my PhD supervisors in Teacher Talk meetings. So, although their pedagogical practice as supervisors was not the focus of my attention in Teacher Talk meetings, their ways of relating to me in Teacher Talk could not be bracketed from our supervision relationship generally. Furthermore, the boundaries between the generation of empirical material and analysis were often blurred. In some instances (e.g., the generation of field notes in observations) they were one and the same process. In the interests of transparency (although at the risk
of presenting an account that is somewhat mechanical) the generation and analysis of empirical material through the six sets of encounters is described in detail.

1. Co-participation in Teacher Talk

The Teacher Talk meetings were an important forum for capturing, clarifying, developing, and critiquing co-participant understandings of key concepts related to the research questions, and our views on how our pedagogical practice was being prefigured by arrangements in and beyond our workplace. We drew into the Teacher Talk conversations various experience-based accounts of pedagogical encounters at our current and previous workplaces, as well as the kinds of sayings, doings, and ways of relating that were reflective of our work as academics in our everyday interactions. Thus, the kinds of conversations that happened in Teacher Talk, and the arrangements that shaped it, as well as the content of the group’s reflections, were highly relevant to the research. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter Six, Teacher Talk was, simultaneously, a space to talk about, enact or ‘live’, and nurture critical pedagogical praxis. The Teacher Talk meetings also became a vehicle for planning, negotiating and reflexively monitoring the research process in terms of the critical participatory action research dimension of the project.

The members of the group negotiated for six Teacher Talk meetings to be dedicated to the project. In effect, this meant that the group’s usual practice of audio recording meetings and having the recordings professionally transcribed was maintained, but that the recordings and transcripts of the six meetings became empirical material for the project. The group also decided that I would assume responsibility for organising the meetings, setting the agenda (in consultation with the whole group and being mindful of the desire for the meetings to be ‘not too much like work’), and facilitating the six meetings. The first five of the ‘dedicated’ meetings occurred once a month from March to July in 2012. The sixth meeting followed in October of that year.

Teacher Talk discussion topics emerged from a combination of the previous meetings’ transcripts, the circumstances that were unfolding in the University at the time of the meetings (e.g., implications of a university-wide timetable change became a key conversation topic at a meeting that coincided with its implementation), and issues arising from the research process, or from my initial, ‘raw’ analysis of transcripts from our earlier meetings. For all but the first of the six meetings, I distributed possible

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57 Prior to the six meetings, this responsibility fell to a group convenor.
topics/questions for discussion in advance in order to give people some time to think about them. At the beginning of the meetings, I generally opened the conversations with an invitation for people to raise issues, ask questions or make comments in response to the previous transcript, or to respond to topics that I posed, whereupon we negotiated a starting point for discussion and began our ‘teacher talk’.

So that the conversations flowed in the usual spirit of an informal conversation among friends, rather than a focus group interview, my ‘facilitation’ was minimal. I facilitated the discussions only to the extent that I occasionally probed for further clarification or elaboration of comments (although all other participants did this as well), raised questions that related more closely to the research questions, and negotiated for ‘space to be carved out’ of the conversation for reflection on the research process and analysis of empirical material. I also attempted, where appropriate, to elicit stories that illustrated people’s understandings of critical pedagogical praxis. Most of the stories emerged very naturally in the course of conversations as people drew on their own experiences to exemplify or illustrate particular points. At other times the stories took on a more reflective tone in the sense of sharing with others what memories were being triggered by what was being said in the meeting.

In one of the meetings, though, a more self-conscious approach to storytelling was used. Via email, and at the suggestion of one of the primary participants, I invited participants to bring a story to the meeting to share with the group. Each of the shared stories was a ‘critical incident’ of sorts (Halquist & Musanti, 2010), a representation of a significant moment in our development as educators; one which might still have a bearing on how we teach today. Both the sharing and responding to the stories proved fruitful for deepening our understanding of relationships between conditions and practices, both past and present.

During the Teacher Talk meetings, I self-consciously negotiated a “participant-as-observer” position (Burgess, 1984, p. 81). On the one hand, I contributed my own stories and views to the conversations, and responded to other people’s comments. On the other hand, entertaining the possibility that the Teacher Talk conversations were part of the living practice architectures of our work as educators, and that I was witnessing critical pedagogical praxis in action, I sometimes refrained from offering my own perspectives during meetings so that I could see things ‘playing out’ without my interjections. My observations on such occasions were recorded in a research journal that I maintained throughout the project. They tended to focus on how praxis was
manifested in the sayings, doings, and relatings that characterised the meetings. I say more about the research journal later in relation to self-study.

*Analysis* of the empirical material generated through the Teacher Talk meetings (audio-recordings and meeting transcripts) involved a range of processes and layers. Preparing the transcripts constituted the first layer of analysis. Although the transcripts were professionally transcribed (with the exception of two which I transcribed myself\(^{58}\)), I checked each transcript thoroughly against its corresponding recording. This involved listening for more nuanced aspects of the conversations not attended to in the transcription process, such as what people were *doing* while speaking, shifts in conversation, changes in tone, self-correction by speakers that reflected conceptual shifts, choruses of ‘yes’ (i.e., who was saying ‘yes’), moments of hesitation, tentativeness, people speaking with authority, and people apparently ‘testing the water’\(^{59}\). I was also correcting mistakes and filling in gaps in the transcripts that resulted from people talking at once, the use of jargon, or pronunciation peculiarities. These were things that could easily be glossed over if I relied on my memory of the meetings and the written transcripts alone.

The second layer of analysis involved multiple read-throughs of each transcript, writing annotations in the margins as I read. Annotations captured some of the themes I was identifying, questions that were emerging, and assumptions that I thought were being made. My first read-through of each transcript focussed more on the content of the conversations, that is, what we were saying about our practice, the conditions we were experiencing, and the relationships between the two. This read-through was also important for identifying issues that might be worth raising in the next Teacher Talk meeting. Other members of the Teacher Talk group also read the transcripts in preparation for each meeting, and some observations were made about the transcripts in the course of our conversations. In this sense, there was a level of collaborative analysis going on as well.

My subsequent transcript read-throughs focussed on the nature of our talk (e.g., ‘*reflexive*’\(^{60}\)), what we were doing while speaking (e.g., ‘*deliberating about consequences*’), and how we were relating in the conversations (e.g., ‘*trust in each

\(^{58}\) The group agreed that I would transcribe these meetings because of the nature of these particular meetings.

\(^{59}\) These are all things that might only be obvious to someone attending the meetings, or who knew the participants.

\(^{60}\) All examples in this paragraph are annotations on the April TT meeting transcript.
other”). The read-throughs were informed by the theoretical framework (see Chapter Four), my evolving understanding of critical pedagogical praxis, and relevant literature. Aiding my use of the literature was a list of analytical questions\textsuperscript{61} that I established midway through 2012, and which I continued to build and revisit in my ongoing engagement with literature throughout the project. The list comprised questions that occurred to me as I read (Appendix F).

After the initial read-through of the first transcript, I created a word document using excerpts that were ‘cut and pasted’ from a digital copy of the transcript. The document was organised initially around the research questions, but it evolved to include other, related categories arising from the themes identified while annotating (and also by combining or dividing earlier categories). I continued to build this document by ‘cutting and pasting’ excerpts from each subsequent (annotated) Teacher Talk transcript, adding “analytic memos” (Kuntz, 2010, p. 423) to the document as I did so. The final ten broad categories were

1. the nature of critical pedagogical praxis;
2. dispositions for critical pedagogical praxis;
3. critical pedagogical praxis at the University;
4. conditions/arrangements at the University;
5. impact of conditions and circumstances on pedagogical practice;
6. implications/challenges;
7. how things can be otherwise;
8. our teaching practice;
9. Teacher Talk as a pedagogical space/condition for critical pedagogical praxis; and
10. the group members.

The themes within each of these broad categories provide the basis for some of the discussion in Chapters Six and Seven.

In addition to the rough coding and categorising process (Saldana, 2009) just described, I analysed three of the six meetings\textsuperscript{62} using an analytical template based on the theoretical framework. This was considered important for ‘zooming in’ (Nicolini, 2013) on the practice architectures that were shaping our practice both inside and outside the Teacher Talk meetings; the traditions we were entering into, extending and

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\textsuperscript{61} See Neumann (2004, p. 321) regarding the qualitative process of asking questions of empirical material.
\textsuperscript{62} After analysing three meetings using the PA template (i.e., for the first, fourth and fifth meetings), I felt that the template had served its purpose and that little more could be gained from proceeding to analyse all six in this way. I had already extensively analysed the remaining three meetings through the creation of summaries, annotation/reading and coding.
\end{flushleft}
reinforcing; and the social justice implications of conditions and practices we were living and talking about. The template – referred to in the project as the ‘Practice Architectures Template’ (or ‘PA Template’) – was adapted from a “table of invention for analysing practices” developed by Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 39). A blank PA Template and one containing guiding questions appear in Appendix G and Appendix H respectively. I also wrote summaries of each meeting in order to maintain a narrative sense of the experiences and actions of the group over time and to avoid becoming fixated on categorising. Both the summaries and the template helped to identify some of the silences (i.e., what people were not saying and not doing) that can be missed through reliance on coding alone.

My co-participants became more involved in the analytical process in two of the meetings where I presented for discussion some of the emerging themes. The group members made comments that shaped ongoing analysis. A follow-up meeting with the group a year after the sixth meeting also served this function. This meeting was audio-recorded and field notes were made during the meeting. The conversation and notes were taken into account in the ‘final analysis’ which was underway at the time of the meeting. I explain the ‘final analysis’ towards the end of this chapter.

Conversations that began in Teacher Talk sometimes spilled over into email exchanges between group members, most often the day after the meetings. Such exchanges were included in the analysis. In addition, there was some interaction via a private interactive website (i.e., restricted-access) that I established for the co-participants to record reflections. The website, called the ‘CPP [Critical Pedagogical Praxis] project website’, was set up in such a way that all Teacher Talk group members could edit and manipulate the site. An advantage of this reflective forum was that it gave group members the opportunity to engage with it at any time. It had the potential to ‘capture’ some of the scholarly conversation and reflections that continued between more formal events.

However, while it was deemed ideal by the group to have this opportunity (indeed one of the group members suggested it), in reality the participants did not regularly visit or contribute to the site and it did not work as well as hoped in terms of capturing reflective insights and conversation. Email, rather, was the preferred means of communicating about the project and relevant topics. Reasons for this may include the

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63 Writing summaries was a strategy used in my Masters research project (Clayton, 2010) to develop a general and contextualised understanding of significant issues.
burden of additional tasks for already very busy people, concerns about the sensitivity of issues and security, and the fact that the site was not established at the beginning of the project. From one group member’s perspective, “the problem was non-conviviality. Also we spend our lives on the computer and on-line – talk is a welcome alternative, and an intrinsically convivial one” (Group member comment on thesis draft). Analysis of email exchanges and web entries involved reading through them after I had comprehensively analysed the transcripts and adding to analytical notes already made regarding Teacher Talk. The means of generating and analysing empirical material related to co-participation in Teacher Talk are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
Summary of empirical material generation and analysis: Teacher Talk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x 2-hour Teacher Talk (TT) meetings</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audio- recording</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x 2-hour follow-up meeting with the TT group</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email exchanges</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘CPP project’ website</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Although generation of empirical material and analysis are separated in this table, in reality, the boundaries between them were quite blurred.

2. Interviews and Follow-ups with Teacher Talk Members

While the encounters described above constituted the central CPAR elements of the study, I crossed over into ‘institutional ethnographic’ territory through individual face-to-face interviews\(^{65}\) with each of the members of the Teacher Talk group. Interviews were considered important, on the one hand, for eliciting co-participant interpretations of their pedagogical practice and praxis, and experiences of the conditions of pedagogical practice within our work environment. On the other hand, they were a means of

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\(^{64}\) Items of empirical material generated or collected (as oral, written, or visual text) during the project. See Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 4).

\(^{65}\) I called the encounters ‘interviews’ because, although they were free-flowing conversations where I was sometimes sharing my perspectives or personal stories, they were nevertheless contrived and directed by me to the extent that I was asking most of the questions.
checking co-participants’ views of how the research processes were being constructed by the Teacher Talk group, and to further explore issues that emerged in early phases of the research. Face-to-face interviews can be time-costly for interviewees and interviewers (Berends, 2006). However, the co-participants were enthusiastic about participating in the interviews despite their busy lives. From one participant’s perspective, this was “because the research and critical pedagogical praxis are central to [our] ideas of what it means to be an educator and an academic. To talk about these things is thus to talk about what is ‘sacred’ in the job” (Alex).

I conducted two, in-depth interviews (Brenner, 2006) with each Teacher Talk group member. The interviews were one to two hours in length to allow for in-depth discussion. They were conducted at times and places that were suitable to the participants. They were also audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. My questions as interviewer were mostly open-ended. Notes were made during the interviews using an Interview Schedule (Appendix I). The interviews were later followed up with less formal discussions about transcripts based on the interviews and/or my analysis.

The first interviews with the Teacher Talk members were relatively unstructured. They were aimed at gathering background information and exploring, in ways that might not have been possible in a group situation such as Teacher Talk meetings (where stories or story threads could be interrupted in the natural flow of conversation), the participants’ narratives regarding their professional lives as university educators. Factors that mediate (R. Nixon, 2012) their experiences of teaching were also explored. Possible discussion topics or themes were identified, prior to interviews, based on analysis of previously collected and generated material. Themes/topics for the first interviews included Teacher Talk, characteristics of the participants’ teaching practice, current circumstances/teaching situation, teaching background, interest in praxis, working conditions, and the research project itself.

The second interviews with the Teacher Talk members were slightly more structured to address specific questions emerging from the empirical material and analysis. Conducted months after the first interviews, they provided an opportunity to pursue lines of inquiry specific to the co-participants’ particular teaching situations, and to probe more deeply into the relationships between the various arrangements and practices associated with their individual pedagogical practice and ways in which participants responded to the enabling and constraining conditions they experienced as
educators (e.g., working within a particular on-line environment prefigured by particular technological structures). Specifically, I wanted to understand what made it possible for the co-participants to think and practise in particular ways.

To aid conversation in part of this second interview, co-participants were invited to draw or co-construct diagrams/images as they talked, visually representing how their pedagogical practice and the conditions within which they practise interrelate. All opted to do so. A technique that has been referred to as still “somewhat untried” in research (Galman, 2009, p. 199), the construction of image-based texts gave participants an opportunity to explore different ways of thinking about their circumstances, and gave me, as interviewer, a ‘window’ into the co-participants’ experiences and complex academic lives that I might not have accessed with a reliance on “linguistic constructions” alone (Wheeldon, 2011, p. 510). The process involved the co-participants drawing and talking, sometimes simultaneously but not necessarily. The co-participants’ talk was a combination of responses to my questions, unprompted explanations and interpretations of the developing images, and ‘think-alouds’ (a term that refers, in a research context, to a technique used to access participants’ thoughts and actions while engaged in practical activity, rather than relying on participant recall of thoughts and actions after an activity (K. Young, 2005; see also Nicolini, 2009). The drawings, or diagrams, ranged from scribbles to concept mapping, mind maps, written words, and objects (Appendix J).

Being mindful of the potential vulnerability associated with drawing (Galman, 2009), and not being certain about where the process would lead, I approached the process in a way that was cautious, intuitive, and experimental. Not unexpectedly, given, among other things, the differing ways in which participants conceptualise their pedagogy, the varying levels of apprehension about being asked to draw, and the differently-constructed relationship each had with me, this process unfolded uniquely for each person. For instance, in one interview the co-participant requested that I do the drawing (although very quickly the co-participant took over since I was not achieving on the page what the co-participant intended!). Some co-participants diagrammatically presented and explained in detail already-theorised and/or structured accounts of their own practice and context. Others generated metaphors and/or more abstract and/or

66 Hence describing the method in more detail than I have others (e.g., interview, video, and observation) for which there is greater precedent.
67 The expression ‘think-aloud’ is also used in a teaching context as I explain in Chapter Six.
messy images and appeared to be more self-consciously making sense of their pedagogical lives while constructing and reflecting on the images.

The strategy was beneficial on a number of levels. In some cases the diagrams served as maps of our conversation, inviting further collaborative reflection on our interpretive processes towards the end of the interviews. Furthermore, some of the diagrams provided a visual summary of themes related to the co-participants’ individual experiences of university conditions and embodiment of pedagogical praxis, affirming and adding to themes that were already becoming apparent through the study. A third benefit derived from the novelty of the activity, which, in the context of a project where the co-participants spent a great deal of time discussing and thinking about the topic, had the potential to interrupt the narratives that we were repeatedly telling ourselves and each other (see Wheeldon, 2011).

In terms of limitations of the technique, not all participants were equally eager to draw. Also, as pointed out by one of the participants, it is not possible to represent all the circumstances and influencing factors surrounding pedagogical practice on one sheet of paper. Hence, the conversation was still central, and indeed many observations, metaphors, images and feelings that emerged in the conversations did not make it onto a page. Despite the limitations, the activity yielded valuable insights into the personal and public dimensions of participants’ pedagogical practice, and in many cases prompted a depth of discussion that I had not experienced in the interviews up to that point.

Analysis of the interviews occurred in six main layers (i.e., in addition to analysis going on in the actual interviews themselves). The first layer involved checking the transcripts against the recordings using a process already described in relation to the Teacher Talk transcripts. The second layer included analysing the diagrams. To do this I made copies of the diagrams, then traced over the copies while listening to the recordings, essentially recreating each co-participant’s construction of the diagram using the recording as a guide. During the analysis, I attended not only to obvious themes, but also to how things in the diagram were positioned in relation to each other (e.g., via arrows, proximity of shapes/words, relative sizes, how things were grouped together, categories, location on the page), symbols, metaphors, what was emphasised or foregrounded (for example, with underlining, retraced letters, capital letters, darker/heavier font, ticks (✓), and brackets). The retracing process and attention to these aspects of the diagrams aided closer understanding of some of the key relevant issues for each person. This particularly highlighted the co-participants’ analytical insights into
what was prefiguring their individual pedagogical practice and what they valued as practitioners.

The *third layer* of analysis included annotating the transcripts, and identifying themes, questions, initial impressions, and points of interest. The *fourth layer* involved cutting and pasting electronic transcript excerpts into a case document for each group member, including myself. I structured all but my own case documents using broad headings based on my initial reading of the interview transcripts. The headings were modified as I developed each case document. The headings included

- background information;
- Teacher Talk;
- sites of pedagogy/teaching circumstances;
- teaching aspirations/aims;
- what is valued/important in pedagogical practice;
- how critical pedagogical praxis is manifested;
- influences on practice;
- sources of tension;
- negotiation of tensions; and
- impacts of practice.

My own case document included only comments I had made in interviews either about the research project, or about my practices and experiences as a university educator.

I then reworked the rather fragmented case documents (excluding my own) into extended narratives by weaving salient transcript excerpts together with interpretive prose and paraphrased versions of the co-participants’ words. I called these extended narratives ‘*participant chapters*’. This was the *fifth layer* of analysis. The ‘participant chapters’ ranged from 23 pages to 49 pages in length. As I constructed each one, I became more discerning in terms of relevance to the aims of the research, and so those written later were considerably shorter than those written first.

Although time consuming, the writing of the ‘participant chapters’ proved a worthwhile process for more closely analysing the complex relationships between people’s personal narratives (following MacIntyre’s (1981) notion of the “narrative unity of a human life” (p. 240)) in relation to practices. It also helped to address my growing concern about losing sight, while doing the very technical work of systematic analysis,

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68 This process was a form of coding (Saldana, 2009).
69 I struggled with what to call these texts during the research. I called them ‘participant chapters’ because I wrote them as if I was writing chapters of a book about the co-participants’ lives, not because I believed that they would become chapters in this thesis, which, by the way, they did not.
70 Others have written about using writing as analysis or a way of knowing. See, for example, Richardson (2000) and Sikes and Piper (2010, p. 42). Writers have also commented on the value of reorganising empirical material to identify salient narratives (W. Green et al., 2013).
of the people whose practices I was interrogating. This writing, furthermore, allowed me to immerse myself in the stories, metaphors, and meanings that appeared to be important for the participants, without being preoccupied by the theoretical framework. As such, it was an attempt to avoid a circle of “theory reinforced by experience that is conditioned by theory” (Lather, 1991, p. 54). This was particularly constructive, in a critical sense, since the co-participants interpreted their world and practices in ways that were already being prefigured, it seemed (although differently), by the very theories comprising the theoretical framework for this study.71

All of the group members read their own completed participant chapters and later made comments to me about, or discussed with me, their responses to the chapters. In this way, the participant chapters (as artefacts) became part of the “member-checking” process (Mertens, 2005, p. 254), a sixth layer of analysis that had been ongoing throughout the project. This ‘member checking’ process involved individual follow-up meetings (and one group meeting noted above) with the co-participants as the need arose to explore emergent issues in more detail. Co-participants were also sent interview transcripts for verification and additional thoughts (expressed via annotations). One of the follow-up meetings was a ‘debriefing meeting’ (initiated and so called by Bailey) about Bailey’s workshops after my observations. The conversation was ‘unstructured’ in the sense that the issues of relevance to her – for instance, her motivations and aims, relationships between her actions and the physical layout of the classrooms, the impacts of particular practices – rather than pre-set questions (Brenner, 2006), directed the course of the conversation. The conversation was audio-recorded and transcribed and analysed in a similar way to the interviews. A summary of how empirical material generation and analysis related to interviews and follow-ups with the Teacher Talk members appears in Table 5.2.

71 Much of the research conducted by the TT members draws on practice theory, particularly Schatzki’s work (e.g., 2002) and the theory of “practice architectures” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 57).
Table 5.2
Summary of empirical material generation and analysis: Teacher Talk member interviews and follow-ups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>Diagnos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 1 to 2-hour interviews</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with each TT group member</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total = 12 x interviews)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Field notes (x 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Annotated transcripts (x 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Transcripts coded to case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>document (x 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Narrative - Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Chapters (x 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Diagram Analysis (x 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x 45 min 'debriefing meeting'</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Field notes (x 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Annotated transcript (x 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Transcript coded to case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>document (x 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 x follow-up meetings of</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Field notes (x 12) selectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varying lengths</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>coded to case document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Only one recorded and transcribed)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Annotated transcript (x 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Transcript coded to case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>document (x 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once all the interviews had been analysed in this way, I began to examine the participant chapters and case documents in relation to each other to see what further narratives might emerge. This process involved, firstly, creating one document using the headings from the case documents, and adding the themes that had arisen in each individual case document. I then manipulated this document, re-categorising and reorganising some of the themes. Next, I created diagrams based on the themes and continued to play around with diagrams until a more coherent narrative emerged.

While I was doing this cross-interview analysis of themes, I also started ‘mapping’ some of the key practice architectures and other factors that were impacting on the co-participants’ pedagogical practice within particular pedagogical sites. I had already begun to do this for doctoral supervision pedagogy, as I discuss below. I decided to do the same for three other pedagogical sites using the interview analysis as a starting point, so that I could make some observations about practice-practice architecture relations across different sites. I chose another three sites that emerged as most relevant to the co-participants’ pedagogical practice, and that I had the opportunity to observe or experience in the project, namely, face-to-face initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, and Teacher Talk. I concentrated on only four sites of pedagogical practice, again aiming for depth of analysis rather than “coverage” (to borrow from Stark & Torrence, 2005, p. 33). As I explain later in this chapter, the ‘maps’ created in this
mapping process, one for each of the four pedagogical sites, were modified in light of a ‘final analysis’ which involved re-examining themes and issues across the various encounters described in this chapter. To illustrate, Figure 5.1 shows the practice architectures that were mapped for on-line pedagogy. The other three maps and a larger version of Figure 5.1 appear in Appendices K, L, M, and N.

![Figure 5.1. Arrangements and other practices (and individual practitioner factors) prefiguring on-line pedagogical practice.]

3. Observation of TT Members’ Practice

While the interviews with members of Teacher Talk were extremely generative, observation allowed “closeness to the practical ways that people enact their lives” (Lather, 2007, p. 35) and systematic analysis of what was “naturally occurring” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 219) or not occurring in the setting in ways that interviews (and Teacher Talk meetings) could not. Observation played a particularly
crucial role in providing contextualised snapshots of critical pedagogical praxis in action, and access to the interplay between the co-participants’ pedagogical practice and arrangements within the sites of practice as events were happening or unfolding. It involved direct observation by me of three kinds of pedagogical encounter, supplemented in some cases by video recording, audio recording, and/or photography: workshops and student consultation meetings; and an on-line subject forum session.

Only a small number of pedagogical encounters were observed to allow more time for in-depth analysis. They were two x 2-hour face-to-face workshops (observing Bailey’s practice); three x 1-hour face-to-face, one-on-one consultation meetings (observing Morgan’s practice); and one x 1.5-hour on-line forum session (observing Sam’s practice). The parameters around the observations – including the position that I adopted as an observer in the act of observing, length, timing and whether or not the encounters were videoed, photographed, or audio-recorded – were negotiated with the co-participants concerned. These negotiations were based on the nature of the activities, the nuances of the situation, and the intended focus of each observation. Sensitivity was required in order to be aware of, and manage, the impact of my observer presence (and the presence of recording equipment) on the situations that were unfolding during the encounters.

The workshops, involving two different on-campus, undergraduate student groups (pre-service teachers), were part of the weekly teaching arrangements (i.e., one x 1-hour lecture and two x 2-hour workshop per week) for subjects within a primary teaching course. One workshop was based on ‘teaching school students how to conduct web searches’. The focus of the other workshop was ‘semiotics’ and was aimed at helping the students prepare for an assignment. The workshops took place in two different classrooms. In the workshops, I remained relatively “detached” from the activities (Burgess, 1984, p. 81), silently observing from the back of the room and being as unobtrusive as possible.

Field notes (see Observation Schedule, Appendix O), video footage, and photographs were generated as part of the observation. The field notes included a combination of diagrams, descriptions of what was transpiring, and analytical notes. More comprehensive notes were made about the encounters as soon as was practicable afterwards. The notes were based on what Bailey was saying, doing, and how she was relating with the students, as well as the arrangements (e.g., layout of furniture, images and symbols on walls and data projection screens, positioning of people, resources such
as audio-visual equipment) that were present or that characterised the encounter. For instance, I noted how resources and space were used, what routines were apparent and how they were being constructed, and with whom Bailey communicated, when and how. I also noted what appeared to be influencing the unfolding actions. General impressions about what seemed to be valued by Bailey and the students; external conditions that were seen to be impacting on the encounter; possible implications beyond the observed situation; sources of tension between any elements in the site; and the ‘projects’ related to the sayings, doings, and relatings were also recorded.

The field notes were supplemented by 16 photographs captured on a still camera, and 75 minutes of video footage. Video recording was helpful in terms of: (a) capturing conversations and non-verbal interactions, and (b) allowing a slower, deeper reflection (Silverman, 2001) on what was observed. Photographs were particularly useful for capturing aspects of the site, such as environmental factors, and positioning of human and non-human entities (Carson et al., 2005), such as desks and chairs. Both reduced the time needed to create detailed diagrams of pedagogical spaces, permitting me to dedicate more time and attention to other elements of the encounter.

A disadvantage of video recording is the potential for the act of recording to intimidate participants (Erickson, 2006), even if the participants are accustomed to the use of video cameras as pedagogical tools. The presence of a still camera can be equally intrusive and intimidating. With this in mind, I chose the least obtrusive camera types and method of operation: footage was taken from a sitting position at a ‘student desk’ using a small, hand-held camera. Video footage was selectively collected and transcribed.

The initial analysis of the workshops involved creation of the fieldnotes (during and after the workshops), generation of analytical notes about each photograph, and analysis of video footage informed by Bailey’s post-workshop reflections in the ‘debriefing meeting’. Later analysis of the workshops involved the use of the Practice Architectures Template, also explained above. Both workshops were analysed using this template.

The three student consultation meetings were focused on helping students (Karen, Sandra, and Mary) with assessment tasks. The meetings took place in Morgan’s office over a single day. They were optional for students participating in a one-week residential program as part of an external, on-line subject in a secondary teaching course.
Morgan had offered the students the opportunity to meet with her to discuss their assessment tasks.

I maintained a “detached” (Burgess, 1984, p. 81) observer position in the three meetings, although it was impossible to be unobtrusive in a confined office space. Cameras were considered inappropriate for observation in these meetings because of the potential to be too invasive and distracting in the space. I chose not to audio-record the meetings for similar reasons. Instead I relied on field notes made during the meetings and elaborated from memory immediately afterwards. The field notes were recorded using the same ‘Observation Schedule’ as for the workshops (Appendix O) and focussed on similar aspects of practice.

Apart from field notes, analysis of the consultation meetings included a detailed analytical summary of the three meetings considered together. This summary focussed particularly on the differences and similarities between Morgan’s sayings, doings, and relatings across the three meetings. Each of the three students presented with very different needs and assignment issues, and so it seemed apt to ‘zoom in’ on how Morgan’s practice adapted to suit three unique sets of circumstances and social arrangements, even though the physical set-ups and the purposes of the meetings were essentially the same. I additionally analysed two of the three meetings using the Practice Architectures Template. This drew closer attention to the practice architectures that were embedded in, and acting on, the student-lecturer encounters, shaping and being shaped by Morgan’s (and the students’) sayings, doings, and relatings.

The observation of the on-line forum session was very different in nature from the observations just described. Students were not physically present and Sam was providing a ‘running commentary’ of what she was doing, seeing, experiencing, and thinking as she sat at her computer engaging with on-line forums linked to her external subjects. The forums were part of each subject’s structure and functioned as on-line discussion spaces for students, lecturers, and tutors.

While my attention during the encounter was focused on what Sam was doing (as part of her pedagogical practice), the thought processes behind her in-the-moment doing.

72 In hindsight, given the circumstances, it may have been better to audio-record the conversations as well.
73 I had intended to analyse all three meetings using the template, but after the first two, realised this was sufficient to yield different insights from those that emerged through the field notes and summary.
74 In this respect, the observation resembled what Nicolini (2009) called a “thinking aloud” technique (p. 200).
75 These forums were asynchronous, meaning that they were not ‘live’ (real-time) conversations.
and the practice architectures that were mediating her doing, it was more of a dialogue than an observation in the sense that I occasionally asked clarifying and probing questions while Sam engaged with the students’ forum comments. Because of my presence and our dialogue, a ‘naturally occurring’ event became something more contrived: an ‘observation meeting’. I was not engaged in the on-line activity itself, but with Sam. My observations were recorded using an Observation Schedule (Appendix O) focussing on similar aspects of practice to the observations described above. The conversation was audio-recorded, and the recording was professionally transcribed. Analysis of the transcript involved the same process as for transcripts of Teacher Talk group member interviews. A summary of the means of generating and analysing empirical material related to observation of co-participant practice is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3  
*Summary of empirical material generation and analysis: observations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>photographs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x 2-hour face-to-face workshops</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>PA Template (x 2) Field notes (x 2) Analytical notes for photographs Video analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x student consultation meetings</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Field notes (x 3) Summary (x 1) PA Template (x 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x on-line forum session</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Field notes (x 1) Coding (x 1) Narrative – participant chapter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. PhD Supervision

Supervision meetings between me and two of my three PhD supervisors (Alex and Morgan, members of Teacher Talk and co-participants in the project) comprised the fourth kind of encounter that was central to the research. Alex was my principal supervisor and Morgan was one of two co-supervisors. In the first two years of the project, I met approximately fortnightly with Alex and Morgan (together) to discuss the research and aspects of my candidature. Later we met bimonthly or monthly depending on the stage of the candidature. I met with my additional co-supervisor separately. She was not a co-participant in the research, nor was her practice the subject of inquiry.
I set the agenda for the supervision meetings with Alex and Morgan, although they were always invited to add agenda items. The meetings were audio-recorded, initially to aid my generation of detailed minutes of the meetings (for all three of us). However, once the project was underway it was clear that analysis of the recordings themselves would be important for exploring critical pedagogical praxis in relation to doctoral pedagogy, and so the recordings were transcribed (by a professional transcriptionist) for analysis. Supervision meetings that occurred with my additional co-supervisor, or, on rare occasions, individually with one or the other of the supervisor-co-participants, were not recorded.

In the supervision meetings, Alex and Morgan were simultaneously supervising my research as supervisors, engaging in pedagogical practice as university educators, collaboratively reflecting on their pedagogical practice as co-participants and Teacher Talk members, and reflexively discussing the unfolding project as co-researchers in what was effectively a form of critical participatory action research. While this made for very complex research (and candidate-supervisor) relations as discussed earlier, this complexity added to the richness of the research and opened up possibilities for examining critical pedagogical praxis from within a supervision relationship, from both candidate and supervisor perspectives.

Our discussions revolved around researching critical pedagogical praxis, as well as around Alex and Morgan’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis. Because of the pedagogical nature of the meetings and their potential as sites of critical pedagogical praxis, the meetings became forums for ‘observation’ in a sense. However, I was not so much ‘observing’ during the supervision meetings as ‘experiencing’, and it was more in the playback of recorded meetings, and while analysing the minutes and transcripts, that I assumed an ‘observer’ stance in relation to what transpired.

As with previously discussed encounters in the research, analysis of supervision meetings involved several layers in addition to the reflexive and collaborative analysis of what was happening in the meetings while they were in progress. One layer included me writing research journal entries after some of the meetings. Another was listening to recordings and making detailed minutes (usually two to three pages per meeting), which involved distilling key points of discussion. I later annotated and roughly coded minutes for the meetings from February 2011 to October 2012 to identify themes, working through the meetings chronologically. A summary of themes that were emerging in this
process was discussed at one of the supervision meetings midway through the second year of candidature (June, 2012). This informed ongoing analysis.

The next layer of analysis involved the creation of half-page summaries of each meeting, written in a narrative-reflective style to gain a ‘big picture’ sense of what had been happening in our supervision relationship over time. In composing the narratives, I made reflective notes about the research process, for example about what I said I thought might happen relative to what had actually happened, or about points at which I made decisions and what I might have done differently armed with hindsight. From the summaries and codes I created a series of diagrams – or “visual representations” (Robson, 2002, p. 488) – one of which was a map of the key practice architectures, referred to earlier, that appeared to be prefiguring the pedagogical practice of my supervisors (see Appendix M). These diagrams were discussed in supervision meetings as well, and modified as necessary in light of comments made by Alex and Morgan.

The final layer of analysis of the supervision meetings and the material they generated involved going back to transcripts and recordings to look more closely at key incidents and conversations in light of what had emerged as important in other layers of analysis. Even though I conducted the majority of the analysis as described, the analysis was a collaborative process to the extent that Alex and Morgan provided comments in meetings about my interpretations at various stages of the project that informed ongoing analysis. The exchanges that took place about my draft thesis chapters carried this analytical dialogue through to the final stages of thesis writing. A summary of how empirical material related to supervision meetings was generated and analysed appears in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4
Summary of empirical material generation and analysis: supervision meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>Audio-recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 x 1.5 to 2-hour supervision meetings between February 2011 and October 2012</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of minutes from recordings (x 30)</td>
<td>Coding/annotating minutes (x 30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Interviews with Colleagues

In addition to meetings and interviews with co-participants and observations of some of the co-participants’ practice, as mentioned, I conducted semi-structured (Brenner, 2006) face-to-face interviews with two of our colleagues. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit university educator perspectives from outside the Teacher Talk group regarding emerging themes and issues, and so these interviews were arranged after the co-participant interviews and observations had been completed.

A more structured approach was deemed appropriate for these interviews given that there were some specific questions to address, although flexibility was still important in terms of the interviewees providing some direction to the interviews. Topics covered in one of the interviews (same-campus colleague) included the impact of technology, the social environment, current teaching arrangements, and the impact of student backgrounds and student engagement on the teaching practice and agency of university educators and vice versa. Topics covered in the other interview (different-campus colleague) included possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis within a subject with which we were both familiar, the academic work environment, current teaching arrangements (including cross-campus teaching), and the impact of student backgrounds and student engagement on the teaching practice and agency of university educators and vice versa.

These interviews were approximately one hour in length and took place in locations on campus suggested by the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded and the recordings were professionally transcribed. Field notes were generated in the interviews. Analysis of the colleague interviews involved checking the transcripts against interview recordings. This was followed by a further read-through and annotation of each transcript. By this time, I had begun to write the first of the findings and discussion chapters, and so analysis was particularly focussed on the comments of the colleague participants that supplemented or contradicted the narratives that had already emerged through other encounters in the project. A summary of how colleague interview empirical material was generated and analysed appears in Table 5.5.
Table 5.5
Summary of empirical material generation and analysis: interviews with colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 x 1-hour interviews</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Transcript annotation (x 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes (x 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Self-study

Paralleling the five sets of encounters that I have described thus far was a self-study of my experiences and practices within the setting as I attempted to embody and enact pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis in my teaching of an undergraduate teacher education subject. Over the course of the research, I critically reflected on my sayings, doings, and relatings in my pedagogical encounters with students (i.e., in lectures, workshops, and meetings) and what I was creating, responding to, and negotiating in my everyday practice (e.g., conversations with students, staff, and even parents of students; University documents; policies; physical set-ups; curriculum materials; emails; and other artefacts and texts), that is, the practice architectures. Many of these reflections were recorded in a reflective research journal that I maintained throughout the research.

Initially I kept only a digital journal, adding written entries as thoughts occurred to me (this sometimes meant multiple entries in one day, or only one or two extended entries in a week, or less towards the end of the project). Later, I included orally-generated journal entries, some of which were translated into text using Dragon (voice-recognition) software. This audio journaling proved useful for making entries while away from my desk, and while using other methods for collecting/generating empirical material, such as taking photographs. Additionally, part way through the project, I began a (non-digital) scrapbook journal. The scrapbook journal provided more scope for drawing, adding short notes (‘stick-on-notes’76) or diagrams made incidentally when it was inconvenient to record thoughts on the computer (or audio-recorder), and for overlaying existing entries with written and graphic text. Six scrapbooks were created in

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76 A brand of compact, self-adhesive note-taking stationery

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total. The eJournal and scrapbook journals were analysed through periodic ‘read-throughs’ of the text, highlighting and making analytical notes where appropriate.

The self-study was also ethnographic in the sense that I additionally examined physical spaces connected to my pedagogical practice (and that of my colleagues), such as classrooms, lecture rooms, areas outside classrooms, staff rooms, offices, teaching preparation areas, other on-campus buildings and facilities, and the home where the Teacher Talk group met. The examination of such spaces – aided by audio journaling, field notes and photographing the spaces in two photo-taking sessions – was aimed at scrutinising some of the more subtle messages conveyed about constructions of pedagogical practice in the University, and the University’s ‘internal’ and ‘external goods’ (MacIntyre, 1981). A summary of how the self-study empirical material was generated and analysed appears in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6
Summary of self-study empirical material generation and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How empirical material was generated/collected</th>
<th>Field Texts</th>
<th>Analysis of empirical material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Photographs + notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching-learning resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of a 13 week unit (1 x 1-hour lecture and 2 x 2-hour workshops per week)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday engagement in academic life at the university as an educator</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x photo-taking episodes</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Considering the Encounters Together – ‘Final Analysis’*

In keeping with the hermeneutic tradition, throughout the processes involved in generating and analysing empirical material as just outlined, there was a constant relating of “the parts to the whole and the whole to parts” (Crotty, 1998, p. 89; see also Bernstein, 1983; Schwandt, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). To identify just a few examples, this included relating individual stories to collective stories and vice versa; relating particularities of our pedagogical encounters to historical and cultural contexts and vice versa (Loftus & Trede, 2009); and relating sayings, doings, and relatings to
practices and sites of practice and vice versa. This ‘part-to-whole-to-part’ analytical process continued into the ‘final analysis’ as well, when I started more systematically bringing the various analytical texts together in conversation with each other and with relevant scholarly literature through cross-referencing.

Visual representation was particularly useful in this iterative cross-referencing process for making sense of, and capturing, some of the relationships and tensions between themes and stories across the six sets of encounters. Diagrams already created in earlier phases of analysis, such as the ‘maps’ for the four pedagogical sites, were elaborated and modified, while new diagrams were created to see what additional or alternative stories and themes might emerge. Chapters Six and Seven provide syntheses of such themes and stories.

It was through the drafting of the thesis chapters, however, that a richer appreciation of the key issues, their relationships with each other, and their implications in terms of the research questions and research aims, was reached. The actual writing process generated further insights as I revisited the empirical material, the literature, the theoretical framework, the diagrams and notes, to find words needed to develop the argument presented in this thesis.

The Writing of the Thesis

I turn shortly to a discussion of the key findings that emerged through the processes described in this chapter. Before doing so, I wish to make some brief comments about the writing of the thesis, particularly the chapters that follow. Firstly, I have largely written in past tense to signify that the events and interpretations are located in a particular historical moment. The people whose words and actions are represented may still stand by what has been said and done, and some situations may remain unchanged. It may also be the case that people’s views and situations have since changed.

Secondly, I locate myself in the following chapters, as I have so far in this thesis, as a co-participant, and, where appropriate, use ‘we’ to denote the co-participants including me. However, I sometimes necessarily pull back from the ‘we’ and refer to ‘them/they’. I do this especially when discussing practices that I observed (in a third person sense) rather than experienced myself. I also use ‘me/my’ when referring to my own practice.

77 The notion of a ‘final analysis’ is not unproblematic. I use the expression to suggest that it was final step in the analytical process prior to completing the writing of the thesis, rather than to intimate that analysis had reached an end point.
Thirdly, there is insufficient space in this thesis to discuss all the relevant stories and issues that emerged in the research being reported. Hence, to avoid what might otherwise look like an inventory of practices and arrangements, I provide fewer rather than many stories and examples, and focus on fewer rather than many sites of pedagogical practice. The aim in the next chapter is to present those stories that highlight the most significant findings and tensions, and that advance the argument being laid out in this thesis. In this sense, and because all interpretations are mediated in various ways (Gadamer, 1981), the account of critical pedagogical praxis and what constrains and enables it in our University, is clearly non-innocent (Lather, 2007).

Finally, in some of the excerpts used in Chapter Six, some words have been omitted or modified slightly (though maintaining the intent as far as possible) in cases where participants might be identifiable, for instance, because of recognisable speech patterns, or to make the text more readable. Such changes have been indicated using square brackets or ellipsis points. This adds to the non-innocence of the account.

Conclusion
The aim in conducting the inquiry in the ways described in this chapter was to generate “context-dependent” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 392) insights about the issues pertinent to our situation and our practices with a view to informing future action in our setting. That the co-participants were already self-consciously committed to educational praxis prior to this study potentially differentiates us from university educators in other settings. Also, the practices of university educators located within an education faculty may be embodied and conceptualised very differently from those not informed by an education background. Therefore, in many respects, the experiences, practices and social relations that were analysed are likely to be unique. However, a further aim of the research approach was to generate a sufficiently “rich” (Stake, 2010, p. 48) and detailed account of ‘lived’ practices and ‘lived’ practice-site relations in a particular setting to allow readers to identify resonances with practices and practice-site relations in other contexts, and be helpful more broadly.

In this chapter I discussed the overall research approach, the specific processes that were followed in the critical hermeneutic endeavour, the role of participants in the research (including myself), and the ethical considerations and decisions that shaped the inquiry. In doing so, I hoped to highlight the very deliberate way in which the inquiry was constructed as a form of praxis, and as a form of research “within practice
traditions” (Kemmis, 2011b, p. 6). The research was eclectic, emergent and complex, drawing on a range of research traditions, different kinds of encounter, and a multi-lens practice theory framework, to make sense of very complex aspects of pedagogical work within higher education. The processes I have described allowed a closeness and sensitivity to pedagogical practices and the conditions constraining and enabling efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis, making it possible to build the narrative (Nicolini, 2013, p. 218) that I begin to tell in the next chapter, the first of three chapters discussing the research findings.
CHAPTER SIX – LIVING PRAXIS

What species, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we know you?
And find you
In the tangled web
Of words and deeds
And furnishings,
And lives
And things
That matter?

