

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

**Crossing Cultural Borders – A Journey Towards Understanding
and Celebration in Aboriginal Australian and Non-Aboriginal
Australian Contexts**

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University**

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Declaration Page

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Abstract

Aboriginal students will often approach their teacher with the biggest and most beautiful smile. That smile, if it could be verbalised, asks the teacher to ‘learn me’.

Non-Aboriginal teachers may find that crossing cultural borders, between their own worldview and that of the Aboriginal students’ can be a challenging and frightening experience, so much so that they may not see the open smile and desire to learn from the Aboriginal student. I have been fortunate to have experienced crossing multiple cultural borders with Aboriginal people using an Aboriginal form of the Third Space (Bhabar, 1994) based on the lived experience of Scott Fatnowna who is the creator of this teaching and learning model. This model is designed to cause positive change between Aboriginal Australians and non-Aboriginal Australians through understanding each other’s worldview by working and learning together with equal power and cross cultural dialogue. The model also resonates with the Ganma metaphor (Yolgnu people from the Northern Territory).

This study investigates, through an autoethnographic narrative and participant interviews, what ‘learn me’ may mean for teachers with Aboriginal students in the classroom. This research also investigates how teachers may not only avoid the pitfalls involved in cultural border crossings but also increase the engagement and retention of Aboriginal students as both students and teachers ‘learn’ each other in a truly holistic fashion.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother Kathleen Margaret McLaughlin for always reminding me of who I really am, especially when I forget.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Peter Taylor for his patience, persistence and sheer tenacity without which I would not have completed this thesis.

I would also like to thank all my participants for giving so generously of their time and energy and sharing their stories with me. A special thank you must go to Scott Fatnowna who is the other half of my Third Space.

Thanks also to all those people who cheered me on and offered encouragement in the dark times.

Finally, but not lastly, I would like to thank my children Matthew and Zoe for putting up with grumpy Mum and believing in a “Bran neu day” for all of us.

Terminology

When used in the Australian context ‘Indigenous’ refers to a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as much by the community in which s/he lives.

Throughout this thesis there are references which refer exclusively to Aboriginal people/students whose experiences may be different to Torres Strait Islander people/students. Therefore, when the term “Aboriginal” is used, this refers specifically to Indigenous Australians of Aboriginal descent, identification and acceptance.

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Doorndjil yoordaniny (coming together – moving ahead).A Noongar representation of the Ganma Metaphor. (by Dale Tilbrook. Copyright Kooya Consultancy, 2003. Permission for use granted by Kim Collard July 2010)

Preface

This thesis is about a journey I have undertaken over the last 10 years. The journey involved a tatty and much worn piece of paper which was a map of sorts, however it is possible that the map was not as it appeared and, instead of sending me directly to my destination, I followed a long and convoluted trail.

The trail that I followed was what some have termed a learning journey. This particular learning journey involved my extensive sojourns and, at times, assimilation into a culture other than my own. This is the culture of Australian Aboriginal people. During this long and intrepid journey I met some remarkable people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and I learnt a great deal about Australian Aboriginal cultural schema.

The journey was made unconsciously at the outset in an effort to find a place of engagement between Aboriginal Australians and mainstream Australians and can be attributed to my involvement with pre-service teacher education at a university in Perth, Western Australia. I believe that in finding and defining this space it may be of use to other non-Aboriginal people who, for one reason or another, find themselves in a position where they need to cross the cultural borderlands between these two disparate cultural groups. It may also be useful to Aboriginal people as they make the journey from one worldview to another. This place of intersection between two cultures, sometimes termed the Third Space, is directed towards education and teacher education specifically.

I begin this thesis towards the end of my journey on a very hot summer's day in Perth, Western Australia, and I invite you to come on this learning journey with me.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Walking into the lobby of the hotel a little sigh escapes me as it is so very cool. It is 5.00pm outside and still hot and oppressive with not even the hint of the famous Fremantle Doctor to cool the city of Perth a little.

As I head for the lifts in this cool and quiet enclave my mind drifts to my doctoral studies. These days my mind seems to be conscious on some subliminal level of these studies most of the time. As I ruminate to myself the lift cranks its way upward to my first student. I am tutoring Australian Aboriginal students from all over Australia who are here to study various block release programs (these programs allow the student to continue in their employment whilst studying. The study spends blocks of time in fulltime study (usually two weeks four times a year) at a university in Perth, Western Australia.

The lift reaches the 7th floor and I walk out and head down to Leah's room. As I walk along the long quiet corridor I wonder why I called my doctoral studies *Crossing Cultural Borders: A Journey of Understanding and Celebration in Australian Aboriginal and Australian Contemporary Contexts*. It was all such a long time ago that the journey began and time does have a tendency to blur the edges of even the most important choices that we make.

As I recall it was because I thought that I had actually reached that place of understanding and celebration, however, as is often the case with new and emergent experiences in our lives, I was so far away from that point of illumination that I was travelling in darkness. I may still be travelling in darkness for all I know but when I knock on Leah's door and she opens it with the biggest smile for me I realise that it is these personal relationships we have with others that creates the world that we choose to live in and this in itself is cause for celebration. If by some chance those relationships are with others who come from a different worldview from oneself then there must be some kind of understanding.

I walk into Leah's room and she is ready to begin study. We have only known each other for four or five days but it seems longer as we get on well and I can see her growing more confident in her own intellectual abilities. Leah is not young and probably about 40 years of age but she is committed to her studies and together we will get over the line in the next couple of years.

As we finish our tutoring session Leah tells me that she will see me next time she is down in Perth. I know I have added a new friend to my life and a new student for the next few years. I walk towards the cranky old lift to get to my next student but not before those doctoral studies float back into my mind.

It has been almost ten years since I began this journey and many of the discoveries that I made during the course of the journey and, indeed much of my learning, came from my engagement with other people. Not surprisingly, many of these people were Australian Aboriginals as my journey was from a place of little understanding regarding their worldview to a place of insightful perception. In the beginning I had no map for this sojourn, and indeed I had no idea at the outset that I was beginning a journey. If I had been aware that I was about to venture forth I would have insisted on a map of some description because, as a former geologist, I know that a map is essential for otherwise one runs the risk of becoming lost. Unfortunately that is precisely what occurred for a short time as I became hopelessly lost in the desert of cultural identity and/or assumed cultural identity. As time transpired I remembered that I did have of a map of sorts and this map was called the Third Space.

The term, the Third Space, was first coined in a scholarly sense by Homi Bhabha (1994) to describe the 'liminal' intercultural space that occurs between people from differing cultural backgrounds. The version of the Third Space in this thesis is based on Scott Fatnowna's lived experience (see Chapter 9) as he sought to make sense of his Australian Aboriginal and Solomon Islander heritage in a largely Eurocentric Australia. This version of the Third Space resonates with the Ganma Metaphor (Yolgnu cosmology from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Australia, see Appendix 6) and, to a lesser extent, with Homi Bhabha's (1994) work regarding

cultural border crossings. The border crossings engaged in throughout this study are between Australian Aboriginals and Australian non-Aboriginals. The border between these two cultural groups, who live in the same country, has been a minefield for both groups because of Australia's historical treatment of Australian Aboriginal people, from colonisation until the present time.

This research is based on my lived experiences over the past 10 years and is interpretive and emergent in nature. Initially I wished to address the issue of the chronic failure of Western education to engage many Australian Aboriginal students. However, due to the emergent nature of the study it has become a representation of the Third Spaces created by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as they attempted to create those intercultural places of understanding that I call the Third Space.

In Chapter 1, I relate the background to the research with the establishment of the first intercultural teaching team in Perth, WA. This team was formed to teach pre-service teachers Aboriginal education at a university in Perth and to attempt to resolve the dual dilemmas facing both beginning teachers at the outset of their careers in remote and rural schools in Western Australia and the Aboriginal students who may be at risk of disengagement from education. In these schools early career teachers may find, for the first time in their lives that they are the cultural minority. Within the same classroom the Aboriginal student may find themselves in a cultural wilderness due to their lack of understanding of the Eurocentric school requirements expected of students by schools (see Chapter 4).

Background

Indigenous Australian educator, Scott Fatnowna, talks about his version of the Third Space in the context of the classroom, in terms of a special intercultural space for learning where all concerned try to recognise and unpack their 'cultural baggage'. Acknowledgement that we all carry baggage (values, attitudes and belief about our own and other cultures) is a fundamental first step. To learn about an 'other' culture in a meaningful and engaged way, there must be some shifting away from the comfort zone of self sufficiency, self certainty and self justification. To shift into this

special intercultural space means facing some level of vulnerability. The Third Space can be described as a space where cultural groups can enter into a dialogue, Bhabha's 'moment of enunciation', which must occur in order to begin understanding each other as people and as cultural beings. This is a space of equal power for all participants where they can learn about each other's culture without fear. The development of various intercultural teaching teams and the unique pedagogical outcomes that were devised and developed over time within both the public and private sectors is the subject of this research.

This journey began in the year 2000 when I met Scott Fatnowna. Scott had been appointed as the coordinator of the Aboriginal Education unit, a core unit for pre-service teachers, at a University in Perth WA. This unit had previously been delivered by non-Indigenous staff. Now it was the responsibility of the staff of the Indigenous Center to create an 'Aboriginal spin' to the unit. However, rather than having a teaching staff composed entirely of Aboriginal people Scott decided to create our own unique cultural space by having both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal staff on the teaching team. It was at this time that I was introduced to the concept of the Third Space. The Third Space can be described as a space where cultural groups can enter into a dialogue to begin understanding each other as people and as cultural beings. This space was based on the Yolgnu Ganma Metaphor (Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land NT). The Ganma Metaphor describes two bodies of water, the first being the ocean which represents non Aboriginal Australians and the second is the river which symbolizes Aboriginal Australians. The river and the ocean meet to form a brackish pool of water which in itself denotes balance. Doorndjil yordaniny (coming together – moving ahead) on page v of this thesis is the Noongar description of this metaphor.

This was the space that we wanted our non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to enter and, in doing so, gain what is termed enhanced 'cultural consciousness'. Cultural consciousness is a much deeper concept than that of cultural awareness, which can be a somewhat voyeuristic exercise and does not necessarily engage the participant in anything more than 'show and tell'. Cultural awareness often maintains the concept of 'the other' as a different and possibly rather exotic cultural group that has

no connection or resemblance to one's own culture; in other words, there is no engagement with the other culture and 'us and them' remains the status quo.

Cultural consciousness requires engagement with 'the other' on all levels and thus they are no longer exotic or different but another human being with similar wants and needs as oneself. Another way of describing this process is 'humanising' the other or becoming 'our other selves' (Bhabha, 1994). This process involves engaging in the Third Space with this other person and learning about each other's ways of being.

It was also during these early days that we decided that the form of the Third Space that our pre-service teachers should enter was a Noongar (Australian Aboriginal people from the south west of Western Australia) space (due to Australian Aboriginal protocols) rather than a pan Aboriginal space. The latter denies the huge diversity of Aboriginal people and also does not fully engage with the concept of 'Country'. The concept of 'Country' is one of the cornerstones of Aboriginal identity. To lose one's connection to Country is to lose one's Aboriginal identity and all the spiritual connections to land and family that this entails.

'Country' is an Aboriginal concept that a non-Aboriginal person cannot truly understand. A person's country is the traditional lands where their 'old people' (ancestors back to creation) come from. 'Knowing Country' means that you know the stories, the songs, the dances, the language, the lore and, through this, the spirit of that Country. It is this connectedness to Country that causes some Aboriginal people to remain living in abject poverty in isolated and remote parts of Australia as this country is the place they know, the land that gives them identity and cultural security, and that land is all they have. Connection to Country involves the responsibility to nurture the land (Country) and then the land will nurture the individuals concerned in return. This knowledge creates a connectedness to that particular land and it is this connectedness to Country that gives identity and pride.

For the Noongar people of the southwestern region of Western Australia there has been a huge amount of cultural loss, mainly because they were closest to the main

and largest areas of European settlement. We (the members of the first intercultural team) believed that engaging our pre-service student teachers in a Noongar cultural space would contribute to their engagement with Noongar students when they began teaching in various schools, many of which would be in Noongar Country in the south western part of Western Australia. We also hoped that this engagement would demonstrate to our students the multiple methods of connecting with Australian Aboriginal students, their families and their communities.

Cultural identity amongst Australian Aboriginal students has been demonstrated to be one of the crucial factors impacting retention rates amongst these students (Bin Saliik, 1991; Bourke, Dow & Lucas 1994; Lukabyo, 1995). Australian Aboriginal students need to feel that there is at least one person who advocates on their behalf (Groome, 1995). As members of the intercultural team we hoped that the process of engaging our pre-service teachers in a Third Space would produce teachers who could begin to fill this advocacy role in schools.

This particular pedagogical model of the Third Space has since left the University, however it continues to develop and enrich both Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's lived experiences in their dialogues and interactions with each other, and has provided pathways for both to follow and thus, create many more "moments of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1994). This study describes those moments, and it is hoped, contributes to the creation of many more.

Research Questions

Initially my research sought to investigate, through an autoethnographic approach and from a non-Aboriginal position, the nature of Aboriginal cultural identity and how this identity impacts the teaching strategies employed by non-Aboriginal educators. However, due to the emergent nature of the research and my deep engagement in Aboriginal cultural schema, I realised that defining Aboriginal identity was not an appropriate undertaking for a non-Aboriginal person. Aboriginal Australians have long labored under the burden of a constructed identity and hence their emergent identity and its descriptions are best left to those who have lived the

experience. Instead this new line of research began by investigating an innovative pedagogy used to teach the Aboriginal Education Unit at a university in Perth, Australia. This pedagogy was designed and developed by Scott Fatnowna an Aboriginal/South Sea Island man from Queensland, Australia. Due to circumstances or serendipity he called this pedagogy the Third Space because it attempts to create a space between two worldviews (Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal Australians). As time passed, and due to my deep engagement in this space, the study became larger and longer until eventually it has stretched over a 10 year period. My research follows the learning and struggles encountered by myself and members of the various Third Space teams that I have been a member of as we attempted to scaffold our way to that unique cross cultural space that we know as the Third Space. In so doing my research sought to provide mutually constructive pathways towards understanding, via personal experience and dialogue, with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators. My research seeks to engage fellow educators and promote their engagement with Aboriginal people, not just as students/parents/care givers but as cultural beings, in a holistic and humanistic fashion. In doing so, I hope to contribute to increasing Aboriginal retention rates at both high schools and tertiary levels, without the consequential loss of Aboriginal identity.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How could I create an epistemology that is reflective of my own ontology and the ontology's of my participants that demonstrates both worldviews equally? (Chapter 2)
2. What methodology could be used to underpin a method that would represent both cultural groups 'ways of seeing the world that was equal and truly echoed the Third Space moments we had reached? (Chapter 3)
3. What were the socio-cultural and historical processes that led to the formation and functioning of the first intercultural team? (Chapters 4, 5 and 6)
4. What is pivotal knowledge is required by a non-Aboriginal person to enter Aboriginal cultural schema? (Chapters 7)

5. What were the critical thinking processes used to reestablished my own cultural identity after a prolonged period of time engaged in Aboriginal cultural schema? (Chapter 8.)
6. What were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space? (Chapters 9, 10, 11.)
7. Can bi-cultural (Third Space) education produce educators who can effectively engage Aboriginal students, thereby contributing to the retention and success rates of Aboriginal students at high school and within tertiary education? (Chapter 12)
8. What were the outcomes of these critical self reflective processes on myself and my professional practice? (Epilogue:- Discussion and Conclusions)

Significance

This research responds to current developments in Aboriginal education and policy throughout Australia, especially issues related to cultural uniqueness.

Prior to the 1967 Constitutional Referendum in Australia education was not mandatory for Aboriginal people. It was only after the 1967 Referendum, when Aboriginal people became citizens of Australia, that education became mandatory for all Aboriginal children. Since 1975 Commonwealth Government sponsored reports have emphasised the need to reform the teacher education curriculum to adequately prepare student teachers to teach effective Indigenous Australian Studies courses to Aboriginal children. Recommendation 22 of the Aboriginal Consultative Group Report to the Commonwealth Government in 1975 recommended that “all teacher trainees in Australia should study courses relating to Aboriginal society” (p. 26). In 1979 a meeting of the Australian Education Council endorsed the principle that there should be promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies as core units of all pre-service and in service education programs.

In 1991, the Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that “all teacher training courses include courses specifically designed

to enable student teachers to understand that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, and to teach the curriculum which reflects those matters” (Recommendation 295). The Royal Commission also emphasised the critical nature of reconciliation between Aboriginal Australians and non Aboriginal Australians. In response to this report the Commonwealth Government established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. A central role of the Council is “to bring about through education, a greater awareness of Aboriginal history, cultures, dispossession, continuing disadvantage and the need to redress that disadvantage” (Tickner, 1991, p.5). This report recognised the critical role of education in the reconciliation process.

In 1990 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy came into effect. This policy was endorsed by all State and Territory governments. The policy sets out 21 long-term goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. Included in these goals are:

20. To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.
21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures. (Commonwealth of Australia, 1993, p. 14)

Fundamental to the achievement of these goals is appropriate teacher education. The 1994 Project of National Significance report, *Teacher Education Pre-service: Preparing teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students*, recommends: “that the Commonwealth and the States/Territories ensure that strategies to implement the National Aboriginal Education Policy include opportunities to ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people be given the chance to undertake teacher training with a specific emphasis on the education of Aboriginal children” (Bourke, Dow, & Lucas, 1994, p. 20).

This thesis research echoes studies undertaken in the USA (Hampton, 1993, Dehyle, 1992, Miller-Cleary & Peacock, 1998), Canada (Kawagley, 1990), New Zealand

(Hingangaroa Smith, 2000) and other countries with Indigenous populations. The outcomes of these studies point to the design of pre-service teacher education which informs teachers regarding Aboriginal ways of seeing the world and a rudimentary understanding of the history and culture of their students.

In response to this research the Indigenous Centre and the Education Faculty at a University in Perth, Western Australia, developed a core unit in Aboriginal Education in 2000. The development of this unit was achieved by Scott Fatnowna, and was thus based on an Australian Aboriginal perspective. The unit was delivered by both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal educators in order to demonstrate to pre-service teachers a Third Space (Yunupingu, 1997, Bhabha, 1994), and so the first intercultural teaching team was born.

The outcomes of this team have been many, including incorporating an understanding of Australian Aboriginal cultural schema into the pre-service teacher education unit in order to assist non-Indigenous people's understanding of Aboriginal cultural identity. Members of the original intercultural team have gone on to create many Third Spaces in both the private and public sector (Kooya Consulting). This thesis documents their stories and their struggles to reach a place of intercultural understanding, our own Third Spaces. These stories yield:

- new knowledge about the experiences of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as they created a space of mutual understanding, and learnt about each other as cultural beings, whilst maintaining their own cultural identity and how this has impacted on their present world view; and
- a reference point for other educators on the processes involved in the formation and maintenance of an intercultural team and how these processes can be extrapolated to provide pathways for both these educators and the Aboriginal people they teach.

Research Methodology

The research methodology needed to ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices could be heard together. Thus a participatory autoethnographic methodology was employed as via this process all voices could be equally heard and represented. Aboriginal culture is an oral culture and thus much 'business' is completed through dialogue both as narrative and "moral tales" (stories/yarns). I have attempted to build a picture for the reader that will provide a window into 'moments of enunciation' (Bhabha, 1997) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people when color and culture have ceased to be a divisive issue between us.

As I was one of the participants of the study and Aboriginal culture is an oral culture, autoethnographic narrative was used to recreate those 'moments of enunciation' (Bhabha, 1994) that this research wished to capture. Ellis and Bochner (2000) advocate autoethnography as a form of writing that "make[s] the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right" (p. 733) rather than seeming "as if they're written from nowhere by nobody" (p. 734). Autoethnography is "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739). Autoethnographers "ask their readers to feel the truth of their stories and to become co participants, engaging the storyline morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually" (p. 745).

Constructivist theory of knowledge presumes that a conceptual framework is built as individuals interact with their world (Von Glasersfeld, 1989). Autoethnographic narrative allows for equal participation and accommodates the multiple realities of each participant's interpretation of similar events through their own unique cultural focus. Alternative genres have been employed to recount and portray vividly and impressionistically the details of participants' lived experiences (Van Maanen, 1988). Autoethnographic research methodology represents both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of being and seeing and will provide signposts to others who may walk down this path towards the middle ground, or Third Space.

As my study was interpretative in nature the sample size is small allowing the data generated from the participants to have richness and depth. Because the processes adopted by this research were interdisciplinary, participatory, holistic and humanistic, I have employed interpretivism combined with critical reflection to create a work of truth and honesty and to inspire pedagogical thoughtfulness in the reader.

My research was participatory in nature and the reflections and personally constructed outcomes encountered amongst the participant's forms a major part of the thesis. In this way, the thesis exposes directly the lived experiences of the participants and the processes through which their meanings, interpretations, and actions were developed. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994)

Data were generated by excavation of the researcher's memory of critical events and by one on one interviews (or yarns) with key participants over a period of several months and in some cases years. This method allowed personal reflection by each participant which added texture and a cultural focus to the study.

Ethics

Research involving the study or participation of humans raises ethical issues. All participants engaged in this study were adults and prior to the commencement of the study consent was obtained from them. This research observed the principle of non-maleficence and thus avoided causing harm to participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Furthermore, the intention of observing the principle of beneficence (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) was maintained as I endeavored to ensure that we all learned much about ourselves and each other's cultures. Processes of critical reflective and dialectic thinking were cornerstones engaged in by myself and other participants in this research as we revisited events through a retrospective focus several years after their occurrence. This gave clarity and a degree closure for us.

An information letter was sent to all participants letting them know that they could withdraw at any time from the study without duress and that all data gathered would remain confidential. Narrative reconstruction of the data was not engaged in as each participant had an individual right to have their opinions preserved. To be an active participant in a Third Space one cannot enter into judgments regarding others' opinions, beliefs, values or ways of being. This particular space requires understanding, tolerance and growing on the part of all participants. All participants agreed to the use of their names as they are proud to be associated with the Third Space and want this innovative pedagogy to be known more widely.

I established an Aboriginal Reference Group at the beginning of this undertaking and they guided me regarding ethics and cultural protocols. Members of the Aboriginal Reference Group were; Kim Collard, Scott Fatnowna, Kathleen Toomath, Alphonsus Sariago. I am grateful to each and every one of them as they have answered my questions and often set me back on course.

It is my intention that this work will provide a record of a remarkable time which had profound consequences for the participants, especially myself. The study was collaborative and upheld the ethics and ideals which were the basis of the first intercultural education team as all participants had an equal voice.

'We' invite you to come on a journey with us and in the process hope that you will indeed 'learn us' in a truly holistic fashion and that this may provide a unique window into another cultural schema and way of being.

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Chapter 2

A Place to Belong

A Theoretical Framework for the Third Space

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I address the first research question: *How could I create an epistemology that is reflective of my own ontology and the ontology's of my participants that demonstrates both worldviews equally?* To do this I present a scholarly rationale for the research methodology, drawing in both Western and Indigenous paradigms to create a Third Space within which I could represent both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of being and seeing the world. In section 1, the multi paradigmatic nature of the research is outlined. In section 2, the Western and Indigenous paradigms used in this thesis are discussed.

Background

The processes and state of mind involved in entering the Third Space are complex and often during these times the concentration involved in maintaining that position precludes actually thinking about what you are doing and how you are going about it. At the outset of what has now become known as “my research” it was not research but my lived experience. It was not until later, when I had realised what a transformational experience it had been, that I considered writing about it. It was also later that I recognised the complexity of the processes involved and thought it might be useful for others who may choose to take a similar journey. This research is interpretive of my lived experience, which occurred through intense personal reflection and excavation of my memories as well as those of others who also had similar experiences (see Chapters 9, 10 and 1).

The Third Space is a space where multi faceted and multi focused memories and activities between cultural groups occur. The addition of the documented lived

experiences of all the participants, including myself, adds colour and texture to the work and demonstrates both worldviews plus the point of intersection of these views. This point of intersection has been termed the Third Space.

My participants are the people who accompanied me as we travelled towards the Third Space. These participants are Scott Fatnowna, Jon Fielder and Hayden Pickersgill from the early days at a University in Perth (the first intercultural teaching team). Kim Collard, Kathleen Toomath, Janice Chester and Marlene Drysdale were fellow travellers during the Kooya (Australian Aboriginal Consultancy in Perth, WA) days. I also worked extensively with Megan and Eric Krakouer during the Dreamtime (Australian Aboriginal Consultancy in Perth, WA) days. The last participant is one of my graduate students, Alana Ross, from a University in Perth with whom I have maintained a mentoring relationship since her graduation. Alanna has been teaching in a remote Aboriginal community for 4 years and her observations shed light on the predicaments faced by beginning teachers in remote community schools. Permission has been granted by all participants to use their real names.

Devising an epistemological and methodological framework for my study required much thought as I wanted to avoid idealist and quixotic notions which may come from autobiographical studies. I also wanted to avoid the unrealistic focus through which many non-Aboriginal Australian people see Aboriginal Australians. These romantic versions of Aboriginality range from the 'noble savage' through various negative stereotypes to 'helping *our* Aboriginals' and the paternalistic attitudes that masquerade as help and continue the victim/saviour mentality amongst Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Instead I wanted to represent the Third Space, as I saw it, which is a place of equal power where the various participants engaged in the space and learned about each other's cultural worldview. All participants in the Third Space were both teacher and learner as the roles are interchangeable depending on the cultural circumstances.

When I first began to consider writing this thesis I pondered the many research paradigms that could be used to describe those intercultural "moments of

enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994) that I wished to portray. It seemed to me that because of the very nature of the work that I could no longer rely on the tried and true processes that I had used in the past. Those processes had served me well in controlled scientific circumstances but I had been moving away from these habits of seeing the world for some time. I needed a different approach and postmodern paradigms provided a place where this could be achieved. Autoethnography and narrative enquiry allowed my voice and the voices of the other participants to be recorded in their own words from within their own worldview and with their own conclusions. This is as it should be as I did not want to speak for people, nor represent them through my own cultural focus. They represent themselves and their own transformations. I wanted to maintain my ontology and the ontology’s of my participants and to represent them faithfully, not as a scribe but rather as the ‘editor’ of this work which we have all contributed to.

I wanted to represent aspects of both Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal epistemologies, to create a methodology that is reflective of both worldviews and thus truly distinguish this version of the Third Space. Hence, this enquiry has led me to engage with postmodern methods and the epistemological pluralism involved in multiple research paradigms.

Because of the nature of my study and to maintain the integrity of the Third Space it was vital that a method of reproduction of other’s stories should be found that refrained from judging through my own cultural focus or, even worse, through my assumed cultural focus. Thus the *yarn genera* was born to represent the Third Space and the continuing discussions between people, not only those who were involved in the original Third Space, but also those who have been gathered as the journey progressed. Multiple paradigms needed to be employed to fully represent the embroidery of human understanding and the different ways that people make sense of their world.

The intercultural understandings and transformations experienced by practitioners within the Third Space are described eloquently by Morrell and O’Connor as:

experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our ways of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (Morrell & O'Connor, 2002, p. xvii)

Multi-paradigmatic methodology serves to allow the transformative nature of the experiences to be documented in an honest, truthful and holistic fashion. Three paradigms have been chosen for the framework of this research. They are interpretivism, criticalism and postmodernism that leads to narrative enquiry. How else can anyone make sense of and represent experiences such as the following?

Beginnings and Endings in Derby Town

It is 11.30am on a Tuesday morning in Derby WA. It is September and it is hot, very hot. The trees seem to hang as if exhausted by the desiccating heat of the morning and there is no breeze, not a zephyr, to stir the red dust which lies over everything at the end of the dry season. The marsh steams all around us and is the overwhelming view from the cemetery. It is a pretty good view which can feel as flat and enormous as eternity.

The men are all dressed in white shirts and black trousers, the black ties long gone in the heat. They stand apart from the women, of which I am one.

I wonder why there are so many shovels lying on and around the pile of brilliant red earth which lies beside the grave. After the coffin has been lowered there is a flurry of activity as the men take turns in filling the grave with red earth. I think how masculine to cover your tears and grief with physical activity. Men will be men no matter what the culture and today this is an Aboriginal funeral.

The women, under the canopy which provides a little shade and some relief from the sun's intensity, wail and grieve. Some smack their heads with rocks and throw the bright red dirt over themselves. Nobody remains unmoved on the hot, still, windless marsh just outside Derby town as we bury our brother. He will now rest in peace with the marsh as his eternity.

We drove out here yesterday in the afternoon to make sure that the grave had actually been dug. It was cooler then and very quiet. The overwhelming shock of the visit was the large number of very recent graves some of them small and obviously those of children. How strange to find that statistics are more than numbers on paper and represent real lives ended early as Aboriginal people have a life expectancy 17 years less than other Australians.

Funerals are always sorrowful events but the most tragic part of this event is the daughter who is only 15 years old. Her mother passed away when she was a baby and now her father is gone. She is supported by the women but is alone. She reminds me of my own children when my husband passed away which adds an extra edge to this experience. She is lucky as she has an extended family and there is always someone she can go to and she will be looked after, however, how young to experience the loss of both parents.

These heartfelt “moments of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994) cannot be analysed or put into categorical boxes, and they cannot be discussed at a distance as there is intense personal involvement. The process of making meaning from diverse, intense and often strange and frightening experiences cannot be adequately engaged in when using a single paradigm, such as the classic positivist paradigm, where the researcher is removed and becomes a mere reporter rather than engaged in transformation on a personal as well as a professional level.

To represent these genuine and sincere human experiences by people from two cultural worldviews both Western and Indigenous paradigms have been used to devise a methodology that accesses the Third Space. I begin with the Western paradigms that have been drawn on to build the structure of a methodology to represent the Third Space.

Western Paradigms

Paradigm of Interpretivism

Within the social sciences, the conflict between positivism and interpretivism dates from at least the middle of the nineteenth century, though it only arose clearly within the field of educational research in the second half of the twentieth century.

Interpretivism insists that there is a fundamental difference between the nature of the phenomena investigated by the natural sciences and those studied by historians, social scientists and educational researchers. This is that people – unlike atoms, chemicals, or even most non human forms of life – interpret or give meaning to their environment and themselves, that the ways in which they do this are shaped by the particular cultures in which they live and this generates the actions and institutions in which they participate. Thus, quite different forms of social organisation, ways of life, beliefs about and attitudes to the world, can be found; both at different times in history and coexisting (peacefully and otherwise) at any one time. Furthermore, this is not just a matter of differences among large scale societies; there is also significant cultural variation *within* the massive, complex societies in which most of us now live.

Interpretivism argues that we cannot understand why people do what they do, or why particular institutions exist and operate in characteristic ways, without grasping how those involved interpret and make sense of their world; in other words without understanding the distinctive nature of their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values and so on. This requires openness in which prior cultural assumptions are suspended and a willingness to learn the culture of the people formerly considered 'other'.

Interpretivism is well described by Taylor, Settelmaier and Luitel (2012):

Social constructivist epistemology foregrounds the researchers unfolding subjectivity in shaping the process of the enquiry, especially the act of interpretation of the other's meaning perspective. Hallmarks of this paradigm are social constructivist standards of trustworthiness and authenticity. (Lincoln & Guba, 2005)

A variety of criticisms have been made of interpretivism and these need to be addressed within the context of this research. The first is that the sort of descriptions interpretivism encourages are too vague or variable to provide a sound basis for comparing the orientations of different people, the character of different situations or institutions. It is also alleged that the key explanatory factors of interpretivism are always cultural rather than material or the surrounding social structure. Although in my research one of the key explanatory factors for an individual's interpretations of the same events is cultural the ability to jointly interpret and make sense of our individual lived experiences is of paramount importance. Interpretivism has been accused of losing objectivity in favour of unreliability and ultimately the 'primrose path' of acceptance of subjectivity.

As time passed I realised that objectivist knowledge is not the only kind of knowledge available and is not the most important when describing people's lived experiences which are emotional journeys. Because objectivity means 'seeing things

the way they are' it does imply some three-way correspondence between what we perceive, what we know and how we represent that knowledge.

As I engaged with my research participants, it was through our personal and combined interpretation of events and the processes of self reflection that our cultural imperatives slowly merged into a space where, although they still existed, we understood why they existed and respected them for what they were. The goal was to find understanding between individuals as each individual understood the 'rules' of each other's worldview. The end point of this process of self reflection and joint interpretation of events was that the 'other' was no longer other, there was no other, we had reached the Third Space amongst ourselves, and we believed that this could be recreated by many individuals given similar circumstances. This place has also been called "cultural consciousness" (Fatnowna personal communication,2005): where the individual is articulate in their own worldview and is also articulate in the 'other' worldview, although of course this is never known as thoroughly as one's own worldview as this is where our identity resides.

Paradigm of Criticalism

Critical researchers aspire to going beyond interpretive understanding of the social world to adopt an interventionist role and redress, for example, racism or some other form of injustice through advocacy and other forms of active engagement. This process can also be used to deconstruct disempowering ideologies which is what was needed for people from very disparate world views to engage in prior to any meaning making. We needed to deconstruct a multitude of ideologies but to move forward we had to forgive ourselves and our various worldviews and yet have empathy for those who have and will continue to suffer.

To gain an increased intersection between our two world views a form of dialogical writing designed to engage the reader in reflecting critically on his or her own complicity in uncritically reproducing normative social values and practises (Taylor, Settellaier & Luitel, 2012) was used. Max Van Manen (1991) has termed this pedagogical thoughtfulness which engages the reader to consider their own similar

lived experiences as those being discussed, however from a position of critical self reflection.

Pedagogical thoughtfulness involves sensitivity towards the individual and an understanding of the other individual's life context. It is concerned with what is best for the other. Pedagogical thoughtfulness involves non-judgmental understanding and "listening that is receptive, open, sympathetic, authentic, facilitative" (Van Manen, 1991, p. 86). Although empathy involves knowing the feelings of another person, pedagogic thoughtfulness involves sympathetic understanding. Van Manen (1991) described this difference as:

In contrast, sympathy (literally, with-feelings) presumes not so much that we vicariously live in the other person but...that we recognise the experience of the other person as a possible human experience-and thus as a possible experience of our own selves. But to open (our head and heart) to the inner life of the other we must orient ourselves to the other with care and love. (pp. 97-98)

Pedagogic thoughtfulness involves a search for understanding experience. A vital aspect of pedagogical thoughtfulness is openness. To be open in pedagogical thoughtfulness means that a person is not closed to the experiences of the other. Openness and vulnerability are two of the most important ingredients in the recipe for beginning and maintaining Third Space relationships between people of different world views. Both parties need to *want* to engage and both need to have openness and vulnerability. Vulnerability is difficult to attain without trust and trust cannot exist without mutual respect.

The Critical Reflective Practitioner

In classroom situations, when teaching Australian Aboriginal students, especially in remote locations, the need for pedagogically thoughtful practitioners is one of the most important attributes required. This process requires critical self reflection of one's own practice and often of one's own cultural background which can in turn create feelings of anger, distrust and a belief that one's own cultural background is

the best. When educators feel like this they are continuing the process of assimilation and will not only cause barriers to the students learning but will traumatise themselves as well. Critical reflection of the self and one's practices is vitally important when attempting to cross cultural borders.

Reflective thinking is important not only as a tool for self assessment, but also as an aim of education. Dewey (1933) describes this as "it enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action." (p. 211)

The concept of reflection is challenging and may refer to a complex array of cognitively and philosophically distinct methods and attitudes. Dewey's thought about the nature of reflection gives us ample opportunity to feel provoked (1933). He argued that reflection consists of several steps including: (1) "perplexity, confusion, doubt" due to the nature of the situation in which one finds oneself; (2) "conjectural anticipation and tentative interpretation" of given elements or meanings of the situation and their possible consequences; (3) "examination, inspection, exploration, analysis of all attainable considerations" which may define and clarify a problem with which one is confronted; (4) "elaboration of the tentative hypothesis suggestions"; (5) deciding on "a plan of action" or "doing something" about a desired result (1973, pp. 494-506). A proper sequencing of such reflective steps makes up reflective experience which in turn can lead to analysis and evaluation, and then to further reflective action. For Dewey, "thinking is the accurate and deliberate institution of connections between what is done and its consequences" (p. 505).

But knowledge of reflective methods alone is not sufficient. There must be a union of skilled method with attitudes. Dewey spoke of the need for developing certain qualities or traits of character such as "open-mindedness or sincerity, wholehearted or absorbed interests, responsibility, as well as the need for a habit of thinking in a reflective way" (1933, pp. 224-228). He further made distinctions between theoretical judgements and judgements of practice; though he hastened to point out that practical judgements too are by their very nature intellectual and theoretical. The reflection involved in practical situations only differs in that it has a specific kind of

subject matter; it is concerned with "things to do or be done, judgments of a situation demanding action" (1933, p. 335). But in making this distinction Dewey passed over the more recent observation that reflection in action may have logic of its own. Schön has suggested that phrases such as "thinking on your feet" and "keeping your wits about you" suggests not only that "we can think about doing something but that we can think about something while doing it" (Schön, 1991, p. 54).

Critical reflexivity (or critical self reflective enquiry) was employed in this study as my participants and I strived to make sense of the world around us. Self-reflection provided a vital tool in excavating memories with all the colour of a lived experience (see Chapter 8). For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants reflection helped to decolonise our worldviews and make sense of events that at the outset seemed senseless.

It is for these reasons that I used research methods drawn from the post-modernism paradigm. In using this paradigm multiple research methods are opened up which better represent the voices of self and other, especially from their own cultural focus. Interpretive, critical and post-modern paradigms "create powerful research methods such as critical autoethnographic inquiry." (Taylor and Settelmaier 2003)

Critical Autoethnographic Inquiry – The Narrative Approach

Critical autoethnographic inquiry allows the autobiographical self to be set in "dialectical tension" (Taylor, et al.) against the ethnographic "other", and this practice allowed us to investigate, through critical reflection and excavation of memories, our own perceptions of events through our own cultural focus. However as time transpires that cultural focus may change and, due to immersion with the "other" culture, we can find ourselves "becoming our other selves" (Bhabha, 1994). It is then that much personal reflection is needed as to why this has occurred. There is a huge difference between engaging in the Third Space and moving permanently into our 'Second Space' (Chapter 9) as this can cause confusion and mystification because you can never be 'other' and nor should you desire to be. This issue is examined in depth in Chapter 8 and is an 'occupational hazard' for cultural border

crossers. Being strong and aware in your own identity is essential when working cross culturally.

The narrative approach engaged in when writing autoethnographically – promulgated by Polkinghorne (1998) and Sarbin (1986) and others – represents an ontological and epistemological stance generative of theory, research and practice which comprehends the person as a social construction perpetually formed and reformed in and of socially mediated discourse, talk, text, and image (e.g., Barresi & Jukes, 1997; Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Bruner, 2004; Gergen & Davis, 1985; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; McAdams, 1993, 1996; Singer, 2004). For some theorists, narrative may be wholly constitutive of personhood: “In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we ‘tell about’ our lives” (Bruner, 2004, p. 694) [original italics] or, as the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote over one century before, “however far man may extend himself with his knowledge, however objective he may appear to himself – ultimately he reaps nothing but his own biography” (Nietzsche, 1894, p. 238).

The defining feature of autoethnography is that it involves the practitioner in performing narrative analysis pertaining to himself or herself as intimately related to a particular phenomenon. Autoethnography entails writing about oneself as a researcher-practitioner, but it is not the same as autobiography in the literary sense. It is not simply the telling of a life – not that doing such would be simple. It is a specific form of critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice (i.e., practice as a researcher and/or career development practitioner). Hence, in the case of my project, individuals critically reflected on the past and the present through their individual cultural focus to make meaning.

Rather than a self-absorbed rendering, autoethnography should produce a narrative that is authentic and thus enable the reader to deeply grasp the experience and interpretation of a small and interesting case study.

In reading an autoethnographic account enriched with theory, the reader is more likely to construct lessons for his or her own sphere of practice. Ellis and Bochner,

(Ellis, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000), emphasised empathic resonance within the reader as an indicator of validity. The notion of *critical consciousness* (cf. Freire, 1972) – that process of raising awareness of oppression so that the oppressed may name their experience and oppressors, and then concomitantly move against it. These notions resonate with this study as many of the participants were Australian Aboriginal people and all, in one way or another, had faced oppression simply due to their racial characteristics. Most notably this oppression occurred in many advanced forms in their school days (see Chapter 10). These are the days in one’s life that identity is formed and to constantly have to excuse your identity or be belittled for it can cause people to react negatively. The unfortunate consequence is that school becomes such a numbing chore that it is given up at the first possible juncture. This still occurs today as many teachers have so little understanding of Aboriginal Australians and the cultural background they come from.

This autoethnographic narrative also offers a means to revisit the notion of empathy and revise methods of education to be genuinely inclusive of the narrative which constitutes ‘personal reality’. English literature shines a beacon for introspection transcendent of the individual, revealing the author (the creator), and the reader (the re-creator), time and time again. Indeed, there are classics which express not only the author in his or her epoch, but tantalisingly open the reader to his or her own being in the world, and timelessly capture all the ethical frailties of being an ordinary human: lusty self-deception and greed, in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; hiding from oneself, in Graham Greene’s *A Burnt-out Case*; personal redemption, in George Eliot’s *Silas Marner*, and the terrifying and grotesque within all, in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Storying serves the author: it expresses a being in the world by extending his or her ideas into a discursive space in which they may or may not be received as intended, repeated, forgotten, or simply never heard. Storying serves the reader: I read you, I hear you, I speak you, and thus I am here too. Perhaps story is the soul of *empathy*—genuine understanding, a shared humanity that reaches across, touches; and in feeling with the other, we become our own “other” self.

With respect to outlining a philosophical grounding of autoethnography, this methodology can align with either the constructivism-interpretivism or critical-ideological paradigms. In the case of my research the constructivism-interpretivism paradigms have been employed. With respect to ontology, I have assumed that ‘personal reality’ is a psychosocial construction, with varying emphasis upon internality, externality, and personal agency, across the constructivism and social constructionism divide. I have written my own narrative analysis as personal ‘truth’, but within this process and outcome there is an attendant awareness and expression of the discursive milieu of oppressive or liberating influences. Epistemologically, autoethnography speaks of the notion of ‘lived experience’, subjectivity, and meaning within relative contexts.

Indigenous Paradigms

It was not until 1967 with the Referendum that Aboriginal Australians were finally considered ‘human’. Up until that point Aboriginal Australians were considered flora and fauna. The 1967 Referendum was held to ask the Australian public their opinion in changing two points of the Constitution. These points revolved around citizenship (up until this point Australian Aboriginals were not citizens of Australia) and the “making of laws” (until this time government could make laws separately for Aboriginal Australians). The outcome of the 1967 Referendum was overwhelmingly to give citizenship to Australian Aboriginals and thus they would be governed by the same laws as all other Australians.

As time transpired Australian Aboriginals accessed the Western education system, including the tertiary system and began ‘writing back’ in the language of their oppressors. A significant outcome of this are the Indigenistic research methodologies which privilege the Australian Aboriginal’s worldview whilst continuing to maintain the high academic rigour required by tertiary institutions.

Australian Aboriginals were not alone in their desire to represent themselves in the ‘halls of academia’. Since the mid 1990’s international and interdisciplinary scholars have been writing about Indigenous perspectives on research. From an Australian

Aboriginal perspective (and that of all First Nation peoples) research is linked to colonialism and oppression and should be decolonised (Hampton, 1995; Crazy Bull, 1997; Abdullah and Stringer, 1999; Smith, 1999; Battiste, 2000; Gegeo and Watson Gegeo, 2001; Bishop and Glynn, 2003; Harvey, 2003; Absolon and Willett, 2004; Howitt and Stevens, 2005). The legacy of invalidating Indigenous knowledge disconnected Australian Aboriginal people from “the traditional teachings, spirituality, land, family, community, spiritual leaders and the list goes on” (Absolon and Willett, 2004, pp 9). For Australian Aboriginal and other First Nations people decolonising research and developing libratory epistemologies is not a total rejection of Western theory, research or knowledge. It is about changing focus, “centring our concerns and worldviews and coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (Smith, 1999, p 39).

Indigenous methodologies are alternative ways of thinking about research processes. There are overwhelming commonalities in the literature on Indigenous methodologies and these include four unwavering principles: relational accountability; respectful representation; reciprocal appropriation; and rights and regulation.

Relational accountability refers to the concept of interdependence with everything and everyone around you or “all our relations be it air, rocks, water, animals, trees, insects, humans and so forth’ (Steinhauer, 2002, p. 72). For Australian Aboriginal people this is well represented by the “skin group system” which inter-relates everything in the environment where you live as all things are allocated a skin group. This concept implies that all parts of the research are also related and that the researcher is not only responsible for their own research but also for “all their relations”.

Respectful (re) presentation requires the researcher to “consider how you represent yourself, your research and the people, events and phenomena you are studying (Absolon & Willett, 2004, p. 15). It is also about displaying characteristics of humility, generosity and patience with the process and accepting decisions made by Indigenous people in regard to the treatment of any knowledge shared.

Reciprocal appropriation recognises that ‘all research is appropriation’ (Rundstrom & Duer, 1999, p. 239) and requires adequate benefits for all involved.

Rights and Regulation refers to research that is driven by Indigenous protocols, contains explicitly outlined goals, and considers the impacts of the proposed research (Smith, 1999).

Many authors, international and interdisciplinary, acknowledge the holistic framework of Indigenous epistemologies (Deloria, 1995; Abdullah & Stringer, 1999; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Smith, 1999; Absolon & Willett, 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2006). It is a holism which goes beyond the empirical concept of a unified physical universe and incorporates the unity of spiritual and physical worlds. In Indigenous epistemologies “the greatest mysteries lie within the self at the spiritual level and are accessed through ceremony” (Sinclair, 2003).

In pursuit of a methodology to represent these different paradigms I considered Bhabha’s (1994) Third Space but the outcome of this space is hybridity. The subject of hybridity does not sit well with First Nations people because people of mixed (in this case Aboriginal and non Aboriginal) heritage were the subject of numerous government policies and practises, in Australia and other countries with First Nations people. These past policies and the practises that they promoted have caused intense and long lasting damage and suffering for Aboriginal Australians. They may be considered one the reasons for the continued separation of Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people in Australia.

Chapter 3

A Way of Being

A Methodology for the Third Space

Introduction

In Chapter 3 I address the second research question: *What methodology could be used to underpin a method that would represent both cultural groups 'ways of seeing the world that was equal and truly echoed the Third Space moments we had reached?* In Chapter 3 the meeting of these two worldviews (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), or the Third Space, and the methodological issues that arose, especially the concept of hybridity, are examined. In section 1, I discuss the outcomes of the examination of hybridity that led to Doorndjil yoordaniny (Noongar Coming Together – Moving Ahead) as a representation of the Third Space in Noongar Country (Perth, WA). In section 2, to maintain the ontology of my participants and myself, the *Yarn Genre* was developed as a method that allowed participants to engage in dialogue using Aboriginal ways of being and hence gave rise to truthful and honest representations (see Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12). Section 3 describes the quality standards that underpin the research.

The Third Space and Hybridity

The point of overlap between two paradigms, or ways of seeing the world, has been termed the Third Space by Bhabha (1994) and others. This is an ambivalent and liminal space with the space itself, and those who participate in it, being termed 'hybrid'. Hybridity as a term originated in the biological sciences to describe the offspring of two different species, the classic example being a horse and a donkey when bred together produced a mule. Unfortunately for the mule it cannot replicate itself and thus it is the being and end of its line and thus this hybrid is unsustainable.

Hybridity was also a term used in all colonised countries to describe the offspring of the 'native' and the coloniser. Hence it is a term that does not sit well with First

Nations people. In Australia in the nineteenth century it was these hybrid children who were removed from their families and where they were sent depended on the amount of 'Aboriginal blood' they had. In this way they were labelled half caste, quarter caste or octoroon and those who had lesser amounts of 'Black blood' were considered more likely to succeed in the non-Aboriginal world and thus they were given 'special treatment'. These were the children who were removed to the cities and adopted out to non-Aboriginal families. In some cases this had excellent results but in most it traumatised the child and created a legacy of intergenerational trauma. These children became known as the Stolen Generations and to this day Australia reaps the legacy of past government policies and practises which created the Stolen Generations. These policies were based upon hybridity and ancestry, believing that the more 'White blood' an individual possessed the greater the likelihood was of that individual being successful in the 'White' world. Hence hybridity does not sit well with Aboriginal Australians as the policies based on 'blood' were only withdrawn in 1967. Terms such as hybridity, half caste, native and more colloquial and insulting names which are also based on a person's genealogy are hurtful and unnecessary, especially in the Third Space which is a space of understanding and learning.

Robert Young (1965), a widely written commentator on imperialism and post-colonialism, has remarked on the negativity sometimes associated with the term hybridity. He notes how it was influential in imperial and colonial discourse in giving damaging reports on the union of different races. Young would argue that at the turn of the century, 'hybridity' had become part of a colonialist discourse of racism. However, the crossover inherent in the imperial experience is essentially a two-way process.

The term hybridity has been most recently associated with Homi Bhabha . In his piece entitled 'Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences' (1995), Bhabha stresses the interdependence of coloniser and colonised. Bhabha argues that all cultural systems and statements are constructed in what he calls the 'Third Space of Enunciation'. In accepting this argument, we begin to understand why claims to the inherent purity and originality of cultures are 'untenable'. Bhabha urges us into this space in an effort to open up the notion of an international culture "not based on

exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity.” In bringing this to the next stage, Bhabha hopes that it is in this space:

that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves.

Equally other colonised people have difficulty with the term hybridity. Liz McKinley (2008) describes the historical connotations of the term as:

Historically hybridity served as a metaphor for the negative and positive consequences, often simultaneously, of racial encounters. It is a term that has been racialised and closely tied to purity and exclusivity. As such it has served as a threat to the fullness of selfhood. Some typologies became very detailed when categorisations were based on ‘mixture of blood’. It was believed that ‘crosses’ of peoples with various amounts of blood could be determined by using a variety of methods, such as visual stigmata and physical measurements, that ‘experienced observers’ could detect. To the naked and untrained eye, half-castes, quarter castes and one-eighth bloods can be determined. (Young, 1995; Sequoya, 2005)

Bhabha (1995) argues that the colonial hybrid, being a subject of difference, did not reassure the coloniser of his primary status. Instead the ‘hybrid’ forms – Creole, pidgin, miscegenated children – were seen to embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration. As Mckinley (2008) eloquently describes, amongst Maori women scientists “traces of this historical construction of Indigenous people erupts into contemporary subjectivity”

For example, from an historical perspective, Maori women were objectified as irrational, backward and lazy which has been used to subjugate Maori women from the time of colonial contact. Conversely, to be a scientist is to be intelligent, rational and progressive, which suggests Maori women cannot be ‘scientists’. The idea of being a subject of ‘race’ is expressed by Frantz Fanon:

And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the White man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. [...] I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects ... (1952, pp. 110–112).

Australian Aboriginal people were also described as sly, lazy, murderers, cunning and the commonest belief by non-Aboriginal Australians, as described by David Gulpilil in the movie *Tracker* (2002) which is set in 1922, when he talks about himself is, “*poor blackfella he born to hang*”.

These thoughts and stereotypical beliefs about Australian Aboriginals have been inherited into the present and many non-Aboriginal Australians hold very negative ideas about Australian Aboriginals often without ever engaging in any form of dialogue and having never met an Australian Aboriginal in their lives. Much of this negativity is driven by the media, however; this is the case for all Indigenous peoples of the world. It is not surprising that the term hybrid does not sit well.

In answer to this dilemma and to describe the Third Space in Noongar country, the Noongar words “*doorndjil yoordaniny*” are used. This terminology means coming together and moving ahead and this metaphor will be used instead of hybridity and all the historical connections and negative associations found within the word.

In Figure 1, *Doorndjil yoordaniny* describes the point where two rivers meet, one being the Australian Aboriginal journey and the other being the non-Aboriginal Australian journey, represented by the black and white footprints (this is an allegory for the Ganna metaphor). Kooya Consultancy (see Chapter 10) had an artistic

representation commissioned (Dale Tilbrook) to represent the two journeys. The place where the two rivers meet is the Third Space and this is not termed a hybrid space but doorndjil yoordaniny, coming together – moving ahead. At the base of the picture the hint of a heart can be seen and this represents the birth of something new, a new way of doing things and of being, some would term this hybridity but we prefer to call it doorndjil yoordaniny.



