Indigenous Secondary Education: What implications for counsellors lie in the stories of Indigenous adults, who as children, left their home communities to attend school?

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School of Arts and Sciences
The University of Notre Dame Australia

‘Indigenous Secondary Education: What implications for counsellors lie in the stories of Indigenous adults, who as children, left their home communities to attend school?’

Suzanne Jenkins


This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Counselling

2012
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this is my own work and does not contain material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any academic or other institution.

I further declare that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis does not contain material previously published or written by others except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Suzanne Jenkins

Candidate’s Name               Date
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ABSTRACT

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of the peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that the child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation.

_Nelson Mandela_

Access to a ‘good’ education is often argued as deserving of the highest priority. The available research pertaining to the educational experience of Australian Indigenous students, however, too often reflects a picture of profound disadvantage, particularly in relation to their non-Indigenous counterparts. In 2008, Prime Minister Rudd announced $20 million of Federal Government funding for 2000 boarding school places over 20 years, to address chronic levels of academic underachievement and to prepare Indigenous students to become “workplace P-platers” in an attempt to close the education gap between black and white Australians. Education in Australia, however, is tied to white culture, the industrial economy and the means through which white culture survives, so accepting these places may also have a shadow side, in relation to multiple levels of loss and possible cultural alienation.

The purpose of this study is to discover what implications for counselling practice lie in the self-report of the ‘lived experience’ of an adult sample of eight Indigenous participants who, as children, experienced leaving home to attend school. Their experience spans five decades.
A phenomenological method was adopted, using an unstructured interview as the data-gathering instrument and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data. IPA is a qualitative research methodology appropriate for exploring in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social worlds.

Analysis of participant stories identified eleven subordinate themes, which were clustered under three ordinate themes: recognition, living environment and realism. One super-ordinate theme emerged, “living between two worlds”, which is represented as a never-ending ‘journey’ involving both ‘loss and gain’, highlighting the need for a loss/gain audit to be maintained as many of the positive and negative experiences were felt in the moment, while others had life-long repercussions.

Identifying these experiences will enhance the counselling profession’s ability to develop interventions to strengthen the social, psychological and educational attainment of current and future Indigenous students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Access to a ‘good’ education is often argued as deserving of the highest priority.

Education is the process by which society transmits its knowledge, culture, values, experiences and wisdom to successive generations … Education is a fundamental right of all people; without education people cannot fully exercise their rights or fulfil their responsibilities as citizens of a nation.
(Milroy & Milroy in Zubrick et al., 2006, xviii).

How we learn as children shapes our whole lives, how we think about ourselves, how we think about the world. A good education opens doors and gives us choice in the type of work we do, where we live, what we want to achieve, what interests we want to follow, our hopes for the future. A good education is the right of every Australian child.
(Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, 2001, Introduction).

The available research and policy literature pertaining to the educational experience of Australian Indigenous students, however, too often reflects a picture of profound disadvantage, particularly in comparison to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Craven, 2006; Hooley, 2005; Hughes & More, 1997; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Report (March), 2000).

According to Craven (2006), Indigenous students remain the most disadvantaged Australians across a “… plethora of socio-economic indicators” (p. 14). Educational disadvantage has been measured through school attendance and retention rates, participation
In 2005, on average, Aboriginal Australians are less likely to get a pre-school education; are well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills development before they leave primary school; have less access to secondary school in the communities in which they live; are likely to be absent from school up to two to three times more often than other students; leave school much younger; are less than half as likely to go through to Year 12; are far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programmes in universities and vocational training institutions; and obtain fewer and lower-level education qualifications. (Milroy & Milroy in Zubrick et al., 2006, xviii).

One contribution towards enhancing the prospects of educational attainment of young Indigenous students has been the initiative of a number of prestigious schools that have offered academic scholarships to intellectually able Indigenous students who otherwise would be unable to access comparable opportunities. In 2008, Prime Minister Rudd announced Federal Government funding for 2000 boarding school places over 20 years, to prepare Indigenous students to become ‘workplace P-platers’. It was reported “Indigenous students will be sent to leading boarding schools under a $20 million plan to address chronic levels of academic underachievement and close the education gap between black and white Australians” (Karvelas & Hohenboken, 31.10.2008). The ‘P-plater scheme’ was described by Prime Minister Rudd as a key plank of the employment drive aiming to provide 50,000 jobs to Indigenous Australians. For some students, however, accepting such scholarships has or will entail leaving their families and home communities, so the opportunities offered may
also have a ‘shadow side’ in relation to multiple levels of loss and possible cultural alienation. Relocation, unfamiliarity with a new location, the loss of social ties and supports has long been associated with ‘culture shock’, a term coined by Oberg (1960).

The purpose of this research was to discover what implications for counsellors lie in the self report of the ‘lived experience’ of an adult sample of such children, which in turn, will enhance the counselling profession’s ability to develop interventions to strengthen the social, psychological and emotional health, wellbeing and educational attainment of current and future Aboriginal students.

It is hoped the results obtained may also generate further, linked research, which will extend the bounds of ongoing research, theory and practice.

**Research Questions**

Two research questions guided this project.

1. What is the ‘lived experience’ reported by adults, who as children, left their home communities to attend school?

2. What are the implications of this ‘lived experience’ for counselling practice?

The terms Indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably in the literature and have also been used interchangeably in this study.
Indigenous Research – Historical Problems and Issues

Too often Indigenous people have been the subjects of research rather than equal partners (participants) in research (Abdullah & Stringer, 1997). Master narratives’ or the theories and perspectives of non-Indigenous academics tend to dominate writing (Dudgeon et al., 1997; Gregory, 2003; Smith, 1999), and historically, the benefit of research has been perceived by Indigenous people to flow principally to researchers and institutions (National Health & Medical Research Council, 2003). As Gregory (2003) observes:

We have been subjected to non-Indigenous interpretation of our experiences, and government policy and programming in the field has relied on this ‘expert’ (read ‘white’) interpretation almost exclusively. Indeed, it is the acquisition of Indigenous knowledge and the ensuing ownership of that knowledge which are the foundations upon which many (non-Indigenous) academic qualifications and careers have been achieved (p. 2).

Commenting on this negative history Smith (1999) notes, “... the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1).

These issues are of particular relevance to this study as the researcher is white – a cultural outsider - a researcher who remains located in her own cultural world but who strives to assist, observe and write about the worlds of others (Keeffe, 1992). Ethical considerations when working with Indigenous partners require observation and respect for cultural protocols in gaining permission to conduct the research and in developing an overall philosophy to guide the project. The researcher sought to establish what Gregory (2003) terms a ‘relational
accountability’, a relationship where the researcher is prepared to give something back, “... rather than merely ‘taking people’s story away’ for their own academic needs” (p. 11). To ensure cultural relevance and competency the researcher sought advice and direction from Indigenous colleagues on all aspects of the research process. A focus group (Fuller et al., 1993) was engaged to reflect on the conceptualisation of the project and the process of proposal development, approval and data collection.

Despite the negative history of research, Indigenous Australians have long been telling their stories or life histories to non-Indigenous Australians in the hope that they and their worlds will be better understood and recognised (Attwood & Magowan, 2001). In an effort to ensure the continued existence of these stories, the help of scholars, historians and others has been sought to prompt old, and bring new historical sources of knowledge to and from Indigenous communities. However, this collaborative work has raised very important issues regarding the production and presentation of Indigenous information. One such issue relates to that of control – who owns the past? Whose history is it? Who has the right to tell it, and on what terms can and should it be told? Who is the author? These have always been matters of the highest importance. Pre-colonial and colonial communities have always had strict rules determining who could tell and hear which stories. When an Indigenous person (or community) entrusts researchers with their precious stories, those researchers incur enormous obligations in receiving such a gift.

Nature of the Study

This research strives to deliver knowledge – descriptions, understandings, interpretations and explanations – that make sense to my research partners (participants) through capturing their unique experience. A qualitative approach was adopted, relevant to the lives of Indigenous
people, to ensure new epistemologies could emerge through the direct pursuit of the lived experience, while protecting and preserving cultural knowledge which has “… previously been silenced by the restrictions of positivistic scientific method” (Abdullah & Stringer, 1997, p. 6). The researcher wished to undertake research “… with, for and by Aboriginal people to overcome some of the problems that have arisen from past practices” (Abdullah & Stringer, 1997, Foreword). An interpretative-phenomenological method was adopted, using an unstructured interview technique as the data-gathering instrument, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the preferred data analysis system. Purposive, “typical sampling” (Stringer, 2004, p. 50) was used to obtain a homogenous group of participants for whom the research question was significant. The provision of a one-on-one interview effectively offered participants the ability to express themselves as fully as possible and so provide a vivid picture of their perspective on the research topic (Family Health International, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2004; Spradley, 1979; Stringer, 2004).

The interviews involved the direct pursuit of the ‘lived experience’. Care was taken by the researcher to ensure that, while the interview process retained a high level of scientific rigour, the participant experienced the interview as essentially a ‘guided conversation’. It was the aim of this research to conduct interviews that would elicit detailed descriptions of events and interactions and provide opportunities to explore significant issues and experiences in depth, enabling participants to be able to “… define, describe, and interpret experience in their own terms…” (Spradley, 1979, p. 65). Participants were advised they would be asked the ‘grand tour’ question. “Can you tell me about your story, who you are, where you come from, and how education has impacted on your story?”

The personal stories of Indigenous partners are positioned at the heart of this study. Great care was taken by the researcher to faithfully report participant perspectives through the use of verbatim quotes. Their stories are presented in Chapter 7.
Presentation of the Literature

Accounts of a positive educational experience for Indigenous students in the literature are notable through their absence. In contrast, negative and constraining experiences of the education process are to be found in documentary and autobiographical writing, songs, poetry and art. This study draws on all these sources, at times using a level of direct quotation unusual for a study at doctorate level. License is taken in this regard, however, to avoid what Dudgeon et al. (1997) refer to as “… the theories and perspectives of non-Aboriginal academics – which tend to dominate writing” (p. 1), and to fully respect Indigenous people in claiming the right to speak in their own voices, to have that voice accepted as legitimate and authentic, and to minimise the likelihood that their experience will continue to be colonised by other interpretations of their experience (Dudgeon et al., 1997).

Purpose of the Study

This study is a serious attempt to address the issue of ‘education’ from an Indigenous perspective. It is hoped the depth and quality of obtained information and insights will be applicable to other students in circumstances similar to those stories being documented, and that the accrued narratives may offer some direction towards enhancing the experience of those who may in future, follow in the footsteps of the current participants.

This project strives to be relevant to the ongoing needs and aspirations of Indigenous students in order to avoid what Sykes (1986) describes as a “… one off, non-cumulative project which does not carry through to the provision of directly usable knowledge” (p. 52).
Significance of the Study

Although many studies have demonstrated the profound disadvantage suffered by Indigenous students, and some have investigated factors which may encourage greater educational attainment for this population, the researcher has not come across a comparable study which investigates the quality of outcome of high school education through the self report of the student as an adult, and an analysis of their life stories or narratives.

Any education system is, to some extent, a culture building system. ‘Mainstream’ education in Australia is tied to white culture, the industrial economy, and the means through which white culture survives. Access to an Australian education, therefore, may result in loss and pose a threat to Indigenous family, community, cultural and self-identity. The hope for this research lies in its ability to offer strategies and directions to those responsible for the care and educational development of Indigenous students, which will enable all Indigenous students to emerge from the education system reporting a positive, holistic learning experience, elements of which may be transferable to those who walk in their footsteps.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapters 1 to 5 constitute the literature review for this study.

Chapter 1 ‘Setting the Scene’ – An Historical Perspective

Discussion on any aspect of contemporary Aboriginal life must be framed within an historical context and perspective. As Scott and Brown (2005) note, people who suffer disconnection and dispossession, may only become visible when our eyes are open to history. The past is
always in the present. It is only by understanding the past that we become more able to critique the present, and actively shape the future. Dudgeon (2000) advises that “Through a knowledge and positive understanding of history, Aboriginal people will be proud of the strengths of their people, history and heritage, and better understand how their social contemporary situation has come about” (p. 47). Chapter 1 offers an historical summary.

Chapter 2  Defining Aboriginal Identity

Arising directly out of the historical dimension is the subject of Aboriginal identity. Who we are, how we define ourselves, our culture, our world, are all questions fundamental to how we perceive ourselves and how we progress our personal journeys. Chapter 2 will focus on issues relating to defining of Aboriginal identity.

Chapter 3  Educational Policies and Practice and their Impact on Indigenous Students

Chapter 3 narrows the focus of Chapters 1 and 2, and addresses the development of educational policies and practice, and their impact on Indigenous students.

Chapter 4  The Concept of ‘Whiteness’ and the Realities of Living in a ‘White World’

Chapter 4 examines the historical landscape in order to explore some of the more contemporary issues pertinent to this research. Wild (2007) asserts, “Education is the key to helping children and communities foster safe, well-adjusted families. School is the way to
keep future generations of Aboriginal children safe. Getting children to school every day is essential...” (p. 115).

The importance of any education system, however, in shaping a student’s concept and view of the world is immense. Knowledge, what constitutes knowledge, and how it is dispersed establishes what is real, what is acceptable, what can and cannot be questioned, so – is there a cost when Indigenous students attend schools representative of the dominant white culture?

The study of ‘whiteness’ is an emergent area of investigation which concentrates attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity and the impact of ‘whiteness’ upon relations with minority and Indigenous groups. Chapter 4 offers a discussion on the concept of ‘whiteness’ and the realities of living in a ‘white world’.

Chapter 5 Storytelling and Counselling

Research which inquires into this concept of cost, when Indigenous students attend mainstream schools, can also be highly problematic. Historically research has focussed on the production of theories which promote and maintain Western privilege through Western knowledge and Western methods of knowing in ways that deny the validity of Indigenous knowledge, language and culture. Central to this process has been the development of ‘counselling’ as a profession. To be effective practitioners, it is essential counsellors are fully aware of the role played by psychological theory, practice and research in supporting European cultural values.

Knowledge is a social construction, it reflects a process where a belief system of an individual constructs realities and these realities are maintained through social interaction. Storytelling or devising narratives is the human means of making sense of an ever-changing
world. Life stories and the themes and metaphors held within them, are also central to achieving the most important goal of counselling, which, simply put, is about development. Development can be regarded as ‘a journey’ along a path toward understanding through self-discovery and self-integration, and the creation and maintenance of harmony and balance. Within the therapeutic setting, individuals turn to narrative to access and reassess memories that may have been painful, fragmented, chaotic or scarcely visible before narrating them (Riessman, 2008).

Storytelling is also recognised as an ancient Indigenous tradition through which the traditions and values of Indigenous culture have been maintained and strengthened through millennia. The relationship between storytelling and counselling, however, has not always run smoothly. Those who have suffered most from the changing trends in psychological theory and counselling practice have been those who remained true to their storied world and its truths. Chapter 5 will reflect on storytelling from a counselling perspective before examining the history of storytelling from an Indigenous perspective.

Chapter 6  Conceptual Framework and Methodology

In a research study such as this, it is essential to adopt an approach that enables the researcher to be creative and strategic, and provide a process that involves “… constantly assessing, reassessing and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions” (O’Leary, 2004, p. 1). The perspective adopted for this research, and the applied methodology have been chosen on the basis they offer the level of fluidity and flexibility necessary to answer the primary research questions. Chapter 6 will provide a review of the conceptual framework and methodology used in this study.
Chapter 7  Data Analysis  -  Stage One - The Stories Unfold

Chapter 8  Data Analysis  -  Stage Two – Thematic Analysis

The data collected in this research are stories, the personal stories of the participants, their lived experiences. Storytelling was considered a highly effective mechanism for ensuring the participant, as the storyteller, retained control of how they were represented. The researcher is the writer, not the owner, of these stories. The content of the transcript belongs to the participant, however the responsibility of transcribing the text in a way that captures as much of the spirit and meanings of the original idiom as possible, and analysing the narrative, remained with a non-Indigenous academic.

In acknowledgement of this, data from this study were analysed in two stages. The first stage (Chapter 7) presents an initial cluster of themes for each participant. Each theme cluster is supported by a sample of quotes, incorporating as much of participant’s stories as possible, whilst protecting personal identity. The researcher adopted an ‘emic’ (insider) position, focusing her attention on hearing and honouring the significance of her participants’ stories. In presenting the data in this way, it is hoped the reader will gain an optimal depth of understanding of the recorded ‘lived experience’.

Stage two of the analysis (Chapter 8) involved the development of a super-ordinate theme, as well as ordinate and subordinate themes, through which the researcher reflected her understanding of meaning as expressed by her participants. In adopting an ‘etic’ (interpretative) position the researcher attempted to make sense of the participant’s experience in a way that answered the research questions.
A summary is offered in the form of a model, generated by the stories of participants presented in Chapter 7, and tables are provided highlighting the references in the literature (Chapters 1-5) which specifically underpin the themes of the model.

Chapter 9 The ‘Lived Experience’ in a Counselling Context

The Indigenous partners (participants) in this research are the experts in ‘living between two worlds’ culturally, socially and psychologically. They are the ‘living experience’ of the literature. This chapter places their stories in a counselling context.

Chapter 10 Developing an Optimal Counselling Approach and Foundation

The aim of this research study is to enhance the counselling profession’s ability to develop interventions to strengthen the social, psychological, emotional wellbeing, and educational attainment of current and future Indigenous students. Through this study’s process of analysis, linking the participants’ stories with the literature, a concept for developing an optimal counselling approach is offered in Chapter 10.
CHAPTER 1

"Setting the Scene" - An Historical Perspective

Discussion regarding any Indigenous issue must take place within an appreciation of its historical context, “in order to better understand cultural differences and the contemporary reality of marginalisation of Indigenous people within a framework of colonisation” (Collard, 2000, p.15). To develop an understanding of the educational, health and social issues that affect Aboriginal peoples today, it is important to understand the impact of colonisation; “a process that had a devastating impact on the physical, spiritual, social and cultural wellbeing of the many different societies (500 clan groups), which remained relatively isolated for between 40,000 and 70,000 years” (Collard, 2000, p.23).

The historical impact on Indigenous culture of white settlement has been well documented. However, there is little social acknowledgement of the consequences of Australia’s colonisation and the policies developed by the white authorities relating to Indigenous genocide, dispossession, isolation and assimilation (Dodson, 2000).

Analysis of the United Nations criteria for acts of genocide has found Australia’s historical policies towards Indigenous Australians qualify on four distinct grounds:

- the well documented killings of Indigenous people by settlers and ‘rogue police’ in the 1800’s;

- the forcible transfer of Aboriginal children away from their parents “with the express intent that they cease being Aboriginal” (Tatz, 1999, p. 6, Author’s emphasis);
• the attempt to achieve “…the biological disappearance of those deemed ‘half-caste Aborigines’” (Tatz, 1999, p. 6), and finally,
• the mental or physical suffering inflicted on Aboriginals under ‘protective’ Government policies (Tatz, 1999).

In 1995 the Keating Government authorised a National Inquiry led by former High Court Justice Sir Roland Wilson into the effects of the Stolen Generation which, in its conclusion, *Bringing Them Home*, reaffirmed the fact genocide had occurred in Australia.