This chapter is the first of three chapters reporting and discussing the key findings of the research. The chapter focuses particularly on the first two research questions:

1. What is the nature of critical pedagogical praxis? and
2. How is critical pedagogical praxis enacted within a particular higher education setting?

I begin the chapter by reintroducing the main participating university educators (Teacher Talk group members/co-participants) and commenting on how each person conceptualised critical pedagogical praxis. This provides an insight into what co-participants were endeavouring to embody and enact in our pedagogical work as academics. I then explore some of the ways in which critical pedagogical praxis was enacted in our university setting. I do this by focussing, first, on the co-participants’ individual practice within three sites of university pedagogy: initial teacher education (face-to-face encounters), on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy. The discussion is structured around four themes that emerged from the analytical processes explained in Chapter Five. I focus, second, on collective critical pedagogical praxis, particularly as it relates to the Teacher Talk group. The chapter provides a basis for examining what enabled and/or constrained our efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis, presented in the next chapter, and a more detailed, theoretical analysis of key issues and concepts, presented in Chapter Eight.

To illustrate and ground the discussion in experiences of practitioners who were living, or attempting to live, critical pedagogical praxis, excerpts from the empirical material are used throughout the chapter. These excerpts (including some of my words as a co-participant) are presented in italicised text. As suggested in Chapter Five, although the excerpts contain participants’ actual words, editing text constitutes a layer of interpretation. Thus, the other co-participants may have interpreted the material and our shared experiences differently. They also may not necessarily agree with each
other’s comments as presented in this text. The excerpts are interspersed with non-italicised text that represents my retrospective interpretation. University Educators’ Conceptualisations of Critical Pedagogical Praxis

In Chapter Three, I discussed ways in which critical pedagogical praxis has been conceptualised and represented in the literature reviewed for this research. In that discussion, I commented on difficulties of gaining a clear notion of how critical pedagogical praxis is manifested in higher education because of its complexity. Throughout this project, particularly in the Teacher Talk meetings and in interviews, the nature of critical pedagogical praxis was revisited, and the difficulties and complexities noted in relation to the literature were echoed in our discussions. From explicit conversations about what critical pedagogical praxis is, what it might look and feel like, and how we recognise it, a picture emerged of critical pedagogical praxis as variously understood and embodied, difficult to observe and/or recognise, and, for some, difficult to define.

Taking critical pedagogical praxis to be variously understood and embodied then (across people and contexts), in this section I focus on the nuanced, personalised understandings of critical pedagogical praxis as expressed by the individual Teacher Talk group members (co-participants): Bailey, Morgan, Sam, Jess, Pat, Alex, and me. The views that I represent are neither fixed nor unambiguous. Nor have they developed in isolation from each other: they were likely influenced by encounters between group members in everyday conversations and in the Teacher Talk space where some of these perspectives emerged. Nevertheless, the views of the group members are considered one at a time, albeit briefly, to highlight the plurality and complexity of such understandings, and to provide a foundation for discussion in the later sections of this chapter, since they provide a sense of what it was that the co-participants were endeavouring to embody. I introduce each person with a brief snapshot of his or her teaching background and responsibilities in the University. More information about the co-participants (e.g., research activity) is provided where relevant in the next chapter.

Bailey had been teaching at the University (at both graduate and postgraduate levels, including supervision of research students) for six years at the time of the study, working primarily in face-to-face mode. Prior to becoming a university educator, Bailey

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78 It sometimes explicitly represents a researcher-teacher, or researcher-candidate voice.
worked for many years as a primary teacher in a diverse range of settings, and then as an educational consultant in literacy education and the professional learning of teachers. As a senior member of the teaching staff within her School, Bailey assumed a range of leadership and administrative responsibilities beyond her own teaching commitments.

Bailey talked about critical pedagogical praxis in tentative terms, sometimes expressing her ideas more in the form of questions than statements. A sense of critical pedagogical praxis as a ‘way of being’ was a persistent theme in her comments/questions. This is illustrated in the following question posed in a Teacher Talk meeting: “So is it something that comes from my way of being in the world and understanding the world and participating in the world and acting on the world, [which] is different from yours?” (Teacher Talk meeting (TT) May: 9). Bailey suggested that she saw praxis as (a) “a matter of perspective” (TT April: 28) such that what might feel like praxis to one person might look like something else to another; (b) part of who people are, rather than merely what they do, although the doing includes “doing the right thing” (TT April: 29) for (and by) others; (c) connected to consciously “being true to yourself” (TT May: 8), in other words, “being a teacher whose theories and philosophies on education are lived” (Interview 1: 15); (d) connected to spirituality; and (e) responsive to circumstances and the practices of others, that is, “taking their lead in some respects” (TT April: 28). In terms of Bailey’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in her encounters with students, I focus in this chapter on her face-to-face teaching in an initial teacher education program, drawing particularly on my observations of two of her face-to-face workshops in this program.

Morgan moved to Australia and joined the Faculty to take up a research fellowship one year prior to the study. She previously taught in other university and primary educational settings. Morgan’s teaching in the Faculty included mixed-mode and face-to-face pedagogy, and teaching in both undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programs, including supervision of research students. Morgan also assumed research leadership responsibilities in the Faculty.

Morgan posited that critical pedagogical praxis might be different for each teacher and that it could be embodied differently in “different sites of practice”; “in different spaces and different contexts” (TT June: 6); and “in different conditions”

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79 As mentioned in Chapter 2, this school is located in the Faculty of Education.
80 Hereafter I replace ‘Teacher Talk meeting’ with ‘TT’ in citing empirical material. The number is a transcript page reference.
She described it as a “disposition”, one which “requires you to be prepared to ask the difficult questions of yourself and your practice” (Interview 2: 11). Morgan talked about this kind of questioning in personal terms as “confronting my ghosts” (TT April: 21), an expression which I understood to mean interrogating, coming to terms with, and learning from, past mistakes. Morgan also said that, while there might be certain aspects of practice that could be “pointed to” in manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis (such as evidence of particular underpinning values), critical pedagogical praxis might not be visible from an ‘observer’ perspective at particular moments in time: “I just think that if you have ten very good teachers, not all of them would be doing CPP [critical pedagogical praxis] at that point in time when you were looking.” (TT June: 6). In terms of Morgan’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in her encounters with students, I focus in this chapter on her supervision pedagogy and her face-to-face experiences within an initial teacher education program, drawing particularly on my observation of three face-to-face student consultation meetings (for a blended-mode subject) and my experiences of our co-supervisor-doctoral candidate encounters.

Sam had been at the University for ten years when this research began. Her background was in social science. During the research period, Sam taught both undergraduate and postgraduate students (including supervision of research students), mostly in an on-line distance mode. She has assumed a range of positions within the Faculty, including leadership positions.

Sam, like Bailey, described critical pedagogical praxis as a “way of being” and something that is felt (and recognised intuitively from the perspective of the person embodying critical pedagogical praxis) rather than observed. When asked to explain what it ‘feels like’, she described feeling “brave” (TT May: 9) and, through reflection and seeing the consequences of practice, gaining a sense of doing what is “right”. This intuition is exemplified in the following comments:

[Critical pedagogical praxis is something you] absolutely feel...and you know when you’re in that moment with your students and you know when you’re in that moment with other people who are also in that moment. (TT May: 6); and

You have to have some kind of courage about what you’re doing. You have to have a conviction that what you’re doing is the right thing, but I think that you have to reflect on that ... You have to continually reflect about what you do and how you are in the world. (TT May: 10)
A sense of how Sam conceptualised critical pedagogical praxis was also evident in her comments about wanting her teaching to be reflective, empowering (such that students feel empowered to take risks and to be reflective), and critical (demonstrating and enabling critical thinking). In this chapter, I discuss Sam’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in the context of on-line pedagogy, drawing particularly on my observation of Sam’s engagement with on-line forums, as described in Chapter Five.

Jess originally began working at the University as a sessional teacher about twenty years ago, having worked for many years prior in the secondary school system, including as a teacher (humanities) and in leadership. Jess had been a permanent academic staff member of the University for twelve years by the time this research began. During the research period, Jess predominantly worked with postgraduate students who studied via distance (on-line) mode or on-campus research students. However, she had prior experience in the University of face-to-face and paper-based distance teaching. Jess held key research and curriculum positions in the Faculty.

Jess said she saw critical pedagogical praxis as

one way of answering back ... to that deterioration in conditions that I see ... for educators generally ... whether you're based in an early childhood setting or you’re a nurse educator or armed services or you’re in a school or a university. I mean, we’re living it in universities right now. (Interview 1: 13)

Jess’s notion of critical pedagogical praxis encompassed, on the one hand, an ethic of care, as exemplified by the statement, “how can you talk about critical pedagogical praxis if you don’t care for your students. It just seems to be a contradiction in terms” (Interview 2: 8). On the other hand, she equated it with (a) “asking hard questions” (Interview 2: 17) in terms of the implications and consequences of practices and conditions, and (b) encouraging others to ask difficult questions (of their own practices for instance). In the case of students, this means through facilitation. In this chapter, Jess’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in her encounters with students are discussed in relation to on-line pedagogy.

Pat worked in one of the University’s predecessor institutions prior to the university’s establishment in 1989. Her pre-university background includes an eclectic mixture of high school, kindergarten, primary school, prison, and community teaching.

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81 ‘Sessional teacher’ or ‘sessional staff’ is the local term for a teacher (lecturer or tutor) who is employed on a casual basis, and for the duration of a teaching ‘session’ or multiple sessions depending on the contractual agreement (each academic year is divided into three sessions).
Since being at the University, Pat has taught (face-to-face and via distance) in a range of areas including language, literacy, numeracy, communication, and vocational education, initially on a part-time basis. At the time of the study, Pat worked predominantly in the areas of curriculum development, VET education, and supervision of research students. Her teaching at the time of this research was mostly in an on-line mode. Pat has held leadership positions within the Faculty and University.

Pat described critical pedagogical praxis as an “encapsulation of what I think education should be about” (Interview 1: 10). She said, “[critical pedagogical praxis is] about morally-informed and committed practice, informed thinking, intellectual, intelligent, respectful, civil, all of those principles that we say underpin what we do in education…. And informed by history and traditions and the future” (Interview 1: 10).

To paraphrase Pat’s words, it is practice that is reasoned, considered and prudent, and that embodies an ethic of care. Pat’s reference to being informed by the ‘future’, I think, points to imagined consequences and implications of action. This aligns closely with notions of praxis that I presented in Chapter One and extended in the discussion of literature in Chapter Three. In terms of Pat’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical in encounters with students, I focus in this chapter on her on-line teaching.

Alex began working at the University in 2002, teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate programs (via face-to-face and distance modes). Prior to this, Alex assumed a range of university teaching, research and leadership roles in other universities, both within and outside Australia. At the time of the study, his teaching mostly involved supervision of research students. Alex’s role in the Faculty was a senior one in terms of both teaching and research.

Alex’s views about critical pedagogical praxis reflect emancipatory ideals and a commitment to critical overcoming. He described critical pedagogical praxis as something that aims to “overcome irrationality and injustice and unsustainability ... through education and teaching in ways that actually maybe also model that kind of critical overcoming” (TT May: 2). Central to his notion of critical pedagogical praxis is an idea of education through which people “understand the conditions and also ... the limitedness and the ways these conditions – is it accidentally or by design? – cause the suffering that they cause” (Alex, Interview 1: 21) and through which people

understand their own location in their own society. They understand something of how they could have been otherwise if things were otherwise, how their society could have been otherwise if things were
otherwise and they also have some appreciation of the ... social forces that caused us to have the world we have and not some other one....
(Alex, Interview 1: 20)

For Alex, critical pedagogical praxis is not something that is necessarily visible (or contained) within a single moment of a pedagogical encounter: "critical pedagogical praxis isn’t a kind of particular moment where you see it – ‘Oh that was very nice critical pedagogical praxis then’" (TT May: 5). Rather, it is embodied and enacted over time, and can be embedded in texts such as course outlines. Furthermore, it can take different forms in different delivery modes; for instance, it might be more “ethereal” (TT May: 7) in an on-line environment. In this chapter, Alex’s attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in encounters with students are discussed in relation to doctoral supervision pedagogy, especially as experienced by me through our PhD candidate-supervisor encounters.

My background was outlined in some detail in Chapter Two. Here I wish to add that, during the research period, I taught one on-campus undergraduate teacher education subject (secondary education) as a sessional teacher, for one session only. My previous university teaching, at another Australian university, involved both face-to-face and on-line teaching in undergraduate teacher education programs. My understanding of critical pedagogical praxis is being explored throughout this thesis, and especially in Chapter Eight. Thus, I refrain from commenting on it here, except to say that, at the time I was teaching the subject just mentioned, my thinking about my practice was informed by the views of my colleagues outlined above, and the definition of critical pedagogical praxis that I posed in Chapters One and Three (which was, in turn, informed by the literature discussed in Chapter Three). In this chapter, I draw on examples from other co-participants’ practice and experiences rather than my own. (I explore some of my own experiences as an educator in the next chapter). However, where I do mention, or allude to, my attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in my encounters with students, I do so based on my face-to-face teaching in this initial teacher education subject.

In summary, critical pedagogical praxis was conceptualised variously by the co-participants as (a) a disposition which enables people to ask difficult questions of themselves and others, and which is manifested differently from person to person, and situation to situation; (b) a way of being that involves doing what is right, being responsive, and acting in accordance with personal philosophies and beliefs; (c) a way of being (which can be felt rather than observed) that involves moral commitment, self-
reflection, and demonstrating and enabling critical thinking; (d) practice that is reasoned, informed (e.g., by traditions, history/future), prudent, and that embodies an ethic of care; and (e) practice aimed at (and modelling) overcoming irrationality, injustice, and unsustainability. These varying conceptualisations of critical pedagogical praxis raise many questions that I attempt to answer in this thesis: Is critical pedagogical praxis a way of being and/or something people do? Can it be observed or felt in an isolated performance (e.g., in a workshop), or is it also (or only) something that is embodied and experienced over time and embedded in a range of activities and/or texts? Common to all of the co-participants’ notions of critical pedagogical praxis was the centrality of an ethic of care and moral commitment; critical (self) inquiry; attention to the consequences of words, actions, and interactions; responsiveness; and a commitment to criticality and social justice. These ideas, as the discussion that follows shows, found expression in the practices of the co-participants and related directly to the themes that emerged from analysis of our pedagogical practices.

CPP82 Enacted and Experienced in our Setting

The analytical processes explained in Chapter Five, particularly the cross-referencing of empirical material and analyses across the six sets of encounters, highlighted that critical pedagogical praxis was manifested in multiple ways and that there were commonalities and differences in terms of how it was embodied from one pedagogical site to another, from one situation to another, and from person to person. This is not surprising given the similar yet varying conceptualisations of critical pedagogical praxis just outlined. The analysis suggested that all of the co-participants were guided in practice by a praxis stance (T. Smith, 2008; Edwards-Groves & Gray, 2008) – an orientation towards morally-committed, informed, deliberative and reflexive practice – and that a praxis stance was embodied variously through (a) endeavouring to understand the pedagogical and academic landscape, the people we were working with, and our practice; (b) being responsive and responding appropriately to the people, arrangements, and circumstances in any given situation; (c) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development, including our own learning and praxis development; and (d) embodying and evoking criticality in the sense of critical thinking/reflection and/or critical action/engagement. In this part of the chapter, I elaborate on these four shared, yet

82 Critical pedagogical praxis.
differently embodied, aspects of practice. First, however, the notion of *embodying a praxis stance*, which permeates these four aspects of practice, warrants further explanation.

*Embodying a Praxis Stance*

It was evident in the research that all the co-participants were endeavouring to *be* morally committed, deliberative, reflexive, and informed in our pedagogical work. In terms of being *morally committed*, a commitment to act for the ‘good’ of other people and society (or “aim[ing] to act rightly” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 39)) seemed to characterise much of the co-participants’ practice. It was expressed often as caring about and attending to the needs and well-being of others, and acting in accordance with a concern for doing what is ethically and pedagogically appropriate in a given situation, rather than in accordance with a rule\(^8\). It was also expressed as a commitment to social justice and “*mak[ing] a difference*” (Group Member, TT April: 26) to the lives of students, to the professions, and the community. This is in line with what emerged in the literature reviewed, with regard to higher education critical pedagogical praxis being characteristically framed by a moral purpose, and also with the idea of a university’s civic purpose (Walker, 2002). It also relates to a fundamental aspiration that all group members expressed collectively and individually at one time or another throughout the research, an aspiration encapsulated in the double purpose of education articulated by Kemmis et al. (2014): “to help people live well in a world worth living in” (p. 25), which appears as part of our University’s mission (see Chapter Two).

In terms of being *deliberative*, each of us was constantly making very context-specific decisions about how to go on in our pedagogical practice. Sometimes this involved, as I elaborate later, performing familiar and ‘choreographed’ or technical moves, while at other times it meant improvising with others in unrepeatable pedagogical dances. At all times, though, it meant efforts to respond to the people with whom we were working, and to act in light of the circumstances, the interests of those involved, and potential and unfolding consequences of action.

*Reflexivity* involves having a meta-awareness of what shapes thinking and action (Pillow, 2003), as well as of the appropriateness and impact of practice (Rallis & Rossman, 2010). It requires being open to change (of self, knowledge, and future action)

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\(^8\) This is not to say, as I mentioned earlier, that a person embodying a praxis stance will respond appropriately to a given set of circumstances, since it is possible to be ill-informed or not informed and/or to exercise poor judgement, despite intentions to the contrary.
as a result of what transpires in action (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). The co-participants all approached work reflexively, treating pedagogical spaces as forming, transforming, and informing, and “mak[ing] time” (Sam, Interview 2: 12) to reflect on various aspects of practice. We did so individually. We also did so collaboratively, for instance, in Teacher Talk meetings. In these meetings we reflexively inquired into how our practices were being formed and informed. This inquiry process was itself a way of becoming and staying informed.

Being informed, according to proponents of praxis (e.g., Grundy, 1987), is part of being able to make prudent decisions that lead to appropriate action. In keeping with this, all of the co-participants demonstrated a “disposition towards inquiry – an inquiry stance” (Smith, 2004, as cited in T. Smith, 2008, p. 78) in relation to practice and pedagogy. We attempted to become and stay informed, and to expose ourselves to new ideas and different ways of looking at the world through engagement in research, professional learning, and scholarly endeavours (including Teacher Talk). Most importantly, we also actively engaged in, and tried to pay attention to, what was happening in and around pedagogical encounters, seeking feedback and information from others whose interests might be at stake when we acted, and/or creating space for others to give feedback about the appropriateness for them of our practice. In other words, our deliberations about what it was appropriate to do were, to borrow Morgan’s words, “informed and formed in community” (Supervision meeting, 29 March, 2013).

Being morally committed, being deliberative, being reflexive, and being informed are tightly interwoven in complex ways in pedagogical practice, and in ways of being an educator. Therefore, they need to be considered together, and in the context of actual practices and sites of practice. This brings me to the four aspects of the co-participants’ practice through which a praxis stance was embodied (as summarised in Figure 6.1), and thus more directly to how critical pedagogical praxis was manifested. The four aspects were, as noted previously, (a) endeavouring to understand the pedagogical and academic landscape, the people we were working with, and our practice; (b) responding appropriately and being responsive to the people, arrangements, and circumstances in any given situation; (c) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development, including our own learning and praxis development; and (d) embodying and evoking criticality. These four aspects of practice emerged in the ‘final analysis’ (See Chapter Five) as general themes that were common across pedagogical sites and
across people’s individual practice. I refer to them in the discussion that follows as the four praxis themes.

Figure 6.1. Four praxis themes. Four overlapping aspects of pedagogical practice through which a praxis stance was embodied.

The four aspects of practice were actualised over time and in complex, interrelated, and dynamic ways across various pedagogical sites. In the following paragraphs, I discuss each of the aspects of practice, or praxis themes, in relation to three sites of pedagogical practice in particular: initial teacher education (face-to-face encounters), on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy. These three sites are themselves comprised of multiple sites (e.g., meetings, workshops, email exchanges). While other pedagogical sites are relevant to our setting and our practice – for instance, mentoring relationships, postgraduate pedagogy, pedagogy associated with particular discipline areas, or professional learning of university educators – I have fore-grounded these three pedagogical sites because they emerged in the research as especially relevant to the co-participants, they were sites in which I was able to witness the lived/living praxis of one or other of the co-participants as explained in Chapter Five, and they were significantly different from each other to yield further insights into the interplay between
practices and “practice architectures” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 31) – or “material arrangements” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 16) – and how critical pedagogical praxis is enacted in higher education. Teacher Talk, another important pedagogical site, is discussed later in relation to collective critical pedagogical praxis.

The four praxis themes are discussed one at a time. In each case, I provide a general comment about the theme, followed by examples and explanations related to each of the three pedagogical sites. The aim of this discussion is to create a sense of the sayings, doings, and relatings that characterised our critical pedagogical praxis, while advancing the argument that critical pedagogical praxis is complex and manifested in multiple ways.

Endeavouring to Understand

An important part of all of the co-participants’ practice was endeavouring to understand the people with whom we were working, our practice, and the sites of our practice, or, in the words of one of the co-participants, understanding the pedagogical “landscape” (Meeting: 8). This co-participant observed,

... a teaching site is ... a place that has people in it who are positioned, who are undertaking certain kinds of roles. There’s a notion around identity. There’s a notion around solidarity. There’s a whole range of different things that sit in that landscape that are sources of information that allow you to understand how it has been constructed and ... understand how to move through it... (Co-participant, Meeting: 8)

Understanding the pedagogical landscape, including people located within it, is essential in terms of being an informed practitioner. Through the research, it became apparent that developing or enhancing our understanding required seeing ourselves as learners. This is exemplified by the following co-participant comment: “I’m still trying to learn this stuff. For me it’s always about learning, I’m always learning. There’s no point in my time where I think, oh I know it” (Meeting: 21). It also meant extending our professional knowledge through scholarly activity, research, and self-inquiry, and gleaning information in and through our pedagogical encounters with others, especially students,

84 As explained in Chapter Five, I narrowed analysis as the research unfolded, through “progressive focusing” (Stake, 2010, p. 129), to concentrate on these three sites and Teacher Talk. The ways and extent to which the three pedagogical sites were different from, and similar to, each other was highlighted through the mapping, described in Chapter Five, of the relevant practice architectures and other mediating factors for each of the sites. Some of these differences and similarities are apparent in the paragraphs that follow.
about how best to engage as practitioners. In other words, it meant adopting an inquiry stance (T. Smith, 2008) towards (our) pedagogical practice.

In particular, all of the co-participants made deliberate efforts to get to know and understand students, the students’ circumstances, what students were learning, and how they were experiencing their studies. Not surprisingly, such understanding was achieved differently in some respects across the three pedagogical sites. Those of us working in initial teacher education in either face-to-face or blended mode, for instance, relied heavily on what we could learn in our face-to-face interactions with students.

Some of the questions that Morgan asked of students (Mary, Karen, and Sandra85) in the consultation meetings I observed are illustrative of this. The consultation meetings were initiated by students about their action research assessment (a seminar presentation and a report) related to a practicum experience. The questions asked by Morgan varied from those seemingly aimed at understanding the students’ primary concerns, (e.g., “How have you been?”; “What’s going on, what’s the problem?” – Student meeting 1), to those aimed at ascertaining how the students were coping with the tasks (e.g., “How do you feel?” – Student meeting 2; “How are you feeling about the task?” – Student meeting 3), or eliciting information about what the students had been doing and thinking (e.g., “Who have you been reading?” – Student meeting 2; “What assumptions did you walk into the classroom with?” – Student meeting 3; “What have you been observing? How have you been observing?” – Student meeting 1). Through such question-answer conversation86, Morgan was able to gain a sense of the students’ needs and respond accordingly.

Being face-to-face encounters, these consultation meetings afforded immediacy and access to non-verbal cues that aided Morgan’s ‘reading’ of the given pedagogical situations. For instance, at one point in her meeting with Sandra, Morgan made a comment about Sandra’s attention to the assessment criteria. Sandra initially responded with a facial expression that Morgan interpreted as skepticism:

85 All student names are pseudonyms.
86 These are examples of the questions that were asked across meetings. Different questions were asked of each student.
Morgan: Yes, you’ve been doing that.
[A pause as Sandra and Morgan looked at each other].
Why are you looking so skeptical?
Sandra: I’m unnerved by doing the presentation. I’m too critical of my own work. (Student meeting, field notes)

This short exchange opened up an important conversation that may not have eventuated if not for Morgan’s attention and access to non-verbal cues (or Sandra’s for that matter). Understanding was reached and acted upon almost instantaneously in the immediacy and corporeality of the encounter.

When talking about the student consultation meetings in an interview not long after, Morgan explained how she constructed the pedagogical space as an opportunity to gain indirect feedback that could inform her ongoing practice:

... on another level, it was an opportunity for them ... to help me, in a very selfish way, interrogate my own practice, and then think about, for future courses and classes like this: ‘What do I need to think about in preparing students and getting students ready? What are some of the things that I may be doing that’s causing a barrier or providing a barrier to them learning?’ (Interview 2: 1)

Based on how the students were engaging (or not) with various aspects of the assessment task, and how they were engaging in the one-to-one conversations with her, Morgan could develop a sense of the impact of her practice on the students. This would, in turn, inform her ongoing practice.

Asking questions and seeking feedback from students were equally relevant to developing practitioner understanding of the pedagogical landscape for those of us working in an on-line context. A starting point for Pat and Sam was finding out where the students were geographically located since students tended to be geographically “dispersed” (Pat, Interview 1: 5) and/or “remote from” the teachers (Pat, TT June: 7) (as well as from other students and tutors). Pat wanted to know, “Where are my learners?... Where are they located? How do I get to know them?” (Pat, Interview 2: 10). Other important questions for Pat were “What do they [the students] want to get out of the learning? How can I create learning experiences that match their abilities, needs and subsequently extend them? Is what I’m doing interesting and engaging? Am I responding to them appropriately?” (Interview 2: 10).

The heavy reliance in an on-line pedagogical site on written text and asynchronous interaction can present challenges for answering such questions. Jess, Pat, and Sam emphasised the need for embedding in the course materials and activities
opportunities for getting to know and understand the students. Course materials and activities, as the nature of the on-line learning environment demanded (and University policy dictated), were planned and made available to students in advance of subject commencement and initial student-teacher contact. In other words, they had to be deliberately planned for. Students were encouraged, for example, to make on-line ‘posts’ in subject forums and blogs, or in Sam’s case, complete reflective writing tasks, as they engaged with the on-line subject materials (organised in modules). Jess’s comment about her approach to on-line teaching in a leadership course highlights the role that such tasks played in informing her practice:

_I try and find out what they know; I always start the beginning of the subject with getting them to tell me about themselves, about their experiences and their understandings and I try and form a picture of the students, because that really helps to inform me then when I’m working with them about the kind of cohort that I’ve got and where they’re coming from and so- I know they’re not empty vessels into which I am pouring this good oil around leadership and I do try and design activities and stuff in a way where they interact and where they’re having to think and then question and talk and discuss._ (Interview 1: 9)

Jess’s comment reflects a desire to be responsive to the students’ needs. Her understanding of students was central to her being able to engage them and challenge their thinking. Jess’s comment also hints that not all on-line learning activities were planned in advance. Indeed forums and other features of the learning platforms used by Jess, Sam, and Pat, permitted weekly interaction between teachers and students, and between students during the teaching session. Sam explained how student on-line interactions with each other were an important source of information for her. Sam described (and I witnessed) a practice of “lurk[ing] across” (Sam, Interview 1: 10) the on-line discussion forums she had established for her subjects. Although she sometimes allowed space for students to have discussions amongst themselves, she ‘lurked’ to discern what and whether students were learning and how they were engaging. Perhaps a face-to-face parallel would be moving between student groups in a workshop, periodically listening to group conversations.

For Jess, Pat, and Sam, though, asynchronous interactions alone were not sufficient for building relationships and understanding students’ needs. All three, as far as possible, made personal contact with students and organised or encouraged ‘real time’ teacher-student conversations, for instance via phone or Skype. Personal contact was
deemed particularly important when students were experiencing difficulties ("at times of great crisis" – Sam, Interview 1: 15). A phone call (or communicating "off-line" as Sam called it) or a Skype conversation could allow a deeper and more immediate appreciation of the issues and circumstances that the students were facing, partly by virtue of bringing non-verbal cues and immediacy into the pedagogical space. Sam shared an example of this during our ‘observation session’. Earlier that day, Sam had several email exchanges with a student experiencing difficulties. When finally Sam and the student spoke over the phone, they "solved the problem in less than a minute" (Observation: 13-14). According to Sam, this happened “because I could hear her, I could hear the anxiety, so I knew exactly what she needed to get through it” (Observation: 14). The phone conversation opened up possibilities for understanding the situation that were obviously not afforded by the email exchange.

Alex and Morgan, as my PhD supervisors, spent a good deal of time trying to understand me and my situation as a doctoral candidate. Unlike the pedagogical sites discussed above, however, the doctoral supervision relationship afforded (and in some ways necessitated) sustained and intensive contact over three and a half years as we focussed on the PhD project and my experiences as a full-time doctoral candidate. Alex and Morgan endeavoured to get to know me well in the early stages of my candidature, and over time gained an even deeper understanding of my needs and interests and how I was experiencing the doctorate. This occurred primarily through our supervision meetings which were typically 90 minutes to two hours in length. We met regularly (on average, fortnightly), mostly in person, and together as a group of three for the duration of the candidature. My writing throughout the doctorate, for instance in research proposals and draft chapters, also helped Alex and Morgan understand me as a learner.

Since I was an on-campus candidate, Alex and Morgan also had regular informal contact with me at Faculty events, lunch-time conversations, social gatherings, and research group activities (for example in RIPPLE and PEP). By virtue of being co-participants in my study, they no doubt learnt, from a participant perspective, a great

87 References to doctoral pedagogy throughout the chapter relate to Morgan and Alex’s combined supervision of my doctoral research. They are based primarily on analysis of meeting recordings, transcripts, and minutes, and what I experienced, did, and thought about as their supervisee. Interpretations regarding their practice, therefore, need to be read as representing a doctoral candidate perspective of manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis.
88 For a few meetings one of us participated via Skype.
89 Research Institute for Professional Practice, Learning and Education; Pedagogy Education and Praxis research group.
deal about my developing skills as a researcher. That Alex and Morgan were willing to be co-participants in this research is also testament to the inquiry-stance they assumed in relation to their own practice. Like the other co-participants, they sought feedback, and exposed their practices to critique by others, including by students in pedagogical encounters, and by peers in Teacher Talk. Exposing practice to student critique also emerged in the higher education literature as an important aspect of critical pedagogical praxis (cf. Francis, 1997), as did the use of student-teacher collaborative inquiry (Arnold et al., 2012, December).

The level of understanding to which the co-participants aspired was fundamental to being responsive and being able to respond appropriately to the people with whom we were working, and to/in the situations in which we found ourselves. This brings me to the second praxis theme, echoed in Pat’s question, noted above, “Am I responding to them [i.e., the students] appropriately?” (Interview 2: 10).

**Being Responsive; Responding Appropriately**

Being responsive and sensitive to people and circumstances, and endeavouring to respond appropriately, were core aspects of pedagogical practice for all the co-participants. I suggest that this was related to our moral and critical commitments to act in the interests of others and humanity in general terms, and, in specific terms, in the interests of the “participants in the action” (Grundy, 1987, p. 65) and those impacted by it. By being responsive, I mean, in the words of a co-participant: “responding especially to the human beings who [are] there” (TT July: 32). This aligns with notions of praxis as context-sensitive rather than rule-following or conforming to a prescribed outcome (Grundy, 1987; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This notion of responsiveness is captured in the following interview comments by two of the co-participants:

*my practice in terms of teaching alters depending on who I’m engaged with, who are my students. If I’ve got an Ed D student then my practice is of one kind, but it’s still got the same underpinnings. If I’m working with low literate adults – what you can see will be different from what you would see if you watched me with an Ed D student. But the principles that inform what I do [respect; thoughtfulness], and how I interact with those students, remain the same. (Pat, Interview 1: 11)*

*I’ve got to be conscious that really what is driving that decision is that I’m responding to these individuals in this space. I’m connecting to those individuals in that space. (Bailey, Interview 1: 16-17)*
Bailey’s comment is relevant to forming relationships with people who are affected by our practice, which relates to the first praxis theme outlined above. Both comments recognise the need to engage differently with different people at different times and in different places as the given set of circumstances demand. This deliberate responsiveness in our practice is one of the reasons why our praxis was so variously lived from encounter to encounter.

Practitioner responsiveness was evident in my observations of the face-to-face encounters that Bailey and Morgan had with students in the workshops and consultation meetings respectively. This was especially so since I was able to witness Bailey in workshops with two very different groups, and witness Morgan in meetings with three students, each of whom had very different needs. Tailoring pedagogical approaches to suit the circumstances, changing direction or doing things differently as situations demanded, and seizing opportunities as they arose to “provoke learning” (Green, 1998, p. 182) are some of the ways in which Bailey and Morgan embodied responsiveness in these encounters.

Morgan’s interactions with each of the three students (Karen, Mary, and Sandra) in the consultation meetings demonstrated mindful tailoring of practice to suit the people and given circumstances. Karen, Mary, and Sandra each explicitly and implicitly demanded very different kinds of encounter with Morgan. Their progress with the assessment, their preparedness for the meeting with Morgan, their knowledge and skills in relation to the assessment, and their experiences during their recent practicum where they were conducting their research projects, are but a few of the factors that seemed to have a bearing on these different expectations of the meeting. Accordingly, Morgan asked Karen, Sandra, and Mary very different kinds of questions. Sandra, for instance, appeared to be further advanced than Karen and Mary in her planning and thinking and preparation for the meeting, but needed to sharpen her focus and explore the implications of the study in greater depth. She was also more assertive and clear about the kind of help she needed. Morgan therefore focused less on questions about technical aspects of the assessment tasks and clarifying questions, and more on prompting Sandra to think deeply about the significance and implications of her action research project. Morgan’s approach with Karen and Mary, in contrast, concentrated on the more procedural aspects of the assessment tasks.

The consultation meetings between Morgan and the students were very much directed by the students themselves, and Morgan was responding to their concerns and
questions. The student-teacher interactions were, therefore, open-ended and flexible. Bailey’s workshops, in contrast, were more structured and pre-planned, and appeared to have routines built into the flow of activity (e.g., a ‘welcome activity’ was a traditional introductory activity for one of Bailey’s workshop groups). Within this structure, Bailey negotiated many aspects of the lessons with the students (e.g., how much time to be dedicated to certain activities, where and with whom students would work for group activities). Also, Bailey modified some aspects of the activities (for example, by changing the group configurations) to suit the people present. She assisted groups with tasks as needed, and facilitated class discussions in such a way that both she and the students were directing the conversations. In one of the workshops, the students led some of the discussion. Interactions were, thus, dynamic and organic, despite extensive pre-planning.

My colleagues working in predominantly on-line subjects were also practising in ways that were responsive to people and circumstances. In the absence of other human bodies when making pedagogical decisions about how to respond/act, however, Pat, Jess, and Sam, had to imagine to a large extent what students were doing and how they were engaging in their work. This is perhaps why it was so important for Pat, Sam, and Jess to know where the students were geographically located, that is, to help them visualise each student, at least in a particular place. Having to develop so much of the curriculum ahead of the start of the subject (Jess called this “frontloading”) also meant relying a great deal on imagining/anticipating how students might respond to set activities and course materials. This is reflected in comments made by Jess in one of our interviews:

*I actually frontload my pedagogy.... I put a huge amount of time and energy into ... really working on the study guide and the materials and the content and how I shape it and I write it- and I design activities throughout it. I get [students] to do an end of topic posting on the forum and I have little blogs with questions etc. and I really do try to put a lot of work and time into designing the materials... I keep thinking, ‘If I'm a student, how would I be responding to this and what would I need to help me understand that particular reading better or what are the kinds of questions that developmentally might help me reflect on my learning?’* (Interview 1: 8)

The kind of ‘frontloading’ that is being described here is illustrative of Alex’s observation (mentioned earlier in the chapter) about critical pedagogical praxis being embedded in course materials (in this case, via Jess’s ‘sayings’ as text in the modules).
The nature of the doctorate is such that *doctoral supervision pedagogy* is almost the antithesis of Jess’s description regarding on-line pedagogy in terms of ‘frontloading’ and curriculum planning. B. Green (2012a) described doctoral education as a “space of emergence” (p. 16) in which “one does not know, cannot know, what will happen, only that something will happen” (Osberg & Biesta 2008, p. 325, as cited in B. Green, 2012a, p. 16). This being the case, doctoral supervisors must necessarily be responsive. Alex and Morgan accordingly followed my cues and insisted that the process be student-directed from the outset. Alex summed up this aspect of his and Morgan’s combined responsive approach as follows:

*We think of it as your journey and not ours and we’re meant to be, I think, being responsive, except in the most abstract sense where we are, as it were, instructive or instructional and that’s about getting the whole job done. But the content we rely on you for.* (Alex, Supervision meeting, 14 March, 2012: 9)

This was certainly what I experienced as their doctoral student. I set the pace and agenda for our meetings and presented various items to be discussed (e.g., ethics application, diagrams, chapter drafts), while Alex and Morgan offered advice, feedback, encouragement, stories, and the occasional verbal ‘prodding’ (e.g., “launch into getting it done” (Alex, Supervision meeting, 25 May, 2011)) based on my questions, concerns, work, and general progress. Sometimes, as suggested by Alex’s reference to “getting the job done”, this meant focussing on technical aspects of the doctoral project such as managing files, generating timelines, completing progress reports, or formatting the thesis in line with particular conventions. Sometimes it meant asking challenging questions, as I discuss in relation to the fourth praxis theme.

Some of the co-participants commented that responding appropriately in the situations with which we are faced as educators can be challenging. We cannot be certain of the consequences of our actions prior to acting, hence the inherent riskiness of praxis noted by Carr and Kemmis (1986). It is also questionable whether we can really know if a course of action is appropriate after acting or while acting. On the one hand, there are limitations to our own reflexivity (Clayton, 2013; Pillow, 2003), the recognition of which is reflected in Morgan’s explication of the role of student scrutiny of her practice:

*I don’t always see when I’m stepping on the wrong stone, unless it’s a crisis you know. I can’t operate at that level of consciousness all the time, it’s too difficult. So sometimes I need somebody to … cause me to check my pathway.* (Interview 2: 2)
On the other hand, students are not always able, willing, or in a position to provide feedback on how they are affected by our practices or their experiences as students. It may be the case, as noted by one of the co-participants, that “flow-on” effects of practice are not realised until a point in time “down the track” (TT April: 33), hence an observation made in a Teacher Talk meeting that “you know not what you do” (Group member, TT April: 32), and Sam’s comment, presented earlier in the chapter, that you need to “have some kind of courage about what you’re doing” (TT May: 10). Nevertheless, all of the co-participants spoke of the importance of actively seeking, and not merely waiting for, student feedback in order that pedagogical responses be as informed as possible about what might, or might not be, appropriate in the given circumstances. This links directly to the first praxis theme.

Thus, the findings suggested that being responsive and responding appropriately not only necessitated understanding and sensitivity to people and the particular situations indicated above in the discussion of the first praxis theme. It also required a certain level of courage and preparedness to take risks in the uncertainty of the consequences, creativity/imagination in generating possible courses of action to take, and flexibility to change direction or respond differently if needed. Now I turn to the third praxis theme, creating conditions of possibility for learning.

Creating Conditions of Possibility

“The only way I can teach you to care is to create situations where you are being asked about whether or not you’re caring.”
(Morgan, Interview 1:17).

This comment, made by Morgan whilst talking about the importance of graduates being caring teachers, reflects the third praxis theme, ‘creating conditions of possibility for learning’. Referred to by Pat as “creates[ing] the pre-conditions for [students’] learning” (Interview1: 5), this theme amounts to deliberately setting up particular discursive, material, and social arrangements within the pedagogical space in order that learning or changed thinking can occur. In the excerpt above, Morgan was alluding to arrangements in which people can be challenged about their attitudes, actions, beliefs or way of being (including being caring or non-caring). This suggests an assumption that educators teach for learning (B. Green, 1998, p. 180).

Through our practice we endeavoured to create (or, more accurately, ‘co-create’ with students and/or colleagues) the best possible conditions and opportunities for learning. Efforts directed at establishing pedagogical spaces as engaging, risk-taking,
generative, yet safe and supportive manifested in a number of ways. One way was through building on ideas, strategies, and texts with which students were already familiar (or as Bailey put it, “connect[ing] up to known things” (Debriefing\textsuperscript{90}: 1)) or sharing personal stories and experiences with which students could connect. Another was getting to know the students, as discussed earlier, and creating or nurturing a respectful, supportive pedagogical environment. A third was using particular approaches (e.g., dialogic, inquiry-based, experiential, narrative, and student-directed) to engage students and enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. This involved treating the pedagogical space as a negotiated and “relational” (Bailey, Interview 1: 8) space (although the kind and extent of the negotiability varied from context to context), and positioning ourselves as co-learners and co-constructors of knowledge in that space. A fourth way was attending to, and caring about, the emotional, as well as the intellectual, needs of students (including creating opportunities for concerns/dilemmas to be raised; using affirming, supportive, and welcoming language). This links directly to the second praxis theme. A fifth was modelling reflective practice. While there were commonalities across practices and pedagogical sites, again, specific sayings, doings, and relatings looked quite different from person to person and site to site. A few, of many, examples are provided in the following paragraphs to highlight some of the more striking similarities and differences between pedagogical sites.

In terms of face-to-face teaching, one of the immediately obvious aspects of Bailey’s and Morgan’s practice in the workshops and meetings I observed was the way they related to students. Both were very welcoming and supportive and were making every effort to connect with the students. Bailey indicated that this was central to her practice as praxis: “my praxis in one sense is around my connecting to people” (Interview 2: 13). The language that Bailey and Morgan used was affirming and supportive (“Really interesting point. What else...?” and “Good observation. I hadn’t noticed that” (Bailey, Workshop 2: field notes); “What I like so far is that you are....” and “...that is a good idea that you have” (Morgan, Student meeting 2: field notes). Bailey and Morgan listened actively to students (e.g., demonstrated through asking clarifying questions and repetition of students’ phrases), and overtly expressed concern for students’ well-being.

The workshop observations also revealed Bailey’s efforts to create a particular conversational culture amongst the students. Bailey established a variety of “interactive

\textsuperscript{90} Debriefing meeting (see Chapter Five).
arrangements” (Bailey, Debriefing: 1) and used strategies that gave students an opportunity to explore and develop understandings of multiple perspectives, and to co-construct ideas as they engaged in meaning-making dialogue and creative activity with each other. Bailey talked about her orchestration of interactive arrangements in terms of “creating the best relational space for my students” (Interview 1: 8). Students were physically, intellectually and emotionally engaged in a range of ways such as role plays, whole class discussions, and small group activities. An important part of these dialogues was the opportunity for students to engage in the language of critical literacy. This is reflected in Bailey’s aim of “creating ... the best physical set ups and the resources to enable [the students] to learn a particular topic of whatever, enable them to develop the language of the particular [discipline area]” (Interview 1: 8). Such language development was especially evident in the semiotics workshop where students were being initiated into language associated with semiotics in their analysis (in terms of semiotic systems) of the written, visual, and audio-visual texts that Bailey provided.