Figure 1: Doorndjil yoordaniny (coming together – moving ahead.) (Copyright Kooya Consultancy, 2003)

It should also be noted that doorndjil yoordaniny is used to describe the Third Space in Perth, Western Australia, because this is in Noongar country. If the Third Space was used in One Arm Point (Dampier Peninsular, WA) then a Bardi word would be used to refer to it. Aboriginal protocols demand that the language of the people in the Country (tribal lands) where these concepts are being discussed be used. Hence a Noongar term cannot be used in Bardi country and via versa.

Australian Aboriginal academic Scott Fatnowna (2005) has expressed the desire that Australian Aboriginal people need to embrace non-Aboriginal ways of being, however, not at the expense of their own cultural identity:

Aboriginal people are attempting to make a difference in their own lives. There is a strong desire to become empowered in Australian society without compromising their identity. The models, structures and frameworks that are embedded with the concept of 'disadvantage' are being challenged. Aboriginal people have undergone an enormous amount of traumatic pressure to change and leave behind their identity and assume a set of values and attitudes that operate outside of their experiences. (Collard, McLaughlin & Sariego, 2005, p. 6)

Hybridity is just another form of a constructed identity for Australian Aboriginals. The word Aboriginal itself is a constructed identity and does not give any indication of Australian Aboriginals. On colonisation, there were 250 language groups and 750 dialects of Australian Aboriginal languages across Australia however, these people were all "Aboriginal". This is a constructed identity as Europeans were used to dealing with the nation state. It is strange that now Australia likes to advertise itself in the international arena and will 'use' this constructed Australian Aboriginal identity.

A very clear indication of the propensity of the industrialised West to seek its 'essence' in the pristine and apparently primitive social world of the Australian Aboriginal, and at the same time, use it to undergird the project of the modern, can

be found in Freud's influential work *Totem and Taboo*, first published in 1938. Although Freud never travelled to central Australia, he had few inhibitions about basing much of his psycho-speculations in *Totem and Taboo* on the ethnographic classic, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, written by the pioneering anthropologists, Spencer and Gillen, and first published in 1899.

The thoroughness of this piece of ethnography, which provides an extraordinarily detailed account of the Arrente and their religious beliefs, can be largely attributed to the fact that Gillen lived for many years in Alice Springs as the town's postman and was therefore able to devote an unusually large amount of time to the object of his research. Thanks to Gillen's apparent neglect of his official duties, Freud was able to introduce his book with a profoundly modernist construction of those distant inhabitants of the antipodes:

Primitive man is known to us by the stages of development through which he has passed through. Our knowledge of his art, his religion, and his attitude towards life ... We can therefore judge the so-called savage races; their psychic life assumes a peculiar interest for us, for we can recognise in their psychic life the well-preserved, early stage of our own development... I am choosing for this comparison those tribes which have been described by ethnologists as being the most backward and wretched: the aborigines of the youngest continent, namely Australia ...' (Freud, 1938:15-16)

Hence another constructed identity, even the seemingly cool clear balance of hybridity could be considered onerous as it is only recently (1967) that Australian Aborigines have been considered citizens of Australia. Prior to this date they were considered flora and fauna of the country of Australia. This harks back to the early days of colonisation and it was also in those days that being a hybrid (half caste, etc) was a very dangerous condition. Memory is still too recent, wounds have yet to heal and equity is a vision for the future which often seems as impossible as retrieving the bucket of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Cupane (2007) eloquently explains the condition of Indigenous people in Mozambique:

we indigenous (people) were manipulated to acculturate and assimilate the coloniser culture. The chief aim of Portuguese colonialism was to turn indigenous people into Portuguese. At the time Mozambique was called 'Portugal Ultramar' which translates as 'Portugal beyond the Sea' (Cupane, 2007, p. 23).

This is likely to be the experience of many of the colonised all over the world.

It is interesting that Scott Fatnowna, when talking about the Third Space, first used the concept as a means of ingratiating himself to non-Aboriginal people. He realised that:

If I replicated the values, attitudes and beliefs of White people it made it easier for them to listen to what I had to say, even though I had very dark skin and was obviously Australian Aboriginals.

These processes used by Fatnowna have been termed "code switching". This terminology contains linguistic as well as social functions as when codes are switched not only language is switched but also values, attitudes and beliefs (see Chapter 9).

The Yarn as a Methodology

Hence a method needed to be devised that truly represented the Third Space, a method that interfaced between Western and Indigenistic methodologies. To achieve this, a combination of multi paradigmatic and post-colonial referents, which are embodied in critical autoethnography, were used to represent Western paradigms. The Indigenistic paradigms were represented by the unwavering need to relate research to the Aboriginal participant's needs and that would create outcomes that would be as useful to the Aboriginal participants as they would be to me.

Thus the Third Space research methodology drew on a combination of paradigms but also stood between them. This is the “liminal space” or “moment of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994), and I have represented this as the Yarn, or the yarning genre.

Engagement in a Third Space between people from disparate cultural worldviews hinges on open and honest dialogue. This dialogue should occur in a place where both participants have equal power, and as they engage in dialogue not only do they learn about each other but they also learn about each other’s cultural worldview.

The literature is replete with examples of writers who draw attention to the relational aspects of the interview and the interactional construction of meaning in the interview context (Langellier & Hall, 1989; Oakley, 1981). This interaction is situated in the context of an ongoing relationship where the personal and social identities of both interviewers and interviewees are important factors (DeVault, 1990; Reissman, 1987) and the relationship continually changes as each responds to the other. Interpretive scholars note the “double subjectivity” (Lewis & Meredith, 1988) that abounds in interviewing. Therefore participants attitudes, feelings and thoughts affect, and are affected by, the emerging reciprocity between the participant and the interviewer

The process of engaging in mindful dialogue can also be called a yarn.

The Yarn

The definition of a yarn from web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_term_Y.htm is:

an informal name for a long, rambling story — especially one dealing with adventure or tall-tales. The genre typically involves a strong narrative presence and colloquial or idiomatic English. The tone is realistic, but the content is typically fantastic or hyperbolic...

This is the Australian Standard English definition of a yarn, however Aboriginal English (a language composed of both Australian Aboriginal words from the local dialect and English words (see Chapter 7) uses the term to imply long conversations, over many years sometimes, in which the proponents learn about each other as they discuss a myriad of subjects. Hence, the phrase “continue the yarn” is used to describe the action of continuing dialogue with a person and therefore “learning the person” (i.e., knowing about the person in a holistic fashion). This process is indeed long and often rambling (engaging in circular time rather than linear time) however, rather than being a story (the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious; account; narration,) it is a process of getting to know a person, particularly their cultural background. Due to both linguistic and cultural differences the type of language used is important, and thus the yarn is spoken in colloquial or idiomatic English or in Aboriginal English if the person is speaking English as a second, third or fourth language.

The interviews with my the Australian Aboriginal participants were engaged in using the yarn genre, and thus the language was colloquial and the information generated moved through a variety of subjects as it circled around the main topic. It involved discussions about the past, including both events engaged in by participants and other events which, although not engaged in personally, had impacted them. The discussions comprised dialogue about past events in a retrospective fashion but always within a present context. For Australian Aboriginals the future is rarely discussed because it is believed that if you are aware of the past and take care of the present the future should sort itself out. The concept of allowing the future to take care of itself because you are taking care of the present can be a difficult notion for non-Aboriginal people to understand as we are so culturally immersed in the future. We like to ‘plan for the future’ and feel that we have a high degree of control of the future due to our forward planning. Future planning is a characteristic of the Western cultural methodology that we are taught from an early age to engage in. The process of the yarn can be easily lost as non-Aboriginal people believe that conversations must be for a reason usually related to their own, or another person’s future.

Yarning is an art form and when engaged in ‘in the proper way’ can lead to a deep knowledge of the ‘other’ person and of that person’s understanding of you.

For this research I engaged my participants in both the yarn genre and a combination of casual face-to-face meetings, emails and discussions, all of which were used to produce the narrative data. These yarns are people’s own personal stories and memories and thus must be respected. However, the participants and I have engaged in numerous discussions as to how best to represent their views, values, attitudes and beliefs, and we decided that although I would write the original draft of their lived experience they were welcome to change it until they believed it was a true representation. This ability to represent themselves was vital to maintaining the integrity of the Third Space we had co-created as frequently non-Aboriginal people have a belief that they are the holders of all knowledge regarding the written word, although this was not the case here. Allowing personal written representation of each participant’s lived experience and meaning making gave texture to the work and helped to demonstrate key differences and similarities between two disparate cultural groups living in the same country at the same time.

Recent research has further delineated ‘yarning’ as a legitimate research tool in gathering information from Aboriginal stakeholders. Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) have defined four distinct forms of yarning when used in data gathering and all four may occur in a single interview. The first of these is social yarning which has been defined as those conversations which take place before the research and:

Follows a meandering course that is guided by the topic that both people choose to introduce into the discussion. Yarns of this nature can include gossip, news, humour, advice and whatever information both parties choose to share. It is usually during the social yarn that trust is developed and relationships are built. (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010 p. 40)

The second form that yarning may take has been described as the collaborative yarn:

which occurs between two or more people when they are sharing information about a research project or a discussion about ideas.” (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010 p. 40)

The third form has been termed research topic yarning and this yarn takes place:

in an un or semi structured research interview. The sole purpose is to gather information through participants’ stories that are related to the research topic. (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010 p.40)

The fourth and final type of yarn is the therapeutic yarn this form of yarn takes place during the interview process:

Where the participant in telling their story discloses information that is traumatic or intensely personal and emotional. In these instances the researcher switches from the research topic to the role of listener where the participant is supported in giving voice to their experience. (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010 p.40)

In my research I used all four methods of yarning however, because of the nature of the research the collaborative yarn was the most common form used.

Quality Standards

Because this research is autoethnographic in nature, its scholarly quality was regulated by and should be judged in accordance with epistemological standards associated with the interpretive, critical and post-modern paradigms. In particular, the standards of trustworthiness and authenticity, pedagogical thoughtfulness and verisimilitude, and wisdom praxis were employed to regulate the quality of this research.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

The interpretive-ethnographic aspects of this research were conducted in accordance with the trustworthiness and authenticity criteria of Guba and Lincoln (1989). In particular, when obtaining data from participants the researcher optimised *credibility* (via member checking, progressive subjectivity, prolonged engagement, peer-debriefing, negative case analysis), *transferability* (via thick description), *dependability* (via emergent design), *confirmability* (via a data audit). As well, a *hermeneutic dialectic process* was employed in which emergent data is fed back to participants for further discussion. The authenticity of the research will be optimised by ensuring *fair representation* of all stakeholders' perspectives. The efficacy of the Third Space created by the participants should be evaluated in terms of its *ontological* (nature of being), *educative* (resulting in education), *catalytic* (genuineness, legitimacy) and *tactical authenticity* (knowledge of change and the power to act on this knowledge).

Critical Reflexivity and Vulnerability

A key criterion of this research is that I demonstrated engagement in a process of reflecting critically on my own subjectivity. This relates to, and advances, the trustworthiness standard of *progressive subjectivity* in my *researcher as learner* role (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Exploration and an honest rendition of the subjectivity of my own personal focus, particularly as I was also a participant in this study, allows the reader to connect on an empathic level, especially if the reader has had similar lived experiences. As I engage in critical reflexivity I exposed my vulnerability and thus I needed to nurture myself through this process. This vulnerability further connects the reader to the text via empathy and thus a desire is provoked in the reader to discover how I dealt with the situation and what the outcomes were.

Pedagogical Thoughtfulness and Verisimilitude

As discussed in Chapter 2, another of the key purposes was to impact the reader by engaging him/her in reflecting critically on their own pedagogical assumptions. By writing narratives for a professional audience I intended to stimulate the reader to engage in the process of pedagogical thoughtfulness (Van Manen, 1990) in relation to their own professional practice. The action of pedagogical thoughtfulness is: "to write in a reflective way that draws the reader into reflecting critically on his/her

own pedagogical values” (Taylor & Settelmaier, 2003). One way of eliciting pedagogical thoughtfulness in the reader is to adopt literary standards that render the narratives as true and believable (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). A sense of authenticity is created as the reader contributes to the experience through their willing suspension of disbelief. The more closely a narrative resembles conventional reality the easier it is for the reader to engage, and therefore *realism* and *plausibility* are important ingredients.

Wisdom Praxis and Humility

The overall intended outcome for the reader and myself was to develop a degree of insightfulness and mindfulness regarding the research. This transformation may lead to a form of hybridity which I have termed *doorndjil yoordaniny* or coming together – moving ahead however, this is the end point of any transformation as something new is created. It is hoped that this new method of viewing an old problem – narrative inquiry within an autoethnographic approach – has led the reader to create their own Third Spaces in their own classrooms and thus result in ‘moments of enunciation’ being realised within these classrooms.

Chapter 4

Do We Have a Problem?

Everybody knows

Everybody knows

That's how it goes

Everybody knows (Leonard Cohen, 1988)

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I address the first part of the third research question; *What were the socio cultural processes that led to the formation and functioning of the first Third Space team?* In section 1, my own first tentative steps towards the Third Space are discussed. In section 2, the experiences of three cross cultural border crossers are outlined via narrative enquiry. The first cultural border crosser is Suzie who is a beginning teacher on her first day at a school in a very remote Aboriginal community. The second is Saffron who is an Aboriginal student in Suzie's class. The third is Sharoma who is an Aboriginal student who has missed a lot of school due to an itinerant lifestyle. Sharoma has always lived in the Kimberley, however now due to family reasons, she has moved down to Perth to continue her education. These three people represent two completely different worldviews which can often be so divergent that it leaves the protagonists gasping. The place where much of this gasping occurs is within the classroom and at the school.

My Journey Towards the Third Space: The Seed of the Enquiry

In 2000 when I began working with the Aboriginal Education unit at a university in Perth I had never heard of the Third Space and I had never encountered Yolgnu wisdom but this was all about to change. At this time I met, and began working with, Scott Fatnowna, an Aboriginal/South Sea Islander man from Queensland, Australia and Indigenous academic (see Chapter 10). It was due to my work with Scott that I

began to learn about the Third Space as a concept that he had extrapolated from his lived experience and the Ganma Metaphor (see Chapter 6).

My interpretation of the Third Space is based on the Ganma Metaphor (Yunupingu, 1997) and is based on Yolgnu (Arnhem Land NT) teachings. It was not until later that we realised that our Indigenous Third Space had many similarities to Homi Bhabha's (1994) work regarding cultural border crossing. The cultural border crossings that we were interested in were between Australian Aboriginals and Australian non-Aboriginals and so the Ganma Metaphor seemed like an appropriate place to begin. The border between these two cultural groups, who live in the same country, has been a minefield for both groups because of Australia's history and the treatment of Australian Aboriginal people from colonisation until the present.

Colonisation itself produces a certain angst which the country concerned carries almost like a cancer, sometimes it is in remission and all is proceeding well and at other times it seems that the cancer of colonisation may kill either the colonised or the coloniser. In the latter circumstances surgery is usually prescribed, however, this rarely has a permanent effect as there are always some pockets of cultural resistance remaining. Cultural border crossings can become dangerous under these circumstances, especially for the unwary and I was very unaware.

The small scrap of paper, crumpled and dirty from overuse, which was my map was given to me at the beginning of my travels by Scott Fatnowna but I did need to make the journey before I could understand the map. Hence, I have created my own map as I thought it may be useful to others who would make similar journeys as my own and save them time, heartache and worry. My small, tatty and much used scrap of paper led me to defining the Third Space and the journey towards it from a non-Indigenous point of view. This new space where both worldviews are respected and valued for both their differences and their similarities was first introduced to me by Scott for whom the Third Space begins in the Aboriginal worldview with a course toward the non-Aboriginal worldview. However, as I am a non-Aboriginal woman, I should have been beginning my journey in the non-Aboriginal worldview. The

journeys are different depending on which worldview the traveler begins in and hence that is probably why I got so unbelievably and almost terminally lost.

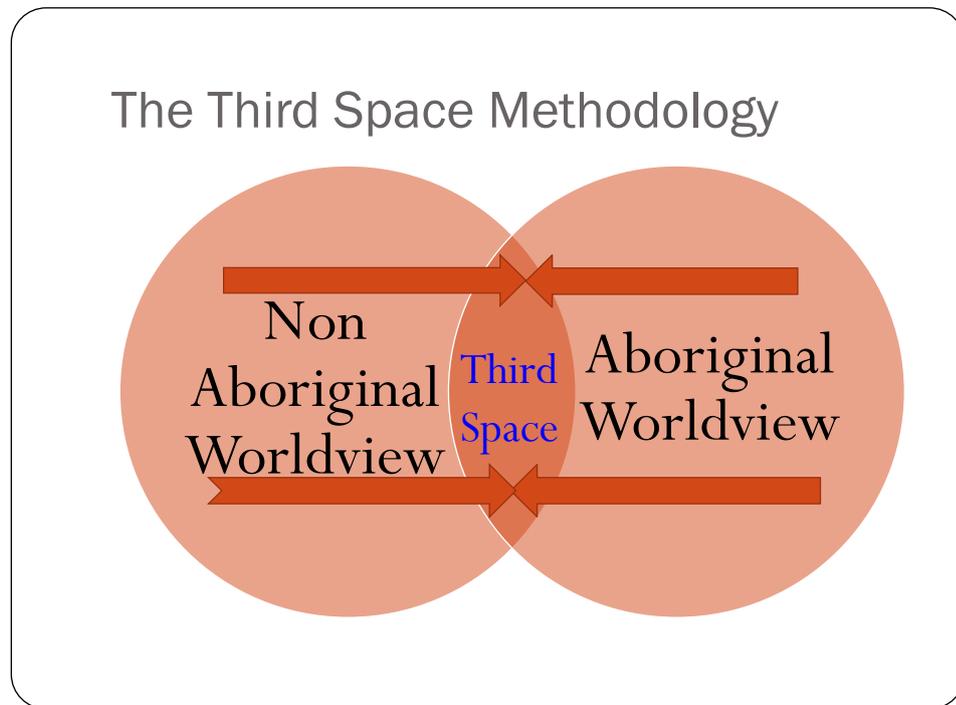


Figure 2: The Third Space Methodology

I am not the only person who has been lost in the world of cultural identity/assumed identity in contemporary Australia. The chasm between these two dissimilar world views (Aboriginal Australian and non-Aboriginal Australian) is nowhere more apparent than in the classroom of many remote, rural and urban West Australian schools. Within these schools the main protagonists are the teachers and the Aboriginal students. The separateness of these two cultures is well demonstrated by Suzie, a first year beginning teacher who was sent to a very remote Aboriginal community. Suzie's story illustrates how she struggles with culture shock as well as a whole new cultural way of seeing the world. The Aboriginal student is represented by Saffron, a member of Suzie's class. Sharoma, a young Aboriginal girl, wrestles with another form of culture shock as she leaves her home in the Kimberley and resumes her education first in Port Hedland and then in Perth. I begin with Suzie's story.

Suzie's Story

Suzie's /Saffron's First Day

It is hot, very hot and the sky shows the thunderheads building towards another deluge. It is also flat, as far as the eye can see there is red dirt with hardly a tree to break the heartrendingly horizontal topography. Suzie stands over the kitchen sink looking out of her window at her new 'home'. She feels another sob about to escape as she surveys the view and thinks of her family and friends who are so far away. She feels abandoned and alone in the wilderness which is the first day of her teaching profession.

On the other side of the road, about four doors down, lives Saffron who has only recently moved to this isolated Australian Aboriginal community to live with her grandmother (Nanna). The family has decided that she has been moving around far too much and she now needs an education. Saffron puts on the 'proper' school dress and a pair of socks as her Nanna watches and discusses with her the 'Whitefella ways' and that socks are a necessary evil even when it is 45 degrees Celsius outside. The shoes are a different matter. Saffron knows that White people always wear shoes but they seem unnatural on her feet and they hurt.

Suzie finally pulls herself together and goes to the bathroom to wash her face and generally compose herself. She grabs her bag and without thinking too much walks outside slamming the door behind her. She honestly wonders if she will live to open that bright blue door again but forces those thoughts from her mind. She has to be professional as she is the teacher. It is only a short walk to school and she arrives very quickly. As she enters the staffroom she feels so much better. The coffee machine is on and other staff members are preparing for the day, conversing and laughing. For Suzie the atmosphere is like a cool breeze from the ocean on a hot day and equally nourishing to her, she feels 'normal'.

Saffron has finally finished getting dressed and Nanna insists that she eats breakfast which she forces down to keep the old lady happy. Now it is time to go, but Nanna will accompany her to school, which for Nanna is a social outing. For Saffron it feels

like the end of the world, which in a funny kind of way it is. The rules she has known all her life will no longer hold true as soon as she walks through the gate. As she enters this strange new world of education she is very, very frightened.

Suddenly Saffron sees her cousin and she runs over to her. Her cousin looks as uncomfortable as Saffron feels but together they will be able to negotiate this foreign country.

The siren sounds and shatters the normal worlds of both teachers and students. Suzie thinks that the time has come to collect her things and go to her classroom. There are only three classrooms here but they are air conditioned and very new. When Suzie reaches her classroom she sees her students and feels a moment of unadulterated fear. These children are so black and they are not speaking English. She feels very much the outsider and very alone. For the first time in Suzie's life she is now the 'other'. She is the one who is different and she feels almost unable to continue. There is nothing in Suzie's life that could have prepared her for these feelings of being the outsider, the leper, the one who is different. Suzie walks into the classroom and the students follow her in. They are silent and will not look at her no matter what she seems to do. Suzie says "Good Morning" and the students mumble something which sounds a little like "Good Morning Miss". As Suzie looks around the room she sees the teacher's desk and feels completely incapable of actually sitting in it. So she sits down in an empty desk with her students surrounding her and begins to tell them a story. The story is about her and how she got here. When she is finished she still sits in the desk but her students are almost looking at her now and she thinks she may even be seeing a shy smile here and there.

Saffron hears the siren blare but does not know what this loud noise means. Her cousin tells her that this means it is time to go to the classroom. Fortunately her cousin is in the same class as her but as Saffron walks towards the classroom she asks her cousin if she knows the teacher. Her cousin replies "No. New teacher this year." Saffron can't decide whether this is a good or bad thing. When the girls arrive at the classroom they see their teacher walking towards them. Saffron sees the teacher and can hardly help but stare as she is so white, blonde hair and blue eyes,

she is also possibly more afraid than she is and Saffron wonders why. The teacher walks into the classroom and Saffron follows the other students inside. It is nice and cool in the classroom but she feels a slight sense of claustrophobia as she is so enclosed. Saffron decides she needs to leave but her cousin holds on to her and explains that that is against the rules, she has to stay. This only increases Saffron's desire to escape but she decides that she may as well have a good look at this "White lady teacher" before she leaves. As she watches from underneath her dark lashes (it is rude for young Australian Aboriginal people to make eye contact with a more senior person especially when they do not know them) she realises that the teacher is more terrified than she is and that she is young and very pale. The teacher seems to wander around the room not knowing where to sit until she finally sits in a desk not far from Saffron and her cousin. The teacher then begins telling the students about how she came to be here and about her family. Saffron relaxes, even if the teacher is a "White lady" she is behaving the "right way" and so she listens. As she listens she begins to feel sorry for this poor teacher so far from her home and her family. Finally when the teacher has finished her story all the students sit in silence until her cousin speaks telling the teacher who she is, who her family are, including Saffron, and where their Country is. The other students take turns telling their own stories and Saffron relaxes, maybe this won't be so bad after all.

Suzie cannot believe that she has revealed so much about herself and her family to her students who are total strangers to her. She finally finishes her story and notices that the students are very silent until one girl starts to speak. The girl seems to speak an odd form of English but Suzie can understand her and listens. As the girl proceeds with her descriptions Suzie realises that this is really interesting and a really good way to get to know her students, she can feel herself relaxing into this strange new world.

All she needs to do is survive and whether Suzie knows it or not she has begun her learning journey in the most correct fashion by talking about herself and her family. She has behaved in a culturally appropriate manner, however we all know that she was driven by fear and the uncomfortable experience of being 'other', the outsider. Suzie could no longer rely on the privilege of Whiteness as she was far from her first

space (her own culture). Her students were equally removed from their first space and hence, the only possible outcome is to find the Third Space which is exactly what Suzie did.

Like Saffron, who was a member of Suzie's class, Sharoma has lived a very transient life. She has spent much of her life in the Kimberley until she was fifteen years old. In September of her fifteenth year, she became an orphan as her father passed away. She was also made a ward of the State. I have known Sharoma since she was about 13 and have helped where I could. There are, unfortunately, many Sharoma's. Here is her story.

Sharoma's Story

Sharoma is a pretty girl and she is 16 years old now. Sharoma is the daughter of 'brother boy' who we buried in Derby last September. Things have not gone well for Sharoma since her father's funeral. She began her life as an orphan; they actually made her a ward of the state, in Port Hedland where she enrolled in the local high school. Sharoma has had a lot of movement in her life and has not been as conscientious in her school attendance as would be liked and this has affected her literacy and numeracy skills, they remain below standard but that is really pretty common for Aboriginal girls from the bush.

Sharoma went to school in Hedland most days because her Auntie made her and anyway she could walk there with her cousin who is younger than her but a big boy and he would protect her from the riff raff. Sharoma was doing OK until the local girls noticed her talking to one of the local boys who was supposedly someone's boyfriend. The only problem was Sharoma didn't know this which was unfortunate because instead of having a quiet talk these girls just beat her up. So began Sharoma's daily torment at school. On a daily basis she was bullied and pushed around, and always when her cousin was not around to defend her. Sharoma started 'wagging' and it was only because of the wagging that the school contacted her Auntie to tell her Sharoma was missing too much school. I wonder what goes on in some teacher's minds when you have a student who is there every single day on time

all organised for four months and then she suddenly becomes quite withdrawn and finally just disappears. It was two whole weeks before the school contacted Sharoma's Auntie to tell her that Sharoma was wagging.

Sharoma's Auntie tells the school that something must be up because every day, as far as she knows, Sharoma sets off to school with her cousin and comes home with him. So what is Sharoma up to? Sharoma is hiding out down at the shopping mall where she is making some very unsuitable friends. They do however protect her from the girls at school and so it seems OK. Also Sharoma doesn't have to put up with not understanding what the teacher says and the shame of not really being able to read or write when you are 16. Little does Sharoma know that the school has rung her Auntie and she is on the way down to the shopping mall because she is a pretty wise old girl and she is certain that that is the place she will find Sharoma. How does she know this? Well that is because in moments of crisis in her own school life in Derby that is exactly where she used to head for a little bit of relief.

Sharoma's Auntie walks into the mall and as Sharoma is not expecting her they bump right into each other. Well let me tell you if Sharoma felt shame at school because she couldn't read or write that is nothing compared to how she feels when she turns around to be right up face to face with her Auntie. Sharoma is unceremoniously marched out of the shopping mall and to the car and then home. Sharoma is amazed that her Auntie is not actually going wild. This is because under pain of death her cousin has spilt the beans about the nasty girls and so Auntie is almost in a protective mood.

The next day Auntie and Sharoma go down to school to see the principal and 'discuss' what should be done. By now the principal is also aware of the nasty girls and Sharoma's daily torment and so they decide to put Sharoma in another class away from the girls. This is a good idea but unfortunately Sharoma finds out the new class is the 'Veggie Class' for those kids who have 'learning problems'. That is it for Sharoma. She goes home and talks to her Auntie and within a week she is down in Perth. No money, no accommodation and no hope. That is about the time I met Sharoma again and I had to force myself not to take her in. Unfortunately nobody

else would either, except her uncle, and that was only because she had nowhere left to go.

Sharoma is real and there are lots of Sharoma's out there. These are the students who are begging for their teachers to enter the Third Space to understand them as holistic beings and to 'learn them' to read and write. When Aboriginal students ask you to 'learn them' it is not bad English. What they mean is learn about me as a person and what I can do and then you will be able to teach me that other stuff (reading and writing).

Sharoma as the "Other"

Sharoma has been in Perth for three months now and continues to live at her uncle's house. It has been very hard for Sharoma because she does not know the 'city' ways. The house is too noisy and there is no bush to walk away into. No river to quietly sit by and let the world pass by with the rivers water. There is always noise and people.

Even though these people are her cousins Sharoma has as much in common with them as she would with some people who live in a house in New York.

Sharoma comes from a place where when you want something you take it. Not at the shops because you can get into trouble for doing that but if someone else has what you want you just take it. There is no please or thank you and no I will pay you back or could I borrow this. Sharoma is in big trouble at her uncle's place because even though all those people are Aboriginal like Sharoma they are city people. Sharoma is a bush person and her upbringing has been completely different from her city cousins.

Sharoma is in trouble for 'stealing' her cousin's cigarettes. Sharoma does not see it as stealing as she knows that when she has a packet of smokes she will share with everybody else. The only problem is that Sharoma does not have a packet of smokes very often because she does not really smoke that much. So her cousins are angry with her. Her uncle shouts at her and Sharoma runs away. Sharoma runs to the big

railway station which is probably not the safest place but she feels free there and always sees a few people who don't mind sharing with her.

When Sharoma comes home she is in trouble again for borrowing somebody's scarf. It is a bit like Cinderella but there is no fairy godmother with a pumpkin coach for Sharoma. Sharoma's Aboriginal culture is different from that of her cousins because Aboriginal people are diverse and Sharoma is coming from the far side of the circle that is Aboriginal culture.

Considering the Third Space and where Sharoma is coming from is best done by thinking of the two circles. Sharoma is what many non-Aboriginal Australians people and many city dwelling Aboriginal Australian's would call 'Aboriginal culture'. This Aboriginal culture is completely different from the Aboriginal culture of her city dwelling cousins. In Sharoma's world her Aboriginal culture and hence her Aboriginality is her entire lived experience and her first space. Sharoma has little to no knowledge of non-Aboriginal Australian culture and thus the Third Space and the intersection of the two is impossibly far away. For Sharoma the Third Space is nonexistent as she knows so little about the 'other'. Sharoma will need to journey to the Third Space to find acceptance with her cousins and with the wider community in Perth as well.

So how can Sharoma make this journey when there is no one to teach her? Both her parents were from the Kimberley and her mother's side are all still up in Derby, Wyndam and Oombulgari (see Appendix 4). She is sixteen and does not have a map. However the map for Sharoma is below. Sharoma is standing almost on the edge of the circle marked Aboriginal worldview. She needs to find her way to the cross over point. Every step she takes in that direction she loses some of her Aboriginality and she does not enjoy this. What Sharoma needs is a guide and someone who can reassure her that as she walks towards the Third Space she will not lose her Australian Aboriginal identity because that will always be a part of who she is. She needs to embrace Chris Sarra's "Strong and Smart" Aboriginal identity (see Chapter 6). That is, strong in cultural ways and smart in non-Indigenous academic ways.

Sharoma's Map – The Third Space

The area where the two circles overlap is the Third Space. This is where Sharoma needs to be and this is why this map is a picture rather than a complex array of words and symbols because Sharoma still can't read. Maps are not very useful when you cannot read them.

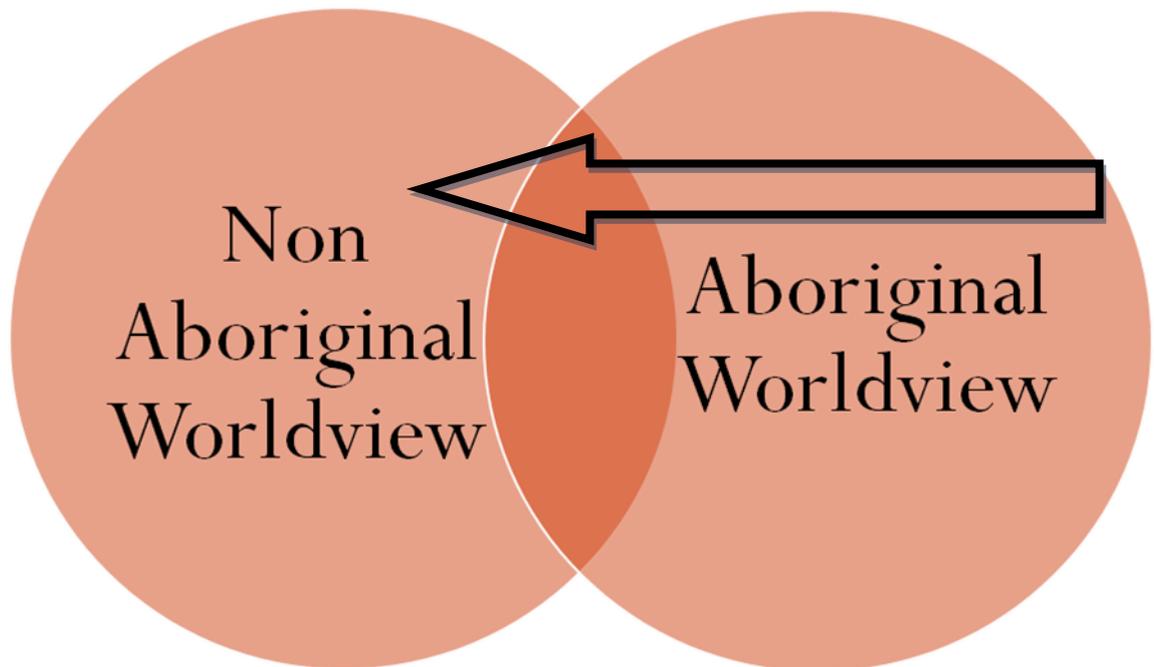


Figure 3: Sharoma's Third Space

Graduating Year 11

Sharoma has finished Year 11 now and even that process was fraught. This is the day of graduation and because her uncle needed to work her Auntie volunteered to go to the graduation. That was a great compromise until she forgot about the momentous occasion in Sharoma's life and did not manage to get to the school at all. Poor Sharoma is the only student without some family there to cheer her on. She had won a prize for something as well and this was the first time in her life she had actually been complimented at school. We were all pretty angry with Auntie and she has been spoken to but that did not help Sharoma from feeling that she was 'the other', the outsider, the only dark skinned girl in the class and the only one with no-one to witness her success. She has finally moved in with her other uncle and she has been there six months now. Sharoma goes to school every day and she likes the teachers. She is very rarely in trouble now except for not locking the house when she leaves or

is alone at night. She did have one excursion into the land of alcohol but was so stupid her cousin took her home and her uncle gave a very serious lecture about displaying oneself. She was very ashamed of that incident and so we never talk about it. Sharoma is gaining her self-confidence and is slowly carving a life out for herself in Perth. She is much better with Uncle Kevin as he has not lived in town all his life and understands that there are different ways of behaving and even living for remote Australian Aboriginal people.

Sharoma still can't read or write and although she is improving it is a struggle. She knows she has to learn and is trying but English is a tricky language. There are so many Australian Aboriginal young people who are essentially illiterate and hence they cannot function in the mainstream world. They cannot get the newspaper and read the advertisements for employment. They cannot write the letter required to register interest. They can't access the internet over a computer because only five years ago that was not possible in places like Derby or Fitzroy Crossing.

Sharoma represents what the politicians call 'the Gap'. The Gap occurs in health, life expectancy, employment, housing and education. I wish those same politicians could meet Sharoma as she negotiates her way through the minefield which is Australian contemporary culture without losing her Australian Aboriginal identity and without the ability to read or write. Sharoma needs the Third Space which she seems to have found by herself. Now, that is what I call a survival mechanism.

There are many Sharomas living in contemporary Australia. Australian Aboriginals have one of the highest birth rates in the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008) and the projections are for very large numbers of Australian Aboriginal children to begin entering the education system in a short amount of time, hence it becomes even more vital that a methodology be found to engage and retain these children within the education system.

Education via schools and teachers has long been a bastion controlled by Westerners and many Aboriginal people continue to see schools and education as assimilative. Schools tend to produce individuals who think a certain way and as they are

controlled by Westerners, this thinking is very much aligned to the Western worldview. Frequently in these institutions, minority cultural groups who continue to hold onto their own traditions are considered recalcitrant and sometimes teachers believe these children cannot be taught. In most cases where this occurs, it is because the teacher has no knowledge of the ways of being and the learning styles of the minority group (Malcolm, 2000). These issues continue to vex educators in Australia, as in the past, schools were often used as places where children were removed. I recall one very old lady saying that she was happy when her children went to school, however they never came back. Her children were removed without her permission and taken to a mission where they would be 'civilised'. Hence, resentment and old wounds also impact on Aboriginal students as they have heard the stories of removal and the consequent suffering that this particular policy was responsible for.

Chapter 5

Why Do We Have a Problem?

Introduction

In Chapter 5, I address the second part of the third research question: *What were the historical factors that led to the formation of the first Third Space team?* In section 1, I investigate the developmental history of both Western and Aboriginal thought and in the process encounter some of the enormous differences between these two cultures. Western thought has developed to become very individualistic whereas Aboriginal thought remains group orientated. As both schools and tertiary institutions are largely based around Eurocentric thinking processes, the divergent nature of these two worldviews may be the root cause for many Aboriginal students' failure to engage in education. However, there is one concept which both cultural groups hold in high esteem, and that is learning. In section 2, I address how Western thought processes and Australia's shared history have impacted Aboriginal people in regard to education.

Western Thought

Western thought has a long and vibrant history and this history is representative of many of the cultural schema now found around the world where Europeans have settled. The history of the development of such thinking is long and exhaustive and in this instance I begin with the Age of Enlightenment when Europe, and hence Western thought, was escaping the strangle hold that the Church and the monarchy had exercised for over five hundred years. People were beginning to realise that they could be masters of their own destiny, however Christian beliefs such as charity and kindness to those less fortunate had not been completely forsaken.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the world as it was then, underwent a massive change in its thinking with events such as the American War of Independence and the subsequent constitution. This was closely followed by the French Revolution (the

French having supported America in their War of Independence). The French Revolution was an answer to the continuous marginalisation of the peasant and the emergence of the middle class who were educated and demanded their place. Prior to this the aristocracy and the monarchy had ruled with little concern for the masses that supported their lavish and often debauched lifestyle.

The outcome of both the American War of Independence and the French Revolution were two documents which formed the basis of the new world order regarding the Rights of Man and were to become the basis of the charter of Human Rights. Both these documents, although eloquent in stating the rights of all men being equal and other laudable sentiments, did not include either women or slaves in the human category. Women fought a long and protracted war in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to procure the right to vote and the rights which had up until that time been only for men (the Suffragette Movement). The 'slaves' were either African or Indigenous people of the colonies or the 'natives' (one of these groups being Australian Aboriginal people). It was not until after the Second World War that authors who were not European began to speak out about the situation which was experienced by what Frantz Fanon called the "Wretched of the Earth" (1961).

With the advent of Freud and Jung and the concept of human psychoanalysis other authors began to look at the concept of mental illness and the formation of human identity, and hence, this was extrapolated to include the formation of identity for colonised people. One of these authors was Jacques Lacan whose first official contribution to psychoanalysis was the Mirror Phase (Lacan, 1949). The Mirror Phase is crucial in the development of a child's identity, as at some stage the pre-linguistic infant will see itself in the mirror, that is, their own reflection. The Mirror Phase, or mirroring, has been taken up by numerous authors, such as Louis Althusser (1971), who used it to explain how ideology is used to reflect both the subject and others and how the mirror of ideology implanted received social meaning in the imagined relationship between the person and their existence. The mirror principle has even been used to describe the first tentative steps of the writings of the colonised and of the colonised identity formation (Homi Bhabha has been described thusly as he uses eloquent and floral speech which mirrors a European, however this

is the official language that is used and if one wants to have voice one must use this language).

Michel Foucault (1961) in *Madness and Civilisation* examined ideas, practices, institutions, art and literature relating to madness. He proposed that with the gradual disappearance of leprosy madness came to occupy the excluded position of ‘unclean’ within society. Indeed in 17th century Europe, in a movement which Foucault describes as the Great Confinement, ‘unreasonable’ members of the population were locked away and institutionalised. Foucault maintains that mental illness, as madness came to be termed, and the new aversion therapies used by Philippe Pinel (1806) and Samuel Tuke (1813), were nothing more than repeated brutality until the pattern of judgment and punishment was internalised. This logic can also be transferred to the brutal treatment of colonised people by the coloniser to explain how over a period of time all resistance is ‘beaten out of people’ and life becomes a process of survival. Foucault also demonstrated that all periods of history have what he terms “episteme” which can be described as specific underlying conditions of truth that constitute what was socially acceptable, such as scientific discourse. Foucault argues that these conditions of discourse have changed over time, in major and relatively sudden shifts from one period’s “episteme” to another. This is a very articulate method of explaining massive shifts in human thinking, such as the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, however these shifts don’t just happen; rather it is a slow yet constant raising of the capacity of all humanity until the shift occurs.

Jacque Derrida’s (1978) concept of deconstruction has also been persuasively incorporated by many including Homi Bhabha. Derrida contributed to the understanding of certain deeply hidden philosophical pre-suppositions and prejudices in ‘Western culture’, arguing that the whole philosophical tradition rests on arbitrary dichotomous categories (such as sacred/profane, mind/body and hence, coloniser/colonised.) and that any text contains implicit hierarchies:

By which an order is imposed on reality and by which a subtle repression is exercised, as these hierarchies exclude, subordinate and hide the various potential meanings. (Derrida, 1978 p.196)

The procedure for uncovering and unsettling these dichotomies is deconstruction.

One of the most significant “episteme” (Foucault, 1961) for post-colonial thinking occurred with Franz Fanon who argued from the position of the colonised. He wrote not from a Lacanian position, that is mirroring those who had colonised him, but from the position of the colonised. He believed that the coloniser’s position was purely based on military strength and any resistance to that strength must be violent as this is the only ‘language’ the coloniser speaks. Fanon was a product of colonisation and wrote with a deep understanding of the position of the colonised. His works, such as “Black Skin White Mask” (1952), very truthfully examine the position of a Black man in a White world and were seized upon by numerous ‘revolutionaries’, from the Black Panther movement in the United States to Che Guevara in South America. However, all spoke from the position of ‘slave’ (Black Panthers) or freedom fighter for the proletariat (Guevara). In the 1960’s the world was indeed changing and the Rights of Man now incorporated women, however the colonised were only just beginning to demand equal rights and an end to the dichotomy of coloniser/colonised.

Finally, and by no means of any less consequence, are the writings of Edward Said (1978) and his concept of Orientalism. Said argued that the West had dominated the East for 2,000 years. Europe had dominated Asia politically so completely for so long that even the most outwardly objective texts on the East were permeated with a bias that most Western scholars could not recognise. He believed that Western scholars had appropriated the exploration and interpretation of the East’s languages, history and culture for themselves. They had written Asia’s past and constructed its modern identities from a perspective that takes Europe as the norm from which the ‘exotic’, ‘inscrutable’ Orient deviates. Said concluded that Western writings depict the East as an irrational, feminised and ‘other’, contrasted with the rational strong, masculine West, a contrast he suggested derives from the need to create “difference” between West and East. The concepts of ‘otherness’ and ‘difference’ had indeed been used as a tool by colonisers to explain the irrational behaviour of colonised

people, and no place more so than Australia and its creation of an identity for Aboriginal people as “sly, cunning and lazy”.

It is these notions that both Australian Aboriginal people and mainstream Australian's are only now beginning to dismantle (deconstruct). As Foucault suggested regarding the “new therapies” for mental illness, that were a brutal method of creating obedience, so too were the policies and practices which were inflicted on Australian Aboriginal people over the 200 years since colonisation. With constant demoralisation and marginalisation it is no wonder that there are some who will ‘mirror’ the colonisers methodology. It can also be expected that some will also ‘ride the horse’ created by Said regarding the description of the needs, ways of being, consciousness and identity of Australian Aboriginal people today, and indeed this is correct for who better to speak/write than those who are a product of colonisation and who continue to strive for an identity that is consistent with who they are now. However, not all Aboriginal people have had productive experiences with education and many remain voiceless, hungry, homeless, unemployed and sick while holding on to the only thing that remains after the ‘culture wars’ in Australia ,that is, their Country, their land which is their mother.

The concept of the land as nurturing mother and the people being part of the land is diagonally opposite to the Western concept of land. In Western cultures the land is considered to be owned by people whereas for Aboriginal people the land owns the people. These concepts, as well as kinship and relationships with both people and the land, are well described in Yolgnu thought.

Australian Indigenous Thought

The Yolgnu people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory are probably best known for the band Yothu Yindi. Yothu Yindi is the name of a fundamental concept in Yolgnu life, that of the Yolgnu kinship system. In this kinship system the land and its people are divided into two sides – Yirritja and the Dhuwa - and life is dedicated to maintaining balance between the two. When Yirritja and Dhuwa are working in

harmony the land and its peoples are one. Yothu Yindi refers to the child and its mother. The full importance of Yothu Yindi is explained by Mandawuy Yunupingu:

Dhuwa have Yirritja children and Yirritja mothers have Dhuwa children. Or to see it from the child's point of view, every Dhuwa child has Yirritja mothers and Dhuwa fathers and every Yirritja child has Dhuwa mothers and Yirritja fathers. Every Yolgnu child has responsibilities both to mother's people and places and to father's people and places. Hence every Yolgnu person has responsibilities both to Yirritja and to Dhuwa. (Yunupingu, 1994 p7)

In the early 1970s Yolgnu people recognised that to survive in the new world order this process of balance needed to be incorporated into education for their children and this education involved schools. For Australian Aboriginal people, schools have been, and continue to be seen, as places where assimilation is carried out, and hence Yolgnu people began to create their own ways of incorporating Yolgnu education with Western education. The Ganma metaphor is one of the metaphors used by Yolgnu when they were developing their 'two-way learning'. Two-way learning evolved from a bi-lingual education program that resulted from the Australian Federal Government's policy shift from assimilation to integration in the early 1970s. The idea was to maintain distinct cultural practices within the framework of Australian multicultural society. Hence, the education department gave support to programs that taught children partly in their own language, which is Yolgnu traditional education via language and ceremony, and the normal mainstream Australian Standard English curriculum. During the struggle to establish this form of education another Yolgnu metaphor was also used, *Ngathu*, which is the sacred bread made from the nuts of the cycad palm. This metaphor was used to "provide sustaining bread for children, matched to their differing needs as learners" (Yunupingu, 1994). This metaphor was also important as it refers to a method of reinforcing in children their knowledge of family relationships, structure and obligations.

The production of *Ngathu* is sacred as it begins with the collection of the nuts from a particular cycad grove, and only particular people may harvest the nuts and prepare the bread. Others are represented in this process through their relations with the people doing the work. *Ngathu* is sacred because it contains something of the spirit of the ancestors left in the place where the cycad trees grow. Peoples' work, the established ways of doing things, respect and judgment are also baked into the *ngathu*. All the processes that are involved in the collection, sorting and shelling of the nuts will make the bread. All stages involve ceremony and special places. Finally, in special woven bags, the nuts must be immersed in a pool with clear running water for several days. This process washes away the poison – cyanide - in the flesh. The amount of time the nuts must be immersed is dependent on the nuts themselves, the water flow, the season, and a multitude of other variables, however the women and the older ones especially (here experience counts a great deal) will know when the nuts can come out. The nuts are then ground into flour with each category of nut ground separately. Different groups of people will receive each type of bread depending on their particular relationship with the cycad grove from which the collections were made. This metaphor was used in the production of the Galtha curriculum, and in the context of education Galtha indicates the participation of people with different perspectives that are each recognised to have value. According to Michael Christie (1992:33), Galtha emphasises that knowledge is not constituted by objective facts, but by ongoing negotiation of our various partial perspectives. The *ngathu* metaphor is described by Mandawuy Yunupingu as:

We gather all the nuts from a particular place. We seek to focus the varied opinions and views of people about schooling. Ideas must be put into relation with each other and sorted. The sub categories and different sorts of issues should be separated so that things can go on in an orderly way. And then when the mix is ready it must be left for awhile. How long? The time will depend on the conditions. Who will know when it is ready to act on? When will the flesh be ready for grinding? When all the bad blood of disagreement has leached away. We must accept the verdict of those we trust as experienced and who are in the right position and place to decide.

The sacred cycad nuts are represented in the form of the *ngathu*. It is presented in ritual ways to those whose various interests are embedded in the bread. Remembering the preparation of the *ngathu* reminds us that there are right and wrong ways. Hurry, and the poison will remain in the bread. There are ways of proceeding that, structurally, ensure that the interests of all are recognised and respected. (Yunupingu, 1994)

Although these customs and protocols are still practised by Yolgnu, and other Australian Aboriginal groups have similar customs, there are also many Australian Aboriginal people who have been denied their cultural knowledge due to colonisation, thus their worldview and the point that they enter the Third Space has been altered irreparably.

These two different modes of thinking continued to develop in their own cultural contexts on opposite sides of the world. It was not until 1788, with British colonization of Australia, that they would collide with each other.

After 1788, with the advent of colonization, as the colonizers began to ‘explore’ the Great Southern Land, the situation changed irrevocably for Aboriginal people.

A Short History of Aboriginal Education in Australia

Australia’s shared history has impacted heavily on education and continues to influence schools today. It is often this history which causes distrust and distrust causes a lack of engagement by whole communities. This shared history and the dichotomy of worldviews contributes to the experiences of young teachers such as Suzie (in Chapter 4). It is also part of the reason that people such as Saffron and Sharoma have such low literacy and may reject schools as assimilative.

Due to this shared history Australian Aboriginal people have only had access to public education for 40 years. There are many old and legitimate resentments

between both groups as schools were used as places for the removal of children and thus there is often little goodwill. In these circumstances this does go some way in describing the cultural dislocation experienced by many young and unseasoned teachers, such as Suzie, who find themselves transported to very remote locations where, for the first time in their lives, they are the minority and most of the people who surround them don't give a fig about their worldview as it is very removed from their day to day activities.

The impact of colonisation on Australia's First people, and thus the beginning of a shared history in Australia is as repellent as the impact on other First Nation's people across the world. However, the importance of this history cannot be ignored as it sets the scene in contemporary Australia for cultural border crossers, and indeed, non-Aboriginal teachers entering Australian Aboriginal communities are crossing cultural borders in every sense.

Australian Aboriginal education has passed through various stages, however the first true schools were those established by various religious bodies to 'bring the natives to God'. The mission period in the history of Australian Aboriginal education applied a veneer of civilisation and Christianisation.

With the demise of early schools for Australian Aboriginal people, that were short-lived from 1815 until 1820, mission schools took over the role of educating Australian Aboriginal students. Although these schools produced some literate pupils, they failed to make any change in most of their students. The missionaries believed that unless a child could be separated from his/her family there was little chance of success. Where that removal was not possible the missionaries gave up.

There appeared to be two methods of dealing with the 'native problem' in the 1880s: they could be put out of sight and forgotten or they could be assimilated. Governments oscillated between these two methods of dealing with the problem for the next eighty years.

Australian Aboriginal children at this time could attend their local school, but their presence was dependent on the indulgence of non-Aboriginal parents who could object to their participation and thereby cause their exclusion. The change from the frontier to settlement also changed the relationship between Europeans and Australian Aboriginal people.

As time transpired Australian Aboriginal people were considered to no longer pose a threat, but rather a blot on society – a ‘problem’ to be solved. As the numbers of Aboriginal people decreased through disease, starvation, and genocide in general, it was believed that they would eventually die out as a group. The increase in the population of mixed descent people gave rise to beliefs of immorality amongst Australian Aboriginal women, whom the government sought to protect from the intentions of undesirable Europeans. In the early days of the 20th Century all states, except Tasmania, passed laws for the protection of Australian Aboriginal people.

In Western Australia, the 1905 Act was typical of similar Acts passed throughout the country. The 1905 Act was intended to control the movement of Indigenous people, to prevent their exploitation and ensure that they remained submissive and law-abiding. An essential part of this policy was to prevent the birth of ‘mixed descent’ children. This policy was also accompanied by the belief that mixed descent children, as they had partly ‘White blood’, could be assimilated into the wider European society. However, for assimilation to be successful, they had to be removed from their Australian Aboriginal families completely and ‘learn the White ways’.