### 1.1 Aboriginal Sovereignty and Self Determination

The concept of Aboriginal ‘Sovereignty’ has generally been the cause of much confusion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In contrast to the Western understanding of the term, Aboriginal use of ‘Sovereignty’ refers to the Aboriginal ‘State’ which exists within the Australian Commonwealth, and by right has the authority to determine its own means of governance on land traditionally owned (Behrendt, 2003). For Aboriginal people, *sovereignty* refers to their never having relinquished ownership of traditional lands, and that since invasion in 1788, tenure has not been recognised by foreign settlement, nor has there been compensation for it during and after dispossession (Tatz, 1983).

Prior to colonisation, Aboriginal tribal people maintained a high level of resource management which sustained a viable hunting and gathering pattern of life. Seasonal harvesting of regional resources, maintenance of kinship groups and
religious practices ensured the continuation of Aboriginal people and their cultural integrity. The importance of recognition of land title for Aboriginal people extends beyond historical and cultural significance. It also represents the means of establishing an economic base on which to found their independence.

'Sovereignty', and 'Self Determination' from an Aboriginal perspective, concerns Human Rights, as well as Indigenous Rights as traditional owners of the land. Sovereignty, self determination, equal rights, human rights; all encompass the same ideals and can be seen as the basic needs of Indigenous people (Behrendt, 2003).

Politically, self-determination aims at greater participation by Indigenous Australians not only in the delivery of services, “… but also in their shaping and suiting to cultural values” (ATSISJC Report, 1993, p. 56). The ‘Whitlam years’ (5 December, 1972 – 11 November, 1975) improved political access for Aboriginal people. Whitlam’s Government endorsed Indigenous self determination and sought to include Aboriginal perspectives at all levels of government, especially where conditions of living such as health, housing, employment, education and legal services were concerned (McLaughlin, 2001). However, in spite of these changes, Indigenous people continued to be deterred from taking an active part in the country’s economic, social or political development (Dodson, 2000).

Aboriginal communities across Australia have sought self government and the means of control and decision making over their lives and destinies, an authority forcefully confiscated with colonisation. As stated in the March 2001 report by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission:

It is not legitimate for governments to identify the needs of Aboriginal communities, nor to ‘provide’ the answers and attempt to encourage
communities to accept them. Are any of these urgings anything more than the self-interested demands of self-styled 'winners' urging self-denial on 'losers'? (McLaughlin, 2001, p. 127).

Community based autonomy presently exists for some Aboriginal groups, such as the Pitjantjantjara people, who, on winning back native lands in South Australia, have legislated in their communities at a local Government level - a political freedom recognised by the Australian judiciary (Gerhandy v Brown, 1985). These legislative powers have their legal source in the people’s ownership of land, a process made possible by the ground breaking *Mabo* decision in 1992, establishing Native Title in face of the pre-existing Terra Nullius doctrine. Though the conditions in *Mabo* were enthusiastically adopted into legislation and the Native Title Act by the Government, the successful struggle for social change was not led by Australia’s political representative institutions, but by Aboriginal individuals or communities on behalf of their people. Native Title itself, as it was legislated in 1992, barred the majority of Aboriginal claims to land due to the strict criteria afforded to successful title (Maddox, 2005).

In response to the *Wik* decision, which found 78% of Australia eligible for Indigenous ownership, the Government legislated amendments to the Act which extinguished the grounds for the *Wik* decision, thereby not only curtailing avenues for successful claims to land, but also diminishing the economic, political and legislative freedoms enjoyed under such title (Maddox, 2005). *Wik* represented the most recent of progressive social attitudes towards Indigenous people and their objectives of land and consequent self-governance, despite considerable reluctance from Australian political institutions. More recently, the (Rudd) Federal and Western Australian State
Goverments’ response to the successful Noongar Native Title claim to South Western Australia has taken the form of separate appeals to the High Court over the ‘legality’ of the decision (Single Noongar Claim (Area 1), Government of Western Australia Office of Native Title, 2007). Such actions reflect how far Australia remains from a truly concerted effort towards Reconciliation through land rights and sovereignty.

1.2 Social Indicators of Disadvantage

Equity may be “the commonplace experience of most Australians” (ATSISJC, 1993, p. 10), but Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are, today, the most disadvantaged group within the Australian community (Bennett, 1996). In terms of life expectancy, health, housing, employment, rates of imprisonment, education, and other social indicators, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are unacceptably below Australian standards” (Bennett, 1996, p. 2).

1.3 Health

With regard to health, the long-term health conditions responsible for much of the ill-health experienced by Indigenous people include circulatory diseases (including heart disease), diabetes, respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, kidney disease and eye and ear problems (ABS/AIHW Report, 2008). Rates of diabetes in Aboriginal men and women are 7 and 10 times that of their non Indigenous counterparts, rates of tuberculosis and hepatitis A are seven and eight times greater. Introduced diseases such as smallpox, measles, tuberculosis, influenza and venereal
diseases, to which Aboriginal people had little immunity, have taken a very harsh toll. A life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians of 18 years currently exists (AIHW, 2004). Indigenous adults are twice as likely as non-Indigenous adults to report high to very high levels of psychological stress. In 2005-06, Indigenous people were hospitalised at 14 times the rate of non-Indigenous people for care involving dialysis, and at three times the rate for endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases. Hospital placements for preventable conditions were five times the rate of that for non-Indigenous Australians. In the period 2001-2005, the mortality rates for Indigenous males and females in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined, were almost three times those for non-Indigenous males and females. The five leading causes of death were diseases of the circulatory system, injury, endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders and respiratory diseases. In the period 2003-2005, the perinatal mortality rate for Indigenous babies in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined was one and a half times the rate for non-Indigenous babies. The mortality rate for children between one and fourteen years in the period 2001-2005 was approximately three times than that for non-Indigenous infants and children. In 2004-05, $1.17 was spent on Indigenous health for every $1.00 spent on the health of non-Indigenous (ABS/AIHW, Report, 2008). These figures present a strong case for greatly increased funding on Indigenous health given the higher mortality rates. Though once comparable with Indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand and the United States, Australian Aboriginal mortality rates have remained constant amid international improvement in Indigenous health (Ring and Firman, 1998).
1.4 Housing

In 2002, it was reported that 70% of Aboriginal people live in rented or public housing, predominantly in rural areas, with only 27% owning or part owning their accommodation. Also, Aboriginal people are 5.6 times more likely to live in overcrowded accommodation, with that rate increasing to 18.8 in rural areas (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2007).

One in seven Indigenous households (14%) were overcrowded in 2006 and 27% were living in overcrowded conditions (ABS/AIHW Report, 2008). The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (1994) showed up to 27% of Indigenous people live in dwellings that are not adequate (Commonwealth of Australia, 1998). Some dwellings did not have running water or electricity and all dwellings were generally in need of repair (Bennett, 1996; Dudgeon, 2000a). One in every two households was receiving some kind of government housing assistance. Indigenous people were over-represented (17%) in the national Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) for the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. Nearly three-quarters of Indigenous clients using SAAP services were women (ABS/AIHW Report, 2008).

Following the ‘Apology to the Stolen Generations’ by the Rudd Government on the 13th February, 2008, which acknowledged Indigenous peoples in Australia as being the oldest continuing cultures in human history, addressing the housing crisis was made the focus for immediate government action.
### 1.5 Unemployment

Aboriginal people suffer the highest unemployment rates in Australia compared to others (Dudgeon, 2000a), and those who are employed receive a diminished income compared to non-Indigenous workers. The 2001 median income for Indigenous managers was 81% that of non-Indigenous managers, professionals 73% and labourers 56% (ABS, 2001). In 2006, the unemployment rate for Indigenous people was 3 times the rate for non-Indigenous people. The median household income for Indigenous people was 56% of the median household income for non-Indigenous people (ABS/AIHW Report, 2008).

### 1.6 Education

The available research and policy literature pertaining to the educational experience of Australian Indigenous students reflects a picture of profound disadvantage, particularly in comparison to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Craven, 2006; Hooley, 2005; Hughes & Moore, 1997; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Report (March), 2000).

According to Craven (2006) Indigenous students remain the most disadvantaged Australians across a “... plethora of socio-economic indicators” (p. 14). Educational disadvantage has been measured through school attendance and retention rates, participation and attainment levels in literacy and numeracy (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Report (March), 2000).
In 2005, on average, Aboriginal Australians are less likely to get a pre-school education; are well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills development before they leave primary school; have less access to secondary school in the communities in which they live; are likely to be absent from school up to two to three times more often than other students; leave school much younger; are less than half as likely to go through to Year 12; are far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programmes in universities and vocational training institutions; and obtain fewer and lower-level education qualifications (Milroy & Milroy, cited in Zubrick et al., 2006, xviii).

A survey undertaken in 2005 revealed retention levels for Aboriginal year 12 students was 38%, compared with 77% of non-Indigenous year 12 students, and only 3.7% of the Aboriginal population continued their education to finish a bachelor degree, as opposed to 16.9% for the rest of Australia’s population (ABS, 2005).

### 1.7 Rates of Imprisonment

As a minority in Australia’s population, Indigenous people are heavily over-represented in the criminal justice system, with Indigenous detainee figures rising 12% between 2004 and 2005 alone, to 22% of the national gaol population. The narrowest ratio between Indigenous and non-Indigenous incarcerations of 4:1 (recorded in Tasmania) increases to 19:1 in Western Australia (ABS, 2005). Many of the causes for Indigenous over-representation in gaols remain institutional. The legal aid service relied upon by the vast majority of Indigenous defendants received consecutive funding cutbacks from the previous (Howard) Government, and many of...
those that appear in court have little knowledge of English, and consequently interactions with the Western style legal system and legal dialect is at best vaguely understood. Lack of communication is blamed for many innocent Indigenous people confessing to crimes they did not commit, not understanding bail obligations, or failing to understand charges and being jailed without knowing why (Willmott & Dowse, 2004).

1.8 Racism and Oppression

Racism is oppressive, because it creates an atmosphere in which a particular group finds itself in a devalued, often stereotyped position. Racism both reflects and is perpetuated by historical, social, cultural, power or authority inequalities in one’s society. It is based on the view that some groups have inherent superiority and enjoy accompanying privileges, while others are inferior and treated less favourably in numerous ways. For some it is an experience embedded in their daily lives – the empty seat beside an Aboriginal person sitting on a busy bus or train, the failure to be served (timely, if at all) in shops and restaurants, the all too often labelling of an Indigenous child as a ‘problem’ student. Racism, sadly, remains alive and well in Australia (Doolan, 2000; Dudgeon, 2000a; Hunter, 1993; Sanson et al., 1998). Fielder (2000) identifies how individual and group racist attitudes can develop out of “...a ‘colonist complex’ in which anxiety and ambivalence persist beneath the veneer of national triumphalism conviction, and self-assuredness” (p. 65).

In the documentary presentation titled ‘Liyarn Ngarn’ released in 2007, actor Pete Postlethwaite describes his experience of white Australian views regarding Indigenous people in the following manner:
There’s an overall feeling I’m getting, whether it is right or wrong, it all comes from one attitude which is: they are worth less; they count less, they matter less; they deserve less, than we who have stolen their birth right from them. It’s still going on. That attitude is still here today. I’ve experienced it. I’ve witnessed it. I’m not fibbing. And I say ‘we’ quite openly, because we English were the first to perpetrate that extraordinary ethnic cleansing really. Destroy a culture, destroy families, destroy livelihoods. Treat people like scrap, or use them if you can. Use them and throw them away (Postlethwaite, 2007).

Racism and oppression have been described clearly in terms of their pervasive and systematic assumptions, both within a historical and ongoing context. Paradies and Cunningham (2009) describe racism as occurring across three different dimensions: interpersonal, systemic and internalised. Hunter (1993) highlights the historical nature of racism and oppression when he describes how European structuring and control of Aboriginal societies began in 1788, and:

…has since influenced every facet of Aboriginal lifestyle, including language, clothing, settlement, housing, food, economy, work, religion, education, law and health. The imposition of non-Aboriginal social structures such as missions, stations, orphanages and the bureaucracies of adoption, has been largely utilitarian, facilitating either the control of Aboriginal access to resources, or the availability of Aborigines, themselves, as a resource (p. 258).

Doolan (2000) describes racism as:
endemic, and sadly it is an intrinsic part of our society. The dominant culture has used race to exercise its power and control over masses of people and to influence the popular perception of minority groups. Negative stereotypes have depicted people as pagan, savage or uncivilised – highlighting antisocial behaviour as innate rather than the result of colonisation and dehumanisation. Australian society is guilty of the attempted genocide, rape and desecration of the oldest living civilisation on earth (p. 66).

Dudgeon (2000a) concludes:

...the history of Australia and the colonisation of its Indigenous peoples has been about systematic conflict, removal, displacement and incursion of the peoples into prisons, reserves, and missions. There are not many Indigenous families who do not have some type of institutional or removal experience in their history... Australian history is built upon racial crimes and the ongoing denial of this history (p. 71).

Such demonstrations of institutional disadvantage act to uncover what the World Council of Churches called ‘the White Problem’; the social means and practices by which black minorities are “alienated from the decision making levels as well as the corridors of effective power” (Adler et al., 1981, p. 10). Australia has failed to provide for its Indigenous citizens the personal rights and securities ensured for all by such documents as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as Australia’s own anti-discrimination legislation (Behrendt, 2003).
When the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed in June 2006, despite opposition by Australian delegates, Tom Calma, Chairman of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission stated that the Declaration “...reaffirms that Indigenous individuals are entitled to all human rights recognised in international law without discrimination”. He also acknowledged that “...without recognising the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and ensuring protection of our cultures, Indigenous people can never truly be free and equal” (Calma, 2007, p. 7).

One possible vehicle which might be used to recognise collective rights could be a treaty which would enable the Aboriginal person to progress within the realms of their cultural rights and obligations. As Sehdev (2011) notes “Treaty is the space where power is negotiated” (p. 273). The dimensions behind any proposed treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, however, has itself become a point of contention between members of Australian society and has consequently become another obstacle for Reconciliation and it’s move towards social cohesion. A report in 2000 by the National Committee for Reconciliation found that less than 50% of the Australian population see the necessity of a treaty (Willmott & Dowse, 2004).

White/Aboriginal interactions through our brief history have resulted in Aboriginal people developing a well founded mistrust of white institutions. Acknowledging this, Dodson (2007) advises that a formal agreement must be formalised by parliament so “Unfinished Business” (p. 28) and divisions existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can be resolved. Aboriginal groups working towards Reconciliation also acknowledge that real social progress must coincide, or (preferably) pre-exist any treaty document (Behrendt, 2003).
As Birch (cited in Behrendt, 2003) notes, real change, such as legislated land rights, acknowledgements of past injustices and compensation, should derive as measures from the Government in good faith before any treaty is signed. He offers the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) between white settlers and New Zealand Maoris, as an example of how hardships are still suffered by that country’s Indigenous people despite the reality of a treaty. Recognising Australia’s inadequate social maturity and drive for egalitarianism, it seems absurd to consider the notion of a treaty, essentially to be based on mutual respect, when Australia currently stands accused by the United Nations of racial discrimination (Dodson, 2000). While such social apathy exists, Indigenous people, and members of the broader community demanding progress, will not find the environment in which their aspirations will be met, and the current state of the Aboriginal welfare within Australia will remain much the same.

1.9 Conclusion

Australia, as a country, still has some way to go in achieving National Reconciliation. To achieve ‘Social Justice’ for Indigenous Australians, their rights and needs both as citizens of Australia as well as the traditional owners of this country, need to be both recognised and respected, not reluctantly by obligation but with generosity and commitment.

As Bennett (1996) advises, addressing “...the cycle of health, housing, employment, education, and social inequities (the cycle of poverty) requires addressing among other things – land needs” (p. 3). This view is echoed in the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report which
states “… improved living standards in most communities will not be achieved without security of land tenure and self determination (RCIADIC, 1991, p. 85).

“With land comes meaning” (Bennett, 1996, p. 6). Yunupingu (1980) describes the land as the foundation that gives him identity, that sense of belonging to the place his spirit came from. Land and culture are the source of Indigenous empowerment, personal dignity and identity.

As Bennett (1996) notes “The denial of equity to one group of Australians diminishes all Australians” (p. 7). Sovereignty, self-determination, recognition of the past and reconciliatory agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are four key issues to achieving a more unified and egalitarian society. At present, achievements in terms of these key issues are still made against the tide of social attitudes. It appears Reconciliation in Australia will only happen when those attitudes undergo radical change, and Australia can break out of this ‘colonial construct’ (Behrendt, 2003). Until then Australian relations will always be marred by Indigenous disadvantage. Australia as a nation needs to acknowledge that racism has to be properly addressed if social justice and reconciliation are to be achieved.

True reconciliation will depend on the creation of partnerships able to recognise the value and knowledge that Indigenous society has to contribute to national knowledge. For those involved in education and support services this demands consideration of how these values and knowledge can be incorporated into all aspects of learning and study (Dodson, 2007). Within our teaching, our research, our counselling practice, we are faced with the living reality of unreconciled students. Our Indigenous students are confronted with the daily realities of dealing with the legacies of past acts of dispossession, racism and disempowerment, as well as contemporary realities of continuing racism and systemic disadvantage. Overcoming
such disadvantage remains the challenge of all who seek an education system that will enhance the well-being of all Australians.
CHAPTER 2

Defining Aboriginal Identity

2.1 A Therapeutic Understanding of Identity Formation

Identity has been defined as “The sense of self, providing a unity of personality over time”, and personality being “…deeply engrained patterns of behaviour, which include the way one relates to, perceives, and thinks about the environment and oneself” (American Psychiatric Association 1987, p. 403). According to Myers et al. (1991) identity formation is “…a process of integrating and expanding one’s sense of self” (p. 54). Individual experience, social context, and sustained, predictable patterns of behaviour over time, are all involved in developing a sense of self and place (Hunter, 1993). To be consciously aware of ourselves – who we are in the world, who others are in the world – and how we relate to each other, informs how we evolve (Sharf, 2008).

The struggle for a sense of significance and purpose in life is a distinctly human characteristic. Establishing a positive self-identity, however, can be challenging, so helping clients clarify or enhance their self-identity is considered a central task in counselling (Nystul, 2011). Corey (2008) advises the underlying conflicts that bring people into counselling are often centred in questions such as “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “What do I want from life?” and “What gives my life purpose?” Understanding the unique nature of Aboriginal identity may be challenging for non-Aboriginal counsellors. This chapter focuses on what it may
mean to be Aboriginal, and how preserving Aboriginal identity has involved continuous struggle over time.

2.2 Defining Aboriginal Identity

Aboriginal identity, sense of community and culture are inseparable (Bennett, 1996; Berndt, 1974; Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Hunter, 1993). Individual identity formation is informed by how the group, to which the individual belongs, constructs and articulates its defining factors, through the constellation of “... personal, family, community and social events experienced during the course of life, particularly childhood” (Hunter, 1993, p. 201). The notion of family is one that is integral to being Aboriginal (Sarra, 2005). For many Aboriginal people, questions regarding name, family and country, are the first asked of new Aboriginal contacts (Garvey, 2007).

Historically within Aboriginal societies, group and kinship systems were woven into the fabric of religious and economic life, and were voiced through practices and patterns of reciprocity and obligation. According to Bennett (1977):

There was no form of category or unit in traditional Aboriginal Australia which was ‘open’ or to which one could belong voluntarily through purely individual choice. Religiously and economically, people were placed quite firmly within the total system – no room was left for an uncommitted, floating population (p. 2).
The basic social category was kinship (Berndt & Berndt, 1985), which in complex but predictable ways structured interpersonal space, weaving the individual into a sustaining social fabric.