Modelling reflective practice and/or drawing explicit attention to practices, conditions and happenings were additional ways in which Morgan, Bailey, and I worked to create conditions of possibility for learning. Embedded in dialogic classroom processes, modelling, and drawing attention to aspects of practice involved being sensitive and responsive to unfolding circumstances (linked to the previous praxis theme) and seizing upon ‘teachable moments’. Bailey gave an example of this in our debriefing meeting. She described a workshop in which she felt distracted as a teacher by the multiple Smartboards in the workshop space:

_We’d just had this lecture about students in 21st century learning environments; how there’s so much stimulation that in fact [students are] distracted by everything ... When I had to actually start leading them into an activity, ... I felt like one of these kids ... I started to think about that and I was using a ‘think aloud’ deliberately: ‘Wow. Ken would have given me Ritalin.’ Ken was this guy in the YouTube clip [shown in the lecture]. ‘I am- As a teacher in this space, I can’t focus. How do I...? I’m finding it hard to find a place and a space to be,’ and ‘Where should I be in this space?’ Then the next week it was more, ‘Okay I need to be here for this part.’ (Debriefing: 5)_

This example depicts Bailey intentionally making explicit for her students her deliberations whilst problem-solving and negotiating the material arrangements of the classroom.

Embodying and modelling a consciousness in practice of (a) what was shaping our practice, and our own agency in shaping what is transpiring, or (b) the impact of our
practice on others, had the effect, potentially, of exposing some of the complex and multiple factors that can be brought to bear on the minute-by-minute judgements teachers are making about what to say, what to do, and how to relate with others and the space in pedagogical contexts. This was highly relevant in the context of initial teacher education where the students were aspiring educational practitioners. Making explicit what was being ‘lived’ at the time, meanwhile, could prompt ‘reflection-in-action’ (Schön, 1983) of those involved in the encounter, or prompt critical reflexivity-in-action whereby the significance and implications of what was going on could be collectively examined whilst it was still possible to change action (Hovelynck, 2000) or arrangements. New possibilities for acting can emerge from such a dialogic process, a process enabled by the immediacy and intimacy of synchronous, face-to-face encounters. A further example of this is provided in the discussion of the fourth praxis theme presented shortly.

Another key way of creating conditions of possibility for learning was through our self-positioning as co-learners and co-constructors of knowledge in pedagogical encounters with students. For instance, in the workshops, Bailey deflected questions back to students and freely admitted when she did not have answers to students’ questions, sometimes by shrugging her shoulders as if to say ‘I don’t know’. In a similar vein, Morgan explained in one of our interviews that she deliberately corrected her mistakes in front of students, something that I did as well. In the observed consultation meetings, Morgan used tentative language when offering interpretations of the students’ comments about their action research projects. Morgan also used inclusive pronouns (‘we’, ‘us’) when providing feedback, for example,

“We are teachers – [the students] need to be learning something”
(Student consultation meeting 3); and

“One of the challenges [that you have identified] happens to all of us”
(Student consultation meeting 1).

Both the “we” and “us” in these extracts were inclusive of the student in each meeting, while the reference to “[the students]’ denoted the school students encountered in the school practicum. The kind of self-positioning evident in Bailey’s and Morgan’s practice potentially challenges unhelpful power relations in terms of possibilities for open and critical dialogue. It also serves to remind students that teacher educators and teachers are neither the ‘gatekeepers’ of knowledge nor infallible beings who are beyond scrutiny. This resonates with the practice and intentions described by Francis (1997), referred to
in Chapter Three, of positioning self as a co-learner as part of her critical praxis. While relevant to all sites of pedagogical practice being discussed in this chapter, in the context of face-to-face initial teacher education pedagogy, such positioning was met with some resistance by students. I elaborate on this issue in the next chapter.

Dialogue was also important to my colleagues working in an on-line mode, although it was fundamentally prefigured by written text – the dominant medium of communication – and the students’ physical isolation from their lecturers, tutors and each other. A major concern emphasised by Pat, Sam, and Jess was that of ensuring that the students felt supported and not alone. According to Pat, for many of the students at the beginning of their courses, the on-line space and/or university study was somewhat daunting, despite the fact that most were mature-age students. Because of this, Pat put “an equivalent amount of time and energy into communicating with them [i.e., the students]” as she did “into the formal processes of revising the materials, marking the assignments ... Sometimes it was even 60 percent looking after them and 40 percent marking” (Interview 1: 5). Pat also ensured that subject materials were well structured with “clear guideposts” so that students would “feel secure” (Pat, Interview 2: 13).

To address issues related to isolation, both Pat and Sam spoke of giving the students and/or themselves a “physical presence” (Sam, Interview 1: 14-15). For Pat it was a matter of ensuring “that there actually was a person, a real, living, breathing person inside the university who would ring them up and say ‘How are you going?’” (Interview 1: 5). Sam similarly talked about making connections “a bit more real” (Interview 1: 14-15). I elaborate on this in the next chapter in a discussion of some of the tensions for embodying critical pedagogical praxis.

Jess, Sam, and Pat fostered connections and dialogue between students “who may never ... [or may seldom] see each other” (Sam, Observation: 5) through on-line forums and/or blogs. For Jess it was important that such dialogue be

as inclusive as possible. So it’s around inclusion and that’s one of the reasons why I want to know about students and I really try and encourage a range of students to voice what they're thinking, what they're feeling and to honour that and to work with them....

(Interview 1: 11)

This was echoed by Pat’s commitment to enabling “everybody to find a space to contribute” and “respond to each other” (Interview 2: 13). Pat did this by having “open-ended” activities and topics rather than prescriptive activities such as write about “seven ways mentoring appears in your school” (Interview 2: 13). For Sam it was
important to create an on-line community amongst each student group, that is, a community in which students felt safe:

*It’s interesting. You only need one really good post from one student and the others will do it. And so creating that—what you’re trying to do really there, is create a space where people know that they’re going to be safe, saying whatever it is they want to say. So I’ve always done that, with all of my subjects.* (Sam, Interview 1: 10-11)

Sam’s comment highlights not only her emphasis on creating a safe space, but also the role of interactive opportunities in encouraging students to engage in on-line activity.

The emphasis on support, creating a safe space, and constructive dialogue were equally important to the doctoral supervision relationship between Alex, Morgan and me. Alex and Morgan were very focussed on co-creating conditions conducive to my identity work (B. Green, 2005, 2009a; Petersen, 2007) as a developing researcher, as well as to the knowledge production/generation (B. Green, 2012b) associated with the research project and producing a thesis. Their roles, they implied, were to help me to become a researcher who could research critically, and in ethically and culturally sensitive ways; who embodied praxis or developed a capacity for praxis; and who produced a thesis that could make a difference to society through the body of literature to which it would contribute. This aligns with constructions of pedagogical practice as identity work, as discussed in chapter two. Alex expressed it in terms of supporting the process of my “story” being “realised” (through the thesis), “in history and making a difference, in a field of people that are, as it were, your people” (Supervision meeting, 14 March, 2012).

Conversations between Alex, Morgan, and me were based on a shared research project and a shared goal. In these conversations, I was moving closer to an end point of having a completed thesis and changing as a developing researcher/academic/potential PhD supervisor through exposure to their ways of understanding the world (e.g., their ways of talking about the world, their actions and gestures, and their ways of relating to each other, to me, and to others). I encountered these things as Alex and Morgan responded to my work, as they told stories – including, for instance, stories about their own PhD research journeys – and as we shared and debated ideas, talked through whatever dilemma I might have been experiencing at the time, and collaboratively considered the research questions.

Engaging in scholarly conversation beyond our community of three was also significant in terms of my being and becoming a researcher, that is, developing an
“academic identity” (Petersen, 2007, p. 477). It widened my exposure to other people’s sayings, doings, and relatings, and the practice traditions and theoretical traditions that I was entering (and hoping to eventually transcend and/or extend). Alex and Morgan played a crucial role in introducing me, literally, to the immediate research community within the university and beyond. They invited me to participate in research group activities with which they were involved. They also encouraged me to attend and present seminars, join committees and doctoral student groups, engage in one-on-one meetings with visiting scholars, participate in workshops, and talk to researchers working within alternative theoretical paradigms and research areas.

Throughout our supervision meeting conversations and other encounters, Alex and Morgan positioned themselves not only as my critical friends and co-inquirers, but also as colleagues. Morgan’s reflection on her role as a supervisor sums up this positioning as a colleague:


....it’s much more about collaboration really, and... I think sometimes I cheat the students when I’m in that [supervision] space because the student doesn’t get a director, the student gets a colleague or somebody who positions themselves as knowing as much as, or even less than the student on many occasions because you’re reading stuff that I’m not reading, so you know stuff that I don’t know. (Supervision meeting, 14 March, 2012: 10)

Alex’s and Morgan’s positioning as co-inquirers/co-learners and colleagues was evident in our collaborative theorising. Over several conversations we explored a range of topics from the relationship between praxis and love to the differences between praxis and practice, and not always agreeing. It was also evident in requests by Alex and Morgan for my feedback on their work (in other words, asking me to act as critical friend to them). This had an empowering effect since my opinion was being sought and taken seriously by people whose work I admired. I believe that this was an important contributor to my risk-taking and candour in our conversations. What made it possible for us to sustain a critical-friend/collegial arrangement was the strength of our relationship (or perhaps our relationship was strengthened because of the possibilities

91 See B. Green and Lee (1995, p. 41) for an interesting explication of the sayings, doings, and relatings (“a choreography of bodies and voices” (B. Green, 2009a, p. 244)) that are being “repeated, rehearsed, and cited” (B. Green, 2009a, p. 244) through the seminar. See also B. Green (2009a, p. 244) and Petersen (2007, pp. 478-479) for further interpretation of this work.
created for negotiation and collaboration!). This strength was based on trust, mutual respect, and eventually friendship\(^{92}\).

Across the three pedagogical sites, the co-participants’ efforts to ‘engage’ learners were clear, and dialogue was central to this. Also clear were efforts to strike a balance between fostering a safe and supportive pedagogical environment and creating a space of generative challenge and struggle so that learning was provoked (B. Green, 1998). It was important to all co-participants, because of our social justice and moral commitments, that the pedagogical space be ‘critical’, which brings me to the fourth and final praxis theme discussed in this thesis: *embodying and evoking criticality*. The fourth theme, is, in some respects an extension of the third, since it involves creating conditions of possibility for the development of people’s capacity, firstly, to think/reflect critically about their circumstances, social-political implications of their current and future practice, the professions within which they are, or will be, located, and society generally; and, secondly, to engage in critical action and dialogue.

**Embodying and Evoking Criticality**

The theme of ‘embodying and evoking criticality’ links directly to the second part of the working definition of critical pedagogical praxis offered in Chapters One and Three, that is, the creation of ‘*spaces in which harmful or unsustainable practices and power relationships can be understood and reoriented, and in which new possibilities for action can emerge and be enacted*’. It also overlaps with constructions of pedagogical practice as critical dialogue discussed in higher education literature (e.g., T. Evans, 2009; McArthur, 2010). There was a variety of ways in which, in line with our social justice sensitivities, we did this. Some of the most common ways included modelling critical self-reflection; engaging in critical conversation with each other and with students; asking critical questions (or in Jess’s and Morgan’s words, “*asking hard questions*”) and challenging assumptions, for example by playing ‘devil’s advocate’; exposing students/ourselves to multiple perspectives; drawing critical resources into the pedagogical landscape; examining critical theory and critical resources with students and colleagues; “stirring” students and each other in to (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 58) critical language and action; encouraging others to ask critical questions and critically self-reflect; and revealing and resisting dominant practices and discourses. (The last of these

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\(^{92}\) See Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, and Sambrook’s (2007, p. 81) discussion of the progression of a supervision relationship to that of friendship.
is discussed in the next chapter as part of a discussion on how we negotiated various tensions.)

Some of these aspects of practice were linked to the nature of the subjects taught by the co-participants, or the courses within which the subjects were located. A number of the subjects were critical and inquiry-based by design. For instance, critical assumptions informed the subjects that Morgan and Bailey were engaged in when I observed their practice, and informed the subject that I taught during the research period, which was based on the notion of re-conceptualising secondary education. For subjects such as these, critical questions were embedded in subject overviews and curriculum materials, including assessment tasks. In some cases (but not in my case), my research co-participants were involved in the initial development and ongoing review of these subjects and the overall courses.

A common aim for Morgan, Bailey, and me, in our face-to-face encounters with initial teacher education students, was to provoke critical conversation, critical reflection and collective critical inquiry amongst our students, while helping students to develop their own critical disposition and capacity for fostering their future students’ criticality. Two striking and contrasting ways of doing this in our face-to-face teaching were, first, the facilitation of collaborative learning activities designed to provoke critical engagement and inquiry, and, second, the asking of critical questions aimed at challenging potentially harmful assumptions.

A learning activity (a “smart searching” activity (Bailey, Debriefing: 6)) in one of the two workshops I observed exemplifies the facilitation of collaborative learning activities to provoke critical engagement and inquiry. In the workshop, Bailey asked her students to design an internet search activity (in pairs) for a hypothetical Year Five class, the aim of which was to develop primary students’ critical literacy skills relevant to engaging with internet materials. Bailey framed the task with reference to an elaborate story about a boy called Zac, told to the workshop group by Bailey in the lecture preceding the workshop. Zac, so the story went, had written a report about the Holocaust, claiming “that there was no such thing really as the Holocaust. It was the name of the event that was to rid the Jews of lice and it was a kind thing that was happening” (Bailey, Debriefing: 7). Bailey asked the students to imagine that Zac was in the class for whom they were designing the activity and consider how Zac’s uncritical internet use, and potentially that of other students, might be addressed through the activity.
This workshop task and how it was framed were part of an attempt, extending beyond the boundaries of the two-hour workshop, to engage students in critical conversation, particularly with their peers in the pair groupings, and also with Bailey as she circulated the room. The kind of critical conversation being fostered was related, on the one hand, to what ‘smart’ searching (implying ‘critical’ searching) might look like. The task demanded that Bailey’s students talk through possibilities for ‘critical’ searching and that they engage their imaginations and physical bodies to create/find ways to avoid reinforcing uncritical searching practices (and have their students “end up like Zac” (Participant comment, Workshop 1)), and instead help their students develop their critical literacy skills. On the other hand, through the trialling of the smart searching processes, an opportunity was created for Bailey’s students to critically reflect on what they had developed.

This pre-planned, structured, experiential, and inquiry-based approach, whereby students worked their way through issues (such as those evoked by Zac’s story) that they might one day encounter as teachers, contrasts with another way of evoking the critical that characterised our (Bailey’s, Morgan’s, my) critical pedagogical praxis in our face-to-face pedagogical encounters: improvised, in-the-moment challenging of assumptions and problematising what was transpiring. This involved a ‘stop and think’, reflexive ‘intervention’ (of sorts) in order to prompt collective interrogation along the lines of, for instance, ‘What’s going on here?’, ‘How did we get to this point?’, or ‘What assumptions are we making right now?’ This relates to the task of making the implicit explicit through ‘teachable moments’, discussed above in relation to the second praxis theme (being responsive, responding appropriately), and relates to the notion of unrepeatable pedagogical dances to which I referred earlier in this chapter.

Morgan shared an example of this with me in an interview and repeated the story in a Teacher Talk meeting for the whole group. The story involves an in-class encounter with Neil, a student studying one of Morgan’s on-campus Teacher Education subjects, which occurred during student presentations about their research projects. The following statement reflects what Morgan had been thinking during Neil’s presentation:

...[Neil] makes a statement in his presentation... I’m paraphrasing, but this is the meaning that’s coming out: ESL [English as a Second

93 I appreciate that the word ‘intervention’ might be problematic here. I am using the word in the sense of momentarily and deliberately suspending what is occurring as part of the natural flow of a lesson and stepping into a space of meta-analysis, rather than a space of therapy or psychologising people’s actions, or a phase of action research.
Language] students are ... incapable of creative thinking.' ... I'm thinking, 'I know this student by now and I'm sure that that's not what he wants to say.... I'm not going to say anything. I want him to recognise that what he said is problematic.' Not one person picks it up. (Morgan, TT October: 15-16)

At the end of the presentation, Morgan drew attention to Neil’s comment:

‘Go back to that first slide,’ I said. ‘Read that slide again. Read it out aloud.’ So he reads it out aloud, and I said, ‘Is there anything wrong with that statement?’ He thinks I’m thinking about grammar. I said, ‘Read that again. Is that what you want to say about this group of people?’

‘Yeah, they lacked creativity.’

I say, ‘Okay explain to me,’ and I’m working through this very calmly, ‘explain to me what you mean by, “they lacked creativity?”’ What he wants to say is that when he uses idioms in the classroom they don’t understand. (Morgan, TT October: 15-16)

As this excerpt indicates, Neil again reaffirmed his belief about the students lacking creativity. Morgan responded by using a non-Australian idiom and then saying,

‘I spoke to you in English and I spoke to you in my full accent and I used my idiom.’ And I said, ‘What does it mean?’ They [i.e., the students] came up with a lot of things. Nobody was close to it and I said, ‘So I’m supposed to assume then that you lack creativity because you don’t understand what I’ve just said?’

[Another student responded:] ‘But no, [Morgan]... you used an idiom.’

And I said, ‘Oh [Louise], when I’m using the idiom, you don’t lack creativity, but when you use the idiom, I lack creativity? ...There is no problem with that?’

Anyway, so I explained what it means: ‘Expect the unexpected.’

[Neil] is gutted by that time because that is not what he intended to say. But I’m looking at him saying, ‘[Neil], that is not your fault. We failed you if you can get to year […] and actually construct your sentence with that kind of expression. Nobody ever said to you, ‘[Neil], is this what you intend to say?’ (Morgan, TT October: 15-16)

This story shows, at the very least, particular strategies or a sequence of strategies that Morgan used to confront assumptions that could be potentially harmful. Morgan, in the first instance, drew attention to Neil’s problematic words, prompting him to re-examine them. When Neil’s self-reflection failed to prompt awareness, Morgan took a more provocative approach, improvising with one of her own idioms such that the class members experienced the consequences of the assumption-making that Neil’s language represented. Morgan, in effect, deliberately ‘positioned’ Neil and his peers in a way that resembled how Neil had inadvertently ‘positioned’ his ‘ESL students’. In doing this, Morgan was, it seems to me, doing what she referred to at another time as
“[subverting] assumptions of difference” (Morgan, Interview 2: 22) and what I see, drawing on B. Green (1998), as using “difference as a resource for pedagogy” for difference (p. 190).

Morgan suggested that it was important that students feel comfortable being confronted by “difference” in any classroom situation, “whether it is disability difference, whether it’s cultural difference”. Morgan assumed that “if difference becomes comfortable in that they’re not afraid of it... they [can] engage it, even if it means engaging by asking hard questions that might cause conflict” (Interview 2: 22-23). Therefore, part of her role as a teacher educator, Morgan suggested, was creating “as much opportunity [as possible] to get them to confront it in the classroom when I work with them” (Interview 2: 23).

Morgan’s amazement that “not one person picks it up” is also poignant in that it reveals an expectation that someone would ‘pick up’ on the problematic nature of Neil’s comments. This is reflective of what I saw in both Bailey’s practice and Morgan’s practice, and what I tried to do in my own: encourage students to challenge each other’s assumptions (and ours) and thus initiate critical conversations. Although clearly uncomfortable with Neil’s construction of ‘ESL students’ in the presentation, Morgan waited for Neil to become aware, or for his peers to challenge his ideas, before saying something herself. This allowed space, although not seized upon by the group, for critical conversation and self-reflection without Morgan assuming the role of ‘gatekeeper’.

Neil’s story highlights the risks involved in critical work, adding weight to the argument I have been developing in this thesis that critical pedagogical praxis is risky. Neil was “gutted” according to Morgan. Perhaps this was self-disappointment, embarrassment, or both? It is important that Morgan ‘knew’ Neil (“I know this student by now”) to the extent that she felt comfortable judging how far, when, and where, she could push Neil and the other students to confront themselves in this way. However, she could not be certain about what would happen when she acted. It is interesting that Morgan brought the conversation around to the failures of university educators in her encounter with Neil (a message in itself for the class about the importance of holding each other to account) in such a way that Neil could possibly forgive himself and move past what happened, although she might never know how, nor the extent to which, Neil was affected by it. Morgan told a similar story of confronting a student’s assumptions where the student concerned thanked Morgan for doing this some time after their
encounter. I think this kind of feedback is rare in academia and university educators are grateful when it happens.

Bailey’s “smart searching” activity based on Zac’s Holocaust report, and the story of Neil’s presentation, highlight how criticality can be embodied and evoked differently in terms of creating conditions conducive to the development of critical thinking, and responding critically to situations in face-to-face encounters. The first is an example of pre-empting assumptions that the students might encounter in their future work as classroom teachers, and the second is an example of responding to the assumptions that students themselves make or expose as they engage in their studies. Both sorts of assumptions have the potential to be anti-educational and to have negative social justice implications if perpetuated or unchallenged.

The kinds of critical pedagogical encounters just described were possible partly because the students were engaging with each other and Bailey and Morgan in face-to-face encounters. Jess, Pat and Sam equally embodied and evoked criticality in their on-line pedagogical practice, but did so in ways afforded by an on-line environment. Jess, Pat and Sam “asked hard questions” (Jess, Interview 2: 16) through lecturer feedback to students on their work, critically-oriented forum topics (e.g., “advocacy”; “the site of the oppressed” – Co-participant, Interview 2: 11), on-line activities and assessment tasks, and impromptu questions posted on blogs and forums.

To illustrate, I draw on questions that Jess posed to students studying a leadership subject, and that Jess encouraged the students to ask of themselves and their “field of practice” (Interview 2: 16). At the beginning of the subject, Jess asked students to consider

... where [do] the constructs for educational leadership come from? When you think of an educational leader, or when you think of educational leadership practices, what are the kinds of things that come to mind for you? And then I try and get them to look behind where those constructs... [are] coming from: the media, ... society? There are certain ways in which we understand leadership and it tends to be very highly gendered, for example. (Interview 2: 16)

Questions such as these, which encourage examination of assumptions and what shapes them (in this case, assumptions underpinning leadership stereotypes), were deliberately ‘written into’ the modules before the students commenced the subjects (i.e., as part of Jess’s “frontloading”). As Jess explained, they were aimed at provoking students “to think critically about their own practice and to ... have some sense of where they’re located in that field and to ask hard questions about that field, as a field of practice”
(Interview 2: 16). The students then continued to encounter critical questions as they worked their way through the subject modules: “They have to keep a blog where they respond to specific questions that I ask along the way...” (Interview 2: 16). Course readings and activities built into the subject modules and study guides supported the critical thinking and conversation that Jess’s ‘hard questions’ provoked. A task embedded in one of the modules, for example, was reading and deconstructing “different materials which ... actually talk about the stereotypes of leadership” (Interview 1: 12).

This kind of task drew critical resources into the pedagogical landscape, as mentioned above. This example highlights that, although the on-line exchanges relying on written communication may not be as conducive to the kind of spontaneous and in-the-moment dialogic exchanges as the face-to-face environment (and that were exemplified earlier), opportunities for critical dialogue/inquiry/reflection could be, and were, created. They were just created somewhat differently.

Embodying and evoking criticality looked/felt different again, in some respects, in the supervision space of the doctorate. Co-creating the space as a critical space was central to Morgan’s and Alex’s supervision practice. Their participation in this research project was itself an act of evoking the critical because it automatically shifted the supervision space to one in which their practice and the conditions prefiguring their practice were being examined. The conversations consequently were critically self-reflexive at times, particularly when discussing analysis of empirical material that related to their practice.

However, there were clear efforts to evoke the critical beyond the examination of my supervisors’ pedagogical practice, some of which occurred, as for the other two pedagogical sites, through feedback on student (my) work and discussions around that feedback. Through feedback and our conversations, I was, as a doctoral candidate, prompted to challenge assumptions and think about what was shaping my and our views. Morgan, for instance, sometimes used ‘mirroring’ to problematise the language I was using (and sometimes that we were all using). ‘Mirroring’ involved Morgan quoting my words back to me, sometimes in paraphrased form, sometimes exactly as stated. The mirrored words were prefaced with something along the lines of, “What I hear you saying is...” (Morgan, Supervision meeting, 18 April, 2011). In a way, this was what Morgan was also doing with the student, Neil, in the story above. My response to Morgan’s “mirroring” in one of our supervision meetings is indicative of its impact on me as a learner:
I can hear back the words that I’m using. Even though you [Morgan] might reach a point where you challenge the way that I’m putting it, as soon as I hear you saying it, I can think about the social justice implications of what I’m saying so my ideas are being challenged just in that mirroring. (Kathleen, Supervision meeting, 4 June, 2012)

As I listened to Morgan, I was prompted to think about what I meant to say, and how my language might be problematic (in light of any mismatch between intended and interpreted meaning); or whether I actually believed what I was saying.

Another interesting way in which the critical was evoked in the doctoral supervision encounters, particularly by Alex, was through ‘projecting’ into the future. Through collective ‘projecting’ we considered a range of ‘What if…?’ questions such as those discussed in a conversation about the project’s ethical complexities: What if the Teacher Talk meetings play out in a particular way? What if some potential participants do not want to be involved? What if the group disbands? (Supervision meeting, 22 June, 2011). In this sense, the doctoral space became a ‘what if?’ space wherein we engaged both our imaginations and ethical sensitivities to consider the potential future consequences and implications of specific research actions or decisions, in order to respond appropriately to our circumstances.

‘Mirroring’ and ‘projecting’ were among many ways of embodying and evoking criticality that seemed to be aimed at ensuring that the research was itself a critically informed and reflexive process, that the thesis was a critically informed and reflexively developed product, and that my critical disposition was being nurtured. I was continually, and in a very organic way, being “stirred in” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 58) critical and post-colonial discourses with which Alex and Morgan were respectively familiar. Yet there was a sense in which Alex and Morgan were conscious of the ‘disciplining’ effects of their practice as I was learning (in) a particular discipline. They were mindful of contributing to my “form[ing]”, and not “deform[ing]” (B. Green, 2009a, p. 244) as a researcher, encouraging me, I believe, to at once learn the rules of the academic research game and question the rules; to resist the ‘disciplining’ on some level, and avoid (at least) becoming a “docile” body (B. Green, 2012a, p. 2).

94 Alex more than once mentioned Bill Green’s work on the ‘doubleness of discipline’ in the context of doctoral supervision (see the review of literature in Chapter Three). So it was clearly informing his thinking. The following excerpt is an example: “[Bill] talks about ... the doubleness of discipline, as we know about from Foucault: being disciplined by [Morgan] and I, and being battered into shape, but also learning the discipline which is of course learning to discipline yourself” (Supervision meeting, 25 May, 2011: 14).
These four praxis themes broadly and collectively reflect some of the sayings, doings, and relatings that characterised our (co-participants’) pedagogical practice enacted as critical pedagogical praxis. The praxis themes also reflect the “project” (Kemmis & Brennan-Kemmis, 2014, April) of our practice, since they encapsulate (as far as any theme can) not only what we said and did, and how we related to people and our pedagogical landscapes, but also some key intentions and ends of our pedagogical practice. All four of the themes are directly linked to each other, which the story of Morgan’s encounter with Neil demonstrates. The story showed the kind of understanding that can be required (first praxis theme) to respond appropriately to students (second praxis theme) in a way (e.g., via caring, supportive and constructive dialogue) that opens up possibilities for challenging deeply held and potentially harmful assumptions (third praxis theme), thus embodying and evoking criticality (fourth praxis theme).

In this discussion of the four praxis themes, I have endeavoured to highlight some of the commonalities and differences between the manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis across three key sites of pedagogical practice. While our enactment of critical pedagogical praxis did not appear to extend to the kind of political action described by Braa and Callero (2006) in relation to their sociology course (see Chapter Three), there are some resonances with the literature reviewed for this study. Examples are the importance of a social justice commitment (e.g., Braa & Callero, 2006; T. Evans, 2009), linked implicitly to a moral purpose; student-teacher collaborative inquiry (e.g., Arnold et al., 2011, December; Francis, 1997); educator as co-learner (e.g., Francis, 1997); and consciousness-raising, challenging assumptions (Braa & Callero, 2006; T. Evans, 2009), and ideology critique (Hooley, 2013). The evidence from this research includes many more illustrative stories than can be accommodated in the space for this chapter, including people’s sayings, doings, and how they were relating outside of, and between, specific pedagogical encounters with students. Hopefully, however, the examples and brief comparisons begin to convey a sense of the complexity, plurality, context-sensitivity, and riskiness of critical pedagogical praxis. I build on this argument in the next chapter.

At this point, I wish to make a shift in focus from individual educators’ pedagogical practice in pedagogical encounters with students to collective pedagogical practice, on the assumption that higher education pedagogical practice is characterised and constituted as much by what educators do collectively as it is by what educators do
individually. On a practice architecture view of practice (e.g., Kemmis et al., 2014), pedagogical practice in universities is characterised and constituted by educators’ shared understandings (and tensions between understandings), our collective and shared sayings, doings, and ways of relating to each other, and the people and arrangements comprising the sites of our practice that hang together in the broader projects and practice of university education. The question of how critical pedagogical praxis is manifested in higher education therefore needs, in addition to the kind of individual critical pedagogical praxis that I have largely been describing until now, to take into account collective pedagogical practice enacted (and experienced) in our setting as collective critical pedagogical praxis.

**Collective Critical Pedagogical Praxis**

As just intimated, our individual practice as university educators is part of a broader practice and project (e.g., university education aimed at preparing graduates to live well and to contribute to building a world worth living in). Even when in encounters with students, seemingly isolated from what other university educators are doing and experiencing, university educators are part of networks of practices and practitioners working towards broadly similar, though also deliberately varied and diverse, ends, co-enacting and co-constructing the practice of university education to which our students are subjected, and of which they are an important part. Co-enactment of pedagogical practice occurs in multiple intersecting and interpenetrating activities such as – to point to a few examples relevant to the co-participants – team-teaching (as for the co-supervision relationship between Alex and Morgan); collaborative course review and development conducted at faculty, school and course team levels; and professional learning in communities like Teacher Talk.

To highlight how collective pedagogical practice is and can be enacted and experienced as collective critical pedagogical praxis, in the following paragraphs I present some observations about Teacher Talk, to which I add further observations in Chapter Seven. For the purpose of the discussion, I treat collective critical pedagogical praxis as critical pedagogical praxis enacted and embodied by a group or community of practitioners joined in their practical endeavours by a common project.

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95 I say ‘largely’, because, in the case of the PhD supervision relationship, I discussed Morgan and Alex’s individual practice and collective practice.
Teacher Talk was a space in which we (co-participants/group members) could collaboratively make sense of, and examine, our various practices and the circumstances of our academic lives, including our struggles. This relates to *endeavouring to understand* our practice and pedagogical landscape (praxis theme one). It was also a space in which we could find ways of negotiating and/or transforming our circumstances and conditions (related to praxis themes two, three, and four). Both of these aspects of Teacher Talk are captured in Alex’s conceptualisation of Teacher Talk as, among other things, “a way of talking intelligently about our work and setting up a task of trying to understand our work in terms of what our working conditions are and how, we with our agency, can respond to them” (Supervision meeting, 29 February, 2012: 17-18).

In a sense, Teacher Talk was a “community of practice”, described by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) as a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting in an ongoing basis.... These people don’t necessarily work together every day, but they meet because they find value in their interactions. As they spend time together, they typically share information, insight and advice. They help each other solve problems. They discuss their situations, their aspirations, and their needs. They ponder common issues, explore ideas, and act as sounding boards.... they become informally bound by the value they find in learning together. (pp. 4-5)

The group was constituted along the lines of the following comment about participatory action research groups: “They constitute themselves deliberately for critical and self-critical conversation and decision making that aims to open up existing ways of saying and seeing things, that is to play with the relationships between the actual and the possible” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 311). In considering critical questions about our practice and conditions, we (group members) could build “solidarity” in voluntarily “open[ing our] understandings to one another”, and could have our understandings and any decisions made about future action/practice “underwrit[ten] ... with legitimacy” (p. 294). In these senses, and in terms of the kinds of questions we were asking about our work, Teacher Talk was constructed as a “communicative space” (Habermas, 1996, as cited in Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 294). Teacher Talk also bears resemblances to “knowledge communities” (Craig, 2009, p. 601) and “study circles” (Rönnerman & Salo, 2012, p. 3; Salo & Rönnerman, 2014, pp. 53-71).

Some of the sayings, doings, and relatings that characterised Teacher Talk provide a snapshot of what transpired. *Sayings* involved, for instance, theorising; story-
telling; debating; questioning; reflecting; using particular words/metaphors; advising; naming and reframing; citing theorists, fictional works, and policy documents; and confessing. Doings included the sayings already listed plus sitting in particular places; positioning our bodies and moving in particular ways; listening; engaging in conversation; laughing; having cups of tea; using certain gestures; reading transcripts or analysis summaries; planning future action; and staying silent. Relatings (also sayings and/or doings) included acknowledging each other, the recorder and the transcribers; turn-taking; interrupting; talking all at once; talking over others; inviting people to speak; following agreed protocols; deferring to others in the group; interacting with the dog\textsuperscript{96}; assuming particular roles; negotiating what to discuss and when to meet next; finishing each others’ sentences; and sharing supper at the end of the meeting. Sayings, doings, and relatings such as these hung together in a number of important projects, one of the broader projects being, it seemed to me, to contribute to the co-construction (or reconstruction) of the university as a praxis-oriented university.

Through Teacher Talk, the group members collaboratively considered particular practical challenges and conceptual issues related to our praxis-oriented goals, such as how to foster a critical perspective, or how to address the ill-effects of the new management system for university timetabling (that produced “impossible” (Co-participant, member check) teaching schedules for some staff), or the meaning of ‘criticality’ and ‘critical pedagogical praxis’. In considering a range of challenges and issues collaboratively, the group members were exposed to multiple ways of understanding our practices, conditions, and circumstances, and multiple ways of talking about them (including using the language of “practice architectures” (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008, p. 57), critical discourses, feminist discourses, and post-colonial discourses), allowing spaces to emerge for ideas to be reframed or perhaps confirmed, and while doing so, building relationships and solidarity amongst the group. In this sense, Teacher Talk was an informing, self-forming, and sustaining space, leading, we hoped, to the positive ongoing transformation of our work environment, and our collective and individual practices.

Teacher Talk is but one of many examples of how collective critical pedagogical praxis was manifested in our setting. However, as I discuss in the next chapter, it was a particularly important site for the co-participants because it was at once a site of our individual and collective critical pedagogical praxis, and a mediating arrangement, or

\textsuperscript{96} The owners of the house had a small dog which was present for most of the meetings.

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practice architecture, for our pedagogical practice. It was a space in which critical pedagogical praxis embodied in other pedagogical sites could be theorised and nurtured. A detailed discussion of the mediating role of Teacher Talk in our pedagogical practice is presented in Chapter Seven.

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to discuss how critical pedagogical praxis is understood and ‘lived’ in our University setting. I began by conveying a sense of how the co-participants in this research conceptualised critical pedagogical praxis. This revealed some of the nuanced commonalities and differences between understandings. I then discussed how the co-participants were constructing our pedagogical practice, aspirationally and actually, individually and collectively, as critical pedagogical praxis in our pedagogical work as academics. In doing this, I explained that a core element of critical pedagogical praxis was a ‘praxis stance’ and that this ‘praxis stance’ was embodied variously and in complex ways through four key, tightly woven aspects of our pedagogical practice (the four praxis themes), which, put simply, were (1) endeavouring to understand; (2) being responsive and responding appropriately; (3) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development; and (4) embodying and evoking criticality. By discussing the themes in relation to our ‘living’ practice (as praxis) across three pedagogical sites (and to a lesser extent, Teacher Talk), I highlighted the complexity, riskiness, plurality, and inherently context-sensitive nature, of critical pedagogical praxis. There is more to the story, however, which brings me to Chapter Seven.

In this chapter, Chapter Six - Living Praxis, I concentrated on co-participants’ sayings (including understandings), doings, and relatings as they pertain to critical pedagogical praxis. Throughout the discussion, I hinted at some of the arrangements in different pedagogical sites that were prefiguring our pedagogical practice, such as the face-to-face teaching arrangements in initial teacher education, asynchronous and written communication in on-line pedagogy, the thesis in doctoral supervision, and collaborative relationships in Teacher Talk. In the next chapter, Chapter Seven – Shaping Praxis, I bring to the fore and critically examine these and other key arrangements and individual factors which prefigured our pedagogical practice, making possible, shaping, and constraining our enactment of critical pedagogical praxis. In doing this, I explicitly situate critical pedagogical praxis in the lives of the practitioners, the history of the university, the practice traditions we have inherited, and the practice
architectures and events that shaped and were shaped by our practice. Thus, I address the third research question, ‘What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting and how so?’ and re-invoke some of the more concerning stories about critical pedagogical praxis raised in earlier chapters that have so far been deferred.
CHAPTER SEVEN – SHAPING PRAXIS

What nourishes, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
What niche sustains?
What walls contain?
What invasive species
Provoke you,
Displace you,
Or chase you
From your home?

This chapter is the second of three chapters dedicated to a discussion of the key research findings. Whereas in Chapter Six I focussed on how our critical pedagogical praxis was conceptualised and enacted by attending to various kinds of sayings, doings, and ways of relating in our pedagogical work, in this chapter I focus on the practice architectures, and factors pertaining to individual practitioner capacity that constrained and enabled efforts to enact pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis.

The chapter is presented in two parts. The first part examines what made it possible for critical pedagogical praxis to be enacted and sustained within and beyond the three main pedagogical sites discussed in Chapter Six (initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy). The discussion focuses on enabling practice architectures, and practitioner capacity and intentions. The second part of the chapter focusses on practice architectures embedded, or implicated, in the setting that either constrained efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis or were significant sources of tension for the co-participants. A discussion of how some of these tensions and constraints were negotiated by the co-participants is included.

What Makes Possible and Sustains CPP in our Setting?

In Chapter Five, I described a process of analytically mapping practice architectures and other mediating factors (see Appendix K to N) in initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, doctoral supervision pedagogy, and Teacher Talk, drawing on empirical material generated through six sets of encounters (co-participation in Teacher Talk; 97

Where I use the term ‘practice architectures’, I am referring to “cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements” following the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 4). A Schatzkian ‘equivalent’ would be “material arrangements” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 16), which includes human bodies as material entities. In the interests of clarity, and because the language of practice architectures was more embedded in my analytical templates, I mostly use ‘practice architectures’ to discuss the findings.
interviews with Teacher Talk members; observations of pedagogical practice; doctoral supervision meetings; interviews with colleagues; and self-study of my teaching). From this mapping process, I was able to discern what was prefiguring the pedagogical practice of the co-participants in the different pedagogical sites, and to identify some key aspects of the sites that were instrumental in this prefiguration (Schatzki, 2002). Of these aspects, there were a number that were considered by the co-participants to be particularly enabling. These were student engagement and student-teacher relationships; curriculum; aspects of place and space; the academic community (including Teacher Talk); and research and scholarly activity. In the paragraphs that follow, I explain the role played by each, as well as the role played by practitioner capacity and intentions, in shaping our practice and enabling critical pedagogical praxis.

**Student Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships**

Student engagement was one of the key factors identified by co-participants as prefiguring pedagogical practice in face-to-face pedagogy, on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy. This is as expected since our engagement with students is a core part of pedagogical practice (through *sayings* with/to students; *doings* with students; and *relatings* with students). In terms of enacting critical pedagogical praxis specifically, what students brought to the pedagogical encounters (including their own life stories, assumptions, beliefs, and pre-existing relationships with each other), and how they engaged in those encounters, played a key role in inspiring and informing our practice, provoking particular pedagogical responses from us as university educators, and making it possible for us to engage in particular kinds of conversations with them (for example, the sort that might be considered ‘risky’).

Student engagement informed our practice in many ways, some of which were explored in Chapter Six. The students’ level of engagement and how students engaged with the subjects (via reading the materials, participating in classroom or online or supervision conversations, attending lectures, preparing assignments or chapter drafts, interacting with their lecturers or supervisors, sending and answering emails, asking questions, as well as their engagement within any given teaching-learning activity) influenced the practitioners’ pedagogical approaches. Student engagement directly or indirectly gave the practitioners a sense of what the students needed, what their interests were, and how receptive they might be to certain approaches. This was
exemplified by Morgan’s very different ways of interacting with Sandra, Mary, and Karen in the consultation meetings (see Chapter Six).

The ways that students engaged and how they related to us as educators also made particular kinds of conversations possible. For instance, in my experiences as a teacher educator, relationships with students influenced the extent to which I took risks with my teaching. Over a thirteen week session of working with two different workshop groups (once a week for two hours in addition to a weekly one-hour lecture), I developed better rapport with one group (‘afternoon group’) than the other (‘morning group’), despite efforts to build very positive relationships with both groups. I was inclined to be more experimental with the afternoon group and tended to push the conversations further on topics that some students found sensitive, for example, issues related to racism. I felt that the afternoon group would be more forgiving than the morning group if something did not work as well as I/we hoped, and that the students would be more willing to take risks themselves (in terms of confronting and being confronted about their views) because of the higher level of trust that we had established.

An additional example is the conversations that characterised the supervision meetings between Alex, Morgan, and me. What made our critical conversations possible were our relationships as explained in Chapter Six. I wonder if it made a difference to our relationship and Alex’s and Morgan’s positioning as colleagues, that my supervisors, although assessing my work, were not actually grading it as such. Synergies between our research interests (for example, based on our common interests in praxis, practice theory and researching within practice traditions) were relevant too. This was, in turn, made possible because of the flexibility within our University system for a person applying to do a PhD to directly approach a potential supervisor, rather than rely on candidate-supervisor ‘match-ups’ after applying.

Aspects of Curriculum (Subjects, Courses, and the Doctorate)

In addition to student engagement and student-teacher relationships, the subjects, courses, and the nature of the curriculum of doctoral study (B. Green, 2009a, p. 4)

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98 I attributed the difference to the combinations of people in the groups. Both workshops were held on the same day each week, hence reference to ‘morning’ and ‘afternoon’ groups. However, other factors may have been at play here, such as the opportunity afforded by the timetable (a material arrangement) for me to act, in the afternoon workshops, on insights gleaned through reflecting on my practice in the morning workshops.
emerged as significant\textsuperscript{99}. In particular, co-participant comments and my own reflections pointed to the role of the history of the subjects, the matching of university practitioners to certain subjects, delivery mode, and doctoral projects as key factors.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, the nature of some of the subjects we were teaching lent themselves to certain kinds of encounters with students, especially critical conversations. As Pat pointed out, subjects do not exist in isolation. Rather they are part of courses, each with their own history encompassing original design, ongoing review, and modifications. Any given subject is influenced by the collective historical efforts of those involved in teaching it and/or its original design. The subject I inherited, for instance, had been through several iterations, and taught by many different people over several years. Its location within courses, the assessment tasks, and readings may have changed to suit the people teaching the subject, and to respond to changing student cohorts; changing expectations for teacher training, qualifications and knowledge; and changing school environments. However, the collective insights of its prior subject coordinators (e.g., shared through teaching resources being passed from one coordinator to the next), and the legacy of its critical aims in terms of re-conceptualising the nature of secondary schools, schooling, and curriculum, remained.