In Western Australia one of the main protagonists for assimilation through the removal of children was Auber Neville, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for over 20 years. In Western Australia, legislation made Australian Aboriginal children wards of the state, which meant that their lives could be controlled totally by the Protector of Aborigines. Mixed descent children were removed from their families and placed in dormitories. At 14 they would be sent to missions and settlements to work. It was believed that this would be a more rewarding life than remaining with

their families, often in what were considered by Europeans as squalid and unhygienic conditions.

The use of the respective Acts continued until the 1970s. It remains unknown how many children were removed in this way from their families; however our society today reaps the 'rewards' of these repressive policies. Nevertheless, the winds of change were sweeping through Australia as they were in the United States with the rise of the Black Panthers. This wind was not a zephyr and as the breeze passed over Australia Australian Aboriginal people became determined to change their position within the country from the lowest possible denominator in a White Australia with a White Australian policy. Australian Aboriginals were not citizens of Australia. They were categorised as 'flora and fauna' and this had been the case since colonisation.

It became clear by the 1960s that the removal of children from their parents was ineffective, not only did they not assimilate but the removal created psychological problems which were more damaging than leaving them with their families (*National Enquiry*, 1997). On March 27, 1967, Australians voted to change the constitution, and thus, the Commonwealth Government had the right to legislate on behalf of Aborigines. This process granted Australian Aboriginal people citizenship, something they had never had before.

The immediate consequences of the Referendum were felt in education with the introduction of Commonwealth scholarships for Indigenous students. The changes within the education system were slow as the administration of Indigenous Affairs continued in the same hands as before the Referendum. Assimilation remained the government policy regarding Aboriginal Australians.

In 1972, with a change of government after 26 years, the Labor Party swept to power. Assimilation and integration were replaced by a policy of self-determination. Self-determination emerged in the context of the rise of civil rights movements in the West during the 1960s and 1970s. Anti-colonial thinkers such as Franz Fanon (1967) and Albert Memmi (1957) were calling for the decolonisation of the minds of Blacks after a number of countries in Africa and elsewhere gained independence. Martin

Luther and Malcolm X, similarly, were fighting racism and demanding equal rights for Blacks in the United States. The likes of Charlie Perkins, Kevin Gilbert, Gary Foley and Marcia Langton were challenging racism in Australia and self-determination was linked strongly to land rights. A transition was occurring in that Aboriginal voices were being listened to rather than simply Western experts speaking for, or on behalf, of Aboriginal Australian people.

In the area of education, it was Friere's (1970) *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that focused on a student-centered learning process aimed at liberation and empowerment. The policy shift to self-determination in Australia has taken a great deal of time to filter down through the education system – a system that is inherently conservative and wary of overt politicisation, which is precisely what Friere's approach demands.

The Schools Commission Report (1975) was a landmark in Australian Aboriginal education. For the first time Australian Aboriginal people were consulted in regard to the education of their children, an Aboriginal Consultative Group, chosen by Australian Aboriginal people from all parts of Australia, provided assistance to the Commission in its deliberations. Funding for Australian Aboriginal education had increased fourfold between 1971/2 and 1974/5. However, Australian Aboriginal people still felt strongly alienated from mainstream Australian society and educational outcomes continued to remain lower for Australian Aboriginal students than for any other section of society.

In 1980 the National Aboriginal Education Committee, which was formed out of the Aboriginal Consultative Group, produced the first Australian Aboriginal education policy. The change in policy to include Australian Aboriginal people in the decision making process was also fraught with problems. After nearly two centuries of oppression and dependence Australian Aboriginal people were suddenly expected to take charge of their own affairs. Furthermore, the non-Aboriginal people who had dominated them were now expected to work in an equal partnership. Some twenty years after this policy had been implemented problems of equality are still being experienced.

The development of these two divergent worldviews impacts heavily on Aboriginal education as this education is structured around a Western or Eurocentric worldview. Hence, Aboriginal students need to learn how to think in a Eurocentric way prior to achieving academic success. In Australia it has only been 220 years since colonisation and before 1788 the Aboriginal worldview was the dominant and only method known to people. Western thought has developed over thousands of years and carried the population with it. Indigenous thought has also developed over thousands of years and yet the requirement for Aboriginal students to achieve success academically is to put aside this way of thinking. In doing so many Aboriginal people feel strongly that Western education is just another method of assimilation and thus they reject this form of education. This rejection is represented by low retention rates and often a lack of desire to engage in Western thinking in any way.

Chapter 6

What Can We Do About the Problem?

A literate person is a person who is able to navigate and shape their world and their future. The sight of a 16-year-old boy struggling to read a year one book about a fox in a box – his head down, hands over his face, mumbling apologies – is humiliating for the student and chastening for any educator. (Gray, 2008)

I went to school every day from year 1 to year 10 and still could not read or write. (Spoken by an Aboriginal man (aged 55) who has always worked in the mainstream as a labourer)

Introduction

In response to the historical and socio cultural factors discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 one of the universities in Perth instigated radical pedagogical change in the pre-service teacher Aboriginal Education unit (AEU). In section 1 I outline the radical pedagogy of the AEU which came to be known as the Third Space. In section 2, the new Third Space pedagogy of our AEU is compared and contrasted with the successful Strong and Smart (Sarra, 2003) program, indicating the similarities between these programs. International examples that demonstrate the pedagogical hallmarks of the Third Space are discussed in section 3. In these cross cultural programs knowledge is recognised as vital and the acquisition of knowledge is considered a pathway forwards by all.

The Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU) Third Space Pedagogy

The desire for change was initiated at the university due to the institution's engagement in reconciliation processes and to support policies of self-determination. This Third Space pedagogy was based on the Ganma Metaphor. The Ganma Metaphor comes from Yolgnu (Aboriginal people from eastern Arnhem Land,

Northern Territory) cosmology and is an Aboriginal way of seeing that ‘in between’ space found where two worldviews overlap, and hence the concept of a Third Space is not new to Aboriginal people. It was not until much later that this Third Space pedagogy was seen as reflecting Homi Bhabha’s (1994) ‘liminal’ space which may be found between cultures.

In 2000, to create the desired pedagogical adjustments, Scott Fatnowna (an Australian Aboriginal/South Sea Islander man) from north Queensland) was charged with the development of the new Aboriginal Education unit. The implementation of the unit by both Fatnowna and me, in association with the Education Faculty, was planned to help continue the process of reconciliation at the University and within the wider community. Friere’s (1970) ideas about “conscientisation” informed our approach to this unit, since long-term educational progress requires radical pedagogical change (see Chapter 8).

The fundamental pedagogical change implemented was to embrace the Ganma metaphor (see below) as a referent for the Third Space concept. The Third Space in Australian contemporary society, in this case, involves two worldviews: those of Australian Aboriginal people (a worldview as diverse as are Australian Aboriginal people) and the mainstream Australian worldview (which is also very diverse). These two worldviews differ markedly and have historically been divergent (see Chapter 5). Formal education is one of the places where this divergence is often more like a chasm.

One of the consequences of the failure to reconcile disparate worldviews has been a negative backlash towards Western education models by Aboriginal Australians which many see as another form of assimilation. School may be seen as another colonial tool to disenfranchise people from their culture. This can be due to the teacher having little or no knowledge of Australian Aboriginal ways of being and thus failing to recognise the wealth of knowledge contained in the students. This knowledge is over looked, or considered unimportant, compared with reading, writing and all the other knowledges required to operate in the mainstream world. The recurrent inability of many non-Aboriginal Australian teachers to understand

their Australian Aboriginal students and their worldview frequently is the root cause for Australian Aboriginal students to leave school (or not to attend) as they feel devalued when the way that they see the world is not considered (Malcolm et al., 1999).

Being mindful of this, Scott had designed the AEU unit in the Third Space (see Appendix 1) and had me teaching with him. We were intended to be a living example of the Third Space with Scott representative of the Aboriginal worldview and me the non-Aboriginal worldview. There was room for everybody in this model. Non-Aboriginal student teachers would not need to feel 'locked out' of Aboriginal education due to their 'Whiteness' because in the Third Space both worldviews are recognised as genuine and valuable. The unit focused on learning about the self and cultural identity prior to learning the Aboriginal Australian world view from both Aboriginal Australian and non-Aboriginal Australian teachers; hence both worldviews were respected and given equal weight. Because there are very few Australian Aboriginal teachers the AEU needed to reach out to non-Aboriginal student teachers, especially those who were willing to learn about another worldview and attempt to become competent cultural border crossers and participants in the Third Space.

The practice of knowing the self first is well supported in the literature. A review of Aboriginal education in NSW undertaken by the NSW Department of Education and Training, and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in 2004 reached the conclusion that the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students needed to be addressed. Seventy one recommendations arose from this review. Recommendation 14 suggested a pilot [program] specifically focused on pre-service training of a group of students for appointment as teachers to locations with high Aboriginal populations (DET, 2004, p 192). The strong commitment of the NSW Department of Education and Training to improvement of Aboriginal students outcomes resulted in NSW DET developing and implementing the Enhanced Teacher Training Scholarship Program (ETTSP). The program included two units in Aboriginal education, an immersion experience with a community or government agency in a community with a significant Aboriginal

population, and an internship of a minimum of six weeks to be undertaken in a school with a significant Aboriginal enrolment, and an Aboriginal mentor throughout the entire enhanced training. The ETTSP is now in its seventh year of implementation.

The key areas incorporated in the enhanced training are:

- Engagement with Aboriginal communities.
- Appropriate pedagogy and classroom management skills.
- Incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum.

Within the second key area an inspection of the self and one's own cultural identity is examined.

In NSW at the Bangamalanha Centre the Regional Aboriginal Team has developed the "8 ways" program to engage teachers in Indigenous knowledge at the Cultural Interface (overlap) between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and finding innovative ways to apply this common-ground knowledge in the classroom. In this innovative program it is contended that Aboriginal perspectives do not come from Indigenised content, but from Indigenous processes of knowledge transmission. Thus, Aboriginal learning processes were identified and a rich overlap was found between these and the best mainstream pedagogies (e.g. Quality Teaching). A common-ground pedagogical framework was developed and trialled from an Indigenous standpoint using a methodology inspired by the work of Nakata (2002, 2007a, 2007b).

"8ways" is a constantly developing body of communal expertise held by the traditional keepers of knowledge in Aboriginal communities throughout western NSW. The traditional keepers came from country in Western New South Wales. Baakindji, Ngiyampaa, Yuwaalaraay, Gamilaraay, Wiradjuri, Wangkumarra and other nations own the knowledges this framework came down from.

Within this framework one of the vital pieces of the crossword regarding personal identity and self reflection is found in a questionnaire which many students found

challenging because it was the first time that they had been asked to reflect deeply on their own personal belief systems and cultural understandings. Most students had previously considered their own beliefs, however they had not uncovered the reasons why they held these beliefs or how they influence their actions. It also provided an opportunity to identify and challenge personal ideologies held about Aboriginal Australians. Lampert (2005) suggests that as our beliefs are politically and socially constructed, we often develop opinions without knowing why. Our beliefs and attitude are shown in our discourses and actions. In the classroom context, teachers hold significant power to contribute to the ways Aboriginal Australians are perceived and understood by students. Therefore, self reflection is critical for educators to identify and address cultural biases. (Harrison, 2008)

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers contributed to the framework which is an ongoing cross-cultural dialogue via wiki and is managed by a team at the Aboriginal Knowledge and Practice Centre, Dubbo. It is not intended to constitute an entire Aboriginal program for schools, but is rather a culturally safe point of entry for teachers to begin engaging with Aboriginal knowledge and cross-cultural dialogue in the community. This program also emphasises Aboriginal protocols as an important key to engagement with Aboriginal students and their communities.

Thus, as with our AEU, ‘inverse racism’ is avoided ensuring that our pre-service teachers were neither threatened nor made to feel small and insignificant against the giant of the Australian Aboriginal worldview. Instead they were made to feel welcome and their efforts to engage and learn about Aboriginal Australians were lauded. We called it a ‘learning journey’ and celebrated at the end of the semester in both an Australian Aboriginal way with a Nyoongar (following Australian Aboriginal protocols which are associated with Country and the tribal group whose Country you are on at the time of celebration, especially celebration which is of a cultural nature. In Perth WA the traditional owners are the Wadjuk people of the Noongar group) smoking ceremony in language and song and also with a few glasses of wine and some lovely food. Thus, our celebration was in the Third Space, and it was indeed a beautiful sight for any humanist.

Creating a Third Space – The Ganma Metaphor

The Third Space is a space where two divergently different concepts, worldviews or ways of thinking overlap to make an “in between” area. The Ganma metaphor is representative of two different groups coming together via dialogue, with the view that through dialogue mutual understanding can be reached.

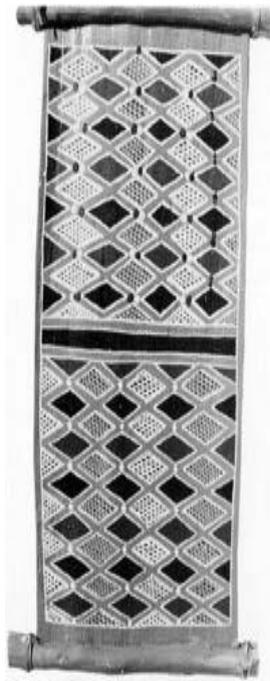
For the Yolgnu people of the Northern Territory the method of conceptualising two divergently different concepts is the Ganma Metaphor. The Ganma Metaphor describes two bodies of water, the ocean (saltwater) and the river (fresh water from the land). Where these waters meet is a brackish pool and this pool represents the mixing of the saltwater and the freshwater. The brackish pool of water demonstrates ‘balance’. The Ganma Metaphor is a very important learning tool for Yolgnu people.

Mandawuy Yunupingu (1994, p.49) describes the Ganma Metaphor eloquently as:

A deep pool of brackish water, fresh water and saltwater mixed. The pool is a balance between two different natural patterns, the pattern of the tidal flow, saltwater moving in through the mangrove channels, and the pattern of the freshwater streams varying in their flow across the wet and dry season. Often when I describe this vision to Balanda, non-Aboriginal people, they wrinkle up their noses. For Balanda, brackish water is distasteful. But for us the sight and smell of brackish water expresses a profound foundation of useful knowledge – balance. For Yolgnu Aboriginal people brackish water is a source of inspiration.

In each of the sources of flowing water there is ebb and flow. The deep pool of brackish water is a complex dynamic balance. In the same ways balance of Yolgnu life is achieved through ebb and flow of competing interests, through an elaborate kinship system. And I feel that in the same ways balance between black and white in Australia can be achieved. (Yunupingu, 1994, p.49)

Yalmay Yunupingu demonstrated this concept artistically in 1989 with a traditional bark painting (below). Another artistic representation of the Ganma Metaphor appears on page xii of this thesis and is the Noongar portrayal of the same metaphor painted by Dale Tilbrook in 2003.



Ganma; moiety-*Yirritja* clan – Gumatji; painter Yalmay Yunupingu (1989).

This painting was produced specifically to represent the concept of *Ganma*. Here we see two distinct grids which are formalised representations of two groups of people which are connected by their deep understandings (the dark brown strip running through the centre of the bark) which have developed with negotiation

Figure 4: Bark painting of *Ganma*; moiety-*Yirritja* clan – Gumatji; painter Yalmay Yunupingu (1989).

Hence the AEU was based upon an Australian Aboriginal metaphor and was representative of the brackish pool of water, and thus balance. Students were asked to investigate themselves and their own worldview and identity (i.e., their 1st space) prior to engaging with the Aboriginal worldview (i.e., their 2nd space). This self knowledge requires the practitioner to engage in extensive critical self reflection on their own values, attitudes and beliefs, which can be an uncomfortable experience for many, especially the young.

The next step of the process of engaging in the Third Space was to learn how the ‘other’ worldview views the shared history. I recall learning about many of the past policies and practices of successive State and Commonwealth governments and how shocked and guilty I felt. This guilt regarding the past and what was done is a process that non-Aboriginal people must work through. In the end there is no guilt or

shame but there is knowledge, and to some degree, understanding as to why Aboriginal Australians continue to reject many Western models of education.

Accepting that Aboriginal cultures are uniquely different to European styles is intended to engage the participant in a learning journey to describe this uniqueness. For me, this was a life changing experience, as it has been for many others (see Chapter 8). However, not everybody is suited to such extensive journeys, and that is as it should be, but everybody should have some knowledge of Aboriginal ways of being if they live in Australia, especially if they are teachers in Australian schools.

Teachers in many Western Australian schools encounter resistance to the Western education model that they are working in on a daily basis. This can be a soul destroying experience if taken personally. However, if the same teacher has knowledge of the reasons for this rejection and an understanding of Aboriginal ways of being it is possible to engage in a Third Space within the classroom. This model may be engaged in using many different cultures and can provide a possible way forward for many minority groups.

The rules of engagement that we established for our AEU pre-service teachers can be summarised (see below). Although each Third Space is created by the individuals involved in it these may be a handy set of important strategies to consider when engaging in a Third Space with Aboriginal students.

1. Know yourself first: Identity, Values, Attitudes, Life experiences
2. Learn as much as you can about Aboriginal Australia; Colonisation, Diversity, Specifics (Country and History), Past - Present - Future.
3. Acknowledge the marginalisation of Aboriginal people as the most disadvantaged group in Australian society.
4. Accept that Aboriginal cultures are uniquely different to European styles.
5. Accept that the way you are building knowledge is entirely different to the ways Aboriginal cultures do.
6. Accept the fact that many Aboriginal people are very resistant and continue to live in two distinct worldviews.
7. Accept the role of cultural broker. (Fatnowna, 2000 personal communication)

Figure 5: Strategies for Appropriate Work Practice- The Pedagogy of the Third Space within the AEU

These strategies are very similar to those used in the “8 ways” of engagement teacher education course as well as those proposed by the What Works the Work Program. *Stepping up: What works in pre-service teacher education* (Price & Hughes, 2009). The “What Works” program is a website established by the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) specifically to help schools take action to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal Australian students. This program suggests a three tiered approach comprised of:

- Building awareness (of self and Aboriginal culture and people)
- Forming Partnerships (with Aboriginal communities and members)
- Working systematically (with Communities and students)

Teaching Aboriginal students, especially in remote communities, requires the teacher to have a very good grasp of Aboriginal history and a rudimentary knowledge of their worldview. These teachers need to be open to a new way of seeing the world and have respect for this other way of being. The role of being a cultural broker may be fraught with the age old problem of the ‘ham in the sandwich’. A cultural broker has knowledge of both worldviews and is representative of the Third Space which is an ‘in between’ space. As a cultural broker there are also many opportunities for learning and growing, as I personally experienced (see Chapter 8).

The role of cultural broker (or Third Space practitioner) is well represented by Chris Sarra’s “Strong and Smart Program” established at Cherbourg, Queensland. This program bears many of the hallmarks of the Third Space as students need to be strong in their cultural identity and smart academically.

Cherbourg could represent many Aboriginal community schools as the circumstances, behaviours and outcomes for many Aboriginal students residing in rural and remote communities are similar. At Cherbourg Sarra’s reversal of the alarming trends are examples of what can be done when teachers, students and community have comparable aspirations.

Being Strong and Smart in the Third Space

In 1998 Chris Sarra a Murri man from Bundaberg in Queensland, was appointed as principal of Cherbourg School in Queensland. This school was in a very poor state with high truancy and shockingly low literacy and numeracy scores, and was generally not functioning well for the students, the teachers or the local community as a whole. The students took little pride in themselves or their school and this filtered out into the surrounding community.

The story of how Sarra turned around the school, the students and the community in a few short years with his Strong and Smart concept is illuminating. These specific insights demonstrate how he re-shaped the school's behaviour to result in a 94% reduction in unexplained absenteeism within eighteen months, which corresponds to a 93% real attendance rate at the school, improved student literacy and numeracy performance, and dramatically improved students' self esteem. That these students could be culturally strong and academically smart is a Third Space moment.

On Sarra's arrival in 1998 the school was in chaos as two status quos existed. The concept of two status quos colluding with each other to excuse chronic failure is not limited to this one Australian Aboriginal community school, but is endemic and is the way it has been for many years in Australia. Sarra describes these two status quos as:

The White status quo that I talk about – it was one in which teachers got their pay and were left largely unchallenged; getting very poor results but left unattended because the mindset was “This is how Aboriginal schools are”.

There was also a Black status quo in which: “Yeah, our children are failing in the community but we can always blame the school for that.

Many of the non-Aboriginal teachers that were on staff or in the staff had been there for years, and they were the type of people who would say: “We love being at the school, we love the children.” And they would say: “My life has been transformed as a result of being in an Aboriginal community.” And that’s all a very nice and romantic story. But the tragedy however is that nothing about the lives of the children had been transformed. (Sarra, 2003)

This collusion leads to students failing miserably (which impacts on self esteem), poor behaviour and poor attendance. The latter two are somehow accepted and tolerated as this is what you have to ‘expect’ in Australian Aboriginal community schools. By tolerating these behaviours it somehow excuses them and makes them ok. In a ‘normal’ school these behaviours would not be tolerated and would result in suspension or even expulsion if the behaviour continued. Hence, boundaries are required and sometimes those boundaries are not negotiable and the students will actually hate you at times for enforcing them. However, insisting on boundaries and negotiating quietly often leads to respect, especially when the boundaries turn out to be good boundaries.

Much of the bad behaviour and unremitting failure seen in Australian Aboriginal community schools is due to a lack of boundaries and staff who make constant excuses for bad behaviour and poor results because “that is what it is like in an Aboriginal community. Kids have so many problems; social, cultural and a myriad number of other reasons can be used instead of taking responsibility” (Sarra, 2003).

Many Aboriginal parents from Cherbourg would send their children to nearby Murgon because they thought that Cherbourg School offered a watered-down curriculum or some type of community curriculum when this wasn’t necessarily the case. However, although the curriculum was similar to any other government school at the time unfortunately it was “watered-down expectations of what the children could achieve” (Sarra, 2003) which was causing many of the problems faced by both the school and the community.

Retention, which continues to be one of the most common problems for Australian Aboriginal students, for the entire school day was extremely poor and was being tolerated. Chris Sarra eloquently discusses his first impressions as:

I would visit classrooms in the morning and I might see 12 students there. And by the end of the day if I visited the same classroom there might be three or four children because the rest had cruised home after lunch. The next day I might come in and there might be 12 to 14 children, but eight of those were different from the children I saw the day before. (Sarra, 2003)

This poor retention so shocked Sarra that he had some research done on the retention of Australian Aboriginal students from Cherbourg at the high school in nearby Murton. The research found that over a 30-year period that of 4260 children who had left Cherbourg School in Grade 7 to go to Murgon High School – of all of those children, the average retention rate at Murton High School was nine months. This implies that these students were not even reaching the end of Year 8 (about 13 years of age) before they had disconnected from the education system.

As the new principal Sarra questioned staff about the extent of the school's failure and was told:

There are a lot of social complexities here. There are many cultural complexities, the parents don't value education, children don't value education, and the community is not supporting the school. (Sarra, 2003)

On every occasion, when reasons for this abysmal failure were investigated, either the students or the community were blamed. There was no stage during this scrutiny regarding the dismal performance that questions such as “What is it that we are doing that is contributing to this underachievement?” To Sarra, this was crucial, as the staff had very little control and influence on the external forces or cultural context in which the school was surrounded. Nevertheless, the staff did have control

over themselves and the things that happened inside the school. Conversely, under this control, the staff had:

Developed and embraced within the school a culture and a society of dismal failure, then clearly, that's what we were destined to return. What frustrated and angered me the most about this tendency to externalise or blame forces other than our own, is that for a teacher like the ones in our school – and in many Aboriginal community schools – regardless of student outcomes, life goes on. But children and adults with very poor literacy or very poor education – they really suffer in life. (Sarra, 2003)

When Sarra sat down with the staff at Cherbourg and told them that after discussions with both the students and their parents, the overarching desire was for:

Children to leave this school with a very positive sense of what it means to be Aboriginal, and with academic outcomes that are just as good as any other school. (Sarra, 2003)

Thus, a new teaching team was established, there were no promises of instant success nor of life changing experiences, however there was a challenge and Sarra was honest enough to tell them that it would take hard work. The concepts of 'rescuing' students or 'feeling sorry for them' were declared inappropriate methods for commencing staff members. The staff were required to commit to effective teaching and learning and that to accept the myriad excuses for poor performance which had been used in the past were no longer suitable.

With a new and committed staff the school crystallised its vision as the pursuit of academic outcomes comparable to any other school in Queensland, and the development of a strong and positive sense of what it means to be Australian Aboriginal in today's society. In spite of these laudable goals there was still the problem of getting the students to engage with these goals. Sarra describes this powerfully as:

When we say a positive Aboriginal identity, we mean “strong”. When we say academic outcomes that are comparable (to other schools), we mean “smart”. So the new motto for our school is about being Strong and Smart. Every Friday on parade I would say to children: “When we leave school what are we going to be?” and they would say, from the bottom of their guts: “Strong and Smart. (Sarra, 2003)

This vision was designed to get students to see their Aboriginal-ness, their Blackness, differently, more positively, and to embrace that new knowledge of self. At Cherbourg everyday being Aboriginal was celebrated, however in doing this the students were not rejecting other people’s Whiteness. This celebration of Aboriginality without the rejection of non-Aboriginal ways of being demonstrates the Third Space as both worldviews are considered important and worthy.

This motto allowed the staff to ‘grasp’ the children, it also allowed Sarra to ‘grasp’ the community and at the same time say to students:

You can’t say to me you want to be strong and smart; young, Black and deadly and then go and act like something else.

You can’t say to me you want to be strong and smart and then go and carry on in class, because there is nothing smart about that, there is nothing strong about that.

You can’t say that you want to be smart and then go missing from school because you’re slack or because you want to go have a swim. (Sarra, 2003)

Upon reflection, Sarra discovered that one of the most important and greatest changes that occurred was to value and utilise the existing human resources in the school, particularly Australian Aboriginal people who were employed at the school, as teachers’ aides or assistants. Such people often hold positions of great power in

the wider community, however inside the school gate their true worth can remain unknown and so they can be relegated to the most menial tasks. Such was the case for Mum Ray.

The change in Mum Ray's activities led to three months of driving around the local community to visit parents and challenging the mindset of the community. Mum Ray became the eyes and ears for Sarra and would tell him who was who in the community, who he needed to go to when particular children were playing up, who he needed to stay away from, when was the right time to visit, and a wealth of other information regarding local protocols and people's family associations.

One of the most important messages that Sarra imparted to his staff was the skill and knowledge the local Australian Aboriginal staff brought with them.

Indigenous teacher aides should be acknowledged for the knowledge they bring to the school. A degree in teaching is an excellent item to have but what these people bring is something just as useful. They must be seen as co-teachers in the classroom, and you must acknowledge and value the information they bring to work alongside you. So they're seen as co-teachers and they respond to the notion of being seen in that particular light. (Sarra, 2003)

It was now time to begin to find solutions to some of the problems and the first problem to be approached was absenteeism. At Cherbourg school an Aboriginal Studies program was established to get children to focus on local community issues and thus acquire a better understanding of the community. Sarra speaks clearly regarding Australian Aboriginal identity and this was crystalline in his mind as students needed to confront the negativity that they witnessed on a daily basis. This negativity included issues such as alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse and all the other outcomes associated with marginalisation.

Our children need to understand these things exist in our community because they are a legacy of other historical and sociological process, and that they are not part of being Aboriginal. (Sarra, 2003)

Juvenile delinquency is an issue which confronts many remote Australian Aboriginal communities, and Cherbourg was no different. Although the number of delinquents there was low, there was a handful of young people in Cherbourg – particularly boys – who created havoc in the wider community. Sarra believes that when young people demonstrate these behaviours they are screaming out about something else.

Sometimes they're saying "I'm hungry." Sometimes they're saying "I'm angry because of what's happened to me", or "I'm confused about what's happened to me or what somebody tried to do to me last night." Or "I need love and attention" or "I need to know what the boundaries are". And with the Strong and Smart vision in our school I believe that that's what it did – it made it very clear what the boundaries are. (Sarra, 2003)

Changing the culture of a school was a difficult process, but involved speaking with elders and parents in the community as to what they considered their children needed to learn. They stated clearly that they wanted their children to learn about their own Aboriginal history and about their old people and how it made them who they are today.

One of the most important considerations for Strong and Smart, which has not been mentioned previously, was that "you don't have to be Black" (Sarra, 2007) to have an impact on Aboriginal students, however you do need to see them as culturally intelligent beings and be prepared to share your culture with them as they share theirs with you. This produces a constructivist scaffolding for both parties and can impact both groups long after they have moved on to other parts of their lives.

The Strong and Smart program continues to grow across Australia and Figure 6 delineates the key elements of this program.

1. Know yourself first: Identity, Values, Attitudes, Life experiences
 2. Learn as much as you can about Aboriginal Australia; Colonisation, Diversity, Specifics (Country and History), Past- Present – Future. Cultural awareness of kinship systems and community relationships
 3. Teachers should have high expectations for all their students.
 4. Quality relationships between schools and communities.
 5. Engaging the local community, especially Elders.
 6. Engaging local community members in schools and making them a part of a progressive and dynamic learning community.
 7. Accept that the way you are building knowledge is entirely different to the ways Aboriginal cultures do.
 8. Accept the role of cultural broker.
- Stronger Smarter Institute, 2011. www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au (facilitation guide)

Figure 6: Strategies for Appropriate Work Practice- The Pedagogy of the Stronger Smarter Program at Cherbourg, Queensland.

There are many similarities between the AEU and the Strong and Smart Program, however the similarities can be summarised in three important points that should be added to the teachers ‘tool box’. The first point is knowing yourself and your own cultural identity. This involves personal reflection and acceptance that Aboriginal culture can be very different to non-Aboriginal European culture, thus values attitudes and beliefs are different. The second important tool is quality relationships with parents, Elders and communities. A holistic attitude should be engaged in and Aboriginal parents should be encouraged to become involved in the school to a similar extent as many non-Aboriginal parents are. Connecting with community, especially Elders, allows Aboriginal people to have input into their children’s education. In 2010 Sarra travelled Australia and did not speak to one Aboriginal parent who did not consider education important. Education is valued amongst Aboriginal people, however due to historical reasons many Aboriginal people are afraid of schools and teachers. It is the schools and teachers who must often take the first steps to create this engagement. A vital point for teachers to remember is high

expectations for students. Sarra (2011) has discussed the 'deficit model' in that Aboriginal students are not considered capable of achieving high academic results. Hanlen, (2007) has also stressed the need for teachers to have high expectations for the Aboriginal students in their classrooms, especially where literacy is concerned.

Lastly, it has been intimated that the Strong and Smart Program had excellent results because it was undertaken in a school with 100% Aboriginal students. In a school with a cohort of Aboriginal students totaling about 25% the Strong and Smart program could not be undertaken in the same way it was in Cherbourg. In schools where the Aboriginal student cohort is a minority the Third Space becomes an important pedagogical tool for creating other ways of making students both strong and smart. (Scott Fatnowna, personal communication)

Very little innovation of real educational significance is available for Australian Aboriginal schools. This is made clear in an analytic reading of a review of practical programs funded by DEETYA (Batten et al. 1998). The limited availability of viable approaches to literacy with Australian Aboriginal students presented in Batten et al. (1998) is mirrored in McRae et al. (2000).

Over the 10 years prior to 1996 the Commonwealth Government of Australia invested over 1.7 billion dollars in Australian Aboriginal supplementary programs, with yearly expenditure rising to over a quarter of a billion per year in 1996. This level of expenditure makes the long history of low outcomes demonstrated by McKay et al. (2000) even more alarming. To spend so much with so little change in the overall outcomes of Australian Aboriginal education is surely an indication that a new perspective is required.

In the past, short-term projects or 'enabling projects' (McKay et al., 2000) have dominated the field. The lack of ongoing development towards successful change lies, in part, in the lack of pedagogical models available for teachers working in the Australian Aboriginal educational field. Teachers who wish to achieve academic outcomes with Australian Aboriginal students cannot turn to the research literature and locate, easily and directly, the critical information that will direct them

successfully in their daily practice. This fact alone indicates that the issues are systemic in nature and well beyond the level at which individual teachers can be held responsible.

Indeed this is the scenario played out on a daily basis for Australian Aboriginal students in Australian schools and hence it is not surprising that students find it is easier not to attend school which is the moment that they limit their life potential as so many of them cannot read or write.

International Examples of Third Space Pedagogy

Australian Aboriginal people make up only 2% of the Australian population and can thus be considered a minority. Similar minority groups may be found across the world (that is, they are minority groups due to earlier colonisation and/or slavery). Many First Nations people across the world suffer from similar inadequacies regarding literacy and numeracy as Aboriginal Australians and programs have been devised to increase literacy rates, with varying degrees of success.

The United States has numerous examples of programs which engage with Third Space criteria for the Indigenous people in that country, the Native Americans. Miller-Cleary and Peacock (1998) developed a program for pre-service teachers which aligned with the Third Space. In this case they had two people lecturing, one who was mainstream American (Miller-Cleary) and the other a Native American (Peacock) from the Ojibwe nation. In this model they discussed ‘culturally responsive teaching’ and engaged pre-service teachers in the culture of the ‘other’ thereby aiming to create teachers with an understanding of the dilemmas faced by Native Americans within the Western education model. Many of the problems encountered by Australian Aboriginal students are similar to those met by Native Americans especially the assimilatory nature of Western education. This work resonated with Scott and I and made us recognise the international extent of the problem. Many Native American youth have similar persistent academic failure as

Australian Aboriginal youth and this constant failure and feeling of being a ‘fringe dweller’ in every way (economically, educationally, historically) can cause anger and violence to erupt (this knowledge is why, in some cases, teachers will put up with behaviour which they would normally reject as they are afraid to upset the student and become a victim themselves). However, culturally responsive teachers may, in certain circumstances, engage with students and become the learner rather than the teacher and thus demonstrate respect and a desire to learn the ways of being of another cultural group.

Science educators have long recognised the importance of students’ worldviews on the learning of science (Cobern, 1996; Kawagley, Norris-Tull, & Norris-Tull, 1998; Keane, 2008). In Africa and other traditional cultures, Indigenous knowledge systems are embedded in philosophical thought and cultural practices that have evolved over many generations (Aikenhead, 1997, 2001; Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999; Jegede, 1997; Keane, 2008; Snively & Corsiglia, 2001; Thomson, 2003). Passed on through oral traditions, collective African worldviews are critical to community identity and the sustainability of cultural diversity and the local environment. Indigenous knowledge systems in Africa have evolved to provide a rich heritage of understandings about the interactions of humans with nature, thus providing foods, medicines, shelter, and other necessities for living.

Aikenhead (2008) distinguishes between the epistemological frameworks of Eurocentric science and Indigenous ways of living with nature by referring to the Greek terms *episteme* and *phronesis*. Eurocentric science, also known as Western Modern Science (WMS), is framed within the context of the *episteme*, or theoretical knowledge that is often construed as disconnected from the knower. Indigenous ways of living with nature focuses on *phronesis*, or practical wisdom and reasoning. From Indigenous perspectives, the “knower is personally and intimately interconnected with one’s ways of living” (Aikenhead, 2008). Even though different epistemological frameworks of science may represent distinct ethno-sciences, Aikenhead and Ogawa (2007) provide a definition of science that encompasses both Eurocentric science and Indigenous ways of living with nature: “Science is a rational, empirically based way of knowing nature that yields, in part, descriptions

and explanations of nature” (p. 544). In this research the borders and boundaries that distinguish Eurocentric education from Indigenous ways of living with nature were considered.

In an effort to overcome the dichotomy between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge systems, researchers are exploring Bhabha’s “Third Space” theory (Bhabha, 1994) as a means to dissolve perceived cultural boundaries by embracing the metaphysics of multiple perspectives and languages (Taylor, 2006; Wallace, 2004).

According to Wallace (2004), the Third Space “is an abstraction of a space/time location in which neither the speaker’s meaning nor the listener’s meaning is the ‘correct’ meaning, but in which the meaning of the utterance is hopeful for either co-construction of interpretation or new hybrid meanings” (p. 908). The purpose of negotiating meaning in the Third Space is to move away from privileged, authoritative discourse by providing Indigenous cultures with improved access to Eurocentric ways of being, while at the same time validating the local communities own ways of understanding nature.

Within the application of Bhabha’s theory, the local Indigenous culture provides meaning and identity to community members in the First Space, while Western ideas (e.g. Eurocentric science) provide a Second Space for learning in schools, often in European languages. However, students and community members must function in a Third Space to negotiate meanings and understandings for the intersections of knowledge, practices, and languages from merging cultures (see Chapter 6). Third Space theory eliminates the cultural hegemony in communication as multiple discourses are “woven together without sacrificing or dismissing the importance of their speaker’s experiences and ways of knowing in the world” (Wallace, 2004). Within the Third Space, stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, curriculum developers, community) collaborate in the co-construction of new hybrid meanings and interpretations of science. Rather than focusing exclusively on the reproducible knowledge of Eurocentric science, the goal of learning in the Third Space is to

facilitate the reconstruction of the learner's everyday beliefs and experiences about the natural world to develop a more robust scientific worldview.

By learning in a Third Space, crossing cultural borders becomes a two-way rather than a one-way journey (Taylor, 2006). Taylor explains the important ramifications and benefits of negotiating in the Third Space when working with Indigenous cultures:

Of major importance is the positive recognition and growth of local cultural capital, including traditional knowledge systems and languages, recognition of the non-essentialist and mutable nature of all cultures and worldviews (including WMS), and the need to develop multicultural identities which harbour a strong sense of shared humanity with the culturally different "other." (Taylor, 2006, p. 191)

Bhabha's (1994) Third Space theory eloquently describes the liminal space between cultures, however it does not truly capture the essence of the Australian Aboriginal Third Space model used with pre-service teachers in the Aboriginal Education Unit. Although there are many similarities the concept of hybridity as an outcome from Third Space encounters does not sit well with Australian Aboriginal people due to historical factors (see Chapter 3).

The codified Eurocentric science curriculum found in many African countries is almost exclusively taught in European languages and is unresponsive to sustainability issues and twenty-first century globalisation issues (Glasson, Frykholm, Mhango, & Phiri, 2006). To move toward a more culturally inclusive classroom, deconstructing the homogeneity and authority of so-called 'universal' Eurocentric science will help to transcend the discord among different worldviews. As we can only know nature through the lens of culturally framed epistemological frameworks, understanding how Indigenous people negotiate the impact of globalisation and the domination of Eurocentric science is essential for planning culturally relevant curricula.

Recognising that scientific knowledge is a product of culture (Aikenhead & Ogawa, 2007; McKinley, 2005, 2007), researchers worldwide are engaging in dialogue with elders in traditional cultures to learn about Indigenous ways of living with nature as a means to understand sustainability science. This dialogue is necessary as researchers create a Third Space to explore multiple discourses and languages, hybridised knowledge, and issues that are important to the sustainability and survival of Indigenous cultures.

Essential to dialogue in the Third Space, McKinley (2005) advocates the teaching of science in local languages as a means for providing an authentic context for promoting community identity and learning of Indigenous students

In New Zealand the issue of Maori education has many of the same symptoms and the chronic failure which is also represented in Australian Aboriginal education. Failure becomes cyclical as the next generation, often failing to thrive in the Westernised education system, are forced to fall back on low paying jobs, low skilled and increasingly hard to find manual jobs (Durie, 1998).

Adult learners entering tertiary education bring with them skills acquired through earlier study, work or life experience. Increasingly, students in the tertiary sector are drawn from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Many of these students bring with them worldviews and epistemologies that differ from that of the traditional Westernised view of higher learning. Although educators have long recognised prior learning and life experience in pedagogical strategies, generally speaking, they have failed to legitimate epistemological and cultural difference and acknowledge how they influence learning (Gajjala & Mamidipudi, 2002; McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000). This is despite the fact that traditional pedagogies are recognised as potentially inappropriate for non-Western cultures (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000).

The traditional classroom provides a setting where engagement and community building can occur yet the teacher must be cognisant of pre-determined learning outcomes. The nature of the Western academic system, or steering media, requires

the teacher to facilitate the acquisition of meaning towards achieving these pre-determined learning outcomes. Learning activities are, therefore, designed to engage the learner and provide support, offering opportunities for discursive interaction but ultimately pre-determined outcomes must be met for students to 'succeed' (Laurillard, 1993). Such learning outcomes are situated ontologically and epistemologically within a system that largely bases what is legitimate on the social history of the hegemonic White middle class elite (Gajjala & Mamidipudi, 2002). This reductionist view overlooks the notion that learning is grounded in the social and cultural world of the learner and does not occur in isolation (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000).

In order to legitimate alternative ways of knowing the learner must, first, be able to construct knowledge in appropriate ways and, secondly, educators must widen their epistemological lens. Whilst feminism and post-modernism have led to less structured theoretical approaches, the tertiary sector appears generally reluctant to embrace the cultural aspects of learning, tending to erase them through culturally neutral epistemology and pedagogy (DeSouza, 2002). As McLoughlin and Oliver (2000) observe, constructivist pedagogies do lend themselves to supporting a pluralistic model, recognising the social and cultural construction of knowledge. However, educators must be careful not to consider this recognition of cultural difference as an end-point from which we provide a bridging framework into traditional academic systems. Culturally sensitive strategies are often derived from the notion of integration, whereby the beliefs, customs and so forth of minorities are accepted and tolerated, however this can mask an underlying goal of assimilation. Our 'one-size fits all' approach to learning fails to recognise or give sufficient weight to alternative models of knowledge construction. In particular it fails to give value to knowledge that might originate from within non-Western cultural groups, whether these groups are Indigenous or migratory (DeSouza, 2002; Gajjala & Mamidipudi, 2002). This hegemony has created negative consequences for members of minority groups and has led to the exclusion of a range of possible epistemologies that might enhance learning, and has prevented the implementation of teaching and learning strategies that are inclusive of a wide range of learners.

It is important at this point to caution that simply being aware of other ways of knowing does not necessarily mean that other epistemologies are validated and celebrated. The research of DeSouza, Williamson and Nodder (DeSouza, 2002; Williamson, 2001; Williamson & Nodder, 2002) illuminates a need for epistemologies that are attuned to the cultural location of the participants and that recognise the limitations of current pedagogical approaches with respect to the lack of a cultural dimension.

These appropriate discursive spaces are often lacking within the Western education model for Australian Aboriginal people, especially those who have little knowledge of the non-Aboriginal Australian worldview.

After all of this research and contemplating Suzie, Saffron and Sharoma (see Chapter 4), I think that there must be some way of incorporating Third Space methodologies within classrooms. The processes by which this can be achieved elude any individual. The wealth of knowledge that now exists seems to point to the possibility that the research has been completed, however it has not been integrated into schools and classrooms. This empty space between research and the practical application of the research creates a gap and whilst this gap remains young Australian Aboriginal people, like Sharoma and Saffron, are destined to fall through the 'cracks' and become another generation who can neither read nor write. Far from closing 'the Gap' in education, 'the Gap' becomes a chasm into which entire communities may fall.

Chapter 7

Essential Tools for Non-Aboriginals Entering the Third Space

Introduction

In Chapter 7, I address the fourth research question: *What pivotal knowledge is required by me to enter Aboriginal cultural schema?* This question has guided this research study especially the methodology engaged in when gathering data. However, prior to answering this question, and to maintain the integrity of the study, that was to truthfully represent two worldviews from a non-Aboriginal perspective, a further question needs to be asked. *What processes are involved when entering the Aboriginal worldview for a non-Aboriginal person and how can these processes be repeated by others?*

In section 1, I address the concept of cultural schema and its ramifications for a non-Aboriginal Australian entering the cultural schema of Australian Aboriginals. In section 2, Aboriginal English is investigated as this language has developed over the last 200 years and is now one of the most important carriers of Aboriginal cultural schema (Malcolm, 2000). Aboriginal English engages the speaker and listener in Aboriginal ways of being.

Initially, an individual needs to have the desire to enter the world view of a culture other than their own and, hence, the outcomes are dependent on the purpose of the cross cultural visit. In this instance, as I was working with Aboriginal people, and my entry was by invitation - and also necessity - both to fulfil my academic role and to understand what was happening around me. That invitation was in the form of the much used and tatty map given to me in the early days of the journey, which I retrospectively realise, was intended for an Aboriginal person and their journey from that worldview into the Third Space and engagement with mainstream Australian society (see Chapter 5)

To have any understanding of another's world view there are certain ways of being which must be learnt. Another term for the ways of being of any cultural group is cultural schema. The concept of cultural competence hinges on knowledge of the 'other' cultural schema.

For Aboriginal Australians one of the most important parts of the cultural schema which has developed since colonisation is Aboriginal English (a dialect of Australian Standard English). It is within this dialect that much of the cultural schema is contained and hence an intercultural broker needs to gain some understanding of this dialect as otherwise the broker will be continually locked out.

Learning cultural schema requires immersion and it is through this immersion (enculturation) that schema and dialect are learnt. These things cannot be learnt passively, and thus a learning journey occurs. It was via such a journey (see Chapter 8) that I learnt about Aboriginal cultural schema and the diversity of this schema', dependence on geography.

Cultural Schema Theory

Cultural Schema Theory may be a relatively new theory but it is not a new concept. The idea of schemas existing as ideal types in the mind dates back to Plato. In the 19th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant developed the idea that every person's experiences are gathered in memory, forming higher order concepts. In the 1920's Piaget's work investigated infants' memory for schemas. From the 1970s to the 1990s, many researchers obtained evidence showing that people's behaviors are deeply embedded by what they store in their brains. Through these studies researchers learned that human behavior relies heavily on past experiences and the knowledge stored in one's brain. Research also revealed that schemas operate at many different levels. Experiences unique to individuals allow them to acquire personal schemas. Societal schemas may emerge from a group's collective knowledge and are represented across the minds in a society, enabling people to think as if they are one mind (Malcolm & Sharafian, 2002). However, when one's cultural environment provides experiences to which every member of that culture is

exposed, his/her experiences allow every member to acquire cultural schemas (Nishida, 1999). Cultural schemas are conceptual structures that enable individuals to store perceptual and conceptual information about his/her culture and interpret cultural experiences and expressions. If a person is not equipped with the appropriate cultural schema s/he may not be able to make sense of culturally unfamiliar situations (Malcolm & Sharafian, 2002).

When one interacts with members of the same culture over and over again, or talks about certain information with them many times, cultural schemas are created and stored in one's brain. Subsequently similar instances cause the cultural schema to become more organised, abstract, and compact. As this occurs, communication becomes much easier. Beyond the cognitive activity of cultural schemas is the complex pattern which occurs in the brain. When humans acquire and retain information from their surrounding environment, neural circuits are generated. Consequently, information processing experience is stored in the long term memory. Memory representation or neural circuits created in the brain as a result of information processing are assumed to be schemas. Thus, schemas provide a foundation in the brain which helps to predict what is to be expected and looked for in certain situations. Not all schemas are uniformly important. High-level schemas are internalised and emotionally salient; likewise, when a schema is only weakly related to a person's self it becomes emotionally empty and irrelevant (Lipset, 1993). Nishida (1999) simply explains that experience is the force that creates cultural schemas. As people have more experiences their developing cultural schemas become more tightly organised. The information not only becomes more complex, but more useful among members of a culture, alike or different.

Cultural schemas have variously been described as cognitive blocks used for the organisation of information (Rumelhart, 1980). Nishida (1999) defines schemas as:

Generalized collections of knowledge of past experiences which are organized into related knowledge groups and are used to guide our behaviours in familiar situations (p. 755)

Schema theory maintains that information processing is mediated by mental structures that organise related pieces of knowledge. Schema theory has proved to be of high explanatory power in cognitive studies for more than half a century, (Bobrow & Norman, 1975; Minsky, 1975; Rumelhart, 1980; Schank & Abelson, 1977).

The term sojourner has been used to describe any person who has had the experience of learning another cultural schema (Nishida 1999). Sojourners generally spend a few years in another culture while intending to return back to their home country. However, believe I was already in my own country (Australia), as were those from the 'other' worldview, from which my participants were drawn. It should be noted here that there is a certain reticence in Australia amongst most non-Aboriginal people regarding engaging in the Aboriginal worldview (or schema). This may be due to a myriad of reasons, the least of these being colonisation, stereotyping and general fear due to ignorance, hence the propensity for a multitude of Aboriginal Cultural Awareness workshops.

My entry into the Aboriginal cultural schema began many years ago without me really being aware of it. However, it was not until a bright sunny day in November 2000, not long after I had received the small and now tatty piece of paper directing the user towards the Third Space, that Scott and I attended a workshop on bidialectal education (two dialects of English, one being Standard Australian English and other being Aboriginal English).

This particular workshop was the culmination of a research project carried out by Ian Malcolm and his team (Haig, Konigsberg, Rochecouste, Collard, Hill, and Cahill. 1999). The work investigated the English spoken by Australian Aboriginal people which has been termed 'Aboriginal English' and this dialect's ramification within a classroom setting.

Aboriginal English

Malcolm et al. (1999) discovered through this linguistic study that for Australian Aboriginal people language has long been the carrier of culture. With the separation of families due to past policies and the Stolen Generations, Australian Aboriginal people continue to represent their culture by way of a new language; this language has been called Aboriginal English. Knowing this language is a requirement if one is to immerse one's self in the Aboriginal worldview, not so much the speaking of this language but defiantly understanding it, as otherwise one is continually locked out of many important and personal conversations. In having a good understanding of Aboriginal English and spending time developing the personal relationship necessary for deep engagement, another world opens up, a world not often entered by non-Aboriginal Australians.

Aboriginal English is derived from complex origins (Malcolm et al. 1999) both linguistically and socially. The English spoken by European people who first settled in Australia came from a wide spectrum of English language varieties, regional dialects from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were represented. Malcolm (1999) suggests that initially these English speakers believed that Australian Aboriginals would welcome the foreign intrusion and wish to switch the focus of their affairs from their own to the foreign society.

Necessity forced Aboriginal people to use the new language, however this was done to a minimum and was used only to enable essential needs to be expressed or matters to be communicated, whilst the most significant areas of life continued to be discussed in Aboriginal contexts and in Aboriginal languages (Malcolm et al. 1999).

These early varieties gave way to a more regular variety termed "New South Wales Pidgen". This language proved to be useful for communicating with other Aboriginal people who came from language groups which, prior to the development of New South Wales Pidgen, had not been able to communicate at all as on colonisation there were some 750 Aboriginal language groups in Australia (Tindale, 1956). Malcolm et al. (1999) describe this process as:

It [NSW Pidgen] served as a lingua franca for communicating about the post-contact experience among an increasingly wide circle of speakers of diverse Aboriginal languages. At the same time it did not carry the full cultural and semantic content of the native English varieties from which it has been derived. (Malcolm et al., 1999, p.5)

It is probable that NSW Pidgen was more or less the direct ancestor of most varieties of English spoken today by Australian Aboriginal people. The prevalence of Aboriginal English as a variety which its speakers have kept distinct from Australian Standard English is a phenomenon of some significance especially as it continues to prevail after some 200 years of contact with native-speaker varieties, and despite its negative stigmatisation by Australian Standard English speakers. It has been suggested that it is clear that:

Many contemporary Australian Aboriginal people see room in their lives for two Englishes, one which identifies them with the wider society and one which identifies them with their own society. The latter English, like the original NSW Pidgen, keeps many Aboriginal semantic and conceptual features intact under cover of a borrowed lexicon. (Malcolm et al., 1999 p. 10)

It has been suggested that Aboriginal English carries different conceptualisations as well as different cultural associations from Standard Australia English. This language is transmitted essentially in the home and in other contexts where Aboriginal people interact in the absence of non-Aboriginal people, and hence, has become a cultural identifier. Thus, for Aboriginal children in situations where typically Standard Australian English is the prevailing language variety, such as the school:

Is a context which Aboriginal children may approach with some trepidation and where they may experience, on an ongoing basis,

misunderstanding, incomprehension and alienation. Nor would it be surprising if many such children were to find it impossible to achieve the expected outcomes and to lack the motivation for regular attendance. (Malcolm et al., 1999 p.15)

With this knowledge firmly placed in the front of our minds Scott and I determined that, as we had been tasked to help create teachers who were open to Aboriginal ways of being, it was our responsibility ‘to the mob’ to make certain that all our pre-service teachers were adequately informed regarding Aboriginal English and its prevalence as a first language for many Aboriginal students in urban, rural and remote settings. This responsibility for ‘the mob’ continues to be carried by many successful Aboriginal Australians and indeed, within the interviews, time and again this responsibility to other less fortunate Aboriginal people is borne out. (see conversations with Kim, Marlene Scott and Megan.)