In common with many traditionally-oriented societies, Aboriginal society was characterised by “... stability: hierarchical structuring, personal integration, role definition, predictability, mutual dependence, limited exploration of the unknown, and suppression of internal tendencies to change (Hunter, 1993, p. 209). This way of life was in sharp contrast to that of white Australian settlers who came from a society which “... valued change, growth, individualism and initiative” (Hunter, 1993, p. 210). The settlers wanted land and were disposed to appropriate and use it in ways that were incompatible with Aboriginal traditional life (Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Hunter, 1993). “Values based on exploitation and capitalism are in direct conflict with the conservationist and cooperative values of Aboriginal people” (Fielder, 2000, p. 64).

Aboriginal attachment to land is non-transferable because for each grouping there are specific ceremonies, legends, stories, songs and other cultural and spiritual links that connect a specific group to a specific country (Berndt, 1974; Berndt & Berndt, 1985; Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000). The complex interrelationships between people, their country, their ancestral beings and totems, their norms, moral code, values and ideals are all embodied in the Dreamtime which governs all aspects of life and how it is to be lived. Ancestral beings usually are area specific. Each Aboriginal group has many stories about the creation of their country by their Ancestral beings, establishing an inseparable link between them (Bennett, 1996; Berndt, 1974). Aboriginal identity is bound to their association with their land. The land can be described as a foundation that gives the individual identity, the sense that...
they belong to that place from which their spirit emerged (Yunupingu, 1980). Without this attachment to country, they are not merely dispossessed; they suffer loss of identity (Bennett, 1996).

2.3 Colonial Constructs versus Indigenous Identity

The early colonists did not acknowledge diversity among Aboriginal peoples. They were regarded and referred to in generic terms. A system of classification, however, developed in response to the growing phenomenon of a part-Aboriginal population when references to proportions of ‘blood’ became prevalent, and Aboriginal people were referred to as ‘full blood’, ‘half blood’ or ‘quarter blood’.

‘Real Aborigines’ were ‘full-blood’ and were expected to die out over a short period of time as they were not considered capable of surviving European civilisation (Bates, 2004; Beresford, 2006; Neville, 1948). So strongly did Bates hold this belief that she titled the early version of her book ‘The Passing of the Aborigine’. Contrary to this expectation, however, the Aboriginal population was, in reality, not facing extinction but was increasing in number (Hunter, 1993; Reece, 2004). Given what had preceded, this capacity for survival and adaptation was truly remarkable, but it came at a price. What emerged were transitional identity structures adapted to the realities of European demands and expectations.

Neville published his book ‘Australia’s Coloured Minority: Its place in the community’, after his retirement as the long-standing Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia. He had held this position from 1915 to 1920 and again from 1926 to 1940. His book details how he believed all visible signs of Aboriginality could be ‘bred out’ and how non-full blood people could be assimilated and absorbed, thus

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (1998) advise that “An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as such and is accepted as such by the community in which they live”. Although this definition is accepted by the Indigenous community, Dudgeon (2000) notes that “complex dialogue and debate about Indigenous identity is an ongoing process…At some levels there is much confusion about being an Aboriginal” (p.43).

In more general terms identity has been defined as “The sense of self, providing a unity of personality over time;” personality being “deeply engrained patterns of behaviour, which include the way one relates to, perceives, and thinks about the environment and oneself” (American Psychiatric Association 1987:339, 403). Individual experience, social context, and time, are all involved in developing a sense of self and place (Hunter, 1993).

Many writers advise that the consequences of assimilation and the collective struggle against racism and oppression has been a major component in the development of most Aboriginal people’s identity (Dudgeon & Oxenham 1989; Dudgeon, 2000; Hunter, 1993; Scott & Brown 2005; Stokes 1996). The general acceptance of the ATSIC definition of Aboriginality, however, has certainly helped to constructively overcome divisions and confusion among Aboriginal people engendered by colonialist references to proportions of ‘blood’. Prior to this it was not uncommon to hear Aboriginal people referred to as ‘full blood’, ‘half blood’, and ‘quarter blood’. 
ensuring no place for Aboriginal people remained in Australia. The only acceptable way forward for Aboriginal people was seen to be a ‘White way’. Aboriginal cultural practices and way of life was deliberately discouraged and punished. The story of Jimmie Barker (as told to Mathews, 1988) offers a very personal and poignant description of the effects of the loss of an Aboriginal way of life:

I feel that I am living between two worlds… Since all these customs and beliefs have been cast aside a lot of us have been left with a feeling of sadness and uncertainty… During my life I have seen many of these Aboriginal ways disappear… Our customs have gone and their loss has caused a great need for readjustment. Life for dark people has been difficult in recent years, but the full-bloods are the worst problem. They need land and natural conditions to help them through this period of transition. It is unfortunate that most of the land which was used for missions or reserves is now lost to the Aborigines… Robin Campbell is a full-blood, and it is too soon for him to become adjusted to living in a town. He needs the bush, the river for fishing and some means to cling to the past (pp. 181-184).

Jimmie Barker lived in New South Wales where Aboriginal people were the first to experience the imposition of the new ‘frontier’. His insights highlight the effects of oppression suffered by Aboriginal people who were removed from their country and forced to re-locate into sites such as missions or reserves. Through separation from their land, Aboriginal people experienced erosion of sacred roles and the way law and culture were articulated. Institutional life introduced many new dimensions to Aboriginal life (Hunter, 1993). Children attending school had much greater exposure
to the English language and were able to communicate in that language more efficiently than their parents and elders. This allowed children to “... possess powers they never had traditionally.” Such powers included “... the power to abandon Aboriginal culture in favour of that of whites” (Tonkinson, 1982, p. 126).

Over time, gender and economic roles were also changed profoundly. Economically, a shift in dependency occurred from the paternalism experienced in stations and missions to reliance on government funds and services. From the late 1950s’ pensions were made available to the aged, those suffering a disability and to women with children, however, application for some pensions could take up to ten years to achieve, if they were approved at all. In the case of the aged pension applicants were required to provide ‘proof of age’, an impossible task for those who did not possess a birth certificate. Success in accessing such funding was often relative to having a white person who could provide advocacy such as writing to government departments to argue their case. This access to sources of funding also occurred when Aboriginal males were being displaced from their jobs as stock men and forced to move away from stations to fringe-camp settings. This constituted a major erosion of the power-base of Aboriginal males. Such emasculation and powerlessness has been noted in many traditional cultures to be closely linked to male suicide and violence towards women (Hunter, 1993). The power exercised by colonial governments left Aboriginal people with little choice but to accept government handouts, and government control over their lives, leading to the erosion and loss of culture and heritage.

Writers, from many different fields, have highlighted the reality and consequences of what can aptly be described as a ‘shame-based trauma’, suffered through the loss of a valued identity, and the inferior, racial, cultural image with
which Aboriginal people have been forcibly indoctrinated (Dudgeon, 2000; Hunter, 1993, Pilger, 1989; Stokes, 1997). It is little wonder responses to losses of such magnitude are manifested in acts of suicide and interpersonal violence. As Gilbert (1977) states:

"It is my thesis that Aboriginal Australia underwent a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the mind of most blacks today. It is a psychological blight, more than anything else, that causes the conditions we see on the reserves and missions. And it is repeated down the generations (p. 3)."

2.4 Modern Acts of Cultural Repression

The repression of Aboriginal culture was enshrined in the application process for accessing citizenship following the 1967 referendum. Those who were able to apply for citizenship were required to formerly relinquish their cultural identity. In some cases, this was achieved in the public domain alone, however, there is no doubt the consequences of even a symbolic giving up of identity needs to be considered in terms of having psychological repercussions (Dudgeon, 2000). Practices of denigrating and denying Aboriginal identity remain within the psyche of Aboriginal people. Jimmie Barker again gives a very personal account of this process when he states:

"...we all have inferiority complex. We have had years of being called 'no-good blacks' or worse. It has been drummed into us that we are the poorest type of humanity in the world and the lowest creatures in Australia. It was hurtful that the sheep and other animals might be counted but the full-blood was never..."
included in the population. That has been remedied, but there is still a lot to be done. So much damage has been done to us during the last century that it is hard to realise the possibility of getting fair treatment in the future. Public opinion indicates that we may be given some reasonable consideration, and that will help our confidence. Confidence is something that, once lost, is difficult to regain. (Mathews, 1988, p. 189).

The long-term effects of such ‘crisis of confidence’ is captured in the writings of contemporary Aboriginal authors such as Scott and Brown (2005) and Janke, also writing in 2005. Janke writes of her university experience in undertaking a law degree as being:

... too shame to do a moot. I’m way too scared to even talk in class. Big shame job if the lecturer asks me a question. I just like to keep quiet, like at high school. Too worried I might say something stupid. Too shame people might find out I don’t know anything, that I really shouldn’t be here (p. 30).

Scott and Brown (2005) describe people they know:

... who mistakenly believe that being Noongar means, in effect, accepting the place they’ve been given at the bottom of society, and that ‘being black’ is ‘not being white’. Even more unfortunate is the belief that the real Aboriginal people are the down and outs, the itinerants, the ‘parkies’. In which case, to affirm one’s Aboriginality is to perpetuate the characteristics expected of a member of an oppressed community, and a sense of self that carries, to paraphrase Noel...
Pearson’s words, ‘the human right to misery, incarceration and early death’. I also worry that being told to be proud of your Indigenous identity, especially without an informed historical perspective and relying only on empirical evidence – the legacy of that history of oppression – can mean being trapped in a reactive loop. In wanting to affirm your identity, and wanting confirmation of it, you perpetuate too much of the way things are now, and an Indigenous identity can even come to mean don’t achieve, don’t succeed, because success is associated with a ‘white identity’. … confusion comes from fearing other people’s reactions, especially those of Aboriginal people (p. 190).

Many writers advise that the consequences of assimilation and the collective struggle against racism and oppression has been a major component in the development of most Aboriginal people’s identity (Dudgeon & Oxenham 1989; Dudgeon, 2000; Hunter, 1993; Scott & Brown 2005; Stokes 1997). Dudgeon (2000) notes “The process of colonisation, the impacts of assimilation and the removal of people (especially children) means that the diversity of Indigenous people is considerable, in terms of appearance, lifestyle, and geographical location” (p. 44).

It may be one of history’s greatest ironies that attempts to formally extinguish Aboriginal identity have resulted instead in a strong, inclusive claiming of Aboriginality highlighted in the ATSIC definition, adopted by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1998. This definition states: “An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identifies as such and is accepted as such by the community in which they live” (p. 60). Although the general acceptance of the ATSIC definition has helped to constructively overcome divisions and confusion among Aboriginal people
engendered by colonialist references to proportions of blood, Dudgeon (2000) notes that “... complex dialogue and debate about Indigenous identity is an ongoing process... At some levels there is much confusion about being an Aboriginal” (p. 43).

Fear of the reactions of other Aboriginal people becomes a real issue when community places emphasis on acceptance after some Aboriginal people relocate from their home communities. Aboriginal people do make judgements regarding who is ‘real’ and who has rights and a sense of belonging to a particular community (Scougall & Dick, 1997). This can have real personal consequences as Cameron writing in Oxenham et al. (1999) expresses:

I have assumed that other Aboriginal people will understand and respect my identity, naively based on the fact that it was never something questioned within my own Aboriginal community. However, my experiences, particularly since moving away from my home state, away from familiarity and connections, have been similar to some of those at school. Moving out of an area to a place where I am not known has exposed me to attacks and questions about my identity, from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In a sense this has meant that I have to establish myself and my identity again, in a new context. It has also meant for the first time I have had to deal with emotional hurt and damage that previously I have experienced from the non-Aboriginal domain (p. 33).

While Hunter (1993) advises that pan-Aboriginality is frequently seen as un-Aboriginality, Dudgeon (2000) states the construction of Aboriginality is as much about the deconstruction of Aboriginality, which has come about through the role
played historically by governments and the disciplines of anthropology and history, leading to Aboriginal society suffering ‘an identity crisis’. Dudgeon & Oxenham (1989) propose that Aboriginal diversity has a number of different manifestations such as: urban Aboriginals; traditionally-oriented Aboriginals; settlement or reserve Aboriginals; and fringe-dwellers, although Australian ‘mainstream’ society mostly restrict their view of Aboriginal identity to ‘tribal’ people who still overly practice ‘traditional’ culture and who look ‘Aboriginal’. In contrast, those who don’t look Aboriginal and/or are living in urban areas and have ‘lost their culture’ are regarded as ‘not real’ Aboriginal people.

The result of colonial history consisting of representations of Aboriginal people in the interests of non-Aboriginal people, has led to profound disillusionment of many Aboriginal youth who do not feel a legitimate connection to their Aboriginal heritage. They too are encouraged to associate Aboriginal culture with images of the traditional practices of language, dance and music, which in many cases are alien to them, leading to the Aboriginal youth questioning the very essence of their identity (Beresford & Omaji, 1996).

Dudgeon (2000) advises “Aboriginal questioning of ‘who is Aboriginal?’ is an undeniable reality… as the people themselves need to go through this process of ‘decolonisation’” (p. 47). Dudgeon and Oxenham (1989) offer a paradigm outlining the successive stages an individual may pass through in acknowledging their Aboriginal identity as follows:

- ‘internalisation and shame’ involving the internalisation of dominant culture values and attitudes to Aborigines.
- ‘resistance, active and passive’ to those internalised negative views.
• ‘acceptance’ of positive views of Aborigines, with questioning of dominant culture stereotypes of Aborigines.

• ‘hostility’ and rejection of those views with an appropriate emotional response (anger) to those that hold them.

• ‘consolidation’ of newly emergent referents of Aboriginality, and active and open demonstrations of these referents, and

• ‘self-actualised Aboriginality’, a rapprochement in which the individual has accepted their Aboriginality and also acknowledged those parts of themselves that reflect dominant society values with some retained and some rejected (p. 11).

Aboriginal identity is never “… simply and/or solely based on birth right.” Within cultures and communities there is always a political dimension to identity” (Dudgeon, 2000, p. 47). Any political, and therefore, social struggle with regard to identity, can have psychological impacts on a person’s sense of self and belonging. While problems remain with Aboriginality as an encompassing category, it has become a cultural and political reality. A reclaiming of cultural identity is taking place and despite continued prejudice and racism, there are now clearly established elements of pride in being Indigenous (Dudgeon, 2000). The importance of culture and heritage among Aboriginal people is increasingly being acknowledged. Central to this process has been the response of Aboriginal people to particularly significant political events such as the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House on 27th January, 1972. This provides a powerful symbol of pan-Aboriginality that draws Aboriginal people together from across Australia and enables them to lobby the Commonwealth government on common issues. The design...
and adoption of the Aboriginal flag provides a new cultural symbol which engenders unity against racism and oppression, and is an artefact of Aboriginal sovereignty. In the context of globalisation and the rise of identity politics, Indigenous issues have assumed significance and have been accorded a critical place within Australian identity. Probably the clearest example of this remains the commemorations that took centre stage in the pageant preformed at the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

2.5 Conclusion

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of identity, especially for Aboriginal people. It is difficult to comprehend the short sighted intentions of those who wished to wipe out this identity, and to understand the effect such intentions have had on the everyday experiences of Aboriginal people. As Australians, we continue to grapple with a clash of culture and value base. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the conflict of views regarding the land. Divergent views regarding acquisition of the land as an economic asset, versus oneness with the spirit of the land, are poetically captured in Kev Carmody’s song ‘This Land is Mine’.

This land is mine
All the way to the old fence line
Every break of day
I’m working hard just to make it pay.

This land is mine
Yeah I’ve signed on the dotted line
Campfires on the creek bed
Bank breathing down my neck...
They won’t take it away from me.

This land is me
Rock, water, animal, tree
They are my song
My being is here where I belong.

This land owns me
From generations past to infinity
We’re all but woman and man
You only fear what you can’t understand…
They won’t take it away from me

(Carmody, 2001)

The continuance of a strong Aboriginal cultural identity is very much dependent on the sensitivity of Aboriginal children to that culture, and their willingness to live according to its standards. Education in Australia, however, is tied to white culture, the industrial economy, and the means through which white culture survives. The dominant culture sets the standard. Will this result in further loss and pose a threat to Indigenous family, community, cultural and self identity as Indigenous children become more versed in White ways, or can the dominant culture widen its understanding of land and heritage and be nourished by a culture that values
permanence over change? The following chapter will focus on education, educational
policies and practice, and their effect on Indigenous students.
3.1 Aboriginal Education

A comprehensive definition of Aboriginal educational process is offered by Victorian Koorie Education (n.d.).

Aboriginal education encompasses an enormous time span. It does not begin with European contact, nor did it end with this contact. Prior to 1788, our people developed a complex education system. It was a system that was very different from the non-Aboriginal system. Education was not limited to a set period of time... Education was a lifelong process, from birth to death, as individuals in the community underwent an increasing process of education throughout their lives. Education was oriented towards the achievement of goals. Every individual was seen as a valuable member of the community and, as they achieved the levels and expectations that were set by the community, they were promoted into another level of knowledge in the community.

This process was not established only so the individual could achieve, it was about how the education and development of the individual benefited the whole community. Each individual had responsibilities before they were born, and as they grew, they learned the cultural values of respect for their elders,
sharing and caring, and obligations to their kin and to their land. Education was a community responsibility and everyone was involved in the process.


Atkinson (2002) advises:

> Education is a vehicle for empowerment for the whole community to enhance life skills from birth to death. The education of the individual is vitally important because as they become educated, they contribute to the knowledge within the community as a whole (p. 5).

While Sykes (1986) states:

> In traditional society, there were many highly skilled people – not only doctors and lawyers, but teachers, geographers, chemists, botanists, and people trained in communications (not only with the living, but also with nature and the spirit world). We had linguists, historians, etc., and while everyone was obliged to learn a little about most of these things, it was the lifetime duty of some people to carry the whole knowledge of each subject and pass it on to whoever would be replacing them (p. 30).
3.2 Mission Schools

When Aboriginal people were being cleared off their traditional lands, when their food supplies were depleted, their ceremonies interrupted and incidents of massacres were increasing, the missions in many ways offered a safe haven (Downing, 1988; Rowley, 1970). During the 1800s, missions were established by churches and were supported by individual Christian and missionary societies. The motivation of governments to agree to the establishment of the missions may have arisen from the expectation that the conversion of Aboriginal people to Christianity would, in many ways, benefit non-Aboriginal society. Conversion to Christianity required Aboriginal people to wear clothes, to pray, to work in non-Aboriginal industries (including pastoralism, fishing and surveying) thus becoming vital contributors to non-Aboriginal society (Rowley, 1970).

The missions not only saved the government money, they also ensured that the Aboriginal children received a rudimentary education that would socialise them into non-Aboriginal culture. Schools were considered a very important part of the equation as they were regarded the main socialising agents, the means of assimilation. Many missions survived until the early 1900's before a number were closed by the mission societies and taken over by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines as reserves (McConnochie, 1982).

In Western Australia the 1905 Aborigines Act paved the way for the government to establish reserves to which Aboriginal people could be forcibly moved.

It outlawed ‘miscegenation’ – procreative sexual union between the races – and banned Aborigines from owning guns. Any Aboriginal camped outside a reserve could be removed at will by the authorities, and Aborigines were not
allowed to wander in towns without a permit or to enter prohibited areas—which could be created any time the government deemed it ‘necessary’ (Beresford, 2006, pp. 12-13).

Hunter (1993) offers a useful description of life on the Balgo Hills mission reserve in Western Australia.