Another relevant factor was the synergy between subjects, courses and doctoral studies and practitioner capabilities/interests. Jess’s leadership subjects, for example, given her leadership research and experience in educational leadership prior to becoming an academic, were well matched to her interests and expertise. Educators having input into a subject’s initial development promoted such synergies\textsuperscript{100}, as did staff being allocated to subjects they had taught previously. Bailey, for instance had taught most of the subjects she was allocated during the research period five or six times. She explained what difference repeated teaching of a subject made to her deliberations about priorities in pedagogical encounters:

\begin{quote}
...you obviously think differently the first time you teach something. You want to cover all angles all the time and then you have to work out well what’s a hill worth dying on ... you can deconstruct every single thing all the time but you have to work out ... How do you make that [decision]? But I think when you’ve taught [a subject before], in the end it’s going to pay off [in terms of goals] if I leave this bit and move
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{99} See Chapter Two for background information regarding the doctoral program relevant to this study.

\textsuperscript{100} What is embedded in subject outlines in the designing of subjects/courses can be influenced by who will have carriage of those subjects, and in the Faculty currently, the people developing the subject outlines and courses are not necessarily the people teaching the subjects.

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The educator’s experiential knowledge and capacity to make appropriate decisions develops through repeated teaching of a subject, since the person is able to iteratively act on insights gleaned from reflection on previous encounters. Repeated subject teachings and practitioner-subject matches are made possible by particular staffing practices (i.e., how lecturers are allocated to subjects), and processes and policies regarding course and subject design and review. Not all co-participants had the opportunity to work in subjects they had previously taught, or to which they were well matched in terms of expertise, as I discuss later in relation to some of the tensions.

Delivery mode was also identified as a key factor by the co-participants. Jess, in particular, highlighted some of the benefits of the on-line mode, including the flexibility it gave her in terms of how she could manage and dedicate her time:

... I didn’t get the time to finish looking at all the blogs, but I’ll look at them later this afternoon and I’ll respond to the students. Having that flexibility makes a huge difference.... [In face-to-face mode, if you’ve]... got a lecture from nine ’til eleven, you can’t sort of say ‘Well I’m going to ignore that lecture and I’ll actually deal with it this afternoon.’ You’ve just got to do it. (Interview 1: 7)

Jess also commented that, compared with distance subjects in which course materials were sent to students in hard copy form, there is flexibility in the on-line context to make changes to the course materials, pose questions, and add readings during the session. In other words, there is greater opportunity to interact with, and respond to, the students actually enrolled in the subjects. A further benefit noted by Jess was the novelty of being able to interact with students using different media (for example, the blogs).

Opportunities afforded by face-to-face mode, in contrast, are captured in the following statement by Alex in a Teacher Talk meeting:

I think there are all sorts of permissions that exist when you’re in the same room with the students and you can take advantage of the ‘teachable moment’ or whatever, so you can respond to things, and things pop up in ways that maybe they don’t in print or in forums or whatever. (TT May: 6)

101 Time emerged as a very important factor as I elaborate in ‘Sources of Tension’ presented later in this chapter.

102 Until recently, this was how many of the distance subjects were organised.
When in the “same room with students”, conversations can be free-flowing and natural, and ‘teachable moments’ (e.g., via the kinds of in-the-moment interventions, problematising, ‘think alouds’ exemplified in Chapter Six) are possible in ways that they may not be in an on-line environment. The consequences of action, as far as they are observable at all\(^\text{103}\), can be observed more immediately and readily. Verbal feedback can also be more immediate. Both students and teachers have the benefit of being able to see cues which, as Sam commented, are “central in any kind of teaching. It’s really central to know where you’re positioned at any given time because it helps you when you think about how you might engage” (Observation session: 7/6). This is very significant for critical pedagogical praxis since it involves making judgements about how to proceed in light of the consequences of unfolding action. Some technologies are available to allow access to ‘cues’, a point I come back to later in the chapter.

Another affordance of the face-to-face mode relevant to critical pedagogical praxis is how quickly educators and students can get to know each other. This was certainly the case for me in the secondary education subject. I was able to gain a sense of each student, and the cohort, more quickly than I have in teaching on-line subjects elsewhere, even with smaller class groups. Having said this, the two-hour face-to-face workshops with half of the students in my subject were much more conducive to getting to know students than were the one-hour lectures with the whole class, regardless of how dialogic I made the lectures.

In the case of doctoral supervision, the emergent, negotiated, and project-based nature of the doctorate itself was a relevant factor. The doctorate is inherently inquiry-focused, and the directions that the inquiry takes cannot be known in advance (or else the projects, as Connell (1985) pointed out, “would not be worth doing” (as cited in Green, 2012b, p. 16). Therefore, as I argued in Chapter Six, there is an extent to which the supervision task is necessarily responsive. That the doctorate involves only one project over three to four years full-time, or even longer if undertaken part-time, is also pertinent since it engages the doctoral candidate and supervisors in potentially deep and sustained critical conversation about a single, albeit multi-layered, activity.

\(^{103}\) Some consequences of action may never be known to the actor(s) or may not manifest or be felt until a long time afterwards.
Aspects of Place and Space

Part of our practice is how we relate to space and place, and so it is not surprising that pedagogical practice was being prefigured by material-economic arrangements, and material-economic arrangements were being constructed through practising in particular ways. The University’s geographical location was very relevant, especially regarding what resources we brought into pedagogical encounters with students (e.g., local curriculum documents in the case of teacher education; local stories), the ways in which we interacted with rural and/or dispersed students, our mindfulness regarding people’s geographical circumstances, and how we interacted with the local community.

In terms of possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis in face-to-face pedagogical encounters, actual physical set-ups played a role in making particular kinds of interactions possible. For instance, one of Bailey’s workshop rooms had been set up to resemble a modern school classroom, complete with multiple Smartboards and resources to which teachers might have access in a school setting. The workshop space, in which the furniture had been re-arranged by Bailey and the group to suit workshop activities, was ideal for the ‘smart searching’ task (described in Chapter Six), as it allowed a range of group configurations (since the desks had been arranged for various group sizes); student use of the internet to access resources and experientially test the activities that the students designed (via outlets for student lap tops located at each desk station); and the sharing of material between students and with Bailey (via the multiple interactive whiteboards) for feedback and critique. The space did have some limitations, one being poor acoustics, making whole-class discussion more difficult than small-group discussion.

In comparison with the workshop space, the large lecture theatre where Bailey worked with the same group of students for an hour once a week was more limited in terms of possibilities for interactive pedagogical approaches. It was designed in the style of a traditional lecture theatre, that is, in tiered rows with fixed seats facing a lectern located at the front, centre-stage. Such an arrangement evokes the notion of the ‘sage on the stage’ and lecturer as performer. The room where my lectures were held was similarly configured and fixed, although smaller, and with a large desk instead of a lectern. If the lecture theatre were the only type of pedagogical space available on the campus, the implications for critical pedagogical praxis would be significant, since it would limit flexibility in terms of being responsive to the needs of the group and
demands of the curriculum, and encourage monologic practices. Monologues may have their place in university pedagogy, but on their own are limiting for all the reasons articulated in the previous chapter. The long tradition of ‘tutorials’ in universities is recognition of this.

Place and space in relation to online pedagogy is much more complex since multiple and wide-ranging locations are implicated at any given time depending on where students and lecturers are based. The pedagogical space is also complex and multi-dimensional, taking in the rooms/buildings within which the lecturer/tutor and students sit to engage on line, the technologies (including the “30cm x 40cm” (Observation: 1) computer screen, as Sam pointed out) that make communication possible, and virtual space.

Faculty office spaces were also relevant to possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis in our setting. Student consultation meetings and doctoral supervision meetings took place, mostly, in academics’ offices. Full-time academics were housed in individual offices fitted with personal computers, bookshelves, notice boards, three or four chairs, and whatever personal items the academics added to the decor (e.g., books and mountains of paperwork). Casual academic staff generally worked in offices on a share-basis. From a student perspective, meeting in the office of one or other of my supervisors meant that multiple reference materials were on hand, for example, if we wanted to suddenly draw Habermas or Aristotle into our conversations, or to easily access web-based resources. We could close the door and create a ‘safe’ space.

Alex’s office was more conducive to participating in conversation on relatively equal terms. Being a slightly bigger office, it permitted the addition of a round table that we could all sit around. For the three of us to fit in Morgan’s office, in contrast, Morgan had to remain at her desk. This had the effect of reinforcing the space as Morgan’s space. (This was evident in the student consultation meetings as well, although it was quite conducive to a two-way conversation: Morgan and each student sat side by side at her desk facing her two computer screens (one screen displaying the assessment criteria, and the other displaying the student’s work)). Although I noticed a difference in atmosphere between Alex’s and Morgan’s offices, the arrangement of Morgan’s office did not, from my point of view, negatively affect ‘relatings’ (and therefore critical pedagogical praxis) in our supervision meetings, because, by the time we started using her office for meetings we had established a strong relationship. Power differentials that might have made ownership of space
relevant to our relatings had already been challenged through our developing relationship. However, I mention this because it highlighted that a physical arrangement whereby people can sit around, say a table, can create a sense of ownership of a space, and that a sense of ownership can influence how people relate to each other. In other words, physical arrangements and space (material-economic arrangements) matter in terms of the power relations (social-political arrangements) they can construct.

Communal spaces for staff were also relevant, especially given that academics were separated from each other for much of their day (when not engaged in teaching face-to-face, that is) because of the individual office arrangement. Staff rooms/lunch rooms that doubled as seminar rooms were important spaces for collegial conversation, exchanges of ideas, and informal and formal meetings. This relates to the role of the academic community in enabling critical pedagogical praxis, discussed next.

The Academic Community and the Role of Teacher Talk

Collegial relationships and opportunities for collaboration within the academic community, both inside and outside the university, were seen as enabling on many levels, but particularly in terms of being a source of intellectual stimulation and emotional and social sustenance, solidarity, inspiration, and information. Bailey described her collaborations with colleagues, particularly with people with whom she shared some common interests, as “generative” and “self-sustaining”; they “generate their own momentum” (Interview 2: 113). She explained that “working with people and synergistic relationships etc. offers more opportunities for creativity and ... dynamic work” (Interview 2: 1). According to Jess, working with others, for example, in collaborative review of courses or working with educational designers, provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and/or to watch what others do. It could prompt her to “rethink what I was doing and how I was doing it” (Interview 1: 6). Related to this, Morgan highlighted the importance of being part of a “rigorous professional community” in which people are “committed to generating a mass of teachers who are crap detectors.... and, themselves ... actively pursuing crap detecting” (Interview 2: 15). Such a community, Morgan implied, can be a source of courage, enabling practitioners to talk openly about their practice, to ask difficult
questions, to challenge each other to think differently, and sustain an interrogative approach to practice.

Some of the co-participants specifically identified their participation in Teacher Talk as enabling of critical pedagogical praxis for some of the reasons just mentioned. On an intellectual level, Teacher Talk was seen as a space of reflection, of testing ideas, and of sharing and generating knowledge. We were able to deliberate and debate about the situations in which we found ourselves, and in so doing, more deeply understand our pedagogical landscapes, pedagogical situations, and the people with whom we were working. It was a way of developing our understanding of our practice. On an emotional and relational level, it was regarded as a source of solidarity and belonging, agency, validation, and sustenance for the group members. In difficult times, it was appreciated by some for its therapeutic value, although this was not a key aim of the group.

While my fellow Teacher Talk group members indicated that their pedagogical practice as such had not changed in any fundamental way as a result of participating in Teacher Talk, all pointed to some ways (however small/large, observable/subtle) that Teacher Talk impacted on their thinking about their practice and the conditions of the workplace. On some occasions the conversations prompted critical action. An occurrence in one of the meetings demonstrates this aptly. We had been discussing a range of issues including how people manage to respond positively to difficult situations rather than be overwhelmed by them, and from where people derive their sense of an “ability to act”. There was some debate about whether it develops intersubjectively, for example in social experiences that show you how you can act and/or that provide a sense of solidarity from which courage can emerge, or whether it is a matter for the individual.

During the conversation, one of the group members made a sudden announcement that she was going to take action about the introduction of a central automated timetabling system: “Okay. I had a very bad day today and that was partly thinking about this horrendous timetable. I’ve decided what I’m going to do: I’m going to act.” (Co-participant, TT June: 13) We were not talking about the timetable at the time, but the issues – which had caused some of the group distress and frustration – had occupied much of the conversation in the meeting before, and some of the structural problems were still unresolved. Clearly, though, the person had been thinking about the timetable in the course of our discussion about agency and the
ability to act when she declared that she intended to (a) write to all in the Faculty asking people to identify their concerns with the timetable; then (b) send evidence to the Union and relevant senior executives of the University suggesting a change of software program and an interim strategy; and (c) finally encourage the union to do something similar in the other three faculties. She finished her declaration with “I just decided that!” (TT June: 14). The conversation continued in the meeting, and then afterwards through email exchanges as the plan was brought to fruition.  

In order that Teacher Talk conversations could prompt thinking and action in the ways described, particular material arrangements were created and/or utilised that could sustain the space, to borrow Alex’s words, as “caring”, “playful”, and “safe” (Supervision meeting, 29 Feb, 2012: 17-18). The Teacher Talk meetings were held off-campus in the home of two of the group members, which meant that the participants were “able to say things to each other without being at all worried that you were going to be told you were not being positive, or you were engaging in pushback because you were critical” (Interview 1: 1). The atmosphere created by the material arrangements in the setting was also important from some of the group members’ perspectives. The meetings took place in a “semi-darkened” lounge room bordered by large sofas (arranged around a coffee table) with bright cushions and blankets, which created a “safe” and “enclosed” (Group member, Interview 1: 13) environment; in other words, a “safe haven” (T. Smith et al., 2010, p. 59). Equally important were the social and discursive traditions that had developed over time, including sharing stories and experiences; affirming each other; respectfully challenging each other’s views; and other sayings, doings, and relatings mentioned in Chapter Six. Through these, the group members were able to build relationships and create/recreate a shared history. What was also important was that the group developed organically and was not an imposed structure (cf. Craig, 2009; T. Smith et al., 2010).

There were other practice architectures, in addition to Teacher Talk, that allowed the co-participants to work collaboratively and/or engage in scholarly conversation with peers. More formal arrangements included team-teaching arrangements, course teams, subject teams for subjects with large cohorts (including a

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104 The outcome of this action is also discussed in the next chapter.
subject convenor\textsuperscript{105}, subject coordinator/lecturers, tutors, and sometimes casual markers), course review and course development processes, research collaborations (including the PEP network), particular initiatives, staff and faculty meetings, and committee work. Less formal arrangements included lunch-time conversations in the staffrooms, informal collegial gatherings or “salons” (Co-participant, Interview 2: 8), and the kind of casual day-to-day conversations that occur as part of working in an academic community (e.g., in the photocopy room, in the corridor, at the coffee machine, over email, and through site-specific social media).

\textit{Research and Scholarly Activity}

As mentioned in previous chapters, the co-participants were involved in multiple research initiatives, some with each other and some independently of the Teacher Talk group. Coinciding with our research initiatives were numerous scholarly activities. We participated in many of these with other members of the Teacher Talk group and Faculty staff at a local level. Such activities included PEP reading group meetings, research seminars, lunch time seminars, writing groups, workshops with visiting scholars, or at a national or international level, for example, conferences, workshops, PEP meetings, doctoral schools, and writing collaborations.

Our engagement in research and scholarly activity informed our pedagogical practice by virtue of raising our consciousness about particular issues, ideas and circumstances, and aspects of our own practice, as well as forming our world views. It helped that the research and/or scholarly work was either about education and/or teaching, and/or about the field at the centre of our university teaching. Pat described the relationship between teaching practice and research and scholarly work as mutually informing: “...there’s a sort of a mutual inter-relationship between research, reading, talking, collaborating and teaching practice and one informs the other in many ways until the lines become very blurred; they’re one and the same thing” (Interview 2: 17). Our research sensitised us to particular aspects of our work, mediating the ways that we reflected on and made sense of our own practice, and encouraging us to ask particular kinds of questions, sometimes self-consciously. An example of this is the direct link that Sam described between her practice research and her sensitivity to what happens when she teaches in an on-line environment. Sam

\textsuperscript{105} Responsible for overseeing the coordination of subjects offered on multiple campuses and/or in multiple programs.
suggested that her research makes her more attuned to what is going on when learning happens or to what affects learning, for example, the role of the corporeal, thereby raising her awareness of what is ‘silenced’ in an on-line environment. I return to this point in the second part of the chapter.

Our research activity and scholarly work also penetrated the conversations that we had with students and each other. We were able to draw some of the language, issues, insights, and theoretical resources related to the research into our pedagogical encounters and curriculum work in the form of questions, forum topics, course readings, recommended readings in the case of doctoral supervision, citations, and even the introduction of new subjects. My own attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis were enabled in this way by the research reported in this thesis in the sense that some of the questions that emerged in the research were raised by me in workshop discussions with students (e.g., How do physical arrangements construct teaching practice and vice versa?). Thus aspects of our research became embedded (as cultural-discursive arrangements) within the sites of our pedagogical practice, and were part of our endeavours to create conditions of possibility for learning, and to evoke criticality amongst students.

Among the factors (including the practitioners’ own initiative) that made it possible for co-participants to make important links between research, scholarly work, and teaching, was the matching of lecturers/supervisors to particular subjects/PhD projects discussed earlier in the chapter. Other arrangements include those that gave the practitioners time (e.g., study leave or research fellowships; workload allocations; employment of casual markers/tutors), resources (e.g., funding arrangements; access to equipment/technology; workspace; university library databases), access to research participants (e.g., university-workplace partnerships) and other supportive infrastructure (e.g., administrative and research assistance; internet presence).

As well as the arrangements embedded and created in the University setting, the co-participants identified aspects of social life, family life, and personal relationships outside of the university environment that were enabling of efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis, especially when negotiating some of the challenges that I highlight in the second part of this chapter. One group member commented, “it’s actually having a [family] to go home to at the end of the day, which keeps me centred and sane. It’s having a work-life balance....” (Interview 2: 20). The importance of a partner who is understanding and supportive was also stressed.

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Another group member noted how conversations in the “social arena” (Interview 2: 24) could prompt her to think about her pedagogical practice. She explained what can happen when she is having a conversation with friends:

We’re talking about life and somebody makes a comment that causes me to think differently about practice in the classroom... and we’re not necessarily talking about teaching,... I find more and more that my practice is being constructed by the conversations that I’m having outside of [professional] practice, in social settings, about life and life chances. (Interview 2: 24)

These comments indicate that people’s lives both inside and beyond the work environment have a bearing on their capacity to practise in particular ways. It is to the role of practitioner capacity that I now turn.

Practitioner Capacity and Intentions
Not surprisingly, it became quite clear early in the research that embodying critical pedagogical praxis was related to practitioner capacity and intentions. I therefore asked, analytically (and literally in the Teacher Talk member interviews), what it was about the participating academics (as practitioners and human beings) that enabled us to embody critical pedagogical praxis as described in Chapter Six. Analysis of the interviews, in particular, pointed to a complex combination of practitioner intentions; knowledges/capabilities; values and philosophical principles; virtues; sense of agency; well-being; state of mind; physical characteristics; and dispositions. These were, in turn, shaped, or given meaning, in/by people’s life histories (including upbringing, education, prior professional experiences, and encounters with traditions), current circumstances and experiences, and our ongoing engagement in pedagogical practice.

Intentions and motivations were particularly significant because of the moral/social justice commitment inherent to the enactment of pedagogical practice as praxis (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a). As indicated, all of the co-participants, in talking about our practice, revealed an intention to be praxis-oriented educators, and to act in ethically and pedagogically appropriate ways. This can be understood in terms of the “projects” (Kemmis et al., in press) and “ends” (Schatzki, 2002) that orient practice. It can also be understood in terms of a quest for “the good” and the pursuit of

106 In the interests of space, I do not debate the distinctions between these contested terms in this thesis. Rather, I acknowledge that for some theorists, the distinctions between some of the terms are blurred (e.g., Kemmis et al. (2014) equate dispositions with “knowledge, skills and values” (p. 34); for MacIntyre (1981), “virtues are dispositions not only to act in particular ways but also to feel in particular ways” (p. 140)).
“excellence” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 177) in our practice. However, our individual ends (our individual telos, or “true good in society with others” (Knight, 1998, p. 8) and the good of humanity) seemed to vary. There may have been numerous reasons for this, including, perhaps, different perspectives on what “the good” consisted of, and/or how we thought we could contribute to “the good”. Morgan, for instance, was motivated, as discussed in Chapter Six in relation to her classroom encounter with Neil, by an intent to subvert assumptions of difference. She called it her “secret agenda” (Interview 2: 22-23). Ends related to specific “states of affairs” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 17) and sites of practice also varied based on the sense we made of the situations as they unfolded.

As well as intentions, particular virtues such as persistence, empathy, courage, and creativity were regarded as important by the co-participants. Philosophical principles and values were identified as relevant too. For instance, Pat spoke of respect; thoughtfulness; taking people from where they are and having a concept of, and commitment to, their development and growth; acknowledging all the affective dimensions of learning; and democratic principles. The co-participants additionally talked about the role of knowledges and capabilities. References to knowledges encompassed self-knowledge; knowledges and skills associated with pedagogical practice, and the specific disciplines/professions (e.g., ability to ‘read’ situations and people, analytical skills, communication); knowledge about people generally, and the people in our pedagogical landscapes specifically.

People’s dispositions were also identified, especially in Teacher Talk meetings, as important enablers of practitioner capacity to embody critical pedagogical praxis. Based on self-reflection and analysis of co-participant comments and practices (informed by literature), some of the key dispositions seemed to be an ethical disposition, or phronesis (Aristotle; Kemmis & Smith, 2008a; Kinsella & Pitman (Eds.), 2012); a scholarly disposition (Wilkinson & Eacott, 2013); a reflexive disposition (Wilkinson & Eacott, 2013); and a critical disposition (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a). Phronesis is directly relevant to the intention to act for “the good” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 204) in pedagogical practice. As Carr and Kemmis (2009) suggested, this is what it means to act “educationally”:

…to act educationally is always to act on the basis of an ethical disposition to practise in accordance with some more or less tacit understanding of what constitutes ‘the good life’ and ‘the good society’. Aristotle called this ethical disposition phronēsis … It is
revealed by educational practitioners who, in striving to achieve the ‘good’ view of the ‘good society’ intrinsic to their practice, demonstrate a capacity to see the particularities of their concrete practical situation in the light of its general educational significance and, on this basis, to make an educationally principled decision about the most appropriate action to take. (Carr & Kemmis, 2009, p. 3)

This comment makes an important link between MacIntyre’s (1981) notions of the quest for “the good” (p. 204), educational praxis, and what was being revealed in the co-participants’ efforts to see and understand particularities and be responsive and respond appropriately (praxis themes one and two discussed in Chapter Six).

Fay’s notion (1987) of “wilfulness” is particularly pertinent to the co-participants’ capacity to act on the basis of what is judged to be appropriate and just, even in the face of challenges. According to Fay, “wilfulness was one of four dispositions associated with “active beings” (p. 48), that is, beings capable of “transform[ing] themselves and their societies” (p. 57). The other three dispositions were “intelligence, curiosity, reflectiveness” (p. 50), which are also very relevant for critical pedagogical praxis and the co-participants’ enactment of it. Fay described wilfulness, not in the negative sense of stubborn disregard for consequences, but in a positive sense, as a “disposition to be and to act on the basis of one’s reflections” (p. 50), that is, to act in accordance with “how the individual thinks it [sic] ought to be in the world” (p. 51). Without wilfulness, Fay suggested, human beings are only passive participants in society.

Fay’s notion of wilfulness was captured aptly by the Teacher Talk member who took the action, described earlier, in response to the changes to the timetable. The following words accompanied her announcement about the action she would take:

sometimes we feel very oppressed by circumstances, and it takes a lot of personal resilience to hold onto the idea that you actually do have an ability to act. And it might be, as I’m thinking now about one issue, [that] what I’m thinking is outlandish.... I will be slapped many times by many people. But I know I’ve got an ability to act, and I am going to do it. And I think one of the really important things about a critical view of your own practice is this idea that we’ve got to hold onto: our concept of ourselves having the ability to act. (TT June: 9)

These words reflect not only a sense of wilfulness, as conceptualised by Fay (1987), but also a sense of agency, which, following Schatzki (2002), I understand as a sense of being able to “make something happen”, for example by “intervening and modifying an arrangement and bringing about action by occasioning it” (p. 192).
These words by the group member additionally highlight the importance of “resilience”. The group member later talked about the need for courage as well, especially in light of the risk that actions may not be regarded favourably by others (“I will be slapped many times by many people”).

Practitioner subjectivities, such as those to which I have been pointing, are related to who we are, and aspire to be, as human beings. However, these subjectivities are not fixed. As B. Green (2009b) observed, “what is becoming clearer ... and increasingly accepted, is that subjectivity is constituted in and through the practices (and discourses) of available cultures and traditions – of ‘forms of life’” (p. 5; cf. Schatzki, 2002). Our life histories thus have a bearing on our capacity to enact pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical practice, by virtue of constituting (and reconstituting) our subjectivities. Upbringing, roles in family and society, education, professional experiences, encounters with traditions (including theoretical traditions and cultural traditions), and personal circumstances, emerged in this research as particularly relevant (and interpenetrating) aspects of the co-participants’ life histories.

Upbringing was raised by most co-participants as an important factor, especially in terms of forming our values and ways of seeing and being in the world. As MacIntyre (1981) commented, “we are, whether we acknowledge it or not, what the past has made us and we cannot eradicate from ourselves...those parts of ourselves which are formed by our relationship to each formative stage in our history” (p. 122). Interestingly, the stories that my fellow group members revealed about their childhood or early adulthood suggested that all of us had either experienced some hardship in our formative years, or had been exposed to other people’s suffering. Such experiences served to sensitise us to the interests of those who are oppressed and marginalised or silenced in society.

Sam, for example, attributed her social justice sensitivities to being “denied an education” (Interview 2: 15) in her youth. Sam explained that

\begin{quote}
I wasn’t allowed to go to university, I wasn’t allowed to do the HSC\textsuperscript{107}, and that’s pretty common for people who grew up where I grew up. Girls just left, got a secretarial job, worked in a factory, got pregnant, had kids by the time they were 20. That was it. (Interview 2:15)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{107} Higher School Certificate: the highest secondary education qualification in New South Wales.
The obstacles Sam experienced as a young person heightened her sensitivity to issues related to inclusion and access to opportunities, as well as empathy for people facing difficult circumstances. Jess also linked her social justice concerns (and the development of a ‘feminist lens’) to her upbringing:

[My mother] worked as a factory worker because she had come here [to Australia] at twenty with not much formal education and ... she had no English. So she learnt everything on the factory floor from colleagues, and life was a battle. If you didn’t have a good education, and you were a female, and you were battling with having kids on your own, there’s your social justice thing straight away. (Interview 1: 10-11)

From Jess’s perspective, her feminist lens and social justice sensitivities (both furthered by later study, and both central to her “primary habitus” – Interview 2: 18) were part of what enabled her to “ask hard questions” in order to expose and challenge assumptions. They were also part of what motivated her to work on being “as inclusive as possible” (Interview 1: 11) and to ensure that students were exposed to a diverse range of resources and views.

Professional experience also emerged as a significant factor. All of the co-participants were already experienced educators when we began working in the University, although our previous educational contexts varied considerably from person to person. Pat, for instance, spoke of five experiences as a teacher (prior to working in a university) that were crucial in shaping and cementing “fairly important philosophical principles” (Interview 1: 12) that informed her teaching and “guided [her] life” (Interview 1: 12). These principles were mentioned earlier in this section of the chapter. The experiences were working in a community literacy van, teaching in a kindergarten, teaching in a prison, teaching a class dubbed the ‘naughty boys’, and teaching a class of predominantly non-English speaking teenage girls. The people Pat encountered, and the relationships she built in this eclectic mix of situations taught Pat “a lot more about what teaching is” and “embedded in [her] head those principles, that sense of praxis, if you like” (Interview 1: 12). This reflects what I think is intended by MacIntyre’s (1981) linking of people’s practice to their life narratives. The five experiences gave Pat a deep appreciation of the diversity of people’s circumstances and the relevance of personal circumstances to learning. It also encouraged her to question things that can turn people away from learning, explaining, in some ways, Pat’s previously noted commitment, in her current practice, to creating the “pre-conditions for learning”.

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Sam made reference to the role of professional experience in developing a skill central to her praxis: being able to ‘read a landscape’. Sam attributed this ability to her experience of working with Aboriginal Elders earlier in her professional career:

...the one thing I was taught when I was with Elders from the Land Council was to shut up and listen. And what they meant was listen and look, look at us and look at what we’re doing, and look at how we engage with things and watch us, how we do things. And for me it was a very powerful thing because it allowed me to learn to read a landscape.... (Observation: 7)

This experience, Sam intimated, and the skills that she developed through it, have added an important dimension (in terms of sensitivity to context) to her reflexivity as a practitioner.

My own experiences of teaching in outdoor settings and in an Aboriginal community were instrumental in helping me to see what happens when we (educators and human beings in general) take things for granted. The experiences instilled a sense of urgency in terms of asking critical questions and understanding how we (humans) arrived at this point in our history. This sense of urgency and attention to the consequences of our collective actions has enhanced my capacity for critical pedagogical praxis by shaping the kinds of questions I pose to students and the kinds of stories that I, like my colleagues, draw upon to illustrate and contextualise (or ‘bring to life’) various ideas and arguments about education and schooling.

The practitioner subjectivities and experiences just outlined were identified by co-participants as relevant to our capacity to enact critical pedagogical praxis because of their influences on our pedagogical sayings – including thinkings – (how we conceptualise education and our roles as educators; what we associate with the ‘good’ in/of practice; the questions we ask; how we name and reframe; what we notice; how we interpret the practice architectures shaping our practice); our doings (our curriculum and pedagogical choices; what we adapt, modify, create or reproduce; how we respond to and shape the practice architectures); and our relatings (with whom and with what we relate; how we relate to students, colleagues, others, and the world). These factors (dispositions, knowledges, values, virtues, sense of agency, and so on) continue to be shaped intersubjectively (i.e., in semantic space, physical time-space, and social space) by the practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) embedded, created and implicated in, and brought to, our setting. This includes the kinds of practice architectures already discussed in this chapter, and those I discuss next.
The factors and conditions that shape, sustain, or make critical pedagogical praxis possible in its various forms are multiple, complex, interconnected and, in many cases, dialectically related to critical pedagogical praxis. Both intersubjective factors and subjective factors emerged as important. What co-participants identified as key ‘enablers’ varied from person to person and from site to site. This suggests that what makes critical pedagogical praxis possible can vary depending on the circumstances, the sites, the practitioners, and other people involved. This was also true of the constraining practice architectures and sources of tension that form the basis of the discussion that follows. Like the enabling mediating conditions, the constraining conditions are interrelated and overlapping.

Sources of Tension for Educators

In this section, the discussion turns to findings related to elements (practice architectures) of the university setting that put boundaries around, and/or limitations on, the ways in which critical pedagogical praxis could be manifested, and nurtured, sustained and progressed. Some of the main sources of tension are discussed in the following paragraphs in terms of seven themes: (1) intensification of academic work; (2) lack of (or diminishing) contact time; (3) challenges of on-line teaching; (4) over-regulation and standardisation of practice; (5) promotion of particular constructions of pedagogical practice; (6) a shifting academic culture; and (7) difficulties in sustaining ‘communities of practice’. Each of these sources of tension is discussed in turn. Tensions featuring in this discussion are not restricted to those identified as impacting directly on the practices of the co-participants. Many of the sources of tension were identified as affecting the overall milieu of the University, the Faculty and the School, and stemmed from concerns about the ways in which these tensions had impacted on other people’s practices, or collective pedagogical practice, as well as our own practices.

Intensification of Academic Work

As for academics in other universities (Houston et al., 2006; Davies & Bansel, 2005; Kenny et al., 2012; Hartman & Darab, 2012), busy workloads and work intensification were major sources of tension for all the members of Teacher Talk and many of our colleagues. The group members spoke of increasing workloads, being expected to do more in less time or with fewer resources, pressure to produce measurable outputs, and multiple, sometimes competing, demands being placed on
academics by the various dimensions of academic work (i.e., teaching, administration, research, community engagement, scholarship, and leadership). One of the co-participants drew two metaphors in our second interview that captured these pressures: an elastic band to represent her practice being pulled in different directions and stretched by various demands, and juggling balls to represent the multiple responsibilities she was constantly negotiating and managing (Appendix J, Figure 11.1).

A number of practice architectures were identified as contributing to work intensification and work pressure issues. Some of these were organisational arrangements, one being the introduction of a “three-session teaching calendar” (Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 53) in 2010 to replace two extended sessions and a short "summer session" per year (Co-participant, Meeting: field notes). This change essentially reduced the length of the two major sessions and reduced the turnaround time for assessment marking, grade finalisation, and preparation for the next session’s subjects. Not only has this had flow-on time pressures for administrative staff supporting academic programs, it has also amounted to teaching staff doing the same amount of work in less time, with “no break” (Co-participant, Meeting: field notes) when teaching for two successive sessions108. Another relevant organisational arrangement is cross-campus teaching. As explained in Chapter Two, this created extra work demands because of additional layers of bureaucracy. I say more about this shortly in the discussion of the second source of tension.

Pressures created by arrangements such as these have been exacerbated by staffing issues. As in many Australian universities (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; May et al., 2011, July; Percy & Beaumont, 2008), positions vacated by full-time continuing staff have increasingly been partly filled by casual staff, a practice attributed by some of the co-participants to the University’s attempts to save costs (cf. Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010). Casual academic staff in the Faculty are not given the time needed to (nor are they paid to) assume some of the responsibilities expected of full-time staff, leaving fewer and fewer people to share a growing number of responsibilities. Being a regionally-located university, staff recruitment is itself an issue, particularly for certain disciplines. The task of “locating people [who can be

108 See Hartman and Darab (2012). The authors mention similar issues to those experienced in our setting, but explore the impact of the three-session arrangement in much greater depth than space allows in this thesis.
appointed as casual teachers] with appropriate experience often falls to full time continuing staff” (Co-participant, Interview 2: 2), as does the task of mentoring casual staff. Consequently, it is not unusual for people to be teaching outside their areas of ‘expertise’ and/or in subjects they have not previously taught, which can require additional preparation on the part of the educators concerned.

The pressures I have been discussing are felt especially acutely by those with large class sizes; again, this is an issue being experienced in other universities (Altbach et al., 2009). The workload is increased with the greater volume of assessment to mark, emails and queries to respond to, and interactions with students associated with greater student-teacher ratios. In our Faculty, this is more the case for those, like Sam, working in on-line courses. Sam commented that “it’s not anything for me to have 300 students in a session who I feel need my undivided attention, which is absolutely impossible to do” (Co-participant, Interview 1: 8). The outsourcing of marking and the employment of tutors can alleviate some of these pressures. However, the responsibilities that accompany working with tutors and casual markers (e.g., moderation of marking), and taking overall responsibility for the subjects, still demand time. Outsourcing also means that continuing staff may lose a direct sense of student learning that marking the students’ work provides.

Another contributing factor has been the high rate of change (or “institutional churn” (Tight, 2013, p. 11) as noted in Chapter Three) within the University as it strives to (a) meet the demands of the changing community; (b) keep in step with technological advances; (c) find more internal cost-efficiencies to alleviate funding pressures; and (d) compete with other universities (“it’s all tied up with ... universities being competitive with one another, with uncapping of places. What’s our edge? Everybody else is doing it...” (Co-participant, Interview 1: 3). The restructure of the Faculty through the merging of two of the Schools is an example of a recent major change. The frequency and speed with which new initiatives have been “hitting the staff” (Co-participant, Interview 1: 3) place additional demands on educators to digest, learn about, implement, and sometimes deal with the ‘fallout’ of, changes. The high rate of change has been particularly noticeable in relation to information technology, for example, through the introduction of centralised databases and automated systems (such as the assessment database package, Gradebook, and the automated academic timetable), and the rollover of different ‘learning platforms’ for on-line courses.
Many of the new initiatives have been introduced to promote productivity and efficiency, and, in the cases of on-line learning, the three-session academic calendar, and the extended academic day, to increase flexibility for students. Flexibility for students has been important for accommodating their increasingly busy lives. However, it has meant that students (and staff) can potentially expect to have 24-hour access to teaching staff, seven days a week, all months of the year. Sam commented that some students despite the university having specified business hours, expect that “you’re actually sitting in your desk waiting for them to email you 10 o’clock at night, 11 o’clock at night” (Meeting109: 5). This reinforces Sappey and Bamber’s (2007, December) comparison of universities to shops open for business “24/7” (p. 10), a by-product, it would seem, of competition between universities to attract students, advances in, and rise of, technology, and a general neoliberal culture.

While some of these old and newly created arrangements may be underpinned by sound intentions, the resultant work intensification for academics has meant diminished time and energy for doing what is central to critical pedagogical praxis, such as building relationships with people and developing understanding, reflecting on practice, staying informed, developing subjects and courses that evoke criticality, sourcing appropriate (critical) resources, critical conversation, and debate. With so many responsibilities that “pull on teaching” (Interview 2: 15), university educators can find it difficult to embody praxis in their teaching, as the following comment suggests, and in particular, to “make connections with students”:

...there are times when it’s been a different sort of pressure this year that I don’t feel like I’m working as well as I can in some areas ... I mean I’m very lucky that I have got a strong curriculum knowledge ... But sometimes I feel like you’re doing the curriculum but you’re not connecting to the people in the classes as well as you should. I always try and make as much of an effort as I possibly can to know and understand who are these people I’m working with, even though there’s 120 of them in the group. I try my very best. But I’m finding that because of these other things that are going on, I’m not doing it as well. (Co-participant Interview 2: 14)

The pressures of dealing with multiple responsibilities in less time (cf. Hartman & Darab, 2012), and the frustration of not practising in ways to which we aspire (cf.

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109 I am using ‘meeting’ in a generic sense here and in other instances where indicating the specific source might expose the participants concerned.
Sweet, 1998), are sources of stress, affecting well-being and therefore teaching practice in indirect, but important, ways.

Another (perhaps less visible) effect is the extent to which people are too overwhelmed by all the tasks and changes they are juggling and negotiating to notice and think critically about what is going on in our setting (including how people and pedagogy are being affected by existing and changing practices and conditions). In one of the Teacher Talk meetings in which new timetable changes were discussed, for instance, one group member commented that she had not had time to consider the implications of the changes for her teaching until they had already been instituted. I suggest that in the current climate in our setting, this is not uncommon. It can lead to people responding critically to important issues only at times of crisis. Pat evoked the well-known boiling frog analogy\footnote{This is based on the theory that frogs, if placed in boiling water, will immediately jump out and save their own lives, but, if placed in cold water that is gradually brought to the boil, will not notice the change in temperature, stay submerged and slowly cook to death.} to make precisely this point in one of our interviews. This has implications for practitioner agency and how well informed and responsive academics can be in their pedagogical work, as well as the extent to which they engage in debate about decisions that affect their practice directly and, from a collective praxis perspective, whether, and to what extent, new initiatives are sufficiently critiqued and democratically sanctioned.

This relates to another issue, that of tasks and decisions being rushed. One co-participant referred to “haphazard” decision-making, describing what appeared to her to be a manager being “so busy zooming around, she has no time to think about these things” (Interview 2: 12). When decisions are made ‘on the run’, opportunities for democratic process can be lost, and detailed attention to consequences can be sidelined. Poor decisions about anything to do with student learning and curriculum obviously impact on pedagogical practice. Equally concerning is the effect of time pressures on how university educators go about their pedagogical work, for example, rushing through ‘course content’, marking, and preparation. Hartman and Darab’s (2012) notion of “speedy pedagogy” (p. 56), which the authors argued induces mechanical, superficial and transmissive approaches to teaching, aptly captures this sense of rush. Many of the work intensification issues and flow-on effects we confronted in our setting replicate the concerns raised in higher education literature by...
Hartman and Darab (2012), and others (e.g., Davies & Bansel, 2007; Houston et al., 2006).

**Lack of (or Diminishing) Contact Time**

Directly related to this is the tension derived from time available for university educator engagement with students in any given subject (i.e., ‘contact time’) being reduced or compacted in on-line, blended, and face-to-face pedagogical spaces. Shrinking contact time is not new to the university. Hatton (2002) made the following observation about practices in the university over two decades ago:

> The new university decided that the CAE mode of ‘overteaching’ [group work v lecture style] was to go and that teaching contact hours were to be reduced as moves towards more self-directed learning were encouraged and the amount of research by staff was expected to increase. (pp. 16–17)

Since then, contact time has been slowly eroded through changes to the length of the teaching sessions (as mentioned), to the practice of rotating lecturers in a subject, to the tutorial system which has seen the reduction of many face-to-face tutorials from two hours to one hour per tutorial, and to a shift to on-line (Meeting: field notes) or blended ‘delivery’ (part face-to-face and part on-line). This has been occurring in other universities as well (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). It is also becoming increasingly relevant to doctoral supervision pedagogy as the pressures mount in the University – as elsewhere because of government requirements (Neumann, 2007) – for studies to be completed in three years (full time) rather than four years or more.

Moves to reduce contact time – which appear to be partly underpinned by narrow assumptions about the nature of higher education pedagogy and how people learn (Hartman & Darab, 2012) – have implications for opportunities to build teacher-student, student-student relationships and develop the kind of trust and understanding needed for critical dialogue (Curzon-Hobson, 2002; Gibbs et al., 2004). This issue was highlighted by Morgan as follows:

> I’m dealing with those types of students who have some kind of discriminatory assumptions ... I get into a safe space that I call my observation point, and I spend some time learning about them. Unfortunately I don’t have enough time. I encounter these students once a week for 13 weeks. So sometimes I never get out of that box with a group, because I’m spending time learning about them and why they think that way. (Interview 2: 20-21)
This statement reinforces how central understanding of the students is to Morgan’s capacity to challenge potentially harmful assumptions, and the role that contact time plays in learning about the students; once a week for 13 weeks, although not unusual for universities generally based on my experiences elsewhere, is sometimes not enough. Morgan additionally commented that lack of contact time could also prevent reaching the stage where classes would take risks to “have me interrogate the cultural assumptions that I walk into classrooms with as well” (Morgan, Interview 2: 23-24). Large class sizes are also relevant to contact time, since they reduce the amount of time that educators can interact with individual students. Sam legitimately asked, “How well can you know a class of 130?” (Observation: 16). These comments raise serious questions about the kinds of interactions and relationships that are denied and favoured by the current arrangements.

As well as affecting relationships, compressed or less contact time can affect the extent to which ideas are interrogated and given anything other than superficial treatment (Hartman & Darab, 2012). Indeed, Hartman and Darab (2012) commented: “it belies the work done by learning theorists who have demonstrated that deep learning is only able to take place under conditions that allow mature reflection and critique (Biggs 1999; Cantwell 2007)” (p. 56). One of the co-participants suggested that, under circumstances of reduced contact time, certain types of knowledge are privileged, for example, knowledge that can be “applied”:

...universities don’t account for it any longer... this idea that you’ve got to be applied all the time, it takes time to develop and it requires thinking time and we don’t – it’s not accounted for in our practice any longer. It’s not part of what we do. (Interview 2: 2)

Not only does the reference in this statement to what is not “accounted for” imply measurable and allocated work hours and contact time with students, it also implies the commodification of knowledge, which is antithetical to critical pedagogical praxis. This connects with one of the broader narratives in the literature (e.g., Bullen et al., 2010) that the kind of knowledge valued in the contemporary university is very different from the kind of knowledge that was valued thirty years ago.

**Challenges of the On-line Teaching Space**

The increasing shift of pedagogical practice into the on-line mode is one of the arrangements that appear to be contributing to change in the kinds of knowledge being privileged in the University. While on-line teaching and learning have many
affordances as indicated earlier, an over-reliance on on-line interactions can present some challenges for embodying critical pedagogical praxis. Some of these challenges were alluded to in the previous chapter and are consistent with issues raised in the literature (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2009).