The prevalence of Aboriginal English amongst both urban and rural Aboriginal people may be due to:

The battle against non-Indigenous accusations that they are not “real Aboriginals” due to the stereotypes of Aboriginal people on the basis of location (remote), tradition (including language), or even skin colour. (Malcolm et al., 1999 p. 21)

Eckermann (1977) found that Aboriginal people in south-east Queensland who were seen to be living in similar socioeconomic conditions as working class ‘Whites’ were labelled by non-Indigenous people as being, “assimilated, integrated or acculturated.” However, in contrast she noted that a “strong and positive sense of being Aboriginal persisted and that the culture was perpetuated through child rearing practises and a rich and flourishing system of folklore persisted (p. 288).

In response to these pressures both Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers have actively defended urban Aboriginal identity and demonstrated the reality of Australian Aboriginal culture in an urban context (Keefe, 1992; Keen, 1988).

Langton (1981; 1994) refutes the external imposition of remote/rural/urban subdivisions by making clear, apart from anything else, that such divisions fail to take into account the “high rate of mobility and exchange between urban and rural/remote areas.” (p. 21). Langton (1981; 1994) also argues that “an Indigenous worldview can continue to thrive when many of its traditional contexts are denied it as it begins to be expressed in new ways such as media, film and other arts based methodologies” (p.36).

This is precisely what has happened to Aboriginal English and, as Malcolm et al. (1999) have succinctly demonstrated, “Aboriginal English has become a very significant marker of identity for Aboriginal people.”

For me, Aboriginal English became a very important concept, not just in performing my role as a university lecturer in Aboriginal Education to pre-service teachers, but later, due to my immersion in the Aboriginal worldview, I needed an understanding of this language, and hence the world view it represented, initially to understand what people were communicating to me and later as an identifier for myself and others. As time transpired I began to realise that, in the words of Glenys Collard, “*language is the carrier of culture for Aboriginal people*” (personal communication, 2004). However, Australian Standard English is the language of power for non-Aboriginal Australians and is also the language of the classroom and all educational facilities.

The cultural contexts associated with Aboriginal English lie at the heart of this language and represent the worldview (or schema) of its speakers. Aboriginal English achieves certain unique functions for its speakers, such as (a) creating a convivial atmosphere among Aboriginal speakers, (b) reinforcing common Aboriginal Identity, (c) providing for certain Aboriginal genres and (d) achieving ironic humor (Malcolm, 1999). Research has shown that:

Even where Aboriginal English seems to employ the same vocabulary as Australian English, it is informed by a semantics

deeply rooted in Aboriginal culture. (Malcolm & Rohecouste, 2000, p. 98)

This has often resulted in miscommunication between Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal teachers. As Malcolm et al. (1999) have suggested, “this world view is very different from the non-Indigenous worldview.” Malcolm et al. (1999) have demonstrated that the Australian Aboriginal worldview or, cultural schema, carries many of the cultural contexts which are taken for granted by Aboriginal Australians. However, these cultural “taken for granted” are often very different to those employed by non-Aboriginals and their schema, or worldview, hence misunderstandings which are frequently generated in a classroom situation arise because neither party (teacher or student) are aware of each other’s schemas. The difficulty arises when schema appear to be similar (similar words but with very different meanings) or, at the other extreme, where schema are so different that each group (teacher and student) have no reference point to begin understanding each other.

Many of the “taken for granted” cultural contexts of Aboriginal Australians are carried within Aboriginal English. Some of these are so different that misunderstandings are bound to occur.

Family/Kin Relationships and the Ownership of Knowledge

Family relations, usually along with relationship to land, are a key to Australian Aboriginal identity (Coombs, et al., 1983) throughout Australia people are defined by who they are related to and relationships between any individuals or groups are largely determined by their association in terms of kinship (Malcolm et al., 1999). Thus, Aboriginal people will ask “who is your mother?” In this way the questioner can put you into the correct place in the tapestry which is Aboriginal Australia. This placement is always achieved in terms of who you are related to and the relationship the questioner has with those people who make up your extended family (which is often over 1000 people).

Furthermore, knowledge is also determined by kin relations. Such knowledge in Australian Aboriginal society is not abstract and ‘objective’ but is strongly linked to context and owned by individuals and kinship groups (Coombs et al., 1983). Rather than being codified in a set hierarchy in the way of much Western knowledge, different elements assume different importance (and frequently different content) for different family/clan groups and at different times (Rudder, 1993).

Malcolm et al. (1999) have discussed the implications of this in cross-cultural contexts via linguistics as, “in English, assumed knowledge is signalled by grammatical features as the use of the word **the**”. In Aboriginal English the word **the** is rarely if ever used, thus, when non-Aboriginal hearers or readers try to interpret discourse in Aboriginal English, they often lack the general cultural and linguistic context which is signalled by the speaker or the writer (Malcolm et al., 1999). However, these same non-Aboriginal listeners may also lack the ‘givens’ provided by the intimate relational context and thus can fail to grasp how the conversation is determined and structured by relationships with the various people mentioned in the conversation.

These differences in assumed knowledge are well described by Malcolm et al. (1999) in terms of assumptions about what is new and what is old information which are often not the same for the non-Aboriginal speaker as for the Aboriginal English speaker, as is demonstrated by the following passage (Malcolm et al., 1999, p. 80) between an Aboriginal student and an AIEW (Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker).

Student: So we went up there to stay wiv im.. an we’v..an on the way we seen our..exs..petrol breakdown..we broke down..an we put out our thumb out all the mud went on..our..when a big truck went past..

AIEW: Oh no..he splashed all over yous

Student: Yeah

AIEW: In he a terrible person eh

Student: At night

AIEW: Splashed mud (xxx) whats they want..went like that..he he went in the mud and squirted all over yous

Student: Yeah and Dad threw the rock at the tyre

In this example there is no previous mention of a 'rock'. When questioned as to the marking of 'rock' as old information, a speaker of Aboriginal English replied "But everybody knows that there will always be a rock on the side of the road."

Thus such information was a given and did not need to be specifically introduced.

The Spiritual/Material Context

Aboriginal Australians are very much influenced by a holistic, spiritual view of the world often referred to as "The Dreaming". It provides a historical framework as well as a general ordering of life in the present, both for the land as a whole and for the individual (Charlesworth, 1984; Stanner, 1956, 1998). Dreaming beings and spiritual forces are not merely in the 'long, long ago' but are active in the present day and are intimately linked with both people and their land. This generalisation applies not only to rural and remote regions but also to most urban Australian Aboriginal people. Even when Australian Aboriginal people have adopted other faiths such as Christianity, they still tend to live by a distinctive spiritual view of the world (Pattel-Grey, 1996).

This spiritual view of the world is well described by Randell (2003), a Yankunytjatjara man from the Western Desert near Uluru (Central Australia, Northern Territory).

Tjukurrpa is the Yankunytjatjara name for what the White people call the Dreaming or the Dreamtime.

It is hard to describe the idea of tjukurrpa in English. We do not separate the material world of objects we see around us, with our ordinary eyes, and the sacred world of creative energy that we can learn to see with our inner eyes. For us, these are always working

together and we learn how to “see” and “hear” in this inner way from a young age.

It took me a long time to understand that White people do not experience the world in this way.

We work through “feeling”. But we are not using this word feeling to mean ordinary emotions like anger, desire or jealousy, or our sense of physical touch. When we use the English word “feeling” in this way we are talking more about what White people call intuitive awareness. We use this to feel our situation, to read people, and talk to Country.

Tjukurrpa is called ‘Dreaming’ because it joins the worlds of ordinary reality and creative forces, and because it is not just of this time and place. But is something we dream in our heads; it is our knowledge of creation itself: past, present and future. Once we drew our paintings on the sand as part of the ceremonies by which we passed on the deepest knowledge of tjukurrpa. After ceremonies these paintings were dissolved into space, scattered into the wind.

This conception of the world has considerable impact on aspects of communication, from considerations of what is appropriate behaviour to the nature of the genres expressed in Aboriginal English. For example, the content of ‘true stories (see conversations with Eric Chapter 11) often includes supernatural entities belonging to an Australian Aboriginal worldview, either the “devil bullock” in the north or “mamaris” of the south west (Kaldor & Malcolm, 1982; Roe, 1983). Similarly far less distinction is made between human categories and entities, which most non-Aboriginal Australians regard as part of the ‘natural’ world. Bain (1992, p. 30-36) notes, for example, that Aboriginal classification systems take into account spiritual associations between human beings and other animate and inanimate parts of the world.

Time/Space Relations

Key reference points are far more spatial and relational than based on precise time. In the Central Desert Aboriginal languages do not appear to have a specific word for time itself, as an abstract concept (Bain, 1992). The concept of the Dreaming emphasises the eternal nature of time – of all times existing now. On the other hand, space, in terms of sites and land, is crucially important since the ‘Country’ (Aboriginal tribal land) into which a person is born is intimately linked to that person’s identity and to his or her family and kin (Bain, 1992). Kearins (1996) has demonstrated superior skills in spatial memory tasks among young Western Desert Aboriginal children compared to their non-Aboriginal peers.

Thus conversations are structured around space and spatial movement. Klich (1988) recounts research showing how exceptional navigation skills in Central Australia are linked to knowledge of cultural narratives, and Tonkinson (1991) has likewise described the use of “songlines” – which encode spatial representations in song to familiarise Mardu (Pilbara Region of WA) people with hundreds of sites they may never visit. Taji Taylor, a Mardu man I worked with for some time, describes this process as “singing Country” which involves songs about all the topographical highlights found along the way on a particular journey. These songs or “songlines” discuss the spiritual significance and creation story for each topographical point. In this way the singer can find his/her way around vast tracks of land, by singing the songlines. Songlines are part of Aboriginal lore, and hence, until initiation are unknown.

Social, Cultural and Cognitive Foundations

Most Aboriginal children come to school with a wealth of knowledge about things that are important to them and their family. Most Aboriginal students know a lot about their extended family (often numbering in the hundreds) and the places they are from, about ‘the bush’ and the flora and fauna that occur there, about life and death, and about Aboriginal spirituality (Malcolm et al. 1999).

The Aboriginal student will know how to talk about:

- Time (*long time, liddle time, night time, all time, quick way, soon, before, days an days an days...*)
- Distance (*long way,..*)
- Quantity (*mob, big mob, biggest mob, bit, liddle bit, lots, too many*)
- Position (*over dere, jus ere, dat way*)
- Family (*gran, pop, nana, grandy, cousin,cousin brother, aun'y, uncle, sis, mum, dad, ol'gran, ol boy/girl*)

However, although these concepts and terms of qualification about time are highly effective within Australian Aboriginal contexts, they are largely not recognised or valued in schools, especially when Aboriginal students are assessed and compared alongside their non-Aboriginal peers who, at home, may have been encouraged to describe quantity using numbers, to tell the time using a clock, standard units of measure and other quantifiers within the non-Aboriginal world.

Differences in the Way Time is Expressed and Perceived

In the non-Aboriginal world, time is very important. It is measured by centuries, decades, years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds, milli-seconds and even nano-seconds. Time in the non-Aboriginal world is measured on a linear scale with divisions along the scale which can be cyclic or repeated (Malcolm et al. 1999). Figure 2, after Malcolm et al. (1999), demonstrates the concept of linear Western time.



Figure 7: Linear timeline

Time in the world of the Aboriginal English speaker is very different; things are not measured along a time line. Time is measured with surrounding events providing a contextual framework (Malcolm et al., 1999). Events are placed in time by being related to other events in the speaker’s or listener’s life or experience. This can be described as a spiral rather than a time line. This is in line with the seasons which are cyclic and, as Aboriginal Australians were hunters and gathers prior to colonisation, the season’s dictated where one should go for food and the processes required to obtain this food.

Similarly, Mardu people of the Western Desert in Western Australia use skin groups (kinship system) that apply to all animate and inanimate things in a person's world, and hence everything in that world is assigned a skin group. In this way, human beings are but a part of the world and certainly cannot exist without all the other parts (Taji Taylor, personal communication, 2007).

For urban Australian Aboriginal people time is better represented as cycles that coincide with significant historical or life events connected in a continuous spiral. The wider more distant spirals represent times long past such as "*in the time of the Dreaming*" while more recent cycles represent things like "*when gran's gran was a liddle girl*" up to "*the other day when we was down the shops*". Malcolm et al. (1999) have described the spiral nature of time and its association with various events as:

The contexts which are essential to describing an event might even be placed in the past and linked for example:

"When nan's mother had her baby"

"When our people were moved to Moore River" (a mission some 90kms north of Perth)

Or linked to the distant past such as; *"When the emu.."*

More recent events are often described with known family occurrences such as; *"We went fishing an um and Auntie K... was dere an Billy"*.

Malcolm et al. (1999) have indicated both speaking and writing by Aboriginal English speakers, from the point of view of the Standard Australian English speaker, may appear digressive and circular rather than linear. This reflects very much the structure of oral tradition whereby 'yarns' are continually supported with evidential subtexts to generate a structure.

As the child grows and finds that their language, and indeed their whole worldview, is different and that this difference is not celebrated but used in a way that demeans

them, it is not surprising that they eventually see school as an exercise in cultural assimilation and ‘switch off’, choosing instead to stay in their own world view and have as little as possible to do with the larger and more powerful non-Aboriginal worldview. When many Aboriginal parents recollect their own school days they remember experiences of being “put down”. (Malcolm et al. 1999) (also see yarns with Kathleen Chapter 10).

Hence, the intergenerational misunderstandings between schools, Aboriginal students, and their families continue. Malcolm et al. (1999) suggest that a pathway for teachers through this intercultural minefield lies in engendering positive attitudes and demonstrating that home culture and language are valued and respected by the school, and defining between the two “codes” of behaviour and language (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural schema). Although Aboriginal children learn to code switch between the two codes and ways of being, this process takes time and often teachers do not understand the amount of time it can take to learn how to code switch on demand (Malcolm et al., 1999).

I was indeed like an Aboriginal child in his or her first days of school as I began to learn about both Aboriginal English and the culture it carried. I was “going forwards-backwards, quick way” (which loosely translates as going backwards to get forwards very quickly, however there is no indication of how much time this takes because it is a journey and these will take as long as they take. There is a certain knowledge that as you are doing this “quick way” it may not take long.)

In learning about Aboriginal English and becoming proficient with the language (including switching between cultural schemas) I had answered my fourth research question regarding the pivotal knowledge required to enter Aboriginal cultural schema. Thus, I began my journey to fully engage with Aboriginal cultural schema and, eventually, the Third Space.

Chapter 8

Journeying Towards the Third Space

Introduction

In Chapter 8, I address the fifth research question; *What were the critical thinking processes used to reestablished my own cultural identity after a prolonged period of time engaged in Aboriginal cultural schema?* As this was a very protracted journey over a 10 year period, I have addressed this question in the following sections. Section 1 examines my own identity and who I believed myself to be prior to this journey. Section 2 investigates the circumstances which led to my complete disengagement with my own worldview. Section 3 addresses the return journey and the critical reflective practices that I employed to create this pathway for myself.

The processes and experiences in entering the Third Space are always individualistic and will change for every person and with every combination of people. This is why openness and trust are vital ingredients when crossing cultural borders.

At the outset of every journey it is always wise to refer to a map and have a plan as to how you will negotiate the journey. In my case I was beginning in a place where I had never really been before and I was unaware that I was about to begin a journey at all.

Referring to my map (below), we can see that I was beginning in the wrong place. I was starting the journey from the Australian Aboriginal worldview. As I had only a rudimentary understanding of this worldview I realised that I needed to increase my knowledge base so that I could use my map.

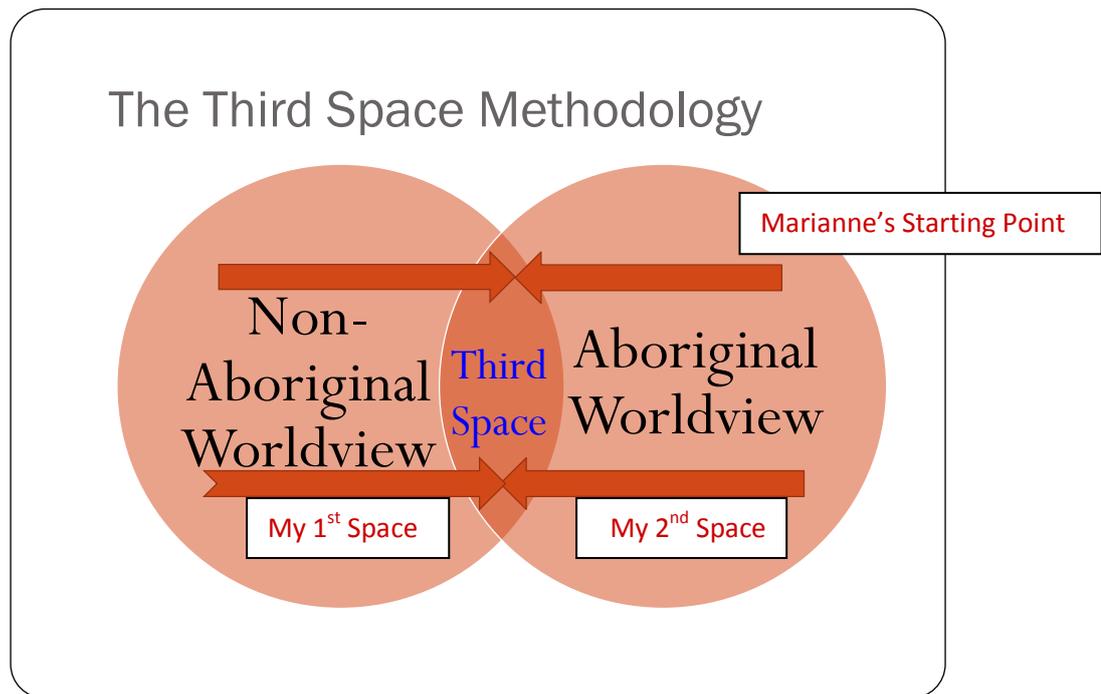


Figure 8: Marianne's Map and Original Pathway

These journeys through my First Space (non-Aboriginal Australian worldview), through my Second Space (Australian Aboriginal worldview), and finally into the Third Space recount my personal lived experiences and the transformations which occurred during my passage.

To begin at the end of the journey may seem an odd way to discuss my sojourns but it was not until the end of these expeditions that I actually realised that I was on a journey at all, and indeed that the reason it had been so arduous was because my map had led me astray.

Journeys in My First Space (Non-Aboriginal Australian Worldview)

It is 2010 and I am sitting in the most beautiful place. The Pentecost River gurgles next to me. The high red cliffs of the Pentecost Range tower over me and all that can be heard, beside the river, is the sound of thousands of birds going about their daily business. It is warm and a gentle breeze ruffles the spear grass which is still a little green in June, which is surprising. It is easy to think here without the hustle and bustle of our daily lives and so my mind drifts to thinking about how odd this

journey, with my mother, down the Gibb River Road in the Kimberley region of Western Australia (see Appendix 5), should occur at the end rather than the beginning of my expeditions from First to Second and finally into the Third Space.

How did I get here and what makes me think that I can have an opinion as I am not an Aboriginal? I am a middle class, private school educated, Melbourne University graduate from an academic family. My degree was in Geology with a Diploma of Education at the end. I gave up Geology with the arrival of my children and concentrated on education. Life has a funny way of moving us to the places (and spaces) where we are meant to be. The things we do and most significantly the people we meet help to create who we are and, most importantly, assist in the creation of our “other selves” (Bhabha, 1997). For me, this journey began a long time ago in Queensland, although at the time I did not know I was becoming my ‘other self’.

I was born in Cambridge, England, where my father was an academic and my mother a nurse; however, they were both expatriates from New Zealand with very adventurous spirits. We moved as a family to Melbourne, Australia, as my father was employed by Melbourne University, when I was five. I completed primary school in Melbourne but instead of entering high school my parents took sabbatical leave and returned to Cambridge. By the time we returned to Australia 18 months later I was a rather experienced border crosser, however secondary school beckoned and with it the trials of the teenage years. I managed to finish high school with a reasonable enough score to enter Melbourne University and this only occurred because I had had several waitressing positions which had not had positive outcomes. After one of these negative experiences my father, who was with me for the whole of the event, said to me as we entered the lift, “Well Marianne that is the way you will be treated if you do not have an education. Do you want to have that experience for the rest of your life?” I was galvanised by these words and determined to get this ‘education’ that everybody was telling me would be my salvation.

On finishing my undergraduate degree in Science with Geology as my major I continued to complete an honors year in Geology and then completed a Diploma of

Education with Science and Geography as my teaching methods. Maybe in this there was a sign of the future as I enjoyed travelling and meeting people from other countries and cultures. Indeed I did a lot of travelling outside of Australia after I had left University and was always a very competent cultural border crosser. In those days the, 1970s, I, like most other Australians, believed that Australian Aboriginals only lived in the central and northern part of the country. I had been to Alice Springs on a school excursion and had met many Australian Aboriginals, even though we had been told not to talk or look at them. I cannot recall what the explanation was but this probably had something to do with personal danger. However, being me I discounted these warnings and found them to be lovely people.

In the 1980s I decided that Melbourne was not the correct place for me and began a journey around Australia with my brother. This was a very long trip because we both kept running out of money and hence we needed to stop and work, usually in very scenic places, but we eventually arrived in Perth.

Due to the financial situation I began teaching in Kalgoorlie, a mining town that I had spent time in earlier in my life as a geologist. That experience had not been pleasant and neither was it this time around.

I met my husband in Kalgoorlie whilst I was teaching there and it was odd because he came from Melbourne and was also a geologist. Neither of us could see a bright future in Kalgoorlie so we left and returned to Perth.

We spent some time as consultant geologists and in this way we travelled all over Western Australia and met many Australian Aboriginals. With the arrival of our children we needed to 'settle down' and that is what we did.

I began teaching at the Homework Group (these are after school classes for Australian Aboriginal students where they can get their homework done before going home and do extra reading and writing) and really enjoyed it. I liked the students and they liked me. I was amazed to find out that several of them were considered to have serious classroom management problems, however when I met

the teachers I knew why. The teachers did not like these students and the sentiment was returned. In this situation, as in most school classrooms, the teacher had the power and the students fought that power in every way they could, hence the classroom management problems.

After several years, due to my science and geology background, I began teaching at the Indigenous Center at a University in Perth, WA, in a science bridging course for Australian Aboriginals. I began as their tutor and I think this was the real beginning of my learning. Most of my students at that time were from isolated and remote communities in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of Western Australia and all of them were mature age and deeply cultural people.

I had never heard of Homi Bhabha or the Third Space until the year 2000 when I met and began to work with Scott Fatnowna, an Aboriginal/South Sea Islander man from Mackay, Queensland. Scott's family ties were to Cape York and across into the Northern Territory. Actually I don't think Scott had heard about the Third Space either until John Fielder, another member of the teaching team, put a Non-Indigenous name to this idea of an intersection between cultures and a methodology for individuals to learn from each other's culture in a space of equal power. I recognised that this is what I had been doing for several years and it was enlightening to have a name put to the process. So Scott and I began to work in our own 'Third Space'. I think I learnt far more than he as he had been living in the Third Space as an Australian Aboriginal man for most of his life. I think it was how he made sense of the mainstream worldview and his Australian Aboriginal worldview. However, Scott was an educationalist and he and I began teaching the Aboriginal Education unit (AEU) at a Perth university in the Third Space. Hence we had an Australian Aboriginal man and a non-Aboriginal woman demonstrating this space to the students. I remember not being able to answer most of the questions students asked and feeling my own guilt and shame as I learnt more about Australian Aboriginal history, the stolen generations and all that had happened. It is no wonder that the gap becomes wider by the day as there is no understanding between these two cultural groups. Both are suspicious of each other, one because of the harm

done, the other because of their own guilt about the harm done. It seemed to me that communication was the key here and respect.

Respect is a key word when working with Australian Aboriginal people and I think that was why Scott decided to use the Third Space theory with the undergraduate teachers. It is hard to respect something that you do not have any knowledge of, and often when we have little or no knowledge of something we tend to use information which has been fed to us by the media, our friends and anybody we consider to be more knowledgeable on the subject than ourselves. As we began teaching our undergraduate teachers about Australian Aboriginal people and culture the student reaction was remarkable. Some of them cried when they heard the truth, some denied it could have ever happened, some decided that it was not their business and tried to switch off, but mostly they screamed that it was not their fault and asked why should the sins of the father be visited on them? Over a period of 10 weeks we nurtured our students through these dark times until, in the end, they could see why many Australian Aboriginal students were classroom management problems, why many drank too much, why there was such a break down in so many different social spheres. Finally, there was celebration that this cultural group still exists and enormous respect for those ‘survivors’ who don’t drink or commit any of the other social vices so often attributed to marginalised groups. But also we celebrated our students learning journey, their tenacity to learn their “other selves” and their empathy for those who had formerly been “other “to them. Many of these students did go out and teach in remote locations and reportedly performed very well (see Chapter 12). They seem to have engaged with both their Australian Aboriginal students and their communities and made a significant difference too many people’s lives. Others attempted to do these things but claim to have been thwarted by the education system, school principals or senior teachers in the schools, because this kind of engagement with students and their local communities ‘is not done’. Unfortunately, there are too many professionals who may be using the remote and regional teaching system to move rapidly upwards with their careers at the expense of their students, the communities and the bright young teachers who may be a little ‘over the top’ but are getting good results and enjoying the process of engaging with their Australian Aboriginal students as human and cultural beings.

We all have a tendency to take our own 'first space' for granted. Our first space is the worldview we were born into and grew up in, learning the various 'rules of engagement' under the watchful and caring gaze of our parents. We become confident in moving around in this space and live comfortably in it as this is where our cultural identity resides. However, we can take our original worldview for granted, especially when we encounter another worldview and are cajoled by this 'second space'. We can lose ourselves in the newness of the second space and begin to believe it is 'better' in some ways than our own first space, especially when the cosmology of the latter seems to be deeper and more defined and the *raison d'être* seems to have more purpose. Thus we may feel childlike in our ignorance, and our desire to learn this new worldview may become overwhelming. We may believe that the way back to our original and comfortable worldview remains, however one day we might decide that it is time to go back, for whatever reason, and to our shock, horror and disquiet we find that the door is closed. We closed the door ourselves without knowing it, such a long time ago that we cannot remember where the key is nor even what that key looks like. I now know why Scott said to me in the very beginning that "You must be strong in your own identity and who you are to work in the Third Space". When you begin to listen to only one side (no matter which one it may be) things become mystifying. There are two courses of action here: we can either run for the hills of our own familiar worldview or listen only to those in the second space, and the latter may cause us to reject our own worldview and to embrace our assumed identity, or what Homi Bhabha (1997) calls "becoming our other selves". We need to maintain a balance, as do the Yolgnu people who respect the brackish water resulting from the mixing of fresh and salt water. All living things aspire to this balance and equilibrium, as when life is not in balance some part is missing out.

So it was for me and my first space. I needed my mother (again) to remind me who I really was and why I had embraced the Australian Aboriginal other to such an extent that I could no longer find much worthwhile in my own non-Aboriginal Australian worldview. I would only dabble in the shallow end of Western thinking and knowledge systems; no wonder I could not find anything to engage in, whereas I

engaged readily in profound and meaningful discussions with many deeply culturally and traditional Australian Aboriginal people on subjects as diverse as spirituality, cosmology, stories of country and reasons for the way things are. Never once did any of these people have a negative thing to say about my non-Aboriginal Australian worldview, it was just perceived as different, and I, as the cultural border crosser, should have accepted that, but I didn't. I continued to wrestle with the terrible things that had happened to Australian Aboriginal people in the past and with the slow but inevitable change that is happening to this great culture. This change is the product of a larger more powerful culture exerting its strength on another culture which is not able to adequately defend itself. This is, in fact, the history of the world and of all civilisations. Nevertheless, much more survives than appears to be so and nothing is ever really lost, however there is change and this is indeed the nature of culture as a culture that does not change runs the risk of stagnating and dying.

Journey's in My Second Space. (Australian Aboriginal Worldview)

So how did I get lost and why did I want to?

I recall a time in my life when slowly and inexorably my known world crumbled around me (2000-2003). I suppose it was because of this that moving into the Third Space seemed such a natural progression. When survival is the name of the game previously considered modes of thinking are often displaced by other more relevant ways of living. I must admit that as I engaged more and more with the second space, that is the Australian Aboriginal world view, and their ways of being, most of my non-Aboriginal friends found me a bit 'off'. I think I may have been very vocal and I also think that in doing so I alienated them as they had not travelled the road I was travelling. When your husband dies of cancer when he is only forty five and leaves you with two young teenage children people, including myself, behave in strange ways. Sometimes I believed that my friends thought that the illness was somehow contagious and that if they spent too much time with me their own husband may become ill and pass away in a similar fashion. I can't blame them; I think I would react in the same way. There is also the belief that you, as the widow, will be so needy that it will impact badly on their own lives and that of their families. The only

people I knew who did not treat me as if I had an infectious disease were my Australian Aboriginal friends. Thinking about this retrospectively I think it is because death, or passing away, is so common in the Australian Aboriginal world. Disease can strike anyone at any time and many are cut down by it long before they should have been. They were kind, they understood, and so, like one who is drowning, I clutched at the only floating object I could see and floated away to another way of looking at the world and another way of being. It suited me as I had always had problems with punctuality. I had never been very good at competitions and life is competitive. As I floated along I had my 'Black shields' that protected me (often without my knowledge) from the slings and arrows of competition from others within my assumed second space identity. On writing this now it makes me feel quite sad that there was no one from my own cultural background (first space) who could or would aid me and I also wonder whether I rejected them instead of the other way around.

One year, almost to the day, after my husband died, my father passed away. My mother had been occupied with her own personal dramas as I lived through mine (although her dramas were so intense she hardly had time to call me between hospital visits and doctors' surgeries). I think this was when I finally grew up as I realised that the lack of contact with her was not due to a lack of care but due to a lack of time as she also had her hip replaced, went blind in one eye over night and coped with my father's failing health.

I did not feel so bad about my father's passing as he had told me about six weeks beforehand that he was 'past his use by date' and that he would not be around much longer. Somehow when somebody has had a good life it seems sensible that when their time comes they accept it with grace and dignity which is what he did.

Returning to Perth after my father's funeral I was not my normal self. How could I have been? I was grieving. Grief is a very strange emotion and nothing can ever prepare you for it. It is a process which takes time to pass through. It is, as a very good Australian Aboriginal friend told me, as I cried myself to sleep again, "Just a part of life and like all other parts of life it will be finished when it is finished". The

end of grief is acceptance, acceptance that these things have happened and that life has changed irrevocably. Life will never be the same again and so you have to 'reinvent yourself'.

When I reinvented myself I did not want to be the person I had been before because that was the person that all those terrible things had happened to. I wanted to be a different person, I did not want to be myself and so I began the process of becoming completely disengaged from my own first space and acculturating (Taylor & Cobern, 1998) which can be described as learning aspects of a culture other than one's own - particularly those aspects which will enable the individual to survive in that culture, Aboriginal culture. My enculturation (the process by which a person learns the requirements of the culture by which he or she is surrounded, and acquires values and behaviors that are appropriate or necessary in that culture (Grusec & Hastings, 2007, p. 547) was absolute to the extent that I lost touch with everybody I knew from my past 'life', and I think that I actually did this on purpose.

There were two concepts that I flirted with at this time, the first being "cultural consciousness" (or cultural competence). This is a term that Scott Fatnowna used when differentiating between "cultural awareness" and the more involved self reflective process of cultural consciousness/competence. The latter is a very empowering process because it involves the participant reflecting initially on their own identity and moving from there towards the 'other' culture.

'Cultural awareness', implies certain knowledge of another culture. This knowledge is generally historical and factual regarding past policies and practices which have impacted on this 'other' culture. It is this 'otherness' which continues to form a barrier between groups. While a group remains 'the other' participants in cultural awareness courses may empathise with these others; however they are removed and may remain personally untouched.

There has been a focus on cultural consciousness/competence and considerable attention has been paid to developing models and guidelines for delivering cultural competency to many services which engage in daily encounters with Australian

Aboriginal people. People such as prison officers, those associated with the courts and the justice system generally, teachers and others who have contact with Australian Aboriginal people. Sonn (2003, p. 3) defines cultural competence as:

Knowledge, awareness and skills aimed at providing services that promote and advance cultural diversity and recognises the uniqueness of self and others in communities. Although knowledge about our own social background is a feature of the development of cultural competence, it seems that insufficient attention is paid to examining the implications of taken for granted social and cultural identities and the power afforded by those identities for working with disenfranchised groups. (Sonn, 2003, p. 3)

This brings me to the second concept with which I engaged, that of “Whiteness” (and indeed “Blackness” as there is a duality about these concepts and the way they are manifested in people’s lives). Whiteness is one of the taken-for-granted social and cultural identities discussed by Sonn (2003) as a privileged position, and members of this group rarely if ever investigate the truthfulness of this notion. Authors such as Fine, Weis, Powell, and Mun Wong (1997) and Twine and Warren (2000) have investigated the concept. Sonn (2003, p. 4) discusses this concept with eloquence when he states that:

Those who belong to this group are typically not asked to reflect on their cultural identities because their culture is the norm, the dominant group. (Sonn, 2003, p. 4)

Thus at the very outset of my dabbling in the second space I was forced to examine my own identity, particularly the:

invisibility of Whiteness ... people are rendered blind to the ways in which culturally sanctioned social and psychological practices can work in an exclusionary and often colonizing manner. (Sonn, 2003, p. 5)

Whiteness is a real power issue which can be very threatening to the “other”. Because of the “invisibility” of Whiteness it is taken for granted by those who are members of this dominant social group. This was illustrated in Chapter 2 by Suzie, non-Aboriginal Australian teacher on her first day (and also in her first year) as a teacher in a remote Australian Aboriginal community school, and by Saffron an Australian Aboriginal student entering high school (about 12 years of age). Both had limited experience with ‘the other’ and thus they needed to ‘learn’ each other before any formal education could begin.

The experience of suddenly becoming the ‘other’, with all the feelings associated with being ‘other,’ can be very threatening. In my own case, possibly due to my broken state, the process of being ‘other’ offered me a way to reject my Whiteness and the life that was associated with it. I knew that I could never be Australian Aboriginal but I felt so comfortable with the culture. Everybody I knew was Australian Aboriginal. I worked with Aboriginal people in various Aboriginal consultancies. I don’t think that I ever wanted to be Australian Aboriginal because the negatives far outweigh the positives. However, I remained the ‘other’ for some Australian Aboriginal people who did not know me and hence I did not experience White privilege, it was more the opposite. The experience of being ‘other’, in what I had considered up until that time my own country, made me feel insignificant and incompetent and afraid to speak, all those ways of being that I had in the past considered weak minded and lacking in integrity. I was the subservient one, the insignificant one, the voiceless one because of the color of my skin and the worldview I had been brought up in. I did not enjoy this experience but I put up with it because I did not think I had anywhere else to go. This homelessness which seemed to embrace me like a black shroud was possibly my reaction to the two very personal deaths that had occurred in quick succession. I was holding on, even though the branch had broken from the tree and was washing down the swollen river, which was my life, towards the inevitable water fall. The waterfall was not a gentle, bubbling cascade. This waterfall bore more of a resemblance to Niagara or Victoria falls, and there were a few of us clinging to the branch and to each other, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. As the current picked up and swept us

towards the falls I knew there was no hope of rescue. We looked at each other and then we were swept over the edge to fall for such a long time, finally feeling water around ourselves again as we plunged into the swirling vortex at the base of the falls. However, on finally reaching the surface I was alone. I thought the others had drowned, and in a way they had. We all climbed out of the maelstrom at different places along the river bank below the waterfall. Hence, for me there was no sense of White privilege, but there was no sense of Black privilege either, as we of the Third Space had been effectively erased. One of the things that disturbed me most was how any person who had been vilified for their cultural background and the color of their skin could inflict the same punishment on anyone else.

Reflecting on this I realise that this had more to do with power and control than racism or White privilege. Being Black is not a moratorium on fairness in a Black institution, it is a bonus, but not if you associate with 'White' people and especially not if you attempt to engage in the Third Space with equal power. These were not issues of privilege, neither Black nor White; these were issues of power and control. It is quite true when it is said that "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" (Dalberg-Acton, 1887).

Under these circumstances Scott, Kim and I all walked away and learnt that there was a life to engage with and that it was indeed very interesting. Kim decided to set up his own consultancy and Scott and I joined him. Somehow we had ended up working together again and working with the Third Space, but this time we were teaching 'cultural awareness' to staff from various government departments associated with justice within the state government of Western Australia. It was indeed a "Bran Neu Day".

This period of time could be described as the 'experimental phase' as we took all that we had learnt from teaching the pre-service teachers and other students at the university regarding the Third Space and transposed it into workshops for these clients. Catering to the need for cultural awareness for staff was a response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Justice Muirhead, 1991) as one of 339 recommendations from this enquiry stressed the need for cultural

awareness amongst prison officers and others who were involved in the custody of Australian Aboriginal people. The Department of Justice (WA), as it was then, was one of the first government departments in Western Australia to recognise the need for cultural awareness training, and this was because of some very hard working people within this department and also because, despite the fact that Australian Aboriginals comprise around 2% of the entire Australian adult population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)

Indigenous adults are 13 times more likely to be imprisoned relative to other Australians. The age-standardised national Indigenous imprisonment rate at June 2007 was 1787 per 100,000 adult Indigenous population compared with 134 per 100,000 adult non-Indigenous population. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)

The proportion of prisoners who are Australian Aboriginal varies across States and Territories. The Australian Aboriginal prisoner population in the Northern Territory comprises 84 per cent of the total prisoner population, while Victoria has the lowest proportion of Australian Aboriginals prisoners (6%). Notably in Western Australia in 2007, Australian Aboriginals are 21 times more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). It is shocking and salutary to note that between 2005 and 2008, the rate of Australian Aboriginal incarceration increased from 1,561 to 1,769 per 100,000 adult population (age adjusted), and if the crude rates are used the differences are much greater. It is, however far more alarming to note that the state with the highest incarceration rate of Australian Aboriginal people and the highest rate of police arrests is WA, with (in 2008) an Australian Aboriginal imprisonment rate of 2828 per 100,000, which is disproportionately 19.8 times more than the general population.

Previously I had never in my life had a firsthand experience of justice or prisons or prison officers. All of these phenomena were new to me, but this was a critical issue for Australian Aboriginal people and, of course, I had to be involved as it was my compelling sense of responsibility as an educated adult, situated in my second space and often the Third Space, to engage with these issues. I could also see how the

Third Space could help people to at least inspect their own values, attitudes and beliefs; however I was unaware that people had to *want* to have this inspection of themselves. I recall one very rainy afternoon at Casuarina (maximum security prison) and finding that a group of Entry Level Prison Officers really did not aspire to develop critically reflective practices. Who was I anyway? – a White woman, coming in here wanting to discuss the very values, attitudes and beliefs which gave them their identity and their ‘White privilege’ to guard the reprobates that were incarcerated here. Nobody else could do this job but them, and the culture surrounding these guards was very much interwoven with the values, attitudes and beliefs I was asking them to reflect upon critically. I was most likely seen as a seditious and disruptive influence. They were the prison officers, or would be soon, and they were the power. The Australian Aboriginals were the prisoners, had committed a crime, and hence were incarcerated, so why did I want to make their job more complex by actually asking them to engage in critical self reflection? I was the enemy. I was letting down my own cultural background “We are all White here so let’s keep it that way”. I was so disturbed by this attitude and by their lack of desire to think when given the opportunity that I nearly gave them my thoughts regarding their paramilitary attitude to prisoners and prisoner control which seemed to be: “we are the guards they are the prisoners, we have the power and we intend to use it”. Fortunately I was sent from the room by Scott and as I sat outside looking at the razor wire and the biggest fence I had ever seen in my life I thought that I had probably more in common with some of the people inside the prison than with these Attila like creatures guarding them. The other fortunate occurrences during this workshop (two days in the gulag) were the four Aboriginal women in this class who really helped me. They could relate to my experience of being ‘other’ and rather than rejecting me they stood up for me and defended me at their own expense as prison culture is very much a Boys Own club like culture. I still know them well and I will be forever grateful for their help.

With the number of Australian Aboriginal people incarcerated increasing each year, and a huge gap in understanding between the two cultures residing in the same country, the Third Space and the processes involved became the recommended methodology for increasing this understanding. However, I saw these statistics on

incarceration from the Australian Aboriginal point of view and it is heart breaking to know and see people caught up in the justice system. Many Australian Aboriginal people are caught up in what Franz Fanon describes as:

The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning (Fanon, p. 37)

Frequently Australian Aboriginals caught in the net of justice do not speak Australian Standard English and cannot afford a 'good' lawyer. They are gob smacked by the aggressive behavior of the police, as I was myself. I had always been led to believe that a person was innocent until proven guilty, however the police can charge a person with an offence and if you happen to disagree (whether you admit guilt or not) you will still have to proceed through the justice system to prove your guilt or innocence if the police believe they have enough evidence to mount a case. The police can arrest a person and hold them in prison until the case comes before the courts, which can be up to three months or more. The most frequent charge for Australian Aboriginals is the *Summary Offences Act* and what has come to be termed the 'trifecta' (offensive behavior, resist arrest and assault police). These offences are sometimes used together by police to charge people who have not committed any crime *until* they come into contact with the police. In this way police will approach Australian Aboriginal people who may be sitting in the park and ask them to move on. These people begin arguing that they are not breaking any laws, they become more argumentative and louder, probably swearing (offensive behavior). As the situation escalates the police feel that they have lost control and hence threaten the protagonists with arrest, which they resist, and punches are thrown (resist arrest, assault of a police officer).

Australian Aboriginal people are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal Australians to be arrested in circumstances where assault occasioning no harm is the most serious offence. They are three times more likely to be imprisoned for such an offence. This

indicates that provocative policing is continuing through the use of the trifecta (offensive language, resist arrest and assault occasioning no harm).

This frequently happens to Australian Aboriginal youth because many of these young people are escaping dysfunctional families and have nowhere to go except the street with their peers. Unfortunately some of these peers have criminal records and have become 'hardened' and they will lead the others astray.

My personal experience of this was via a friend of mine and his journey through the Magistrates Court and finally to the District Court over a period of eighteen months. At no stage during this time did he ever utter a single word except in declaring himself not guilty. In the end he pleaded guilty to avoid a jury and the very imminent threat of imprisonment. His lawyer went overseas on holiday for two weeks prior to the District Court appearance and was totally unprepared. Meanwhile the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) was very prepared and suggested that he plead guilty and thereby receive a suspended sentence. The judge knew nothing of these machinations and was ill-equipped believing the case would unfold before the jury. The only redeeming of evidence the judge had read was a piece I had written in his defense, and this is as follows:

My name is (removed for personal reasons) and I am a Nyikina man from the Derby area in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. I am an Australian Aboriginal and was born on the 28th of May, 1953 in Bungaran Leprosarium. At this time both my parents had been diagnosed with leprosy and had been sent to the leprosarium, this was in fact where they had first met as my father had spent several years in Darwin before returning to the Kimberley. He is described on my birth certificate as a mosquito catcher from Broome.

My childhood was pretty normal except for the times when my parents, either separately or together, were re-interned into Bungaran, this is the nature of this disease as sufferers can appear to be completely cured, however the debilitating

symptoms can, and do, redevelop at anytime. At these times my brothers, sisters and I went and stayed with close relatives.

From the age of five I went to school every day at Holy Rosary Catholic School in Derby. I did not excel at school but lived a reasonably happy life within a large family and owe much to my parents for the values, attitudes and beliefs they gave to me. At that time in my life family was everything and although my parents were quite strict and we did not have a lot we were happy. I remember camping holidays away and even a journey all the way down to Albany, in winter time, and we still went swimming in the ocean. We were blue when we came out.

When I reached the age of 16, in about 1968, I left home for Port Hedland where I worked as a postman. I had worked as a postman in Derby prior to this as an after school job. I stayed in Port Hedland for about 8 months and then returned to Derby to work in the Derby butchers shop. In 1971 I began work at the Derby Abattoir as a laborer and it was at this time that I met my wife to be. At the end of 1976 I put in for a transfer from Derby meat works to Wyndam meat works. My son was also born in 1976 in Perth. In 1977, I had been successful in my transfer and began work at the Wyndam meat works. This was a very happy time for my family, as I recall, as I was now the only Aboriginal on the line (cutting up the slaughtered animals into the meat we see at the butchers shop). In 1978 we travelled round Australia. It was also in 1978 that we adopted my daughter as her mother was a Tongan and had to leave Australia. She did not want to take her daughter with her as she believed that the child would have a better life in Australia, so we adopted her. She now has a successful career working in the mines in the Northern Territory and we remain close.

In 1981 we bought our house in Mundajong in Perth. I returned to Wyndam meat works for the 1982 season but my family remained in Perth. When the season was complete (about 6 months) I returned to Perth to an empty house with 1 spoon and 1 bowl and no idea where my family was. Unfortunately, whilst I had been away in Wyndam working, my wife had moved in with another man and thus, when I returned home the house was bare. This was a terrible time in my

life as I had always been faithful and believed that our relationship could withstand the long absences whilst I worked up north.

In 1983 I returned to Wyndham and worked in the bakery. I missed my children desperately and they did come and stay with me for a while at this time. In 1984 I established my own lawn mowing business in Derby. This business was reasonably successful and I could have stayed in Derby for the rest of my life, except for the fact that I had a desire to increase my education. In 1988 I was accepted at Port Adelaide Community College. I spent 6 or 7 years in Adelaide and attempted to improve myself. Whilst in Adelaide, and at the University, I met an Aboriginal woman from Cairns who was training to be an archaeologist. We had an enduring and deep relationship for 4 years and much of my faith in women and relationships as a whole was returned. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and passed away in 1994. All three of her children have proven to be outstanding footballers. Two of them played for North Melbourne and one continues to play for Essendon.

In 1997 I returned to Perth to see my mother and other family members. In 1998 I took a job in the Naracoorte meat works for that season. Towards the end of the season my son arrived in Naracoorte to tell me that my mother was gravely ill. I returned to Perth with him at the beginning of 1999. In June 2000 my mother passed away. This was a terrible time for my family as we are all very close and losing your mother is one of the more sad experiences that occur in everybody's lives.

I have been living and working in Perth since 2000. I have held a number of jobs from furniture removalist to grinder at an engineering works and I am now employed as a scaffolder on a contract basis with my brother. We hope to establish our own business in the near future.

I am 54 years of age on May 28th 2007 and I have worked hard most of my life. My parents instilled in me values such as honesty and fairness, however listening

was considered more important than talking when I was young. To this day I will not talk to people I do not know beyond a superficial level.

I am (removed for personal reasons) and I am a Nyikina man from the Derby region of Western Australia. I have never been in any trouble with the lore or the law in my life and am an honest person. Thank you for taking the time to read this as I find talking to people I don't know very difficult, especially in these kinds of circumstances.

This experience and too many others like it were pushing me further and further into my second space. My colleagues were Australian Aboriginals as were my friends and I thought that I had finally reached the Third Space. However, what I had actually reached were the outer limits of my own second space (the Australian Aboriginal worldview). I lived in this space for several years until I recognised that I was not just lost but, like a dying man disorientated by thirst in the desert, I was walking in circles.

Journeys in My Third Space: Coming Back

It is several years now since I planted the seed. I must have dug a very deep hole as it has taken a long time to germinate and sprout. In fact I had forgotten that I had planted it until one day I was thinking about ways to move forward when I found that my seed had not only germinated but had grown into a tree. The tree was tall and healthy and gave shade in summertime and shelter from the winter rains. The leaves are a glossy grey green and the bark is a silver color which appears luminescent at night. The only problem being that this particular tree has a tendency to rot from the inside out and drops huge branches, for no sensible reason, which cause large amounts of damage to the surrounding areas which, unfortunately, are residential. So we have to chop the tree down. It is sad but there is an analogy here between the beautiful Tuart gum and my journey back to the middle ground and my Third Space.

It is now 2009 and it is remarkable how we leave clues for ourselves before we embark on a journey, like Hansel and Gretel who crumbled the loaf of bread so that the bread crumbs were left to show the path home, the crumbs were eaten by the birds thereby leaving no path at all. In a similar fashion to Hansel and Gretel the clues that I had left for myself had disappeared as my journey back took such a long time. I had become comfortable in my skin and in my assumed identity. Little did I know that I had become some sort of hybrid version of my original self. It was a desire to break out of my assumed identity that led me to create the path back. The original pathway was long gone and I had changed as well. Maybe enough time had passed since the life breaking events and I now felt that I could resume being myself as the pain had passed and acceptance had taken the place of grief.

Going Home

In 2009 I had organised my final two interviews in Melbourne with one Australian Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal Australian, were both academics who had been working successfully in the Third Space together for five years. I wanted to speak to them about their Third Space and their feelings regarding this place.

On the assigned day my mother and I drove to Moe in Gippsland, Victoria. I had not driven out of Melbourne into country Victoria for nearly twenty five years. I had visited my parents but these had been fleeting visits and had not involved anything outside the metropolis that Melbourne has become since my formative years of school and university. The first thing that amazed me was the roads. Freeways connected everything and leaving the city was as simple as accessing one of these freeways and driving. One of the reasons I had left Victoria in the first place was because whenever I had wanted to leave the city it entailed a trip involving several hours fighting traffic to gain my escape. Now this had all changed and as we flew along the freeway I noticed that, although the city had expanded, the traffic flowed freely and the landscape was green, incredibly green. I did not want to go to the places where the fires had been only nine months before, as that would be too sad, but as we drove along I saw in the distance large blue jagged mountains. In Western Australia, especially the parts I had inhabited, there are no comparable mountains and the overwhelming color of the landscape is red. These mountains were beautiful

and remarkably still retained the vestiges of snow at their tops. They form part of the Great Dividing Range, which extends along the east coast of Australia, and hence they extended further than my eyes could see and made me wonder if it was time for me to return to Victoria, maybe I was old enough to live in a small country town and not slowly lose my mind. I immediately eradicated that thought as it was not part of the plan and we all know what happened last time I did that. It was the experience of living and teaching in a small Victorian country town (newly weds and nearly dead) which had finally caused me to leave Victoria, and this was the first time I had seen this kind of geography since then.

When we reached our destination, which was not as easy as expected as country towns have ways of causing the occasional tourist to become hopelessly lost in a very short time, I was so pleased to see my participants (see Chapter 10). The most interesting occurrence on this day was my feeling of belonging. I did not feel the usual sense of cultural struggle to straddle the two worlds of Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian culture, feeling as though I belonged in neither world because as Scott used to say, “I was the wrong shape”. I now felt strangely competent in both worlds, and realised that I was in the space that I had tried for so long to reach, I was home, and I was in the Third Space. The reason I had finally reached this place, albeit on a temporary basis, was because I was surrounded by people who had travelled the same road as me, both Aboriginal Australian and non-Aboriginal Australian. I felt a sense of relief, although for only a fleeting and tantalising moment, and I knew that this place really did exist and was not a figment of my own imagination, not an impossible utopia. As we drove out of Moe I revisited the concept of returning to Victoria but soon realised that my life was in Western Australia now as my children live there and my created world is there, however I hope to consider the idea more fully later.

I had had similar moments of connectedness when I had given the BHP Billiton workshops recently (2010) to an all-Australian male mining audience; most had spent much of their lives in remote parts of Australia with Australian Aboriginal people, and had developed a deep concern for their welfare and admiration for the worldview of these people. This respect had developed over considerable time as

deep trusting relationships had been formed, resulting in admiration by both groups for each other and their different ways of seeing the world. The Third Space can be an ephemeral space, especially when groups of people do not spend time together on a daily basis. This is a space designed by the individuals that inhabit it and each relationship has its own unique Third Space qualities, however each is different and individual and dependent on the needs of the people who have developed that space.