Balgo is home to some 400 Aborigines. On the edge of the Great Sandy Desert, it is over 300 kilometres from the nearest town, Halls Creek. Balgo Hills had been founded as a Catholic mission in 1939, concentrating Gugadja (Kukatja) speakers from the desert to the south and east. It was run under strict and, by most accounts, authoritarian control until the 1970s… The people of this isolated settlement were, and remain, tradition-oriented. The mission also attracted Aborigines from other groups, such as the Walbiri from across the Northern Territory border. Gugadja (Kukatja) traditional life, including relations with the Walbiri, appears to have been interspersed with confrontation and violence… and, certainly the mission did little to alter the underlying tensions. (pp. 187-188).

Tensions on mission reserves related to the fact that Aborigines did not want to 'settle' on clan lands that did not belong to them. They wanted to continue living on their own land in their traditional ways, honouring their culture and belief systems. They struggled to resist the efforts by non-Aborigines to change their beliefs and culture, both for them and for their children (Austin, 1998; Hunter, 1993; McConnachie, 1982; Rowley, 1970). In some cases this struggle led to a movement of Aboriginal
people away from government settlements and church missions to more remote clan communities, which became known as the Outstation or Homelands Centres movement (Downing, 1988).

3.3 The Establishment of a Government System of Aboriginal Education

For almost 100 years after the establishment of a European-type education system in Western Australia, Aboriginal children were either too remote from such centres, or were denied access to them (Mounsey, 1979). The Elementary Education Act of 1871 drew no distinction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. However, an 1897 amendment to the Aborigines Protection Act (1886) passed responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children to the Aborigines Department. The consequence of this was that Aboriginal students were excluded from government schools until the 1940s. Amendments to the Elementary Education Act in 1893 enabled the State governor to proclaim school districts and elect school boards, as a result local land owners and settler/occupiers were given significant influence over educational facilities and programme content. According to Mounsey (1979):

Section 22, part 4 of the amendment to this Act gave the Education Authority the right to exclude any pupil suffering from any infectious or contagious disease, or whose presence was otherwise injurious to the health and welfare of other children (p. 396).
Legislation in the form of the Aborigines Protection Act of 1886, which established the Aboriginal Protection Board, and the creation of the position of Protector of Aborigines, placed Aboriginal people under rigid government control – a control that would last for the next 50 years (Hunter, 1993; Mounsey, 1979).

The effects of the Aborigines Act of 1905 were twofold: non-Aboriginal parents were able to push for the immediate exclusion of Aboriginal students; and regulations were developed which precluded Aboriginal students having access to public education. The first successful appeal by white parents to have Aboriginal children excluded from a government school occurred at Shark Bay in March 1905 (Mounsey, 1979). An escalation in mission activity followed the proclamation of the Aborigines Act 1905. By 1921 nine missions had been established. By 1950 this number had increased to twenty-one in Western Australia.

The Royal Commission into allegations of maltreatment, and inquiries into the administration of the Aborigines Department, resulted in the publication of the Moseley Report in 1934. Recommendations from this report resulted in the Native Administration Act of 1936 which had a profound effect of the nature of future educational settlements, their control and administration. Mounsey (1979) noted the main changes as being:

(1) The abolition of the position of Protector of Aborigines and all aspects of his ‘protectorate’ function;

(2) The creation of a Department of Native Welfare headed by a Commissioner;
Prior permission was required from the Minister of Native Welfare before a new mission could be established;

All missionaries had to be licensed before they commenced duties; and

Only missions which complied with departmental regulations regarding education, diet, hygiene and housing of inmates would be subsidized (p. 398).

Following the creation of the Department of Native Welfare, 13 different authorities established 17 new missions, dramatically increasing the potential for Aboriginal children to attend school (Mounsey, 1979). Mounsey states that by 1940 a new philosophy had emerged “… one which aimed to provide adequate schooling to all Aboriginal children” (p. 398-399). However, school inspectors, at this time advised that “… because of their limited mastery of English literacy and numeracy, Aboriginals were educable only to the fourth and fifth grade” (p. 399).

Even this level of provision proved too much for some. Hunter (1993) quotes the Member for Beverley in 1942 as saying:

Why send these half-castes and natives to school for two or three years? Of what use is the schooling to them afterwards? I would rather have an uneducated than an educated nigger. A native with some education develops into a bigger scoundrel than does the ordinary native (p. 48).
Aboriginal society continued to evolve and develop throughout the whole period of Aboriginal occupation of Australia. Prior to European settlement social change occurred from within Aboriginal society, as new concepts were developed within existing structures in a way that modified without radically changing highly cohesive, tightly knit communities. Change was gradual and congruent with the existing system, leaving communities and individuals stable, effective and productive. However the policies and processes of assimilation made no attempt to gradually introduce changes deemed compatible with existing structures. Instead the intent was to replace one social system with another, the replacement being radically different in terms of basic values, systems, relationships, economy and religion (Mead, 1973).

Mead (writing in 1942 and published in 1973) makes the following comparison between what she terms ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ education.

Primitive education was a process by which continuity was maintained between parents and children… Modern education includes a heavy emphasis upon the function of education to create discontinuities… Another common factor in these modern trends of education is the increasing emphasis upon change rather than upon growth, upon what is done to people rather than upon what people do… Changing people’s ideas, people’s language, people’s beliefs, people’s emotional allegiances, involves a sort of deliberate violence to other people’s developed personalities… (p. 103).

3.4 Education - A Means of Assimilation

According to Freire (1996):
For cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. Since everything has its opposite, if those who are invaded consider themselves inferior, they must necessarily recognize the superiority of the invaders. The values of the latter thereby become the pattern for the former. The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them; dress like them; talk like them (p. 134).

In 1937 the Commonwealth Government openly talked, for the first time, about the need for attempts at assimilation to be preceded by a system of education for Aboriginal people. The implementation of the government’s policy was delayed by the outbreak of war in 1939 but when it returned to the national agenda, the policy of assimilation was clearly overt and well articulated (Austin, 1998; Harris, 1991; Mounsey, 1979). In 1948 a conference convened in Canberra comprised of Commonwealth and State representatives, discussed at length the role education could play in sponsoring assimilation. They concluded that:

The role of educational policy should be to give natives of full and mixed blood a training to fit them for ordinary avocations of life, e.g. artisans, mechanics, farm or station workers, etc. with a view to their absorption into the general social and economic structure and to qualify them to hold positions of responsibility in Government institutions (Harris, 1991, p. 26).

It was decided that educational policies supporting assimilation would be rolled out, in the first instance, in the Northern Territory and that the language of instruction
would be English unless it was imperative, given local conditions, for the teacher to have some knowledge of Aboriginal languages. Harris (1991) advises that:

In 1950 the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education assumed responsibility for the administration of education for Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory in respect of staffing and inspection of schools; curricula; classification of schools and recommendations for the establishment of new schools; training, appointment, classification, transfer and promotion of teachers; the inspection and supervision of mission schools and recommendation for the assistance of mission schools… The Commonwealth Office of Education maintained its responsibilities until the end of the 1955 school year when the control and administration of Aboriginal education were transferred to the Welfare Branch within the Northern Territory Administration (p. 26).

The main element, or vested interest, entirely missing from this process of policy, planning and implementation for assimilation was the voice of Aboriginal people.

In July 1961, the then Minister for Territories, the Honourable Paul Hasluck made the following policy statement to a Missions Administration Conference:

The Australian Government has committed itself to a policy of assimilation. In practical effect that means that it will shape its work in nutrition, health, hygiene, schooling, vocational training, employment and the removal of legal restriction so as to promote the advancement of the people towards life in and
with the rest of the Australian community and on exactly the same terms as those enjoyed by all other Australians (Harris, 1991, p. 33).

Mounsey (1979) advises that, following the presentation of Hasluck’s paper, a further change was revealed in educational policy. Fundamental to this change was the presentation of the influential Watt-Gallacher report in 1964, which outlined a series of recommendations for Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory. Provision of education was to take part in normal (government) schools and pre-schools where possible. Where this was not possible, provision was to be made through special schools and pre-schools, for all Aboriginal and part Aboriginal children. The focus had shifted from mission and special schools (Gallacher, 1969; McConnochie, 1982; Mounsey, 1979).

Gallacher listed a number of specific skills which he believed Aboriginal people must develop “…to function in today’s world”. These included:

(i) Learning English as a second language,
(ii) Learning new job skills,
(iii) Learning new ways to improve and protect health,
(iv) Learning the social skills of modern life,
(v) Learning newer civic and political responsibilities,
(vi) Learning newer family responsibilities,
(vii) Learning newer ways of maintaining order,
(viii) Learning how to use the services of the larger society,
(ix) Learning the skill required to use numbers,
(x) Learning how to think analytically, and to form and test conclusions.

(1969, p.102).
Although it was acknowledged that Aboriginal modes of learning and analytical thought processes were different from the European norm, the curriculum, methods, theoretical orientation and rationale underpinning educational programmes closely followed models of cognition developed by Western psychologists, designed to promote Western style learning and evaluation (de Lemos, 1969; Gallacher, 1969; Rickwood, Dudgeon & Gridley, 2010; Sykes, 1986).

de Lemos, described as a pioneer in her work with Aboriginal children, reports on a study she undertook looking at concept development and the implications of this on Aboriginal education. Her study was based on the work of Piaget’s stage development theory, in particular, with the development of concepts at the concrete operational level. Piaget found that one of the basic concepts developed at this level was that of conservation, i.e. the understanding that any substance or quantity remains invariant regardless of changes in form or position. Piaget believed that this concept was a necessary prerequisite to the development of operational concepts in any field. Piaget found that conservation of quantity, number, length and area was developed by about seven years in Swiss children, conservation of weight at about eight years, and conservation of volume at about 12 years. de Lemos applied Piaget’s tests of conservation of quantity, weight, volume, length, area and number to Aboriginal children, aged from 8 to 15 years, who were attending two mission schools. The children were questioned in English. de Lemos comments that if the children were unable to communicate their meaning clearly in words, they used gestures. She neglects to explain how she deciphered these gestures and categorised them in Piaget’s terms but advises the children’s responses were classified into three stages based on those described by Piaget. de Lemos concluded that her:
… findings clearly indicate that the concept of conservation develops much later in Aboriginal children than in European, and in some cases appears not to develop at all. According to Piaget’s theory this concept is basic to all logical thinking, and this retardation would therefore indicate that intellectual development proceeds much more slowly in the Aboriginal culture, and that in general Aboriginals would achieve a lower level of intellectual functioning than is normally achieved in the European culture. The strong evidence that environment factors can have very marked effects on intellectual development, together with theoretical assumptions regarding the processes of intellectual development, suggest that this retardation would be mainly a result of environment factors (p. 255).

It remains unclear whether de Lemos is using the word ‘retardation’ clinically, literally or conceptually. Given the importance accredited to her work, a lengthy direct quote is offered regarding her report.

While my findings are specific to Northern Territory children, and the degree of retardation found in these children would not necessarily be expected to occur in children living in other conditions, I would suggest that the low educational achievement of Aboriginal children in general is associated with a failure to develop the basic concepts which are necessary to understanding and progress in the school situation… Recent research into the environmental factors affecting intellectual development suggest that it is not the physical aspects of the home environment that are most important, but the social aspects, that is, the relationship between parents and children. A warm, friendly home atmosphere, free discussion and questioning, encouragement of exploration and
experimentation, stimulation of intellectual curiosity, and the provision of adequate language models are now recognised as the important home environments variables related to intellectual development. In the present circumstances Aboriginal parents are unable to provide this kind of environment for their children and the deficiencies that the children suffer in their homes can only be remedied by an attempt to make up for these deficiencies in the school environment (pp. 257/8). Ideally, the answer to the problem would be to provide pre-schooling facilities that would remedy the deficiencies of the Aboriginal home environment, and provide the children with opportunities for perceptual and motor learning and language development (p. 259).

This quote from de Lemos offers a blatantly Westernised sense of culture and learning which is regarded as superior and, therefore, should be imposed upon all cultures. Blaming the failure of what she sees as the ultimate development of cognition in Aboriginal children on the parents and home environment is an attack on the heart of cultural development in a child. Her use of English, as the preferred language model to promote intellectual development, ignores the importance of a child’s native language in cultural development and learning. As Zeegers et al. (2003) state:

A child’s mother tongue embodies all his or her early life experiences and ingrained language habits. The mother tongue is always a cohesive linguistic system with its own grammatical/semantic properties. It allows the child to communicate, and function comfortably. It channels his or her thought processes prior to starting school (p. 58).
Two further limiting factors which impeded Aboriginal children’s ability to compete educationally with non-Aboriginal children relate to the dissonance between what was taught in the classroom and the social and cultural heritage of Aboriginal students, and their stages of acculturation (Harris, 1991; McConnochie, 1982).

Gallacher’s education programme, however, was not limited to the skills listed (see pp. 53-54), he also argued that schools must actively modify fundamental Aboriginal values and attitudes, even though he also acknowledged that strong opinions that “negated all that is Aboriginal in favour of the traditions of the non-Aboriginal society, have not taken into consideration the dangers that are inherent when a programme of rapid change from one culture to another is demanded” (p. 100). Given the pivotal role played by Gallacher’s 1964 recommendations in the programming and content of the school curriculum, a number of direct quotes are listed to clearly capture his views. Six particular values have been singled out for attention:

Future Orientation:

In our culture we are seldom satisfied with things as they are. Our entire way of life is permeated with concern for the future. In the Aboriginal culture, the preoccupation was with the present and the past as signified by their dreamtime and their basic beliefs about life. Their concern was with maintaining harmony with nature rather than manipulating the forces of nature to satisfy future needs, as is our custom. The Aboriginal was interested in ‘being’ not in ‘becoming’.
Time:

In our society, we are preoccupied with time. We carefully schedule all our waking hours. In fact, we could say that time dictates our every activity. We judge ourselves and others in terms of how well we use time; we make a virtue and a necessity of punctuality. This is not so with the Aborigines. In their original state, small segments of time held very little significance for them. They lived life, as it were, on a broader canvas bounded only by night and day and the seasons. To introduce them to our time values poses a problem of considerable magnitude and, regrettable though it may be (we get ulcers, they don’t yet!), this is one of the tasks with which education must sympathetically concern itself.

Saving:

In line with our orientations to the future, we must safeguard that future, that is, we must save. An integral aspect of our way of life is to forego immediate pleasures to think ahead in order that our security is assured in old age. (We contribute to superannuation funds, take out insurance, etc.) By contrast, saving would have been an irrelevant concept in the food-gathering economy of the Aborigine. Furthermore, one of the important values of his way of life was to be able to share with his kin rather than hoard for himself. Somehow our education system must bring to the Aborigine a realisation that his current way of life necessitates a concern for the future and, in particular, a saving for that future.
Competition:

Perhaps one of the dominant hallmarks of our culture is the stress on the individual. We encourage and reward, in all walks of life, the spirit of competitiveness – the prize goes to the winner. This is, in fact, within our society, a strong motivating force for personal effort and striving and it is one we often (perhaps too often) invoke within the classroom. For the Aborigines, group goals are more important than individual goals. The individual has an ordered place within a kinship structure and he must abide by the rules implicit in that structure. As a consequence, co-operation rather than competitiveness becomes the right way of life. Again, regrettably, but realistically, we must, as educators find methods by which we may sow the seeds of competitiveness - to a degree at least - if the Aboriginal child is to win for himself recognition in our highly competitive society.

Work:

The concept of work is so much an integral part of our society that we wonder why anyone would need to make a comment on it. So often, however, the Aborigine is labelled as lazy, unreliable and unresourceful, that we need to look more deeply into his view of work. In his indigenous state, the Aborigine did work – this was necessary for survival – but the important difference lies in the fact that for the Aborigine their work was part of an-going unified activity of living, not as in our case, an activity occurring within a separate and rigorously defined portion of the day. Education, then, must have as one of its goals the
development of work attitudes and work habits. Indeed, an underlying assumption of our philosophy of education is that a major task is to lead the Aboriginal people to an acceptance of the need for and the deriving of satisfaction from gainful employment.

Methods of learning:

Children within our society learn by questioning; their parents and teachers make strong use of the natural curiosity of the children. This reflects the adult desire to know and understand his world, to add incessantly to his store of knowledge. We are more than favourably disposed towards change and we would expect that our children would, as adults, know a great deal more than we do today. In fact our aspirations as parents are for our children to progress and to explore still further the new technology. By contrast, the Aborigines understood their current world in terms of the past. All phenomena could be accounted for by reference to approved customs. As a result, children were not encouraged to question, to explore ideas and to seek understanding; the pattern had already been determined and the children were taught to accept this pattern. Observation, imitation and rote learning rather than inductive/deductive thinking were the modes of learning. Methods used by teachers therefore must attempt to arouse in the children the desire to know ‘how’ and ‘why’, must familiarize them with the scientific concept of causation and must make them active and eager in the pursuit of understanding the wider world which they must be equipped to enter (Gallacher, 1969, pp. 100-102).
What is striking about Gallacher’s writing is his knowledge of Aboriginal culture and his awareness of the inherent dangers in what he was proposing. Rather than a tragedy unfolding as a consequence of ignorance, this tragedy was the brain child of someone who was very well informed and who rightly predicted that, if Aboriginal children were removed from the source of their spiritual and emotional nourishment, “… the curriculum becomes an empty, superficial thing, shut off from the main current of the child’s life and exerting little or no influence upon him” (1969, p. 102).

The very structure and organisation of the schools also reflected European values which cut across traditional values and progressively drove a wedge between the child as a member of a family and a community, and the child at school. As McConnochie (1982) notes:

By establishing schools and classrooms organised along western structures, with children being grouped by age and ability into separate self-contained classrooms, traditional divisions, into tribal and sub-tribal, and moiety groupings, and the traditional avoidance relationships built into the kinship systems are shattered. Children find themselves sitting with the children they would normally avoid, sharing a classroom with children of many and distinct tribal groupings, and isolated from the children of the local residential group. The enforced replacement of Aboriginal social groupings with western groupings, for substantial periods of time each day, can only serve to weaken the traditional structures, contributing to the breakdown of the traditional social organisation (p. 75).
Indigenous children in other colonised nations experienced similar challenges. Despite these challenges, however, (or maybe in response to them) some children were encouraged by their families to attend these ‘Western type’ schools. Drawing from her experience in Canada, Christian (2011) notes that, after running away from five foster homes in five years to see her ‘Granny’, her Grandmother urged her to “Go to school, we need to know how these people think” (p. 71).

3.5 Consequences of ‘Attempted’ Assimilation

The consequences of these policies have been clearly outlined by Aboriginal people in a variety of ways through poetry, song and art:

At the white man’s school, what are our children taught?
Are they told of the battles our people fought?
Are they told of how our people died?
Are they told why our people cried?
Australia’s true history is never read,
But the Blackman keeps it in his head.

When I was young they sent me to school
to read and write and be nobody’s fool
they taught me the white ways and bugger the rest
cos everything white was right and best
So I grew up in a white man’s sense
and I found belief and I gained confidence
no doubts were apparent in my little world
so I sailed on to big things with my wings unfurled.

My world was so rosy until I saw
that nothing that I did could open the door
cos when you reach somewhere no matter how soon
you’re nothing more than an acceptable coon.


“Saw the white walls of freedom, never found the black door” (Carmody, 1995).