The observation of Sam’s engagement in an on-line forum revealed five particularly relevant issues. One was the amount of time Sam had to spend dealing with technical issues, adding to the work intensification issues discussed above. For example, before Sam could begin to engage in the on-line forums in our observation session, she had to deal with Interact\textsuperscript{111} sites disappearing from her computer screen: “I now have to sort of work out, ‘Well where are my forums?’ I know they’re here, but they’re not where they normally are. So I’ve kind of lost my classroom in some ways” (Observation: 2). Movement between sites was also difficult and slow. One of the other co-participants and a colleague participant also spoke about the technical challenges of on-line teaching, especially for the students who were not familiar with the technology.

A second challenge is that parts of the body are silenced in on-line interactions. Sam talked about feeling frustrated at “having to silence parts of [her] body”:

\begin{quote}
I lose a sense of myself. I lose a sense of my own physical body ... So suddenly teaching becomes a cognitive thing rather than a part of my – you lose your identity in a lot of ways and I find that that’s a very difficult thing for me because of how I am or how I see myself. (Observation: 2)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
I can’t pick up cues from my students. They can’t pick up those cues from me.... If you lose that whole modality, then there’s a whole thing that’s missing in that ... teaching and learning contract, or the negotiation. (Observation: 7)
\end{quote}

Having parts of her body, and parts of the students’ bodies, silenced in the pedagogical exchanges was significant for Sam because of her sense that her identity and practice are so entwined, and because of her views about embodiment and the role of the physical body as a source of information. The latter is relevant to how she and her students engaged in interactions as teacher and learners, but it is also relevant to the content of subjects she was teaching.

\textsuperscript{111} Interact was the University’s learning management system in place at the time.
Because of the absence of bodily cues in on-line interactions relying on written text, as Sam pointed out, the risk of misinterpretation is high. Sam explained that she had to be “careful about my words” (Observation: 2) since communication is so literal and “people don’t read an email the way you wrote it. They read an email the way they feel when they read it” (Observation: 6). Unlike in a face-to-face classroom encounter (or, for example, when communicating via Skype), Sam suggested, “I can’t see that [Sharon] is sitting in the back of the classroom obviously unhappy about something and so… is she going to take …[my joke] personally? I can’t see that” (Observation: 7). For Sam, this meant having to use neutral language and relying less on humour, which was counter intuitive. In this sense, the written word mediates the kind of relating that is possible. The room for words to be interpreted in unintended ways, meanwhile, potentially makes critical conversation riskier than it might otherwise be.

A fourth challenge was the bounded-ness of the on-line space. The technology “sets up a whole range of structures that are not natural” (Observation: 2). Sam highlighted the layers of technology that she was required to negotiate in order to make contact with the students (including finding the missing sites!):

I don’t just open a door and walk into a classroom … I actually have to … announce my presence to other people before I can announce it to my class. I’ve got to log in … But what does that mean when I ‘log in’? … I’ve suddenly positioned myself, and I’ve positioned myself as an employee of this university in this particular school and now I can get in…. (Observation: 1)

Other features of the Interact program also ‘positioned’ Sam in particular ways. For instance, teachers’ comments automatically appeared in red font, which, in many cultures, has negative, punitive connotations, and signals authority and warning. This kind of subtle positioning works against notions of students and teachers as co-learners. Furthermore, conversations, unless they are taken off-line as discussed in Chapter Six, whether asynchronous or synchronous, are generally not as free-flowing.

As an aside, but an important one, Morgan raised the centrality of humour to her practice in terms of connecting with students and helping them engage with ideas. Like Sam, Morgan implied that it was part of who she was as a teacher, but that she sometimes felt constrained teaching in an Australian university as a non-Australian because much of her humour and many of her humorous stories would not carry the same meaning in a different cultural context. Morgan therefore had to be creative in how she went about incorporating humour into her teaching. This highlights once again, the mediating role of material-economic (location) and discursive-cultural (language/culture) arrangements.
as face-to-face conversations. They therefore tend to be “very one sided” (Observation: 22), according to Sam, as the lack of continuity is not conducive to people “feed[ing] off each other” in conversation. Sam regarded this as pedagogically problematic because of the importance of dialogue.

Related to this is a fifth challenge: surveillance. Sam described a sense of being watched and having to negotiate layers of “surveillance” (Observation: 1) as well as layers of technology: “I have to enter the University site where I know I’m going to be observed” (Observation: 2). This is reinforced by the ‘announcements’ (i.e., logging into the program) that need to be made by both students and educators before engaging in the forums. Perhaps adding to this sense of being observed is the fact that the on-line exchanges, being written, become part of a permanent record. This raises questions about the extent to which contributions in the subject forums are even more guarded than they might otherwise be, despite some of the benefits of the written mode, for example, those noted by Garrison and Kanuka (2004), of students having more time to consider their contributions to (on-line) discussions with their peers.

Over-regulation and Standardisation of Practices

The issue of surveillance is tied to another source of tension identified by the co-participants, that is, the over-regulation and standardisation of practices. The co-participants collectively and individually spoke about the number and range of mechanisms (e.g., policies, contractual agreements, procedures, and accountability measures) governing our everyday work. Some internal examples impacting on pedagogical practice include the ‘workload policy’113, assessment regulations, performance management, quality assurance procedures, employment contracts, and subject evaluations. Examples of external compliance mechanisms include the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which according to the University’s website, “sets the learning outcomes for each AQF level and qualification type” (Charles Sturt University, 2014a, para. 7), the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) (Charles Sturt University, 2014a).

113 Explained by one of the co-participants as “a formula that has been derived through the enterprise bargaining award that governs a calculation around the number of hours that people are doing in regard to teaching and coordination” (Interview 2: 8).
Stipulations related to assessment are illustrative of the excessive regulation of pedagogical work: the type of tasks, how many assignments, how many hours spent marking each paper, time-frame for return of marked papers to students, whether a numerical mark or a grade (e.g., ‘Distinction’) is assigned, when grades can be released and how, circumstances under which extensions can be granted, moderation processes, who and how many people are to approve grades, and how grades are to be distributed across a class cohort. Furthermore, the work of academics is being increasingly measured (against particular standards) and scrutinised, for example, in relation to the number of hours worked, scores on student evaluations, and the rate of publications per year. This parallels comments made by Ball (2012) citing Ozga (2008) about academic work being ‘governed by numbers’ (Ozga, 2008, cited in Ball, 2012, p. 18) (see Chapter Three).

Many of these governing mechanisms have been introduced with seemingly good intentions – not least the ‘improvement’ of teaching practice – in excess of satisfying external standards. However, there are numerous side-effects, which can, ironically, work against an ‘improvement’ agenda. Not only have the additional layers of bureaucratic procedure (Ball, 2012) in our setting created more work for academics, the combination of regulations and regulatory discourses, standards, and scheduling arrangements (e.g., timetables) has been generating an atmosphere of surveillance and a work environment in which management and systems, rather than pedagogical relations and demands, are setting the pace, rhythm, and flow (I. Young, 1990) of pedagogical work. Along with this, arguably, academics’ autonomous scholarly and professional judgement is being devalued; there is a skewing of priorities away from pedagogical concerns and towards satisfying external standards; and time and academic work are becoming increasingly commodified.

The ill-effects of such conditions for individual academics have caused much concern for the co-participants. Under pressure to meet certain expectations, to conform to and comply with standards and regulations, and indeed embrace regulatory discourses (e.g., the language associated with ‘quality assurance’), some academics have experienced anxiety, disillusionment, and/or a sense of disempowerment and

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114 This is a reference to a particular grade distribution to which subject grades were expected to conform in the Faculty at the time of the study (i.e., more Passes than Credits, more Credits than Distinctions, and more Distinctions than High Distinctions in the distribution of grades allocated to a class of students in a subject).

115 See I. Young (1990, p. 244). I have used I. Young’s words in a context different from that in which she used them.
loss of autonomy, again echoing observations about contemporary universities made by Ball (2012) and others. Three of the co-participants talked about “performance anxiety” (Interview 1: 14) (although only one of the three used this actual expression). A sense of what was meant by this is summarised in the following co-participant comment:

... I don’t have a problem with people being asked to, in a sense, be held to account for what it is they’re doing... I just think there’s something about trying to quantify it with these numbers and again screwing people down. Well you go to pick up the pin and you feel the weight of this sort of sitting behind you all the time and it actually, it doesn’t destroy my enjoyment in doing it, but it ... actually detracts from it considerably because it creates, I think, a climate of fear and oppression and there’s always this anxiety about whether you’re going to make the grade, and then you make the grade and then it’s sort of whether you’re going to continue to make the grade. And I mean it’s very stressful. (Interview 1: 14)

Again, such feelings as these have serious implications for the well-being of academics, which in turn affect people’s pedagogical practice.

The excessiveness of regulatory and compliance mechanisms can be attributed (and was attributed by most of the co-participants) to the entrenchment of managerialism in the University, along with the complexities and challenges it endures as a multi-campus university seeking to maintain its integrity as a unified institution (see Chapter Two). Preoccupations with finding efficiencies, efforts to control outputs, and performance measures are all characteristics of ‘new public management’ (Hood, 1991), which, according to Hatton’s (2002) research, has characterised governance within the University from its establishment in 1989 (see Chapter Two). External pressures have only served to compound the situation. External pressure has emanated not only from the accrediting and compliance agencies noted above, but also from funding bodies (principally the Federal Government), professional associations and accrediting bodies linked to professions for which graduates may be preparing (e.g., the NSW Institute of Teachers), and the community, as well as potential students (referred to all too often as ‘the market’).

The following co-participant comment highlights the connection between (a) internal managerial concerns and the increasing institution of accountability measures, (b) external pressures, and (c) the issue of trust placed in university educators by people in senior management positions:
The thing that is missing in the system is trust…. They don’t trust us to teach effectively because they’re answerable to some other god. So we have to be answerable to these things so they can be answerable to something out in the wilderness. (Interview 2: 12)

The suggestion of external pressures emanating from “some other god” located “out in the wilderness” is interesting since it highlights both the power and invisibility of some of the practice architectures implicated, but not necessarily residing, in our workplace (e.g., those just outlined). The trust issue is also significant. This is one identified by Nagy and Burch (2009) and Olssen and Peters (2005) as a symptom of managerialism. Casualisation – itself a by-product of new public management by virtue of being a form of ‘outsourcing’ (see Hood, 1991) – is in some respects contributing to this, and implicitly being used to justify a very worrying trend, from the point of view of the University’s educational mission, of ‘teacher-proofing’ (Dunne, 2005; Giroux, 2010) subjects and courses so that anybody can teach them.

**Promotion of Particular Constructions of Pedagogical Practice**

Conditions such as these encourage particular kinds of approaches to pedagogical practice, particularly of the *rule-following* kind (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Kemmis & Smith, 2008b) in which educators are little more than “operative[s] of some system” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 5). One of the co-participants talked about the regulations and standards having a “homogenising” effect on pedagogical practices whereby diversity of teaching styles/approaches and needs of particular student cohorts and campuses are overridden in a desire to make everything uniform. Hardy (2010a) has also written about this. The arguments behind such moves are couched in words like ‘consistency’ and ‘equity’ (e.g., “If the students here have that experience it’s inequitable because the students on the other campus don’t” (Interview 1: 6)). However, the effect is potentially inequitable. It ignores injustices created by the denial of difference and particularities of circumstances (I. Young, 1990), and diminishes flexibility and room for creativity and responsiveness in the conduct of pedagogical practice.

There was an overwhelming sense in which the conditions of compliance and work intensity were promoting what some of the co-participants referred to as “filling 116

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116 This aligns with a comment made by Arnetha Ball in her keynote presentation at 2012 Australian Association of Research Conference: “Equality has come to mean students learning the same thing in the same way at the same time”. Ball (2012) attributed this assumption to the corporatisation of education.
in the dots” (Interview 1: 7), “bells and whistles” (Interview 2: 8), and “box ticking” (Interview 2: 9) approaches. Filling in the dots teaching relates to the trend noted above of constructing the curriculum in such a way that anybody can teach it. Pedagogical practice, thus enacted, is formulaic and prescribed rather than responsive and dialogic, treating university education as transmissive: a “kind of retailing of textbooks, of knowledge out of textbooks. It’s not about having people who are competent” (Co-participant, Meeting: 23). The modularisation of units (or, from a cynical perspective, the neat ‘packaging’ of ready-made university subjects for the students as consumers) lends itself to this kind of teaching117.

The notions of pedagogical practice as bells and whistles and box ticking resonate with constructions of pedagogical practice as a technical and/or economic exercise (see Giroux, 2010; Hartman & Darab, 2010), and are thus consistent with some of the broader narratives in higher education literature outlined in Chapter Three. ‘Bells and whistles’ connotes a focus on products rather than praxis (Grundy, 1987), a lack of depth and substance, and an emphasis on practice ‘seeming’ to be educational rather than actually ‘being’ educational118. This, I suggest, is a sign of a profit-orientation (Giroux, 2010) not a praxis-orientation. This links to the observation, made by some of the co-participants, that the use of the latest technology is seen, by itself, as a measure of good teaching practice (e.g., “the mark of a good teacher in my school is the amount of things that you use” (14)), and that technology then becomes employed by people as a tool to “decorate their teaching” (Interview 2: 11). Relatedly, box ticking connotes compliance to normative notions and particular standards of what the ‘good teacher’ and ‘good pedagogy’ looks like. It suggests a kind of practice in which work ceases to be pedagogical, and instead becomes administrative, invoking the idea of teacher as “operative” (mentioned above; Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 5) and technician (Giroux, 2010) devoted to efficiency and measurable outputs in compliance with external standards.

These constructions of pedagogical practice are perpetuated and legitimised by the kind of discourses that pervade staff meetings, formal professional learning events, and documents that we engage with daily as academics. To illustrate, I draw

117 Modularisation of units can also be conducive to self-directed learning, which I believe has an important place in higher education, but not at the expense of all other forms of learning.

118 I have borrowed from Dewey’s (1938) notions of ‘seeming’ versus ‘being’ here (see p. 62). I return to this idea in the next chapter.
on an interview conversation with one of the co-participants in which one such document was mentioned:

This was sent to us today: ‘Blended and Flexible Learning Standards’... The reason it was sent to us is, a performance review is coming up... you have three levels of competency that they expect. You have baseline, progressive, and exemplary... So they’re going to tick box me or anybody else as they measure the standards of blended and flexible learning strategies that I use in my class. These are the measures they measure me against,... I look at these things here and this is what I call ‘bells and whistles’... I’ve been asking myself the question over and over and over. Right, so you can come into my classroom and observe my teaching, and you can actually get a tick box for all of these... But the problem is how do you know that I’ve really taught?... I just picked up ‘pedagogy’: [reading from the document] ‘course design provides a mix of pedagogical principles and disciplines’. So this is looking just at the course design. ‘Builds on prior knowledge of students, utilises authentic learning principles’. How do you know that? We haven’t met the students as yet... the course outline sometimes is active a month before we teach students. (Interview 2: 9)

Documents such as the one being cited in these comments, even if intended to be ‘aspirational’, have a normativising effect, especially in the absence of any critical conversation about what the standards mean, what the standards do, what the standards are for, whose interests the standards serve, what/who is constructing the standards, and if the standards are realistic given competing arrangements (e.g., the expectation that subject outlines are ‘active’ (published on-line) before educators have any contact with students). Such documents can be dismissed as rhetoric. However, over time, with a significant volume of texts conveying similar messages, and being authored by people whose influence matters in a competitive and uncertain environment, this rhetoric produces effects. It becomes part of the discursive-cultural arrangements that construct pedagogical practice in a particular way, and can leave academics feeling like the co-participant responding to the document: “...when you confront me with this, four pages of standards, I all of a sudden get really preoccupied with box-ticking” (Interview 2: 9).

Two of the co-participants made comments about this issue that offer some hope. One of the co-participants was adamant that people in the Faculty wanted to do the best thing by the students and were not focussing solely on routines and expectations. The other was keen to point out that although particular constructions of pedagogical practice were being promoted, especially in terms of compliance, “it is starting to change, particularly in our school, we argue quite strongly against all of
this kind of stuff” (Interview 1: 7), for example, against expectations regarding assessment. More is said about how such constructions are/were resisted towards the end of this chapter.

A Shifting Academic Culture

What I have described thus far in relation to sources of tension amounts to what some of the co-participants portrayed as a change in the academic culture of universities in general and our University in particular\(^{119}\). From the co-participants’ perspectives, the intensification and over-regulation of academic work, a managerialist, accountability-driven approach to governance, and other factors that I come to shortly, have been producing a culture that is somewhat antithetical to critical pedagogical praxis. The co-participants implicitly and explicitly created a picture of a university becoming increasingly managerial, competitive, compliant and isolationist, and less democratic, collegial, and critical. As I showed in Chapter Three (e.g., see Connell, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005), such shifts are not unique to our University. The following comments, taken from different co-participant interviews, reflect some of these concerns:

I think we’ve got management practices in place that want to shut everybody down … Some ‘you beaut’, new initiative is introduced, and you’re just supposed to adopt it rather than critically question it. The space for critical interrogation, not in the negative sense, but critical interrogation of initiatives, changes, trends, is really very absent I think … it’s just an anathema to use the word ‘evaluation’ which is part of this notion of critical pedagogical praxis. You are forever thinking and interrogating whether what you’re doing is the best that you can do, but I think the extent to which currently we’ve got agency about this management framework that’s around us, is quite limited. (Interview 2: 18)

There’s also a kind of Pollyanna tendency which says we don’t have to confront that: ‘We could say all sorts of clever and critical things about the world, but let’s just get on and live in it and let’s try and do the polite thing and the nice thing and we’ll try and talk about it being caring for kids and doing your best and so on, even if the circumstances that you meet aren’t ideal conditions’. (Interview 1: 21)

I don’t have the level of professional interrogation that I require … for my teaching. (Interview 2: 16)

\(^{119}\) One co-participant commented that she thought the situation was better in our University than elsewhere: “I find it an oppressive culture to work in, in that sense [reference to performance anxiety noted above], and this is better at [this university] than at some other places, in fact quite a bit better, which is shocking really” (Interview 1: 14).
...what’s around me this year is not the support and the relational structures and the support networks of the people in this building that I’ve experienced since I’ve been here. So we had strong connectivities and support around our research professors, ... other senior people in the building, other lecturers who were doing work in the same sessions. Whereas this year, I feel like we’ve got none of that ... It seems to me that people are working in isolation – everybody. (Interview 2: 13)

What has been slowly (and perhaps inadvertently) emerging, these comments suggest, is a culture in which silence, compliance, and performativity are valued over critique and open debate, and where people are working increasingly in isolation from each other.

A number of factors were identified as contributing to this “change in culture” (Pat, Interview 1: 7) in addition to some of the arrangements already discussed (e.g., accountability measures). One co-participant pointed to an individualising and depersonalising effect of diminishing “critical mass” connected to casualisation, as explained above: “you get to a point where you do not have a critical mass for collegiality, either in individual discipline areas or inside any kind of unit or school or division” (Interview 1: 4). Perhaps a sign of a diminishing “critical mass”, and a contributor to it, was the noticeable absence of people in one of the School buildings during the first year of the project\(^\text{120}\), although the absence of people may also be linked to the increasing use of information and communication technology, which reduces the need for academics to be present on campus to interact with students and colleagues.

The treatment of people who criticise initiatives or express a dissenting view also emerged as a contributing factor for some of the co-participants. For instance, the emails sent to senior managers regarding the new timetable changes, as described above, were never acknowledged by those senior managers. Also, one co-participant noted that “…you get into a lot of strife when you say you would like to evaluate something” (Interview 1: 2). Conversely, arrangements associated with rewards and incentives – such as grants, study leave approvals, promotion policies and practices, awards, and public recognition – emerged as contributing to an atmosphere of competitiveness between academic staff. Many such arrangements, as I commented in Chapter Two drawing on Hatton’s (2002) research, were instituted by the University’s

\(^{120}\text{This is based on my own observations and comments made by the co-participants.}

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first Vice-Chancellor precisely to encourage competition in line with his corporate agenda.

The kind of cultural shift that I have been describing has several serious implications for critical pedagogical praxis in addition to some of the effects already mentioned in relation to the first two sources of tension. A climate of competitiveness can lead to a lack of trust and strained relations between colleagues, while lack of “connectivity” can affect staff morale. This, in turn, affects the extent to which exchanges of ideas and perspectives, collaborative critical inquiry, collective critical pedagogical praxis, and collective action to promote conditions conducive to critical pedagogical praxis, are possible. The following co-participant comment highlights this relationship:

*If I don’t feel safe and I worry that people are actually competitive or people are silo-like in their practice, it limits my ability to do it [i.e. ask interrogative questions] because I then have to work on finding the courage to stand in a professional community by myself if I have to, and then do it with the students.* (Interview 2: 15)

Academics working in isolation from each other can lead to a fragmented approach to curriculum development:

*...each subject gets gardened, there’s someone who is the gardener for every subject but nobody’s thinking about the whole ecology any longer and there are moments when people do a course renewal where they think about the whole course and then everybody goes through a process of forgetting how the pieces are meant to fit together and cross course themes like these just get dropped* (Co-participant, Meeting: 7)

Opportunities for collective critical pedagogical praxis, I suggest, are at stake under such fragmented, individualistic arrangements where a sense of the ‘whole’, and when collective consciousness of the consequences of the whole (i.e., the history making dimension of our collective efforts), are lost.

Many of the issues related to a shifting academic culture were probably not helped by the Faculty restructure going on during the research period. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, in the first year of the study, two schools located in different regional areas were being merged, and most of the Teacher Talk group members were located in one of the merged schools. Because the two schools, each with its own Head, had operated relatively autonomously prior to the merger (they were still overseen by a Faculty Dean), the merger necessitated an overhaul of administrative practices, a reshuffling and rationalisation of positions, reformation of committees, and changes to
the ways in which meetings were conducted. The ways in which these changes were managed created a great deal of angst, confusion, instability, and extra work, which affected staff relations, the working environment, and staff well-being.

The impact of the merger was the subject of one of the Teacher Talk meetings. There was a general sense that the merger process was destabilising and demoralising. The group members spoke of uncertainty about what was going to happen to people’s jobs; confusion about who was responsible for what in the new structure; organisational delays; increased workload, especially for the new Head of School now responsible for a school doubled in size; “a sense of loss” stemming from the school’s identity being “ruptured” (TT March: 7) and losing a key “personality” (TT March: 8) with the reconfiguration of senior positions; disillusionment with the ‘top-down’ way in which the merger was managed; and staff conflict and suspicion. One of the group members described the newly formed school as directionless and anchorless at the time, alluding to a loss of a clear sense of its mission, or educational project:

*I find it odd that at this moment of transition for the school, suddenly actually it seems like all of the anchor ropes have been thrown overboard ....And where the ship’s going and where it is anchored or not anchored etc., it’s all gone completely nutso....*  

*We’re not thinking about our work and the real work [“of education for society”— member check]. What’s going on? People have lost ... they’ve forgotten their jobs. (TT March: 4-5).*

These statements capture the profound sense of concern about the situation at the time, shared by all the group members.

While, as Becker et al. (2004) stated, “a certain degree of distress is unavoidable in any institutional merger” (p. 153), the view shared amongst the Teacher Talk group was that change could have been managed with greater attention to staff welfare and implications for academic practice. Of particular concern were the ways in which various aspects of the merger were and were not communicated to staff within the schools concerned, and the lack of recognition that people were suffering in the process, such as people whose positions disappeared or changed as a result of the restructure. The group members suggested there was an indifference (felt, if not real) to the actualities of people’s lives. Also of concern was the lack of opportunity to raise concerns. One person commented, “a large majority of people are in pain and

121 My contract as a sessional lecturer is an example of this. The contract, and therefore my pay conditions, were not finalised until a month into the teaching session.
haven’t been given the space to release the pain in very productive ways” (TT, March: 14). Another member of the group expressed discomfort at being pressured, as a senior member of staff in the Faculty, to “put a positive spin” (TT March: 11) on the changes that were occurring, a further indication of a culture of silence. Putting a positive spin on an “inherently stressful” process (Cartwright & Cooper, 1994, p. 58) fails to acknowledge the important point made by Cartwright and Cooper (1994) that “when an organization is fundamentally changed, the psychological contract – the expectations that the individuals has [sic] of the other – is broken, becomes unclear and has to be reestablished or negotiated” (p. 58). Some measures were put in place to facilitate the process, but from the perspective of the co-participants, some of the key human concerns were ‘glossed over’.

The merger happened two years ago (at the time of writing) and routines and practices in the school have since stabilised. The extent to which the school and people have recovered from the upheaval, however, remains to be seen. Also, the toll that it took on staff relations (given the tensions related to the merging process which created the University in 1989), as well as on pedagogical practice at the time, and subsequently, will probably never be understood. What is clear is that what transpired in the merger process contributed to a climate of compliance and competition, and one in which dissenting or critical views were suppressed. At the very least, it heightened the significance and impact of the tensions and constraining conditions I have been highlighting in this chapter.

**Difficulties in Sustaining ‘Communities of Practice’**

The sources of tension and constraining conditions for critical pedagogical praxis that I have discussed have heightened the need for groups like Teacher Talk (as communities of practice) in our setting. However, there are some challenges for sustaining such communities or groups amidst difficult conditions. Furthermore and paradoxically, the strengths of such groups can also create some tensions. And so it was with our group, as strong as it was.

Some of the qualities of the Teacher Talk group that made it so enabling of critical pedagogical praxis in terms of providing sustenance, solidarity, a sense of belonging, and safety needed for collaborative critical reflection and intellectual playfulness, also had the potential to create some unintended consequences. Wenger et al. (2002) noted of groups such as ours: “as communities of practice focus on their
domains and deepen their expertise, they inevitably create boundaries. This is a natural outcome of the focus, the intimacy, and the competence they share” (p. 151). Although not discussed in the Teacher Talk meetings that were part of this research, some of the group members alluded, in the interviews, to an underlying tension related to boundaries. The social-space-time boundaries that were being constructed and reconstructed around the Teacher Talk group to make it a ‘safe haven’ for its members, and to foster belongingness and group identity, in some respects also made it exclusive.

Although there was a sense in which the boundaries were porous, some of the group members suggested that there were Faculty staff who wanted to be part of Teacher Talk (and PEP) but felt that the group was closed. My informal conversations with colleagues outside the group confirmed this sentiment. In a competitive environment in which relationships may already be strained, and in which connections to research groups are associated with material and other support for research (which is valued all the more in a climate where research output is regarded as a measure of success as an academic), issues of inclusion and exclusion regarding groups such as Teacher Talk can arguably take on greater significance and be more keenly felt from both a staff-relations perspective and a social justice perspective. Tension existed, therefore, because of the potential for Teacher Talk to be contributing to the very issues that the group hoped to address, even though opportunities existed for people to establish similar groups.

Furthermore, the small size of the group, while engendering an important level of intimacy, possibly limited the discussions in terms of having a diversity of views. The group was heterogeneous in many respects, as the varying conceptualisations of critical pedagogical praxis attest. Yet, there were also some respects in which our views were similar, and necessarily so in order for individuals to want to come together at all. One group member asked if we were so like-minded that it was possibly a case of “preaching to the choir” (Interview 2: 30). Another group member felt that there was “more robustness to the discussion” (Interview 2: 2) in previous years when the group was larger and more diverse. The “diminution in members” (Interview 2: 2) was acknowledged by the whole group by the end of the research.

122 There were seven members at the time of the study. There had been double this number in previous years.
period, and the group members agreed that it was important, for the sake of Teacher Talk’s vitality and criticality, to expand its membership.

Another challenge for the group was (and is) considering to what extent strong friendships and a commitment to preserving the group itself might be a tension regarding criticality. Again this is a paradox. A degree of friendship and trust is necessary for people to feel safe enough to expose their own views and stories to critique, and to challenge the views of others. Yet there is a sense in which, as Wenger et al. (2002) noted, “in a tight community a lot of implicit assumptions can go unquestioned” (p. 141), and “pushed to an extreme, close friendship and the desire for a sociable atmosphere can prevent members from critiquing each other” (p. 145). That some of the co-participants opened up in the interviews in ways that they did not in the Teacher Talk meetings raised questions for me about whether criticality and the expression of contrary perspectives sometimes gave way to the interests of preserving friendship, group cohesion, and conviviality.

A further tension relates to the “rhythm” (Wenger et al., 2002) of Teacher Talk. One of the co-participants explained that the group had “dipped and swayed a little bit with changing membership” (Interview 1: 5). This has implications for the group’s “aliveness” (Wenger et al., 2002) in terms of momentum: momentum for action and inquiry generated in meetings can be more readily sustained if meetings are more regular. At the follow-up meeting held a year after the last Teacher Talk meeting dedicated to this research (October, 2012), one of the group members raised the fact a year had passed since the last meeting. The group did not speculate about why this was the case, but we did express concern and a keenness to have regular meetings once again. In addition to the changing membership which was mentioned above, I surmise that the group “dipped and swayed” because of the voluntary nature of the group – which is crucial for the group to remain self-sustaining – and because the meetings were held in people’s ‘spare time’. When lives become busier – and this certainly appeared to be the case for the co-participants – or personal circumstances change, ‘spare time’ can become harder to find123. One group member commented, “in groups like this ... the rationale for why you do what you’re doing needs to be

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123 One of the group members commented in thesis chapter feedback that “around the time the research period with Teacher Talk ended, PEP (RIPPLE) introduced regular reading group meetings (approximately one per month) to maintain shared reading and discourses, so it may be that the reading group colonised the time previously devoted to Teacher Talk.” This may well have been the case, from my perspective.
revisited on a regular basis” (Interview 2: 2). Perhaps the ‘dips’ serve as a reminder of how important that is.

Such challenges are not unique to Teacher Talk. According to Wenger et al. (2002), the kinds of issues discussed here present ongoing tensions for all communities of practice and require constant vigilance. Furthermore, W. Green et al. (2013) and Nagy and Burch (2009) have highlighted that communities of practice are particularly difficult to sustain in a contemporary university environment. An issue not discussed in the texts just cited is a tension that may be specific to critically-oriented groups (or perhaps to our group?): the tendency for a “language of negativity” (Interview 1: 2) and a “focus on the constraining side of things” (Interview 2: 4) to dominate conversations at times. This tension became the subject of one of our reflexive Teacher Talk discussions. By our own admission, at times we were better at naming the issues than at identifying spaces for agency and enabling conditions, and making decisions about what we would do. One group member suggested that a negative focus can be a product of collaboratively examining conditions (whether enabling or constraining). Another member suggested that it can be a product of talking in general terms (which we sometimes did) rather than discussing the specifics of our own practice and specific impacts upon it. A reflexive vigilance is clearly demanded of the group to maintain a language of possibility.

Some of the sources of tension I have discussed in this chapter may appear to be peripheral to pedagogical practice, but the nature of critical pedagogical praxis (being, for example, relational, critical, risky, and intellectually demanding) is such that the capacity of educators to embody critical pedagogical praxis is not just a matter of the educators’ skills, abilities, aspirations, and dispositions. It is also dependent on their level of engagement in the educational community, frame of mind and well-being, reading of people and circumstances, and their sense of themselves as educators, all of which are affected by the broader conditions under which they work. In many cases the tensions identified in the research were raised (or noticed) in the context of particular university arrangements bumping up against the co-participants’ ideas about what a university is, what pedagogical practice is for, our understandings of praxis, and our ideas of the kinds of educators we want to be.

Of course the issues and arrangements outlined affected the co-participants differently. Indeed, arrangements that were constraining for some people, for example, aspects of working in the on-line space, were enabling for others. Many of
the concerns about working conditions were echoed by the colleague participants, suggesting that the experiences of the group in this regard were not unique. However, some academics not participating in this research may not regard the conditions I have described as problematic, especially if they are not aware of what is going on, or their interests are served by the current conditions, or they have different ideas about what education is and/or what a university is for. There may be some who regard the conditions as ‘normal’.

There is also a sense in which some arrangements are both enabling and constraining. This was observed in the higher education literature as well (e.g., Hardy, 2010b). Enabling conditions can provoke critical pedagogical praxis in a nurturing sense, while constraining conditions can provoke praxis as a form of resistance to those constraining conditions. As Alex put it in an interview, “many of the practice architectures that make me more passionate about these ideas are the ones that try to silence me” (Interview 2: 17-18).

This brings me to the ways in which tensions and constraints were negotiated. Despite many tensions and constraints, the co-participants found spaces for agency where there appeared to be none, and found ways to enact and sustain critical pedagogical praxis in their work. Some of the ways they managed to do this extend the narrative of how critical pedagogical praxis was manifested in our setting by virtue of being forms of critical pedagogical praxis in themselves.

**Negotiating Tensions; Changing Architectures**

The participating academics (the co-participants/Teacher Talk group members) negotiated and/or changed constraining conditions in multiple ways. Tensions were negotiated individually and collectively, as well as *strategically, creatively, proactively,* and/or *subversively.* The co-participants negotiated tensions and constraints *strategically* by “*clawing back a sense of agency*” (TT July: 12). The co-participants, for instance, prioritised on the basis of what was important (in terms of impact on people and learning), what was achievable, and what was sustainable and sustaining. This meant partly acknowledging that there are aspects of academic work that are beyond the control of individual educators (and groups for that matter), and that there are too many tensions to deal with all of them. Some spoke in terms of choosing “*which battle*” to fight, or deciding which “*hill [is] worth dying on*” (TT
June: 16). Others explained that they had developed a capacity to say ‘no’ to taking on extra responsibilities or to ignore certain pressures.

Some of the co-participants also indicated that they tended to immerse themselves in activities that were self-sustaining, such as research and teaching. One person, for example, talked about her teaching becoming a source of solace amidst the turmoil of the Faculty restructure (i.e., the merger), her teaching being “one of the few things” (Interview 2: 11) that she considered stable and over which she had some “control” (Interview 2: 11). Other co-participants spoke of finding “spaces of agency” (TT June: 4), for example, through curriculum review, School Board representation, the University Council, the Tertiary Education Union, and through research and teaching:

wherever there are fissures, you go through them (Interview 2: 19);

... it is really thinking about how you work in that space that can make a difference in people’s lives ... We do have power in that sense and so that’s always, for me, the saving grace (TT April: 26-27).

Tensions and constraints were also negotiated creatively. By this I mean doing something differently to see what happens, turning constraints into opportunities and teaching points, or resources, for learning. There were numerous examples of the latter in the study, from Bailey’s ‘think aloud’ about being over-stimulated in the multi-screen classroom (see Chapter Six), to some of the group members doing research into on-line learning, to restrictive furniture arrangements becoming a discussion stimulus for students in a workshop. Sam’s response to some of the constraints posed by the on-line environment is a good example of creative negotiation of tensions. As explained earlier in the chapter, Sam was conscious of technology silencing parts of the body. To address this, Sam deliberately used technology to “bring that body back into learning” (Interview 1: 14). (This relates to comments I made in the previous chapter about Pat and Sam creating a physical presence in the on-line subjects.) In addition to Skype and phone calls, Sam used emoticons (e.g., 😊) in her correspondence, posted a photograph with her welcome message on the subject forums, and made use of software (e.g., Bridgit) that allowed her to share her screen with students if they were experiencing difficulties:

so I’ll share my screen with them and then physically I will go through everything they need to go through and so for me it’s physical. So I’m using the mouse to show them what to do (Interview 1: 14)
The practice architectures, in this way, become resources to be used for ‘the good’.

Another way in which tensions and constraints were negotiated was proactively. Some examples of this are drawing inspiration from students and colleagues and from theorists and philosophers, and the creation of communicative spaces and communities of practice to understand and find ways of addressing issues affecting practice. Teacher Talk is a practice architecture created to serve this purpose. An additional proactive response to constraining conditions was taking on particular representative and leadership roles to effect change, voicing concerns in public forums or via letters to people in positions of responsibility (which some of the group members did regularly), and treating constraints as motivation for action.

During the research, I was able to see some of the positive impacts of this proactive negotiation of tensions. For example, although the emails sent to senior managers about the introduction of the new timetable were met with silence, with Union support, some changes to the system were made in the months subsequent to the emails being sent. This suggested that the action had made an impact. Changes were also being made to practices regarding the distribution of student grades, another issue that had been raised by a co-participant in a staff forum.

Some of the ways in which co-participants responded to constraints might be regarded as subversive or resistant. A few of the co-participants spoke of refusing to be silent, being strategically compliant, or ‘doing’ trouble-making, as the following statement suggests:

> you have to feel that you’re quite comfortable with the role of not being one of the compliant people and that’s a big struggle for many people I think in a sense, I think, you’ve got to be a trouble maker... and you’ve got to be prepared to be labelled as a trouble maker but I think if you’re labelled as a trouble maker because you critically interrogate parts of your working context, well roll on. (Interview 2: 18)

The research revealed that subversive responses to existing arrangements can take more subtle forms as well. In a sense, the kind of self-positioning of the educator as a co-learner that I described in the previous chapter is an example. In one of Bailey’s workshops, Bailey was refusing to let the students position her as ‘the expert’ (or ‘spoon-feeder’) in the class discussion. It was as if the students were following a well-
rehearsed ‘script’\textsuperscript{124} that she was subversively encouraging them to rewrite. It could also be said that by continuing to engage as praxis-oriented educators, the co-participants were all subversively challenging some of the increasingly prevalent ‘box ticking’ and ‘bells and whistles’ constructions of university pedagogical practice, and variously pushing at the boundaries of what it means to be a university educator.

Negotiation of, and working with/in, the tensions and constraints, proved to be an ongoing and challenging process for the co-participants (and our colleagues). It involved academics refusing or transcending a ‘survival mode’, and/or finding balance or unity, and/or finding a way to reconcile and manage the competing demands on time, energy, and intellect, while being mindful of self-care and self-preservation. How tensions were being negotiated depended on the architectures and sites, and different kinds of manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis. However, it also depended on our personal circumstances, and the kinds of virtues (especially courage, persistence, and justice), dispositions (especially wilfulness and phronesis), sense of agency, knowledges, and values that enabled us to identify, interpret, and respond to “\textit{salient cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements in a site}” (Co-participant, chapter feedback). This relates to the discussion earlier about practitioner capacity. The co-participants may have felt like “operators” (Kemmis & Smith, 2008b, p. 5) at times, but on the whole, saw themselves as ‘agents’ of change. This is reflected in the following co-participant comment:

\textit{... after you recognise what you can control and ... you realise it’s very little, you have to be prepared to do the best you can with that very little agency that you do have... So it’s what I do with that information that becomes critical. (TT June: 5-6)}

This comment emerged in Teacher Talk, itself an example of how academics are negotiating, and can negotiate, constraining conditions in our setting. It was, in a sense, a strategic, creative, proactive \textit{and} subversive response (in the form of a communicative space) to a perceived lack of opportunity for critically reflective dialogue and commitment to countering constraining conditions. It was a practice architecture that allowed the group members to confront these things together and draw on the strengths of each other.

\textsuperscript{124} The unwritten ‘script’ that many students so dutifully learn from Year One to Year 12 and sometimes into university that goes something like this: ‘student defers to teacher; teacher knows the correct answer’.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to discuss findings related to what was constraining and enabling the co-participants’ efforts to enact pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis. I first focussed on what was enabling of critical pedagogical praxis, beginning with enabling practice architectures and proceeding to practitioner subjectivities and aspects of people’s life histories in a discussion of practitioner capacity. I then turned to the practice architectures that were either constraining of efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis, or identified by the co-participants as sources of tension. This discussion of tensions concluded with an exploration of how tensions were negotiated, highlighting the agentic responses of the co-participants to complex neoliberal and managerialist conditions.

In presenting these findings, I have not only pointed to specific practice architectures that affected practitioner capacity and shaped critical pedagogical praxis, I have also highlighted some of the complex ways in which practice architectures, practitioner capacity, practitioner subjectivities, and life histories relate to each other. This is important for understanding how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured, a question that I consider more explicitly in the next chapter. I now turn to that chapter to directly address the four guiding research questions and the overarching question. In doing so, I theorise the main issues emerging from the discussions in this chapter and Chapter Six, and discuss their implications for university practice and policy in the local setting.
CHAPTER EIGHT – THEORISING PRAXIS

What difference, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
   How might we provoke you?
   And possibilities create,
   By making space
   For imagining
   And flourishing,
   Not rendering
   Your habitat
   Hostile?

This chapter is the third of three chapters dedicated to discussion of the key research findings. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (a) to bring the empirical findings presented in Chapters Six and Seven into conversation with the three practice theories comprising the theoretical framework for this research as a means of shedding further light on some of the key issues and concepts; and (b) to provide direct responses to the four guiding questions and overarching question, and consider the implications of these for practices in the local University setting. In addressing these aims, I highlight the complexity of critical pedagogical praxis, and of the task of nurturing it, especially within a neoliberal environment. I also highlight the sources of hope in the face of challenges and complexity.

The chapter is organised in five parts, with each part corresponding to one of the four guiding research questions and the fifth overarching question:

1. What is the nature of critical pedagogical praxis?
2. How is critical pedagogical praxis enacted within a particular higher education setting?
3. What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting and how so?
4. How might enabling conditions be sustained and developed, and constraining or disabling conditions changed or negotiated? and
5. How can critical pedagogical praxis be nurtured in higher education?

In each part of the chapter, I offer responses to these questions, reversing the order of the first two questions. My responses are based on the key findings and issues (as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven), and on further theoretical analysis of the practices, conditions and relevant constructs, in light of the three practice theories comprising the theoretical framework. Thus, I draw more explicitly in this chapter on the three practice theories (Kemmis et al., 2014; MacIntyre, 1981; Schatzki, 2002, 2012), and weave my thoughts regarding questions prompted by these theories (see
Table 4.1, Chapter Four), through the discussion. I do this not to privilege theory over the lived experiences, but to shed different light on the issues and constructs explored in the project. Implications for practice and policy in our University setting form part of the discussion in relation to the fourth guiding question. Broader implications are discussed in Chapter Ten.

How was Critical Pedagogical Praxis Enacted?

In Chapter Six I discussed the ways in which the co-participants in the study enacted critical pedagogical praxis in three pedagogical sites: initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision. The examples provided in the chapter showed how critical pedagogical praxis was enacted *individually*, that is, by the individual practitioners in encounters with students, and *that* it was enacted *variously*. Critical pedagogical praxis looked (and felt) different in different contexts, and was enacted differently from person to person. That critical pedagogical praxis can be variously enacted was also evident in the literature, where different authors described critical pedagogical praxis enacted in different forms (See Chapter Three).

Despite the variations in manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis across contexts and people in this study, it appeared that critical pedagogical praxis involved the embodiment of a “praxis stance” (T. Smith, 2008, p. 79), where a praxis stance implies an orientation towards being morally (and critically) committed, deliberative, reflexive, and informed (see also Kemmis & Smith, 2008a). This praxis stance was embodied, as noted in the praxis themes identified in Chapter Six, *deliberately, consciously* and variously through (1) endeavouring to understand; (2) being responsive and responding appropriately; (3) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development; and (4) embodying and evoking criticality.

The research also revealed that critical pedagogical praxis was enacted *collectively*, for example, through communities of practice. In Chapter Six, I explained the role of Teacher Talk, the community of practice to which the research co-participants belonged, in manifestations of collective critical pedagogical praxis. The praxis themes were equally relevant to collective practice, and in the case of Teacher Talk were enacted through collaborative, reflexive, critical inquiry. This has resonances with the work of Arnold et al. (2011, December; 2012, December), Hardy (2010a, 2010b), and Hooley (2013).
Critical pedagogical praxis was also shown to be enacted through the negotiation of practice architectures that constrained pedagogical practice or created tensions for the co-participants. This was discussed at the end of Chapter Seven. It involved the co-participants applying the aspects of practice captured in the four praxis themes to our own work circumstances: understanding our conditions and their impacts on practice and people, responding in the most appropriate ways to the circumstances, creating conditions of possibility for praxis, and embodying criticality in agentic responses to conditions. In some respects, this partly answers the research question I consider next.