Finding My Own Space

There have been many circumstances that have conspired to create the reestablishment of myself. I had to return to the beginning point and ask myself the question of who I actually was, not who I wanted to be, nor who I might be if I did this or that. The most important ingredient in finding my own space was time. Time passes and removes us from the situations that we have tried so hard to eliminate from our lives until we realise that during the passing of time we have healed and are now ready for a new adventure. I believe the reason that I wanted to be somebody else was because of the numerous life changing events I had experienced. Grief, for example, is an emotion that Western culture finds hard to accept, whereas in Aboriginal culture it is an emotion well understood, accepted and travelled through. In Western cultures there is little preparation for this emotion and this ignorance breeds fear. An example of this occurred to me recently as I sat with my friend who had lost her father this year. Outwardly she appeared to have recovered, nonetheless, as the conversation turned towards the subject of her father's passing the tears came. She had never cried as she was so busy making certain all the other members of her family were coping but she did now because she knew that I understood and had been to that dark place known as grief. The next day she told me how much better she felt because she had "Let it out" as if grief itself was some dark alien beast which resided in her, which it can feel like, however it is not alien. Grief is a part of life and in a way prepares us for our own passing.

Another of the circumstances that have moved me forward has been the critical reflective processes involved in writing this thesis. We rarely contemplate any particular subject, no matter how seriously it is impacting our lives, to the degree that

we reflect during the writing of a thesis. The depth of contemplation involved forces us into the 'hall of mirrors' where we see ourselves reflected back in all our glory including those dark spaces that we usually do not inspect. Walking through the 'hall of mirrors' may take a considerable amount of time and so it was for me as I continued my critical self reflection as to how I had alienated myself from most of my former life. It was not until I recognised that I had removed myself, which involved accepting the fact that I had done this of my own volition, that there was any hope of recovery. During the recovery process, which I had begun myself and was very hastened by my sojourns with my mother, I remembered a book I had read many years earlier when I was recovering from another dislocation in my life. The book was by Carlos Castenada (1968), an anthropologist from the USA who had investigated the cultures of Mexico and their attachment to the spiritual world created by taking mescaline from the cactus. During Castenada's long sojourns with this other culture his guide discussed with him the pros and cons of "a path with heart" the path that led to enlightenment. This discussion also touched on 'a path without heart' and that such a path becomes more and more difficult as it is travelled until it peters out and leaves the wanderer lost and frequently in a empty place. As I ruminated on 'a path without heart' it occurred to me that this was exactly the path I was travelling. It was becoming more and more possible that this may be the case as too many of the situations I found myself in were negative and I was forced to be servile. My ever active mind wrote various workshops and discussion papers with other people's names on them. At first I thought this was as it should be but as time passed and I walked further down my hall of mirrors I realised that this was extortion on a grand scale and I decided to remove myself permanently.

I still have a vast respect for Aboriginal culture and people, however there are some, as with any group who have been marginalised, who will use the goodwill and desire to 'make a difference' by others for their own ends. There are also non-Aboriginal people who have thrived financially on the 'Aboriginal industry' as successive governments threw money at a problem that is far more than a financial one.

So many good hearted and well meaning people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have been forced to accept that, for some, their dedication and tenacity

carries them on 'a path without heart' and, hence, they find other avenues to walk along. I think this is very sad and smells of corruption of the worst sort as many Aboriginal people still live under the most atrocious conditions and they aspire to be more but are often stymied by the very people who are there to 'help'.

In 2011 I worked as a university supervisor with pre-service teachers and went to numerous schools in Perth. I discovered many dedicated teachers working in very complicated situations, usually in low socio economic areas, and now believe that all children need to be given a chance to achieve their full potential. Those children who come as refugees from war torn countries, those children who come from dysfunctional families where violence and addiction in all its forms are a way of life, and those children who are 'normal' but missing the fundamentals of reading and writing. There is no special group, no group more deserving of help, for they are all children and hence all deserving.

My sojourn through the hall of mirrors is complete for the time being and I look forward to my own 'Bran Neu Day' as I contemplate the future with enthusiasm rather than fear. I am indeed ready for a new challenge, however, I hope that I will still be involved with Aboriginal people in some way as I have immense respect and genuinely enjoy their company. Working with Aboriginal people is not a 'path without heart', however the system that functions around that work and administers much of the work leaves a great deal to be desired. It is this system that is partially responsible for the circumstances which now exist. I now realise that I have not changed all that much as I have always been a little reactionary and had a dislike of large and unwieldy systems of administration. No wonder I feel comfortable with Aboriginal people as they have an inherent distrust of these systems as these are the same systems that have caused their own dislocation. I remain a person from the 60's and 70's when I say that we should tear down these systems and replace them with people and care of people rather than maintaining the system for its own sake.

Finally, I am inclined to agree with Scott (see Chapter 10), that one's level of comfort is the most influential ingredient for change. I was not comfortable in my assumed identity in any way, as I continued to wait for something. I remain uncertain

as to what this something might have been. Eventually I became so uncomfortable that I chose to change. I accepted that this change may lead me away from Aboriginal people and was not happy about that, but change needed to occur for me to find any comfort.

I applied for countless jobs and frequently got interviewed but somehow I was always unsuccessful. During this time my old friend Scott continued to support me and remind me that “if you look after Country, Country will look after you”. I held this message as a mantra in my mind and continued to ‘wait for something’. I also had a long conversation with Kim who told me that mining companies still believed that they should employ an Aboriginal person in the roles I had been applying for. During our conversation he implied that in many instances this was wrong as often a non-Aboriginal person will do a better job, however these were the same truths that I had tried to avoid and it did explain my lack of success. I reflected on these two truths that had been given to me by the two most important Aboriginal people in my life and decided that I needed to take a completely different direction. As I ruminated on which direction I should take I managed to find some sessional work at a university in Perth. This was followed by several other offers that I accepted. Country had taken care of me and I was relieved.

I thought that the new direction I had taken would lead me away from Aboriginal people but it did not. I have now found a space where I am teaching young Aboriginal people, through a consultancy, to speak in the Third Space. I have a dream that Third Space teams can be developed, not just amongst teachers, but in both the public and private sectors as whilst separation is continued there can be no Third Space for either Aboriginal people or non-Aboriginal people. These barriers continue to preclude any Third Space encounters. Kim and I were talking about this and we both agreed that the Australian psych needs to be overhauled. As both the government and private sectors continue to employ Aboriginal people for Aboriginal business they continue, well intentionally, to keep these two groups of people separate. I believe that it would be far better to have people from each group working together in the Third Space.

I have also noticed that many Aboriginal young people who have embraced Western education, but maintained their Aboriginal cultural identity, have a desire to engage with non-Aboriginal people as they are no longer 'other'. This is an opportunity that should be grasped; however political correctness continues to blur the vision of many. I continue to maintain my own space but I can, and frequently do, move between my first and second spaces as a very adept cultural border crosser, or, as my friend Scott would say, a "cultural alchemist". Scott has always has a very vivid imagination, however I think that crossing cultural borders and code switching as one moves across these borders does take a certain kind of magic.

PART 2

The Yarns

I give you this story
This proper, true story
People can listen
I am telling you this while you've got time...
Time for you to make something you know...
History...
book.

Bill Neidie (1986, p. 33)

Introduction

In Chapters 9-12, I address the sixth research question: *What were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space?* I have divided the interviews or yarns up into distinct chapters, and each chapter is representative of a time (beginning in 2000) and my peers of that time. Thus, in Chapter 9, I have interviewed Scott, Haydn and John as they were my peers during the university days. In Chapter 10, I have interviewed Kim, Kathleen, Marlene and Janice as these people represent the Kooya days (Kooya is an Indigenous consultancy in Perth formed by Kim, Scott and me after leaving the university). In Chapter 11, I have interviewed Eric and his daughter Megan as they were my peers during the Dreamtime days (another Indigenous consultancy in Perth). In Chapter 12 I have interviewed Alana who is a former student of mine and has just returned from four years teaching in a remote Aboriginal community.

Chapter 9

University Days

Introduction

In Chapter 9 I begin to address the sixth research question: *What were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space?*

As this is a large question Chapter 9 covers the early days and the creation of the first Third Space teaching team. In section 1, I define the first, second and Third Spaces by the language (and hence the cultural schema) used in communication within each space. In section 2, I interview Scott, Haydn and John who were members of the first intercultural teaching team.

In acknowledging that engagement in the Third Space involves the formation of relationships through open dialogue, and that frequently the dialogue of the Third Space is representative of Aboriginal cultural schema, the methodology of the yarn was employed (see Chapter 3). A yarn is a long and often meandering conversation and, in Aboriginal cultural schema, is used to get to know a person initially: however it is the preferred method of communication between Aboriginal people and also between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who are residents of the Third Space.

These interviews represent both worldviews, Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian, and each chapter is represented by the various proponents at that time. Each interview presents the individual participant's critical self reflection and personal memories and meaning making of a time, and occurrences during that time, through their own cultural focus.

Each interview was completed over an extended period of time (from 9 months to 1 year) and involved multiple sessions (or yarns). The length of each yarn varied however they were always at least an hour in length and sometimes up to three hours long. These interviews belong equally to the participant as they do to me as we have worked on them extensively together.

All the interviews with my participants (both Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) were engaged in using the yarn genre, and thus the language was colloquial and the information generated moved through a variety of subjects as it circled around the main topic. It involved discussions about the past, including both events engaged in by both yarn participants and other events which, although not engaged in personally, had impacted them. The discussions comprised dialogue about past events in a retrospective fashion but always within a present context. For Australian Aboriginals the future is rarely discussed because it is believed that if you are aware of the past and take care of the present the future should sort itself out (personal communication Scott Fatnowna, 2004). The concept of allowing the future to take care of itself as you are taking care of the present can be a difficult notion for non-Aboriginal people to understand as we are so culturally immersed in the future. We like to “plan for the future” and feel that we have a certain control of the future due to our forward planning. Future planning is a characteristic of the Western cultural methodology that we are taught from an early age to engage in. The process of the yarn can be easily lost as non-Aboriginal people believe that conversations must be for a reason usually related to the future, their own, or the other person’s. Thus, my conversations or ‘yarns’ with my participants demonstrated this spiral nature with events from the past used to qualify present events. This is a continuous back and forward motion and can be very discombobulating for the non-Aboriginal English speaker.

Yarning is an art form and when engaged ‘in the proper way’ can lead to a deep knowledge of the ‘other’ person and of that person’s understanding of you.

The interviews, or yarns, could not have occurred without engagement in Aboriginal cultural schema via the Third Space. These yarns reflect much of the cultural schema associated with the Aboriginal worldview as well as the participant’s personal self reflections and their oral history.

The need to constantly code switch (switch between dialects and hence cultural schema, as described by Malcolm et al., 1997) between languages, and hence worldviews, is well portrayed by a recent workshop in Aboriginal Cultural

Awareness for Entry Level Prison Officers (ELPO) for a West Australian government department that I facilitated.

After a particularly gruelling three days attempting to ‘transform’ Entry Level Prison Officers and give them a certain knowledge regarding Aboriginal Australians I was exhausted by the process. This process entailed two separate workshops and two different groups of people. One group was unafraid and energetically embraced change. The group included a Koori man who played the didj like an angel. The group seemed to recognise that they could be agents of change themselves, and they craved understanding of the ‘other’ culture which, unfortunately, represent half the incarcerated population in Western Australia’s metropolitan prisons (this number increases to almost 100% in regional prisons). They recognised that to perform their duties, and indeed to add meaning to their jobs, would require them to form relationships with those ‘others’ and, hopefully, via these partnerships cause change in those ‘others’.

The second group had a few members who were resistant to change and fought hard to maintain their own status quo. It never ceases to amaze me how vocal some people are when they believe that their known world is under threat. However, the more dangerous and insidious variety are those who sit quietly and allow the proceedings to flow over them without breaking stride with those values attitudes and beliefs they hold dear.

I was tired (cultural brokerage is an exhausting process) and possibly just did not have the energy to lever them across the line. At the end of the day I went home and found myself speaking a pretty good example of Aboriginal English and this, to my children’s dismay, continued for several hours. I had to almost physically drag myself back from the comfort of my second space. I use the word comfort because in my second space I do not need to question my own processes as a cultural broker, I can just call anybody who doesn’t seem to get it “White” and that one word is enough to describe their actions and their resistance to change. However, I am White myself and hence racially they are the same as me. In a moment of clarity I suddenly recognised that just because we were both White didn’t mean we possessed the same

cultural schema. All people are different at a grassroots level and although they may form themselves into groups with similar values, attitudes and beliefs, they are still all individuals with their own lived experiences and thus their own values, attitudes and beliefs. This concept is much aligned with the Western Eurocentric notion of individuality, a notion that is not represented in Australian Aboriginal schema which is very family and group orientated.

As I dragged myself back from my comfortable second space I realised that this is why we have the Third Space, it is for those people, both Black and White, who choose to cause change in others and who choose to continue to learn and grow whilst engaged in these processes. When we cause change in others we cannot help but be transformed ourselves.

Which Space/Which language

In the example above the issue of language can be seen to be almost an identifier of cultural orientation and, indeed, Aboriginal English is used as a cultural identifier amongst Australian Aboriginal people (Eades, 2000) as is the conversational method termed the yarn.

The process of engaging in mindful dialogue is called a yarn. Aboriginal English and the yarn are used as the main method of communication when I am in my second space (or Aboriginal worldview) and I will call this language Y2 (the language of my second space or Aboriginal English). When I stand in my first space (Australian worldview or mainstream) I speak Australian Standard English, which I have called Y1 (the academic and scholarly voice is also considered as part of Y1 as it is also my first space). However, in the Third Space a combination of both Englishes and worldviews are used to communicate, that is Y1 and Y2, which produces the language of the Third Space that we called Y3.

The language of the Third Space (or Y3) was the language used in all the interviews with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, however in the case of some participants the language was more Y2 (Eric) and for others it was more Y1 (John). Although the language used in some of the interviews was Y2, or Aboriginal

English, my participants have asked me not to ‘shame’ them by using this language throughout their interview and, faithful to the integrity and trustworthiness of this study, I have only used small sections of Aboriginal English. There are several reasons why some of my participants did not want to be wholly represented by Aboriginal English and they are:

1. A fear of being misunderstood by non-Aboriginal people who will read this thesis.
2. Aboriginal English is very much an ‘insider’ language and not for public consumption. This is not because there is anything secret about it but colonisation tends to produce a certain embarrassment when the language of the coloniser is not used and a feeling of low self worth. This probably stems from the ‘good old days’ at school and the mockery that Aboriginal English speakers undergo to this day in the school yard and the classroom.
3. There is a certain trust and respect amongst my participants that I will do things the “proper right way” in this study and, hence, I have maintained the integrity of my relationship with my participants by relating these yarns in the fashion they have requested.

Data was gathered via a series of one-on-one interviews with the people who have made the journey into the Third Space with me. All the interviews used the yarn and have occurred over years (e.g., Scott) in some cases. In other cases the interviewee (e.g., Eric) did not know what the terminology ‘Third Space’ meant however, the Third Space between myself and Eric is represented by our yarn and our open and honest conversations about his lived experience. Eric has had some very negative experiences with non-Aboriginal people and he has told me that I am the first “wadjella” he has ever yarned with over such a long period of time (4 years) and in such a personal fashion. That Eric should feel comfortable enough to have the yarn with me is indicative that the Third Space is operational within our relationship.

In the following chapters the yarns appear and I invite you to walk with me and the other participants of the Third Space into another worldview and way of being. We invite you to 'learn us'.

As this study is retrospective and begins in the year 2000 it seems important to begin there.

The University Days

In July 2000 I joined the Indigenous Program at the Indigenous Centre at a university in Perth, WA. At the time it was a small team comprising Kim, who was our coordinator, Scott, who was the second in command, Pat, who taught the units on Aboriginal Studies which were attended by mainly White Anglo Saxon students who had an interest in Aboriginal issues, Chris, who was a new graduate and had briefly been a student of mine, and myself.

As we embarked on the "bran new dae" of the new world we intended to create, using the Third Space (Yunupingu, 1997), we were a very cohesive team and swiftly created a Third Space amongst ourselves, and indeed became very good friends. I was the only non-Aboriginal team member, initially, but I was there to be educated and indeed I was.

Thus, to further investigate the Third Space between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians through bi cultural eyes the following interviews were undertaken. I began by interviewing Scott as he was the creator for us of the Third Space concept. Later I was to find a similar concept had been defined by Homi Bhabha (1997) and although Bhabha's endpoint of hybridity is rejected (see Chapter 3) his concepts of dialogue and becoming our other selves resonate with our Third Space.

Scott and I worked extensively together and he was one of my main teachers regarding not only the Third Space but also Aboriginal ways of being. It was such an easy relationship that I was often blinded to the intense difficulties of being Aboriginal in Australia.

I had never heard of the Third Space until I met Scott Fatnowna and thus we begin at the beginning of the journey and, in the Australian Aboriginal way, to understand who a person is we need to know that person's story.

Yarns with Scott

Scott is an Aboriginal/South Sea Islander man from Mackay in north Queensland and is the inventor of this version of the Third Space. It is not surprising that Scott developed the idea of the Third Space between Australian Aboriginal and Australian people as Scott has a shared cultural heritage with his mother, who is an Aboriginal woman from the Kooki-ilingie of Cape York Peninsular, and his father, who is of the Fatalaka and Bobongie Clans of Malaita in the Solomon Islands. From infancy the Third Space existed in his family (one parent being a Solomon Islander and the other being Australian Aboriginal) and hence he devised methods to remain in the middle ground. Scott grew up in Mackay and was a member of the Seventh Day Adventist community there. It was not until he was at high school that he learnt that not all 'White' people wore shirts, shorts, long white socks and shoes. It was also not until high school that he realised that 'White' people also got drunk and rolled around in the gutter. He had believed that only Aboriginal people did that kind of thing. He had been very protected by his parents and the religious community that he lived amongst. He even considered becoming a minister in his younger days but then he discovered girls and decided nursing was the career for him. He proceeded to enrol in nursing until one day he met his cousin and during the course of their conversation his cousin convinced him that teaching was the profession for him. It was during these years that the seed of an idea, which was eventually termed the Third Space, began to grow. Scott was the only Aboriginal person in not just his year but over the entire four years of his degree: however, rather than feeling isolated he embraced this new experience. His journey as a teacher/learner and the development of the Third Space had begun.

By the time I met Scott he was a member of the Indigenous Program at a university in Perth. I used to see him cruising around as I waited interminably for my wayward

students to come to the tutorial we had organised. He was always happy and always said hello even though he didn't really know me. I had heard on the grapevine, which is an extensive network of various people, that there was a position available to teach the pre-service teachers Aboriginal Education and so I thought I may as well try. I could not believe it when I received a telephone call to ask me to come in for an interview. I was even more stunned when I got the job.

From that point onwards I was to be immersed in the Third Space. I was to travel the same route as the pre-service teachers (see Appendix 1 for course outline), albeit with a little more knowledge: however I was more aware of what I did not know, and it was a lot. I also felt the guilt that some mainstream Australians feel when they meet members of the Stolen Generations; the shame of being a 'White' person, and there was also a little bit of anger in there as well. I could relate to my students when they said, and sometimes shouted, "I was not there. I am not responsible". I must admit I was tutored by my Aboriginal peers, and Scott in particular, until I understood that there is no guilt or blame instead there is just sorrow but those past government policies and practises must never be forgotten as they are responsible for where Australia finds itself today. In retrospect, I now realise that this is the beginning of the transformational journey that participants engaging in the Third Space travel. The overriding outcome of this initial journey for myself and the pre-service teachers was a knowledge that it is also up to us, both as individuals and as a group, to attempt to create some kind of equal playing field, although I am still not sure how you do that.

So began our journeys in the Third Space. Ten years have passed since those early days of discovery and we have all changed and moved forwards. Scott now lives in NSW and I have remained in Perth. We still communicate often and for this reason my 'yarn' with him is written as an interview. We decided that it is best if he 'wrote back' which has been the case, however there was very little writing but many, many yarns. This is the outcome of those yarns.

Marianne: Scott what does the Third Space mean to you?

Scott: The Third Space is the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people trying to deal with change. The Third Space represents the best practises for those people as they take responsibility for changing themselves.

Marianne: What are some examples of this change?

Scott: A good example is CDEP (Commonwealth Development Employment Project; Community member's complete work on the general upkeep of the community for small amounts of money). The question here is can you make things work for you on CDP? The answer often is no as the payment is minimal and people are limited by this. Due to low literacy, numeracy and often an inability to speak Australian Standard English, people are trapped in the poverty cycle of CDP and community work. If they wish to improve their lot in the mainstream world they must leave their community and many of these communities are "in Country". For many Aboriginal people their country is all they have left, however to stay there is to live in poverty but to leave is a very scary concept when you are not armed with the ability to speak Australian Standard English and you are not aware of the 'culture' of the mainstream world. Therefore some kind of sacrifice is required. This is where "cultural consciousness" comes into the development of the Third Space.

Marianne: Can you tell me what your concept of cultural consciousness is?

Scott: Cultural consciousness can be described as four layers. The first layer is your own space, the space that is yourself as you are now. The second layer is your interpretation of your own space and your intent to engage with the 'other'. The third layer is a deeper understanding of your own culture, where you stand within that culture, what your responsibilities and obligations are and your continued understanding of the 'other' on ever deep levels. The fourth layer is deciding that you can form partnerships with the other and this requires openness, flexibility and negotiation. The fourth layer is the entry point to cultural consciousness and the Third Space which is only limited by your own judgement and your own truth. On the other hand a "Third Spacer" (either an Australian

Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal person who has already engaged with the Third Space) will work backwards from the fourth layer and encourage others to discover themselves by taking responsibility for opening up their own Third Space. In other words a “Third Spacer” engages in instigating, managing and tracking cultural consciousness in others who wish to cause change in their lives. This process includes, but is not limited to, the individual’s desire for change initially. It requires the individual to understand the consequences of this change and the ability to manage these changes over time. For Aboriginal Australians the consequences of these changes can often mean moving away from country and family which is a very lonely experience and towards a world where the individual will often need to “pretend” to engage in the mainstream values, attitudes and beliefs even when these make little sense and do not seem relevant. Change does require action and cannot be completed sitting in a room or a community for that matter. Change also involves great personal courage and often loneliness and isolation. This desire for change only occurs when the individual’s level of comfort is being affected by their lived experience. When an individual has a high level of comfort (that being a secure job, comfortable living conditions and is generally contented with their lot in life) they will not feel the need to engage with change. These individuals often look for control of their own first space by desiring more and more at the expense of others who often have much less.

Marianne: So what about teachers in remote communities and the Third Space?

Scott: This goes back to the level of comfort an individual is experiencing. In some cases if the level of comfort is low these teachers will gather together in their own little world and attempt to recreate their own culture. They will reject the ‘other’ and remain in their own first space thinking. They will not attempt to form partnerships with Aboriginal people and will walk out of the community after three years unaffected by the experience as it was a means to an end which was to acquire permanency, move to a metropolitan school, become a principal or whatever reason prompted them to be there in the first place. These

individuals have set their own agenda and nothing is going to interfere with this agenda, not their students or those students' parents. These particular individuals are searching for their own first space normalcy and so they will go fishing, have BBQ's and a million other "normal" activities to appease their own first space Gods but they will never ask, let alone encourage, Aboriginal community members to engage in these activities with them. On the other hand community members can be just as first space orientated and so the two remain separate.

Marianne: Is there anything you would like to add regarding the processes involved in change and the effects that this change will have on people.

Scott: The processes involved in entering and staying in the Third Space can be described as "learning to think (whilst at university) and thinking to learn" (when entering schools as a beginning teacher).

Scott as Teacher – Marianne as Learner

From the outset it should be noted that within this Australian Aboriginal model of the Third Space each individual is both teacher and learner. When I first began to engage in the Third Space I was the learner or student. The Third Space was designed originally as a methodology for Aboriginal Australians to use as a tool as they travelled towards engagement with mainstream Australia. It was designed specifically to maintain their Aboriginal cultural identity as engagement in the mainstream can lead to a loss of cultural identity. This loss of cultural identity for an Aboriginal person entering and engaging in the mainstream world is very similar to my own loss of cultural identity as I engaged with Aboriginal cultural schema on a deeper and deeper level (see Chapter 8). When Aboriginal people find themselves lost in the desert of cultural ambiguity there is a term used to describe such people. The term is 'coconut'. Thus the Third Space was a means of allowing engagement with the mainstream world without the consequential loss of the individual's Aboriginal cultural identity.

Many Aboriginal people have little knowledge of the mainstream world and they are not fluent speakers of Australian Standard English (ASE). The mainstream world is a large and threatening place inhabited by 'White fellas' whose main objective is to

embarrass, hurt and generally discombobulate the Aboriginal person. These are the stories and they are told by many individuals who have ventured out from their communities into that fearsome world.

As Scott says, it is the level of comfort experienced by an individual which is the deciding factor in whether they will stay 'on' Country and in community or venture forth into the unknown and feared world of the 'whitefellas'. If the individual knows how to operate in the Third Space then they are prepared to engage with the 'other', whilst still maintaining their own personal cultural identity. Engagement in the Third Space leads to cultural consciousness.

Cultural consciousness is the product of the Third Space and can be described as the place that is inhabited by Third Space practitioners. Cultural consciousness is far more than cultural awareness (see Chapter 8) or cultural competence and when engaged in allows the practitioner to truly feel and empathise with the other. Thus, as I gathered all of this information, I determined that I would become culturally conscious myself as I could see how useful this would be in my engagement with Aboriginal people.

Scott describes the four layers that must be passed through to achieve the Third Space and cultural consciousness, however the overriding necessity required to enter the Third Space and cultural consciousness is desire. The desire to form partnerships with Aboriginal people which will lead to mutual understanding of each other's ways of being, and thus, to pathways forward together. Many Aboriginal people feel that the pathways that have been developed for them to engage in the mainstream world have been developed without very much input from Aboriginal people themselves. It is this paternalistic stance that continues to block forward movement. A Third Space practitioner would enter into dialogue with the people concerned as both teacher and learner and thus all the people involved have a voice and are included in the decision making processes. When people are involved in these processes they develop an attachment to the product, and thus, a desire to engage with the product.

It is very easy to remain in one's own first space and this occurs with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In our own first space we are comfortable

and it is this level of comfort that Scott speaks about. Whilst we are comfortable, no matter which space we are in, change does not even enter our minds. It is only when our level of comfort is reduced that change becomes a necessity rather than something we may engage in on a casual or intellectual basis. This is the case regarding many teachers in remote communities, who hold on to their first space with a death grip, rather than embracing change and engaging with the 'other'. Equally, Aboriginal people will hold on to their first space tenaciously when they are comfortable in that space.

This level of comfort is an interesting concept as the implication is that all Third Space practitioners must have, at some stage, reached a point where they were uncomfortable. In my own case I can see how this was possible (see Chapter 8). Change can appear the only option when personal comfort has disappeared. Change also takes courage and when we are comfortable we do not need courage, and thus, we do not change.

First Semester, 2000

In 2000 as Scott and I prepared for our first semester teaching the pre-service teachers nothing could have prepared us for the various blizzards that were to occasionally consume us, especially during the first weeks. I was teaching the Diploma of Education students, as I was the high school teacher, whilst Scott was engaged in teaching the Early Childhood and Primary students.

In one of my Diploma of Education classes was Haydn, a mature age non-Aboriginal man, who worked across the road at an education facility that taught music to Aboriginal Australians. I was also involved in a little project at a school which engaged my Aboriginal students from the university with primary school Aboriginal students in a mentor/mentee relationship. At school we had decided that we would put on an assembly and thus needed music and musicians. One of Haydn's students was Kathleen who joined the mentoring program with gusto. The mentoring program petered out, as such things do when they are unfunded and people are busy, however both Haydn and Kathleen have special places in my life and are participants in this research.

At the end of the first semester 2000 Scott and I realised that we were going to need more staff and so I suggested Haydn. Haydn began his apprenticeship with us in 2001 and the three of us worked together for several years. During this time we continued to be involved in teaching the Aboriginal Education unit where we slowly but surely moved our non-Aboriginal students from their comfortable first space into the less comfortable and often strange Third Space. I interviewed Haydn in 2009 as I wanted to ascertain his experiences of the Third Space and how he had used the knowledge gained whilst working in the Third Space.

Yarns with Haydn

Haydn is a non-Aboriginal man who grew up in the Bunbury region of Western Australia in the 1950's and 60's. Haydn's father was an Australian from the south west of Western Australia and his mother's parents were Dutch South Africans. Although only a child at the time (1950s and 1960s) he witnessed firsthand the Australian Aboriginal children who were members of the Stolen Generations.

My attitude, at that time, was molded by my parents and, like any child, I believed that these children had been deserted by their parents and that their parents didn't love them and so the mission had taken them in to do the good Christian thing. It was convenient to believe these ideas as in a way it makes you as a child feel safe and very sorry for these children. It was also very convenient for the adults as children were not mature enough to engage in the critical thinking required to examine such social attitudes.

Aboriginals could behave in only two ways and they were either good or bad. To be a good Aboriginal involved behaving in the same manner as everybody else. That is to have a job and possibly even a house, to send their children to school and be a functioning member of society. These were the days of assimilation.

'Bad Aboriginals' were those who chose (it was thought) to live in the camps on the fringes of every town. These people had no access to water or sanitation of any kind and thus were often unwashed. To be unwashed in body and clothes was tantamount to a crime against God and humanity for many of the religious right wing who at that time made up the large "White" population in the south west of Western Australia.

Times were changing, however and with the advent of 'Black rights' in the United States, Martin Luther King and groups such as the 'Black Panthers' notions of equality were bound to find their way to a place as remote as Bunbury. Another element of change was the Vietnam War and Australia's involvement in it. By 1967 when the Vietnam War was at its bloodiest Australia had the 1967 Referendum which changed the landscape irrevocably for both Australian Aboriginals and Australians in general. The 1967 Referendum changed two parts of the Australian constitution. The first constitutional change being that "All laws will be made for all people INCLUDING Aboriginal people. The second change being all people born in Australia will be Australian Citizens INCLUDING Aboriginal people. Prior to these changes Aboriginal people were not considered citizens of Australia (Aboriginal people were considered flora and fauna) and special laws were made for Aboriginal people that basically made them prisoners of the state "for their own good".

By the early 1970's I was attending a university in Perth, Australia and completing an Engineering Degree. These were seditious times at University and it was at this time that I heard about the Stolen Generations. I had believed the stories of abandonment of children by their parents and to discover the truth caused outrage. It was a time where truth seemed to disappear amongst a miasma of well intentioned lies and I think it was a time when we all grew up and

learnt to find the “truth” for ourselves. After finishing my degree I enrolled in a Diploma of Education but did not finish as the siren call of the music industry had been calling to me for some time and finally I could not resist the song. I left university and became a member of a band. Music remains my first love, however the music industry is an ephemeral one and thus I decided to complete my Diploma of Education in 2000.

In 2001 I joined the Indigenous team to tutor the pre-service teachers in the Aboriginal education unit and this was the first time I had heard about the Third Space. This was my initiation and I passed.

I asked Haydn about his experiences in the Third Space and what he gained from the experience

Marianne: Why do you think Scott chose you to be a part of the Third Space team?

Haydn: I think Scott recognised that I had an innate understanding from youth about the Third Space and also a social conscience. I also think that because I had worked extensively with Aboriginal people at another educational institution that I had a background understanding of the struggles that Aboriginal people face in education.

Marianne: What are some of the important points you have learned about Aboriginal people and your experiences as an educator?

Haydn: Time is of the essence and more resources need to be provided to achieve educational equality. There is no point in cutting Aboriginal people off as this will only lead to a complete waste of the money already invested. Education is a generational thing and thus it takes time for its benefits to percolate down through society.

Another important concept that I have seen is Aboriginal Australians reluctance to engage in situations that incorporate pressure, whether it be deadlines or performance, there seems to be an inability to handle pressure. They do not (always) want goals (prescribed for them)

however, they also do not want to be on unemployment benefits. Unfortunately there does not seem any half way mark between the two.

Marianne: What do you considered are some of the attributes required of people who wish to teach Aboriginal Australians?

Haydn: Some attributes for participation in Aboriginal education for non-Aboriginal teachers are the realisation that there are other world-views that differ considerably to one's own.

Non-Aboriginal teachers need to have an understanding that significant cultural differences to the mainstream can occur within Aboriginal families and communities even though they are often not outwardly apparent.

Teachers who are successful in teaching Aboriginal students also need to have a willingness to learn and constantly revise history and its impact on current circumstances.

There is a need for awareness that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend the day to day difficulties that many Aboriginal people encounter. The knowledge and awareness by teachers that for many Aboriginal students educational outcomes do not necessarily carry the same importance as for the mainstream and that there are complex reasons for this, mostly as a result of historical events. Teachers require the patience to present education in a way which can take much longer to achieve the outcomes normally achieved in set time frames. Finally teachers need to have the ability to conceptualise educational improvement through generational flow on effects rather than on an individual's immediate results.

Haydn as Learner/Teacher – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

Haydn and I worked extensively together and he often pulled me back from my second space into my first space from where I could navigate to the Third Space. Haydn very rarely left his first space because most of his interactions were with non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers. When he did have dealings with Aboriginal people he was very reliant on me and my knowledge of Aboriginal cultural schema. As time transpired he did learn a great deal about Aboriginal cultural schema, however this

was always from a distance, and thus, he could always return to his first space on a daily basis.

Engaging in the Third Space cannot really be entered from a distance; however, I understand why Haydn did this. It was a fear of involvement in something that he did not understand and also found a little frightening. Not everybody wants to be a cultural broker on a permanent basis and I think this comes back to one's level of comfort, as discussed with Scott. When we are reasonably comfortable in our lived experience we are loath to make radical and permanent change. Haydn has much empathy and I also think this was another reason for his reticence in engaging more fully in the Third Space as there is an enormous fear of getting hurt. He had witnessed what had happened to others. He had also been burnt badly at an earlier stage and thus he was protecting himself by limiting his dealings and maintaining his first space. The details of Haydn's negative experiences need to remain with him. It is not my place to divulge such personal information regarding one of the participants in my study. This is because each participant has trusted me sufficiently to allow the use of their names and thus it would be ethically wrong for me to discuss their personal experiences. I have, after discussion with my participants, decided that this research does not want to become an indictment of who did what to whom, rather it is a reflection of the understanding that can occur between members of differing cultural background when the desire to engage with each other exists.

Semester 1, 2001

Towards the end of 2000, as we were flying high with the first blushes of what might be termed success, I had heard that there was trouble downstairs in the Bridging course (an enabling course which moves Aboriginal people who may not have finished high school up to a point where they should be able to enter mainstream University courses). At that time I was a sensible person and took Scott's advice not to get involved; however at the beginning of 2001 the Indigenous Program was joined by John. John was much further down the academic road than the rest of us as he already had a PhD in Communications and he was to guide us academically.

John arrived bearing the scars of his long and protracted battle ‘downstairs’ which were healed quickly, due to the dynamic nature of our workplace and its team. John remained at the Indigenous Center for much longer than the rest of us due to his diplomatic nature and his ability to close his eyes to that which was not his business no matter how unfair it may be.

I was interested to interview John as, besides Haydn and myself, he was the only other non-Aboriginal person involved in the Third Space and, indeed, it was John who told us about Homi Bhabha (1997) and his original notion of the Third Space as a liminal space of change for cultural border crossers.

John continues to work at the university in another school. Here is John’s story and his own methodology of making sense of often nonsensical occurrences.

Yarns with John

John is, and he admits this himself, one of those people, who have never wanted to be seen, either by himself or others, as a ‘bad White person’. Perhaps to begin with I should explain what a ‘bad White person’ is and how John could possibly think that he could be classified this way.

For many non-Aboriginal Australians the discovery of the Stolen Generations and other negative impacts that past Australian government policies and practices had on Aboriginal people, filled many with shame and guilt. Indeed when I first heard I was shocked. This begs the question as to why we were all so surprised and shocked to hear about these things. We had all been living in this country, albeit we were children, but we had witnessed the dark skinned children at the back of the church on Sunday. We believed it when we were told that these poor children’s parents didn’t want them (this is the worst possible scenario for a child because how do you know this won’t happen to you) or that the parents had died. Finding out in early adulthood that these explanations were in fact untrue harked back to the days in Nazi Germany when people who lived five minutes from the gas chambers swore that they had no idea that hundreds of human bodies were burning on a daily basis. For many of us,

John included, it was the time the proverbial blinkers came off and we progressed through our university days toying with radicalism, communism and nearly every other “ism” in existence. John continues with his story.

As guilt and shame replaced childhood fantasy an idea began to grow that ‘we’ as a collective group could do something to ‘help’ these children who were now adults. Education has always held the key to increasing opportunities for people and thus I found myself working with Aboriginal people in a tertiary setting.

It was here that I determined that I would not be a ‘bad White person’ and thus, along the continuum between bad and good there is, at the extreme end, the enabler. An enabler will, almost with no personal expense spared, attempt to make up for the past in their own personal associations with the wounded party or parties. This is very much a victim-rescuer scenario or the pursuer and the pursued. In the case of the pursuer and the pursued the relationship hinges on the pursuer (or, as in this case, the ‘good’ White person) chasing their Aboriginal students to ‘make’ them conform and, most importantly, pass their subjects. The whole concept of pursuer and pursued is that the pursued continues to move away as long as the pursuer is chasing them. When, in a state of complete exhaustion, disappointment and self flagellation the pursuer finally stops the pursued also stops and begins to move backwards towards the pursuer and hence the game begins again. However, there was an answer to this conundrum, and it was, and continues to be, the Third Space.

I was the person who coined the term the Third Space from Homi Bhabha’s (1997) work and there are indeed similarities but in our Third Space there is equal power, it is one on one and individual to individual and it is not something that can be taken and re-enacted elsewhere using, dare I say it, ‘the recipe’. Because the process is

so uniquely individualistic there is no recipe as each individual moves towards this intercultural space at their own speed and within their own time.

In my attempt to create meaning regarding my own enabling behaviours, I have blamed my pursuer/pursued scenario on my 'moral vanity'. My moral vanity was created by the myths regarding Aboriginal people and the romanticised version of Aboriginality which was in the seventies so prevalent amongst twenty- something university students. The concept of "White guilt" has been wrestled with by many and I was no different in my desire to prove myself as an anti-racist White.

I was looking for causes, wore many of the badges, and did many of the anti racism marches in the 1980's. I had one foot planted in the local community church of my youth and one foot stepping out into the very liberal academic domain of scholarly thought. This was before the cracks appeared in pan-Aboriginal solidarity post-1988, and once again my desire for an Aboriginal hero or cause to champion was more about my need for a messiah and moral/ideological legitimation than with dealing with what Gilbert (1978) describes as "the truth about their people today". My truth, my moral vanity, counted more.

One of the steps to escape my 'White guilt' and 'moral vanity' and the victim mentality which both these create in the student or, for that matter the "other" person, was to change the co-dependent patterns through a scaffolded support process that facilitates independence. It is easy to see why many of us engage in co dependent relationships with Aboriginal students when we consider the enormous number of obstacles that many of them are faced with both in senior high school and at a tertiary level.

For most Indigenous students entering tertiary studies the challenge is undeniably a considerable one, especially if the pathway is through an Indigenous tertiary access program. “Bridging” or “enabling” students often need to build skills which were not developed during their primary and secondary years. And, because these students frequently have dependents and/or health issues, and/or a negligible financial base, this means that there are many extracurricular factors that can make the learning process much more challenging than for young middle-class, non-Indigenous university students. Disadvantage for Indigenous students is compounded by the fact that other categories of disadvantage, such as rurality, isolation and low socio economic standing are among the factors also impacting on them and their communities. Good academic outcomes are linked to a sense of self belief and effort. This breaks what Scott and Brown (2005, p. 190) describe as Indigenous identity being misconstrued “to mean don’t achieve, don’t succeed because success is associated with a ‘White’ identity.

Initially I was trying to prove my moral credibility and it soon became clear to me that lowering levels of achievement resulted in negative outcomes. An example of this is the way students tend to struggle upon entering mainstream degrees after ‘soft’ access course grades. Further there was a tendency for other Indigenous students to develop dependent relationships with tutors through support made available to them. The educator’s responsibility is to scaffold the student’s process of active learning, rather than undermining the student’s responsibility to learn through low expectations, inflated grades, hollow praise or rescuing.

Cox (2007), drawing on Bowen and Freidman, argues patterns of dependency tend to develop when there is an overemphasis on passive forms of support and affirmation at the expense of the

attainment of learning/work goals and the challenge to grow students/employees. This does not mean there should be no affirmation and no support, but that it needs to be genuine and meaningful, and likened to learning goal attainment. The ultimate aim of the scaffolding process is to facilitate independence rather than interminable dependence.

John continues working at the university but is now in another section where he employs his skills in Communication with students from many cultural backgrounds. He still has an association with the Indigenous Center and no doubt this will continue as he has developed certain border crossing skills whilst working there which are not easily replicated.

John as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

John consistently engaged in the Third Space, however he was very caught up in what he terms his 'moral vanity' and also in being 'a good White person'. There are so many really 'good White people' that sometimes they are used by their Aboriginal students until eventually they become burnt out from all the giving. Some Aboriginal students are very adept, as are students from all cultural backgrounds, at wringing the last drop of empathy from their tutors. This happens so often that good hearted people have to give up because they become so drained and there is no reciprocity from the student or the management involved.

John continues to struggle with his moral vanity, however I think that John's struggle has more to do with his empathy for other human beings. To have done all the things that John has done and to continue giving generously of himself as he does, he may have conquered his moral vanity without even being aware of it. This may also be due to comfort, as, if we are comfortable we will continue with old and outdated ways of being as they are part of that comfortable way of life we exist in.

I know how hard John worked and he was often taken advantage of intellectually as well as personally. It is hard to maintain faith in a belief when most experiences attached to that belief are negative. Yet again we find ourselves questioning our level

of comfort. When our level of comfort has diminished to such an extent that we feel almost nullified it is then that we cause change to happen in our lives. There is a point where our own knowledge of justice and self worth needs to be considered and at this point we can become angry that we tried so hard to cross cultural borders, nonetheless, we were taken hostage and held for an interminable amount of time. Finally, I suppose the ransom is paid but it is usually paid by oneself and it is only then that change occurs.

Chapter 10

The Kooya Days

Introduction

In Chapter 10, I continue to address the sixth research question: *What were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space?* In this chapter I continue the narrative of the Third Space and introduce four new participants. In section 1, I have a yarn with Kim, who was the coordinator of our section at the university, and later the principal of the consultancy that he, Scott and I formed. In section 2, Kathleen, a Noongar woman from the Albany Region of Western Australia has a yarn with me. In section 3, Janice and Marlene, who form their own Third Space team at a university in Melbourne, Victoria, discuss their lived experiences and their understanding of the Third Space.

Semester 1, 2003

As time transpired things became rocky in our known world and eventually we all left our cozy niche. Kim, Scott and I developed Kooya Consultancy and began learning about the world outside the university. The development of Kooya Consultancy led us into new places; however we also met some very interesting people who were members of their own Third Spaces. In meeting these people we realised that we were not isolated in our thinking, that is, that Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people can work together, with equal power, and in this way huge strides may be taken regarding reconciliation and indeed “doorndjil yoordaniny” or coming together – moving ahead.

During the Christmas break in 2003, Kim, the coordinator of our program at the university, resigned. Kim’s resignation shocked us all, as over the past two years our budget had slowly been cut, although we did the same amount of work. Scott was moved from the program to another more junior role, which was a very serious demotion and I became a ‘sessional’, which is another term for being on a good behavior bond in an academic institution. The original head of school had returned

from her sojourn in the United States where she was undertaking a PhD, prior to that our Acting Head of School had been a very far-sighted woman.

By the middle of 2003 my 'sessional' ranking had diminished to so little that in the second semester I had no work. This was also the time that my father passed away (see Chapter 8). A trying time indeed, however Kim was determined that there was life after the university and resigned to establish a consultancy. The consultancy was Kooya Consultancy and continues today. (Kooya or Kweryah is the frog in Balladong Nyoognar (Balladong spelling of Noongar) language and is the totem of the Bennell Clan of which Kim is a member).

We had a few small jobs, one of those being an interesting project associated with the TAFE sector. It was also during that time that Kim gave us "doorndjil yoordaniny" (Coming Together – Moving Ahead) which we considered a more authentic description of our Third Space methodology as this rejects the concept of hybridity on historical grounds (see Chapter 3). Our big break came when Scott and I wrote a Tender for a large government department to provide Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Workshops to their staff. We were successful in this tender and thus began what we now call "the Kooya Days" (or Kooya Daze as Scott and I sometimes called it because we were so busy all the time we were in a daze).

The staff from the large government depart we worked with were mainly Prison Officers and Court Officers and these workshops represented one of the 339 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (January 1987 – December 1989). The Royal Commission produced a number of reports, including individual reports for each death investigated. These were presented separately as they were completed. The Commission also produced an Interim Report, which was presented on 21 December 1988. The final report, signed on 15 April 1991, made 339 recommendations, mainly concerned with procedures for persons in custody, liaison with Aboriginal groups, police education and improved accessibility to information. Many of the reports can be found at www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/.

One of these recommendations stipulated that all Non-Aboriginal people working with Aboriginal people in the Justice system must complete some form of Cultural Awareness, hence the tender.

Prior to our successful tender application, Kim had applied for a scholarship with the NHMRC to do his Masters at a university in Perth and was successful in his application. Kim was caught in the dilemma between cancelling his Masters and pursuing the delivery of the contract with Scott and myself. After much soul searching he decided to complete his Masters whilst Scott and I cared for the business in his absence.

Kim played an integral part in the development of our version of the Third Space both at the university as our coordinator and also as the Director of Kooya Consultancy. The Third Space continues to be the vision associated with Kooya Consultancy and as it has expanded many people have been introduced to the concept of the Third Space over the years.

Yarns with Kim

I was born in Wagin in the southwest of Western Australia but my father was a Ballardong man of the Nyoongar Nation. My father's and grandfather's country was from the Brookton area and I refer to this as my ancestry country. My mother always believed herself to be a Nyoongar woman but it wasn't until many years later when it was discovered that her mother (Alice McPhee) was a member of the Stolen Generations and came from the Kimberley region (Gidja People).

I spent most of my childhood (up to year 7) in Wagin and did most of my primary school there. My experiences toward the latter part of primary school became very difficult because I was beginning to experience racism and prejudice toward both myself and Nyoongar people in general. My father, John Collard, had fought in the

Second World War and upon his return from active duty in 1945 took up Citizenship.

I had a good life in Wagin and spent time on the Reserve with many Nyoongar families like the Meads, Wallams, Dinahs, Penny's, Jacksons and many more. I remember hearing the old people speaking language as they sat around the campfires and they told the young ones, the only way we would ever get on in this world was to learn English and discouraged us from speaking our Native tongue. It was also an offense at that time to speak Aboriginal languages and penalties were severe.

So I grew up not knowing or speaking my ancestors' tongue. My family moved up to Perth in 1969 when I was in Grade 7. My older brother and sister had gained scholarships to attend boarding schools in Perth and my parents wanted to be near them to support them.

In the early part of 1969 I attended Wagin Primary School and vividly remember experiencing racism and prejudice by both teachers and students alike directed towards Nyoongar students attending this school. I remember one of those teachers saying to me 'Collard you will never amount to anything'. Later, that same year, we moved to Perth and I went to North Beach Primary School. Here I encountered a teacher who, for the first time in my schooling years, took a personal interest in me and provided me with guidance and direction. I finished school at the age of 15 and gained an apprenticeship as a Boilermaker/Welder which I completed.

I then went to Mt Newman and worked "on the mines" for several years until I decided that I needed to do something to help my people. I made a decision to join the West Australian Police Force

with the grandiose idea of being a role model so my community would have someone to look up to and something to aspire to but this was soon to change. During this time I was to experience further racism and prejudice from both my colleagues and my Aboriginal community. On one of my first days on the job, after completing training at the Police Academy, I walked into my first posting at a Police Station to find out that my first task was to assist the CIB to execute a search warrant in a search of drugs. The only problem being that the family (unbeknown to me) who the search warrant was to be executed on, were members of my own extended family. I was advised that I would be going to the scene with the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB). On route, it was then that I was told that the house where we would be executing the search warrant was 'xxx Collard's' house. I was told by the IOC "that there are things in this job that you won't like, but to 'shut your mouth, close your eyes and block your ears if you want to get on in this job'. I knew that this was a test of character as a police officer and used when they were deciding whether I was one of 'them', or one of 'us'. I also knew that I had very little choice in the matter as I had clearly been put in a compromising position and had no options other than going through with it.

It was this and similar circumstances that drove me to stay in the job as I decided that I could do more good by staying than leaving. My family also had problems with me working for the Police Department.

I would go to a family BBQ and as soon as I entered the room a hush would fall over the assembled gathering and whispered voices would say" Shh now, here is Uncle Kim, he is monarch" (Nyoongar word for Police). Hence, family gatherings became difficult experiences because of this issue of 'dual accountability'.

After 7 years, Kim recognised that being a member of the Western Australian Police Force was not providing the cure-all that he imagined and he decided to attend university and increase his education. Kim enrolled at a university in Perth and after 4 years completed his undergraduate degree with honors.

I met Kim many years ago, probably in 1997, when I was tutoring his brother Greg who was enrolled in the Science and Technology course (a bridging course for Aboriginal people into the sciences and engineering). When I joined the Indigenous program Kim and I had already met, however this had been briefly. Kim was now the coordinator of the Program and he was at that time only just learning to speak Noongar language. Kim learnt his language from a non-Aboriginal anthropologist. Kim would spend the next 4 years learning his ancestral language as well as song and ceremony.

It is interesting that Scott and his Third Space philosophy were the catalyst that prompted Kim into learning language and ceremony as we wanted to create a Noongar space for our students (Aboriginal protocol insists that only people from that country can speak on cultural issues) through language and song. It took Kim a year to learn enough language and discover the appropriate ceremony to create that Noongar space and worldview that we wanted for our students at the end of the semester. We called this the learning journey (which was really the whole semester) and our students had to prepare for it in the same way as an initiate would. During the ceremony the students were smoked and a group of us (women) sang the Welcome song many times as they passed through the smoke.

Little did we know on that cool, bright and clear spring day in October that our wonderful world was about to change nevertheless it did and we have all grown considerably from that change.

When I interviewed (yarned) Kim in 2010 I asked him several questions that exemplify his critical self-reflective processes regarding his engagement in the Third Space.

Marianne: When did you first hear about the Third Space?

Kim: I learnt about the Third Space in 2000, at about the same time as you. I remember us both yarning with Scott as he described this space and how we should introduce our non Indigenous pre-service teachers to the Aboriginal worldview through the Third Space. As I was the most senior Noongar in the group it fell to me to discover the language and ceremony that would be used to represent the Third Space at the end of the semester. At that time I was in the early stages of learning language and ceremony. The knowledge that it was my responsibility to provide Noongar language and ceremony motivated me to increase the time I spent learning with Elders. Remember we had done all that work in the previous semester to prepare for the visit by the Obijwe People from the USA.

Marianne: Yes I remember the Obijwe visit (the Obijwe people are Native Americans from the area of the Great Lakes in the USA. Their cultural revival after colonisation was a shining example for us all and inspired hope that Noongar people could establish a similar revival of their own cultural through language, ceremony and song). That was fantastic and really seemed to demonstrate the shared journey of First Nations people from other parts of the world.

Kim: I continued to learn from my Elders but it was the second year that we ran the learning journey that I really had the knowledge required to create the Noongar cultural space that we wanted.

Marianne: How has knowledge of the Third Space changed the way you see the world now (2010)?

The Third Space has changed the way that I engage with non-Aboriginal people, especially those clients in the Cultural Awareness workshops. In the beginning I would have clients who just did not want to be there and resented 'wasting time' learning about the Aboriginal worldview. Although I never said anything these people would hurt me with the things they said about Aboriginal people and their complete lack of engagement. They were ignorant people and wanted to remain so. Now, though I understand that much of that lack of respect and often nastiness

was driven by the fear that is associated with ignorance. In fact my initial reactions of anger and resentment towards these people were also driven by fear. This fear can actually be called fear of the 'other' and comes from a lack of understanding of the others worldview and how they are placed in that worldview. Some of the most aggressive and rude clients have been those who have only had negative experiences with Aboriginal people and thus, in a very human fashion, they close the door on 'those people' who have caused them pain. How can I judge them when I also reacted in a similar fashion on hearing their comments and feeling their negativity? Sometimes it was hard to stay in the room but, as you know, we all made these sacrifices because we believed that the message we were seeking to give was important and might possibly open people to the positive and beautiful nature that is Noongar culture.