Keeffe (1992) describes a particularly powerful pictorial presentation by Pintupi
(Western Australian) Aboriginal assistant teachers/ artists at an education conference
held in Canberra, which was developed as a method of expressing their own personal
experiences. The painting \(^1\)was completed during the course of the conference. The
teachers/artists used an artistic form to convey to Australian education providers their
concerns about the nature and place of Aboriginal education and the level of cultural
knowledge and values in the Australian curriculum.

The Pintupi title of the their painting is *Nganampa manta lingkitu ngaluntjaku*,
which can literally be translated as ‘to hold our earth firmly’... the image of
holding earth forcefully in the hands is intended to convey a larger message

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\(^1\) Reproduced images of the painting referred to in Keeffe (1992) can be viewed in Appendix 1 (page 342-343).
about holding on, especially through education, to that which comes from the land. In an Aboriginal view, this includes law, language and culture (p. 21).

The painting is in five panels, representing different periods of time. The four corner sections of the painting depict government policies in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s. During these periods different government policies of assimilation, integration, self-management and self-determination have been applied, shaping the nature of Pintupi educational experience. The following text was written and translated after the painting was finished.

THE CENTRE: IN OUR ORIGINAL COUNTRY

The yanangu (Aboriginal) of long ago, before the walypala (whitefella) came, are living in their land. The children learn about their dreamings, their language, their ceremonies, and their country, all this is passed onto them from their grandmothers and grandfathers...

From a historical perspective, the central panel refers to the period known as yiriti, the time before the Pintupi world was transformed through contact and involvement with non-Aboriginal society. As the panel shows this was a time in which all of Pintupi life was close to the earth, to manta. The large roundel at the very centre of this panel symbolises the essence of the land, as the source of the Dreaming (tjukurrpa), of all knowledge, understanding and resources. Its centrality and size indicate the power of place in the Pintupi view. In the north, south, east and west, extended family groups (walytja) live off the land, moving
around sites of particular significance to their families. Their children have always been with them.

From an educational perspective, the pre-contact period, which ended for most Pintupi in the 1960s, but for some as late as 1985, was the only period in which education was correctly assumed to be based on principles of universal access, equal opportunities and ensured successful outcomes through an appropriate curriculum… The panel refers to both the time before the *walypala* presence, and contemporary knowledge and understanding about land, language and culture. The knowledge is then and now, there and here, traditional and contemporary, historical and current. This knowledge is at the centre of the contemporary Pintupi world, and is accessible through bicultural education, just as the Dreaming is both a distant and historical period and an accessible domain of the Pintupi world, able to be activated through religious ritual.

**TO THE NORTHWEST**

In the ‘ration times’ (up to and including the 1960s), the *yanangu* are sitting, not knowing. The *walypala* are teaching the (*yanangu*) children about their (non-Aboriginal) language and (non-Aboriginal) culture. The other *yanangu* people are sitting ‘behind’, at the back (and not involved).

The top left of the painting, or the Northwest panel, shows a historical period of enormous change for the Pintupi, when an ongoing but uneven process of relocation from the bush into settlements (government reserves) at Haast Bluff
and Papunya occurred. For most Pintupi, this was during the 1950s and 1960s, a
time when government policy was unambiguously one of assimilation, and the
settlements (and schools) were clearly institutions of forced social change…
This panel is a conceptual model of settlement politics at the time, with a special
focus on education, although the model holds true for the other areas of cultural
interaction. The smaller U-shapes are the children, shown to be surrounded and
enclosed by walypala teachers, with whom they have no connections of kin,
country or culture. The artists were once children in these schools, learning a
foreign culture and a foreign language. Their parents, grandparents and related
community members are shown to be behind, at the back and not involved.
They are without power, influence or significance in the schooling process or in
the selection of knowledge for the curriculum. The transmission and elaboration
of Pintupi knowledge across the generations are blocked, along with access to
country. The language and culture of the school has no formal or informal
connection with the language and culture of the community, nor with the
concepts of ngurra (land), walytja (extended family groups) and tjukurrpa
(Dreaming) that underpin Pintupi values.

TO THE NORTHEAST

(In the 1970s), although the others continue in ignorance of walypala ways, a
few yanangu eventually learn about walypala language and culture and (start to
work in) schools. At the same time some of the children and the adults together
learn about grog and petrol sniffing...
In the top right or northeast panel, time changes as the feet move into a period in which government policies moved into attempted integration, rather than assimilation. It is the 1970s, in places such as Papunya. The white U-shapes are now joined by a few black ones, representing the fact that some yanangu (such as the artists themselves) are gaining access to walypala knowledge and skills, and are working in the schools as assistant teachers. They do not have the authority to determine the nature of the curriculum, nor do they, or the general community have any involvement in educational decision-making. They are ‘working as they are told’.

At that time, petrol-sniffing and alcohol came to Haast Bluff and Papunya from other communities. In the painting, the cans and bottles are shown as white dots in front of some of the children. Of course adults drink, if not sniff, but there are no dots in front of the larger U-shapes, indicating that the focus of the panel is the introduction of new knowledge to the young from the walypala domain, including knowledge with a negative social effect.

TO THE SOUTHEAST

Today, yanangu and walypala have joined, living and working together.

In the bottom right or southeast panel, the school of the present era (ie the 1980s) is shown at the level of working adult relationships. While there is an inner circle of responsibility, surrounding the central resources and knowledge of education, the majority members are non-Aboriginal. Other yanangu and
walypala staff are outside this group. The expressed ideal is one of cooperative, shared decision-making and teaching responsibilities, inside the school. It is outside the school that the ideals seem to evaporate, with no community involvement being shown.

The panel says, in effect, that this ‘model’ is where the Pintupi teachers have come by the end of the 1980s. Changes have occurred in yanangu roles, especially through on-site teacher education programs, and the artists are keenly aware of the significance and responsibility of this role. They have, in this panel, painted a critique that depicts the fundamental flaw of this model. Where is the grandparental authority, the community knowledge, the access to yanangu understanding? In a sense, the panel points out that despite rapid change in individual yanangu and walypala relationships in the school, changing the broader social and cultural relationship between the school and the community in which it is located is still on the agenda… They are also aware of the need for a process of negotiation about the cultural content of the curriculum (pp. 22-27).

In analysing the teacher-student relationship, Freire (1996) warns against the teacher “filling” the students “with the content of his narrative – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them influence. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity” (p. 52). He warns against a system which turns students into “containers” or “receptacles” to be filled by the teacher. This he calls the “banking” concept of education designed to “anesthetize and inhibit creative power, leading to the submersion of consciousness” (p. 53). In Freire’s view, alienating
students from their own decision-making is to make them into objects. In contrast Freire proposes adopting a ‘problem-posing’ system of education, one which involves providing students with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, in a way which supports them to become increasingly critical and less alienated. In Freire’s view, if students are prevented from engaging in a process of inquiry, they have been subjected to another form of violence. He believed in the importance of perceiving personal and social realities as well as the contradictions they hold, of becoming conscious of our own perceptions of that reality and being able to deal critically with it. Friere promotes cultural synthesis as a means of offering the opportunity for outsiders, those from another world to come, not only as teachers – ‘givers of truth’ – but as people who wish to learn about the people and the world they are entering. To come with an agenda of inclusiveness and integration, presenting themselves as possible co-authors of a new inclusive dialogue which may transform education into “the practice of freedom” as opposed to “the practice of domination” (p. 62). This vision sits well with the final panel of the Pintupi painting, *Nganampa manta lingkitu ngaluntjaku.*

**TO THE SOUTHWEST**

(In the future) our grandmothers and grandfathers are holding onto (and not forgetting) the land. They are telling us how to teach in school. They are saying that *yanangu* schoolteachers should instruct the children. The *yanangu* and *walypala* teachers are together working out (how to operate the school). The boss (or the government) is sending other *walypala* teachers to work in the school with *yanangu* people...
As depicted in the bottom left, or southwest panel of the painting, the artists see their ideal future school as one that is an integral part of the community in a balance determined by the older men and women: those who ‘hold the earth firmly’. The generation of grandparents (*tjamu, kami*) is shown with their spears and coolamons. These are the signs of the gender divisions of traditional labour and knowledge, and the complementary tools of authority. The grandparents, as an autonomous decision-making body, have the authority to direct the younger (artists’) generation about the organisation of knowledge in the school. They are the ultimate determiners of the balance between local and external knowledge, because they are in control of the local, Pintupi domain of knowledge. The artists, presently student teachers, will then be the managers of the school, meeting the professional and kinship responsibilities of holding and looking after the students in the school. They plan to work in collaboration and cooperation with *walypala* teachers, meeting them on their own firmly held ground. They aim to ensure that the curriculum will reflect the needs and concerns of the community, providing access to external skills and knowledge in ways that support access to the Pintupi skills and knowledge represented in the centre of the painting (pp. 27-28). In the words of the artists:

We wish to teach our children about their country, family, ceremonies, to learn and understand these things. If they don’t learn these things they will be ignorant. We wish to teach our children *yanangu* and *walypala* ways (Keefe, 1992, p. 32).
This Pintupi pictorial critique, with its political, historical and cultural dimensions, not only highlights the school experience as one which fails, alienates and excludes but it offers real possibilities for future direction, particularly regarding how current structures can be replaced by those which can embrace distinctively Aboriginal values and decision-making processes. Such a development would honour the importance of Indigenous students learning through Indigenous pedagogy. As Behrendt (2000) notes:

I learned from listening, from watching silently as nature unfolded around me; and from imitating the quiet reflection of my parents and elders (p. 165)... It was a practical education. I learned by doing and I wanted to do because I could see how important it was for my elders and me. We were in the education process together. Education was for living (p. 167)... One of the hardest things about high school was the way Aboriginal issues were ignored in the curriculum (p. 66).

Gibson (1993) highlights the importance of day-to-day socialisation processes in determining preferred Aboriginal learning styles. He refers to learning practices very similar to those reported by Behrendt (2000) such as:

… learning through observation and imitation rather than through verbal instruction, learning by personal trial and error rather than through verbal instruction and demonstration, learning in real-life activities rather than practice in contrived settings, context specific learning rather than producing
generalisable principles... learning is always person oriented rather than information orientated (p. 48).

Gibson (1993) also highlights three major differences between Aboriginal and White Australian learning.

Firstly, in Aboriginal education, the role of language is reduced. Secondly, this predisposes Aboriginal people to think and perceive in a way that is not constrained by the serial and sequential nature of verbal thinking. Thirdly, in some Aboriginal cultures there is little need for formal education, all the learning which is necessary for effective participation can be learnt in the day-to-day activities of that particular group (p. 48).

3.6 Continuing Realities

It is well documented that negative childhood experiences can act as critical antecedents to a range of risk-taking behaviours leading to well-documented adverse health outcomes both in childhood and adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998; James, 1989; Jenkins, 2004; Johnston, 1998; Read et al., 2004). Pedersen (2003) reports on an Adelaide study (South Australian Health Commission, 1991) which examined childhood factors contributing to problems in the lives of Indigenous adults. 530 Indigenous people aged 15-77 (37% male, and 63% female) were interviewed. The study revealed that the perception of hostility from the outside community was significantly related to mental health issues, suicidal behaviour, non-prescribed drug use, police problems, and prison experiences. 48% of respondents were conscious of
hostile attitudes from the outside community during their first seven years of life. This figure increased to 60% over the next seven years.

As part of her doctoral research, Pedersen (2003) undertook a study which found Indigenous children scored significantly lower than non-Indigenous children on teacher’s evaluations of their academic performance. She highlighted seven primary reasons why this occurred:

- The more transient nature of Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous families;
- Teachers did not have sufficient understanding of Indigenous culture and ways of learning which are different to mainstream culture - a ‘cultural mismatch’ occurred;
- The views held by teachers about their students can affect how students feel about themselves, which can affect their performance;
- The school curriculum is based on the needs of mainstream students rather than the needs of Indigenous children. It may have little relevance to the life of an Indigenous child;
- Home backgrounds may not be conducive to mainstream academic learning. An Indigenous child is two to three times more likely to live in poverty, so education may not a high priority. Parental experiences of school were also deemed to be relevant;
- Absenteeism, which was often linked to attendance at significant cultural events;
- Too often Indigenous children may not see positive outcomes, for example, jobs, at the end of the educational process (pp. 48-54).
Other reasons identified related to poor health, inadequate housing, powerlessness and identity problems within the classroom setting. It was suggested that, in order to succeed academically, some Indigenous children may have to sacrifice their in-group identity. These findings are very similar to those found by Sarra (2005).

Pedersen (2003) concludes the results of her study indicate that a societal – not an individual – problem exists and that structural remedies are needed to address prejudice and discrimination. She promotes the incorporation of an Indigenous Studies component in the school curriculum which would include information about Indigenous people and culture as well as the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. Such a component would serve to enhance Indigenous children’s cultural maintenance and renewal and offer cultural awareness to non-Indigenous teachers and students.

It does appear there are direct connections between hostile public attitudes, teacher attitudes, curriculum content and a lack of perspective on historical and contemporary Australian society. It would appear little progress has been reported since Nakata (2001) described his education experiences in the 1960s/70, in the Torres Strait, when there was:

... an unmodified state curriculum, taught by teachers who had no special preparation, who probably didn’t know we existed until they found out they had a transfer to the region. There was no recognition that English was not our language. I think that in those days Torres Strait Creole was not considered to be a language. It was known simply as ‘bad English’ (p. 335).
3.7 Possible Pathways to a Brighter Future

Sarra (2005), in his doctoral thesis, also highlights the importance of incorporating Aboriginal studies as an integral part of the school curriculum. Under his leadership, Cherbourg School in Queensland developed a positive Aboriginal identity for Aboriginal children by:

- Developing and implementing a whole school Aboriginal Studies program;
- Clearly articulating a positive Aboriginal identity to which children could subscribe;
- Discussing with children regularly what Aboriginal people say being Aboriginal means;
- Getting children to explore their own sense of being Aboriginal (p. 266).

Such an approach would enable all staff and children (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to benefit from a heightened cultural awareness, and ensure Aboriginal children did not suffer similar confusion to that reported by Pat Dodson in the course of his education, when the text books he studied “... insisted that Aboriginal people and their culture were extinct when he felt very much alive” (Keeffe, 2003, p. 201). As Sarra (2005) purports:

Schools that are led by individuals who have a positive and accurate understanding of Aboriginal perceptions of being Aboriginal, to the extent they
value and ensure they are guided by Aboriginal leadership, will challenge, nurture and embrace Aboriginal students who will undoubtedly become stronger and smarter (p. 269).

3.8 Conclusion

The fear Indigenous people feel about education being used as a tool of assimilation remains a very real fear. It is a fear of loss of culture and connection to ‘country’, which are the source of Indigenous identity and empowerment. Governments have resisted attempts by the Indigenous community to gain some degree of control over their education process. One possible motivation for this resistance according to Libermann (1981) regards the fear that:

… a revitalized Aboriginal population may press land claims, particularly in regions where mineral resources are, or may be located. The attitude of these state governments is that if Aboriginals are to be educated, they should be socialised at the same time into the Anglo-Australian culture. The removal of the most talented students from their communities, however, has severely limited the capability of Aboriginal groups to maintain community cohesion. An Aboriginal civilization that modernizes while retaining its traditional culture poses a permanent political and economic threat to the conservative regimes of Western Australia and Queensland, whose economic prosperity depends on multinational mining developments located on traditional homelands” (p. 139).
Indigenous control of education has also been discouraged in other states and territories where pastoral activity, industry and commerce present conflicting and overriding interests (Skyes, 1986).

Western style education continues to disadvantage Indigenous students in many different ways and at many different levels. Aboriginal values and realities are not reflected in the content or the delivery of mainstream programmes. It has been recognised for some time that positive levels of self-confidence, self-assuredness, self-efficacy, self-reliance and a positive sense of the value of education, contribute to making the school experience an important contributor to physical and emotional wellbeing for Indigenous students (McInerney & Sinclair, 1992). Alternatively, schools can become ‘factories of failure’ if Indigenous children learn and internalise negative beliefs associated with Aboriginality from the wider society through stereotypes and racism (Scott & Brown, 2005), coupled with the negative effects of culturally incompatible teaching and learning styles (Sarra, 2005).

Education programmes that continue to focus on course content and processes related solely to the cultural perspectives of non-Indigenous educators, will continue to disempower Indigenous students. Policies and programmes devised by non-Indigenous people will not significantly change or improve the social and educational position of Indigenous students, or enable them to take constructive control over decision making regarding their future. As Sykes (1986) notes:

Education occurs within the power relationship that is seen to exist between the government and the indigenous people of Australia – a power relationship which is based on two conflicting perceptions of history. The Black community conceptualize their history as having begun at Creation, while white people
perceive Black history to be of import only as it relates to their own presence in Australia, that is, only that period of the last two hundred years during which they have occupied the country. The government sees itself as being in a position of asserting both authority and benevolence in relation to indigenous people (p. 62).

To be successful, individual, community and social change must value Aboriginal expertise and experience. As Guider (1991) advises, “... we will not develop as a nation to our fullest social and economic potential whilst we devalue and ignore the enormous richness of our indigenous people” (p. 51).

Education programmes need to formulate and implement modes of inquiry that are specifically relevant to the social and cultural needs of Indigenous people. Indigenous people should be free to determine what they need from the education system and have an input into how that is delivered. This would greatly reduce what Harrison (2004) terms the “... constant tension between what the Indigenous students themselves want from education and what others want for them” (p. 11).

White Australian norms underpin national educational policy and curriculum content, but the processes and social privileges that produce these ideas and present them as normative are rarely questioned or debated. As Smith (1999) highlights, conducting research with Indigenous people demands an analysis of imperialism and “... an understanding of the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge, has and continues to be embedded in multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (p. 2).

The study of ‘whiteness’ is an emergent area of investigation which concentrates attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity and the impact of ‘whiteness’ upon relations with minority and Indigenous groups. These
issues are of particular relevance to this study, not least because the researcher is white. Chapter 4 will offer a discussion on the concept of ‘whiteness’ and the ‘realities of living’ in a ‘white world’.
CHAPTER 4

The Concept of ‘Whiteness’, and the Realities of Living in a ‘White World’

“They Came, They Saw, They Named, They Claimed” (Smith, 1999, p. 80)

4.1 Race Relations and the Emergence of ‘Whiteness’ Studies

The study of ‘whiteness’ is an emergent area of investigation which concentrates attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity and the impact of ‘whiteness’ upon relations with minority and Indigenous groups. Historical problems and issues have been identified regarding white researchers conducting research with Indigenous subjects (Abdullah & Stringer, 1997; Dudgeon et al., 1997; Gregory, 2003; Smith, 1999). As the researcher in this study is a ‘white’ ‘outsider’, who is undertaking research with Indigenous Australian participants, an examination of the concept of ‘whiteness’ and the realities for Indigenous people living in a ‘white world’, is directly relevant to this research. Such an examination also requires an exploration of the specific material circumstances which may continue to inform experiences of colonialism and dispossession.

Frankenberg (1993) defines ‘whiteness’ as “... the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage” (p. 236). Green and Sonn (2006) refer to ‘whiteness’ as “... the dominance and privilege that comes from being white in countries like Australia” (p. 379).

Writing within an American context, Doane (2003) refers to ‘whiteness’ as an emergent area of investigation which developed in the late 1980s and 1990s. She refers to the development of a consensus among social scientists who began to regard ‘race’ as having
no scientific validity, and started to view it as a socially constructed category based on the arbitrary and imprecise evaluation of physical characteristics.