What is the Nature of Critical Pedagogical Praxis?

Analysis of how critical pedagogical praxis was enacted in our setting (in light of literature) makes possible some observations about the nature of critical pedagogical praxis in higher education. This addresses the first guiding research question: What is the nature of critical pedagogical praxis? Critical pedagogical praxis was found to be site-sensitive and multifarious. The different manifestations of critical pedagogical praxis across initial teacher education, online pedagogy, and doctoral supervision pedagogy, and across different people’s practice were evidence of this (see Chapter Six). That critical pedagogical praxis was embodied differently from person to person suggests that critical pedagogical praxis is also idiosyncratic. Individual practitioner subjectivities, capabilities, and life narratives appeared to have a significant bearing on the nuanced differences from person to person.

These characteristics of critical pedagogical praxis – that is, being site sensitive, multifarious and idiosyncratic – make critical pedagogical praxis highly complex. There are other factors contributing to the complexity of critical pedagogical praxis, not least that it combines aspects of social relations that are themselves complex: pedagogy, praxis (and practice), and criticality. Its complexity stems also from the complex and ambiguous relationship between critical pedagogical praxis and pedagogical practice; the complexity of pedagogical sites; and the complex relationship between critical pedagogical praxis, the practitioners who embody it, and the arrangements with which it is enmeshed (Kemmis et al., 2014). Such complexity has implications for researching critical pedagogical praxis, as I discuss in the next chapter, and finding ways to nurture it; so, it is worthwhile unpacking this complexity further.
Even though they focus on practice and praxis in a general sense rather than critical pedagogical praxis specifically, the three practice theories comprising the theoretical framework for this research are useful in this regard. The theories are also useful for highlighting how critical pedagogical praxis is distinct from pedagogical practice, and distinct from (and in tension with) species of pedagogical practice with which critical pedagogical praxis appeared (empirically) to compete for legitimacy. The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014), for instance, raises the question of whether there are characteristic *sayings, doings*, and *relatings* of critical pedagogical praxis, and whether there might be a distinct *project* within which such sayings, doings, and relatings hang together. However, because critical pedagogical praxis is context-sensitive and idiosyncratic, it was not possible to identify *particular* nexuses of sayings, doings, and relatings (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) that characterise pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis in some *universal* sense.

Rather, there appeared to be sayings (e.g., inclusive, supportive language), doings (e.g., challenging assumptions), and ways of relating (e.g., addressing uneven teacher-student power imbalances) *associated with* critical pedagogical praxis, some of which were highlighted in the discussion of the four praxis themes in Chapter Six. However, such sayings, doings, and relatings were only comprehensible as aspects of critical pedagogical praxis when considered in light of whatever else was going on in the sites within which they emerged, and in light of the practitioners’ intentions. I think it might be possible to say, as the theory of practice architectures suggests, that there are characteristic sayings, doings, and relatings of *pedagogical practice* that hang together in a pedagogical *project*. However, exploring in detail the characteristic sayings, doings, and relatings of pedagogical practice as such was beyond the scope of this research.

In terms of the “project” or “projects” (Kemmis & Brennan-Kemmis, 2014, April) of critical pedagogical praxis, it appears that overt moral and social justice commitments underpinning critical pedagogical praxis – the moral dimensions of the projects of pedagogical practice (i.e., educating for the ‘good’ of individuals and the good of human kind) – are fore-grounded in the doing of the practice. This was

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125 See Chapter Four for a detailed discussion that contextualises these questions.
126 Hence, I have not provided a decontextualised and definitive list of sayings, doings, and relatings for critical pedagogical praxis. To do so would be unhelpful and misleading.
certainly the case for the co-participants in this research, and was evident in the literature discussed in Chapter Three. While notions of what ‘for the good’ and what ‘the good’ entail are contested and subjective, there was at least a common explicit project. This common project is reflected in the working definition of critical pedagogical praxis used throughout this thesis: seeking to ‘create spaces (e.g., through teaching and learning interactions) in which harmful or unsustainable practices and power relationships can be understood and reoriented, and in which new possibilities for action can emerge and be enacted’.

MacIntyre’s (1981) work is helpful in unpacking the complexity of critical pedagogical praxis. MacIntyre (1981), in articulating his view of practice, wrote of the internal goods of a practice that are realised in the pursuit of excellence of that practice. According to several views on praxis, praxis is motivated by ‘internal goods’ (MacIntyre, 1981), such that the doing of the practice is an end in itself (see Carr, 2004; Kemmis, 2012b; see also Chapter Three, ‘Praxis and Praxis Development’). It follows that the very enactment of pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis implies a motivation linked to the ‘internal goods’ of pedagogical practice. This relates to the intrinsic worth of doing the best that one can given the sets of circumstances being faced in practice. In particular, it relates to the intrinsic worth of acting, pedagogically, for the good of others and society; acting justly, and responding appropriately (ethically and pedagogically speaking). Again, as shown in Chapter Six, this was what I witnessed and experienced in this study. The ‘critical’ in critical pedagogical praxis overlaid the internal goods of pedagogical practice with the satisfaction of acting for justice and against injustice.

Pursuit of practice for the sake of producing ‘external goods’ (MacIntyre, 1981) is associated with poiesis (making action involving the “skilful application of rules of procedure” (Grundy, 1987, p. 176)) rather than praxis (Kemmis, 2012b). Poeisis is more relevant to pedagogical practice enacted as a technical or economic exercise. The suggestion by co-participants (see Chapter Seven) that constructions of pedagogical practice as both praxis (e.g., critical pedagogical praxis) and poeisis (e.g., ‘filling-in-the-dots’, ‘bells and whistles’, ‘box ticking’) co-exist in our University, is indicative of a debate internal to the tradition of higher education pedagogical practice about what the “ends” and the “standards of excellence” of pedagogical practice are and ought to be.
Schatzki’s (2002) articulation of the four aspects of a practice that “form its organization” (Schatzki, 2002, p. 77; see this thesis, Chapter Four) raises questions about whether pedagogical practice enacted as critical pedagogical praxis might have (1) practical understandings, (2) rules, (3) teleo-affective structures and (4) general understandings (Schatzki, 2012) that pertain to its character as critical pedagogical praxis. Based on the empirical findings of this research and theoretical analysis, my sense is that there are some practical understandings in critical pedagogical praxis that are distinct from the practical understandings of pedagogical practice in general, although some practical understandings might be fore-grounded in enacting pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis (e.g., how to ‘read’ a social situation critically in terms of harmful and unsustainable practices and power relationships, how to build relationships with students that can be sustained despite raising ‘uncomfortable’ issues, and how to ask questions specifically to prompt critical thinking about harmful and unsustainable practices and power relationships). Perhaps there are general understandings in terms of a shared notion of the intrinsic and moral value of pursuing pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis and of doing the best that one can along the lines discussed above in relation to ‘internal goods’ of pedagogical practice.

Regarding teleo-affective structures or components, I suggest that there are emotions and moods that it would be acceptable (and unacceptable) for educators to express, and ends that it would (and would not) be acceptable to pursue, if embodying pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis. For instance, it would be antithetical to critical pedagogical praxis to act purely for the sake of personal gain, and to express say malice, greed, or revenge, in the conduct of the practice. Conversely, it would be acceptable to express care, empathy, or sensitivity, and expected that teachers act in the interests of students’ well-being and education. It might be the case, however, that teleo-affective components such as these are relevant to pedagogical practice generally, not particularly to critical pedagogical praxis.

Schatzki’s notion of practices having “rules” – where a rule means an “explicitly formulated directive, remonstrance, instruction, or edict” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 16) – raises all sorts of tensions for critical pedagogical praxis, which, based on understandings of praxis as non-rule-following (e.g., Kemmis & Smith, 2008a, 2008b; Grundy, 1987) and context-sensitive (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), seems to defy the idea of being rule-bound. Yet, paradoxically, even critical pedagogical praxis, in order to
be an expression of a moral commitment, would have to have an inbuilt and implicit commandment: ‘thou shalt at least act as appropriately and as justly as possible in the conduct of pedagogical work’. This implicit rule aside, if Schatzki’s rules are “understood flexibly”, and “seen as rule-referenced” rather than “rule-governed, at least in any strong sense” as suggested by B. Green (2009c, p. 43) and Schatzki himself (see Schatzki, 2002, p. 81), it is more conceivable that Schatzki’s ideas about rules are relevant to pedagogical practice enacted as critical pedagogical praxis, although this does not negate the tensions.

Not only does critical pedagogical praxis resist rules, it also resists ‘auditability’. Being multifarious, complex, and inherently uncertain, it cannot be readily measured or quantified. However, critical pedagogical praxis can be evaluated (e.g., in terms of whether and to what extent harmful or unsustainable practices or power relationships are identified through a teacher’s interactions with students). The resistance to being audited and quantified may present problems for universities that wish for all aspects of practice to be auditable and calculable (Ball, 2012), and suggests one reason why critical pedagogical praxis might not be promoted in a culture of accountability.

As well as being complex, critical pedagogical praxis was shown to be hard work in the sense that it is intellectually and emotionally demanding. This appeared to be so partly because it is risky. Social situations are complex and often ambiguous. As stated in previous chapters, it is not always clear what ‘the right thing to do’ is. There are a number of reasons for this: (a) there are often competing needs and interests (Dunne, 2005), (b) we are not always conscious of all the things we are doing when we act (I. Young, 1990), (c) “what is done will be irreversibly done” (Kemmis, 2010c, p. 423) and, as I argued in Chapters Six and Seven, (d) the consequences of our actions cannot be known with any certainty (Arif, 2009; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis, 2010c).

Risk arises, furthermore, from the pedagogical work involved in confronting people’s assumptions – including one’s own, or in “speaking truth to power” (Apple, 2013, p. 142) – and in exposing self and others to alternative views and ways of seeing the world. Giroux (2010) alluded to risks along these lines in the context of critical pedagogy. Such confrontation and exposure can disrupt people’s identities and the “knowledges and commitments that people have grown up with” (Simon, 1992, p. 86). This may well be the intent if people are working on the assumption that such
disruption can create possibilities for change\textsuperscript{127} and transformation (B. Green, 1998). The critical pedagogical praxis described by T. Evans (2009) regarding the use of “disorienting dilemmas” (following Mezirow & Assoc., 2000) in sustainability education, as discussed in Chapter Three, appeared to be based on such assumptions. The risk of this kind of critical work stems from potential loss of former understandings and constructions of self, which can be liberating and/or painful and embarrassing. Relationships can also be at stake if the critical questions are resisted and/or conflict arises. Perhaps it is for these reasons that Morgan stepped cautiously in her encounter with Neil, the student whose presentation revealed assumptions about students for whom English is a second language (see Chapter Six).

Risks thus create tensions for educators. There appears to be a need to strike a balance between being in, or creating, ‘safe’ spaces for critical engagement, and being in, or creating, sufficiently challenging spaces so that shifts in thinking and action can be provoked. If uncertainty is eliminated (to the extent that is possible), the practice becomes something other than praxis. If disruption is removed or avoided, there may be no change (which is a risk in itself if ‘no change’ equates to the continuation of someone’s suffering or loss). In any case, for those who welcome challenge and risk, the tensions I have been describing can be a source of inspiration. The inherent riskiness of critical pedagogical praxis can, therefore, be potentially both constraining and sustaining. This adds to the complexity of critical pedagogical praxis.

Critical pedagogical praxis is also hard work in the sense captured by the following words of Dewey (1938): “it is easier to walk in the paths that have been beaten than it is, after taking a new point of view, to work out what is practically involved in the new point of view” (p. 30). Critical pedagogical praxis engages the whole body (for example in ‘reading’ a situation and communicating and relating with others)\textsuperscript{128} and is intellectually and emotionally demanding (e.g., deliberating about the most appropriate course of action to take; researching options for action; reflecting on the consequences of actions; flexibility and creativity to change direction or respond differently in situations if needed). Maintaining an inquiry stance towards practice necessitates being proactive in seeking information and strengthening relationships.

\textsuperscript{127} This idea links with a particular view of what pedagogy is. See, for example, B. Green (1998) who argued, following Simon (1992), that “it is only in bringing learners to a sense of crisis in this way that the possibility exists for change” (p. 188).

\textsuperscript{128} This relates to Sam’s contention, noted in Chapter Six, that critical pedagogical praxis is something you “feel” (TT May: 6).
These aspects of pedagogical practice require mental and emotional investments as well as time. This was evidenced by the co-participant comment, noted in an earlier chapter, about it being difficult to maintain a high level consciousness. Other co-participants spoke of, and I felt, angst in terms of not knowing the impact of certain doings in pedagogical encounters with students. These demands also add to the complexity of critical pedagogical praxis.

A final point I wish to make about the nature of critical pedagogical praxis relates to the discussion, at the start of Chapter Six, about how critical pedagogical praxis was conceptualised by co-participants. In that discussion, I showed that critical pedagogical praxis was conceptualised variously by the co-participants, and I noted questions that the varying conceptualisations raised. These questions were

- Is critical pedagogical praxis a way of being and/or something people do? and/or
- Can it be observed or felt in an isolated performance (e.g., in a workshop)? and/or
- Is it something that is embodied and experienced over time and embedded in a range of activities and/or texts?

Here I offer my responses to these questions based on the analysis presented in this chapter and Chapters Six and Seven. I have come to think of critical pedagogical praxis, not as a disposition in and of itself – since a disposition is a capacity for, or an orientation towards, action or practice that does not encompass the actual doing – but rather as a way of ‘knowing-doing’\(^\text{129}\) pedagogical practice, or a way of being in pedagogical practice, or a way of inhabiting pedagogical practice that incorporates particular dispositions (e.g., praxis stance, phronesis, critical disposition)\(^\text{130}\). Critical pedagogical praxis is something that is ‘lived’ in teaching through sayings, doings, and ways of relating. These sayings, doings, and relatings might be ‘captured’ in curriculum documents and ‘felt’ in moments of practice, but they extend over time and vary according to circumstances and in accordance with practitioner ends.

Aspects of pedagogical practice enacted as critical pedagogical praxis may be more or less critical at times, or more or less technical at times, depending on what is appropriate for the circumstances and on what is being done at the time. Furthermore, the sayings, doings, and relatings do not always turn out to \emph{actually be} the most

\(^{129}\) I am not discounting physical knowing in this construction. This may be regarded as problematic by proponents of Aristotelian notions of praxis.

\(^{130}\) See Kemmis (2010a) for a discussion of “knowing doing” (p. 11) in the context of research practice.
appropriate. On the contrary, there can be good and bad critical pedagogical praxis, just as, on a post-Marxian understanding of praxis as history-making action with moral consequences, “there can be good and bad praxis” (Alex, Supervision meeting, 6 July, 2011: 16). This would be interesting to explore further but was not pursued in this research.

What Enabled and/or Constrained Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
The third guiding question for this research was ‘What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting and how so?’ The analysis of constraining and enabling conditions for critical pedagogical praxis highlighted several enabling and constraining practice architectures, which I discussed in Chapter Seven. In the following paragraphs I revisit these architectures and more explicitly theorise them in relation to literature. I begin by returning to the enabling practice architectures, and making comments about their role in creating “conditions of possibility” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 37) for critical pedagogical praxis.

*Conditions of Possibility for Critical Pedagogical Praxis*
In Chapter Seven I showed that there are many enabling practice architectures within our University for critical pedagogical praxis. Among them were student engagement, positive and productive student-teacher relationships, and student feedback; aspects of place, space, and curriculum; technological advances; research activity; collegial relationships and activity; scholarship and professional learning opportunities; and organisational structures that support all these things. Other enabling architectures, included institutional rhetoric suggesting a social justice mission; and talented and dedicated staff and students with diverse backgrounds and experiences. These practice architectures were enabling in that, in complex and multiple ways, they were sustaining of people’s efforts, and they nurtured practitioner capacity to embody critical pedagogical praxis (e.g., by nurturing particular dispositions).

These practice architectures were identified in the study through the process of analytically mapping what was prefiguring the co-participants’ practice using empirical material generated through the six sets of encounters explained in Chapter Five. Further analysis, involving comparison of practice architectures across sites of pedagogical practice, suggested that the practice architectures were also *enabling* in that they constituted, or were instrumental in maintaining and/or creating, “conditions of possibility” that make a site a “niche” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 37) for critical
pedagogical praxis. This additional layer of analysis allowed me to identify six key conditions (*six conditions of possibility*). They are (1) time; (2) space for creativity; (3) space for autonomy and flexibility; (4) positive, productive, and trusting relationships; (5) rigorous critical dialogue and reflexive conversations; and (6) opportunity for engagement and experience. Because these conditions of possibility have implications for nurturing critical pedagogical praxis, I elaborate each in turn.

1. *Time*

   Empty time is not a vacuum to be filled. It is the thing that enables the other things on your mind to be creatively rearranged, like the empty squares in the 4 x 4 puzzle that makes it possible to move the other fifteen pieces around. (Lewis in Honore, 2004, cited in Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 58)

   Time, as the words of Lewis above suggest, is important for, at least, the kind of complex and creative intellectual work that critical pedagogical praxis entails, according to the lived experiences of the co-participants. Some of the aspects of practice as critical pedagogical praxis that demanded time were interrogating practice (Hardy, 2010b; Hartman & Darab, 2012), developing understanding of a social situation (or coming to understand a pedagogical landscape), building relationships, engaging in critical debate, noticing what was going on, scholarly engagement, creating enabling conditions, building communities of practice, imagining how things could be otherwise, and resisting well-rehearsed “scripts” (Russell & Grootenboer, 2008). Teacher Talk is, in a sense, testament to the importance of time, as it was seen by some of the co-participants as time ‘carved out’ for many of these aspects of practice.

   Time is important, but it is also crucial that there is room for educators to use time in creative ways and to act and think imaginatively so that it is possible to move beyond “what is” (I. Young, 1990, p. 6). This brings me to *space for creativity*, the second *condition of possibility* for critical pedagogical praxis.

2. *Space for Creativity*

   “Imagination is the faculty of transforming the experience of what is into a projection of what could be.” (I. Young, 1990, p. 6)

   In this research, space for creativity emerged as important through discussions about enabling arrangements such as collegial relationships and collaborative work with
others, dynamic interactions in classrooms and online forums, and arrangements (such as the tradition of respectful and open contestation) that maintained the “playfulness” (Alex) of the Teacher Talk conversations. Creativity is necessary for, as I. Young (1990) suggested in the quote above, projecting and thinking beyond the current state of affairs; being able to visualise alternative paths in practice, and alternative arrangements that lead, for example, to a more socially just and sustainable reality, local or otherwise. It is important for seeing beyond rules and boundaries, and for seeing openings in constraints. Schatzki (2002) argued that “constraints operate ... through the determination of impossibility and the corresponding delimitation of possibility; that is to say, through the exclusion of certain actions and the concomitant leaving of others open” (p. 212). I suggest that the co-participants in this study were able to negotiate constraints in the ways I described in Chapter Seven, partly because of a creative capacity to see open “paths” (Schatzki, 2002, p. 212) or “opening[s]” (I. Young, 1990, p. 257) amidst, and in, constraining arrangements. This sense is captured in the notion of ‘maybe-ing’ that I introduced in Chapter One. Creativity is also important for the kind of responsive, improvised interventions in pedagogical exchanges exemplified by Morgan’s encounter in the classroom with Neil, and Bailey’s use of ‘think-alouds’ (see Chapter Six). As some of the co-participants commented, it is one of the self-sustaining elements of pedagogical work.

What appeared to feed creativity in our setting, apart from time to think and imagine, was exposure, through scholarship and conversation, to diversity and difference regarding ways of seeing and being in the world. People feeling safe enough to take risks was also important. Exposure to diversity and difference are especially crucial for transcending illusions, created by ideology, that cultural and/or changeable arrangements are natural and/or fixed (Grundy, 1987). Preparedness to take risks, as already implied, allows educators to try different ways of being and doing (a creative and reflexive move) on the basis of their experiences in practice.

3. Space for Autonomy and Flexibility

“Nobody deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise, or about things that he himself [sic] cannot act on.” (Aristotle)

Autonomy and flexibility are regarded as important for all academic work (Ball, 2012; Blackmore et al., 2010; Houston et al., 2006). However, it is especially important for critical pedagogical praxis in terms of practitioner agency, and being able to act on
professional judgement and respond in appropriate ways to changing circumstances. Critical pedagogical praxis, like praxis, presupposes having choices about how to act (Arif, 2009; Bernstein, 1983; Grundy, 1987). As Aristotle’s words above intimate, there is no need for deliberation in action if there is no choice involved. Therefore, critical pedagogical praxis requires options and openings for courses of action. Some of the enabling architectures identified in this study were enabling because they gave the co-participants flexibility and or the space to act autonomously. The flexibility afforded by on-line technology is an example of this. The space within a subject to design activities to suit the goals and students’ interests is another example.

4. Positive, Productive, Trusting Relationships

    People need to have a sense of being brave and being courageous but I think that that comes from solidarity. (Co-participant, TT June)

The fourth condition of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis is positive, productive (in a fruitful, mutually-enriching sense), and trusting relationships among all people involved in university teaching and learning, but particularly among university educators, among students, and among university educators and students. Positive relationships emerged as important on a number of levels, the benefits of solidarity implied in the co-participant statement above being one of them. The research highlighted the nurturing value of relationships. Relationships based on mutual respect, sharing, and collaboration can sustain educators in their efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis despite challenges. This was reflected in the value ascribed by the co-participants in this study to positive student-teacher relationships, to the academic community, to research groups, and to Teacher Talk. The solidarity, legitimacy, and “human connectedness” (T. Smith et al., 2010, p. 63) that can be derived from such relationships and forums are important for fostering a sense of agency and confidence on the part of educators.

From a pedagogical perspective, trusting, respectful, open relationships make certain kinds of dialogue possible, such as those involving the exchange of views, the sharing of feedback, or the asking and answering of confronting questions. Hence the importance to the research co-participants of sustaining Teacher Talk, despite having

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131 See Kemmis (2006), following Habermas (1996), for a discussion of the role of communities of practice and communicative spaces in building “solidarity” and providing “legitimacy” (p. 473). Several of the co-participants used similar language to describe the benefits of Teacher Talk. See also T. Smith et al. (2010) on solidarity and “collective praxis” (p. 63).
busy lives, and establishing on-line communities with student cohorts (via forums) in on-line courses and building relationships “off-line” (Sam). From a collective critical pedagogical praxis perspective, positive, trusting, and productive relationships are crucial for the kind of collective, concerted effort and understanding required to achieve broader change.

5. Rigorous Critical Dialogue and Reflexive Conversations

It is through the process whereby practitioners discuss, argue and learn about cases demanding judgment that the practice continually realizes and redeﬁnes its internal aim and practitioners shape and reshape their habitus or disposition. (Schwandt, 2005, p. 326)

Schwandt’s comment above points to the fifth condition of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis. Rigorous critical dialogue and reflexive conversations that make a community a “critical community” (Grundy, 1987, p. 124) (including in the classroom and on-line forums) are crucial for raising the critical consciousness and nurturing/cultivating dispositions required for critical pedagogical praxis. Through critical dialogue and reflexive inquiry, educators (and students) are not only exposed to critical theories (as discursive arrangements that inform the conversations), experientially generated critical insights, and instructive stories of social injustice/justice and critical overcoming. They can also be constructively held to account for their views, made aware of the take-for-granted, and prompted to think more critically about their location in, and contributions to, particular traditions (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a) as practitioners (and soon-to-be practitioners), and history generally. Through such activity, those engaging in the dialogue and inquiry are at once initiated into critically reﬂective practices and potentially debating and developing a deeper understanding of themselves, their practice (Carr, 2004), and their “practice landscapes” (Bristol, Brown, & Esnard, 2014, p. 17; Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 4) as the products and producers of history. As explained in previous chapters, Teacher Talk conversations were guided by this very purpose. From a collective critical pedagogical praxis perspective, open and critical debate is imperative for ensuring that initiatives are appropriately evaluated, and that harmful or unsustainable practices and power relationships can be collectively understood and reoriented.
The sixth condition of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis is the opportunity for engagement and experience. Although the lines between engagement and experience are somewhat blurred, by *engagement* I mean engagement in scholarly activity in a university community (encompassing students and colleagues), and by *experience* I mean experience of doing pedagogical work and enacting critical pedagogical praxis. It was clear throughout the research that engagement in community was essential for understanding the state of affairs, the people inhabiting the pedagogical landscape and affected by pedagogical practice, and appreciating the consequences and implications of practices and conditions. I remind readers of Morgan’s words, cited in Chapter Six, about the importance of deliberations regarding the appropriateness of practice being “informed and formed in community” (Supervision meeting, 29 March, 2013). The co-participants emphasised engagement in the university community as a key factor in their own praxis development. This included engaging in activities ranging from curriculum development and review, presenting staff seminars, and collaborative research, to committee work, taking leadership roles, and team-teaching.

Experience, meanwhile, played a pivotal role in the development of practitioner capacity to enact pedagogical practice as critical pedagogical praxis because of the self-forming value of experience, implied in the words of Dewey (1938) just quoted (see also Dunne, 1997, p. 130), and the experiential and reflexive nature of praxis (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a). The self-forming value of experience is reflected in the following co-participant words: “And once you’ve lived it, as Bourdieu knows, it’s always, in a way, the core of who you are” (Interview 2: 19).

Just as praxis develops *in the doing of it* (Kemmis & Smith, 2008a), so too, it seems, does the capacity for critical pedagogical praxis. Kemmis’s (2012c) comment about the “discipline of reality” (p. 158) captures at least one of the reasons why this is the case: “it is in praxis that we submit ourselves – that all of us are submitted – to the discipline of reality. We do our best and then we hang around to see whether what we did was good enough” (p. 158). We are disciplined through our living the consequences of our actions.
Through both engagement and experience university educators develop a deeper appreciation (explicitly and/or implicitly) of, and perhaps conform to, ‘accepted’ (or even taken-for-granted) aspects of pedagogical practice – that is, the rules; understandings; teleo-affective structures (Schatzki, 2012); the projects; characteristic nexuses of sayings, doings and relatings; practice traditions (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008), and the internal goods and standards of excellence (MacIntyre, 1981). More than this, though, experience and engagement allow university educators to develop a capacity for reflecting on, and moving beyond, felt limitations of these aspects of pedagogical practice. Returning to the four praxis themes presented in Chapter Six, I posit that critical pedagogical praxis is both manifested and experientially developed through (1) endeavouring to understand; (2) being responsive and responding appropriately; (3) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development; and (4) embodying and evoking criticality.

Opportunity for engagement and experience links back to time, as do most of these conditions of possibility, and, specifically, time in practice. However, as I have implied, it is not just about time. The six conditions of possibility are interdependent, so, for a site to be a niche for critical pedagogical praxis, there needs to be the space to imagine and use time in creative ways, space to flexibly and autonomously respond to circumstances and act on creative insights, positive relationships that can sustain, inform and co-construct the practice, and critical dialogue and inquiry to keep the experiences and engagement transformative. In articulating these six conditions of possibility, I have begun to formulate a view about what nurturing critical pedagogical praxis might entail. I return to nurturing critical pedagogical praxis later in the chapter. At this point I wish to theorise aspects of the sites that made the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis difficult.

Constraining Conditions

Despite the many practice architectures linked to conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis in our University setting, as shown in Chapter Seven, there were several practice architectures that created unconstructive tensions. These were practice architectures related to (a) the intensification of academic work; (b) lack of (or diminishing) contact time; (c) challenges of on-line teaching; (d) over-regulation and standardisation of practice; (e) promotion of technical, virtual, neoliberal constructions of pedagogical practice; and (f) a shift from a critical and collegial
culture to one of compliance and competition. These sources of tension were experienced or viewed by the co-participants as tensions, because of a lack of coherence between some of the current practice architectures and our notions of pedagogical practice as praxis, and the university as a praxis-oriented university.

Having now identified six conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis, I suggest, further, that the tensions above were experienced as sources of tension because they were eroding, or negatively impacting on, existing and potential conditions of possibility in the University. This becomes clear when the sources of tension and conditions of possibility are juxtaposed. A picture emerges of

- **work intensification** eroding time and affecting relationships;
- diminishing and **lack of contact time** affecting positive relationships and critical dialogue, and compressing time for experience and engagement;
- challenges of working in an **on-line environment** creating tensions regarding ways of relating;
- promotion of particular **constructions of pedagogical practice** that tend to discount rigorous critical dialogue and reflexive conversation;
- **over-regulation of and standardisation** of academic work eroding time, flexibility, and space for creativity, and de-legitimising practitioner autonomy; and
- a **shifting academic culture** undermining autonomy, relationships and critical dialogue.

This erosion of, or negative impact on, conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis in our setting has important implications which I come to shortly. I first wish to offer a way of thinking about the constraining conditions that highlights the extent to which critical pedagogical praxis is vulnerable as a species of pedagogical practice, and to pave the way for considering what might be done to address this vulnerability. To do this, I take the species-niche metaphor further, and consider constraining conditions in the University in terms of ecological competition and imbalance.

The first issue is **competition**. The tensions I have highlighted in this chapter and in Chapter Seven, are indicative of a ‘habitat’ that has been colonised to some extent by techne (Carr, 2004), a market-culture (Giroux, 2010, p. 186) linked to performativity (Ball, 2012), and a managerialist (‘must-being’) culture. This colonisation poses many threats to critical pedagogical praxis. Certain things have become **natural** and **normal** through the ways in which power has operated in the University, for example, via centralised decision-making arrangements (I. Young,
1990, p. 218), a system of reward and discipline (e.g., related to grants and promotions), and a kind of “cultural imperialism” (I. Young, 1990, p. 59), whereby academic practices are being brought increasingly “under the measure” of norms (p. 59) associated with these cultures. Excessive quality assurance measures are a case in point. This is concerning for critical pedagogical praxis because, to borrow from Ball (2012), it serves to

re-orient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes and are a deflection of attention away from aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative value. (p. 20)

What is equally concerning is that this “cultural imperialism” (I. Young, 1990, p. 59) is rendered almost ‘invisible’ due to the lack of open debate about ongoing changes and new initiatives, at least in some sectors of the University. Furthermore, the illusion that things are normal and natural, or even inevitable, can affect the perception of choice. It diminishes the need to exercise judgement as argued above, and dulls the imagination so that the ‘otherwise’ (in the sense of ‘How can things be otherwise?’)\(^\text{132}\) becomes less and less conceivable. This has the same effect, surely, of actually reducing choice, which is also happening in the University through over-regulation of academic work, layers of bureaucratic procedure, and compliance mechanisms.

Meanwhile, the University is evolving into a niche for species of pedagogical practice that are ever more auditable, calculable, surveillable, and controllable. In other words, attempts to enact critical pedagogical praxis are being stifled by a process of displacement. Constructions of pedagogical practice associated with a ‘neoliberal ethic’ are displacing critical pedagogical praxis (although not entirely, I stress), as the institutionally-preferred, institutionally-valued, and institutionally-legitimated form of pedagogical practice. Individualistic, competitive, and technically efficient and proficient ways of being an academic are increasingly promoted and rewarded.

From a Schatzkian practice theory perspective, practices change or persist depending on competition and coherence between practice-arrangement bundles and whether the relevant arrangements prefigure the “repetition or redirections of doings

\(^{132}\) See Alex’s (co-participant) definition of critical pedagogical praxis in the first section of Chapter Six; and Aristotle quote in this chapter.
and sayings” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 17). What appears to have been happening since the establishment of the University in 1989, is that doings and sayings (and relatings, courtesy of the theory of practice architectures) embodying neoliberal ideals have been reproduced and reinforced by policy, management practices, discourses, organisational features, hierarchical structures, and cultural conditions within the University, which have, in turn, been reproduced and reinforced by government policy, funding arrangements, accrediting bodies, and other arrangements outside the University. Sayings, and doings (and relatings) associated with moral commitment, professional judgement, and critique have, conversely, been progressively side-lined because they do not cohere with certain practice-arrangement bundles, for example those associated with new public management.

This has the effect of cultivating an “entrepreneurial disposition” and/or “governmentality” (Blackmore et al., 2010, p. 3) rather than the kinds of disposition (e.g., critical disposition and phronesis) that are important for critical pedagogical praxis. There is a constant tension, therefore, for university educators, like the academic participants in this research, who construct themselves as both agents of social change, and as praxis-oriented, critical, relational, reflective, inclusive, caring pedagogues, and yet practise within an institution that, in some ways, constructs them as service-delivery-minded, entrepreneurial, technical, and compliant experts.

From a MacIntryrian perspective, such tensions can be understood as tensions between the external goods of the University (as an institution) and the internal goods of university pedagogical practice and critical pedagogical praxis. Among the most important external goods for the University are (a) status relative to other universities both nationally and internationally, and (b) funding or external research income. The preoccupation with both is related to external pressures in terms of what is demanded of the university (by the government, community, professional bodies, and funding bodies), what financial resources are made available to the university to meet the demands, and competition between universities which raises the stakes for achieving status and attracting students. This has been the case since the University’s post-1989 entrepreneurial beginnings (Hatton, 2002; Hodgson, 1996). In Chapter Two, I linked this to the neoliberal political-economic climate at the time of the University’s establishment, the University having to compete with institutions that were differently funded prior to 1989 (Hodgson, 1996), the corporate vision of the first Vice-
Chancellor, and an ongoing imperative shared with many universities to “stay afloat
and keep mission intact” (Sharrock, 2007, p. 9).

That preoccupations with external goods might overshadow some of the
internal goods of university education are not surprising if we take MacIntyre’s (1981)
position that institutions, while having a distinct role in sustaining and organising
practices, can also ‘corrupt’ and ‘threaten’ practices because of a tendency for
competitiveness and “acquisitiveness” (p. 181) to pervade the culture of institutions.
Some of the practice architectures in the University are certainly suggestive of a
competitive, acquisitive culture in our University. The ‘habitat’ is one in which
external goods such as qualifications, publications, kudos, financial reward, awards,
promotion, performance outputs, and grants constitute forms of “currency” (Knight,
1998, p. 10). These goods have their place, but they also have the potential to “distort
or disrupt the achievement of internal goods” (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012b, p. 166). The
species of pedagogical practice with which critical pedagogical praxis is forced to
compete for legitimacy as a pedagogical practice tradition, could be viewed as
distortions of efforts to achieve goods internal to higher education pedagogical
practice, and/or be reflective of changing “standards of excellence” (MacIntyre, 1981,
p. 175).

Related to the issue of competition is that of balance. In some respects, the
‘colonisation’ of the ‘habitat’ by particular academic cultures at the expense of others,
instrumental reasoning at the expense of practical and critical reasoning, and species
of technical pedagogical practice at the expense of species of critical pedagogical
practice, represents a kind of ‘ecological imbalance’ produced by competition.
However, there are other ways in which the University ‘habitat’ is out of balance.

Examination of the University ‘habitat’ through a ‘practice architecture’ lens,
and particularly its attention to the social-political dimensions of social sites,
highlighted a problematic power imbalance whereby managers, administrative, and
technical staff turn out to have a disproportionate say relative to teaching staff in
matters related to pedagogy. The disproportionate power of managers and
administrators was evident in the continual overlaying of requirements regarding how
pedagogical work ought to be done, and the ways in which change was managed. This
power imbalance is symptomatic of neoliberal preoccupations, although sometimes
cloaked in the language of equity and quality, ideals with which academics would
have very little dispute (see Davies & Bansel, 2007). The imbalance has both social
justice implications in terms of making difficult the “self-determination” (I. Young, 1990, p. 218) of university educators, that is, the “ability ... to decide what they will do and why” (p. 218), and pedagogical implications in terms of university educator capacity (including the will) to exercise professional judgement and respond appropriately to pedagogy-related circumstances.

I wondered in this research if there might also be an imbalance between “seeming” and “being” (Dewey, 1938, p. 62) linked to the power imbalance and a related culture of performativity (Ball, 2012), compliance, and silence. To explain, I refer to Dewey’s comments about the dangers of “enforced quiet and acquiescence” in the context of teachers and school students: “enforced quiet and acquiescence prevents pupils from disclosing their real natures. They enforce artificial uniformity. They put seeming before being. They place a premium upon the outward appearance of attention, decorum, and obedience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 62). Although Dewey’s comment was not directed at social relations amongst staff of an institution, or relations between governments and universities, the notion of putting “seeming before being” (p. 62) struck a chord in terms of what I was observing in the University and what some of the co-participants were saying, for example, about the value ascribed to ‘bells and whistles’ teaching. I could not help wonder what was being inadvertently promoted here: education or the appearance of education; ethical practice or the appearance of ethical practice; democracy and inclusion, or the appearance of them?

In some ways, these constraining conditions make the University a ‘hostile habitat’ rather than a niche for critical pedagogical praxis. To the extent that this is so, critical pedagogical praxis is an endangered species of pedagogical practice. The task of nurturing critical pedagogical praxis under such conditions is, therefore, challenging. The University is a site of many ambiguities, some of which are potentially harmful and anti-educational. This is concerning since it essentially means that the practices and practice architectures that make the University what it is are in some respects undermining its own good intentions, rendering the realisation of its aspirations a constant struggle. The risk is that if the University continues on its current path, the university project could change so profoundly that the institution is no longer recognisable as a university (and the community it serves will be the worse for it), or frustrations worsen if it appears that the university project being pursued is no longer possible. Unfortunately, the literature reviewed for this research suggests
that the situation in our University is not very different from what is being experienced elsewhere.

What is happening in our University is not happening by chance. It is happening because of what we academics, together with other people comprising the University community, are doing, reproducing, and transforming in our practice as we respond to our circumstances. Our sayings, doings, and relating are collectively holding the current architectures in place, creating a particular history. As one of the co-participants observed, we are “collectively responsible” (Alex, Supervision meeting May, 2011: 13) for the practice architectures that constitute what goes on in the University. This includes both practice architectures that enable pedagogical practice and those that constrain it.

Many of our (academics’) contributions to constraining conditions are perhaps made unwittingly. Some examples of this include taking on more responsibilities or accepting particular policies that add to time pressures and work intensification; adopting accountability discourses, which perpetuate the pressures to conform and comply; not being physically present on campus, which feeds an isolationist/individualised academic culture; and self-imposed forms of accountability such as making student evaluations of subjects available to all staff and students. However, it may also be the case that academics are knowingly and uncomfortably complicit in holding some of the constraining architectures in place, for example, by ‘outsourcing’ the marking of student assessment, as I did, knowing that it solved a managerial/time constraint issue at the expense of ‘good’\textsuperscript{133} pedagogy.

Despite the increasing challenges for enacting critical pedagogical praxis in the University, there is a positive side to this story. Conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis clearly exist at our University because people are living/embodiment critical pedagogical praxis. The discussion in Chapter Six is testament to this. Many people within the university are trying in earnest to do their best and work towards educational, praxis-oriented goals. Furthermore, academics are finding ways to deal with the tensions and nurture critical pedagogical praxis through pedagogy and through engagement in the academic community (as collective critical pedagogical praxis, for instance, in Teacher Talk), and to create new architectures or change existing ones through collective action. The impact may be small, but they

\textsuperscript{133} This is based on my view that the marking of assessment constitutes an important part, pedagogically, of student-teacher conversations.
nevertheless represent a kind of ‘speaking back’ to the neo-liberal agenda that appears to be driving practices and decisions within the University.

Another source of hope is the strong commitment of the University as a whole to be a better university. Associated with this is support at some levels for critical inquiry (e.g., support for studies that have looked critically at the institution, including this one), and a commitment to self-evaluation. Although self-evaluation is now tangled up with accountability/surveillance practices (and in this respect adds to the issues), it nevertheless provides a window through which awareness can emerge. There are things being done in order that critical pedagogical praxis can flourish. However, there are things that can still be done, as I discuss in the next section.

How Can Enabling Conditions be Sustained/Developed? How Can Constraining Conditions be Changed/Negotiated?

The fourth guiding question for this research was ‘How might enabling conditions be sustained and developed, and constraining or disabling conditions changed or negotiated?’ To address this question, I have considered the implications of the research findings, and drawn from the stories of possibility that were evident in this research. This includes the stories of how practice architectures were experienced, created, negotiated, and challenged by the co-participants in the study. It is clear from these stories that more needs to be understood and to be happening or done to make the University more conducive to critical pedagogical praxis.

The findings suggest that sustaining and developing enabling conditions, and changing and negotiating constraining conditions, requires awareness as a starting point. It is importance, for instance, to be aware of what kind of university we are offering, what impact this is having on teaching and learning, and what is contributing to the prevailing constructions of university pedagogy. This necessitates critically examining the impact on pedagogy of many of the things that are being taken for granted or assessed solely on the basis of manageability and cost-effectiveness. Some of the taken-for-granted in our setting appeared to be the shift from face-to-face teaching to on-line modes, decreasing contact time, large class sizes, accountability measures, casualisation, outsourcing of marking, heavy workloads, and the standardisation of practices.

Awareness can be raised through a number of practice architectures such as local critical communities of practice, everyday informal conversations, dedicated
gatherings of staff (e.g., staff meetings and faculty forums), reading groups, social media, and collaborative inquiry such as the kind of critical participatory action research described in this thesis. Engaging with colleagues in the broader academic community is also important in terms of gaining diverse perspectives, and imagining how things can be otherwise. In such forums it is important that university educators ask of themselves and others particular kinds of questions about what we say, do, and how we relate to each other as pedagogues. Some possible questions might include:

- What kind of university education are we offering?
- How do we talk about our practice and what kind of pedagogical practice are we constructing when we use this language?
- What are the goods and projects of our practice, and what are we collectively projecting as the goods and projects of our practice?
- What dispositions, virtues, and values are we cultivating, and what do we want to be cultivating?

University conditions and their impacts are constantly changing. University educators, therefore, need to be vigilant in terms of what is going on around us. This is important on personal and collective levels, since an awareness of the ‘game’ (with all its practices, enmeshed, as they are or could be, with associated practice architectures) is needed in order to be able to find and create spaces for agency. Without this understanding/awareness, options for negotiating constraints are limited. To borrow from J. Nixon (2011), “the possibility of collective change for the future starts with a collective consciousness of the present” (p. 16).

In order for critical debate to be possible, there needs to be a culture of trust, collegiality, and openness (cf. Gibbs et al., 2004). Challenges, contradictions and constraints need to be acknowledged as much as successes need to be celebrated. It is important that people feel secure in their positions, not only in terms of employment, but also in terms of having a place in the system and community, feeling valued, and having some sense of autonomy and opportunity for self-expression and self-determination. Those in management and leadership positions have an important role to play in terms of (co-)establishing and sustaining a sense of community and belonging. Academic agency, solidarity, professional judgement, and diversity ought to be encouraged and harnessed, not squashed or feared.

The findings of this study also suggested the need for re-asserting (or re-imagining) our ‘idea of the University’ in light of the current tensions. For the sake of social justice, and a university education that is in fact educational, I suggest that how
the University can be a more praxis-oriented university, and how pedagogical practice can be reclaimed as a “site of human flourishing” (to borrow from Schwandt, 2005, p. 330), needs to be widely discussed. This research has suggested the need for restoring balance; a need for exploring alternative ways of addressing issues that have led to the high rate of change, escalated casualisation, and unrealistic workloads. This is important so that people have the time and space to do their best in practice and be fully engaged in the University community.