As time passed and I learnt more language, engaged more with Elders and community, I realised that there were many flaws within the Noongar community and that many of these flaws had a lot to do with the processes associated with colonisation and internalised oppression.

Marianne: What do you mean by internalised oppression?

Kim: Internalised oppression is something that every First Nations person will experience in their lives. This oppression is created by the belief of others (both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal) that this person will fail in some way. Sometimes this failure is at school and thus education is rejected. In some circumstances this failure at school may lead to anger and overt aggression or a complete disrespect of the 'other' worldview, values, attitudes and beliefs. Because of this anger and disrespect the person may commit crimes such as theft, assault and abusive behavior to people they consider 'other'. They may present as very aggressive, uncaring and remorseless with regard to these crimes. Today we can see evidence of this in the large number of Aboriginal people incarcerated in our jails.

Sometimes internalised oppression can lead to substance abuse as a method of escaping the constant failure and the hopelessness associated with this failure. I realise now that when I felt angry and hurt in those

early workshops that that was a form of internalised oppression as I wanted to share my knowledge of my culture with clients and they basically slapped my face and told me to go away as they were not interested and anyway, they were busy and did not have time to listen to something that they considered unimportant.

Marianne: So how did you deal with your own internalised oppression?

Kim: As I learnt more and more about my culture and about the Third Space I realised that I needed to bring these clients into the Third Space with me. On occasions some clients were very resistant and would even walk out of the workshop. I would try not to push a person that far because the last thing I wanted to do was cause harm. Remember that workshop we were doing together when Scott jetted in from the Eastern states?

Marianne: How could I forget? Talk about the cat amongst the pigeons.

Kim: On that day as we sat laughing at Scott and his high jinks with the clients little did we know that at least half of them could not handle the severity of the lesson. They were too afraid to do anything about it at the time but complained bitterly later.

Marianne: Yes I remember that we both had to go and apologise and pour gallons of oil on those troubled waters.

Kim: Knowledge of the Third Space has made me realise that the 'other' can feel as upset as I did in those early workshops. I now try to raise people's consciousness to engage in another worldview by going through the Third Space. This means that if it all gets too much for them they can return to their comfortable first space with no harm done. I do not want to run workshops like Jane Elliot (Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes, 2009) where the 'other' is shamed into submission as this is a continuation of the past. I think we have all learnt what oppression does to people and I don't want to inflict that on others. Working in the Third Space is a comfortable place for me now. I can engage with anybody on any level because the Third Space led me to learn about my Aboriginality which in turn has led me to know myself. In this knowledge I now want to teach as many people as possible about Aboriginal culture and Noongar culture

in particular and I have found that the process for doing this is best achieved by using the Third Space.

Kim as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

Kim and I have had a long and sometimes rocky relationship, however Kim has taught me that “being the wrong shape” has nothing to do with me personally but it is more to do with a client’s expectation that an Aboriginal person will deliver cultural awareness. This is as it should be however, in the early days there was no Aboriginal person who could deliver from a Third Space perspective. At the time I failed to realise that the clients in the workshops were open to taking the place of learner but they did not want to assume that place with me as teacher because I was not Aboriginal. This says more about the client than it does about me. The message that I attempted to share was related to my journey from my first to my second and eventually into the Third Space. These clients did not realise that my journey is similar to the one that each of them would need to make if they wished to reside in the Third Space. Many of these clients believed, and this belief continues today, that it is a short walk from being culturally unaware to being culturally aware. This is one of the misconceptions that can inadvertently be produced by half day or one day cultural awareness workshops. To enter the Third Space the person must be far more than culturally aware, they should be culturally conscious of the ‘other’ culture. This consciousness cannot be achieved in a day but takes much longer and includes engagement in the learner’s second space (the other worldview). This engagement allows the person to understand how the ‘other’ is feeling and why they may be feeling that way.

Now I am happy to leave the Cultural Awareness to Aboriginal people. I would have been happy to do this from the outset but I did learn how difficult it is to be a proud Aboriginal when all those around you are asking questions that you are still asking yourself. I enjoy doing a workshop with Kim as then we demonstrate the Third Space and I am happy to take the role of learner and in this way the clients can find their own level of comfort.

I am very happy that I maintain my relationship with Kim as together we have learnt about the Third Space and the interchangeable roles of teacher/learner within this space. It has been a learning journey for us both over the last 10 years, but now we are comfortable in that space we are considering wider options.

2004 – 2006

After the demise of the Indigenous program at the university Kim, Scott and I worked on the development of Kooya Consultancy. Scott, Kim and I completed many grueling workshops both together (these were always better experiences as we had each other and could change the workshop if necessary) and separately, however, there was an overriding complaint about me and that was that I was not Aboriginal.

To alleviate this problem my old friend Kathleen was brought in to work/train with me. Kathleen and I have been on many learning journeys together over the last 10 years and I was very interested to interview Kathleen for although we have known each other for 10 years I did not know about her school experiences. I was also very interested in hearing about her personal self reflection and meaning making of our workshops together and her understanding of the Third Space. We do not often engage in discussions about the 'glory days' because, as women, we have far more important issues to discuss and these issues are located in the here and now. So here is Kathleen's story and my story as well for that time.

Yarns with Kathleen

Kathleen is a Noongar woman who lives in Perth and works within the Western Australian Public Service. Kathleen's father is Irish and her mother is Noongar. Kathleen's mother was a member of the Stolen Generations and she was also the first Aboriginal woman to achieve a degree in Fine Arts from a university in Perth. Kathleen is also an artist and a deadly drummer. I first met Kathleen when she was at the Aboriginal Music School studying for a Diploma in Music. Kathleen was involved in my first foray into research in a small project at a primary school in Perth. This project engaged Aboriginal students from the university and the music school in mentoring upper Primary school students who were in danger of disconnecting. Kathleen was also involved with me in delivering Cross Cultural Awareness to Entry Level Prison Officers and other such people from a government department in Perth.

Kathleen, like many young Aboriginal women, had her children when she was quite young. I asked somebody as to why these parenting partnerships start when the parents are so young and the answer is that there will always be someone to look after the baby because of family, especially grandparents.

Kathleen has been generous enough to relate some of her stories about her first days at school. Kathleen is a Referendum baby, as she was born in 1967, however equal rights for Aboriginal people took a long time to float across the Nullabor Plain (see Appendix 3) and her experiences are held by many people of her age. There are many Australian Aboriginals of Kathleen's age that had negative school experiences and hence, they may have reservations regarding schools and sending their children to school. Due to these negative experiences some parents may even prepare their children for the 'war' which still rages in many classrooms and playgrounds regardless of what staff may attempt. This war continues on a daily basis and serves nobody, like most wars. Nonetheless, like most wars, the attrition levels are high and many young Aboriginal people simply give up school, or worse, become what they have been told they will become and that is a resident of a Juvenile Detention Center, thereby proving that the detractors were correct, thus the Aboriginal youth declares a continued war on those who are 'other' to him or her.

Marianne: Kathleen, what are your memories of primary school.

Kathleen: My first day at school was horrendous and traumatic. I had never been away from my family before, not to kindergarten or pre-primary. This was it and I remember holding on to my mother's skirt until I was pried off.

After six weeks at school the teacher decided that there must be something wrong with me as I had not uttered a word the whole time. In answer to my silence it was decided that I was 'simple'. This has left a long standing dislike of school (not education, just school) which is probably not what we want as 'school should be fun' but school is not fun when teachers play favorites and promote their own often racist

cultural baggage and you happen to be a member of the particular race in question.

So I ran away from school and came home and luckily someone was there. My Mum took me back to school but at least everybody knew there was a problem. So much for school being safe and nurturing eh!

Looking back I can now see the problem which was that the teacher had no idea that Aboriginal people become silent when they are in a place they do not understand. Through silence we make sense of the situation.

On top of this I was bullied on a daily basis because I was Black. I remember when I was very young that I didn't have a lunch box (Mum did it the old way and lunch went in a paper bag) and that made me different. The teacher, probably well intentionally, put the brown paper bag up the front of the classroom on her desk so that the contents would not get squashed. All morning all the other students could see it and I was 'shame'.

My school days were a blur of racism from both teachers and students. Teachers especially, who every primary student wants to be liked and appreciated by, looked at Aboriginal students as if they were lesser beings. By the time I reached high school I was becoming a punk.

At least I didn't end up residing at a Juvenile Detention Center and that was because my parents cared and would not have allowed it. My rage against the machine was made much worse by constantly feeling second best and second hand. Feeling that I would never be good enough no matter what I did.

These feelings of inadequacy are underlined by a story I heard recently about a little Wongi girl (Kalgoorlie Region, WA, Appendix 4). When she got home from her first day at school she rushed into the bathroom and jumped into the bath. Her mother came into the bathroom to find her scrubbing her skin with the laundry scrubbing brush until it nearly bled. Her Mum asked what she was doing she replied "I am scrubbing the black off myself so I won't be dirty anymore and people will like me". How sad is that and this happened not long ago in 2010.

Marianne: When did you learn how to code switch?

Kathleen: One day, while I was at the music school, I heard about code switching. I could not believe that there was a term that existed for how my life seemed to be running. I had learnt how to code switch as a matter of survival. To realise that there was a name for an action I completed on a daily basis made me feel a lot better. I didn't feel so different anymore and decided that lots of people code switched as a method of survival when working in a culture other than their own.

By the time I met Kathleen she had mellowed somewhat and was studying at the music school. When we had finished our work at the primary school we kept bumping into each other. She came and spoke to pre-service teachers at a university in Perth for me on several occasions and finally, met Scott Fatnowna. This is when Kathleen learnt about the Third Space.

It was then that Kathleen's apprenticeship began in earnest. At that time I was delivering Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Workshops to staff from a government department in Perth. As you can imagine this was actually like passing through Dante's seven hells on a daily basis. It was decided that I need to be "Noongar-afied" (that is the workshops would be more credible if I had a Noongar working with me). So began our journeys into fiery places and I learnt firsthand what racism and sexism were all about. To start off with I was not Aboriginal, but Kathleen was and so that cancelled that complaint out. Then we were also both women delivering to a mainly male audience who actually hated Aboriginal people because all their experiences had been negative, this is understandable as they worked in the prisons.

For six months Kathleen and I would torment ourselves to attempt to teach these people critical reflective thinking and self awareness. Some sessions were worse than others and sometimes we would manage to complete our mission and the participants would be changed and moved to look beyond their own comfortable lives and at the 'other' with understanding and sensitivity.

Kathleen takes up the story:

During this time I was investigating my Noongar identity and this was a product of working in the Third Space with you and Scott. I was asking questions like what was the meaning of my Aboriginal identity which I felt I had suffered with all my life? What was good about it? I began talking to my Mum and learnt what was good about it and how I should be proud, but I learnt about my mother's story and that she had been "taken away" as a child. This story had never really been talked about before I started asking questions. I was aware of it but didn't know the details probably because I hadn't wanted to know up until then. The night I finally heard all the details of my mother's removal as a child was also the night before you had asked me to run the first hour of the workshop because you had some school/kid business to take care of. By the time you arrived the room was all quiet and strained.

I was still pretty upset about what my Mum had told me the night before but I thought I should be professional and anyway I wanted to support you as you supported me. I started by telling them my story and before I knew what was happening someone asked me why I was there because I was not a 'real Aboriginal'. The reason they had asked that question was because I had told them that my father was Irish and that I didn't speak language (her Aboriginal language).

These two facts were enough for the members of this workshop to decide that I was 'not Aboriginal'. Somehow I managed to deal with this incident in a calm manner and moved on to the next topic which was, unfortunately, "Past Policies and Practices". These were the very policies and practices that had been the cause of my mother's removal from her family at 4 years of age.

Oh that was a bad day, after hearing about my Mum's removal the night before, being pilloried by those insensitive people and then

seeing the start of the movie Rabbit Proof Fence, (2002). When we got to the point where the girls are taken away something broke inside me. I just could not stop crying, all those years of cruelty and inequality came flowing out of me.

I am glad you let me go home because I just could not have gone back into that room with those people.

Needless to say there were complaints but neither Kathleen nor I cared. We had done our bit and I thought we had failed. We had not failed because Kathleen moved on and became stronger and I even returned some years later to deliver those workshops again. I must admit that the clients are actually very nice people and there are a lot more Aboriginal people working in that government department now. I also think that many more non-Aboriginal Australians have engaged with Aboriginal people in a positive way in their lives and thus, they are more open to learning and to change. As a final question I asked Kathleen what her understanding of the Third Space was.

My understanding of the Third Space comes from you and Scott and the work we did together. It was not until I learnt about code switching at the Music school and then met you that I could even consider that any wadjellas (White person) could have anything in common with me and my experiences. But when I met you mob I suddenly realised that there was a place for wadjellas and that I could learn a lot from them, but in a kind of controlled environment. It was because of the work I did in the Third Space that I decided to investigate my own cultural identity and have those yarns with my Mum. I reckon it was all a part of my life journey and now I have lots of good relationships with wadjellas and know that it is only by working together that any real changes can be made. I can't say I loved working with you mob but it certainly changed the way I looked at the world and also set me up for what I do now. I had no trust for wadjellas in the past and even saw them as my tormentors but after knowing you (Marianne) I know that this torment is not just restricted to us blackfellas. It is

*just a part of human nature generally speaking and good people
can find each other and work together to make changes happen.*

Kathleen now works at a government department on a full time basis and is involved in Aboriginal Art and artists, making sure they know what is available and how to access it. Kathleen is a living, breathing example of the Third Space as she works with both worldviews but tries to maintain a Third Space stance, which can be difficult. It was funny when we sat down to have this “yarn” because it made me realise that we had all moved on and in a positive way. Kathleen and I don’t need the Third Space anymore because we are just two women who are very good friends and I like to think we will always be.

Kathleen as Learner/Teacher - Marianne as Teacher/Learner

I have known Kathleen for 11 years now and although our relationship began on a professional level we have continued to strengthen and deepen this relationship over time.

When I interviewed Kathleen we discussed code switching and all the ramifications inherent in this skill. Kathleen recalls that from the time she heard about code switching, which was a word that described the way she functioned as a human being, she has felt a lot more comfortable in her own skin. Suddenly there was a name for the way she lived and if there was a name then there must be other people who lived the same way as she did. This gave Kathleen hope as she was not the only person who functioned in two worlds.

Over the 11 years that I have known Kathleen I have seen her suffer, mainly through her children. Kathleen became a grandparent when she was 36 years old. Both her daughters had children when they were 15 or 16 years old and both girls managed to pick the most objectionable partners available. Through Kathleen’s daughter I have witnessed the outcomes of domestic violence, alcohol and drug addiction and the negative side of an extended family (her daughter’s partner’s families). Kathleen has been telephoned by the Police at 3.00am and had to go and find her daughter, who was standing on the railway tracks waiting for the train to come and finish her off.

Kathleen has given me permission to include the following narrative as she hopes it will lead to understanding and help others.

Her daughter was in a terrible state; however, Kathleen then had to go and find her grandchildren. She found her grandchildren in a filthy house with the baby sitting on the kitchen floor, surrounded by broken glass, wearing nothing but a nappy in the middle of winter at 4.00am in the morning. The child was blue with cold and crying pathetically. The baby had been crying for a long time and had not been fed or changed. The adults, her daughters partner, the child's father, and his family were sitting on the lounge out of their minds on drugs and alcohol and incapable of attending to the child. Kathleen walked into this scenario and understandably lost her composure to such an extent that the Police were called. The police told her she could not take the baby, or the other children, because they were with their father and grandparents. The fact that these people were incapable of caring for themselves, let alone a baby and two other pre-school age children was not seen as a mitigating factor by the police. The police had been told that in such circumstances they needed to be 'culturally aware' and that as the children were with a parent and grandparents, unless there had been a physical injury, the situation had to wait for the morning and the Department of Child Protection (DCP) to send somebody to assess the situation. Kathleen was told that if she removed the children she would be breaking the law and would be arrested. Finally the Police agreed that the baby would need to be taken into care and Kathleen could take that child only, the other grand children had to remain.

As Kathleen left the house her other grandchildren were crying and screaming for her to take them as well but the Police could not let her due to 'cultural circumstances'. She had to drive away with the sound of her grandchildren screaming in her ears. She then drove to the hospital to make sure her daughter was OK. By the end of the day the children had been given into her care, very traumatised by the whole experience, on the other hand, had this been a non-Aboriginal family the children would have been removed immediately. I wonder why there are still different rules for Aboriginal people. It was obvious to the Police that the father and his family were in no condition to care for the children, but they

could do nothing to resolve the situation until the morning when the DCP had come and assessed the situation. As it was DCP, who are overworked and understaffed, did not arrive at the house until the afternoon. This gave the protagonists time to clean up the house and themselves. It was only due to the Police report from the previous night that told of the conditions that they found the children in and the state of the 'responsible adults' that the children were removed. Kathleen and I discussed this and we decided that there is a fear regarding the removal of Aboriginal children from Aboriginal families because of the past (Stolen Generations). In this instance the Police believed that the children should be removed, as did Kathleen who was the children's maternal grandmother, but this could not be done until DCP assessed the situation. The reason DCP had to assess the situation was because no physical harm had been done to the children. The implication here is that all Aboriginal people live in unhygienic circumstances and under the influence of drugs and alcohol. This is so far from the truth as many Aboriginal people do not drink alcohol and do not take drugs.

After this particular incident Kathleen had to take a week off work to resolve the multiple situations with her daughter and her grandchildren. She was so ashamed to have to tell her manager what had happened as she had to take leave without pay. Her manager was kind and understanding but Kathleen told me that when she returned to work everybody looked at her and she could almost feel them shaking their heads and saying "That is what it is like if you are Aboriginal", but up until that time they had believed that Kathleen was somehow different, she was "not like that". The implication is that if you are Aboriginal you will live an itinerant life, you will drink alcohol and take drugs and you will be on unemployment benefits. How can we banish these beliefs in our society when this is what people see on the TV and read in the newspapers? As Kathleen's mother said, "That is not Aboriginal culture. That is no culture at all." It is not easy being Aboriginal in Australia. Most people think that Aboriginal people receive Social Security above the level of other recipients which is untrue. I think there are a certain group of Aboriginal people who are intergenerational welfare recipients who have learned the system due to the amount of time engaged in it. It is these same people who make it so difficult for the large percentage of Aboriginal people who are going about the business of working,

caring for their children, helping family members who are not as fortunate as themselves and generally behaving in the 'proper way'. It is not, and it has never been, easy to be Aboriginal in Australia.

Kathleen and I continue as friends and we keep on supporting each other. I do not get involved with her family business, but her daughters know when I am displeased and avoid me. I think those girls are a little bit frightened of me and Kathleen agrees. Kathleen is glad they are afraid of somebody. She told me the other day, after one of the more recent disasters involving her daughter (it was number 2 daughter this time and we believe they take it in turns), that when she told her daughter that I was coming over her daughter had suddenly become a little more pliant and was very polite and engaged when I arrived. I wish I had the same effect on my own children.

Kathleen and her mother have taught me so much about being Aboriginal and I am grateful to them both, they are amongst the most significant people in my life. I have witnessed their fortitude, strength of character and resilience after the most enormous personal disasters. They have taught me, shown me and allowed me to be part of their family and I feel very honored, however I am also aware that being Aboriginal, especially in a capital city in Australia in 2011, is not an easy identity to have and I doubt that it will be during my lifetime.

2007 – 2008

At Kooya Consultancy at the end of 2007, Kim asked me to write an Expression of Interest for a project associated with a university in Melbourne. This project revolved around the development of a workshop for career advisors in schools and their often stereotypical classification of senior Aboriginal students. Rarely would they advise a young Aboriginal student to remain in the sciences and attempt to progress through their final two years of schooling towards a degree in Medicine. It was believed that this may have been due to a lack of cultural understanding by the career advisors about Aboriginal people, and hence, a workshop to increase cultural competence amongst this group should be devised.

Aboriginal health is one of the four areas where Aboriginal people are underrepresented professionally. In the portfolio of justice, as discussed earlier (see Chapter 8) Aboriginal Australians are over represented both in prisons and the criminal justice system generally. Unfortunately, poor health may be due to poor housing which in turn is due to unemployment and unemployment is due to a lack of education.

Remarkably, our expression of interest was the one chosen, mainly because of our Third Space concept which may lead to a desire to cause change and engage with the ‘other’.

The two representatives from the university in Melbourne were a pair of wonderful women, one a mainstream Australian and one an Aboriginal who had worked together in their own version of the Third Space for five years. As time transpired I got to know them quite well and thus decided that they were people I wanted to discuss the Third Space theory with in more detail.

I organised two interviews in Melbourne with Janice and Marlene and found that many of the issues that we have in Western Australia also occur in Victoria, however Victoria seems to be creating a space for reconciliation far more rapidly than Western Australia (this is possibly historical as Western Australia is often termed the “wild, wild, west” which alludes to characteristics found in the western part of the USA in the 18th and 19th Century).

Yarns with Marlene

Marlene is an Australian Aboriginal woman (Koori) who grew up in Victoria, Australia (see Appendix 3) in and around the Lake Tyres area. Marlene and I have a great deal in common but we are from opposite sides of the Third Space. Marlene and I would be around the same age and we both grew up and completed our schooling in Victoria. I imagine I could be considered privileged as I attended a private school followed by my undergraduate degree at Melbourne University.

Marlene on the other hand has really done it the hard way but this has not stopped her as she has recently been awarded her PhD.

Although Marlene and I came from opposite sides of the Third Space we both needed to learn about the 'other' which for Marlene was mainstream Australia and for me Aboriginal Australia. This was done experientially by both of us at different times in our lived experience and thus, it seemed both interesting and important to talk with her. The journeys that we both made were long, arduous and very different nonetheless we both arrive in the same place which is the Third Space.

During our conversation I asked Marlene some very important questions regarding working with non-Aboriginal people in an academic institution.

Marianne: Have you had positive or negative experiences with non Aboriginal people working in an academic institution?

Marlene: It is usually fine but there is a lot of code switching. I have been told that I am not a 'real' Australian Aboriginal because of my light coloured skin. There seem to remain many non Aboriginal Australians who believe that a 'real' Australian Aboriginal is very dark skinned and probably does not speak Australian Standard English. These images of Aboriginality seep through the façade of reconciliation and are very indicative of many mainstream Australians' beliefs regarding Aboriginal Australians.

I have noticed that when I work with many non-Aboriginal people that many of these people do not have much cultural competence. An example of this is when a young student, who was well on his way to becoming a surgeon, asked me why he needed to learn this crap as he would never be dealing with Australian Aboriginals. I replied that it was a good thing that he was an anesthesiologist because if any Australian Aboriginals should encounter him at least they would be anesthetized, hence, saving them the unfortunate experience of actually engaging with him as a human being.

Marianne: Can you please elaborate on some of the more difficult experiences you have had while working with non Aboriginal people.

Marlene: When a non-Aboriginal person has written many papers on “Engaging with Australian Aboriginal People” and consider themselves to be an expert on the subject, but the protagonist has never talked to, nor worked with, any Australian Aboriginal people. The processes involved when working across any two worldviews do include engagement with those people from the other world view and this must be done experientially. If these experiences are missing the engagement becomes somewhat voyeuristic in nature and this in itself shows a lack of respect and understanding. To achieve the respect and understanding necessary non-Aboriginal Australians must be able to code switch from one worldview to another in a similar fashion as their Australian Aboriginal peers as otherwise all the work of understanding and engagement is done by the Australian Aboriginal person. Unfortunately in too many cases it is the Australian Aboriginal person who must do all the work to create a Third Space between their own worldview and the worldview of mainstream Australia. This process has led many Australian Aboriginal people to the conclusion that engaging with ‘the other’ is exhausting and often disappointing work and, hence, they choose not to engage in the mainstream worldview.

Marianne: In your opinion what are some of the important qualities and attributes required by non Aboriginal Australians when working with Aboriginal Australians?

Marlene: Respect for the Aboriginal worldview, intellectual property and community. It is respect that is required to engage in any meaningful way with any worldview other than your own.

The Third Space creates this respect and equality of power as each worldview is seen as an entity in its own right and the participants in this space have come there to learn from each other about that ‘other’ worldview.

Marianne: What do you think is one of the worst misconceptions held by non-Aboriginal Australians?

Marlene: I think possibly one of the most insulting concepts can be found in the belief that many non-Aboriginal Australians have that all Aboriginal Australians are only in their job because that position is 50D [these positions have been developed by government to create equity in the work force and only Aboriginal Australians can apply for these positions.] This is indicative of the attitude held by many in this country and it is rude and disrespectful especially when many of these people have worked long and hard, and often from a place with no privilege, to achieve the outcomes they have reached. We must all attempt to reserve our value judgments and actually get to know people before presuming that they are there as a token Australian Aboriginal thereby creating the illusion of political correctness. Sometimes this may be the case, however most Aboriginal Australians in well paid and responsible positions have got there by hard work and much blood, sweat and tears as unfortunately racism is a mindset which takes many years to dissolve.

Marlene has recently completed and submitted her PhD and she maintains that:

The reason I do all the things that I do is for other Australian Aboriginal people who do not have my education and thus I represents not just myself but many other Australian Aboriginal people.

Scott Fatnowna has a saying and that is “*behind every Australian Aboriginal person you may meet, and especially those you may teach or interact with, their stand twenty more that you cannot see*”. It is these people who you may never know who are also effected by you and your behaviors. An example of this can be found in Marlene’s PhD as she is a role model not just for Aboriginal Australians but for all Australians.

Marlene as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

My yarns with Marlene underlined many of the pieces of information that I had learnt from other Aboriginal people. Marlene has suffered the same stigma as

Kathleen, due to her light coloured skin, she is often not considered a 'real Aboriginal'. Aboriginality has nothing to do with one's skin colour, rather it has to do with how a person defines themselves. I think that the skin colour business is a left over from times long past when Aboriginal children were removed from their mothers when the father was a White man. This was done under the misguided belief that such children had a greater chance of assimilation into the mainstream world because of their 'White blood'. Although this may seem ludicrous to an outsider these were the grounds for the removal of Aboriginal children under the various Acts of Parliament. Whether a person is Aboriginal or non Aboriginal their 'blood' is the same. As David Gulpillil maintains "no matter if you are fish, bird, animal or human being, all have blood. There is only one red blood." (One Red Blood, 2002).

Marlene and I also discussed non Aboriginal people who engage in research on (rather than with) Aboriginal people. I was always rather afraid that I might be seen that way but Marlene told me that that was not the case as I worked with Aboriginal people. Researching and working with/on Aboriginal people seems to have become a popular past time recently as more and more non-Aboriginal people find an interest in such investigations. It was through my yarns with Marlene that I found that many of my beliefs regarding the 'Aboriginal industry' were true. As funding increases so does the number of researchers, many of whom have never spent time with Aboriginal people. This is the respect issue that Marlene mentions. Marlene has had moments when she has had to bite her tongue as she has sat in meetings and been told all about Aboriginal people by a non-Aboriginal researcher who has become an 'expert' through reading research written by others who, may or may not, have engaged with Aboriginal people. These 'experts' are only expert by proxy and thus the action of 'working on' rather than 'working with' Aboriginal people remains.

Marlene and I also discussed the 50D positions and the stigma attached to such positions. These positions were created to help create equity as often Aboriginal people do not have formal qualifications but they do have lived experience. The latter is often far more useful than the former when working with other human beings.

Marlene and I also discussed code switching and non-Aboriginal people's ability to perform this action. This does not imply that non-Aboriginal people should become proficient in Aboriginal English, nor should they consider that when working with Aboriginal people that this is the *lingua franca*. Language is important for understanding the message a person is trying to give, however it is knowledge of the Aboriginal worldview, often contained within Aboriginal English, which is important. Such knowledge cannot be gained through books, journals or any other written format, it can only be gained by engagement and allowing oneself to accept the role of learner rather than teacher. This last lesson is one that many non-Aboriginal people find hard to accept, however if the lesson remains incomplete then code switching between world views becomes impossible as people will remain in their comfort zone which is their first space. In so doing they do not respect the remarkable knowledge fund associated with the Aboriginal world view.

Respect is a word that non-Aboriginal people should keep in the front of their minds, but respect does need to go both ways and, most importantly, it must be earned through deeds. There is a saying amongst Aboriginal people and that is "No good just to talk the talk. You have to walk the walk as well". It is the ability to talk the talk and walk the walk that creates respect as well as deep and enduring relationships with those who may have once been considered 'other'.

Yarns with Janice

Janice is Marlene's superior and a senior academic at a university in Victoria where they have been working together for five years. Janice is a non Aboriginal Australian and both she and Marlene work together in the field of Aboriginal Health. They are the human representation of the Third Space. These spaces take a long time to create and they must also be nurtured by the participants.

Janice and I discussed her working relationship with Marlene and what she has learnt from this experience.

Marianne: From your own experience what have you learnt about working with Aboriginal people from Marlene?

Janice: At the beginning of our working relationship I did not see that Marlene identified so deeply as an Aboriginal Australian as she is quite fair skinned and a very competent code switcher. It was not until later in our relationship, when I saw Marlene interacting with her family, that I realised that Marlene spends her working life in the Third Space and engages in code switching between the two worldviews. Code switching for Aboriginal Australians becomes an almost unconscious act the longer they work in the mainstream world. It is in fact an art form and for the inexperienced an exhausting practise. Code switching is an action that is required by any Australian Aboriginal person who wants to work in the mainstream world and is necessary so that people will listen to you whilst you put forward, and defend, other Aboriginal Australians who do not have these code switching abilities.

It was not until I saw Marlene with 'her mob' that I suddenly realised that both Marlene and her family had a completely different way of seeing the world. I also discovered 'waiting and silence' which is a useful tool very few non Aboriginal Australians are aware of, however it is a necessary method of behaviour if you wish to be respected and acknowledged. Waiting and silence can be described as the action of remaining the silent observer as Australian Aboriginal people discuss an

issue. As a non Aboriginal person your input is not required until later, and hence you must remain silent. This is a very difficult process for us from a Eurocentric worldview as the process is the antithesis of the behaviour that we acknowledge as correct when a group is discussing any issue. Once non Aboriginal people have grasped, and can practise, waiting and silence the respect which is given to you is immense as you have demonstrated respect for Australian Aboriginal ways of being by remaining silent.

Marianne: As your relationship with Marlene developed what did you learn about Aboriginal people that you had not known until working with Marlene?

Janice: As time has transpired I have come to realise that Australian Aboriginal people have a completely different way of seeing the world. Family always remains the dominant feature and the obligations and responsibilities associated with family are always the most important priority.

Many Australian Aboriginal people find leadership positions within the mainstream world very threatening; however when they have worked alongside non Aboriginal Australians for a long time this reticence to 'take charge' disappears as they become more proficient in the worldview held by non Aboriginal people. The whole concept of the boss is an anathema to many Australian Aboriginals as most decisions are discussed with everybody before the final choice is made. Being 'the boss' may also remind people of the past when the boss controlled every aspect of Australian Aboriginals lives (people such as the Chief Protector of Natives). To this day a letter from a government office is often feared. Government, and the bureaucrats associated with government, have often been accused of creating barriers between Australian Aboriginals and non Aboriginal Australians as everything must remain separate. I believe that health and education need to be joined, however whilst the silo mentality remains within government this will not happen. Unfortunately many of the bureaucrats who now deal with 'Indigenous issues' now reside in Canberra and many have never engaged with any Australian Aboriginal people. It is because of this that many of their suggestions

may hark back to the days when decisions were made on behalf of Australian Aboriginal people for 'their own good'.

Marianne: During the last five years what have you learnt regarding collecting data from Aboriginal people that you may not have known earlier?

Janice: It appears that an ongoing problem is excessive consultation. Ever since it became common knowledge that consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders needed to occur it has emerged that the process itself may be used to create 'jobs for the boys'. I have heard tales where the consultation process lasted three very interminable years and when the project actually started the community had lost all interest and hence the project was never completed. Consultation is a very necessary process, however when it continues for year upon year with no real change or outcome, besides further consultation, Australian Aboriginal people really begin to wonder 'what this white mob doing'.

Similar criticism has been directed at the fly-in/fly-out nature that many non Aboriginal researchers have now come to consider the best way to gather data. Australian Aboriginal people need to know who you are and to develop a relationship with you but this is not possible when researchers arrive for two weeks and then disappear for months on end. It is remarkable the amount of research that occurs in the Kimberley, for example, between the months of May and August, which of course also aligns with beautiful warm weather and glorious sunsets. As the season progresses through high temperatures and into the Wet there are no researchers left, only those they have attempted to research.

Marianne: From your own experience have you ever encountered the professional jealousy that may occur from other non-Aboriginal researchers regarding Third Space relationships?

Janice: These people have no idea of the time and nurturing which is required to produce these relationships and believe that they should have similar relationships with Australian Aboriginal people, which indeed they may, however the time involved to create and solidify these relationships, as trust and respect must be earned, is something they are unaware of and may not be prepared to engage in.

The processes involved in creating Third Space relationships can be engaged in by anybody nevertheless respect, trust and understanding of both the differences and similarities between two worldviews are vital ingredients, as is allowing and accepting that, at times you, as a non-Aboriginal person, must take a secondary role. The ability to engage in Third Space relationships requires time, patience, trust, respect and desire by both parties for the birth of the relationship.

Third space relationships add a new dimension to both people's lives and create spaces for new understandings, methodologies and solutions to problems which may have perplexed and confused prior to the Third Space relationship.

Janice as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

Yarning with Janice clarified many aspects that had caused me concern. I was beginning to believe that I had become somewhat cynical in the way I perceived many non-Aboriginal researchers. I was starting to think that I was viewing these people from my second space, and thus discounting the value of their research. Janice made me aware (again) of the responsibilities connected to a non-Aboriginal person who worked with Aboriginal people. In many cases, to the shock of the assembled audience, you do need to remind other non-Aboriginal researchers of important requirements, such as respect, the development of relationships, waiting and silence, and code switching. When reminding others of these important considerations you also need to speak from the Third Space. As a very junior academic, and as a non-Aboriginal person, people may question my right to make these comments; however, to maintain my own integrity and the integrity of the Third Space I do need to gently remind people of these important standards.

Equally, there can be times when Aboriginal people need to be reminded that the non-Aboriginal people who are trying desperately to engage with them are coming with open hearts and minds and that patience is required to teach these people the 'right way' of 'doing business'. It is also understandable that, at times, both groups throw their hands in the air and speak from their first space. It is often a lack of understanding and knowledge about the 'other' that causes the continued separation

of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. A Third Space practitioner is often, as Scott has said, a ‘cultural alchemist’ as well as a consummate diplomat.

By the beginning of 2008 there was more change as the previous year Scott had returned to NSW for family and personal reasons. I continued to work sporadically for Kooya but by this time I was beginning another journey and that was my PhD. I needed to concentrate on this and Kim was very much behind me to write all our stories down and in some way bring others to a place where they too could “learn us” and our Third Space methodology.

Chapter 11

Dreamtime Days

In Chapter 9, I continue to address the sixth research question: what were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space? In this chapter I continue the narrative of the Third space and introduce two new participants. In section 1, I have a yarn with Eric. I was especially privileged whilst working with Dreamtime (Aboriginal consultancy in Perth) to have as my co facilitator Eric, who is an 80 year old Noongar man and carries with him enormous cultural and historical knowledge. In section 2, I speak with Megan who is Eric's daughter and the owner of Dreamtime.

Introduction

In January 2007, whilst I continued working with Kim at Kooya and after Scott had left Western Australia, Kim employed Megan to help out with the workshops. By the end of 2007 Megan left Kooya and formed her own company called Dreamtime. She got a little work here and there but by the end of 2007 a very large tender was advertised. As both consultancies wanted to apply I wrote two tenders. I did not appear in either tender as a possible sub-contractor as I could not choose between the two.

Eventually Dreamtime was granted the one half of the tender and Kooya was granted the remaining half of the tender. Both tenders involved the delivery of Aboriginal Cultural Awareness to the various staff at the respective institutions.

I began delivering workshops for Dreamtime at the beginning of 2008. Megan was working with the Department in another role and could not co facilitate with me and thus, we needed somebody else to vindicate me culturally. It was at that time that I began working with Eric who is Megan's father and the most wonderful and wise Noongar man I have ever met.

I wanted to interview Eric regarding the Third Space, however when I spoke to him he did not know what the Third Space was. To describe this space I said that it was the way that we worked together. When the time came to have the interview it was more a yarn and I was happy to hear part of his story as he has been around for nearly eighty years and this in itself gives insightful historical knowledge. I wondered if the situation had changed for Noongars during the course of Eric's life. Aboriginal people have the most wonderful sense of humor and this is apparent here in my yarns with Eric.

Yarns with Eric

Eric is a Nyoognar man and was born in Kojonup in about 1930. Eric does not consider himself an Elder as he was not initiated. Eric's wife, Phoebe, was a strong woman and her grandfather was what they call a 'clever man' A 'clever man' is an Australian Aboriginal who has the gift of foresight. An example of this foresight was when someone would sicken and be taken to hospital. Eric continues "*the clever man would not visit people if they were going to live but if he suggested that we should visit someone in hospital it meant that this person would not survive*". A clever man can also see spirits and he would try to remain inside at night as otherwise it was hard to sleep. An example of this was when a little Noongar girl went missing. Eric takes up the story:

A search party was set up, (both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australians), and we drove out into the bush where she had last been seen. It was dark and cold and the clever man said "You may as well all go home because we will see this little girl walking down the road at sunrise". By this stage this man had been proven right so many times that most of the men did go home. In the morning the rain had cleared and there, walking down the road, as dry as a bone, came the little girl. She had no memory of where she had been all night or why she was completely dry after the heavy rain the night before. The clever man told me that her grandfather was looking after her and she would be alright. The one thing

which makes this a bit of a ghost story is that the little girl's grandfather had been killed six months earlier. Her grandfather's spirit had come and hypnotised the girl and taken her to shelter under the sheep lick (blocks of salt left out for the sheep to lick but covered by a small roof). She had no memory of this but was safe and sound.

There are many stories like this from the 1940's, and '50's. To this day there are still clever men around and they may sometimes be called "Feather Foot". They are not discussed and I will not discuss this further here. Eric did have the opportunity to become a clever man but he decided:

Not to take advantage of the opportunity as I had a family and the thought of spending two months or more in the bush eating raw meat with no shelter did not seem all that good. I also felt that I would not be able to handle the whole idea of being a clever man and wanted to be "normal".

Eric came from a large family and had four sisters and five brothers. As he was one of the younger children he did have the opportunity to attend school, however six of his older siblings did not have the opportunity and hence remained illiterate all their lives. Eric began school in 1937 when he was seven or eight and attended a primary school just outside of Perth. He recalls having a good relationship with the teacher and "when I did get "the cuts" (the cane) it was for a good reason. I had respect for the teacher and my mother made me go to school every day."

Eric continues:

The Noongar students were the ones who kept the school open because without them the numbers were so low (three or four students at the most) the school would have been closed. One day none of the Nygoogar kids arrived at school and this was because one older boy talked all us younger kids into 'taking the day off'.

The problem was that one day turned into big mobs of days and finally the school was closed. Our parents had sent us kids but the thought of spending the day in the bush was so tempting that it did not take much to see that this was a better way to spend the day rather than all locked up in a classroom. This went on for such a long time, (with the notes from school being intercepted by the older 'ring leader') that finally, the school was closed and nobody was the wiser. If my mother had have known what I was doing there would have been trouble but nobody knew and us kids held on to that guilty secret for many years.

Far from being the end of Eric's education he resumed school at another primary school and stayed there for two years:

This made me a Standard Six which is about the same as Grade six or seven these days. I could read and write and us Nygoogar kids were great at adding and subtracting as we all had small jobs and we knew all about money because we had worked hard for it. We could add and subtract in our heads and even multiplication was something that we could do easily.

When Eric left school at about the age of fourteen he went to work with his axe. In the early 1940's in Western Australia the process of clearing the land was in full swing and many Nyoongar's were employed in this pursuit. Eric tells me that:

A long time ago, a possum could travel from Perth to Kalgoorlie, (which is a distance of more than 600 kilometers) without his feet ever touching the ground.

This is because the land was forested and it was these forests which were cut down so that the European method of farming, fences, gates etc, could be engaged in.

The forests had a very important role in the cultural identity and spirituality of Noongar people. Cliff Humphries, who was an old Balladong Noongar man (who taught Kim the Noongar language) over a five year period.

Cliff Humphries was born in Beverley in 1910. He was raised with his first language being Noongar. Cliff has given his consent for the circulation of these stories, in the hope that they may contribute to protecting what remains of the original old growth forests of the southwest.

Noongar Land - Noongar Sprit

Before the coming of the Wadjulla (non-Aboriginal Australians) our forests played an important part in our spiritual well-being, identity and survival. The spirits of our dead were found inside both dead and living trees. Our capacity to hunt, seek healing and communicate spiritually was dependent upon our practices of putting into and returning to our Country the spirit of our people from where it had come. The Noongar forests are sacred to us. These places of old forest, untouched by the Wadjalla, continue to remain spiritual reservoirs.

The destruction of these very sacred places will destroy links to our ancestors which in turn will eliminate our capacity to remain spiritually healthy. (personal communication Kim Collard, 2009)

Unfortunately Aboriginal Australians and Noongars in particular, could find little work besides clearing the land. There was no such thing as Social Security and Aboriginal Australians were paid in kind (flour, tea, sugar and a little meat) rather than money. Their movements were restricted and unless they could organise employment for themselves the government (the Department of Native Welfare) sent them to various places far from home to work. In many ways Eric was lucky the day he walked into the farm at Kojonup for this is where he worked for four years with his father and brothers learning the “*axe trade*” (clearing land, cutting down trees using an axe).

Eric did flirt with the idea of going shearing “up north”, Eric takes up the story:

One day I met a “gun”(the fastest and most proficient shearer) shearer, an old White man, who told me that I could earn lots of money if I went and worked away from home. When I got home I talked to my wife about it. She said that if I wanted to go I could but I looked at my children and my life and decided that I would miss them all too much. There are more important things in the world than money and family life is one of them.

I asked Eric if any of his brothers and sisters had taken ‘citizenship’ (Aboriginal Australians who appeared to be assimilating were given this opportunity.)

My brother was granted citizenship but it was not all it was cracked up to be because if a person took citizenship they had to live in town and cut all ties with their family. If you did not do this then your citizenship was revoked or you could even end up in jail. Similar rules applied to the drinking of alcohol. My oldest brother took citizenship and although he could buy alcohol he could never drink it on the premises and was not allowed to give it to other blackfella’s who didn’t have citizenship. If you were caught, then when you went to court, you had better make sure you brought your toothpaste, but most people are so close to family that they did the time rather than say no.

The most important thing in most Aboriginal Australians lives is their family. Eric describes this:

Family will look after you when you are down, support you when you are in trouble and through all the trouble faced by a person family will continue to nurture you.

Eric continues with his story:

I stayed in the land clearing game until I went to Mt Baker to do some casual farm work for a lady whose husband was away at the war (World War II). I worked chaff cutting, fruit picking, feeding sheep and general farm laboring. From 1945 I remained on the property at Mt Barker and “grew” my family up there. I worked seven days a week from sunup to sunset and received one weeks paid holiday a year. I was very happy and this farm seemed to only hire Noongars, so there was plenty of family around.

I asked Eric about racism in those days and he said:

There was always a divide between the “wadjella’s (White people) and the Noongars. For example when lunch time arrived all the Noongars would eat out on the veranda even after the 1967 referendum.

When I asked Eric why Noongars continued to eat lunch outside he said:

We just felt more comfortable out there. We could talk about anything we wanted to and didn’t have to worry about upsetting anybody.

Eric also told me about the curfew for Aboriginal people:

It was an offense to be in the town after 6.00pm and you could end up in prison for three to six months.

I asked Eric if it upset him to have so many government controls on how he lived his life and he said:

No not really, we all wanted to be home eating tea by 6.00pm because it was dark or getting that way and there was no electricity. Anyway what we going to do in town with no pub? Better off being home, nice feed and warm.

Eric and I have continued to deliver Cultural Awareness workshops, however Eric had a health crisis at the beginning of 2010 and he needs to take care of himself and only attends the workshop for 2 or 3 hours. This is long enough for him to cause change amongst the clients which he continues to do on a regular basis.

Eric's health has not improved but he is "*still hanging in there*". It was my privilege to have spent time with him and to hear all his true stories. He is a wise Noongar gentleman and I hope that soon his health improves.

Eric as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Learner/Teacher

Eric and I began working together in the first half of 2007. We both approached each other with respect and not a little caution. Eric wondered about this wadjella woman who knew so much about Noognars and had an 'education'. I, on the other hand, wondered about Eric and whether we could work together. I suppose we were both coming from our first space in the beginning. Fortunately Megan was there in the beginning to help smooth the way for a very productive working relationship.

I would ask Eric questions such as the reason so many Aboriginal girls fell pregnant when they were so young and he would answer me. Eric would ask me questions such as "Why are they so strict about the dress code here?" As we worked together we developed an easy and relaxed relationship. We used to laugh a lot and sometimes, even in the direst circumstances, Eric would find the funny side.

Eric would call the clients in our workshops his "little wadjellas" and was excited to meet each group that passed through. He did not feel that way in the beginning. He was nervous about me and all those other White people. Eric told me he had never spent so much time with White people in his life. He was relieved that I was there with him because "You are more like a Noongar than a wadjulla". When I reflected

on this particular statement I realised that Eric and I were in the Third Space, however, I had walked over to my second space (Noongar worldview) to engage with Eric. It was during the process of our work and our yarns that we walked together, metaphorically speaking, into the Third Space. It was in this space that Eric could ask me questions about my worldview (my first space) and vica versa. We could both ask these questions because of our relationship. We both knew that we would never judge the questions, and thus the questioner, and we also knew that there was no hidden agenda, each question was asked in good faith. Eric and I supported each other through many grueling workshops and he had respect for me as I seemed to be able to gather the clients together and take them on a journey into another worldview. Eric would be there to tell his ‘true stories’ and legitimise me, however, we actually personified the Third Space and our happy and easy relationship wrapped our clients up, nurtured them, and taught them about another worldview. As these clients saw how productive our relationship was they determined themselves that they would also like to have similar relationships with Aboriginal people which many of them have had and continue to have. Eric used to tell me how important our work was and in hindsight I can see that he was correct. The positive outcomes for clients from our workshops had more to do with those same clients witnessing our Third Space relationship than with the actual content.

Eric has been one of my greatest teachers, not just for Aboriginal culture, but for life in its entirety. I would worry and stress about certain problems but he would say that I should just calm down, relax, “What is the worst thing that can happen?” I would then tell him and he would proceed to discount almost every point and make me laugh as well. Eric reminded me to have faith in life itself and more importantly to enjoy every single day “because you don’t know how many you have left”. To meet and work with somebody like Eric was the healing balm that I required at the time and went a long way to restoring my tattered faith in life. I am eternally grateful to Eric and our yarns and hope that life continues to treat him well in every way.

Yarns with Megan

Megan is Eric's youngest daughter and she has struggled as a single mother for many years; she is bright, intelligent and has an enormous grasp of the Third Space as she has worked for the Public Service for many years. Megan and I have completed many Cultural Awareness workshops together and I know she finds maintaining her Third Space very trying and exhausting at times. On one particular occasion (and one of our first workshops under the banner of Dreamtime) she appeared dazed. When I asked her what was wrong she said "*Oh these wadjullas, they wearing me out*". I asked her if she would just like to be left alone and I would take over and she said: "*Nah, you right, you just like a blackfella*". She then went outside for half an hour whilst I attended to the clients whose only transgression was their huge desire to learn everything in one day. This is impossible and continues to be one of the failings of short cultural awareness workshops as client's think/hope/want to achieve a complete understanding of Aboriginal culture and people by the time they reach the end of the day.

My conversations with Megan are intriguing and give a small window into the lived experience of an Aboriginal woman in the 21st century and her struggle to remain attached to both worldviews without upsetting either.

Megan is a Noongar woman from the Mount Barker region in south western, Western Australia. Megan is Eric's daughter and the great granddaughter of the 'clever man' which Eric mentioned. Megan is also completing her final year in Law at a university in Victoria and hopes eventually to become a magistrate in the West Australian judicial system. The overarching reason for this is to help her children and her nephews and nieces as:

They are so helpless within that system, as they have been since colonisation. My belief is that Aboriginal people caught up in the legal and prison system, and believe me there are many, need Aboriginal people to defend them as we have a greater understanding of the backgrounds which may lead Aboriginal people into the maze which is the legal system. This belief can be well substantiated as many non-Aboriginal people in Western

Australia, especially the privileged who complete Law degrees, have little to no knowledge or understanding of Aboriginal people. They are unaware of Aboriginal English, which can be a first language for many Aboriginal Australians, and of many of the cultural protocols involved. An example of this can be found in Kalgoorlie (see Appendix 3) which is the central regional and government hub for people from the Lands (the Lands stretch all the way to the tri border region between Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory). Due to numerous government enquiries, and much consultation, many women were coming forward and relating their experiences of rape and domestic violence on a scale which cannot be imagined (this is almost always alcohol fuelled and is the reason many Australian Aboriginal communities are “dry” and alcohol is banned). Many of these women were older women who had had little to do with non-Aboriginal people and nothing to do with courts and lawyers in their lives. They had courageously volunteered to speak about these things, often at their own personal expense, and under the threat of violence. In response to this the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) sent two young (23 year old) male solicitors to interview these women. Initially the DPP were surprised that the women would not respond in any way to the questions put to them. Even ignoring the cultural protocols surrounding men’s and women’s business, and the nature of the crimes which had been committed, why would anybody send two young males to interview women in their forty’s and fifty’s regarding crimes of a violent sexual nature and actually expect these women, who were already in fear for their lives, to discuss these things with a young (White) man. Needless to say after some period of time they tried again and sent an Aboriginal Australian woman with a law degree to do the pre-case interviews. Miraculously this woman had no problems and the perpetrators were convicted and brought to ‘justice’.

These are the kinds of reasons Megan has studied Law. Megan continues with her thoughts:

Unlike many of my contemporaries I have maintained my links with community. There is an unfortunate tendency for many Aboriginal people who have gained tertiary and post-tertiary qualifications to disconnect themselves from the larger Aboriginal community, however many of these same people hold positions within government to advise on Aboriginal Australian issues, develop policy for Aboriginal Australians and are the Aboriginal Reference Group Members for high level policy decisions and many research outcomes are based on their opinions. They are nothing but “coconuts” and do not represent community, however they do represent their own and often their families’ interests at the expense of the larger Aboriginal community, hence nothing really changes, even with the addition of huge amounts of tax payer’s money. Much of the time this money does not reach the community members it was allotted to but is consumed in endless consultation by highly paid consultants who know somebody somewhere.

Megan as Teacher/Learner – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

When Megan and I first met each other we instantly clicked. In the first instance we would discuss our children and their exploits. When Megan formed Dreamtime I wrote the tender for her and we had a mentor/mentee relationship in the early part of our time together.

As time went by we became very good friends and would support each other as we both struggled with life in general. Megan withdrew from the workshops after about six months as she had another job that constituted a conflict of interest. I then began facilitating with Eric.

Megan and I would yarn in the Third Space about almost anything. I remember we would laugh a lot as I think Eric's sense of humor had infected me and I would always find the amusing side of even the most awful situations.

Megan worked for various departments within the Public Service and, although she appeared to do this with ease, I had many phone calls when she would ask me "Why did that wadjella do that?" In most cases it was usually professional jealousy or other nasty human traits but there were occasions where racism would rear its ugly head. In those circumstances I would tell Megan to stay calm. The expectation was that she would become upset and hurl abuse at the racist and thus 'prove who she really was', however she did manage to maintain her decorum within the Third Space.