Doane (2003) suggests what is ‘new’ and ‘unique’ about these ‘whiteness studies’ is that they reverse the traditional focus of research on race relations by concentrating attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity, the social meaning attached to ‘whiteness’, and the impact of whiteness upon intergroup relations. In contrast to the usual practice of studying the ‘problem’ of ‘minority groups’, the ‘whiteness studies’ focus on what can be described as problematic regarding the identity and practices of the dominant ‘white’ group.

Doane (2003) quotes a growing body of research which suggests ‘whiteness’ for white people remains a hidden identity that barely if ever intrudes upon everyday experience. She refers to this as “the ‘invisibility’ of ‘whiteness’ to ‘white people’” (p. 5). These studies reveal the most common answers to a question regarding the meaning of ‘whiteness’ posed to white people was “I never really thought about it” or “white means white” (p. 7). What emerges from these studies and this downplaying of ‘whiteness’, is a one-dimensional perspective on race relations which allows the constructed role of ‘whiteness’ to remain largely unexamined. This neglect of the importance of the emergent dominant white group, has underpinned a focus on the characteristics or differences of minority groups rather than an examination of the nature of whiteness. As Budney and Salloum (2011) advise:

Essentially, the position enjoyed by the dominant largely white community binds it to its own power and privilege, so that this community’s own culture becomes a self-invisible norm, and all other cultures and social positions come to be seen as Other” (p. 369).
Within an Australian context, Garvey (2007) advises the concept of ‘whiteness’ is not “superficial” or “inconsequential” (p. 9) and encourages close examination of the cultural meanings of ‘whiteness’ and the consequences of being ‘white’ (and not being ‘white’) in an Australian context.

Historically the role of research has focused on the production of theories which promote and maintain ‘white’ (Western) privilege through Western knowledge and Western methods of knowing in ways that deny the validity of Indigenous language and culture (Doane, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993; Garvey, 2007; Green & Sonn, 2006; Smith, 1999). Smith (1999) describes research as “… a significant site of struggle” (p. 2) between the interests and ways of knowing in the West and the interests and ways of Indigenous people. She identifies that researchers tend to frame their research in ways which assume a particular problem is located within an Indigenous individual or community, rather than with social or structural issues. Such an approach, she states, leads to data collection and analysis which simply affirms views held previously by the researcher.

4.2 ‘Whiteness’ – The First Global Hegemony

Vickers (2005) describes colonial, race-based societies as ‘hierarchical’ where “whiteness puts you at the top” (p. 25), and racial prejudice becomes “… the life blood of colonial rule and colonial society” (p. 28). An exploration of the role played by ‘education’ is also particularly pertinent here, given Vickers’ assertion that colonial hierarchies are maintained through supporting “… an elite of educated natives who could absorb Western knowledge to the point where it improved their ‘inner character’” (Vickers, 2005, p. 22). Smith (1999) also advises that colonial education:
... was used as a mechanism for creating new indigenous elites... schooling helped identify talented students who had been groomed for more advantaged education. Many of these students were sent away to boarding schools... in these settings, and through their learning, students acquired the tastes, and sampled some of the benefits and privileges, of living within the dominant culture. Their elite status came about through the alignment of their cultural and economic interests with those of the colonizing group rather than those of their own society (p. 64).

Watson (2007) describes this process as “... a way of knowing the world... (a way of) ... occupying the minds of non-western cultures” (p. 17). Such views offer a reminiscence of the Orwellian philosophy of ‘Big Brother’ captured so vividly in the novel 1984 when O’Brien threatens Winston with the words “You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then fill you with ourselves” (Orwell, 1954, p. 269).

The colonisation of ‘racial’ groups was a key feature of the expanding British Empire in the 18th Century. The faith held by the English in their culture, religion and laws was, according to Fesl (1987), aided by their popular belief in the ‘Great Chain of Being’, a philosophy first devised by the Greeks but ‘reinvented’ by the English philosopher John Locke. This Chain of Being described all creation (visible and invisible) as a vertical chain of living or spiritual beings, superior or inferior to the links positioned above and below them. According to this philosophy the Christian God resides at the top of the Chain and from this God descends every other being. In the human chain the ‘civilised Englishman’ sits in the most elevated position, close to the angels and far above their colonised peoples. Certain groups were perceived to possess distinctive characteristics which were believed to determine their capacity and capability, and related to whether they could be deemed superior or inferior. Scientific evidence sought to support these beliefs led to many anthropologists
attempting to classify the physical characteristics of different ‘races’ through measuring skull size and shape, bodily proportions and other variables, in a manner designed to reinforced the notion of European superiority. In Australia, the linguistic dissection of Aboriginal people into full blood, half caste, and part Aboriginal was the direct result of a cultural imperialism which regarded a person with some Anglo blood as more intelligent than someone with a darker appearance (Fesl, 1987).

Darwin’s ‘On the Origin of Species’ (1859) was applied to confirm the view that more ‘noble’ races could be identified as the result of biological determinism through specialisation and survival, thus supporting ‘truths’ such as ‘man’s fate was beyond his control’. If races were unequal, and this inequality was genetically inherited, then British dominance through discrimination was justified. A man’s fate was beyond his control: ‘might’ was ‘right’.

The British belief in their own cultural superiority, their need to order their world, the assumption of their right to civilise, and their desire to regulate and control the colonised, constitutes a particular form of violence (Attwood, 1992; Morris, 1992). This belief system, which viewed racial demarcation as a reflection of divine reality, was to lead to far-reaching social consequences. British conquest of Australia resulted in the dispossession of its Indigenous peoples, marginalising its survivors on the fringes of colonial society, while agents of British ‘civilisation’ actively sought to change and reshape their hearts and minds (Attwood, 1989, 1992; Dobson, 2007; Hage, 2003; Hunter, 1993; Markus, 2001; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Watson, 2007).

The methods used to achieve these desired outcomes, however, were, in the main, ‘home-grown’ and ‘exported’ from Great Britain. In late 18th century Britain, social commentators and philanthropists were alarmed to discover in their rapidly growing cities, multiplying populations of “… unwashed, immoral, uneducated, unchristian, unemployed and lawless slum-dwellers” (Kidd, 1997, p. 18). With the emergence of scientific surveys
designed to detect, count and categorise aspects of social behaviour such as criminality, matrimonial status, legitimacy of children, employment and religion, a “political barometer” was established to measure “the moral health of the country” (Kidd, 1997, p. 18). Moral ‘degradation’ was linked to criminal behaviour which motivated demands for official intervention. Philanthropic bodies set up ‘ragged schools’ to ‘rescue’ children from poverty and teach them behavioural norms such as “… punctuality, diligence, cleanliness and submissiveness through (author’s emphasis) religious practices of self-criticism and prayerful obedience” (p. 19), while government-backed reform schools specialised in retraining. According to Kidd (1997), by the turn of the century, one in every 230 juveniles between 5 and 15 years old living in Britain were held within the reformatory and industrial school system. Similar reformatory conviction was present in Australia from the earliest colonial days.

4.3 The Role of the Missionaries

Studies of frontier violence often offer the rather restricted view that colonial dominance over Aboriginal people was effected more through force and administration of the law than by any other method, at least in the short term (Reynolds, 1999; Roberts, 2005). Attwood (1989), however, suggests that, over a longer period, missionaries exerted a more effective and fundamental means of control.

According to Attwood (1989) missionaries sought to ‘settle’ and convert Aboriginal people. A segregationist policy was favoured which concentrated Aboriginal people on central reserves. The missionaries tried to isolate their ‘charges’ from the influence of both European settlements and their traditional lands which enshrined their customary connections (Attwood, 1989). ‘Wandering’ and ‘unsettled’ habits were considered opposed to a ‘civilised’
life (Watson, 2007). Great emphasis was placed on changing Aboriginal notions of space and time. Lineal time, such a basic factor in Western style living, was not valued and had little influence in Aboriginal patterns of education and living. Their philosophy precluded a conception of ‘yesterday’, ‘today’, and ‘tomorrow’. Rather ‘Time’ was dimensional with the forces of the past, present and future, with all temporal constructs being contained and implicit in the now. ‘Time’ came into being when The Dreaming was complete (King-Boyes, 1977).

The Dreaming charged Aboriginal people with the sacred responsibility to “… care for the social and cultural structures developed by their mythical ancestors… their rites and ceremonies were all directed towards the conservation of their world” (King-Boyes, 1977, p. 45). King-Boyes outlines nine facets of Time central to Aboriginal understanding, each containing its own energy potential. They are: historical time; personal time; time as an agent of creation and destruction; time encapsulation; natural (biological) time; synaptic cause and effect’ periodic time; revelatory time; and cosmic time. Time is regarded as a dimension of Space, reflecting a sense of unity with land and culture. Traditional Aboriginal patterns of life sought to develop the individual’s potential for inward perception of mind and spirit, as opposed to placing emphasis upon material possessions and physical comfort (King-Boyes, 1977). Once we are taught as children to ‘see’ in a particular way, however, it is very difficult to retain the ability to ‘see’ in old ways when full adulthood has been attained. The “Golden Mean between Man and Nature… knowledge sacred and intact” (King-Boyes, 1977, p. 51) began to suffer erosion. A different sense of time and space was instilled in ways designed to remove Aboriginal people as far as possible from their Aboriginal world. Through this process of acculturation, traditional knowledge of the land and how to utilise its resources, along with a sense of space and place began to diminish.
A system of ‘paternalism’ was used to deliver a framework for the new missionary society which was authoritarian and hierarchical. Life was to be determined by the economic and social structures of the dominant society, and acceptance of its cultural order. The dominant culture set the standard. Missionary establishments were particularly reliant on the cost-effectiveness of practices where educational goals were limited to training Aboriginal girls for domestic duties and boys for farm labour. The aim was to create a cultural and economic dependency on the missions. Such dependency and subordination was designed to blunt the conflict between the colonisers and colonised and thwart any growth of Aboriginal independence and solidarity (Attwood, 1989; Hunter, 1993; Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Watson, 2007).

A diversity of racial ideas and attitudes had become apparent in the 19th century. Believing themselves to be the ‘superior race’, pastoralists argued their interests should always take precedence over Aboriginal interests. This view, however, was now being challenged by evangelical churchmen and women and humanitarian philanthropists, who although they also believed themselves superior to Aboriginal people, felt duty-bound to see “… that justice was done’ to these fellow members of ‘the great family of man’ and to help those who were ‘in a state of heathenism and childlike ignorance’” (Attwood, 1989, p. 82).

The missionaries’ programme of ‘civilisation’ and Christianity, however, did not bring about the strong, social and economic position for Aboriginal people that had been hoped for. Rather it created “… prisons of inequality” (Attwood, 1989, p. 118). Instead of restoring Aborigines to a situation supporting a strong foundation of pride, independence and initiative “… they had guided and drilled them too much and like anyone who has been institutionalised for too long, Aborigines had become disenfranchised from the wider society” (Attwood, 1989, p. 119). Observers of this process attributed the generalised state of passivity, hopelessness and dependency, reflected by mission inmates to the paternalistic and
segregationist practices of the missionaries and the various Boards for the Protection of the Aborigines. These critical observers became one of the forces behind the passing of the 1886 *Half-Caste* Act (Attwood, 1989).

The missionaries had initially constructed Aboriginal people as a unitary racial group. However, in the context of growing numbers of Aborigines of mixed descent, this view was being revised. Categorisation according to ‘full blood’, ‘half caste’ and ‘quarter caste’ was now emerging coupled with a marked obsession with colour and an assumption that genetic inheritance determined social and cultural behaviour. Such reflections on both racial and cultural conceptualisations provided two policy alternatives: inclusion and segregation. Aboriginal people of mixed descent would be ‘absorbed’ into the ‘white’ community, while ‘full bloods’ were expected to die out. The Victorian (Half Caste) Act of 1886 reflected a further stage of colonial labelling which effectively excluded many Aboriginal people from the definition of Aboriginal, contradicted their kin-based sense of identity and sought to regulate their lives more than ever. Paradoxically, as attempts to define and regulate the colonised increased, so their sense of their identity became more ‘Aboriginal’ transcending narrower definitions traditionally tied to country, clan, and more recently to pastoral station, fringe camp, mission or government reserve (Attwood, 1989).

### 4.4 The New Deal

The Anthropological Society of Australia, founded in 1890, led to a redirection of interest from evolutionary to environmental factors which focussed scholarly attention away from perceptions of husbanding a dying race to the study of the structure and social cohesion of ‘primitive’ societies. Anthropology was introduced to the curriculum of Sydney University in 1923. A. P. Elkin, who took over the Chair of this new school in 1934, defined ‘the
Aboriginal problem’ as one of adaptation. He believed Aboriginal people were capable of social improvement and could, with appropriate interventions, adapt to a ‘civilised’ lifestyle. Elkin’s recommendations regarding how this could be achieved culminated in a ‘New Deal’ for Aboriginals, launched by the Federal Parliament in 1939. This ‘Deal’ stipulated a redirection from ‘protective’ policies to the development of programmes (achieved through institutionalisation and assimilation) which would (re)train Aboriginal people to a level designed to enable them to qualify for the rights of citizenship (Kidd, 1997).

In 1966 Australia signed the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, ratification of which depended on the elimination of all racial discrimination in federal and state legislation (Kidd, 1997). Many Australians (currently) believe the 1967 referendum gave Aboriginal people the right to vote, granted equal citizenship, repealed racially discriminatory laws, and transferred Aboriginal affairs from the States to the Commonwealth. However, Attwood and Markus (2007) advise that the changes endorsed in the referendum delivered none of these outcomes. Repeal of section 127 of the Australian Constitution allowed for Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census but did not confer rights of citizenship, as the Australian Constitution makes no reference to citizenship. Rather, amendment of section 71 of the Constitution enabled the Commonwealth to enact ‘special laws’ for Aboriginal people but this change did not require federal governments to use these powers and, in effect, little change was effected as successive Liberal governments failed to deliver on the 1967 mandate. The election of the Whitman Labour Government in 1972 brought a dramatic increase in federal funding in an attempt to address Aboriginal need (Kidd, 1997). This radical development was sadly short lived. Hope briefly re-emerged following Paul Keating’s speech at Redfern on the 10th December, 1992 (Beresford, 2006), at the Australian Launch of the International Year for the World’s Indigenous People, when he offered:
... that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice (ANTar, 2008).

However, when Keating, as Prime Minister, made the controversial decision not to oppose the McArthur River lead-zinc-silver mine in April 1993, disillusionment prevailed (Beresford, 2006).

To-day the question of race remains central to Australian politics, and therefore, to Australian life. Moreton-Robinson (2007) highlights the central role played by race in the transition from colony to nation state, while writers such as Markus (2001), Hage (2003) and Mawani (2011) suggest race has been made a central and integral element in nation building and national identity through exclusion or assimilation. According to Moreton-Robinson (2007) “... patriarchal white sovereignty operates ideologically, materially and discursively to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession” (p. 88).

As white people in our society control the main institutions, they are able to claim the social and cultural mainstream, which has allowed white understandings and practices to be regarded as normative. As a result, white privilege has been successful in ensuring all types of benefit continue to be directed towards and received by white people, while maintaining a lack of explicit awareness of this process within white society. Ensuring ‘whiteness’ seemed “... normal – necessary even – in their new world” (Anderson, 2002, p. 1) and this goal was not achieved without sustained and focussed effort. Anderson (2002) offers a comprehensive report on how medical and social scientists dedicated themselves to protecting the white population from degeneration whilst ensuring the construction of a vigorous ‘white’
Australia. The mainstreaming of whiteness and white racial unconsciousness interact in a mutually reinforcing relationship. ‘White privilege’ can be described as the unearned benefits that flow to whites, compounded by the ‘lack of awareness’ of this privilege by ‘whites’ (Doane, 2003; Garvey, 2007).

The privileges of white people are the flipside of the disadvantages faced by Indigenous people. For those who benefit, privilege is the norm, and as such lacks conscious scrutiny. Green and Sonn (2006) advise “… unacknowledged power can affect the political actions of those in the dominant group, in this case white Australians” (p. 379). “Simply not recognising whiteness… reproduces its power” (p. 382). For Indigenous people, Moreton-Robinson (1998) notes, ‘whiteness’ means living in “… a society where crimes against their humanity and cultural integrity go unnoticed, unheard and unpunished on a daily basis” (p. 43). Smith (1999) notes that, across the world, Indigenous people suffer disproportionately high rates of imprisonment, suicide and alcoholism. She reports that some Indigenous activists regard these rates “… as the continuation of a war” (p. 154), demonstrating that colonisation remains a living process (Moreton-Robinson, 2007).

4.5 War in Australia

The concept of ‘a war’ currently taking place in Australia is not one readily accessible to many white Australians, although it is one which does appear in literature pertaining to Indigenous issues. For example, Trudgen (2000) acknowledges a race war exists in Australia, but suggests that, compared to Indigenous people, white people exercise their ability to move in and out of this war zone. Nicoll (2005) on the other hand argues that:
We all live in this war zone, which is not just a figure of speech but a very real product of ongoing sovereignty struggles in what Moreton-Robinson (2003b) identifies as a ‘postcolonising’ Australia. But, unlike our Indigenous counterparts, very few white people are exposed to the front-line of this war. Those who are find it almost impossible to keep things in perspective because we are exposed to the alienating experience of being subjects of a white nation which denies there was ever a war, let alone that it is continuing (p. 30).

Some writers suggest not only is this ‘war’ continuing, but there is evidence to support the view that ‘positions’ are becoming more entrenched. Moreton-Robinson (2005), for example, notes:

The political and social climate in Australia regarding race... has taken a reactive and conservative turn since the early 1990s. Conservative policies have reinvested white ownership of the nation and consolidated a strategy, in the guise of mutual obligation, to deny that race has any relevance in the distribution of resources and life chances (p. vii).

Dodson (2007) warns that “The benign use of government language – mainstream services, practical reconciliation, mutual obligations, responsibilities and participation in the real economy – cloaks a sinister destination for Australian nation building” (p. 22), while Watson (2007) describes the previous Howard, Rudd and current Gillard governments policy of ‘mutual obligation’ and ‘practical reconciliation’ as an echo of past policies of assimilation.

According to Green (2007) the relationship between Indigenous and white people in Australia continues to be based around the Indigenous person being viewed as a problem – a
problem to be solved. He describes white Australians as being “... preoccupied with observing, studying, classifying and labelling Indigenous people which enables them to be managed and controlled in different ways” (p. 55). Smith (1999) cites examples of how governments and social agencies continue to fail to recognise how many Indigenous social problems are directly related to history.

They have framed Indigenous issues in ‘the Indigenous problem’ basket, to be handled in the same cynical and paternalistic manner. The framing of an issue is about making decisions about its parameters, about what is in the foreground, what is in the background, and what shadings or complexities exist within the frame... Many Indigenous activists have argued that such things as mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, for example, are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination (p. 153).

She suggests the reason so many long-term social issues continue to plague Indigenous communities is because these issues have been framed in a way which does not support possible solutions. In other words, as long as the dominant view dictates how issues are defined and responded to, alternative voices are robbed of their opportunity to be heard.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) provides an apt example of how a government-led initiative (similar in that regard to Prime Minister Rudd’s ‘P-plater’ scheme) has resulted in fierce opposition from a variety of sources. A critique of the NTER will be offered as a means of highlighting some of the realities which arise from seeing the ‘world’ through a different lens. It will also provide an update on the historical social indicators of disadvantage outlined in Chapter 1 such as health, housing, unemployment and education. In critiquing the nature of the Intervention, this chapter will examine both the
findings and recommendations of the original *Little Children are Sacred* report, outline what the government response has been, and explore the implications of this ongoing policy on the lives of Indigenous people and affected communities. Although the NTER has been limited to the Northern Territory, the effect of such policies highlight the nature of the challenge faced by many Indigenous people, including current Indigenous students, of ‘living between two worlds’.