Because the pace of change in the University is itself an issue, ensuring that change on any large scale occurs at a pace that can be appropriately and sensitively managed is important. Constant, major change can take a toll on staff well-being, sense of security, and morale, and this affects pedagogical practice. The consequences of such change for staff well-being and practice need to be understood and carefully considered by those managing change, and as far as possible, involve those who are most directly affected by the outcomes. This includes employee participation in major decisions which significantly affect their wellbeing, relationships and every-day practices (including pedagogical practice). There appear to be many mechanisms in place for people to have their say in what is happening at various levels of university governance. However, how well these mechanisms are actually working and/or permitting and allowing participation warrants examination, since excessive workloads or other issues could be preventing people from participating in decision making processes and expressing their opinions.

The most important thing of all though is acting; acting collectively and individually to create and recreate arrangements that together become nurturing architectures for critical pedagogical praxis. To this end, university educators need to be asking

- What are our spaces of agency? How can we turn constraints into opportunities?
- How can we contribute to conditions of possibility? How can we collectively create time and space for activities and relationships that sustain us in our endeavours?
- How can we find a balance between the demands created by our neoliberal conditions and our pedagogical aspirations?

Based on the findings of this research, I suggest that, at the very least, through our sayings, doings, and relatings, we need to be reconstructing the discourses related to pedagogical practice so that they reflect the University mission. We also need to do
our best to challenge the take-for-granted material-economic arrangements regarding how academic work is organised, and reclaim the academic environment as collegial and critical. We can do this by opening up more, and intersecting, communicative spaces, like the one created by the Teacher Talk group, where important issues can be constructively, critically and democratically debated, and notions like praxis can be ‘spoken into existence’.134

There are some particular implications of this research for communities of practice like Teacher Talk. The literature and the empirical analysis highlighted the importance of communities of practice developing organically rather than being imposed. However, managers can support them by “valuing the learning they do, making time and other resources available for their work, encouraging participation, and removing barriers” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 13). The University supported the Teacher Talk group in an important way by funding, through small grants and staff release time, several research projects attached formally to Teacher Talk, including this one. Although I am not certain (because it was beyond the scope of this project to explore communities of practice in the University generally), it is likely that other communities of practice in the University were supported in similar ways. It is critical that support be sustained.

A challenge for the members of such communities is to find ways to ensure that they can connect up with each other (so that they do not become isolated and contribute to issues of competition and exclusion), without diminishing the integrity and nourishing value of groups. Vigilance is needed, as alluded to in the previous chapter, in order to ensure that communities of practice are not disempowering for people inside or outside the groups, and to ensure that they embrace diversity. (See W. Green et al. (2013) on some of the dangers of communities of practice.) Also, conversations in communities of practice need to maintain criticality in a positive and constructive way, since focussing solely, or primarily, on what constrains and oppresses can, in effect, be oppressive and so overwhelming for people that they are unable to act. A positive place to start might be focussing on what kind of teachers participants want to be (in line with the purpose of their work), what kind of workplace they want to work in, and what kind of conditions would make it possible for them to be the kind of teachers they want to be (i.e., with a sprinkling of maybe-ing and imagining).

134 This expression is borrowed from one of the co-participants.
Many of the comments just made have implications for policy and practice external to the University. As I have argued, the current practice architectures in the University are in place partly because of external pressures emanating from government policy and funding arrangements for universities over time. I make further points about this in Chapter Ten.

How Can Critical Pedagogical Praxis be Nurtured?

How to nurture critical pedagogical praxis in higher education turns out to be a very complex question because of the complex nature of critical pedagogical praxis, because there are multiple phenomena that prefigure pedagogical practice in the contemporary university, and because arrangements that enable can also constrain and vice versa. This is heightened by the differences in how people respond to, and are affected by, the conditions characterising their workplace and sites of their pedagogy. The co-participants in this research, for example, were constrained and nourished in our practice by different things.

Nevertheless, there are some points that can be made about nurturing critical pedagogical praxis. To begin with, I return to the notion of provoking critical pedagogical praxis. This research suggested that critical pedagogical praxis can be rendered possible through both nurturing and provoking processes. Nurturing of critical pedagogical praxis involves a kind of experiential “stirring in to” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 58) critical pedagogical praxis through (1) exposure to particular sayings (including critical questions), doings, relatings, and praxis-oriented ideals/goals (i.e., through engagement in the university community); (2) enacting critical pedagogical praxis (i.e., through experience); and (3) having space, time, and opportunity (and other conditions necessary) to do what constitutes critical pedagogical praxis (i.e., conditions of possibility).

Provoking of critical pedagogical praxis, on the other hand, involves a kind of dissonance/disruption to people’s thinking/identity positions (B. Green, 1998; Simon, 1992) and can occur, paradoxically, in both a positive and negative sense. Provoking critical pedagogical praxis in a positive sense involves (or can involve) deliberately asking difficult questions, or prompting people to ask difficult questions that lead to changed identity positions/changed action. This is the kind of critical work that was happening in Teacher Talk at its best, and in some of the pedagogical encounters I described in Chapter Six.
Provoking critical pedagogical praxis in a *negative sense* amounts to creating such constraining conditions – or contradictions (Seo & Creed, 2002) between the lived and the ideal – that people are prompted to act/think differently. Few would argue that any one person or group deliberately sets out to create constraining conditions. However, as I demonstrated in Chapter Seven, constraining conditions have been created in our University, however inadvertently. Constraining conditions have actually prompted action on the part of co-participants to change conditions and practice. The response to timetable constraints was one example. While positive consequences can result from critical pedagogical praxis provoked in a negative sense (*or provoked negatively*), as they did in the case of the action in response to the new timetable arrangement, the personal costs involved can be great. This is a paradox, since the notion of provoking praxis can be a positive aim, and it can be problematic if what provokes praxis amounts to unreasonable constraint leading to harm or oppression.

Because of the importance of both nurturing critical pedagogical praxis and provoking it (in a positive sense), then, it might be more helpful to think not just in terms of nurturing critical pedagogical praxis, but of *nurturing-provoking* praxis. I suggest that the task of nurturing-provoking critical pedagogical praxis in higher education, at least in our setting but perhaps elsewhere, is three-fold. It is matter of simultaneously (1) *nurturing practitioner capacity* by nurturing particular dispositions for critical pedagogical praxis, nurturing/building peoples’ sense of agency, knowledges, and relevant virtues (e.g., courage, justice, persistence, truthfulness), and provoking critical awareness and reflection; (2) *creating and sustaining the conditions of possibility* that I outlined earlier in the chapter; and (3) *changing, negotiating, or provoking changes to, constraining practice architectures*. None of these tasks is simple and each relates to the others. Even though there are challenges for embodying critical pedagogical praxis in the University setting where this research was undertaken, the research showed that this three-fold task of nurturing-provoking critical pedagogical praxis is being realised through the living critical pedagogical praxis of educators in the University.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided a theoretical discussion of some of the key findings of the research, as well as some concluding thoughts about the nature of critical pedagogical
praxis itself. In the discussion, I highlighted the complexity and multifariousness of critical pedagogical praxis, and more explicitly theorised both conditions of possibility and constraining conditions for critical pedagogical praxis. Emerging from this discussion was the conclusion that the University in some respects is a ‘hostile habitat’ for critical pedagogical praxis, one in which critical pedagogical praxis competes for legitimacy, and in which efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis have been challenging. However, I also emphasised that critical pedagogical praxis is being realised and nurtured in the University. Niches for critical pedagogical praxis (like Teacher Talk) exist within the University, and there are possibilities for changing the extent to which the University is itself a niche for critical pedagogical praxis. On this basis, I made some recommendations for future practice. I concluded the chapter by responding to the overarching research question, ‘How can critical pedagogical praxis be nurtured in higher education?’, highlighting the role of ‘provoking praxis’, and offering some thoughts about what nurturing-provoking critical pedagogical praxis entails.

In the next chapter, Chapter Nine, I switch focus to offer some key reflexive insights that emerged in the doing of the research. These are insights about the research process and some of the ways in which the process was mediated. In this respect, Chapter Nine is an extension of Chapter Five in which I discussed the nature of the study. I also consider how the research project became a practice architecture for critical pedagogical practice in the setting, adding to the responses in this chapter to the question of what was enabling and constraining critical pedagogical praxis.
CHAPTER NINE – MEDIATING PRAXIS

What trickery, Critical pedagogical praxis?
How might we grasp you;
Hold you for a while?
And avoid
The self-delusion
That we can claim
And name
And master you?

Whereas in Chapter Five I explained how this research was done, in this chapter I move beyond that by examining some of the more problematic aspects of the inquiry process itself – what Pillow (2003) referred to as “research problematics” (p. 179) – and their implications for researching critical pedagogical praxis. I do this by drawing on reflections and reflexive insights gleaned through the doing of the research. The title of the chapter thus serves a dual purpose in that ‘praxis’ refers to both critical pedagogical praxis and research praxis. Based on an assumption that lessons learnt and ‘research problematics’ are an important and potentially instructive part of a research story, in this chapter I seek to expose some of the ways in which interpretations were mediated (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Kinsella, 2006) and to a lesser extent how the research project mediated critical pedagogical praxis. I do this in the spirit of research as praxis (Lather, 1991), of critical hermeneutics, and of CPAR, which calls for transparency (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014) in terms of research practices. Such a discussion is especially warranted in this inquiry because of the complex research relations that characterised the research.

I begin the chapter by discussing some of the difficulties of researching critical pedagogical praxis generally; difficulties that stem in part from its complexity, and from the complexity of practice and the sites of pedagogical practice in a university setting. I then examine some of the tensions related to representing critical pedagogical praxis, including in this thesis, followed by tensions associated with negotiating research relations and roles within a close-knit community. Next I reflect on the rather unique situation of conducting PhD research with PhD supervisors being involved as co-participants in the project. The last part of the chapter turns to interrogation of this research project as a practice architecture for critical pedagogical praxis in our University, building on the conclusions already drawn in previous
chapters about what was affecting possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis. I also reflect on the use of the theoretical framework.

Researching Critical Pedagogical Praxis

A number of issues made researching critical pedagogical praxis very complex and challenging; some were alluded to in previous chapters. One of the complexities relates to the approach of researching within practice traditions: the task of critically examining conditions of critical pedagogical praxis, when one’s thinking about the conditions is conditioned or mediated by those very same conditions (Bristol, 2010). In this case, the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements shaping the co-participants’ teaching were also shaping interpretations and other elements of the research process. In addition to this complexity, which demanded reflexivity throughout, there were four other challenges that I think are worth noting in this discussion.

The first of these challenges relates to the difficulties associated with naming the phenomenon referred to in the thesis as ‘critical pedagogical praxis’. As I showed in Chapter Three (in my discussion of literature), and in Chapter Six (via the varying conceptualisations of the co-participants), critical pedagogical praxis is variously understood and named. During the project, for example, the co-participants, like some of the authors cited in Chapter Three, talked about ‘critical pedagogical praxis’, ‘critical educational praxis’, and/or ‘critical praxis’. Because there was not a specific and fixed definition shared by all co-participants, it was challenging to ascertain what each person meant when they talked about ‘critical pedagogical praxis’. Adding to the complexity was the tradition within the Teacher Talk group of discussing academic practices and academic praxis in general, as well as pedagogical practice and pedagogical praxis in particular. This demanded that I discern how people conceptualised the boundaries between their pedagogical practice and other academic practices (if such boundaries existed), and what they were referring to when they spoke of ‘praxis’.

My own understanding of critical pedagogical praxis, and tentativeness with the term, also had to be negotiated. At different times throughout the project, I wondered whether an alternative term might better reflect the kind of morally committed, social-justice oriented, informed, reflexive practice that I was (and the Teacher Talk group members were) interested in understanding and nurturing. The
following excerpts from my research journal reflect some deliberations about the term:

I’m wondering whether I should stick to the use of ‘critical pedagogical praxis’, or whether it would be better to use ‘critical educational praxis’ as I have so far in the ethics application. I could have a title ‘critical educational praxis in higher education pedagogy’ – still keeps the focus on pedagogy. I need to think this through some more – just wondering if some people might see the ‘critical pedagogy’ bit (which has baggage of its own) and suggest that praxis is implied in critical pedagogy anyway. The advantage is that ‘pedagogical’ reflects a focus on the professional practice of the teacher (which can include learning and teaching), but not to the extent that critical teaching praxis would. But ‘teaching’ drops off the learning side of things. (eJournal, 2 September, 2011)

I spent some time this morning rethinking the whole CPP idea and going back to ‘critical praxis in higher education pedagogy’. Reading Bill Green’s notes has forced me to look again at whether my questions relate to pedagogy or curriculum or both, and what implications that has for the language I am using around CPP. (eJournal, 6 September, 2012)

I was concerned about the term on several levels. One was the complexity of the term and its being somewhat academic. This could create barriers for understanding critical pedagogical praxis and for having conversations about it. I wanted to avoid this, but did not manage to find a term that would overcome this tension.

I was also concerned, as shown in the first journal excerpt, about the critical pedagogical in ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ automatically associating the kind of practice being examined with the critical pedagogy tradition. Critical pedagogy is an important and highly relevant pedagogical tradition, but one that has attracted much criticism (e.g., Ellsworth, 1992; Green, 1998; Luke, 1992), including on the basis that it is positioned by some critical pedagogy scholars as “the way of negotiating intellectually and in practice with the challenge of education as a global narrative” (Bristol, 2012, p. 15). Furthermore, I have found the language of some of critical pedagogy’s key proponents, for example McLaren and Giroux, to be so negative (and even, ironically, militaristic) at times as to be oppressive, and antithetical to the kind of praxis we were endeavouring to embody. In any case, critical pedagogical praxis, as I understand it, transcends the critical pedagogy tradition. I accordingly toyed, at different times, with ‘critical praxis’, ‘critical teaching praxis’, ‘critical educational praxis’, ‘pedagogical praxis’, ‘educational praxis’, and ‘teaching praxis’.
A further concern was that the term ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ might be too limiting and not encompass what goes on between and around pedagogical encounters. That concern, however, stemmed from a rather narrow conception of pedagogical practice that I held initially, and that I was to later reject. (Incidentally, the conception of ‘teaching’ captured in the first journal excerpt above was also very narrow, looking at it now). During analysis I came to think about, and use, ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ in a much broader sense. This broader understanding is reflected in my use of ‘critical pedagogical praxis’ throughout this thesis.

Influenced, then, by both literature and my empirical analysis (i.e., engagement, through the hermeneutic process, with the ideas of the other co-participants), I finally returned to ‘critical pedagogical praxis’. Although not entirely unproblematic, I deemed this term most appropriate because it foregrounds three important elements (criticality, pedagogy, and praxis), all of which help distinguish it from other kinds of pedagogical practice in conversations about practice. The descriptor ‘pedagogical’ additionally distinguishes it from other kinds of academic practice.

The second challenge of researching critical pedagogical praxis relates to difficulties associated with researching practice itself. This has been noted by Gherardi (2009) who claimed that “practices are difficult to access, observe, measure or represent because they are hidden, tacit, and often linguistically inexpressible in propositional terms” (p. 116; see also Green, 2009c, p. 44). What proved particularly important in this project for overcoming these difficulties was an eclectic approach that allowed practices and the conditions of practice to be experienced (as a participant in the practices) and observed as well as spoken about. In this sense, the research project builds on the previous collaborative inquiry work of the Teacher Talk group. This earlier work relied primarily on conversations about practices and conditions. While this is critical, it does encourage a focus on sayings (including sayings about doings and relatings in pedagogical practice) and semantic space. Adding an ethnographic element to the inquiry process opened up possibilities for examining the nexus of sayings, doings, and relatings of pedagogical practice in the semantic, physical space-time, and social space (Kemmis et al., 2014) of classrooms, offices, meeting rooms, and lounge rooms (and other pedagogical sites beyond the Teacher Talk meetings) as they transpired. Indeed, having elements of self-study, CPAR, and institutional ethnography as part of the critical hermeneutic process
enabled access to different and multiple slices of our practice realities across these three dimensions of the (university) social world (Kemmis et al., 2014). However, these different dimensions of the project had implications in terms of power relations between those involved in the project, as I discuss below.

Despite the affordances of an eclectic approach, there was a limit to what I could witness, experience, and analyse, since the prefiguring conditions of practice and praxis within a university environment are so multilayered and complex. One of the challenges was determining how deeply and broadly to interrogate constraining and enabling conditions. Many of the issues that emerged, the relationship between a Faculty restructure and critical pedagogical praxis to name one, were worthy of substantive investigation in their own right.

There are also limits to what can be known (Pillow, 2003) by researchers and participants. The following excerpt from the field notes made during an observation is an acknowledgement that there was a limit to what I could know about a person’s practice:

Thinking about praxis in terms of how [Bailey] conceptualises it (as a ‘way of being’), I suspect, even though I can never really know as an observer, that Bailey lives what she believes about teaching. I base this not on some arrogant idea that I might understand her intentions, but on the extent to which she models what she is talking about, the layers of learning that I could see going on (for her and the students), and her ability to laugh at herself in the company of students – sense of humility and honesty that makes it difficult to imagine her not walking her talk. (Workshop 2: field notes)

Some of my fellow co-participants also expressed uncertainty about what they could know about their own practice. The following interview exchange with one of the co-participants highlights this:

Q: Would you characterise [your teaching] as critical praxis?
A: I don’t know. Don’t know the answer to that. I hope so, I hope it is.
   But, how do you tell? (Interview 2: 17)

The conversation moved from this point onto aspects of the person’s practice that might be associated with critical pedagogical praxis. However, her way of talking about her practice in critical pedagogical praxis terms remained tentative. All of the co-participants asserted that critical pedagogical praxis was what we aspired to embody, but not all were comfortable characterising their practice as ‘critical pedagogical praxis’. This raised questions, for me, about whether this is something
that is knowable at all, and/or whether I was encountering humility, and/or encountering people who were not wanting to be positioned in particular ways in reports about the research, and/or something else.

This raises another issue. I made the case, in Chapter Six, that the co-participants were embodying critical pedagogical praxis. Does this suggest that I think I know better than those co-participants who were reluctant to make such a case for themselves? I hope not. It was presented as an argument, supported by all at my disposal and within my mental grasp, and one which some of the co-participants might find uncomfortable (although to date no one has indicated as much through the member checking processes). My own discomfort in making the case stems from concerns that (a) in doing so I expose the participants to ridicule/criticism, since readers may not agree with my conclusions, and (b) my argument is foregrounded, as might be expected given the requirements of a PhD thesis.

Representing Critical Pedagogical Praxis

Some of these issues, such as naming critical pedagogical praxis, are also representation issues. Issues with representation have been widely explored in qualitative research literature (e.g., Halquist & Musanti, 2010; Kuntz, 2010; Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001; Pillow, 2003), suggesting that issues I confronted are not uncommon. Some of these were decisions about whose stories and what stories are told; who decides what stories count, since not all stories can be told (Mockler, 2007); and “how do I do representation knowing I can never quite get it right?” (Pillow, 2003, p.176).

I wish to highlight a few particular issues that were sources of tension in the writing of the thesis because they ‘bumped up against’ my commitment to conducting the inquiry in ethically sensitive ways. One of these was the difficulty (in representing empirical narratives) of finding a balance between the stories, lives, and interests of the individuals involved in the project, specifically the co-participants, and the social sites we inhabited; that is, between the subjective and the intersubjective. This balance, I determined, was important in order to honour the people and acknowledge practitioner agency (thereby minimising an abstracted, dehumanising effect), while attending to the sociality and materiality of practice. I viewed both as part of my ethical and theoretical responsibilities as a researcher of practice. I was thus attempting to avoid writing about people’s practices and experiences in a way
that became a “blurred averaging” of practices and experiences, to borrow from Shotter and Gustavson (1999, p. 17), such that my co-participants would no longer recognise themselves and their practices in the text. I did, however, need to be careful about this in the interests of anonymising people’s identities where necessary – and possible (cf. Kuntz, 2010; Malone, 2003) – for ethical reasons (see Chapter Five).

The decision to begin the discussion of the findings (i.e., at the start of Chapter Six) by introducing the ‘main characters’ in this thesis (Bailey, Morgan, Pat, Jess, Sam, Alex, and me) was a deliberate move to achieve a balance between the subjective and the intersubjective in the writing. Attaching specific people to each pedagogical site in Chapter Six was also aimed at achieving this balance, although, in doing so I risked pigeonholing the co-participants, or presenting them as one-dimensional. How people were represented became a point of discussion in the member checking process (described in Chapter Five). One of the co-participants, for example, indicated, through chapter feedback, that she thought some of my descriptions and thematising had the effect of “flattening” the people represented. Needless to say, I tried to address this in subsequent drafts. Whether or not I managed to overcome this is now a matter for readers to determine.

A second (and related) key issue in writing the thesis was connected to the use of verb tense. As explained at the end of Chapter Five, I chose to write in the past tense to signify that the events and interpretations of the participants were located in a particular historical moment. However, as Shotter and Gustavson (1999) asserted, citing Williams (1977), the use of past tense has the effect of presenting experiences, relationships and forming processes and practices into fixed and “formed wholes” (p. 6), which is somewhat misleading. Furthermore, my ‘then and now’ approach to writing the thesis also meant that my voice as the author located in the ‘now’ was privileged over other voices (including that of my historical self) located in the ‘then’. Both of these issues have implications for the integrity and the “ethicality” (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007) of the research. This was another unresolvable and uncomfortable tension.

A third issue relates to how I located myself in the thesis through the use of personal pronouns. While writing, it mostly seemed natural, because I was a member of the participating group, to use the first-person plural (‘we’) when describing the co-participants’ practices, perspectives, and experiences. However, I also felt some discomfort, aware that the use of ‘we’ can be potentially exploitative and colonising
(a) by presuming to speaking on behalf of (or speaking for) others implied in the ‘we’, and (b) by rendering difference invisible (cf. Lather, 2007, p. 162). I also asked myself in earlier stages of the writing if I was hiding, as a participant, in the ‘we’, that is, as a means of avoiding putting the spotlight on my own practice, and why I might be doing this. These are issues that I worked through, and will no doubt need to continue to interrogate in future self-study research.

A fourth issue relates to communicating critically in a way that does not accentuate the negative at the expense of the positive. Again, this is a matter of balance. The critical social science tradition, represented in the following definition of ‘critical’ presented by Fay (1987), can lead to a focus on the negative: “offering of a sustained, negative evaluation of the social order on the basis of explicit and rationally supported criteria” (p. 26). At times throughout the investigation, I found myself following this negative path in contradiction to my interest in a positive kind of criticality associated with keeping spaces, possibilities, opportunities, and futures open so that the seemingly unimaginable and the yet to be imagined can emerge. (The latter is reflected in the definition of critical pedagogical praxis articulated in Chapter One, and the notion of education as a maybe-ing arena referred to throughout the thesis.) Indeed, an audience member in one of my seminar presentations about the research said she was confronted by my “glass half empty” portrayal of university conditions. I was happy that she was confronted by the presentation, if it prompted her to engage with the issues, but I realised I needed to rethink how I was representing my critical views. Encounters such as this also forced me to ask if I was in danger of “demonizing” (Lather, 2007, p. 31) the university and “angelizing” (Lather, 2007, p. 31) the participant group and/or the research project, neither of which I wanted to do. I have been reminded constantly that critical work requires a vigilance and mindfulness to avoid unhelpful extremes.

There was also a danger of “demonizing” (Lather, 2007, p. 31) the technical. I wanted to problematise a preoccupation with technical aspects of pedagogical work, and the conceptualisation of teaching as merely a technical task, hence the critique of constructions within higher education of pedagogical practice as a technical exercise (in Chapters Three and Seven). I also wished to highlight the broader implications (i.e., ill effects) of technical rationality as a driver of processes within universities. However, I was conscious of showing, in representations of this research, that critical pedagogical praxis does not exclude the technical aspects of pedagogical work. There
are times when attention to the technical in pedagogical practice is highly appropriate and warranted. Examples such as the supervision meeting discussions focussed on the production of the thesis, and attention to assessment criteria in the student consultation meetings (see Chapter Six) illustrate this. Avoiding an ‘either/or’ positioning of the critical and the technical (either critical or technical) is important, but tricky.

Negotiating Research Relations and Multiple Roles
Research relations in any research project are generally very complex, not least because of complicated power relations between participants and researchers (Zeni, 2001; Pillow, 2003), as noted in Chapter Five. In this project, the complexity was compounded by researching within my “home institution” (Malone, 2003, p. 797), researching with a well-established group, and researching with two of my PhD supervisors. I discuss the complexities of researching with my supervisors in the next section of the chapter. In the following paragraphs, I focus on research relations connected to the involvement of the Teacher Talk group, followed by the multiple roles I negotiated throughout the project.

The Teacher Talk group, as explained in Chapters Two and Five, was a pre-established group when the research reported in this thesis began. The group constituted a close-knit community of experienced educators and researchers. This enabled the generation of very rich, critical conversations about praxis. However, it also created some interesting tensions for me as I negotiated various research relations. For instance, while I was an experienced educator and group facilitator excited by the challenges of conducting this kind of research, and despite being very welcomed, encouraged, and supported by the group members, I felt some vulnerabilities in the Teacher Talk space as a newcomer to the university and the group, as a PhD candidate, as a sessional teacher, and as a novice researcher. This no doubt impacted on my facilitation of conversations, on how the group members responded to me, and on how I interpreted what transpired. There were well-established traditions, for instance, with which I was initially unfamiliar, and in some respects I allowed myself to be haunted by the legends of past participants in my attempts to live up to imagined expectations (imagined by me, that is). It took me a while to move past these concerns about how the group operated before my time. I did so through journalling, and through talking to the group members and my supervisors.
If I had my time again, and if opportunity allowed it, I would attend a few meetings as a participant before beginning such a project as a researcher-participant. This would have enabled me to gain a greater appreciation of some of the nuanced practice traditions and group dynamics (relatings) before stepping into a facilitation role, and provide a point of comparison so that I could more keenly sense whether, and in what ways, my facilitation was affecting those dynamics and traditions.

Another tension stemmed from my ethical concerns about the extent to which the project was, or could be, collaborative and democratic. While the CPAR part of the project based on the Teacher Talk meetings was very collaborative, continuing one of the traditions of the Teacher Talk group, the ethnographic element of the project was much less so, and this changed the power relations beyond the Teacher Talk space. The observations and interviews especially were more invasive, and put me, as a researcher, in a position of power relative to the other Teacher Talk participants. The ethnographic part of the project could have been conducted collaboratively. However, the expectations surrounding PhD research came into play, which meant that I undertook more of the analysis and writing than I might have if we had agreed, as Teacher Talk participants, to conduct a collaborative ethnography. The ethnographer role gave me greater “discretionary power” too (Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001, p. 363) in terms of the utilisation of the empirical material. The group members understood this, but I nevertheless experienced an ongoing, niggling tension.

Adding to the complexity of the research relations were the multiple roles we (co-participants) assumed within the academic community. For my own part, I was self-consciously aware of moving in and out of various roles: teacher, researcher, colleague, doctoral candidate, group member, (thesis) author, participant, and friend. In negotiating such roles, I was also constantly switching between participant and spectator (Kemmis, 2011b), and insider (Zeni, 2001) and outsider, perspectives, even though I was researching from ‘inside’ the practice tradition of university teaching. In this complexity of shifting roles, I was trying to simultaneously make sense of possibilities for critical pedagogical praxis, and what it means to be a researcher. The following journal entry, made while I was reading one of the Teacher Talk meeting transcripts, conveys a sense of the questions that emerged in my attempts to negotiate this complexity:

....[it] struck me that there are some understories that are being alluded to but not articulated/spelt out [in the meeting] – is that
because people don’t want me to go there with this research? Did I not ask the group to clarify because I was respecting that, or because I was thinking if I ask, then I will have the responsibility of deciding what to do with the information because it is clearly sensitive? Perhaps I was feeling like I should not pry – I guess that I have always had this thing where if people want to tell me something, they will. As a researcher though, should I be thinking about delving deeper????? How far do I go? What sort of researcher do I want to be? Delving can uncover things that really shed light on the situation, but it can also surface stuff that is not relevant and then it just becomes gossip. Maybe the participants feel like it is gossip to bring it up. Perhaps it needs to be brought up in order to name what we are talking about. Unless real examples are being used, we are just talking in code and it isn’t real. Also – tension to do with the fine line between me participating as a researcher in the Teacher Talk meetings and me participating as a colleague – as a colleague, I would not probe – therefore if I probe, does it just become my research focus group? (eJournal, 16th September, 2012)

This excerpt highlights a tension between wanting to understand a situation, particularly in terms of the social-political dynamics, and not wanting to be a gossipmonger probing for ‘juicy’ details. Because the group members were my colleagues, there seemed to be a fine line between the two, and I refrained from asking certain questions because of this, I believe. The final comment at the end of the excerpt, about the group becoming “my research focus group”, relates to another concern I had about ‘hijacking’ the Teacher Talk group meetings in the interests of the project. This was something that neither I, nor the group, wanted to see happen.

My PhD Supervisors as Co-participants

The two of my three PhD supervisors who participated in the project as participants (Alex and Morgan) were also negotiating multiple roles, and our relationship was possibly more complex than is usual for supervisor-supervisee relationships135. The arrangement of having two supervisors involved as participants, and having a third supervisor acting as an independent co-supervisor, made possible the generation of some very interesting insights. Some of these insights were shared in the discussions in previous chapters, but this arrangement also had some noteworthy effects on the research process. The production of the thesis, for instance, effectively became part of

135 While I was able to find research where supervisors and doctoral candidates were co-researchers in PhD projects, or where supervisors and doctoral candidates retrospectively explored the pedagogical processes involved in supervision after the doctorate (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2007), I did not come across any PhD projects (in a literature search) where the supervision practice of the PhD supervisors was the subject of their supervisee’s inquiry.
what was interrogated in the project. Furthermore, the thesis itself is a product of the interplay between some of the university architectures identified in the previous chapters and the practices of three of the co-participants (two of my supervisors and me). It was produced through my being ‘subjected to’ my supervisors’ critical pedagogical praxis. This raised the stakes for Alex and Morgan in terms of what this thesis would look like. How this impacted on their practice, I do not know.

Another interesting effect of this arrangement was a kind of conscious ‘holding back’ on my part. Early in the project, Alex, Morgan, and I agreed that I would not discuss upcoming Teacher Talk meetings in our supervision meetings. This was seen as important so that Alex and Morgan would know as much about what was going to happen in the Teacher Talk meetings as the rest of the group (excluding me as facilitator), thereby keeping the meetings fresh and vital for them as participants, allowing them to participate on a more ‘even keel’ with the other group members, and minimising their influence on my decisions as a researcher. There was also an understanding between us that I needed to work through some analytical and theoretical issues on my own. This was important not just because of the pedagogical benefits of doing so, but also in order that I could avoid being overly influenced by supervisors whose opinions I was encountering extensively in their roles as participants, and as authors of some of the theory that was informing my analysis. So, I ‘held back’ in using Alex and Morgan as a sounding board for some of my theoretical and analytical struggles.

I refrained from giving Alex and Morgan drafts or section chapters of my writing at times for the same reason. I was concerned that Alex and Morgan would become over-familiar with my work, and I wanted them to be reading it as if for the first time. Because of all this ‘holding back’, I reached a point, as the following journal excerpt shows, where I wondered what we had left to talk about:

....I felt a bit lost going into this meeting. Can’t help thinking that if I can’t discuss stuff because it will devalue [Alex’s and Morgan’s] experiences in the Teacher Talk meeting (as participants), and I avoid telling [Morgan] and [Alex] stuff because I need to struggle with some things on my own (and try to avoid being too influenced by [Alex and Morgan]) there is very little left for me to talk about in the supervision meetings beyond turning it into a data collecting/generating exercise.
(Scrap journal, 10 July, 2012)
This highlights one way in which the research project was mediating the pedagogical practice of Alex and Morgan, by virtue of impacting on what I was bringing to our supervisions meetings as pedagogical encounters.

There was also a tension, for me, in terms of how I was to read Alex and Morgan’s feedback on my draft chapters. Sometimes I felt myself asking, ‘What do I do with this comment? Do I treat the comment as a supervisor comment or a participant comment?’ This made a difference because I could acknowledge and respectfully ignore supervisor comments, but I had an ethical responsibility not to ignore participant comments, and in any case, I was interested in the participants’ reflexive insights, believing such insights to be an important part of the collaborative process (Clayton, 2013; Gildersleeve, 2010). In some instances I chose to treat supervisor feedback as participant comments, for example, by incorporating them into the text and acknowledging them as chapter feedback.

Having an independent co-supervisor was instrumental in helping me to work through and/or with some of the tensions described in this chapter. This space allowed me to talk about concerns without worrying about what was, or was not, influencing my thinking during our meetings. Sometimes I played out conversations with this supervisor in my mind before our meetings, anticipating what she might ask as a devil’s advocate or critical friend, for instance. In many cases, by the time I met with her, I had already worked through issues, or planned what I needed to do, and her role became one of reassurance. What I think made this arrangement work so well, apart from the careful choice regarding who the independent co-supervisor ought to be, was that we met separately and that she remained, as far as was possible, ‘outside’ the relationship between Alex, Morgan, and me.

The Research Project as an Academic Architecture
As I have implied, the research project was a practice architecture for the supervision relationship between Alex, Morgan, and me, and therefore an important practice architecture for their pedagogical practice. It was also an important practice architecture, in a very generative way, for my own pedagogical practice in teaching the subject mentioned in Chapters Six and Seven. Throughout the study, my focus kept shifting between my practice as a teacher educator and my practice as a researcher and I was conscious of how each of these was mutually transforming the other: “there’s this internal dialogue going on between my thinking about university
teaching practice, and how I'm processing what's happening in there [i.e., the classroom]” (Kathleen, Supervision meeting, 29 February, 2012: 9)

The research project sustained my efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis on a number of levels. Having the opportunity to systematically inquire into my own practice and attempts at embodying critical pedagogical praxis, while observing and thinking about the practice of others, enhanced my self-understanding, and drew my attention to where I was finding space for agency as an educator and how I was responding to enabling and constraining conditions. Through the project, other people’s practices and ideas about practice became practice architectures for my practice, prompting me to ask different kinds of questions of myself as a practitioner. At the end of the debriefing meeting with Bailey, Bailey made a comment about how she found the interview. I responded in a way that reflects the impact of our conversation on me from a teaching perspective:

And I guess I’ve appreciated too that this [interview] in itself is a pedagogical space because I’m learning and thinking about my own teaching, also thinking about the research, but I’m thinking about my own teaching as you talk... (Kathleen, Debriefing meeting: 11)

The supervision meetings with Alex and Morgan were equally enabling of my critical pedagogical praxis. I recall one meeting in particular where I talked through some concerns. At the time, I was feeling very despondent about my teaching. Morgan was asking me questions that helped me to reflect on what had been happening. This led to a general discussion about our experiences. I noted in the summary of that meeting:

We collectively reflected on conditions and our teaching roles. In effect, this became a teacher talk space between the three of us, and in a sense, an enabler for my teaching practice ➔ supervision as architecture for my efforts at critical pedagogical praxis as a teacher. (Supervision meeting, 2 May, 2012: analytical notes)

Despite the project being enabling in the ways just described, I was concerned about the potential for the project to be a problematic practice architecture. One of the issues I was mindful of was the risk of the research process perpetuating that which we (the Teacher Talk group) were trying to contest/challenge in our critique of practices and conditions. It was important that the research itself did not prompt a shift from a group of colleagues collectively making visible their own practices and related conditions for interpretation and critique to a form of surveillance for those
involved. It was also important that the study did not ‘write us into’ a particular way of ‘being’ even before the study began. Questions about if/how our inclusion as participants defined us as particular kinds of practitioners, and in what ways this might be constraining, were ongoing considerations throughout the project.

Another concern was that the project was adding to the already heavy demands and workload described in Chapter Seven. In addition to the regular Teacher Talk meetings that were already part of the group members’ academic lives, the members, by virtue of participating in the project, were involved in interviews, follow-up meetings, transcript reading, and draft chapter reading, all of which are time consuming. The project became one more ball that the participants had to juggle. What did time taken up with this project mean that the co-participants had less time for?

Reflections on the Theoretical Framework

The final aspect of the research that I wish to reflect on is the theoretical framework. In Chapter Four I highlighted the affordances of the framework, which comprised three practice theory lenses based on Kemmis et al. (2014), MacIntyre (1981), and Schatzki (2001). This reflection balances the Chapter Four discussion by commenting on some of the tensions experienced in putting the practice theories to work hermeneutically, as well as the strengths/benefits (regarding what the framework made possible). I also comment on how I negotiated some of the tensions.

In terms of benefits and strengths of the framework, the three practice theories were sufficiently overlapping, yet significantly different from each other, to be complementary. On the one hand, the three theories, in combination, made it possible to ask particular kinds of historical, moral, material, philosophical, and social-political questions about practice and praxis (see Chapter Four). On the other hand, some of the tensions between the theories, for example, the idea of ‘projects’ as used by Schatzki (2002) not quite aligning with ‘projects’ as understood by Kemmis et al. (2014), were generative in the sense that they prompted me to attend more closely to the meanings and implications of the language and concepts associated with each theory.

The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) and Schatzki’s site ontology were particularly important for conducting research in an institutional setting. Using these theories as analytical tools kept me mindful of not letting the material be overshadowed by the discursive in a very text-intensive university
environment. It encouraged attention to how our practices were being shaped by the materiality of things and spaces, as well as through language. The Practice Architectures Template (Appendix G) proved very useful in terms of thinking about what practice traditions were being reproduced and transformed through the sayings, doings, and relatings going on in the practices being observed.

It was interesting too that I was encountering the theory of practice architectures as a living, evolving theory, and not only in scholarly literature. This was possible because I was part of the community that was developing the theory. It was being spoken about and reconceptualised around me. Just when I thought I understood aspects of the theory, it changed. This suggests that the theory is vital and responsive (as theories about practice must be, given that practices and our understanding of practices evolve), and I was privileged to be involved in such conversations. That the theory was evolving was at once tricky, since I was using an unstable lens, and generative, because I was constantly rethinking my position in relation to the emerging ideas. MacIntyre’s and Schatzki’s ideas also evolved, but they were more ‘stable’ in comparison because of how I encountered them (i.e., in text\textsuperscript{136}), and there was a fixed point at which I stopped reading their work.

In terms of tensions, there were some aspects of each of the theories that I struggled with. In the interests of brevity, I mention the ones that caused me the greatest concern. I experienced hesitancy, for instance, regarding MacIntyre’s notion of a ‘narrative unity’ and wondered whether it oversimplifies people’s pursuit of ‘the good’, and overestimates the role of intentionality and people’s level of consciousness in what they do. This hesitancy stemmed from thinking about this in relation to certain literature (e.g., Lather, 2007; I. Young, 1990), and a discomfort in writing about people’s lives in terms of \textit{unity}, even though I could sense that each co-participants’ actions and words appeared to have an underlying (and perhaps unifying) commitment to act in the interest of others and human kind. I was also uncomfortable with MacIntyre’s (1981) “standards of excellence” (p. 175). The concept was useful. However, the language was jarring in the context of a culture where ‘standards’ have become part of the discursive armoury of neoliberalism and managerialism.

The theory of practice architectures presented tensions because of the categories embedded in the theory: sayings, doings, and relatings; the three dimensions of social space; and the three kinds of arrangements. These categories, as I

\textsuperscript{136} I did talk to Theodore Schatzki in 2011, but that was very early in my candidature.
have emphasised in the thesis, were very useful for comprehensively investigating practices and sites. However, there is the potential, when using a practice architecture lens, for the categories, which are only analytical categories, to take over the analytical process. I was concerned, very early in my analysis (prior to using the Practice Architectures Template), about becoming fixated on categorising (e.g., asking ‘Is this policy a cultural-discursive arrangement or a social-political arrangement?’) rather than seeing the salient narratives. To address this, I did multiple read-throughs of the transcripts, each time asking different questions of the text rather than categorising according to the practice architecture categories as I went. It was only later that I used the Practice Architectures Template to analyse the material further. As indicated in Chapter Five, I also used multiple analytical strategies to disrupt an inclination to categorise.

In terms of implications for future use of the theory of practice architectures, I suggest that the theory of practice architectures is not so much useful for separating things into categories (which is a futile thing to do), as for bringing certain aspects of the practices and sites into focus. If, through analysis, different aspects of practice are ‘named’ (and the theory makes the naming possible), then it was not a matter of which ‘name’ is right or wrong, but that the language used aptly captures/describes helps make sense of what is transpiring in the practice. Seen rigidly, the theory can be problematic, because social practices are not rigid. Seen more loosely, the theory provides multiple possibilities for understanding and conversing about practice.

A final tension related to the theoretical framework emerged from a fear of being trapped by it. This relates to the point just made about categorising, and being involved in a community, as mentioned, where these theories were part of our everyday conversations. In a supervision meeting I talked about this in terms of “getting fixed on that way of seeing the world” (Supervision meeting, 22 June, 2011). Knowing that the writing of the chapters would be an important part of the analytical process, I deliberately set out to write the findings and discussion chapters in a way that the empirical material would lead the narrative. The theoretical framework had shaped the research questions, had informed my research approach and early analysis, but when I started to write the stories of our living praxis (Chapter Six) I self-consciously left the theories to the side (to the extent that I could) and explicitly theorised the empirical findings in a later chapter (Chapter Eight). In the subsequent
drafts of Chapters Six and Seven, I added references to the theory, but sparingly, so as not to overimpose the theoretical lenses (Halquist & Musanti, 2010, p. 457).

Conclusion

This chapter provides a snapshot of some of the practical, theoretical, and ethical challenges that emerged in the thesis as various elements of the research bumped up against each other (Clayton, 2013). In particular, I highlighted complexities associated with researching practice and praxis in a complex setting, representing critical pedagogical praxis, negotiating complex research relations and multiple roles, researching with my PhD supervisors, and the theoretical framework and its use. I also extended the arguments presented in previous chapters by commenting on this research project as a practice architecture for critical pedagogical praxis. While I anticipated some of these complexities and the challenges they generated, I nevertheless had to work my way through them. The chapter was not written with the intention of making the “research problematics” (Pillow, 2003, p. 179) unproblematic. Rather I hoped to highlight some of the complexities in order to shed different light on some of the research questions that this study addressed, particularly ‘What enables and/or constrains critical pedagogical praxis in the setting and how so?’ I also hoped to demonstrate the role of critical reflexivity in the critical hermeneutic work characterising the study, and what was mediating the process.

Next is the final chapter in which I bring the thesis to a close. In the chapter I summarise the key findings and consider their implications beyond the setting in which the research took place. Some implications for researching praxis, based on the discussion in this chapter, are presented as part of the concluding discussion.
CHAPTER TEN – NURTURING-PROVOKING PRAXIS

What future, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we nurture you?
What architectures
Build or break,
What new paths
Or worn paths take,
Sensing the history
We make
When we act?

The contemporary university, a site of uncertainty and struggle in the face of multiple pressures pulling at its core functions, presents many challenges for university educators endeavouring to embody critical pedagogical praxis. This study set out to generate insights into how critical pedagogical praxis can be nurtured in higher education in a way that contextualises and theorises these challenges, but also moves beyond stories of universities in crisis. It did so by examining how a group of academics’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis were enabled and constrained by the conditions within a particular university setting.