It may have been the pressure of dealing with such incidents on a daily basis that sent Megan back to her first space. These incidents compounded with a new relationship with a Murri man sent her further and further into her first space. Eric and I would occasionally discuss this and not even he could understand why this 'fella' was more important than her family. He even suggested, in all seriousness, that this man was 'singing her' (a man will think and think about a woman in a magical way until she eventually comes to him). As time has transpired I wonder if Eric may have been right because Megan's behavior changed completely. She had been one of the most honest people I had ever met, however because this man was a gambler, she started to become late with all her repayments. I knew about this and so I gave her time. Mostly she came through but in the end she simply disappeared.

I don't believe that Megan will remain in the dark place she is now because her spirit will eventually rebel. I hope this is the case as once we were very close friends and I remain in the Third Space awaiting her return.

Megan's disappearance was due to 'shame' and I can understand those feelings and thoughts. Finally, after some very good advice from a friend of mine, I decided to ring her. When she answered the phone she did not know who I was at first as so much time had passed, I suppose my number had been deleted. We had a great yarn and have ended up working together on another project. We all make bad decisions

in our lives and these choices can, and do, prescribe the ways that we interact with each other. I am glad that I waited in the Third Space and now we will introduce some young Aboriginal men to the Third Space as they begin their careers with a large mining company.

The Teacher/Learner Relationship in the Third Space

The importance of the teacher /learner relationship in the Third Space is one of the fundamentals of Third Space interactions. This is well demonstrated through my relationships with all the participants; however, the significance of this has been underlined recently on two occasions.

The first occurred as I prepared for another grueling workshop. Kim rang me and said that he was coming and we would facilitate together. I was very pleased as recently the worn out notions of being the wrong shape have continued to follow me from workshop to workshop. I knew Kim would not be able to resist engaging fully in the workshop and thus, I took the place of learner with the clients. I was engaged and interested with the information being delivered but more so by Kim's care in grasping and involving the clients in the Aboriginal worldview. Kim has learnt so much since those early days and it was a wonderful experience to take the place of learner in the workshop.

The next day I wrote a tender for Kim's company and the roles were reversed. I became teacher and Kim was learner as we were engaging in the mainstream world which is my first space.

The second instance of the teacher/learner relationship in the Third Space occurred as I was having a yarn with my old friend Scott. We were discussing doctoral studies and he said that he was very close to going and enrolling in a PhD. He told me that he had taken a document that has been presented at workshops to multiple clients engaging them in Third Space thinking to a University in NSW. He told me that the various academics had looked at it and all they could say to him was "Oh, this won't work." Scott explained to them that it did work and was being used in several locations. Their reply continued to be "No, No that won't work." I asked him what

the document was and he told me. Laughing I said to him “No Scott, they don’t mean the idea won’t work they mean the way it is presented (in a workshop format) won’t work as a thesis ready to go.” “Oh”, says Scott, “Is that what they meant? How come?” My reply was that there is a format that includes research questions and also academic rigor through referencing and because Scott’s document was not presented this way that was why people were saying “No, that won’t work.” Scott replied “Ah, so that means I will need to get a supervisor and start again?” No, I replied, not necessarily but most probably in the end you will need to. The thought of returning to university and teaching his supervisor was a bit too much for Scott and so we moved on to the next topic.

Scott told me about a school he had been working with in northern NSW. This particular school had decided that they needed to engage with the Aboriginal community as many of the lower to middle secondary students were causing huge problems that had resulted in a significant number of these students being suspended. The school asked Scott what they should do and he told them to talk to community members and work towards a solution. The school proceeded to do this and all the community could tell the school was “Stop suspending our kids.” The school was at a loss as to what other disciplinary choices were available and continued to suspend students. The school attempted to have another community meeting to discuss the issue but nobody came. They returned to Scott and told him what had happened. He told the school that if that is what community wanted they should try to find other methods of creating harmony and stop suspending Aboriginal students. The school did find other methods and now some 3 months later the students who had spent most of the term suspended are the teacher’s best friends and the community is engaging with the school and both are moving forward together. The message here came from the Aboriginal side of the Third Space and that was to “Stop suspending our kids”. Until the school could do this there was nothing more to negotiate or discuss. Once the school proved that they were serious about engaging in a Third Space, as opposed to engaging Aboriginal community in the school’s first space, or the non-Aboriginal worldview, the community was happy to walk with the school into the Third Space. Since that time the school and the community have had many meetings and the behavior of Aboriginal students from community has become

exemplary. As the school has stopped suspending students petty crime has decreased and the whole community is generally happier.

As Scott and I continued our yarn through a multitude of topics we moved from teacher to learner and back again. My Third Space with both Scott and Kim has been developed over 12 years and we know each other very well, however there is respect between us for what we all bring to any discussion.

I really believe that it is the ability to move between the teacher/learner roles that establishes the difference between the Third Space model of cultural engagement and other models. In the Third Space there is equality and both worldviews are respected and considered equally important. There is no manager or boss as this role changes depending on the task at hand. There is nonetheless, huge respect between participants in Third Space relationships and it is this respect that leads to moving forwards together, rather than tangentially, without contact or understanding.

Chapter 12

Creating Third Spaces

In Chapter 12, I will address the seventh research question: *Can bi-cultural (Third Space) education produce educators who can effectively engage Aboriginal students, thereby contributing to the retention and success rates of Aboriginal students at high school and within tertiary education?* In section 1 of this chapter I interview Alana who is one of my graduates from a university in Perth. Alana has just returned from 4 years teaching in a remote Aboriginal community. During our yarn we find that many of the problems associated with teaching in an Aboriginal community remain. The startling discovery is that these problems are not just Aboriginal problems but they are also non-Aboriginal problems. Nowhere are the issues associated with cross cultural border crossings more prominent than in a remote Aboriginal community, especially if teachers arrive unprepared to cross cultural borders.

In section 2 of this chapter I discuss the most recent developments in my own Third Space teaching and learning as I find that I have come ‘full circle’ and have the opportunity to engage with my own group of Aboriginal students. This experience allowed me to incorporate all that I had learnt and in the process I ‘learnt’ my students as they ‘learnt’ me.

Yarns with Alana

Alana was a pre-service teacher from a university in Perth who completed the Aboriginal education unit with me in 2006. Alana chose to be placed at a remote Aboriginal community and several weeks after her placement she telephoned me. I had not heard from her for nearly a year and so it was a surprise. Alana and I continued to communicate and towards the end of her first year I visited her in the community. Although this visit was in relation to another research project it was an eye opening experience. Little had changed in the years since I had lived in these communities. The overzealous, ego-driven White CEO continued to ‘tell’ community members what to do and how to do it. The principal was career driven

and what can only be termed a 'fence sitter' who did not really want to engage with community and only did so because he had to. The teachers at the school were all young but they really were trying to make a difference. The students spent more time absent from school than in the classroom and thus the school continued to demonstrate low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Alana arrived at the community in July 2007 under very tragic circumstances as a staff member had been killed in a car accident and she was sent to replace her. Alana has dark skin, which has been a blessing and a hindrance. Her parents are both Anglo Indians and her dark skin caused Alana problems in her school days. Children, like adults, fear difference and due to this fear they can be very cruel to any child who appears to be 'other'. In Alana's case she had been born in Australia and considered herself to be as Australian as a meat pie, however all her peers at school could see was her dark skin. When she arrived in the community as the new teacher Alana's dark skin became a blessing as she did not appear as 'other'. There are also many Aboriginal people who have an Indian/Afghani heritage as these people came to Australia many years ago as they were experts with camels. In dry and sandy parts of the country camels were used instead of horses as they could go without water and were adapted to sandy/rocky desert conditions.

Alana quickly became friends with the Aboriginal teachers' aide, who was also a community member, and with community as a whole. Community members would come to her and ask her to intervene with the CEO or the principal at the school. Alana would often ring me in tears as she felt she had let the community down when issues of concern within community were time and time again discounted as unimportant. She felt personally responsible that she had not been able to convince people of the importance of the issues.

As time transpired Alana was having great success with the secondary students. The literacy and numeracy scores had increased and students came to school every day. This success caused jealousy, not so much amongst her peers but in her interactions with the principal as he felt that the skills Alana demonstrated in her interactions with community somehow undermined him. In a way he was correct as people

wished more and more that Alana was principal, however she was too young and inexperienced.

In 2008 Alana returned to the community for her first full year of teaching. Alana takes up the story.

When I came back to the community at the beginning of 2008 everything seemed to have settled down. The same staff were there as last year and I had developed friendships with many of them. The first half of the year was pretty good and we really felt that we were getting somewhere with the community. The students were coming to school and they were enjoying the learning. Various government people would visit briefly but it did not seem to upset anybody. At that time we were a functioning community and the members were considering ways of creating employment via tourism. Unfortunately everything began changing half way through the year when half the original staff moved on. We had new staff arrive but at that time there were so many funerals that the kids were very often away. The worst thing about this was that after every funeral there would be a car accident and this meant another funeral. This continued to happen for the rest of the year. The community was in a constant state of mourning and this cast a shadow over everything.

Finally we reached the end of third term and I was exhausted, by that time I was in a deadlock with the principle and his attitude to community. I returned to Perth for the holidays and really did not want to go back.

Marianne: Why didn't you want to go back?

Alana: I was so tired of watching the dissolution of a community that had been going somewhere a year before. I was tired of the principal with his paternalistic attitudes and of the constant appearance and disappearance

of staff. I remember you talking to me just before I went back and warning me to 'take care'. I arrived in Carnarvon to pick up a new teacher and was really sick. I actually thought I was having a heart attack. I went to the hospital and they told me it was stress and gave me something to calm me down. I returned to the community with the new teacher, who lasted one term, and got sick again. I had to go to the hospital and ended up back in Perth for three weeks stress leave.

Marianne: How did that make you feel?

Alana: I was angry with myself for being so weak. I went back to the community and finished the year. It was not as bad as I had thought it would be, especially as the principal was leaving. That was worth going back to see. We had a husband and wife teaching team directly from England and they were both hopeless. The husband, as he was a secondary teacher, was given my class and that hurt. It hurt even more when he lost all the students because he was such a disciplinarian and had no idea of Aboriginal ways of being. I remember he was trying to teach Maths and used the English soccer teams as an example. The kids did not know what he was talking about and when I tried to talk to him he was rude as he thought I was very inexperienced compared to him. He also decided that he wanted to be the Deputy Principal and thus made very good friends with the principal. He used the community to get ahead in his career and to the day he left, for another Aboriginal community, he had no idea about Aboriginal ways of being and he didn't care either. He is probably a principal at some poor community that nobody wants to go to and continuing to damage kids who are already very negative about school and 'White ways'.

Marianne: What made you return to the community to teach for another year?

Alana: I thought it would be better because we had a new principal coming who was experienced in Aboriginal communities.

Marianne: And was it?

Alana: Yes it was and the community really liked her. She brought in new ways of doing things including excursions to Perth. A few of the students got scholarships to other specialist schools and there seemed to be

opportunity again. The students started coming to school again and it was really a great place to be. We had our problems but there was such a community spirit that we all, the teaching staff, community and the new CEO really believed we could get over those problems and we were all working together.

Marianne: What was that experience like?

Alana: It was great. It was just like you had led me to believe it could be like but it did not last very long. We had what I call an 'itinerant' principal in fourth term and this person did not care. They were there for the short term to make money and everybody knew it. At that stage we were looking forward to the next year because we knew we were getting a new principal. Little did we know what was about to descend on us. If I had known I would have left then.

Marianne: So, what did descend on your community?

Alana: The new principal was young, younger than me and she arrived with her husband who was 25 years older than her and had complete control of her. They came with their own agenda and that was to make money and use the experience as a platform for her career. He was the registrar and even managed to teach for a term as a relief teacher. I can't imagine how much that cost and why it was allowed. The only mitigating factor was that the person who was to become my partner also arrived at the same time so my personal life became very interesting. I think that is the only reason I probably did not notice the amount of damage these two were doing.

Marianne: What kind of damage did they do?

Alana: Where do I begin? The principal did not talk to community members at all and still doesn't. All communication between the principal and community members goes through either the Teacher's aide or me. However, when the Teacher's aide asked for a key to the school the principal would not give him one, even though he has been there for 10 years and will be there long after she goes. This has made this valuable member of the school feel dreadful as there is no trust and no respect but the principal continues to use him to communicate with community.

These kinds of actions cause resentment throughout the community and in response students stop coming to school. The other problem we are facing is the huge emphasis on the little kids, Early Childhood and the younger grades. Nobody cares about the big kids, as if they are already a lost cause. Combined with this the state government has built a new police station in the community and a new Court house. There is accommodation for these government workers but the community only has 50 – 100 residents. The community is dying. Many people have left and a lot of the old people have died over the last few years so that people feel undirected. People feel as if their community has been taken over and that they have no voice. There are still some great people here but they are all talking about moving on because of the intense Police presence and a principal who does not care. It is like some kind of invasion and I can understand why some Aboriginal people hate White people.

Marianne: Is there a lot of unemployment in the community?

Alana: Of course. The only jobs are CDEP and now those are going. There is work with the community council but it is all very menial. All the important jobs are held by White people. Nearly everybody is on Social Security as this usually pays more than any job people can get.

Marianne: What employment opportunities exist around or near the community?

Alana: There is tourism but that involves driving and most people do not have a car that is capable of driving a hundred kilometers a day. The price of fuel is enormous and by the time you have filled up and driven to the place of work every day for a week the money you get is less than social security.

Marianne: What future do you see for the school?

Alana: Not much. We have teachers come in at the beginning of every term and they are gone by the end of the term. This term a young guy who was first year out came and he lasted five weeks. A few years ago we had an Aboriginal teacher who came and was doing really well. There was an incident with a drunken community member and because of a lack of support from the principal she left. Then there were the mad teachers

who came and wanted to convert community to religion or wanted to have the 'Aboriginal experience' and went feral.

Marianne: Did you have any special induction with the Education Department before you were appointed to this remote community?

Alana: I had no induction when I first came out here. My induction was at the beginning of the following year and this involved 4 hours. Two of those hours were spent with a Canadian psychologist who talked about human behaviors generally. I was assigned a mentor teacher who worked about 400 kilometers away and I received one phone call from her to see if I was still alive. I also received a phone call from graduate support but that did not happen until the end of my second year.

Marianne: Do you feel disillusioned by the experience?

Alana: Absolutely. I first came here because I am interested in all people and I had not had much to do with Aboriginal people. I have witnessed a procession of principals and teachers who have come here to feather their own nest financially and career wise. They have little concern for the community and see it as a means to their own personal ends.

I often wonder what staffing is doing sending these people out here where they cause more damage but leave with their bank balances full. I wonder where all the good, caring and experienced teachers are. People like you Marianne.

Marianne: Well Alana they are in Perth completing a PhD and they are very aware of the way some people milk the system. What does the future hold for you now?

Alana: I don't know. When I came back this year (2011) I had my doubts but I seem to have survived the first term. I will be very sad to leave because I have some very good friends here (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) but I feel drained by the whole experience. I feel that the Department continues to staff schools with completely wrong people for the job. I feel that there is very little hope for my very remote community and I am tired of seeing community members being forced to back down by their White superiors. It really is like something that may have occurred a hundred years ago but because it is such a small community nobody cries

out for them. If this was a large community or a town with a large Aboriginal population these things would not continue to occur. It makes me sad when I look at the kids and think that all you can expect from life is more of the same. Did you know when I put on a careers day all they wanted to know about was hairdressing and various trades. They have had the dreams knocked out of them or, even worse, they just do not know how to dream of any other life besides the one they exist in now.

I will try and finish the year but I have my doubts. I may have to kill someone and that is probably not going to look good on my CV.

Marianne: I think you should leave before you reach that point.

Alana: Yes, you are right as usual. I need to make some plans, eh!

Alana as Learner/Teacher – Marianne as Teacher/Learner

Alana chose to go to a remote school because she is interested in people and had had little experience with Aboriginal people. I was surprised when she telephoned me and told me where she was. Alana has remained in the community for nearly four years and experienced both wonderful and frustrating times. Alana's story is similar to many young teachers who begin their teaching careers in remote locations. Her encounters with the Aboriginal community members have generally been good and she has formed many deep, enduring and positive relationships. Her relationship with the Aboriginal Teaching Aid is a good example of a Third Space relationship. She has learnt so much about Aboriginal people from this person who is very senior within the community and yet when he asked the principal for a key to the school he was refused. This highlights issues of trust, respect and, most importantly power.

Within any school the principal has power and if this power is abused very little forward motion can occur. Aboriginal people do not engage in direct confrontation in these circumstances and will tend to wait, knowing that the person will not be there forever. At Alana's school there have been two principals during her time there, the first was a 'fence sitter', and the longer he was there the less he wanted to engage with the community. Eventually it transpired that he was there to further his career and achieve a principalship in the south west of the state, which he did. Alana began her relationship with this principal well but as time passed and he become less

and less interested in the students and the community the once bright relationship soured.

The most recent principal is a different story. This principal is reasonably young at 27 years of age and thus may lack experience, however her complete disregard and lack of engagement with community, except through Alana or the Teacher's aide is concerning. The expectation that either Alana or the Teacher's aide will intervene in community/school issues without any personal input from her is seen as a lack of respect by community members, especially Elders. The refusal to give a school key to the person who she relies on to engage community was possibly the final nail in the coffin. There are very few pathways back from such a decision as it demonstrates a lack of trust, respect and strangely, I believe, fear.

All the pre-service teacher training programs, cultural awareness and other engagement activities cannot change Aboriginal education outcomes if the principal clings to their own first space. It is understandable that people who arrive in remote communities do feel a great culture shock, especially if they have had little to do with Aboriginal people previously, however to remain aloof in the office and allow a junior teacher and the Teachers Aid to engage with community on your behalf creates a vacuum which can only be filled with discontent. The schools attendance has decreased, especially amongst senior students, and although no stone has remained unturned regarding the Early Childhood years, many of these children are the younger siblings of the secondary school cohort. The secondary school cohort has been left to go their own way, as if it is too late for those students. Due to the discontent felt by the secondary cohort this is communicated to their younger siblings and these students then begin to have attendance problems. In small communities everybody is connected in a holistic way so if a Year 9 student is having a bad time at school all his/her younger brothers, sisters and cousins will hear about it and they will wonder if this is what will happen to them when they reach that age.

Engagement with community by the principal is vital and necessary within any school community context, in a small and remote Aboriginal community it becomes

not only a necessity but the most important ingredient in creating a pathway for both the community and the school to walk together. Principals need to engage in the Third Space as if this is not achieved the gap between Aboriginal education outcomes and those outcomes achieved by their non-Aboriginal peers will continue to widen.

Full Circle

I had been waiting a long time for Megan to come back from the dark place she had been residing in. Finally, in mid 2011 I decided to ring her and see how she was. We had a wonderful yarn and towards the end of it we discussed our present circumstances. At the time I was teaching an enabling course in Math at a university in Perth and Megan said “You are just the person I need. I have four Aboriginal trainees here and they need to do some Math/Science enrichment before they move on to their TAFE course in Engineering”. I was very pleased to have the opportunity but did not think much about it until a few days later when Megan rang and asked if I could come to a meeting with herself and the Chief Engineer of an oil and gas company in Perth. By the time the meeting had finished I had been tasked with developing a short (4 week) course for 4 Aboriginal trainees that would involve revising topics such as Geometry, Trigonometry, Algebra and Physics. As I walked out of the building in central Perth I wondered what I had got myself into because none of these subjects was anywhere close to my area of expertise. I knew that I would need to re learn the material myself and then teach it.

I developed a curriculum along the lines that the company had suggested and they approved it. I knew that I needed to meet the trainees before I could really decide what they needed to learn and eventually the day arrived. It was the trainees’ second day on the job in a large company in central Perth. To say they were slightly discombobulated would be an understatement but they were dealing well with the strangeness of city life. I also had to deal with peak hour traffic, parking and all the other interesting occurrences that one faces when working ‘in the city’.

As I sat ruminating as to how I should design and teach this short Maths/Science enrichment course I began thinking about the Third Space. One of the reasons that I had been employed to design and teach this course was because it was believed that I knew how to engage with Aboriginal people, however this was different as this involved engagement and then teaching concepts that can only be described as Western Modern Science. To learn concepts such as Algebra and Physics requires a person to have learnt to think in a certain fashion. This method of thinking can be anathema to many Aboriginal people as it is so distant from their own worldview. I did not want to engage in assimilation (Aikenhead, 1998) but I did want to prepare these young people for their journey ahead. Thus I needed to devise a middle path that respected Aboriginal beliefs on the nature of the world and also taught Western Modern Science (see Chapter 5).

The trainees were mainly urban Aboriginal people and thus had had a considerable amount of mainstream schooling. On the first day, when we had a yarn to get to know each other, they all said that they had liked school, except for the rules. When I asked why they had liked school they said it was because of friends and also because school got them away from home. Home can often be a dysfunctional place and school gives a person a veneer of normality. One of my trainees said that he could leave home for school in the morning with 30 people drinking and playing cards and return in the afternoon and sometimes everybody was gone and if not he could do his homework or play outside away from home. Sometimes for Aboriginal students school may be the lesser of two evils.

On the first day of my teaching I ran into the first of many barriers and one I certainly had not thought about. I was showing a DVD about the formation of oil and gas and before we could consider the concept of geological time one trainee became uncomfortable and left the room. On his return I asked him what the problem was and he told me that this was all rubbish because everybody knew that God had created the world in 7 days. I was stunned, we were all stunned, the missionaries did a magnificent job in converting Aboriginal people but to find a 19 year old who refused to even listen to that “evolution stuff” amazed me. As I drove home I thought that that was one particular snow storm I had not expected.

To avoid such thorny topics I decided to do Maths. The trainees were all well versed in Mathematics and it became a revision course for some and a learning curve for others. I will never forget the day when the 2 trainees who admitted that Maths was a different and unknown language ‘got’ Algebra. The smiles were worth the trials, especially when I was told that “I never thought I would get that but now I do and it is easy”.

As we were working in the Third Space I wanted to privilege Aboriginal knowledge and we had many yarns about Aboriginal beliefs. The city dwelling Aboriginal youth did not have such an extensive knowledge as the trainee who came from Broome. He had lived in two worlds all his life and often we would yarn about the Kimberley. The other trainees were interested although to start with they were a little belligerent that he had ‘culture’ and they thought that they did not. The summit of this particular line of argument was when one Perth trainee said, “There is no such thing as Nyoognar culture. It is dead.” The room became silent, all eyes were on me, wondering what I would do, I felt a shiver go up my spine and asked, “What makes you think that?” So followed a lengthy discussion about the loss of Noongar culture because of colonisation, the loss of language and ceremony especially, and the fact that “all them mob up North are alright. They proper Aboriginals but what about us poor mob down here?” It was not my place to cure this but I knew somebody who could. By the end of 4 weeks the young Perth man in question had learnt more about Noongar culture than ever before. He realised that it was his own fault that he knew so little as people had tried to teach him but he had rejected it all in favor of Christianity. As he learnt about his old people I could see him growing and his maturity increasing with his pride in being Aboriginal. This pride in Aboriginality is one of the cornerstones of Chris Sarra’s Strong and Smart (see Chapter 6) methodology and I have never seen change in a person as rapid as this. We had a yarn about how all this Maths/Science stuff does not gel with the way that Aboriginal people see the world and I remember saying “You don’t have to believe anything that makes you question your belief structure. You just have to know it and know how to do it.” As testament to this particular young man’s intelligence and strength of character this is exactly what he did.

After two weeks of Maths and Science we were all getting a bit tired. It is hard to do these subjects all day and we needed something else that we could use to give us breaks here and there. That is when one of the trainees came up with the idea to build a bridge, both physically and figuratively. I remember that yarn as we all knew each other well by then. During our discussions the trainees decided that they were the bridge, as they were the first Aboriginal trainees this company had ever had, and so in building the bridge using Western Modern Science and Maths their Aboriginality was represented in the paintings on the bridge. The most important painting was of a Wagul (creation spirit for Noongar people). At one end were the Noongar trainees and at the other was a sting ray, which was the totem for the trainee from Broome. In the middle was a fire with people sitting around it with the company's logo in the center. The trainees had described their understanding of the Third Space with full knowledge of their place in it and the responsibilities and obligations that are attendant in this space. They were well aware that whatever they did reflected on others who would come after them.

We were also involved in various workshops to the non-Aboriginal staff for the company and one day Megan asked me to come and talk about Martu skin groups (see Chapter 7). I stood up and explained these skin groups and moieties remembering faithfully everything I had been taught. The trainees were amazed and this opened up another can of worms for all of us as all of the trainees, except the Broome man, wanted to know, "Why does this White woman know more about Aboriginal people than I do?" (Chapters 7 and 8). I took up the gauntlet and explained that I had learnt all of this information out of interest and that the more I learnt the more I realised how important it was. I explained that when somebody begins a learning journey, such as this, that one piece of knowledge builds onto the next. It is also only when people know who you are and trust and respect you that they are willing to teach you. I explained that there were some things that I would never know and that was because I was not meant to. There are some things that are secret knowledge and I think non Aboriginal people have to respect that and not even try to find out. The final vital piece of information was that I was old and had had a

lot longer to learn these things but if this “young mob” wanted to learn they only needed to ask their own old people and if they were serious they would learn.

As the days transpired and we got closer to the end of our learning, the model bridge began to take shape. The bridge was 1.5 meters long and 0.5 meters high and consisted of a large span with a road for cars to use. Finally the painting began. We divided the tasks between us and each person did what they were best at. When we presented the bridge to the General Manager, who had instigated the Aboriginal trainee program, we were all a bit nervous. However, we did not need to be as the man had tears in his eyes when he accepted the bridge and heard the story. I remember walking out into the weak winter sunshine with the trainees with a smile on my face. Not only had we learnt the Maths and Science but we had defined our own Third Space and in so doing created a place for all the non Aboriginal people in the company to enter and learn about Aboriginal people. The interesting thing is that many of the non Aboriginal people working in the company were not Australian and they had wanted to engage with Aboriginal people and their culture for a long time but had not had the opportunity or political correctness had held them back. Like most non Aboriginal people in Australia they had felt that it was not their business and were also a little afraid, but now they have an opportunity to learn and engage.

With the end of our short course the Aboriginal trainees began their TAFE course. This did not go very well as the lecturer seemed uncomfortable with Aboriginal people and the course had been designed using the ‘deficit model’ (see Chapter 12). Why is it that some teachers tend to assume that all Aboriginal people are stupid or have literacy and numeracy issues before they even meet the person? The pace was very slow and the trainees were condemned to 6 months of painfully slow learning. However, to their credit they stuck at it and began directing the lecturer without his knowledge.

After 6 weeks at TAFE, I organised a meeting between TAFE and the company. I was going to serve as an advocate for the trainees as I knew the problems they were having with the TAFE course. I had communicated my misgivings to Megan and we were both going to attempt to resolve the issues but we did not have to. The

company people, who were the immediate superiors of the trainees, assumed the advocacy role and asked every question I would have liked to have asked. They insisted that the pace be picked up, that outcomes were obtained, that direction be maintained and that the deficit model be discarded. It was the company's people who insisted that the trainees were far better than the way TAFE were seeing them and issued a veiled threat that if TAFE did not 'pull their socks up' the trainees would be removed and placed elsewhere. Megan and I walked outside and realised that we had done our job. Between the two of us we had won over the company and also given the trainees a voice. It was the trainees who had vocalised their misgivings about the TAFE course and told the truth about all the issues that surrounded it. When I asked the trainees why they had not communicated their misgivings to their TAFE lecturer they told me that they had tried and that although he listened it all stayed the same so in the end they had taken my advice and told their boss who was the most wonderful 'fella' you could imagine. Although previously he had never had anything to do with Aboriginal people as a result of spending 3 or 4 months with the trainees he had seen how hard they had tried. He had become an advocate on their behalf because he was a genuinely good person and I believe he would do the same for anybody if he knew them and saw wrongness. There are many good hearted people in the world but often I forget this. It does my heart good to see what a success the Aboriginal trainees have become and how the company has welcomed them and embraced them for who they are and the enormous effort they have made to break the cultural stereotype mould. The Aboriginal trainees are a credit to their families and are forging pathways for others to follow. The company executives and senior management were also truly open and "wholehearted" people. Brene Brown (2009) has described whole hearted people as those who embrace their own vulnerabilities and in so doing embrace the vulnerabilities of those around them. Sometimes one's faith in human nature can be restored purely by seeing human beings at their best.

Epilogue

Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis, termed the epilogue, discussion and conclusions, I will summarise and briefly discuss the outcomes of each of the research questions. These research questions have guided this study which set out initially to investigate an innovative pedagogy used to teach the Aboriginal Education Unit at a university in Perth, Australia. This pedagogy was designed and developed by Scott Fatnowna an Aboriginal/South Sea Island man from Queensland, Australia. Due to circumstance or serendipity he called this pedagogy the Third Space as it attempts to create a place between two worldviews. These disparate worldviews are those of Australian Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australians. However, due to my deep engagement in this space, it became a much larger and much longer study that eventually stretched over a 10 year period. This study follows the learning and struggles encountered by myself and members of the various Third Space teams I was involved with as we attempted to scaffold our way to that unique cross cultural place of understanding known as the Third Space.

Research Question 1: How could I create an epistemology that is reflective of my own ontology, and the ontology's of my participants that demonstrates both worldviews equally?

In Chapter 2 I address the second research question. This particular question took months to develop as to answer it I needed to devise an epistemological and methodological framework for my study. I wanted to avoid the idealistic and quixotic notions which may come from autobiographical studies. I also wanted to avoid the unrealistic focus through which many non-Aboriginal people see Aboriginal people. As I pondered the many research paradigms that could be used to describe Bhabha's (1997) 'moments of enunciation' and the intercultural understandings that are the outcomes of the Third Space I settled on a multi-paradigmatic methodology. This form of methodology allows the transformative nature of lived experiences to be documented in an honest, truthful and holistic

fashion. The paradigms have been chosen as the framework for this research-interpretivism, criticalism and postmodernism- lead to critical autoethnographic inquiry with a narrative approach. As this study needed to represent two worldviews I have also incorporated both Western and Indigenistic research paradigms to devise a methodology that accesses the Third Space.

Paradigm of Interpretivism

Interpretivism argues that we cannot understand why people do what they do or why institutions exist and operate in characteristic ways without grasping how those involved interpret and make sense of their world: in other words without understanding the distinctive nature of their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values and so on. This requires openness in which prior cultural assumptions are suspended and a willingness to learn the culture of those formerly considered 'other'.

As I engaged with my participants through personal and combined interpretation of events and self reflection our cultural imperatives slowly merged into a space where, although they still existed, we knew why they existed and respected them for what they were. The goal was to find understanding between individuals as each understood the 'rules' of their own culture and to share this knowledge with the members from the 'other' culture. This space is also called cultural consciousness (Fatnowna, personal communication, Chapter 10) and is where the individual is articulate in their own worldview as well as the 'other' worldview.

Paradigm of Criticalism

Critical researchers aspire to go beyond interpretive understandings of the social world to adopt an interventionist role and redress forms of injustice, such as racism, through advocacy and other forms of active engagement. This process can also be used to deconstruct disempowering ideologies and was what was required by people from very disparate worldviews prior to any meaning making.

A form of dialogical writing to engage the reader in pedagogical thoughtfulness (Van Manen 1991) was also used. Pedagogical thoughtfulness involves a search for

understanding experience and involves self reflection of one's own experiences that may be similar to those of the author.

Dewey (1964) has described self reflection as “it enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action” (p. 211). However, knowledge of reflective methods alone is not sufficient. There must be a union of skilled method with attitudes.

Critical Autoethnographic Inquiry – The Narrative Approach

Critical autoethnographic inquiry allows the autobiographical self to be set in “dialectical tension” (Taylor et al. 2012) against the ethnographic ‘other’ and this provided us with the opportunity to investigate, through critical self reflection and excavation of memories, our own perceptions through our own individual cultural foci.

The narrative approach engaged in when writing autoethnographically – as promulgated by Polkinghorne (1988) and Sarbin (1986) and others – represents an ontological and epistemological stance of generative theory, research and practice which comprehends the person as a social construction perpetually formed and reformed in, and of, socially mediated discourse, talk text and image. The defining feature of autoethnography is that it involves the practitioner in performing narrative analysis pertaining to his/herself as intimately related to a particular phenomena. In this particular study I was also a participant and thus autoethnographic writing represented the ontological and epistemological position that I wanted to take.

Indigenous Paradigms

As I was intent on representing two world views I needed to incorporate Indigenistic research methodologies into this study.

Indigenistic research methods have four unwavering principles: relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulations. These four cornerstones of Indigenistic research methods allowed the

research to be driven by Indigenous protocols and also made certain that the research generated reciprocity between myself and my participants. These methods also mean that the researcher (me) needed to display characteristics of humility, patience and generosity and accept decisions made by Aboriginal people in regard to the treatment of the knowledge that had been shared.

Research Question 2: What methodology could be used to underpin a method that would represent both cultural groups' ways of seeing the world that was equal and truly echoed the Third Space moments we had created?

The point of overlap between two paradigms, or ways of seeing the world, has been termed the Third Space by Bhabha (1997) and others. This ambivalent and liminal space and those who participate in this space have been termed hybrids of their original selves. The Third Space as devised by Scott Fatnowna does not have notions of hybridity attached to it and this is the point where our Third Space moves tangentially away from the space described by Bhabha (1997).

Hybridity is not a term that should be used to describe Aboriginal people (or any person for that matter) as it is a term used in colonized countries to describe the offspring of the 'native' and the colonizer. Hybridity was the basis for the policies that were legislated by various Australian governments to sanction the removal of 'hybrid' children from their families.

Indigenous researchers have consistently rejected this term and the concept. McKinley (2008), in her discussion around Maori women and science, eloquently describes how Maori women were objectified as irrational, backward and lazy, and these terms have been used to subjugate Maori women from the time of colonization. Conversely to be a scientist is to be intelligent, rational and progressive and thus Maori women cannot be 'scientists'

Aboriginal Australians have also been called lazy, sly and murderous, and these thoughts and stereotypical beliefs have been inherited into the present by many non Aboriginal people.

In answer to this dilemma, and to describe our Noongar version of the Third Space, the words “doorndjil yoordaniny” were used. This terminology means coming together and moving ahead, and this metaphor was used instead of hybridity and all the historical connections and negative associations found in this word.

The method devised to gather data from participants engaged in this Third Space was the Yarn as this technique of communication seemed to model the interface between Western and Indigenous methodologies. During this research I engaged my participants in the yarn genre and a combination of casual face to face meetings over years in most cases.

Recent research has further delineated the yarn as a method. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) have defined four distinct forms of yarning when used in data gathering, and all four may occur in a single interview. The first of these is the social yarn and has been defined as those conversations that take place before the interview. The second form is the collaborative yarn and occurs between two people when they are sharing information about a research project or discussion about ideas. The third has been termed research topic yarning and is engaged in during a semi structured interview. The fourth and final type of yarn is called the therapeutic yarn and may take place during the interview process. A therapeutic yarn involves the disclosure of traumatic or intensely personal information. In these circumstances the researcher swaps to a listener role where the participant is supported in giving voice to their experiences.

As this research is autoethnographic in nature, its scholarly quality was regulated by and should be judged in accordance with epistemological standards associated with the interpretive, critical and postmodern paradigms. In particular the standards of trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), critical reflexivity and vulnerability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), pedagogical thoughtfulness and verisimilitude (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), and wisdom praxis and humility have been used as quality standards for this research

Research Question 3: What were the socio cultural and historical processes that led to the formation and functioning of the first Third Space team?

This was a very large question and because of this I divided it in half. In Chapter 4 I have addressed the socio cultural processes that led to the formation of the first Third Space team through narrative. This narrative is set in a very isolated and remote Aboriginal community in Western Australia and follows the story of Suzie, a first year beginning teacher on her first day in her first school placement. Suzie is suffering from a very bad case of culture shock and is also very homesick. Suzie feels abandoned in this strange place amongst strangers who have a very different worldview to herself. Saffron is a member of Suzie's class and is an Aboriginal girl who has led a very itinerant life and thus missed a lot of school. Suzie and Saffron represent both sides of the Third Space and both struggle to grasp the other culture and its ways of being.

Chapter 4 also follows the story of Sharoma who is a young Aboriginal girl who has also led an itinerant lifestyle. Sharoma is the face of many Aboriginal students from isolated communities who find themselves in the Western Eurocentric school system that does not have any reference point for their Aboriginal identity. Sharoma also faces the battle of finding a place with her city cousins after the passing of her father. Sharoma's story is real and eventually she ceased her attempts to become part of the 'White' world and returned to Wyndam (WA) where her mother's family resides.

Chapter 4 introduces the problem faced by both sides of this Third Space and looks at the thoughts and strategies by both protagonists to attempt to bring understanding and a semblance of 'normality' to their lives.

In Chapter 5 I addressed the second part of the first research question. This question relates to the historical factors that led to the creation of the first Third Space team.

As the Third Space relates to two completely different world views I wanted to gain some understanding of the thinking of each cultural group as this might explain the

vast differences. I explored Western thought from the Age of Enlightenment in Europe and the development of what we now call Western Modern Science.

Western thought is based on ancient thinking traditions from Greece and Rome. During the Age of Enlightenment Europe was beginning to move away from a doctrine prescribed by the Church and enforced by the King and army. This change led to authors such as Foucault, who describes such leaps in thinking as ‘episteme’. By the middle of the 19th century the progression of this mode of thinking had eventually produced authors from groups who had previously been considered sub human. Fanon, Derrida and Said spoke from the position of the oppressed and carved the road for authors who followed. These authors represent Indigenistic methodologies (used throughout this thesis) and write from the position of ‘other’.

In the second part of Chapter 5 I discuss Aboriginal thought (and have by no means covered this extensive subject as there are many topics that are not known by non Aboriginal people. These gaps in knowledge are as they should be. However, when Aboriginal people believe a person is ready some of the gaps may be filled over time). Aboriginal thought developed along far more holistic lines and begins in the Dreaming when the world was created. During this time much knowledge was given to the first people by the Creation spirits and this knowledge is still relevant today. I have used an example from Yolgnu cosmology to demonstrate the complexity of Aboriginal thought. The example is the making of the *Ngatha* or sacred bread made from the cycad nut. The making of the *Ngatha* also goes some way to introducing and describing the many roles a person has within Aboriginal society. Each person has multiple responsibilities and obligations and these are all known by a child as they enter school. The making of the *Ngatha* was also used by Yunupingu (1994) in the creation of the *Galtha* curriculum. This curriculum combines Yolgnu language and thought with the Western curriculum and thus creates what has been termed ‘two way learning’. In using the making of the *Ngatha* Yunupingu (1997) describes “creating a sustaining curriculum for Yolgnu children” as the *Ngatha* is a sustaining bread for the people.

I conclude the discussion on the historical factors with a short history of Aboriginal education in Australia from colonization until the present. This discussion is insightful as the history is one of marginalization and the creation of an invisible and docile people. Aboriginal people have always objected to the way they have been treated but over the last fifty years the voice has become louder and louder. The outcomes of this history have led to many young Aboriginal people seeing and experiencing school as another form of assimilation as schools work in a White Eurocentric way and although they do try to 'accommodate' all others it is often too little too late. The history helps to explain why Australia finds itself in the present position.

In response to the socio cultural and historical factors discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 a university in Perth, Western Australia, determined to create more culturally prepared teachers, by engaging Scott Fatnowna at the Indigenous Center at that university to redevelop and teach the pre service teacher Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU).

Chapter 6 discusses the development of the AEU and first Third Space teaching team by Scott Fatnowna and myself. Scott has an Aboriginal/South Sea Islander heritage and from an early age needed to align these two different cultural backgrounds to find his own identity. The Third Space methodology is based on his lived experience and extrapolated to create a space for non Aboriginal people (pre service teachers in this case) and Aboriginal people to come together in a place of equal power and open a dialogue. When any two culturally disparate cultural groups meet they need to have some knowledge of the 'others' ways of being, however, prior to this new knowledge they need to inspect their own cultural identity and what that means. It is through the processes of learning the self through self reflection (Dewey, 1967) prior to learning something of the other that can lead the proponents towards the Third Space. Unfortunately it is a lack of knowledge (often termed ignorance) that leads to cultural misunderstandings.

The pedagogy of the Third Space can best be described through Yolgnu cosmology and the Ganma Metaphor (Yunupingu, 1997). The Ganma Metaphor speaks of the

river from the land (representing Aboriginal people) and the ocean (representing non Aboriginal people). Every day the tide (the ocean) moves through the mangroves and inundates the land. There is a sacred pool of water at the base of the escarpment where the river gives its water to the ocean. This pool is sometimes fresh water (when the tide is low) and sometimes it is mainly saltwater (high tide), however as the tide goes out the pool finds balance and becomes brackish water. The brackish water represents balance in the environment and this balance is essential for the environment to flourish. Yolgnu people strive to create balance in their lives and the brackish water in the sacred pool is an example of balance in nature. The mixing of the saltwater from the ocean and the fresh water from the land has been used to describe the Third Space and the place where Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people and their ways of being can come together in balance.

During the teaching of this unit we initially used the Ganma Metaphor as a referent, however, we realized that Aboriginal protocols insist that the culture of the Country in which one is, that is local knowledge must be privileged. This led to 'doorndjil yoordaniny' (Fig 1) which roughly translated from Nyoognar means coming together-moving ahead. Doorndjil yoordaniny then became our referent as we slowly moved our students from various places across the knowledge continuum to the Third Space where both cultures were valued and respected equally.

Another recent innovation along similar lines is the Strong and Smart Program (Sarra, 2003). This program was used in Cherbourg in Queensland to address the chronic failure of students and the absenteeism that eventually leads to failure within the school system. The cornerstones of this program are that students need to be strong and proud in their cultural identity as well as smart academically. This program has had a certain amount of success however it does depend on the principal at the school and their attitudes to Aboriginal identity.

International examples of Third Space pedagogy have also been discussed. In the United States Native Americans from the Objiwe tribe and mainstream Americans (Miller-Cleary & Peacock, 1998) developed a program for pre service teachers called Collected Wisdoms (1998). This was a collection of both Native American and

American strategies used in teaching Native American school students by combining both ‘wisdoms’ and thus a Third Space is developed that welcomes both cultural groups.

These two ways of thinking are well described by Aikenhead (2008) who distinguishes between the epistemological frameworks of Eurocentric science and Indigenous ways of living with nature by referring to the terms “episteme” and “phronesis”. Eurocentric science (or Western Modern Science) is framed within the context of the episteme, or theoretical knowledge, which is often constructed as disconnected from the knower. Indigenous ways of living with nature focus on phronesis or practical wisdom and reasoning. The Third Space is a place of intersection between these two ways of knowing.

This dichotomy between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge systems has caused many researchers to explore the concept of Bhabha’s Third Space. Researchers such as McKinley (2005) have advanced teaching science in local Maori languages in New Zealand.

There are numerous examples of similar Third Space pedagogies in Africa and many other places where Indigenous ways of being are the ‘modus operandi’ of the citizens. In all these cases the underlying methodology is to bring both Indigenous ways of seeing the world together with Western Modern Science without making either knowledge base appear shallow, superstitious or simple. Thus the Ganma Metaphor is a perfect example of the importance of balance not just in the natural world but between cultural groups and for people as individuals as well.

Research Question 4: What is pivotal knowledge is required by a non-Aboriginal person to enter Aboriginal cultural schema?

In Chapter 7 I explore research question 4 and the notion of cultural schema (Nishida, 1999) as well as the importance of language as a carrier of culture in oral cultures such as Aboriginal culture.

This research question led me to consider what processes I personally used to enter the Aboriginal worldview and to wonder if these processes could be replicated so that others could also undertake the learning journey I had undertaken from one worldview to another and then into the Third Space.

Initially an individual needs to have a desire to enter the worldview of a culture other than their own, and thus the outcomes are dependent on the purpose of the visit. In my case I was working with Aboriginal people and my entry was by invitation. I also needed to have a greater understanding of Aboriginal ways of being to fulfill my academic role and to understand what was going on around me.

To have an understanding of another's world view there are certain ways of being that must be learnt. Another term for these ways of being is cultural schema. The concept of cultural competence hinges on knowledge of the 'others' cultural schema.

From the 1970's to the 1990's research has obtained evidence demonstrating that people's behaviors are deeply embedded by what they store in their brains. These studies have also indicated that human behavior relies heavily on past experiences and the knowledge stored in one's brain. The experiences that are unique to an individual allow them to acquire personal schema. Societal schema may emerge from a group's collective knowledge and are represented across the minds of a society, enabling people to think as if they are one mind (Malcolm & Sharafian, 2002). When an individual's cultural environment provides experiences to which every member of that culture is exposed, his/her experiences allow every member to acquire cultural schema (Nishida, 1999). Cultural schemas allow members of the same culture to interpret experiences in a similar way. If a person is not equipped with the appropriate cultural schema, s/he may not be able to make sense of culturally unfamiliar situations (Malcolm & Sharafian, 2002).

For Aboriginal Australians one of the most important parts of the cultural schema that has developed since colonization is Aboriginal English (a dialect of Australian Standard English). It is within this dialect that much of the cultural schema is contained. Malcolm et al. (1999) have identified Aboriginal English as a major

identifier, carrier and gatekeeper of contemporary Aboriginal culture and it is the first language of many Aboriginal people. Malcolm et al (1999) indicated that Aboriginal English is spoken by at least 70% of Aboriginal people in Australia.

The prevalence of Aboriginal English amongst both urban and rural Aboriginal people has been suggested by Malcolm et al. (1999) that it may represent the battle against non Aboriginal accusations that they are not “real Aboriginals”. These accusations are based on stereotypes of Aboriginal people regarding their location, tradition or even skin colour.

Aboriginal English achieves certain unique functions for the speaker such as reinforcing common Aboriginal identity, providing for certain Aboriginal genres and ironic humor (Malcolm, 1995).

Many ‘taken for granted’ cultural contexts of Aboriginal Australians are carried within Aboriginal English. Some of these are so different that misunderstandings are bound to occur.

Taken for granted cultural contexts include family/kin relationships and the ownership of knowledge, spiritual/material contexts (the Dreaming), time/space relations, social, cultural and cognitive functions and the differences in the expression of time.

One of the most problematic outcomes of these two forms of English, Australian Standard English and Aboriginal English, is that the former is the language of the classroom and also the language of power for many non Aboriginal people. It is vital that teachers have an understanding of Aboriginal English and not just consider it ‘bad English’. Many an Aboriginal student has tried and tried to write in Standard Australian English, become constantly muddled between the two cultural schemas they represent, and because of this has fail consistently. In the end the student, who is neither being heard nor complimented on their efforts, just gives up and leaves the Western education system. However, this young person is not prepared to meet the

world in either cultural identity which can lead to a complete disenchantment with society as a whole.

Research Question 5: What were the critical thinking processes used by myself as I reestablished my own cultural identity after a prolonged period of time engaged in Aboriginal cultural schema?

In Chapter 8 I relate my own journey from my First Space (non Aboriginal worldview) through my Second Space (Aboriginal worldview) to my Third Space. I spent a protracted time in my second space and this lengthy period has been termed an identity crisis or a mid life crisis or some other kind of crisis by many. I prefer to look at this journey retrospectively as a period in my life when I learnt some very interesting and often provocative knowledge. I also see it in the framework of a bigger picture which is my overall life journey. My explorations in my second space have led me in a whole new life direction and I am very pleased with the outcome.

The catalyst that caused my complete disengagement with the non Aboriginal worldview were two very personal deaths and this led me to a desire to not be me as these catastrophes had occurred to that person, the one who had grown up in a middle class academic family in Melbourne. In my mind I wrongly believed that if I became someone else then all the bad things would stop happening in my life and in a strange way my engagement in the Aboriginal worldview did add clarity and understanding. Finally I realized that I needed to find the balance that Yunupingu (1997) discusses when describing the brackish pool of water that is the Ganma Metaphor.

I am convinced that my journey back to the Third Space began in the Kimberley on the Gibb River Road with my mother. My mother was never critical or judgmental but she reminded me of all the wonderful, interesting and good features associated with Western thought and I slowly began to recognize that there was no balance in my life. As I progressed through my second space I finally found the Third Space and this space is a comfortable space for me. It has been said that you cannot have the ‘best of both worlds’ but I would like to object to that notion as I think that it is

possible when a person resides in the Third Space. In the words of Edith Piaf and her uplifting and inspirational song “Je non regret rien” (No I regret nothing).

Research Question 6: What were the critical reflective processes engaged in by participants attempting to enter the Third Space?

Part 2 (Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12) of this thesis is devoted to the Yarns or interviews that I completed with members of the various Third Space teams I have worked with. In acknowledging that engagement in the Third Space involves the formation of relationships through open dialogue, and that frequently the dialogue of the Third Space is representative of Aboriginal cultural schema, the methodology of the yarn was employed. A yarn is a long conversation that in Aboriginal cultural schema is used to get to know a person initially. A yarn may appear to be a meandering conversation to the outsider but from each loop within the conversation vital information is exchanged.

These interviews are representative of both worldviews and each participant’s critical self reflection and their personal memories are represented through their own cultural focus as they moved towards their own Third Space.

The language of the Third Space has been termed Y3 and is a combination of Aboriginal English and Australian Standard English. The language used depends on what is being discussed. A Third Space protagonist will code switch between these two languages. The language of my second space (Aboriginal worldview) may be Aboriginal English or an Aboriginal language (as long as someone is there to translate). The language of my first space (non Aboriginal worldview) is Australian Standard English.

The yarns are chronological and begin in 2000 (Chapter 9) with the formation of the first intercultural team. My yarns with Scott regarding the Third Space have been long but never meandering. Scott developed this form of the Third Space from his own lived experience as being an Aboriginal/South Sea Islander man he needed to find some method to represent his own identity and this was the Third Space. This

intersection of two worldviews was transferred into the Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU) at a university in Perth. Aboriginal Australians have long labored under various constructed identities, Aboriginal Australian being one of these, as well as the non-Aboriginal notion of a pan Aboriginal identity. These various constructed identities do not do justice to the diversity of Aboriginal Australians and within the AEU the Third Space made this apparent. The space created by the various individuals in this unit was of their own making and is representative of the cultural identities of the people who created the space.

Scott is a firm believer that it is a person's comfort levels, or lack thereof, that are the catalysts that create change. It is only when a person becomes so uncomfortable within their lived experience that they will contemplate change.

Another member of the first intercultural team was Haydn, a non-Aboriginal man who had grown up in rural Western Australia. Haydn was decimated when he discovered the truth about the "dark skinned children at the back of the church". He had believed the myths regarding these children whose parents did not want them. To find that these children represented the Stolen Generations made him question every truth he had ever assumed.

Haydn did not choose the path that I took and walked away from his connections with Aboriginal people because it is often too sad and heart rending for a person who is filled with empathy to face on a daily basis. He continues to happily entertain with his music and has chosen a path that does not require as much self reflection.

John is another non-Aboriginal colleague who was also a member of the first intercultural teaching team. John has engaged in considerable self reflection and considered himself to be an 'enabler' of Aboriginal students and many of their methods of dodging academic responsibility. He blames this on his moral vanity that had been created by the same myths that Haydn had labored under. John has reflected deeply and found that the work of Freidman (1999) proved helpful. Freidman advocates that patterns of dependency tend to develop when there is an over emphasis on passive forms of support and affirmation at the expense of the

attainment of learning work/goals. John is not the first, and neither will he be the last, non-Aboriginal academic who has followed this methodology with his students. John's self reflective processes finally led him to realize that the pursuer/pursued mentality did not create the independence that is the hoped for outcome between student and learner.

Chapter 10 continues the yarns with Kim and the Kooya Days. Kim, a Balladong Noongar man, has used his learning about the Third Space to find a place where he can forgive non Aboriginal people and give them the knowledge that many of them are so eager to gain. Kim's journey towards his Third Space caused him to reengage with his Nyoongar culture by learning both language and song. He is now a fluent speaker of Balladong Nyoongar language and has learnt much ceremony and song associated with this culture. Kim continues to educate non Aboriginal people about Aboriginal culture and has found his own Third Space from where he can do this and be respectful of both worldviews.

Kathleen is a Noongar woman from the Albany region of Western Australia and has used the Third Space to create a place for herself between the two worldviews. Kathleen has battled more than her share of crises but, similar to Kim, she now realizes that many of the perceived slights from non-Aboriginal people are more due to ignorance than racism. She now seeks to educate these non-Aboriginal people rather than berate them. Kathleen is a living and breathing example of the Third Space as she travels to her job in the city each day and yet returns to her Aboriginal world with her family in the evening. Kathleen has learnt to balance these two worlds (most of the time) by remaining in the Third Space and code switching between the various cultural schemas as she travels through her life.