### 4.6 The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)

On June 15\textsuperscript{th} 2007 Pat Anderson and Rex Wild QC delivered their report ‘*Ampe Akelyerneman Meke Makarle*’ (*Little Children are Sacred*) to the Northern Territory Government, detailing concerns of child abuse in the Northern Territory and making in total 97 recommendations to the National and Territory governments. Six days later the Howard Government passed the *Northern Territory Emergency Response Act* (NTERA) which involved the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975) and the deployment of the army in taking control of 73 rural Indigenous communities (‘concerned Australians’, 2010). Other legislation introduced as part of the package included:

- The Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Bill, 2007;
- The Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, 2007;
- The Appropriation (Northern Territory National Emergency Response) Bill (No.1) 2007-2008; and
The NTER involved the implementation of nine measures budgeted at a cost of $585 million. These measures involved:

- Deployment of additional police to affected communities;
- New restrictions/bans on alcohol and kava;
- Pornography filters on publicly funded computers;
- Compulsory acquisition of townships currently held under the title provisions of the Native Title Act 1993, through five year leases with compensation on a basis other than just terms;
- Commonwealth funding for the provision of community services;
- Removal of customary law and cultural practical considerations from bail applications and sentences within criminal proceedings;
- Suspension of the permit system;
- Quarantining of a proportion of welfare benefits to all recipients in the designated communities and of all benefits of those who neglect their children;
- The abolition of the Community Development Projects (CDEP).

Commenting on the rapid passage of this legislation, Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett stated in a media release:
The government attacks anyone who tries to slow the breakneck speed of the legislation process, falling back on their argument that it’s too important and urgent to do properly. To properly assist Indigenous communities, this legislation requires input from those affected by the changes... (The Government) drops a bombshell by announcing out of nowhere that it’s taking over Indigenous communities and now it ignores the democratic process by ramming the legislation through parliament essentially sight unseen (7/8/2007).

Co-author of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, Pat Anderson’s response to the passage of the NTERA was reported in *The Age* newspaper. She said:

> What the Prime Minister and Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Brough have done is just a further form of abuse. Their approach isn’t going to nurture any kind of development... nothing. I just don’t know what to say to you people.


The NTERA was passed with bipartisan parliamentary support and the NTER (or Intervention as it is commonly known) has remained in place under the Rudd, and now the Gillard Government. Although some prominent Aboriginal commentators supported the Intervention, Aboriginal groups have strongly condemned it. Critical voices include members of the Northern Territory Government and the authors of the *Little Children are Scared* report who argue “... its heavy-handed, top-down approach was inconsistent with the recommendations in the report” (Aboriginal child abuse and the NT Intervention, n.d., p. 1).

An alternative proposal for urgent action based on consultation and partnerships with
local Aboriginal communities, welfare organisations and women’s groups, put forward by 40 Aboriginal organisations, was ignored (Aboriginal child abuse and the NT Intervention, n.d.). The Intervention has been also been criticised by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and the United Nations has expressed concern over the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act (Northern Territory National Emergency Response, n.d.).

The focus of the *Little Children are Sacred* report, and the grounds used to justify the Intervention, was the issue of abuse, including sexual abuse of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory. While recognising child abuse as a prevalent concern, the report made clear that rates of child abuse perpetrated by Indigenous offenders is comparably matched by those of non-Indigenous offenders, and that statistics relating to the Northern Territory reflect rather than exceed a nation-wide reality (Anderson & Wild, 2007). Since the beginning of the Intervention, over 7,000 Indigenous children living in the Northern Territory have been screened for abuse, of which four cases have proceeded to criminal charges being levelled. According to Australian journalist John Pilger, these cases “… were little different from those of child abuse in white Australia. What was different was that no soldiers invaded the beachside suburbs, no white parents were swept aside, no white welfare was ‘quarantined’” (Pilger, 03/11/2009). Only Indigenous Australians were on the front line of this war.

Highlighting assimilation as the reason and motivation behind the Intervention, Dodson (2007) states:

The current battle ground of the agenda is located on the vast new region of northern and central Australia where Indigenous people maintain their languages, own their traditional lands under Western legal title, and practise their customs whilst seeking to survive on public sector programs whose poor design has resulted in entrenched dependency. This is where the Howard Government is implementing its radical agenda
of deconstructing and denying the abilities of Indigenous people to live in settlements on traditional country. It is setting out to remodel them into mine labourers, small business people and private entrepreneurs... Communal ownership and collective decision making will give way to private land and home ownership and a new mobile Indigenous individualism that will need to seek employment opportunities dictated by market forces at distant locations... Forty thousand years of a society founded upon different presupposition to the Greco-Roman tradition and the Protestant work ethic of industrialisation is finally colliding head on with the believers of the meteor called the global market economy (p. 22).

In deploying troops to the Northern Territory, Prime Minister Howard avoided using any terminology that could imply an ‘invasion’ was taking place, however, “... (some of his more starry-eyed supporters – Frank Devine called the first week of the initiative the ‘shock and awe stage... ’)” (Rundle, 2007, p. 38), while the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, described the government’s strategy in the terms: “....stabilise, normalise, exit...” (Hinkson, 2007).

At the time this was taking place, evidence of systemic neglect was also surfacing. According to testimony from Barry Hansen, Treasurer of the Northern Territory Council of Social Services, the Northern Territory Government spent only $72 million, or one third of allocated funds, in 2007/8 for Family and Child Services. Mr Hansen contests the Territory authorities have consistently underspent in these community services since before 2003 (Glenday, 19/03/2010). In November 2009, Commonwealth Grant Commission report findings uncovered the Northern Territory Government has been spending roughly half the funds it receives for services in Indigenous communities and a quarter of the money it
receives for dealing with homelessness. The report also found that prisons were included within expenditure designated ‘services for Indigenous communities’ (Razak, 30/11/2009).

Throughout the *Little Children are Sacred* report, authors Pat Anderson and Rex Wild QC reiterated the call for extensive and genuine consultation with Indigenous communities in matters relating directly to Indigenous affairs. The continuation of perceived ‘foreign’, ‘insincere’ and ‘interventionist’ government policies into Indigenous affairs, the report assured, would continue to produce ineffective and inevitably failed social policies (Anderson & Wild, 2007). Recognising this, the main thrust of recommendations made in the report called for greater self determination, and focused on community-based services relating to housing, education, family and child services and drug and alcohol rehabilitation, all of which were to be determined through active and lengthy consultation with those communities concerned (‘concerned Australians’, 2010). Measures taken as part of the Intervention have clearly not complied with these directives.

The report by Anderson and Wild recommended community service programs have “... sufficient flexibility to adapt to the cultural dynamics of individual Aboriginal communities” (p. 54). The Howard Government, however, instigated a number of blanket measures imposed on 73 ‘quarantined’ Indigenous communities, and all Indigenous recipients of welfare payments. Government-appointed Community Business Managers were sent to all 73 community towns to take charge of the Intervention programs acquiring all financial authority over each local community (‘concerned Australian’, 2010).

An immediate measure taken by the then Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Mal Brough, was to dissolve the existing permit system whereby visitors to Native Title land required permission by the community. This was despite the *Little Children are Sacred* report acknowledging that Indigenous control of visitors had effectively kept white child offenders away as well as those seeking to bring alcohol into dry communities. At the same time, blue
signs prohibiting alcohol and pornography were erected on all entry roads to those ‘quarantined’ communities (Robson, 19/07/2007). One resident of Ampilitwatja described the impact of this measure as follows:

We are part of that community that are categorised, all us blokes now, as racists, and sexual abusers and got this so called paedophile ring across the Territory… I mean that’s how we feel. We’re put down. We’re pushed down (‘concerned Australians’, 2010).

Under the Intervention, five year land leases to the Federal Government were made compulsory for the 73 targeted communities. In the cases of the Tangentyere Council (which represents numerous town camps around Alice Springs) and Tennant Creek, the compulsory lease requirements were 40 years and 99 years respectively (Robson, 26/07/2009). The Federal Government claimed the leases were necessary to implement its housing and services programs. Tangentyere Council CEO, William Tilmouth, described the council’s decision to lease its land in return for the $135 million of Federal funds earmarked for the Alice camp areas, as “We’ve had a gun at our head”. Since signing the lease, Tangentyere Council’s role has been downgraded by the Government from a representative organisation to an advisory committee (Robson, 16/05/2009), dismissing the right of Indigenous people to determine the identification of, and response to, community concerns. According to Marlene Hodder, a resident Northern Territory Welfare Officer:
Land is home, spirit, security, wellbeing. The imposed five year leases (not mentioning 40 and 99 year leases) have caused untold anxiety and stress to many Aboriginal people. Long-fought for rights are now being eroded. The taking of land is still a puzzle as to how it relates to protecting children (Robson, 16/05/2009).

The Hon. Clare Martin, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory Government released the following press release, expressing her condemnation of these measures, on 6th August, 2007:

(NT Government) ... continues to support practical and effective long-term solutions aimed at child abuse. However, providing unrestricted access to communities by removing permit requirements, leasing land for five years and compulsorily acquiring town camps does not meet these criteria and does not have the support of the Government. These measures are not mentioned in the Anderson Wild report and clearly have nothing to do with child abuse.

One of the central and more contentious features of the Northern Territory Intervention has been the quarantining of 50% of all welfare payments via a ‘Basics Card’ system which overwhelmingly affects Indigenous people. It is this measure which required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act to implement, and restricts half of welfare payments for use on particular products at particular stores, which in some cases are hundreds of kilometres away. Checkout aisles in prescribed stores and Northern Territory Centrelink offices have become unofficially segregated as almost exclusively black customers using the
Basic Card stand apart from others using more familiar means of exchange (Federal Government Northern Territory Emergency Response Review, n.d.).

The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association has come out in opposition to compulsory income management, saying any short term dietary benefits will be offset by the long term psychological impact. According to the Association, “The shame and stigma attached to the program will have significant effects on the mental health of recipients and their children that will have serious, harmful impacts on physical health later in life” (Hind, 12/03/2010).

The severe shortage of Indigenous housing was also a major issue tied to the Intervention. According to Anderson and Wild (2007):

> The shortage of Indigenous housing in remote, regional and urban parts of the Territory is nothing short of disastrous and desperate. The present level of overcrowding in houses has a direct impact on family and sexual violence, substance abuse and chronic illness, and results in devastating outcomes in terms of education and employment (p. 197).

The report recommended the immediate construction of 4000 new homes at a cost of $1.2 billion, although this would still lead to an average household population of seven residents (Anderson & Wild, 2007, p. 195). In March 2010 the Housing Industry Association estimated the Northern Territory would be 12,000 houses short of demand by 2020 (Glenday, 19/03/2010). The severity of the housing shortage among Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory is epitomised by a quoted passage in the *Little Children are Sacred* (report) which
reads, “The waiting time for a house on the Tiwi Islands is 50 years – the average life expectancy of a Tiwi man is 48 years” (Anderson & Wild, 2007, p. 197).

On June 4th, 2009, Marion Scrymgour resigned as the Northern Territory Labour Government’s Indigenous Affairs Minister over the prioritising of 15 prescribed ‘growth towns’ with $160 million of funding, leaving only $36 million for the other 580 communities in the NT. The prioritising is seen as an attempt to concentrate Indigenous populations in more central locations, in most cases away from their traditional lands to which they bear Native Title claims (Robson, 13/06/2009). These urgently needed housing projects, for which the leasing of Native Title land was deemed an essential pre-requisite, have received in total $672 million from the Federal Government (Henderson, 18/03/2010). However, on August 18th 2009, Jim Davidson, Head of the Northern Territory’s Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Project (SIHIP), was dismissed from his post by the Northern Territory’s Indigenous Policy Affairs Minister Alison Anderson, after it became clear that, with no new houses built, administrative costs had consumed 70% of the money allocated for the project (Robson, 22/08/2009). At the same time, the Northern Territory Council of Social Services found that demand for emergency accommodation has increased tenfold in the last 12 months, due to a lack of adequate public housing (Middleton, 16/02/2010). In July 2009, the Minister for Central Australia, Karl Hampton, acknowledged that charging Indigenous people living in tin sheds rent is ‘unacceptable’. Residents of some dwellings were paying $250 a fortnight (Brennan, 21/07/2009).

In relation to Indigenous education, three common themes emerged during the Anderson and Wild Inquiry - poor attendance at school; teaching in an inappropriate language, and an inconsistent or non-existent delivery of sex education (Anderson & Wild, 2007). The Inquiry also highlighted the relationship between adequate housing and education.
The *Little Children* report points out that 94% of Aboriginal communities in the NT have no preschool, 56% have no secondary school and 27% have a local primary school located more than 50 kilometres away. Where schools have altered their curricula to relate to Aboriginal students’ interests, their attendance rates have increased by up to 92%. But the main problem remains that there are too few teachers, often as result of a lack of housing (Robson, 19/07/2007).

Anderson and Wild’s (2007) report also went to considerable length to highlight the significance of the use of Indigenous languages in the classroom in ensuring engagement and cultural understanding. The report further concluded that many Indigenous parents were not sending their children to school as, “The link between gaining a good education and subsequent employment has been broken” (Anderson & Wild, 2007, p. 161).

Since the 2007 Inquiry was concluded and the report by Anderson and Wild submitted, the Northern Territory Government changed its education policy to make English the compulsory teaching language for the first four hours in all Northern Territory schools. Responding to this change, Professor Charles Grimes from the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages said the decision:

... defies commonsense. The very basic principle of education is you work from what's known to what is unknown - that's commonsense. Another bit of commonsense is children learn best in the language that they know. As I talk to teachers in remote communities pretty much all of them say the same thing, they say after four hours there are no children left in the classroom... The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People says that Indigenous people, minority people, have the right to decide the way
that they have their own education, including the role of their own language in that education (Henderson, 29/10/2010).

The situation relating to schooling is made all the more concerning following the Federal Government’s decision in February 2009 to suspend the welfare of families whose children are not attending school, thereby compelling Indigenous children and their families to submit to policy and community programs they regard as pointless exercises (Harper, 15/02/2010).

According to Anderson and Wild, “There is not a single action that the Commonwealth has taken so far that has corresponded with a single recommendation (from our Report). There is no relationship between all these emergency powers and what is in our Report” (Murdoch, 6/8/07).

In an interview conducted by John Laws, Radio 2UE, with the Prime Minister, on the 6th August, 2007, the interviewer asked why the Prime Minister had ignored every single one of the recommendations of the Anderson Wild report. Mr Howard replied:

What we have done is to accept their analysis of the crisis but then to set about doing what we believe is necessary to improve the situation and the quality of what we are doing has to be judged according to its intrinsic merits, not according to whether it complies to the letter with the recommendations of that report (Altman & Hinkson, 2007, p. 332).

The UN Human Rights Rapporteur, Professor James Anaya, after visiting Indigenous communities affected by the Intervention, confirmed such measures as compulsory income management and land leases, overtly discriminated against Aboriginal peoples, stigmatized their already stigmatized communities and infringed their right to self-determination. Anaya
declared the Intervention to be incompatible with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to which Australia affirmed support. He also urged the Government to act swiftly in reinstating the protections of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. Australia was called to appear before the UN Human Rights Commission in September 2010, accused of racial discrimination and breaching international obligations (Tlozek, 25/02/2010). In August 2009, Richard Down on behalf of the Alyawarra Nation, applied to the UN Human Rights Rapporteur for refugee status as internally displaced persons stating, “We feel like an outcast in our community, refugees in our own country” (Stewart, 26/8/2009).

On the 28th November, 2011, seventeen Elders from the remote Northern Territory Aboriginal community of Ramingining, East Arnhem, released a statement in response to the Gillard’s government announcement that the Intervention would be extended for a further ten years. Their statement declares:

The government is extending and strengthening laws designed to assimilate Aboriginal people. We will not sit back and watch these attacks on our lives, our future, our culture and our law...

After five years, it feels like the water level has climbed up to our neck. Another 10 years will bring it way over our heads. The government is drowning us slowly and wonders why twice as many of our young people are attempting suicide. This is no valid reason to discriminate against Yolngu in this way...

In the days of self-determination, senior elders of every community were asked what we wanted to do, they would ask for our ideas... Now they just come and tell us “This is it! Non-negotiable...

Only community empowerment allows us to participate effectively, but our communities councils have been destroyed...
Many people are feeling stigmatised by this blanket policy that brands all Aboriginal people as alcoholics, irresponsible parents and child molesters. The government is telling the world that we can’t look after our kids. This is lies! The government only looks at school attendance instead of looking at what and how our children are being taught. We need our bilingual education, we need more Yolngu teachers and we need elders involved in developing curriculum. We know what we need, but the government is ignoring us and punishing us if we don’t do what they say...

In homelands in particular, and also in our larger remote communities, Yolngu are happy and safe. The intervention is pushing Yolngu into urban towns where they are on foreign country. CDEP wages have been cut for thousands of our people and no new jobs have been created. We watch contractors come in from outside earning top dollar, while the government tells us we must work for the dole! We could be doing a lot of that work and earning that money. This hopeless situation drives people to alcohol...

The intervention has brought hatred. We know now for certain that the true enemy of our people is the government and the philosophy behind this new assimilation policy. They have declared war on us, but we will fight for self-determination...

What happened to democracy in Australia? We don’t want to have to fight against government. We want to engage with government, we want to take control of our lives and we want to build our future, but these policies leave us penned like animals with nowhere to go (Elders, 28/11/11).

The first recommendation of the Little Children are Sacred report made clear that, no solution should be imposed from above. The authors of this report regarded it as critically important that governments commit to genuine consultation with Aboriginal people in designing initiatives for their communities. Their recommendation was in line with the
findings of every other study prior to theirs promoting the view that community involvement of Indigenous people with government should be a ‘bottom-up’ rather than a ‘top-down’ process. According to Anderson and Wild (2007), when the Prime Minister and his Indigenous Affairs Minister initially announced their emergency response, which included the imminent mobilisation of the military, they had not consulted with the NT Government, or the authors of the Little Children are Scared report.

The response by the Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments defies the studies and inquiries undertaken, ignores the people involved, and appears to follow their own agenda at the expense of Australia’s Indigenous people and their rights. As Rex Wild, asks: “... why it is after all the reports... it’s now necessary to move in a patronising, paternalistic way, which is the very same thing which has caused all the difficulties in the last 200 years... ?” (‘concerned Australians, 2010, p. 57).