The research highlighted the complex nature of critical pedagogical praxis, and how variously it can be manifested in higher education. It also highlighted three other important issues. Firstly, university practice architectures are both a source of nourishment (i.e., conditions of possibility) and a source of tension for critical pedagogical praxis, depending on whether they create and/or limit time and space for (a) building positive collegial and student-teacher relationships; (b) engaging in critical, reflexive inquiry and rigorous critical conversation; (c) responding creatively and ethically to people and situations; and (d) engaging in professional learning and critically reflective pedagogical practice. Secondly, to address some of the ‘threats’ to the enactment of critical pedagogical praxis, existing practice architectures in the particular setting studied need to be more closely scrutinised, reoriented and/or replaced by different, more sustaining architectures. Many such ‘threats’ can be linked to the penetration, into university life, of neoliberalism and managerialism. Critical communities can play an important role in the task of constructing, or in some cases reconstructing, practice architectures that counter, or side-step, the ill-effects of neoliberalism and sustain critical pedagogical praxis. Thirdly, there is a ‘doubleness’ to the notion of provoking praxis. Critical pedagogical praxis can be provoked in a positive sense through creating dissonance which prompts people to confront their
assumptions and act differently. Paradoxically, it can be provoked in a negative sense through oppressive conditions. Provoking critical pedagogical praxis positively is what the co-participants in this study hoped to do through our collective critical pedagogical praxis.

This chapter concludes the dissertation by considering the significance of the key findings in terms of contributions to existing knowledge, implications for practice and policy in the broader higher education context, and possibilities for future research. I offer these final comments on the assumption that this site-based project, while “profoundly local”, has implications that have resonances beyond our “place, puzzles and problems” (Editorial, 2013, *Educational Action Research*, p. 287). The literature discussed in Chapter Three certainly suggests that this may be so. A final reflection, which draws together the poetry segments used to introduce Chapters Six to Ten, concludes both the chapter and the thesis.

**Critical Pedagogical Praxis as Manifested in Higher Education**

Investigating the experiences and living pedagogical practice of a group of academics endeavouring to embody critical pedagogical praxis in a particular university setting, enabled a close examination of critical pedagogical praxis. These experiences and living practice were investigated through six sets of encounters. These were

1. co-participation in the Teacher Talk group;
2. interviews and follow-ups with individual TT members;
3. observations of TT members’ efforts to enact critical pedagogical praxis in practice;
4. engagement in a supervision relationship (and reflexive study of supervision) with two of my PhD supervisors;
5. interviews with two colleagues of the TT members; and
6. self-study of my practice as a lecturer in a teacher education course preparing pre-service teachers for secondary schools.

An eclectic mix of theoretical and methodological resources informed the generation of empirical material through these six sets of encounters. Through critical hermeneutic analysis, critical pedagogical praxis emerged as highly complex, context-sensitive, idiosyncratic, multifarious, risky, and hard work. This was highlighted particularly by the examination of the participating academics’ individual attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis in initial teacher education, on-line pedagogy, and doctoral supervision, and collective attempts to embody critical pedagogical praxis
(collective critical pedagogical praxis) in a community of practice, that is, the Teacher Talk group.

By making visible how critical pedagogical praxis was enacted variously in these pedagogical sites through four aspects of practice – (1) endeavouring to understand, (2) being responsive and responding appropriately, (3) creating conditions of possibility for learning and praxis development, and (4) embodying and evoking criticality\(^\text{137}\) – the study potentially contributes to an understanding of the nature of critical pedagogical praxis, and how it can be realised in higher education, especially in teacher education, on-line pedagogy, doctoral supervision, and professional learning communities, but perhaps more broadly. The research also challenges suggestions that universities have abandoned their knowledge-related functions and civic purpose (see Chapter Three), and the notions of university classrooms as ‘dead zones’ and universities as morally bankrupt (Giroux, 2010). Critical pedagogical praxis may be difficult in the contemporary university, but it is, nevertheless, very much alive as a species of pedagogical practice.

Insights into the complex ways in which pedagogical practice is prefigured in a university setting may also be useful for those concerned about possibilities in higher education for critical pedagogical praxis and related species of pedagogical practice\(^\text{138}\). The research showed that critical pedagogical praxis was prefigured by a complex combination of other practices (e.g., research and scholarship practices, student learning practices, and management practices) (Kemmis et al., 2014), multiple arrangements pertaining to the sites of practice (Schatzki, 2002, 2012) and the individual educator’s circumstances, and factors related to practitioner capacity (e.g., dispositions, knowledges, values, virtues, aspirations/motivations, well-being, state of mind, sense of agency, self-efficacy, and physicality) which are formed (and/or given meaning) intersubjectively through life experiences and circumstances (Green, 2009b; Schatzki, 2002). What educators themselves brought to the sites of pedagogy was as important as what educators found, changed, and created in those sites with others. This suggests that attempts to nurture and understand critical pedagogical praxis need to take account of practices, practice architectures, and practitioner subjectivities and capacity, and how these things relate to each other.

\(^{137}\) These were identified as the four \textit{praxis themes} in Chapter Six.

\(^{138}\) For example, radical pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, critical pedagogy.
The research reported in this thesis examined critical pedagogical praxis enacted by academics located within an Education Faculty and focussed on four specific areas (counting Teacher Talk as a site of pedagogical practice) of higher education pedagogy. To build further on the insights generated by the inquiry, research examining practice in non-education faculties (or across faculties), and other areas of higher education pedagogy, both on and off campus, would also contribute to an understanding of critical pedagogical praxis. The three practice theory lenses used in this study, and a research approach incorporating elements of critical hermeneutics, institutional ethnography, self-study, and critical participatory action research, would be useful for such research. Including the perspectives of students, and more closely examining the impact of pedagogical practice of this kind, would also be valuable.

Possibilities and Tensions for Critical Pedagogical Praxis

This research additionally contributes to knowledge about critical pedagogical praxis and nurturing critical pedagogical praxis through insights generated about the myriad interrelated and constraining and enabling conditions within a particular university. Although what constrained and enabled critical pedagogical praxis varied depending on the circumstances, the university educator(s), the pedagogical sites, and the particular sayings, doings, and relatings of the educators, some key practice architectures emerged as significant, in terms of enabling and constraining critical pedagogical praxis, across different pedagogical sites and individual educators’ practice.

On the one hand, critical pedagogical praxis was enabled and sustained by practice architectures related to

- student engagement, student feedback, and positive student-teacher relationships (as sources of information, inspiration, and motivation; that to which the practitioners were responding in the sites of practice);
- aspects of curriculum (in terms of opportunities for critical dialogue, building relationships, challenging assumptions, and drawing critical resources into the pedagogical encounters);
- aspects of place, space, and information technology (by opening up possibilities for communication and interaction; by allowing access to resources; by creating flexibility in terms of time management);
- collegial relationships and opportunities for collaboration within the academic community (as sources of solidarity, inspiration, information, and as sites of critical exchanges and stirring each other into critical language);
• research/scholarship (informing practice; affording exposure to discourses and diverse perspectives); and

• relationships beyond the university environment (as a source of sustenance and “triggers” (Co-participant, Interview 2: 24) for thinking differently).

It was evident that some of these practice architectures, which interrelated in many ways, could enable by supporting and/or sustaining efforts to practice in particular ways, contributing to conditions of possibility. They could also enable by prompting certain types of pedagogical responses, or by impacting positively on practitioner capacity. Together, the existence of these practice architectures contributes to a narrative of hope regarding the present and future enactment of critical pedagogical praxis.

On the other hand, efforts to embody critical pedagogical praxis were made difficult by cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that contributed to (a) the intensification of academic work, (b) lack of (or diminishing) teacher-student contact time, (c) challenges of on-line teaching, (d) over-regulation and standardisation of practice, (e) promotion of technical, virtual, neoliberal constructions of pedagogical practice, and (f) a shift from a critical and collegial culture to one of compliance and competition. The tensions created by these conditions, many of which reflect the penetration of neoliberal and managerialist ideals into the University setting studied, contribute to a narrative of critical pedagogical praxis at risk in the contemporary university.

As emphasised in Chapter Three, in a discussion of higher education literature, the impact of neoliberalism and new public management on higher education pedagogy is a pervasive concern. This study suggested that the concern is warranted. Evidence regarding the effects of mechanisms associated with neoliberalism and new public management on the work of academics generally, and on their pedagogical practice in particular, reinforces arguments that constructions of pedagogical practice as a technical (i.e., instrumental/rule-following) (e.g., Walker, 2002), virtual (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2009), and/or economic exercise (e.g., Bode & Dale, 2012; Giroux, 2010; Sappey & Bamber, 2007, December) are increasingly accepted in the contemporary university at the expense of constructions of pedagogical practice as praxis. This research echoes calls for greater attention to the moral-political-relational dimensions of teaching (e.g., Ball, 2012; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Walker, 2002), and highlights the need for raising awareness about implications for pedagogy. However, this study also moves beyond the widespread critique of the contemporary university
in ways that the other studies and commentaries do not. This research offers (a) a contextualised, ‘lived’ account of how conditions are impacting on pedagogical practice from the perspective of three particular practice theories, and (b) a view of critical pedagogical praxis as a way of “answering back” (Jess, Interview 1: 13) to the neoliberal conditions.

This research has implications for government policy with respect to pressures external to universities that perpetuate neoliberal and managerialist preoccupations. In the university in which the study was conducted, ongoing cuts to government funding, changes to funding arrangements and student fee schemes, and the increasing authority assigned to regulatory government agencies, appear to have had direct effects on university governance in the setting studied, which, in turn, has affected academic culture and discourses, how technology and other resources have been utilised, and the everyday working relationships of staff and students, to give just a few examples. As this research showed, these practice architectures have been prefiguring pedagogical practice, making some kinds of pedagogical practice like critical pedagogical praxis more difficult than others. Unfortunately, tensions in Australian universities are likely to worsen before they improve given recent cuts to university funding and policy changes announced by the Federal Coalition Government in May this year (2014). Academics, it seems to me, not only need to be aware of the effects of these external arrangements on university education, but also need to participate in public debate about these issues, if we are to address the worsening situation for universities at a national policy level.

In some ways, this research has only scratched the surface (even in one university setting) regarding the tensions and possibilities created by practice architectures for critical pedagogical praxis. Whereas empirical material for this project was primarily generated over eighteen months, studies that examine the impact of university architectures over an extended period of time, and that look more closely than the scope of this project permitted at any one of the tensions or enabling architectures identified in this research, would usefully inform future practice, policy, and ongoing conversations in the scholarly literature.

Negotiating and Changing Practice Architectures

In highlighting both enabling and constraining conditions for critical pedagogical praxis, this thesis has taken a critical stance in relation to the existing circumstances
within my own institution. This was essential not only in order to honour the perspectives of the participants, and to share an honest account of my interpretations, but also to continue a tradition of critique and critical debate by making various tensions for critical pedagogical praxis visible, rather than contribute to a culture of silence by ignoring these tensions, or denying they exist. This was deemed important for creating and finding “opening[s]” (I. Young, 1990, p. 257) in my own setting through which constraining practice architectures that we have inherited, or already created, might be negotiated and/or changed, and through which different practice architectures might be constructed in light of current tensions.

The benefits of this are specific to the community in which the research was conducted. However, some insights emerging from the analysis of constraining and enabling conditions could be helpful for those wanting to reconstruct practice architectures in other settings in order to make the architectures in those settings more conducive to critical pedagogical praxis (or like species of pedagogical practice). In particular, the six conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis outlined in Chapter Eight could serve as a useful frame for critiquing existing practice architectures in a university setting. For instance, one could ask, ‘Do the current economic-material arrangements (e.g., allocation of staff to subjects; employment of casual v. continuing staff; workshops spaces; staff meeting spaces; workload allocation; staff-student ratios; repeat teachings of a subject; study leave; cross-campus teaching arrangements), social-political arrangements (e.g., collegial and democratic decision-making; surveillance measures; power attached to particular positions) and cultural-discursive arrangements (e.g., university mission; discourses regarding pedagogy)

1. allow time (e.g., for reflection, relationship-building, scholarship, noticing, engaging in debate, democratic/inclusive decision-making, creating conditions of possibility)?

2. allow space for creativity?

3. allow space for autonomy and flexibility so that educators can exercise professional judgement, be responsive, and respond appropriately?

4. foster/sustain/allow the development of positive, productive, trusting relationships?

5. encourage/legitimise/provide for critical dialogue and reflexive inquiry and conversation? and

6. provide opportunities for maximum engagement in community and opportunities to develop the capacity for critical pedagogical praxis through experience?
If the answers to these questions are negative, academics could usefully ask, ‘Where are our spaces of agency for addressing these issues?’ Obviously, answers to such questions need to be considered in relation to the particularities of each site and what educators are trying to achieve.

In addition to pointing to what might be important to consider in critiquing existing conditions for pedagogical practice, this research highlighted how constraining conditions can be negotiated and responded to in positive ways. It also showed that new practice architectures – such as Teacher Talk, a particular kind of community of practice – can be formed to create conditions of possibility for critical pedagogical praxis, and despite some of the difficulties of sustaining communities of practice, especially in challenging times, to serve as a space for consciousness-raising and finding ways of addressing issues.

By highlighting the agentic ways in which a group of academics were negotiating and changing practice architectures in a particular setting, the study, and this thesis, acknowledges, but moves beyond, crisis narratives about universities, and challenges the notion of the ‘undead’ academic (Ryan, 2012). Certainly, the sense of frustration underpinning Ryan’s zombie characterisation is justified, and such characterisations and the crisis narratives capture a kind of suffering that ought to be acknowledged. However, I suggest that the academic community can be better served in the long term by drawing inspiration from the lived stories of how people are embodying critical pedagogical praxis, and engaging passionately, but calmly, in critical dialogue about how we can deal with the current state of affairs creatively, proactively, strategically, subversively (if necessary), and above all, collegially. It is my hope that this research makes a contribution to the conversation in this regard.

The Doubleness of Provoking Praxis

The ‘doubleness’ of provoking praxis in higher education can also be viewed as a source of hope. In Chapter Eight, I suggested that, to provoke praxis in a way that is constructive (and least likely to generate harm), we need to do so by creating conditions in which praxis is provoked positively, that is through a kind of nurturing-provoking. I also commented that provoking praxis positively (or nurturing-provoking) means the self-conscious/reflexive stirring in to sayings (including critical questions), doings and relatings associated with critical pedagogical praxis (such as the kind exemplified in this thesis), and the pedagogic use of dissonance/disruption
(i.e., in a generative sense), for example, through debate and open forums which allow participants in such forums to deliberately provoke each other to critique and confront current views. Thinking about nurturing critical pedagogical praxis in terms of *provoking praxis* puts an emphasis on critical dialogue as a core part of the professional learning of academics.

However, this research also highlighted that critical pedagogical praxis can be provoked (as a form of resistance or disruption) by conditions that are potentially oppressive. While it would not be desirable for critical pedagogical praxis to be provoked in this way if harm is caused in the process, those concerned about praxis in universities can draw hope, paradoxically, from the knowledge that the most adverse conditions can stir a passion which prompts people to take critical action, and which sustains critical pedagogical praxis. The conditions in the University setting in which this research was conducted, were ironically, in some ways, provoking praxis in the latter, negative sense. This is a side to the story that appeared to be missing from the crisis narratives in the higher education literature reviewed for this research.

**Researching as, about, and for, Praxis**

The actual *doing* of the research, as discussed in Chapter Nine, highlighted some of the issues that can arise when researching critical pedagogical praxis, and when conducting research within practice traditions. Such issues may be relevant to research *as, about, and for, praxis* more broadly. In particular, the reflexive discussion pointed to the need for a kind of research practice that recognises the complexity of praxis and sites of practice, and pointed to the advantages of an eclectic and multilayered approach. It also provided a warrant for mindfulness (Conklin, 2009) and critical reflexivity (Pillow, 2003) in the critical hermeneutic process because of the potential tensions associated with representation and the negotiation of research relations, and because of the ways in which the research *doings, sayings, and relatings* are themselves mediated.

**The Praxis-Oriented University**

I began this thesis with crisis narratives. I wish to begin the end of this thesis by pointing out that the thesis is not a crisis narrative. Rather it is a narrative of struggle, a struggle out of which an alternative ending for praxis and education in the contemporary university can emerge. The alternative ending consists in the re-inscription of universities as praxis-oriented institutions, university conditions as
conditions of possibility for praxis, and university pedagogical practice as praxis. It consists in pedagogical practice as a site of human flourishing, universities as ‘may-being’ arenas, and social justice being lived, not seeming to be lived or intended. J. Nixon’s (2011) words highlight why this is so important:

Higher education is one of the spaces in which we are able to set about this imaginative task of learning to live together in a world of difference and thereby reclaim the public realm as a shared space of human action. That task of imaginative reclamation and reconstruction is one of the most important and urgent tasks facing higher education in the twenty first century. (p. 17)

The praxis-oriented university I imagine seems far away in some respects, and given the stories of living praxis in this thesis, within reach in others. The praxis-oriented university is not impossible.

Clearly, there is a need to provoke and embody praxis collectively to keep spaces open in our university settings for questioning the unquestionable and imagining the unimaginable. Based on this research, I suggest that university educators need to

- be aware of the kind of pedagogical practice, university education, and academic life we are constructing/perpetuating when we teach;
- assert and/or reassert (or perhaps re-imagine) through engagement in our universities, community, and in our writing, what kind of university education is crucial for our times, and reassess whether what is happening in our universities is taking us towards or further away from that;
- determine (for example, through communicative spaces in, and across, our universities) what, and the extent to which, traditions, practice architectures, and practices in universities need to be challenged and/or revitalised;
- commit to changing/challenging traditions, practices, and practice architectures that deny possibilities for praxis and/or commit to creating different ones; and
- act (individually and collectively in our academic communities) to create arrangements that together become nurturing-provoking practice architectures for social-justice oriented, informed, and reflexive practices.

This is our ethical and educational responsibility.

I would like to close this chapter, and the thesis, with the poetry segments that appeared at the beginning of the last five chapters of the thesis. I bring these segments together as a summary of my sense making, aware that it potentially raises more questions than answers:
Ode to Critical Pedagogical Praxis

What species, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we know you?
And find you
In the tangled web
Of words and deeds
And furnishings,
And lives
And things
That matter?

What nourishes, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
What niche sustains?
What walls contain?
What invasive species
Provoke you,
Displace you,
Or chase you
From your home?

What difference, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we provoke you?
And possibilities create,
By making space
For imagining
And flourishing,
Not rendering
Your habitat
Hostile?

What trickery, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we grasp you;
Hold you for a while?
And avoid
The self-delusion
That we can claim
And name
And master you?

What future, Critical Pedagogical Praxis?
How might we nurture you?
What architectures
Build or break,
What new paths
Or worn paths take,
Sensing the history
We make
When we act?
Hopefully this thesis has shed some light on some of the walls we need to break, what we can constructively create, and even what well worn paths could guide us in making an alternative history, or new beginnings.

Post Script

‘What future?’
Let’s see.
(Education needn’t be
A casualty.)
Hope?
Happy earth?
Healthy citizenry?
Who knows what
May be!
The answer will lie
In your living
Of me,
Don’t you think?

by Critical Pedagogical Praxis
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research: Dealing with issues and dilemmas in action research (pp. 88-97). New York: Routledge.


the 29th annual conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (pp. 471-478).


Appendix A: Group Protocols

Group Protocols (Teacher Talk)

Members of the Teacher Talk group agree to participate in the Teacher Talk project, and in Kathleen Clayton’s PhD research project ‘Critical praxis in higher education pedagogy’ according to the following protocols:

1. Respect and open communication.

   1.1. Group members agree to communicate respectfully and openly with one another throughout the project.

   1.2. Each group member agrees to respect the rights of others to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline participation in particular aspects of the study, or to have information they have provided removed from any reports emanating from the study. Group members agree to respect the right of any group member to withdraw from the group, the study, or part of the study.

   1.3. Group members agree to be open with other group members and the chief investigator [Kathleen] if they think the research is having a negative impact on the group, or on them personally.

2. Access to empirical material.

   2.1. All group members will have access to empirical material/transcripts that are generated or collected within the context of the group meetings (i.e., as ‘common empirical material’).

   2.2. Access to material that is collected outside of group meetings, but that directly involves group members, for instance in observations or face to face interviews, will be restricted to the chief investigator, unless the group members concerned negotiate for such material to be released to the group for the purposes of data analysis or discussion stimulus. Group members agree that where others are involved (such as participating students who may appear in video-recorded lessons), such release of empirical material to the group will occur only with the consent of those involved.

   2.3. Group members agree that if the chief investigator’s PhD supervisors, as part of their supervision responsibilities, need to access any empirical material involving group members, but not considered ‘common empirical material’, access will be negotiated between the group member concerned and the chief investigator.

   2.4. Group members agree that if they wish (for their own publications and/or research purposes) to use common empirical material generated within this project, they need to negotiate that use of the empirical material with the chief investigator. Group members agree that the assessment of a PhD

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139 The title of the thesis and my name have changed since this document was created.
thesis on the basis of its original contribution to knowledge would be a consideration in any such negotiations.

3. **Identifiability.**

3.1. Group members understand that, since the study involves a PhD candidate and her two supervisors as research participants, the institution and the primary participants may be identifiable in any representations of the study where this involvement is acknowledged. Group members agree that this needs to be considered in all phases of the study and agree to act with discretion so that the institution and the participants can be appropriately safeguarded.

3.2. Considering the conditions outlined in 3.1, group members agree that:

   a. it is appropriate to acknowledge the group members by name (e.g., in footnotes or in ‘Acknowledgement’ sections of reports of published accounts of the research); but that

   b. non-gender specific pseudonyms (e.g., for direct quotes) are to be used in the main text of accounts so that it is difficult for readers to attribute particular comments to particular people; and

   c. if, through the course of the study, the group members collectively decide that the naming of the group members in accounts of the research (beyond general acknowledgements) would be beneficial to both the individuals concerned and the institution, and not harmful to others, then individual written consent to be named would be obtained from each of the group members before anyone is named.

3.3. With regard to empirical material that involves group members but that is not considered ‘common empirical material’ (for example individual interview transcripts), group members agree that efforts to protect participant anonymity will be made in consultation with the group members concerned.

4. **Reflecting on the research process.**

4.1. In order to ensure that the research process does not compromise the integrity of the group, or impact negatively on those involved, group members agree to periodically review (as a group) how the research is unfolding and impacting on the group and the individual group members.

5. **Changes to group membership.**

5.1. Group members agree that, if new members join the group during the project, the new members will be invited to take part in the research and written informed consent will be obtained before they become involved. Group members agree that the new group members will be asked to commit to these group protocols.

5.2. Group members agree that if one or more of the group members no longer wish to be involved in the study, then the inclusion of the teacher talk meetings in the research will be reviewed.
6. **Representation.**

6.1. Group members are entitled to an opportunity to check that their work and comments are fairly, relevantly and accurately represented in any reports of the research. To this end, group members will be consulted (as co-researchers) about representation, and will be asked to check draft thesis material which relates to them.

6.2. Group members agree that, if they feel that representations relating to them are not fair, relevant or accurate, they will communicate this to the chief investigator who will deal sensitively and respectfully with any concerns that are raised.

6.3. Copies of the completed thesis will be made available, upon request, to the group members.

7. **Mediation**

7.1. In the very unlikely event that there is conflict/relationship breakdown (between group members) that cannot be resolved and that is detrimental to the project and/or well-being of group members, group members agree for Miriam Dayhew, University Ombudsman, to be asked to act as mediator to help those concerned work through the issues.
Appendix B: Sample Consent Form

The following Consent Form was used for the co-participants (i.e., Teacher Talk group members). All Consent Forms were tailored to suit the participants and the nature of their potential participation. The structure of the forms for the three participating groups (co-participants, colleague participants, student participants) was similar. The title of the project and my name (Kathleen Mahon) has changed since the forms were completed.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Locked Bag 588
Boorooma Avenue
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678
AUSTRALIA
http://www.csu.edu.au.html

Consent form: Primary participant (TT group member)

Title of research project:  
*Critical praxis in higher education pedagogy*

Chief Investigator:  
(PhD student)  
Kathleen Clayton  
RIPPLE  
Locked Bag 588  
Boorooma Avenue  
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678  
Tel: 6933 2664  
Email: kclayton@csu.edu.au

PhD Supervisors:

Professor Stephen Kemmis  
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Email: skemmis@csu.edu.au

Dr Laurette Bristol  
RIPPLE  
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Tel: 6933 2745  
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Professor Lisa Given  
School of Information Studies  
Locked Bag 588  
Boorooma Avenue  
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678  
Tel: 6933 4092  
Email: lgiven@csu.edu.au

I ……………………………………………………………, give consent to my participation in the research project entitled ‘Critical praxis in higher education pedagogy’. In providing my consent, I make it clear that:

1. I have read the project proposal in its entirety. I regard the proposal as equivalent to an ‘Information Statement’.

2. My participation in this project is voluntary and based on an understanding of the purpose, methods, demands, risks and potential benefits of the research as outlined in the proposal.

3. I have had an opportunity to discuss with the chief investigator, and others, details of the project and the implications of my involvement and have agreed to the group protocols (attached as well as listed in the proposal).

4. I agree to participate in accordance with the group protocols.
5. I understand that my participation in the study may involve:
   - critically reflective group discussions (in TT meetings) about the research topic and the research processes;
   - one to two x 1-2 hour face-to-face, audio-taped interviews about my pedagogical practice, factors that impact on my practice, and the implications of my practice within a university setting;
   - observation, audio (or video) recording, and photographing of my pedagogical practice;
   - participation in reflective writing about aspects of the project via an on-line forum established for this project;
   - verifying data and reviewing interpretations and representations of the data.

6. I understand that any information I supply to the chief investigator as part of the study will be used only for the purposes of the research (as stated in the research proposal and ethics application) and in accordance with the agreements made in the group protocols for the study.

7. I understand that other participants who are members of the TT group will only have access to data that is generated collectively by the TT group, and may have access to data related to my individual involvement in the study if I give permission for that access to occur.

8. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on Charles Sturt University premises for at least five years, and will then be destroyed.

9. I understand that I may withdraw at any time without any penalty or discriminatory treatment, and that I may request that any data I have supplied to that time be withdrawn from the research.

10. I am aware that Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study and I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:
    
    Executive Officer  
    Human Research Ethics Committee  
    Academic Secretariat  
    Charles Sturt University  
    Private Mail Bag 29  
    Bathurst NSW 2795  
    Phone: (02) 6338 4628  
    Fax: (02) 6338 4194

    Participant’s signature: ......................................................... Date: .......................  
    Chief Investigator’s signature: ............................................... Date: .......................
Appendix C: Sample Information Statement

The following Information Statement was used for the Colleague Participants. The Student Participant Information Statement was similar, but modified to suit the nature of the students’ potential participation in the study.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Locked Bag 588
Boorooma Avenue
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678
AUSTRALIA
http://www.csu.edu.au.html

INFORMATION STATEMENT: Colleague interview

Title of research project: Critical praxis in higher education pedagogy

Chief Investigator: Kathleen Clayton
(PhD student) RIPPLE
Locked Bag 588
Boorooma Avenue
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678
Tel: 6933 2664
Email: kclayton@csu.edu.au

PhD Supervisors:

Professor Stephen Kemmis Dr Laurette Bristol Professor Lisa Given
School of Education RIPPLE School of Information Studies
Locked Bag 588 Locked Bag 588 Locked Bag 588
Boorooma Avenue Boorooma Avenue Boorooma Avenue
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678 Wagga Wagga NSW 2678 Wagga Wagga NSW 2678
Tel: 6933 2149 Tel: 6933 2745 Tel: 6933 4092
Email: skemmis@csu.edu.au Email: lbristol@csu.edu.au Email: lgiven@csu.edu.au

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a PhD research study entitled ‘Critical praxis in higher education pedagogy’. The study is being conducted by Kathleen Clayton and supervised by Professor Stephen Kemmis, Dr Laurette Bristol, and Professor Lisa Given. You are eligible to participate in this study because of your current or past involvement in teaching and learning in the university setting that is part of the study and because of your current or past working relationship with academics whose teaching practice is the focus of the study.

The purpose of this study

The purpose of the study is to investigate critical educational praxis (critically reflective, informed and morally committed educational practice) in higher education. It will explore how this form of educational practice is constrained and enabled in a university setting. The study aims to understand ways in which critical educational praxis can be fostered.

What the study involves

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to be involved in an audio-taped face-to-face or phone interview (45-60mins) at a time and place that is convenient to you. The purpose of the interview is to obtain your perspectives about university teaching practice and the
conditions which impact on teaching practice at CSU. Specifically, the interview will focus on...[insert specific topics]...This interview will be conducted by the chief investigator. The audio-recording of the interview will be transcribed. You may be asked to verify interview transcripts to ensure that they are accurate and to review interpretations of data that you provided to ensure that interpretations are fair, relevant and accurate.

Your participation in this study, the audio-recording, transcript and any notes made by the interviewer will be treated in a confidential manner. The audio recording will be erased from the recorder as soon as it has been uploaded to a password-protected hard drive or USB for transcription and analysis purposes. Only the chief investigator will have access to the data, except in the event that the chief investigator’s PhD supervisors, as part of their supervision responsibilities, need to access the data. In this case, the chief investigator will negotiate this access with you.

Your name will be removed from any transcripts and notes and will not appear in any reports of findings or publications arising out of the research. All of the research data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the chief investigator’s university office. Electronic information will be kept in password-protected electronic files and USBs. The data will only be used for the purposes outlined above. It will be destroyed five years after the research is completed.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to participate, and if you do participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide to withdraw, you do not need to provide a reason for withdrawal. You may withdraw any data that you have supplied. There will be no consequences to you if you withdraw, or if you decide not to participate.

Possible benefits and risks
It is hoped that this research will benefit teaching practice and student learning at CSU. It is also hoped that the findings will be of value to others and could potentially contribute to improved teaching and learning in other university contexts.

There are no specific risks anticipated with your participation in this study, apart from the inconvenience of giving up your time. However, if you have any concerns about your involvement, the chief investigator is happy to discuss any concerns that you have. If you find that you are becoming distressed about any aspect of the research and you are a CSU staff member, counselling support is available at no personal charge through CSU’s Employee Assistance Program (see CSU Division of Human Resources website for details).

Any questions?
If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact the chief investigator at the address noted at the top of the page. This study has been approved by Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the committee:

Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Academic Secretariat
Charles Sturt University
Private Mail Bag 29
Bathurst NSW 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.
If you agree to participate, please read and sign the attached Consent form.
This Information Statement is for you to keep.
Appendix D: Addressing Risks to Participants

The following is an excerpt from the ethics application submitted to the Universities Human Research Ethics Committee prior to commencement of the research (hence the somewhat technical language). I have modified the table to include only those sections pertaining to risks to participants. This table summarises some of the key and general approaches to managing ethical issues. Specific ways in which emergent issues were addressed depended on the particularities of each situation.

A number of possible risks have been identified, most of which are either ‘low risk’ (according to explanations of risk provided in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007 pp 15-18)) or unlikely to occur. The table below lists the identified risks (column A) and measures that will be taken to eliminate, minimise, or manage the corresponding risks (column B):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Burdens and/or risks</th>
<th>B. Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenience to participants in terms of giving up time to participate in the study</td>
<td>• As much as possible, use data collection procedures that involve minimal disruption to what is naturally occurring in the setting (e.g., observation of activities, or attendance at meetings that ordinarily occur in the setting).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Where disruption is unavoidable (for example in the case of interviews), be mindful of participants’ time commitment and ensure that data collection schedules are convenient for the participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional discomfort for participants could include:</td>
<td>• Establish rapport with the participants and maintain a respectful, honest, caring, sensitive approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make explicit who will have access to data, how the data will be used, and how long the data will be kept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that access to data is restricted according to the agreed protocols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Keep participants informed about the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Respect participants’ rights to privacy and autonomy which may include not being recorded, photographed, observed, or interviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain confidentiality and where possible, ensure that the participants cannot be identified in any material related to the study unless they have given written permission to be identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage the participants, where possible, in various stages of the research process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for participants to check and annotate interview transcripts and to read and respond to representations of data pertaining to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverse impact on existing relationships.</td>
<td>• Establish group protocols to which all primary participants agree. (See agreed group protocols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Closely monitor the impact of the research on existing relationships and adherence to group protocols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work through issues openly and respectfully, involving neutral parties if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[General]:</td>
<td>• Ensuring that participants are aware of the risks outlined above and respecting their rights to withdraw from the study at any stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open and regular communication with participants so that any adverse impacts of the research, or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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any additional risks, can be identified early.

- Ensuring that the burdens/risks are justifiable in terms of the benefits of the study for the participants. If this is not the case, then the participant’s involvement and research approach may need to be reviewed and modified accordingly. If this changes the circumstances to which the participant initially consented, the relevant consent form would be revised and re-approved by the HREC before being signed by the participant.
- Although unlikely, if serious issues develop that cannot be quickly resolved, the study may need to be suspended (in consultation with the HREC) until the issues have been appropriately addressed.
- Ensuring that participants are advised of counselling services which can be accessed if they experience distress as a result of their participation in the study.
Appendix E: Presentations About the Research

Refereed Conference Abstracts


Non-refereed Presentations

‘Critical Praxis in Higher Education Pedagogy II’. Presented at the 2013 Faculty of Education Higher Degree Research Forum, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst.

‘Critical Praxis in Higher Education Pedagogy I’. Presented at 2012 Faculty of Education Graduate Studies and Research Forum, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.

‘Research as, and about, praxis’. Presented at the 2011 Faculty of Education Doctoral Student and Supervisor Forum, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst.

Presentations for fellow participants at the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis International Doctoral Schools (Gold Coast, 2012; Tromso, Norway, 2013).
Appendix F: Sample Analytical Questions

The following is an excerpt from the list of questions I generated as I engaged with literature in this research (as part of the research, and also related to my teaching). I began recording such questions after I had conducted a preliminary review of literature. This excerpt is included to provide a sample of the kinds of questions, prompted by literature, I was asking as part of the hermeneutic process, that is, in addition to the questions prompted by the three practice theories (See Chapter Four).

- How might power be operating in productive, rather than solely repressive ways? (prompt: Gildersleeve, 2010)
- What counts as pedagogy? Practice? Good pedagogical practice? Sites of pedagogical practice? (prompt: Green, B., 1998, p. 177) What subject – positions are being made available? (p. 179) What views of the relationship between power and pedagogy are operating in the sites of practice and in people’s practice? (p. 181) In what ways do the conditions within the university shape how we provoke student engagement? Within what regimes do we operate? (p. 187) How can the nature of praxis itself be constraining and enabling (constraining → inherently risky → appeal to people who embrace risk?) (pp. 188-190) What difference does time make (i.e., working with students over extended time period, where students engagement extends and deeps the conversations) (p. 190)
- What “discursive boundaries” are being established around pedagogy and curriculum at the University? How so? How is CPP ‘positioned’ in the discursive practices? How is it conceptualised and understood and ‘taken up’ by practitioners (prompt: Irving, 2011, p. 25)
- What are the routines? And where/how are they being disrupted? By what and with what effect? (prompt: Green 2009c, p. 49)
- Could I be looking at a culture where it is impolite to critique others? (prompt: R. Nixon, 2012, p. 230) What stance do the participants take towards our pedagogical practice? (p. 137) What traditions are influencing our work and have become part of our identity as professionals? Look for connection between those influencing traditions and meanings of praxis – for example, could there be a feminist stance or a post-colonial stance? Or a post-critical stance? And what do these things mean? (p. 137)
- What practices have become routinised, habit, institutionalised? What work do the practices do? What did the past practices and experiences do and what do they continue to do? What past experiences are stored in the practice memory? (prompt: Dewey, 1938, p. 29) What is haphazard? What is improvised? Are there disputes over rules? What happens? What are the rules? Who are the arbitrators? (1938)
- What am I rejecting/accepting in my study when I borrow from particular theorists? What kind of (human) being asks questions about praxis? (prompt: Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 24)
- Does accountability at the University extend to management? (prompt: Shore & Wright, 2004)
Appendix G: Blank Practice Architectures Template

The following template is based on the “Table of invention for analysing practices” in Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 39). The original “table of invention” (p. 39) was modified to suit this research and to reflect my developing interpretations of the theory of practice architectures, in light of my use of it during analysis, and in light of other literature. (The template is included in this dissertation with permission.)

### Practice Architecture Templates (for Investigating CPP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical source:</th>
<th>Field text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements of practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practice architectures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project(s)</strong></td>
<td><em>(found in or brought to the site)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices/praxis observed:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practice landscape</strong> – site <em>(objects and people “enmeshed” in the activity in this space at this time)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayings</td>
<td>Arrangements that make the sayings, doings, relating possible, and/or that prefigure the sayings doings and relating:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doings</td>
<td>Cultural-discursive arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being - Practitioner lives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practice traditions</strong> <em>(“in play, reproduced, or transformed in the practice” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 39))</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being - Dispositions – habitus</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site-practice-practitioner relationships</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implications – including social justice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPP</strong></td>
<td><strong>Researcher and research process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Practice Architectures Template (With Questions)

The template is based on the “Table of invention for analysing practices” in Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 39). Note that some of the questions have been informed by sources other than Kemmis et al. (2014). Also, that the sayings, doings and relatings do not neatly align in this template with cultural-discursive arrangements, material-economic arrangements, and social-political arrangements, is deliberate.

**Practice Architectures Template Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of practice</th>
<th>Practice architectures (found in or brought to the site)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Aim (Content? Process? Political? Moral?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Whose project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Conflicting projects?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Broader project v smaller projects nested within?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice landscape – site</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Where? Who? What (objects)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Atmosphere?/social climate? General layout/characteristics of the space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Circumstances?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sayings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What kind of language is being used/ are people being stirred into?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How is text presented?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Sayings characteristic of CPP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Sayings characteristic of particular discourses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stories/idioms/metaphors?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Stereotypes? Labelling of deviancy from the norm? unifying/inclusive language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What questions are being asked?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How is CPP discursively positioned?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural-discursive arrangements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Language modes? (spoken/written)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Text types?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Texts?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Dominant or competing discourses?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Cultural imagery and symbols?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What moral positions are assumed/shared?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Language of “practice architectures”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of practice</td>
<td>Practice architectures (found in or brought to the site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Main activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who is doing what? And with what/whom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Doings characteristic of CPP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relatings /“Havings”? (I. Young, p. 25)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How are events being orchestrated? And by whom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Interactions/tone of interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who is being included and excluded?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Alliances?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Relatings characteristic of CPP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● How is power/autonomy exercised/embodied/denied?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Distribution of resources?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Air time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Decision making processes – who decides/participates?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material-economic arrangements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Routines?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Objects; furnishings; layout?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Technology?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Body in the space?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Resources? Allocation/distribution of resources?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-political arrangements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What relationships are in place (e.g., student-teacher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Roles?/role expectations? Hierarchies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Positioning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Who has power? What kind of power? How determined?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Conventions/rules (e.g., turn-taking)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Attitudes about others?/existing relationships (e.g., mutual respect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What counts as capital?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of practice</td>
<td>Practice architectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being - Practitioner lives</strong></td>
<td><em>(found in or brought to the site)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Upbringing</td>
<td>• What is familiar/routine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language/cultural background?</td>
<td>• What is recalled through the activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional experience?</td>
<td>• How well rehearsed is the activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional learning?</td>
<td>• What theoretical traditions are called upon/embodied (e.g., social constructivism?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical incidents?</td>
<td>• What traditions are institutionalised?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Current role and status in the institution</td>
<td>• What is regarded as given?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being - Dispositions – habitus</strong></td>
<td>• What is habitual? What is haphazard? What is improvised?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identity (e.g., as researcher? educator? mother/father? particular type of teacher?)</td>
<td>• Cultural traditions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical/political disposition?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beliefs/assumptions/stance towards own practice?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of agency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideals/principles? Ideas of ‘the good’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aspirations?/commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Virtues and feelings?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of practice</td>
<td>Practice architectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site-practice-practitioner relationships</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implications – including social justice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is going on here?</td>
<td>- What conditions/practices are oppressive? For whom? How? (exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence (I. Young, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What makes the practices and structures possible? What is holding particular relationships (including power relationships) in place?</td>
<td>- How is oppression or domination reinforced or struggled against? (including through resignation, indifference, deliberate ignoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Significant chains of events in, prior to, and developing from this episode?</td>
<td>- Whose interests are served/not served?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Impact of sayings, doings, relatings? (e.g., what is evoked?)</td>
<td>- What is being limited? Denied? Enabled?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How is the activity framed?</td>
<td>- From where does constraint and enablement of action derive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is influencing/shaping/governing/mediating what/how? (including historical/institutional)</td>
<td>- What does this say about the University?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is being reproduced? Challenged? Transformed?</td>
<td>- What does this say about possibilities for CPP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is being valued? Legitimised? Problematised?</td>
<td>- What does this say about CPP?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship to other events/activities outside this episode?</td>
<td>- What is not happening that ought to, or could, be happening?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What narratives are being played out?</td>
<td>- What are the unintended consequences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Where do these narratives intersect with, contradict, compete with, complement each other?</td>
<td>- Tensions/contradictions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship between individual action and the actions of many (institutional regularities, patterns, structures) (I. Young, 1990, p. 28)</td>
<td>- What is taken for granted? What are the blindesses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How are practices and practice architectures “represented and enshrined in laws, regulations, rules, policies or social technologies (like funding and accounting systems)”? (Kemmis, 2009, p. 35)</td>
<td>- What is brought into question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is overt and what is infused?</td>
<td>- What are educators and students constructed as?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPP</strong></td>
<td><strong>Researcher and research process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- characteristics</td>
<td>- Any pertinent researcher sayings, doings and relatings? Researcher role? (e.g., detached or participant observer?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- how is it being taken up?</td>
<td>- How is what I am doing as a researcher mediating what is transpiring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher and research process</strong></td>
<td>- What is impacting on my practice as a researcher?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Sample Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule – Co-participant (interview 2)
Participant Name: .................................................................
Location:.................................................................
Date/time:........................................
- Establish a timeframe.
- Explain the purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible topics</th>
<th>Possible questions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your pedagogical practice</strong></td>
<td>What are the things that have most shaped the way that you teach?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagram</strong></td>
<td>How would you represent your practice diagramatically? Add things that impact most profoundly on teaching. How would you characterise the relationship between ....(elements of the diagram)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praxis/CPP</strong></td>
<td>In what ways do you see your own teaching practice being part of a collective praxis? What conditions are necessary for CPP to exist/be possible?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Talk</strong></td>
<td>What sustains TT? What can make it difficult to sustain? The impact of the teacher talk beyond the group? Tensions? Do you see it as an enabler for CPP? If so how?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The University</strong></td>
<td>What impact would you say you have had on the pedagogical practices that go on here? What more could we do to nurture praxis development? What would be your ideal University environment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The school merger</strong></td>
<td>How has the merger impacted on your teaching practice (if at all)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This project</strong></td>
<td>How are you feeling about your involvement in this project as a participant? Any tensions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: Participant Diagrams

The following diagrams were created by the other co-participants in our second interviews:

Figure 11.1. Interview diagram 1

Figure 11.2. Interview diagram 2

Figure 11.3. Interview diagram 3

Figure 11.4. Interview diagram 4

Figure 11.5. Interview diagram 5

Figure 11.6. Interview diagram 6
Arrangements and other practices (and individual practitioner factors) prefiguring initial teacher education face-to-face pedagogy.
Arrangements and other practices (and individual practitioner factors) prefiguring online pedagogy.
Arrangements and other practices (and individual practitioner factors) prefiguring doctoral supervision pedagogy.
Appendix N: Practice Architectures Diagram – Teacher Talk

Arrangements and other practices (and individual practitioner factors) prefiguring Teacher Talk.
Appendix O: Sample Observation Schedule

**Observation Schedule** (adapted from Clayton, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>What? How? When? (sayings, doings, relatings)</th>
<th>Impact of/on cultural/discursive, economic/material, social/political arrangements and other factors</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time:
Date:
Location:
Participants:
Photographs? Y/N
Video? Y/N

Description of context/site (including physical space):

Layout/configuration

PP= primary participant; ST = student; V= other people; O=observer