Marlene, a Koor Aboriginal woman and Janice, a non-Aboriginal woman formed their own Third Space team at a university in Victoria and have worked together for five or more years. Marlene has taught Janice about the Aboriginal worldview and Janice has taught Marlene much about the non Aboriginal worldview. They support each other and work tirelessly to create a more equitable world.

Chapter 11 discusses the Dreamtime Days and I interview Eric who is an elderly (but spritely) Noongar gentleman from the Mount Baker region in Western Australia. When I went to interview Eric he did not know what the Third Space was but when I told him it was ‘when we worked together’ he knew what I was talking about. Eric is over eighty years of age and has many insights into the numerous changes that have occurred to Aboriginal people during his lifetime. Eric and I have worked extensively together and at first we were both reticent, however, time spent together, often in a hostile environment, brought us to our own Third Space. I am forever grateful to Eric for his sensible conversations and extraordinary humor in the most negative situations. As Eric used to say as we entered another workshop with prison officers, “Don’t worry we have each other and we both have phones.” This would always reduce me to laughter and thus the negativity tended to fade the more I laughed.

I also interviewed Megan who is Eric’s daughter. Megan is a final year Law student at a university in Victoria and feels a moral obligation to help ‘her mob’. She witnesses on a daily basis the vulnerability of Aboriginal people who do not speak Australian Standard English when confronted with Western Justice. Megan has found her own Third Space but because of the nature of her work she often returns to her second space to have a rest. Megan and I had some dark days but we have moved on from that point and now remain good friends and have resumed the Third Space relationship we had prior to the dark days.

Research Question 7: Can bi cultural (Third Space) education produce educators who can effectively engage Aboriginal students, thereby contributing to the retention and success rates of Aboriginal students at high school and in tertiary education?

In Chapter 12 I interview Alana, a former student who completed the AEU at a university in Perth. Alana is a non Aboriginal woman but has an Indian heritage and so has dark skin. Alana volunteered to become a teacher in a remote community in Western Australia.

Alana struggled during her four years at a remote community in Western Australia, however, Alana's struggle was not due to the cultural dislocation often associated with a non Aboriginal person's first entry into a remote Aboriginal community but more due to seemingly culturally ignorant, career orientated school principals.

Alana has formed strong and permanent Third Space relationships with many of the community members and has watched as a succession of career orientated school principals have proceeded to demoralize and disconnect the Aboriginal students that returned to the classroom because of their trust in her. This has made Alana feel that many of the promises she has made were empty and, although the students and their families do not blame her, she feels that her work is wasted. Alana left her community last year because of the school principal, the last in a line of similar people who seem to consider the community to be a stepping stone on their career pathway. Many of these people appear have no care or concern for the community, its members, or their students and use the system to move upwards in their careers. This upward movement is done at the expense of those who can least afford it, the students and their families. These destructive methodologies continue to widen "The Gap" and need to be attended to as it is these selfish motives that continue to disengage Aboriginal students from Western education.

Alana has since moved to Broome in Western Australia and continues to form Third Space relationships with Yawaru people. She is a much happier person now but still cries at night for "her community" and the people she had to leave behind.

Research Question 8: What were the outcomes of these critical reflective processes on myself and my professional practice?

In the Epilogue: Discussion and Conclusions I have chosen to answer this final research question and to conclude this thesis with a short narrative that brings together much of the learning that I have gained over the last 10 years. This narrative also demonstrates that the title of this thesis 'Crossing Cultural Borders – A Journey of Celebration and Understanding in Aboriginal Australian and non-Aboriginal Australian Contexts', is achievable and desirable for both cultural groups. The

narrative also reveals that through the Third Space, with dialogue and time, whole-hearted people (Brown, 2007) can, and do, find a place of understanding and celebration. This space belongs to the individuals concerned; however, this space may be enigmatic and difficult to create when large systems are involved.

Marianne in the Land of Enchantment (Celebration and Understanding)

I have had numerous experiences ‘in Country’ that can only be described as enchantment of the most wonderful kind and, as a final note, I would like to share my most recent experience as it truly illuminates the title of this thesis and demonstrates celebration and understanding from the position of a non Aboriginal person in the Third Space.

Sitting in Derby Regional Hospital, in mid 2011, it is very cool and quiet tonight. I am feeling a little unwell and as I look at my arms and legs I feel repulsive. The sand flies got me but what do you expect when you are on the Marsh, those great open tidal flats that surround Derby town. I have given up that truly southern city practice of constantly looking for a clock and needing to know the time. I had to have a word to myself on the road from Broome about that practice. I even had to remind Kathleen that it just did not matter anymore. Some people call this ‘Broome time’ but I call it being sensible because nobody else has the same connection with time and clocks. We bring these habits with us from the southern capitals and the sooner we dislodge them the more comfortable we become.

The doctor arrives and I can see the look of shock on his benign and friendly face when he sees the suppurating boil-like volcanoes covering my arms and legs. He asks me what has happened and I explain that the sand flies got me. He is surprised and asks if he can take a photograph as he has never seen a reaction this severe. This of course makes me feel even worse and the word beautiful is finally completely torn from my dictionary of self. I will just have to be very careful from now on because, as the doctor explains, each time the reaction will get worse. He gives me some antihistamines and sends me on my way.

Kathleen is waiting for me and we return to our very shabby motel accommodation. I wonder how I will survive the next five days but then I remember the reason I am here. Last year when I returned from the Garma Festival, a festival of song, dance and ceremony by Yolgnu people in Arnhemland in the Northern Territory (see Appendix 6). I had visited Derby and the Mowanjum Community and they had told me about their own corroboree. I had returned to Perth and told Kathleen and she had said that she wanted to go. I had forgotten until a few weeks before hand, when I believed that I would not make it to the Kimberley that year. One evening in June 2011 Kathleen reminded me and asked me to come with her as she was going there for work. I asked Kathleen why she wanted me to come and she said “To hold my hand with all those “proper” Kimberley men and women.” Kathleen was a little frightened of the Wandjina and Wandjina country (see Appendix 5) so she asked me to come with her. My experiences in Wanjina country have been some of the most remarkable occurrences in my life. From the morning 5 years ago when I woke up to witness the sunrise over the steep red cliffs and watching them changing colour with the speed of the rising sun, to the spooky experience amongst the gorges at El Questro (not Wanjina country, but Kimberley). I think Kathleen thought I had some key understanding but that is certainly not the case.

Prior to the hospital experience we had spent the day out at the community and in the evening watched the corroboree. The community was in a state of grief as someone had been killed the week before and a young person had taken their own life the previous night. Youth suicide is an ongoing and worrying problem and it is exacerbated in places where there is no employment and no hope of employment. Boredom leads to destructive behavior and then when you finally return to the ‘real’ world there is still no hope (see Chapter 12). It is hopelessness and boredom that are the two most destructive and long-term problems associated with remote communities, especially for the young.

Mowanjum did a fine job. The dancing was great and there was a deeply spiritual atmosphere to the evening. I met so many people that I had not seen for a long time and made some new friends as well. Just as we were leaving the community and walking to the car I was certain I heard a night bird but Kathleen said I must be

hearing things. I forgot about the eerie sound as we went back into town and then to the hospital.

The next morning was uneventful except that whenever I went outside my birds were always there. They are not 'my birds' really but whenever I am in the Kimberley the chicken hawks are always nearby. Even in places where they do not really live a few will turn up if I am there. A friend of mine once commented that if anybody wanted chicken hawk stew they should just spend some time with Marianne. There was also a feeling of waiting and expectation and I wondered what that was about.

As Kathleen and I sat fishing out on Derby jetty this feeling of expectation continued to grow. Finally I said to Kathleen, "How are you feeling?", and she said, "I feel weird, like we are waiting for something to happen and it has nothing to do with fish." We packed up our fishing lines because there was no hope of a fish as the tide rushed in to engulf parts of the Marsh, and headed back to the car.

I had managed to get one night's accommodation just out of town at a place both my mother and I loved and wondered if the reason why I was feeling expectant was because this is where we were heading. As we drove out of town the birds continued to fly with us. They did not leave and Kathleen said to me "So what is the story with these birds and you?" I said I don't know they are just my birds and they always come with me when I am here. "Mmm," says Kathleen, "I have been seeing Wanjinias everywhere as well." This is not surprising as this is Wanjina country and Mowanjums specialise in this artwork. They are the only people who can paint Wanjinias and so there is a lot of this art around. "No", says Kathleen, "in my mind as well." I said that that was good and she should be happy. Kathleen was not so certain.

When we turned off the Gibb River Road into the station we were staying at the silence surrounded us. I got out of the car to open the gate and sitting on the gate was one of my birds. I had a bit of a conversation with him but he did not move so I opened the gate with the bird still sitting astride the gate top. Kathleen drove through and I closed the gate. The bird was still there when I got back into the car. By now

Kathleen is having a mini anxiety attack about the birds and conjuring up images of Alfred Hitchcock's movie of the same name. I calm her down and say, "Look, we will ask when we get to the station if that is normal." We finally arrive at the station and as usual it is beautifully cool and quiet. Kathleen forgets the bird business and prepares for her adventure on the Marsh this evening where there is an art exhibition. I have decided to miss this one because I am frightened of sand flies and I want to spend time in this lovely place with a very old friend of mine who is travelling down the skeleton shattering Gibb River Road to meet me.

My friend is a Nykina man and the Wandjina is a part of his dreaming. He has been with me many times when 'things have happened'. I see a cloud of dust coming down the road and that beaten up old car miraculously appears out of the sunset. We are both pleased to see each other and the first thing my friend says to me is, "What is the story with your birds Marianne?" I ask what he is talking about and he tells me that they have been with him every inch of the four hour drive he has made, even in places where he has never seen them before. Finally he tells me that there was even one sitting on the gate into the property and that these are wild things. "Well," I say, "they are just looking out for me". He gets a bit cross with me then for being so blasé about something that is important but we put it all aside to catch up. As evening closes in around us I hear my birds calling their high eerie cry, almost like somebody is crying. I tell my friend about Mowanjum and all the sorrow there and wonder if the birds are crying for community.

Kathleen comes back and is very over excited as she has seen lots of animals as well as the ever present chicken hawks. She reports that the one on the gate has retired for the evening. We all adjourn to our respective rooms for the night and as I switch the light off it is so blissfully quiet and peaceful. I sleep, deeply and soundly. I wake in the morning with my head full of Wandjina dreams and as I open my eyes the sunrise greets me. The sun is warm and I fall back to sleep and into my dreams which are all peaceful. The most important point about sunrise and Wandjina is that most of the cave paintings of this creation spirit face the sunrise, and thus sunrise is forever associated with Wandjina. I finally wake up and walk outside, everybody else is awake and I ask how they all slept. They are silent, just looking at me. I ask

them what is wrong and they both continue to look at me silently. Finally, Kathleen says that she had dreams of Wandjina and even thinks she saw one. My other friend has also had a dream filled sleep but he is happy as Wandjina are part of his dreaming and he is in Country so these things are not unusual. I am perfectly happy and relaxed, listening to the parrots and watching the day unfold. My friend leaves to return to his place of work, another 4 hours down the dusty corrugated Gibb River Road but he is content and joyful as he leaves. He says he is so glad he stayed here because he believes that spirit spoke to us all last night and in a good way as well.

Kathleen and I pack up for the return trip to Broome and home to Perth. The drive is uneventful but my birds are there. Just before we leave we ask the station manager about the bird on the gate. She is an Aboriginal woman and has been there for many years, and says that she has never seen anything like this before. She has also had a peaceful but dream filled night and again it was the ever present Wandjina that featured in her dreams. Kathleen communicates her concern regarding Wandjinas, apparently in her open plan office there is an old bark painting of a Wandjina and every person who has sat in the seat that views the painting has, unfortunately, lost their father, including Kathleen. We sit and think about this and finally decide that the Wandjina has nothing to do with these passings. Wandjina are not angry destructive spirits that roam the earth looking to punish people. Wandjina is like the Christian equivalent of God, ever present but not interfering in human activity with random acts of destruction. I walk away and leave them to talk as it is not really my business and anyway I want to enjoy the last few hours that I remain in this beautiful and tranquil place.

As I stroll up the path I am sad that I am leaving but I know that it is time, family, work and a thesis await me. I sit and just listen to the bush, watching and observing my surroundings quietly, and there is tranquility in this. Kathleen returns from her yarn feeling a lot better and we pack the car up for the return trip to Broome and then on to Perth.

It is a cruel day with a long delay in Broome airport of 5 hours for me. I do not arrive home until 2.00am and it is wet and raining. My dog is lying on the bed moaning and unable to walk. I wake up the whole house but my family is pleased to see me as

now Mum is home they can relax. On the other hand my first job the next morning is a visit to the Vet. I know the peace is over and all tranquil dreams of Wandjina and sunrises are finished for the time being, however the really weird thing about this is that in the fortnight since I have come back I have been offered a very lucrative job that is Perth based but much of the work will be in Wandjina country. So maybe my friend was right, Wandjina has called me, or maybe I am just lucky to have the chance to work in a beautiful place with some wonderful people and the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of some of the most deeply cultural and spiritual people I have ever met. Could this possibly be the understanding and celebration that I wanted to discover at the outset of my journey? I like to think so and believe that I have now found my niche, I am happy within myself and the past remains the past, but we learn lessons from that past that we use in our present day living. I look forward to many more sunrises with Wandjina in my mind's eye.

And in Conclusion...

Several months ago, after the Garma Festival, my mother and I were sitting in Cape Leveque watching the evening progress along the horizon between the sea and the sky. It was warm and we were relaxed. We had managed to negotiate the dreaded Cape Leveque road after spending the day on a plane coming from Darwin via Kununurra. My mother asked me a question which really stumped me. I actually had to say "I will need to think about that." This curly question was "Well Marianne, you have been to Garma and nearly finished your PhD. So what have you learnt?" In answering this question I also answered my main research question regarding the creation and maintenance of Third Spaces in Australian Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian contemporary contexts. On reflection I realised that it was through the interviews with my participants and my lived experiences over the last decade that I had learnt about Aboriginal cultural schema. Equally my participants had learnt much about the cultural schema of mainstream Australian society due to our extended association and our lived experiences together. It is because of these shared experiences, which we had sometimes endured and sometimes celebrated, that we had all 'learnt each other'. Through this learning we had at times "become our other selves" (Bhabha, 1997) and indeed "worked the hyphen" (Lincoln, 2010)

which “refers to studying the Self–Other conjunction, that fragile and sometimes fractious splice between ourselves as subject and object and those for whom we work, as subject and object. By including the hyphen recognition is given to the “indelible relationships that have shaped both sides in different ways” (Lincoln, 2010). The hyphen, or Third Space in this case, has allowed this research to take account of “the differences, deviations, conflicts and contradictions and provide a richer more authentic representation of the people and situations I worked in”. (Lincoln, 2010)

I have also re learnt myself and, although at times this was difficult, I am glad that I now live as a more authentic person and possibly as a wholehearted person (Brown, 2007) as well. I hope you have enjoyed our journey and have ‘learnt us’ and that this will add to your engagement with Aboriginal people and also act as the foundation for many more Third Spaces and the possibilities that can arise from the creation of such intercultural spaces or “moments of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1997).

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal: An Aboriginal person, who is of Aboriginal descent, identifies as Aboriginal and is accepted by their Aboriginal community as such.

Australian Aboriginal: As above with Australia to qualify the country of origin of this Aboriginal person.

Bunggul: Yolgnu dances accompanied by Manikay (song), Bilma (clap stick) and Yidaki (didgeridoo).

Community: Aboriginal communities are groups of Aboriginal people with kinship associations living in Country.

Country: Refers to an Indigenous Australian person's tribal lands.

Garma: Implies many things for Yolgnu as a practice and as a place. Garma happens when people with different ideas and values come together and negotiate knowledge in a respectful learning environment.

Garma Festival: This festival, held at Gulkula, creates Garma for Yolgnu, Aboriginal people of northeast Arnhem Land and Ngapaki- Non Indigenous Australians.

In/On Country: This term refers to an Australian Aboriginal person who is on their ancestral Country. This gives that person the right to talk about cultural issues.

Indigenous: When used in the Australian context 'Indigenous' refers to a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as much by the community in which s/he lives. **Non Aboriginal:** Any person living in Australia who is not of Aboriginal descent.

Non Aboriginal Australian: As above with Australia added to qualify the country of residence of this person.

Noongar: Australian Aboriginal people of the south west of Western Australia. Country extends from just south of Geraldton to Esperance. There are 14 sub groups which make up the Noongar nation (see Appendix 4).

Yolgnu: Australian Aboriginal people of northeast Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Australia (see Appendix 6).

Torres Strait Islander: A person of Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as a Torres Strait Islander and is accepted by their Torres Strait Islander community as such.

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Appendix 1: Unit Outline for Ed 510 – Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education



Unit Outline

CURTIN UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL STUDIES

Semester 2, 2002

UNIT INFORMATION

Unit Ed 510 Aboriginal Education
Index No 13039
School Centre for Aboriginal Studies / Education Faculty
Credits 25
Coordinator Scott Fainovwa
 Office: 211.232 Centre For Aboriginal Studies / Centre Resource Library
 Phone: 9266 2886 or 0427 66 2886 (leave a message)
 Email: s.fainovwa@curtin.edu.au

Lectures Friday 1 - 2pm
 Room 105.107 (Robertson Library)

Tutors Marianne McLaughlin
 Phone: 94581823
 Email: m.mclaughlin@curtin.edu.au

Haydn Pickersgill
 Phone: 9443 3191
 Email: gpicksh@cygnus.uwa.edu.au

Tutorials Wednesday 10 – 12 Room 204.122
 Wednesday 2 – 4 Room 304.117

Thursday 10 – 12 Room 501.335
 Thursday 2 – 4 Room 501.335

Unit Description

This unit is designed to provide you with beginning knowledge and understandings to comprehend some of the complex cultural environments and roles that are interconnected with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education. The learning is aimed at developing skills in which you are able to critically reflect and assess your own teaching abilities in cross-cultural contexts.

Unit Objectives

- Explore own culture, attitudes, values and belief systems.
- Identify, describe and analyse cross-cultural learning and contexts.
- Develop understandings of own role in cross-cultural contexts.
- Demonstrate current understandings of the discipline of teaching.
- Identify various stakeholders that can be utilised in developing and implementing culturally appropriate education in cross-cultural contexts.

Texts

Please purchase the following texts:

Curtin Bookshop – ESSENTIAL

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. \$42.05

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. \$33.65

CIRC - Curtin Indigenous Research Centre (211.137) – ESSENTIAL

Oxenham, D. (2000) *Aboriginal Terms of Reference: A course paper for the Indigenous Studies Program*, CAS. Gunada Press, Curtin University, Perth, WA. \$5.50

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. \$27.50

Curtin Bookshop – HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. \$28.36

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. \$33.65

Milnes, P.D. (2001). *From Myths to Policy: Aboriginal Legislation in Western Australia*. Metamorphic Media: Perth, WA. \$14.95

Readings will be in Robertson, TRL and CAS Resource Library (211.231). There is photocopying available in CAS Resource Library and will require a cash payment (\$0.20 per sheet) to the Librarian.

Lectures

The lectures in this unit are designed for you to hear Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander voices on issues dealing with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education. The topics will include identity, diversity, culture, reconciliation, oral / written history, Aboriginal Terms of Reference and the role of the teacher in cross-cultural learning contexts.

Tutorials

Please read for weekly tutorials and participate in discussions and activities. The tutorial sessions will support lectures and provide the opportunity for you to critically analyse self and others in a supportive environment. As adult learners, you will bring with you prior learning about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. It is important for you to learn from each other and tutors to develop knowledge that will enable you to become effective teachers in the school community context.

Unit Assessment

Assessment for this unit consists of the following:

1. Journal Reflections 40%
2. Seminar Paper 20%
3. Seminar Presentation 20%
4. Tutorial Attendance and Participation 20%

ASSESSMENT ONE: Journal Reflections 40%

Due Date - Journal to be submitted at the end of lecture:

- week 4
- week 8
- Journal for remaining weeks of semester to be submitted end of week 11
- 2 page report on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education on field experience

Task

A journal of your responses and thoughts about your learning should be maintained on a weekly basis throughout the semester. Journal entries can be in note form but must contain:

- a summary of the key ideas gained from your learning that week (lecturers, seminars, AND readings / other resources). Note: this is a summary of the key ideas that have struck you, not a complete overview of the learning for the week.
- a reflection on your thoughts re appropriate Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education and your role in it. This could include a critical response to the ideas of the week and / or thoughts on the following:
 - * what knowledge do I have of my own culture and how am I influenced by these understandings towards Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues?
 - * what are the issues / dilemmas for non Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander teachers teaching Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students?
 - * is/should education be assimilative?
 - * how can teachers deal with the tensions of the need to equip students with Western knowledges / skills as well as Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander knowledges/skills?
 - * what is the purpose of school education from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspectives?
 - * what things challenge you the most in terms of being a teacher of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students?

Assessment criteria

- a minimum of a page per journal entry (ie. each week)
- a weekly entry (ie. 14 entries)
- the inclusion of both a summary of key ideas from learning for the week AND a reflection, in each week's entry
- demonstration of engagement with key ideas and dilemmas discussed in class and in readings
- ideas from / reflection on a minimum of two readings discussed each week

The purpose of this assessment is for you to confront own feelings re Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education and issues, and for the tutor to have an opportunity to engage in dialogue via assessment feedback with you on an individual basis. Feedback on this task will aim to further challenge our preconceptions and to suggest ways of dealing with issues raised. The task should be viewed as a critical dialogue between partners (who may or may not agree).

ASSESSMENT TWO: Seminar Paper 20%

Due Date - End of week in which your presentation takes place.

Task

Group seminar paper and presentation (to be presented weekly). Each group is to select an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adult. Each group must then:

- Demonstrate own current attitudes, values, understandings and knowledge of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and educational issues.
- Develop interview questions.
- Develop interview structure.
- Develop seminar paper structure.
 - Your paper should include:
 - Evidence of research and relevant readings
 - Identification and critical analysis of issues
 - Comments on your group interaction and interview process
 - Your understandings of the role you may play in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander educational issues

Assessment criteria

Papers must

- address each of the points above
- provide a final copy to the interviewees
- show a consideration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context of learning
- demonstrate engagement with the literature
- generally demonstrate appropriate questioning of own current understandings of issues in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education
- an historical understanding of how the education system has impacted on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people

The purpose of this assessment task is to talk with and listen to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adult share their experiences of the western education system. It is designed to help you understand some of their knowledge of both positive and negative experiences of teaching and teachers. There is also the opportunity for you to share some of your experience, knowledge and understanding of teaching with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adult and develop skills that may help you be an effective teacher in cross-cultural contexts.

ASSESSMENT THREE: Seminar Presentation 20%

Due Date – Weekly commencing week 5.

Task

Present a 15 minute presentation summarising your research. Treat this as a lesson and you are developing a creative way to teach the tutorial group. Your group may decide the mode of this presentation (eg. Small group work, an interactive session, a role play etc). You should provide suitable resource materials for your audience as you decide are required (eg. summary sheets, handouts etc). Presentation to be undertaken by your entire group. Your group should be prepared to answer questions and respond to a general class discussion after your presentation.

Assessment criteria

Presentations should

- provide a summary of the researched literature
- give a history of the interviewee
- explain the main points discussed
- describe what was learned
- reflect on what skills are needed to be an effective teacher in cross-cultural contexts

ASSESSMENT FOUR: Tutorial (and Lecture) Attendance and Participation 20%

So what does this mean? Could it mean by just showing up you will get an easy 20%? I think it is much more than that!! Conceptual building blocks are essential to the development of critical thought, analysis and reflection in cross-cultural teaching situations. These skills are developed over time and require weekly exercise in this academic context. This is also an individual process in which you are largely responsible for your learning and development. As the Lecturer or Tutor I am responsible for providing knowledge and experience of the conceptual building blocks and learning pathways.

Therefore, a partnership in learning and development is to be expected. The basis of this partnership should reflect tolerance, respect and acceptance of each other's culture and life experiences. Power must be shared so that one does not dominate the other. Roles of 'Learner' and 'Teacher' are established and at times maybe shared or reversed as the learning progresses. Each is responsible for completing required tasks before each teaching and learning exchange. To maximise the learning exchange it will be necessary to reflect and record what has taken place.

The quality of the teaching and learning exchange will be dependant on the partnership and how willing the 'Learner' and 'Teacher' are to listen and speak openly, honestly and constructively. In this academic context it is important to question our assumptions, attitudes, values and belief systems. Together we will create an environment that is built on trust incorporating principles of safety and security; '*Cause No Harm*'.

In this assessment task I wish to reflect and practice a core theme in effective cross-cultural teaching and learning: '*BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS*'.

Assessment criteria

You will record weekly progress in journal and suggest a possible mark at the end of the semester.

Lecturer and Tutor will observe individuals in group dynamics.

UNIT OVERVIEW

DATE (WED)	WEEK	LECTURE TOPICS
26/7	1	Introduction, conceptual frameworks & the exploration of self as a learner and a developing teacher
2/8	2	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspectives on education
9/8	3	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Identity and Culture
16/8	4	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander History in WA
23/8	5	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Contexts: Working in Cross-Cultural situations
30/8	6	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Languages and Communication
6/9	7	Contemporary Issues: Native Title Legislation
13/9	8	Contemporary Issues: Stolen Generation
20/9	9	Contemporary Issues: Reconciliation
27/9	10	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies: Funding, Policy and Practice in WA schools
4/10	11	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education: Where to now? Future directions? What is my role?
11/10/22	12	<i>Week free from class</i>
18/10	13	Field Experience & Teaching Practice. Journal Reflections during this time to focus on the identity and history of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the school and community. Speak to teachers, principal, deputy principal, support staff, parents and students about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies. Describe and Analyse their points of view. What is happening in the High School in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education?
25/10	14	
1/11	15	
8/11	16	

Indigenous Australian Cultural Studies Program

Vision Statement

The pursuit of inter-cultural learning informed by Indigenous community based academic processes towards the enactment of social justice and equity.

Principles and Objectives

As much as knowledge and content are key features of the unit offered, it is the way the Centre for Aboriginal Studies approaches learning and personal and community development that underpins the educational experience offered. This is outlined in the following principles and objectives:

Inter-cultural learning:

- learning with and from each other;
- creating frameworks (ways of seeing, doing, analysing, assessing) that cross cultural borders;
- focusing on the development of knowledge, understandings and skills that enable learners to cross and broker cultural borders.

Holistic learning:

- combining social, cultural, spiritual, emotional, behavioural, political, economic and historical factors;
- providing a framework that validates and contextualises cultural and regional diversity (remote, rural, and urban);
- providing frameworks that contextualise and bring together the past, present and future.

Indigenous Australian control and delivery:

- culturally diverse Indigenous teaching staff, working in partnership with non-Indigenous staff, to ensure the cultural and academic integrity of the program.

Community in the classroom:

- representation and participation of the local Indigenous community in delivery of the Course;
- curriculum development and learning processes informed by community experiences and perspectives (community based workshops).

Privileging Indigenous Australian knowledge:

- foregrounding the lived knowledge, experience, and perspectives of Indigenous Australians in academic contexts.

Week One: Introduction, Conceptual Frameworks & the exploration of self as a learner and a teacher.

Introduction to the Unit

Education 510 is a study of the broader issues and contexts in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education. It explores the role of the teacher and what you as the *developing teacher* can identify as the skills that are needed to be effective in cross-cultural settings. At times it will be challenging and uncomfortable particularly as you develop knowledge from an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspective. This is all part of the learning process and will be nurtured in a trusting and supportive environment.

This unit encompasses and promotes respect for all peoples and the integrity of their cultural beliefs and values, and a tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity. It is underpinned by a commitment to social justice and recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a unique and significant relevance in Australian society.

Housekeeping

- ◆ Semester timetable
- ◆ Assessment requirements
- ◆ Readings and resources
- ◆ Contacting staff
- ◆ Participation and Learning responsibilities
- ◆ Group behaviour
- ◆ Questions

Introduction to Guiding Principles of the Unit

This first session will provide an introduction to the unit and examine the objectives, principles and practices that support the curriculum.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Perspective

- The unit gives primacy to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledge and ways of working, and applies the principles of Aboriginal Terms of Reference.

Teaching and Learning Processes

- Because this unit is framed by an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspective, non-Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students will be working in contexts, which may feel unfamiliar to them. Long-held assumptions may be challenged and new cognitions and comprehensions acquired. The challenge is therefore to achieve an appreciation, understanding and acceptance of the cultural values and protocols that underpin the unit.

Teaching and Learning Processes Continued

- The unit draws upon a range of teaching and learning processes, including reflective practices.
- Students will be required to read weekly tutorial readings, which will be critically discussed.
- A portion of time will be set aside at the end of each tutorial for students to record their thoughts about the discussion, reflecting upon their own feelings about the material discussed. The purpose of the journal will be to provide students with an opportunity to become more aware of their learning and how such learning has influenced their beliefs and practices.

Ethical Issues

- Issues of ethics and responsibilities may arise at times throughout the duration of this unit. Students should be given an opportunity to raise such issues in honest and impartial group discussion.

Respect

- Respect is a powerful concept in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture. The personal regard that each person holds for the customs and values of the Dreaming traditions and for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage is very important, as is esteem for Elders. Along with this goes responsibility and obligations connected with those traditions. For instance, sacred sites would always be approached with respect, so that the spirits know who-is-coming. Respect for one's-own-behaviour-is-paramount, with the prospect of 'shame' being a very strong deterrent to wrongdoing. We respect our families, our communities, and the wellbeing of others.

- Some topics in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal Studies may be controversial for some people. It should be clearly defined from the outset that respect and tolerance for others' views are paramount.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Knowledge

- Students need to be aware that the sharing of knowledge by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people with others has historical and political implications.
- In the past Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people had very little privacy and our personal lives were open to intense scrutiny. Even today tourists drive into northwest towns and communities and videotape or photograph people without asking their permission.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Knowledge Continued

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander information, knowledge and artefacts have been taken and used in shameful and inappropriate ways.
- In an academic setting only 'public' sharing of information will take place. Certain discussions pertaining to men's business or women's business is inappropriate in mixed gender company.
- Information that is deemed to be community business, even though it is not cultural material, is private out of respect to our people.

Language

- ◆ 'Aboriginal' which in Latin means 'from the beginning', and other such European words have to be used because there is no Aboriginal word that can be used to refer to all Aboriginal people in Australia. The same is applied to the people and cultures of the Torres Strait Islands.

Use the Right Words, 1996.

- 'Aboriginal' is the word that the colonisers used to describe us. Although it is hard for us to have to name ourselves in the language of the coloniser, as yet there is no generic term that has been agreed by Aboriginal people to represent us all. Most Aboriginal people refer to themselves as being Nyungar, Koori, Murri, Nunga, etc, which in each local language means 'people' or 'man'.
- The term 'Indigenous' is used increasingly to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people/s, especially in Government publications. Although more convenient to use than the longer term there may be a tendency in its use that denies specific representation, and which has an homogenising influence on cultural diversity.
- At times in this unit the word 'Aboriginal' will be used as a generic term for Indigenous Australians, that is, for Islander people as well as Aboriginal people.

Journal Reflections

- Build a picture representing your life – who am I?
- Describe and analyse your current understandings of teaching. What have you learnt so far through your study?

Readings for Weeks 1 & 2

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 27 - 42.

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Foreword vii-viii, Preface ix-xx & Pages 27-50.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Preface v-vi & Page 1-74.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 1 – 39.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 1-19.

Merridy, M. "I'm Rather Tired of Hearing About It...": *Challenges in Constructing an Effective Anti-Racism Teacher Education Program*. Northern Territory University.

Morgan, D. & Shade, M. (1998). *A Case For Incorporating Aboriginal Perspectives in Education*. The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 26, (2), pp. 7-12.

Week Two: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspectives on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education

The focus of this week is for each of us to begin to become conscious of our own cultural experiences, knowledge and understandings. As well as this we will be exploring our current understandings of teaching and the areas in which we have so far studied. We will begin to gain some knowledge of the experiences Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people have had with the Western education system and look at the ways in which some Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people have coped with these learning experiences.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- Define culture.
- Build a picture representing your life – who am I?
- Describe and analyse your current understandings of teaching. What have you learnt so far through your study?
- What is your current understanding of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander perspectives on education and in what ways do Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people want to engage with the education process?

Readings for Weeks 1 & 2

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 27 - 42.

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Perth, WA. Foreword vii-viii, Preface ix-xx & Pages 27-50.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Preface v-vi & Page 1-74.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Page 1 - 39.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Page 1-19.

Merridy, M. "I'm Rather Tired of Hearing About It...": *Challenges in Constructing an Effective Anti-Racism Teacher Education Program*. Northern Territory University.

Morgan, D. & Slade, M. (1998). *A Case For Incorporating Aboriginal Perspectives in Education*. The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 26, (2), pp. 7-12.

Week Three: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Identity and Culture - Aboriginal Terms of Reference

This week we look at the broad topics of identity and culture in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Non-Aboriginal contexts. We will attempt to describe and analyse our own assumptions and attitudes about in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in relation to what we may know and understand. We will be introduced to the concept of Aboriginal Terms of Reference.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- Describe the history of this country? Where does it begin?
- Define identity.
- What is racism?
- Look at the picture building work of "who I am" and analyse situations that have shaped your attitudes and values.
- Describe the ways in which you may work with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 43 - 62.

Oxenham, D. (2000) *Aboriginal Terms of Reference: A course paper for the Indigenous Studies Program*. CAS, Gunada Press, Curtin University, Perth, WA.

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Pages 51 - 89.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Page 96 - 105.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Page 40 - 52.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Westworth Falls, NSW. Page 28 - 36.

Week Four. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander History in WA and Australia

The area now known as Western Australia was first settled about 50,000 years ago. The second 'settlement' occurred in 1829. The shared history of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander & Non-Aboriginal people in WA is not ancient and distant. In various communities throughout WA there are Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people who remember seeing their first 'white man'. Much has happened in this time of which the effects are still being felt today. Legislation was employed in order to control Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and their movements. Successive governments have employed differing policies in order to come to terms with a culture so vastly different from any they had previously encountered. We will explore some of this history and the impacts on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Non-Aboriginal people, their cultures and lifestyles since 1829.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

We will view the following video; "Education: a search for relevance".

Identify and discuss the main themes presented in the video and the readings.

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Leonards, NSW. Page 63 - 100.

Milnes, P.D. (2001). *From Myths to Policy: Aboriginal Legislation in Western Australia*. Metamorphic Media: Perth, WA.

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Pages 91 - 105.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 27 - 54.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 53 - 59.

PART OF LECTURE PRESENTED BY: Pat Dodson - Wentworth Lecture. 12 May 2000

BEYOND THE MOURNING GATE- DEALING WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Greetings to the Ngunmawal.

In 1938 Australia was sitting at the tail end of the great depression, a calamity that created enormous suffering across great sections of the Australian Community. Those Australians who survived the Great War and the Depression would soon hear the ominous sounds of another human disaster being cranked up in Europe and Northern Asia. Little wonder then that the prospect of a party in Sydney to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet was seen as a welcome diversion from the threat of another world war and the difficulties of life that continued to weigh upon them. A programme of festivities was planned to celebrate the foundations laid in the Colony along British lines, its glorious achievements and its triumphs over the alien environment and the original owners of the land. The highlight was to be a re-enactment of the arrival of Governor Phillip and a party of his sailors at Port Jackson. It was planned that a replica of the ship, HMS Supply, would anchor at Farm Cove and a rowing boat would bring a group of actors led by Frank Harvey, playing the part of Captain Phillip, to the western side of the point at Lady Macquaries' Chair. The official programme for the event reported that the first boat to land will carry a party of men who will put the aborigines to flight. Captain Phillip was to arrive in the second boat. Twenty five Aboriginal people from Menindee had been brought to Sydney by the Aborigines Protection Board to play the part of the fleeing Sydney Natives. They were billeted at the Redfern Police Barracks who were under strict instructions from the Board to deny them any contact with disruptive influences from outside the timber barracks of the Redfern Police Compound. No doubt the organisers of the gala reenactment felt that using Menindee people was a safer option than using local Sydney Aboriginals. The Menindee group would need no encouragement to head for home.

Week Five: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Contexts / Working in Cross-Cultural situations

The Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community today consists of diverse groups of people living in remote, rural and urban locations. The diversity of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander groups raises many issues around identity / Aboriginality and how you understand these concepts. We have explored the main themes surrounding identity and we now shift the focus onto the many Non-Indigenous people working in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Non-Aboriginal organizations that are providing a service to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. In this weeks lecture a panel of Non-Indigenous workers have been invited to talk and share their experiences from a Non-Indigenous perspective of working with and for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in cross-cultural contexts.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- As a teacher what do I need to know to work effectively with Indigenous people?
- Why and how is it different when working with Indigenous people?
- What must I avoid doing when working with Indigenous people?
- Should Non-Indigenous people work with and for Indigenous people?

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 183 - 198.

Oxenham, D. (2000) *Aboriginal Terms of Reference: A course paper for the Indigenous Studies Program*, CAS. Gunada Press, Curtin University, Perth, W.A.

Oxenham, D. et al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Pages 105 - 121.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 171 - 187.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 81 - 113.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 37 - 50 & 117 - 123.

The Sydney mob however had declined to flee in 1778 and would have stayed put again in 1938. While the rest of Australia was either preoccupied with the pleasures of the summer break or those who were in Sydney planned how they might participate in the upcoming Australia Day Celebrations, a group of Aboriginal people with a belief in the need for justice and equality were hard at work with some plans of their own. The Aborigines Progressive Association with leaders like Jack Patten, Bill Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs, Jack Kinchela, and Helen Grosvenor were planning an Australian Aborigines Conference. The event was to be called a Day of Mourning and Protest. It was to be held on Australia Day Wednesday 26th January. They circulated a motion for debate at the meeting: WE, representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in Conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the white men's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by the white men during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian Nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. They met at the Australian Hall at No.148 Elizabeth Street now a site of significance to all Australian people, thanks to the efforts of Jenny Munro and others. The Day of Mourning and Protest Conference was attended by Aboriginal people from up and down the eastern seaboard. All Australian Aborigines were invited.—The views expressed and the arguments put forward were diverse reflecting the backgrounds and histories of the people involved. The issues though were agreed and clear: Equality and Recognition and The Right To be Aboriginal People along with the right to enjoy the equality, responsibility, and quality of being an Australian citizen. It was not a trade off— one set of rights for another. It was about improving the living conditions of Aboriginal people so that they might survive as human beings and break the domination of government regulations and prescription. In the minds of the leaders at that time both realities could co-exist and be enjoyed. There was no need to extinguish what remained of the Aboriginal uniqueness and heritage after 150 years of the white man dominance of the land and lives of the Aboriginal people. The architects of the assimilation policies of the time had a different view. They had their own ideas about what would be best for the Aboriginal peoples.....

Week Six: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Languages and Communication

Before 'settlement' in 1788 there existed approximately 200 distinct language groups in this country. As the 'settlers' established their presence in areas already occupied by Indigenous peoples, cultures interacted through sometimes appropriate systems but mostly contact occurred inappropriately as peoples sought to communicate their knowledges, understandings and experiences from different languages and cultural viewpoints. Much has occurred since that time as languages and communication styles have adapted and in some instances changed over time. We will take a broad look at the development of literacy skills in Indigenous students. We will develop some knowledge of what "literacy" means to Indigenous people and what their aspirations are around it.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- How is "literacy" understood by Indigenous people?
- What are the links between language and culture?
- What issues about identity and belonging (to cultural group) do we need to be aware of when focusing on language and communication?
- Is the teaching of Australian Standard English an act of assimilation or a means to access social capital?

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 199 - 213.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 117 - 146.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 81 - 113.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 7 - 19.

Resources - Essential

'Deadly Ways To Learn' package Deadly Ways To Learn Consortium 9264 4111
'Ways of Being, Ways of Talk'

'Solid English'
'Two Way English'
'Towards More User-Friendly Education for Speakers of Aboriginal English'

9570 6071

Week Seven: Contemporary Issues - Native Title Legislation

Aboriginal Land and Native Title issues explores Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal perspectives of land and native title law. You will begin to examine and build knowledge of the multi-dimensional relationship of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people with the land; the law of native title and its economic, social and political impact upon business and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander groups. We will consider possible methods of reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous interests in land.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- What is your understanding of the significance of land in Indigenous cultures?
- What is your understanding and meaning of "land"?
- What is your understanding of terra nullius?
- Do you understand or have knowledge of the law of native title and its operation in Australia?

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 199 - 213.

Howitt, R. (1998). *Recognition, respect and reconciliation: steps towards decolonisation?* Australian Studies Journal. (1). Journal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Ligare Pty Ltd, Riverwood, NSW.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 64 - 68.

Yunupingu, G. (1998). *We know these things to be true: The Third Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture*. Ngunjook, Journal of Australian Indigenous Studies. (1). 4. August.

Week Eight: Contemporary Issues - Stolen Generation

Most Australians were unaware of the policies and practices which saw the systematic separation of Indigenous children from their families over the greater part of the 20th century until the 1997 report revealed the extent of the practice and the profound impact on individuals, families and communities. This week we examine how the racial ideology which emerged in the Nineteenth century influenced the colonisation of Australia. This week's learning examines the relationship between this racial ideology and the policies which facilitated the removal of thousands of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children from their families in the Twentieth century. We will broadly examine government and community responses to the 1997 report from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families; "Bringing them Home".

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- Describe your understanding of the racial ideology which shaped the policy of separation?
- What powers did governments hold with regard to the removal of Aboriginal children from their families?
- Does ignorance of past injustices diminish the urgency of a response? Eg. An apology from the Australian government.
- Should we judge the past from the perspective of the present?

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin. St. Lenards, NSW. Page 129 - 161.

Lavarch, M. (1997). *Bringing Them Home - National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Sterling Press Pty Ltd. Sydney, NSW. Page 1 - 5 & 27 - 38.

Milnes, P.D. (2001). *From Myths to Policy: Aboriginal Legislation in Western Australia*. Metamorphic Media: Perth, WA.

Oxenham, D. et.al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Pages 123 - 146.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 60 - 78.

Lavarch, M. (1997). *Bringing Them Home - National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Sterling Press Pty Ltd. Sydney, NSW.

Week Nine: Contemporary Issues - Reconciliation

Finding a way of living together in Australia in racial and cultural harmony is one of the fundamental issues facing both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people in this country today. In order for both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people to work together, they now have to find meaningful solutions and processes to enable this to happen. Reconciliation has been with us for the past 10 years. What has been achieved in this time and what is still to do? Has the reconciliation process reshaped Australian identity in the 21st century? We will look at why it is important to develop partnerships in working with Indigenous people and how this is different to past approaches.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- In week 3 we looked at the topic of racism and came up with a number of meanings to describe this behaviour. Please describe your understanding of this term (racism) now and in particular use the themes in the reading found in Partington.
- What is the role of teachers in the reconciliation process?
- What is the relevance of reconciliation in the WA education system.

Readings

Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 1 - 26 & 164 - 182.

Dodson, P. (1999). *Lingari - Until The Chains Are Broken*. Walking Together - Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation. Number 26. Just Print Management. Kingston, ACT.

Keating, P. (1993). *The Redfern Speech - "Australia Day"*. Redfern, Sydney, NSW.

Partington, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 147 - 170 & 194 - 197.

Ridgeway, A. (1999). *Apology - Regret or Sorrow?*. Walking Together - Council For Aboriginal Reconciliation. Number 26. Just Print Management. Kingston, ACT.

Further Reading

Groome, H. (1995). *Working Purposefully with Aboriginal Students*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 261 - 274.

Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 101 - 116.

Week Ten: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies - Funding, Policy and Practice in WA schools

This week we will take a look at some of the current funding, policy and practice issues dealing with Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal Studies at both the state and federal government levels. We will get an understanding of what the governments are trying to do and how they are implementing their programs. Also, Bringing It All Together? During the semester a wide range of topics have been covered, that are considered to be important when working and teaching with Indigenous people. This week we will review what has been covered and look at how we now begin to keep developing knowledge and understanding to implement what we have learned into our thinking and practice.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- What are the most important things that I have learned this semester in working and teaching with Indigenous people?
- How will I implement what I have learned into my practice?
- Has my knowledge and position shifted from when I first started this unit?
- Discuss the following statement in relation to what you have learned over the semester:

"Despite substantial State and Commonwealth funding committed to Aboriginal Education, the educational outcomes are very disappointing. Many areas of concern have been identified, such as student attendance, achievement, retention rates and the range of factors traditionally related to students at educational risk. The Education Department of Western Australia is committed to improving the educational outcomes being achieved by Aboriginal students in this State. The Education Department will work in partnerships with the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal Education and Training Council (AETC) in developing a strategic approach to address the issue of Aboriginal students underachieving in our education system. I urge all schools to become familiar with the outcomes being sought for Aboriginal students and with the key focus areas that have been identified as requiring a concerted effort over the next triennium. I believe if we accept this challenge and work in partnership with the Aboriginal community, the cycle which Aboriginal students have been locked into will be broken before the end of the twentieth century."

Cheryl Vardon – Director General / Education Department of Western Australia.
• Aboriginal Education Operational Plan (1997 – 1999). Western Australia Government Press: Perth, WA. Page iii.

Readings

- Craven, R. (1999). *Teaching Aboriginal Studies*. Allen & Unwin: St Lenards, NSW. Page 231 - 260.
- Partridge, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 191 – 219.
- Vardon, Cheryl. (Director General / Education Department of Western Australia). *Aboriginal Education Operational Plan (1997 – 1999)*. Western Australia Government Press: Perth, WA. Page 1 – 12.

Week Eleven: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education: Where to now? Future directions? What is my role?

Bringing It All Together? We have arrived at a beginning point. We are now ready to learn from the actual practice of teaching. During the semester a wide range of topics have been covered, that are considered to be important when working and teaching with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples. This week we will review what has been covered and look at how we now begin to keep developing knowledge and understanding to implement what we have learned into our thinking and practice.

Tutorial Discussion & Questions

- What are the most important things that I have learned this semester in working and teaching with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- How will I implement what I have learned into my practice?
- Has my knowledge and position shifted from when I first started this unit?

Readings

An Aboriginal Parent. *Letter To A Teacher*. Native Perspective July – August 1977.

Oxenham, D. et.al. (1999). *A Dialogue on Indigenous Identity: Warts 'n' All*. Gunada Press: Curtin University, Perth, WA. Pages 147 – 164.

Partridge, Gary (Ed) (1998). *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 220 – 244.

Further Reading

- Harris, S. & Malin, M. (1994). *Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms*. Social Science Press: Wentworth Falls, NSW. Page 124 – 128.
- Oxenham, D. (2000) *Aboriginal Terms of Reference: A course paper for the Indigenous Studies Program*, CAS. Gunada Press, Curtin University, Perth, WA.

plagiarism

Week Thirteen – Fifteen: Field Experience & Teaching
during this time to focus on the identity and history of Abo
people in the school and community.

Describe the ways in which your school has been involved in Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander Education.

Eg. curriculum studies, cultural days, Aboriginal Parent Awareness & Student
Support (ASSPA) committee, guest speakers, cultural incursions and excursions,
Sorry day celebrations, etc.

Copy

Academic honesty, essential to a student's credibility and self-esteem, and ultimately
reflects the values and morals of the University as a whole. A student may work
together with one or a group of students discussing assignment content, identifying
relevant references, and debating issues relevant to the subject. Academic
investigation is not limited to the views and opinions of one individual, but is built by
forming opinion based on past and present work in the field. It is legitimate and
appropriate to synthesize the work of others, provided that such work is clearly and
accurately referenced.

Plagiarism occurs when the work of another person, or persons, is used and presented
as one's own, unless the source of each quotation or piece of borrowed material is
acknowledged with an appropriate citation.

Encouraging or assisting to commit plagiarism is a form of improper collusion and
may attract some penalties.

Refer 1998 Curtin University Handbook. P. 47.

Penalties

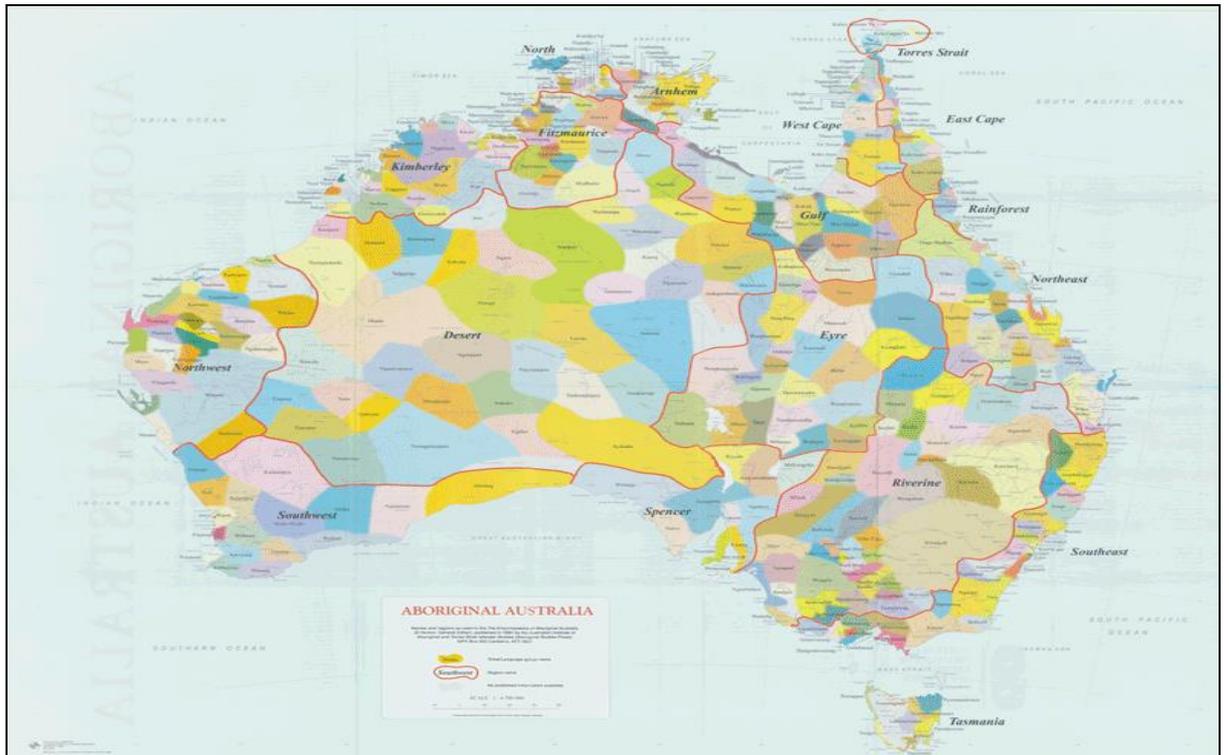
The University regards very seriously any acts of cheating, or dishonesty by way of
plagiarism. Penalties for such incidences have been defined within the *University's
Acts and Statutes*. There is a range of penalties, which may be imposed on a student
for academic dishonesty, that is, plagiarism. Depending upon the severity of the act of
plagiarism, or the number of like offences, which have previously occurred, a student
may have any one or a combination of the following penalties imposed against
her/him by the University:

- Cancellation or deprivation of credit for any examination or other academic
work, which will entail and ANN* grade being assigned to a student's
academic record;
- Suspension of all or any of a student's rights and privileges including,
Suspension from attending lectures, seminars, tutorials or other classes;
- Suspension from attendance at or exclusion from any examination;
- Exclusion from the University or any part of the University for any specified
period, not exceeding the remainder of the calendar year;
- Refusal for re-enrolment as a student;
- A fine, up to the maximum approved by the Council;
- Expulsion from the University.

[Curtin University of Technology Act, 1996 – Statute 10 Student Disciplinary Statute
– Sections 2 and 4.]

*ANN – result annulled due to misconduct.

Appendix 2: The Tindale Map



Appendix 3: Map of Australia



Appendix 4: Map of Western Australia



Appendix 5: Map of Gibb River Road, Western Australia



Appendix 6: Map of Arnhem Land, Northern Territory