4.7 Conclusion

The continuation of colonisation appears assured as long as Indigenous people remain the scapegoats for white explanations of Indigenous disadvantage – explanations that ensure white people do not regard themselves as part of the problem (Green & Sonn, 2006). As Chomsky (2010) notes it was military superiority rather than any moral, social or natural advantage that enabled white people to create and control the first global hegemony in history. Sustaining this position he believes has only been successful “... with the benefit of self-induced blindness... that includes selective historical amnesia and a variety of devices to evade the consequences of one’s actions” (p. 16).
When Aboriginal voices speak into a colonised space, how is that voice heard? How can another way of ‘knowing the world’ find expression? How can we create a healthy society – one that can heal the trauma of colonisation? Watson (2007) suggests a movement away from colonialism will only occur when non-Indigenous Australians participate in a debate which will allow them to question their own institutions and ways of seeing – only then will they truly hear Indigenous concerns and be able to relate to their experience. de Costa and Clark (2011) advise the willingness of non-Indigenous people to engage in these discussions will inevitably lead to uncomfortable or unsettling realisations. They believe, however, such discussion should not be avoided as “The question of ‘decentring’ or ‘unsettling’ the settler within, may be the key to reconciliation” (p. 332). The word ‘reconciliation’ denotes a past action or actions. It suggests wrongdoing for which forgiveness is forthcoming in a manner that can enable a ‘coming together’ (Walcott, 2011). According to McAllister (2011), reconciliation requires:

(a) Honest acknowledgement of harm,
(b) Sincere regret,
(c) Readiness to apologize,
(d) Readiness to let go of anger and bitterness,
(e) Commitment not to repeat the injury,
(f) Sincere efforts to redress past grievances, and
(g) Entering a new mutually enriching relationship (p. 426).

Accepting and engaging these principles may allow us to work towards spaces of:

- “Decolonization; Transformation; Truth and Reconciliation” –
(Semchuk & Jimmy, 2011, p. 66), but how do we build and reinforce conditions for sustainable healing that are strong enough to address the legacy of past wrongs and challenge the continuation of current ones? How do we create and reinforce conditions conducive to lasting reconciliation and healing?

Writers such as Falk and Martin; Morrissey; Birch; Brady; Larkin; Cronin, among other contributors in Moreton-Robinson (2007), argue it is the concept of ‘sovereignty’ that lies at the heart of any re-alignment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. They believe we need to examine the many ways Aboriginal sovereignty is denied while white possession is exerted, and how this defines our national identity. For non-Aboriginal Australians this requires a discussion around “... what does it mean to be in a place but not of a place, and the rights and privileges thus afforded?” (Mathur, 2011, p. 6). How can we learn to perceive with ‘new eyes’ and create “... a vision that will bring us closer to understanding both our collective and disparate pasts and our possible and potential futures?” (Mathur, 2011, p. 8).

Aboriginal sovereignty continues to invoke fear in white Australia and is regarded as a threat to the security of many non-Indigenous Australians. Watson (2007) believes such fear is based in a lack of understanding concerning the nature of such sovereignty. She describes Aboriginal sovereignty as quite different to white sovereignty, which she states is characterised as a patriarchal model maintained through dominance and force. Aboriginal sovereignty is different from state sovereignty in that it does not focus on just one sovereign state but rather “... hundreds of different sovereign Aboriginal peoples... it embraces diversity and focuses on inclusivity rather than exclusivity” (p. 20). According to Watson (2007) “Aboriginal sovereignty poses a solution to white supremacy in its deflation of power” (p. 20). To achieve such an outcome nationally will require respect for Indigenous knowledge
systems and the historical landscapes from which they are created. A process is needed which will allow and support this to happen.

Knowledge is a social construction, it reflects a process where a belief system of an individual constructs realities and these realities are maintained through social interaction. Storytelling or devising narratives is the human means of making sense of an ever-changing world. Life stories and the themes and metaphors held within them, are also central to achieving the central goal of counselling, which, simply put, is about development. Development can be regarded as ‘a journey’ along a path toward understanding through self-discovery and self-integration, and the creation and maintenance of harmony and balance. Within the therapeutic setting, individuals turn to narrative to access and reassess memories that may have been painful, fragmented, chaotic or scarcely visible before narrating them (Riessman, 2008). The following chapter offers a focus on story-telling, and the role and nature of counselling within the context of story-telling.
CHAPTER 5

**Storytelling and Counselling**

We live in a storied world. We live our lives through the creation and exchange of narratives. We live through the stories told by others and by ourselves. Such stories have ontological status. The story is the means by which we organize and communicate the meaning of events and experiences; it provides the bridge between culture and self (Attwood & Magowan, 2001; Bell, 2009; Bruner, 1990; McLeod, 1997; Murray, 2003; Rose, 2001). Strong stories have the power to change the way people think (Riessman, 2008; Rose, 2001).

Storytelling is the oldest form of human communication. Humans are a species of story makers and storytellers. The capacity to narrate is present as soon as a child learns to use language. Storytelling comes to us as easily and unconsciously as breathing. In all its manifestations, story is the most enduring expression of human culture. Regardless of our culture or its age and origins, human beings share storytelling abilities. This gift may be the result of a ‘predisposition’ or ‘readiness’ to organize experience into a narrative form. Modern science informs us where such function is located in the brain, and how it is hardwired into the human genetic code, and although the exact nature of these sensory image-making abilities remain a mystery, it is clear narratives are created to bring order and meaning to our lives. Stories are central to the development of self-concept and identity and how we distinguish ourselves from others – a process central to our wellbeing (Bell, 2009; Murray, 2003; Oxenham et al., 1999; Riessman, 2008).

Barthes (quoted in Riessman, 2008) highlights the universality of narrative when he states:
Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind (sic) and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative... it is simply there, like life itself (p. 4).

5.1 Storytelling from a Counselling Perspective

Counselling, through story telling, has been described as both an ancient activity and an emerging (or maybe, more correctly, a re-emerging) conceptual model (Glossoff, 2009; Nystul, 2011). As an ancient activity, counselling through story telling finds its origins in some very old cultural traditions which ritualized ways of enabling individuals and groups to manage interpersonal tensions and questions regarding purpose and meaning (McLeod, 1997). As an emerging conceptual model, narrative methods for understanding human behaviour have become increasingly popular in psychology and are regarded as an attempt to simplify and demystify counselling by focusing more flexibly on the client’s own perspective and language. Narrative approaches draw on theories associated with ‘post-modernism’ (Nystul, 2011; Sharf, 2008).

Central as stories may be to the human condition, and despite their early acceptance, stories were not valued in modern psychological theory or practice. Scientific knowledge was prized over narrative knowing which resulted in the tendency to diminish the significance of stories. The growth of science and technology correlated directly with this loss in legitimacy of stories as a means of communicating truths about the world (McLeod, 1997). Knowledge gained from storytelling is very different to knowledge gained through science. All truths
about human functioning are relative to the kind of lens through which those truths are examined. The unique richness of storytelling as a subjective way of knowing, grounded in oral culture and value laden, was abandoned in favour of paradigmatic knowing representing scientific modes of thought known as ‘modernism’ (Bruner, 1990; Glosoff, 2009; McLeod, 1997; Nystul, 2011). This process was to have particularly severe repercussions for Indigenous peoples and their way of life, so rooted in literal story (Rickwood, Dudgeon & Gridley, 2010).

Counselling as a profession, is a relatively new phenomenon which has developed through a series of dynamic processes. This chapter, however, does not seek to provide a comprehensive account of the myriad of counselling theories and approaches now available. Rather, the focus of these pages will be dedicated to a brief review of the philosophical frameworks of modernism and postmodernism.

5.2 Modernism

Sullivan (2008) offers a concise definition of modernism when he states:

This is the world of diagnosis and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV, psychopharmacology, treatment manuals and random controlled trials. In this philosophy, counselling theories are considered to be accurate accounts of what they are describing. The first therapies of psychotherapy and counselling (psychoanalytic, humanistic, behavioural and cognitive) were considered to be accurate portrayals of human psychological functioning (Hansen, 2006). As opposed to the postmodernist, modernist assumptions are based on the dominant natural sciences paradigm. Reality is not contingent upon human experience or knowing but independent and separate from it. Through objective and empirical observation, hypotheses can be formed and
variables manipulated, and through experimentation (of the random controlled trial kind) that reality can be directly contacted and verified. The truth is out there! It is empirically observable. Anything that is not empirically observable is not real (p. 23).

Psychology was born in positivism. The emergence of psychological theories took place around the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Early theorists regarded human nature as being biologically determined (Bruner, 1990; McLeod, 1997; Rickwood, Dudgeon & Gridley, 2010). This development reflected advances in psychiatric and psychological knowledge leading to new forms of treatment. Scientifically validated theories and procedures were applied increasingly to problems of emotional life and behaviour even though such knowledge relied on assumptions and procedures which were “... abstract, impersonal, free of social context, logical and predictive” (McLeod, 1997, p. 30).

The term counselling was first used by Carl Rogers in 1942 to distinguish the service from the form of psychotherapy offered by members of the medical profession through the practice of hypnosis and psychoanalysis, based on the medical model (Corey, 2008). Rogers believed individuals had the capacity to explore themselves and to make decisions regarding their wellbeing without an authoritative judgment from a counsellor. He saw little merit in making diagnoses or providing information or direction to those he referred to as clients. As a result his method became known as nondirective. He emphasized the importance of the relationship between the counsellor and the client, and regarded the client, rather than the counsellor, as the most important factor. Rogers was interested in learning about the process of effective counselling – what worked and what did not work. He remained within the scientific approach to counselling, however, and whenever he reported his research about client-centered counselling it was supported by psychometric data (Glossoff, 2009; Moss, 2009; Nystul, 2011; Sharf, 2008).
Defining counselling is a difficult task as there is little agreement regarding both definition and the issue of whether there is any real difference between the disciplines of counselling and psychotherapy. Sharf (2008) notes the term psychotherapy has been associated with psychiatrists and medical settings, while counselling is more associated with educational and social work settings. This has led some writers to suggest that counselling is more usually concerned with ‘normal clients’ who experience ‘problems of living’, while a more psychotherapeutic approach is preferred with those who are more ‘severely disturbed’. They suggest their relationship can be regarded along a continuum, with counselling at one end and psychotherapy at the other. Problems arise, however, in attempting to differentiate between the parameters of disturbance severity, as well as distinguishing between the terms. This requirement is further hindered by the fact that many practitioners accept both titles as relevant to their practice and often use the same set of techniques (Corey, 2008; Nystul, 2011; Sharf, 2008; Sullivan, 2008; Welfel & Patterson, 2005). Both terms will be utilized interchangeably in this chapter.

A definition offered by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia is as follows:

Psychotherapy and Counselling are professional activities that utilize an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop understanding about themselves and to make changes in their lives. Professional Psychotherapists and Counsellors work within a clearly contracted, principled relationship that enables individuals to obtain assistance in exploring and resolving issues of an interpersonal, intrapsychic, or personal nature (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia, www.pacfa.org.au).
According to Glosoff (2009) the concept of counselling did not emerge out of any perceived need within human development, but rather in response to the demands made by the industrialization and urbanization of the United States of America. She advises that at the turn of the 20th century the US faced escalating social and economic problems relating to the distribution of a growing workforce, an increasingly educated population, the needs of immigrants, and the preservation of social values and cohesion as family connections were weakened. The industrial revolution led to job specialization and many technologic advances required the development of new skills and an increased ability to adapt. Large cities became overcrowded following the need for workers to live near their workplaces, and assistance was required to enable this new society to develop and maintain their recently constructed and socially accepted mores.

New specialized industries needed school leavers suitably prepared to realize their full work potential. The response to this particular societal pressure took the form of the vocational guidance movement lead by Frank Parsons, regarded by some as the originator of (career) counselling as a profession (Glosoff, 2009; Nystul, 2011; Welfel & Patterson, 2005). Parsons regarded career decision-making as a rational process of guided self-appraisal, an awareness of work opportunities and an capacity to match abilities with demand. From the publication of Parson’s book in 1909 until the 1940s, the newly fledged profession of counselling became more ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ as a result of its enhanced ability to assess individual aptitude through standardized testing. The vocational or ‘trait-factor’ counsellor became ‘the expert’ in measuring skills and abilities, and matching personal traits to the factors needed for success in varying occupations.

Standardized testing, however, was not limited to vocational counselling. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the testing movement was establishing itself in a variety of fields. Francis Galton, an English biologist, developed tests to differentiate characteristics of
genetically related and unrelated people while James Cattel focused on ways to measure intelligence, introducing the first mental abilities test, and Alfred Binet developed the first intelligence scale in 1905. World War I and II played a vital role in the proliferation of psychological testing. The army’s need to classify new recruits for training programmes resulted in the development of mass intelligence and ability testing. Although counsellors were not, in the main, the creators of the tests, they became the administrators. Knowledge about, and skill in using the tests become part of the formal education of counsellors. As counselling as a profession developed, new aspects of scientific technology were introduced such as psychometric assessment, projective techniques and behavioural inventories. Large-scale commercial production of psychometric tests followed and they were utilized in industry, health, education, government and the armed forces as well as in private practice (Nystul, 2011). The use of psychological tests offered a systematic approach to diagnosis and treatment that allowed counsellors to formulate an objective dimension to the counselling process, thus allowing counselling to be regarded as scientific in nature. The practice of such ‘scientific’ methods, however, eventually created controversy amid an increased sensitivity to multicultural issues. The testing movement declined to some extent when it became apparent that many standardized tests reflected a cultural bias (Glosoff, 2009; Nystul, 2011; Rickwood, Dudgeon & Gridley, 2010; Welfel & Patterson, 2005).

Psychology experienced a paradigm shift when it moved from a strong biological base to position itself within the neurosciences with a firm focus on perception, memory and thinking. In turn, this shift became regarded as varieties of information processing, and a new positivist, ‘laboratory’ style emerged with ideals of reductionism, causal explanation and prediction (Bruner, 1990). Emphasis shifted from ‘meaning’ to ‘information’, from the construction of meaning to the processing of information. In this new reductionist era computing became the model of the mind replacing the concept of meaning. Although very
popular at the time, this move came to be regarded by some as highly constricting as the profession moved away from a historical, interpretive approach to understanding the nature of humanity, to questions about the nature of the mind and its processes (Bruner, 1990).

Psychotherapeutic research at this time also adopted the methodology of natural science – accurate measurement, statistical analysis, experimentation, the quest for predictive power and the role of the detached, objective researcher. This research was occurring throughout the post-industrial world (Glossoff, 2009; McLeod, 1997; Nystul, 2011; Welfel & Patterson, 2005). The modern world, characterized as it is by urbanized, industrial societies, invests heavily in scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge has become an integral and valid part of modern society yet such knowledge relies on assumptions and procedures which do not require social context.

Bruner (1990) advises psychology and the social sciences generally have always been sensitive, if not oversensitive, to the needs, economic and political, of the society in which they develop. This, he states, has resulted in counsellors and psychotherapists defining and redefining people in the light of new social requirements, and, as a result, psychotherapy has remained largely a white, class-based activity, which gives itself the authority to pathologise other images of self, ways of knowing, and ways of life. McLeod (1997) takes the view that underpinning the growth and expansion of therapy was the emerging theme of colonisation, and describes this form of psychotherapy as “… a culturally sanctioned form of healing that reflects the values and needs of the modern industrial world” (p. 2).

McNamee and Gergen (1992) suggest that it is the image of ‘the expert’, adopted in the 20th century, which allowed strong ideological biases (political, moral and cultural) to be located within modernist theories and therapeutic practices. They describe the practice of such ‘experts’ as seeking to “… sustain certain values, political arrangements and realities and hierarchies of privilege” (p. 2).
Klein (2007) reviews the work of one such ‘expert’ prominent in the mid-1990s. Ewen Cameron, a Scottish born American citizen, had at the pinnacle of his career been President of the American Psychiatric Association, President of the Canadian Psychiatric Association and President of the World Psychiatric Association. From his published papers Klein records:

... he believed that the only way to teach his patients healthy new behaviours was to get inside their minds and “break up old pathological patterns.” The first step was “depatterning”, which had a stunning goal: to return the mind to a state when it was, as Aristotle claimed, “a writing tablet on which as yet nothing actually stands written”, a tabula rasa. Cameron believed he could reach that state by attacking the brain with everything known to interfere with its normal functioning – all at once. It was “shock and awe” warfare on the mind (p. 31).

Cameron called his new method for returning the mind to a blank state and then re-programming it ‘Psychic Driving’. This method involved deploying all known means (electroshock therapy, drugs, isolation and sensory deprivation) to interfere with the two major factors that enable us to maintain a time and space image:

1. our continued sensory input, and
2. our memory.

A Page-Russell device was used to administer up to six consecutive jolts instead of a single electric shock. Cameron used this machine on patients twice a day for thirty days – a total of three hundred and sixty individual shocks per patient. A mixture of drugs were used,
including ‘uppers’, ‘downers’ and ‘hallucinogenics’, as well as drugs to induce sleep for up to sixty five hours. Isolation rooms were soundproofed and kept in darkness. White noise was piped in and cardboard tubing was applied to arms and hands to impede the patient’s ability to touch. Once ‘depatterning’ was thought to be complete, taped messages would be played to Cameron’s patients containing the messages he wanted them to absorb. These tapes could be played for sixteen to twenty hours a day for weeks on end.

Cameron’s methods proved highly successful in deconstructing the human psyche but rather less successful in re-constructing it. Following Freedom of Information requests in the late seventies it was revealed Cameron’s research and clinical practice had been generously funded by the CIA (Klein, 2007).

Although ‘therapists’ such as Cameron may represent the more extreme version of ‘Big Brother’ attempts to erase ideas, beliefs and behaviours that challenge those in powerful and dominant positions, McNamee and Gergen (1992) believe most traditional positivist approaches to knowledge are overly rigid, and the way they produce knowledge is fixed, and therefore, not universally valid. As an alternative to modernism, McNamee and Gergen (1992) advocate the adoption of a postmodern, constructionist approach to therapy which they argue invites the kind of critical self-reflection necessary to open the future to alternative forms of understanding.

5.3 Postmodernism

The theories and practices of postmodernism offer a direct challenge to the theories and practices of modernism. In contrast to McLeod’s (1997) view of modernism as “… abstract, impersonal, free of social context, logical and predictive” (p. 30), “… postmodernism recognizes that truth, knowledge, and reality are reflected contextually in terms of social,
political, cultural, and other forces that can have an impact on personal experience” (Nystul, 2011, p. 18). As such, postmodernism appears to offer opportunities for integrating diversity issues such as the role of culture and economic forces. It suggests a movement away from an autonomous, integral self to a social community self that extends beyond the individual to all aspects of society.

Postmodern trends are associated with two psychological theories – constructivism (Kelly, 1955; Mahoney, 1988) which emphasizes the role of cognition in interpreting external events, and - social constructionism (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1985; McLeod, 1997; McNamee & Gergen, 1992), which stresses the importance of social forces in constructing reality. Both theories recognize the role played by narrative in creating stories used by people to define personal meaning in life, and solution-focused therapy which focuses on finding solutions to problems by looking at what has worked in the past, what currently is working, and what could be utilized to improve future outcomes (McLeod, 1997).

5.4 Constructionism

Constructivist theory is based on the study of cognition. Therapists, working from a constructivist perspective try to understand the constructs used by clients to understand their problems. They are interested in how human beings interpret their worlds, and how counsellors interpret their acts of interpretation. Plausible interpretation, the sense we make of our world, our fellow humans and ourselves, is regarded as preferable to causal explanations.

Critics of constructionism, however, believe psychology needs to return to more human concerns such as the role culture plays in shaping our thoughts and how culture provides the language we use to express them. It is argued that the cognitive revolution with
its focus on the mind as an information processor, led psychology away from understanding the mind as a creator of meanings (Bruner, 1990). Although constructivist psychologists and therapists found value in the concept of narrative, they were criticized for failing to fully acknowledge the significance of storytelling in addressing the social and cultural dimensions of narrative (McLeod, 1997).

5.5 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism, according to Gergen (1985) and McLeod (1997), represents a broad movement within psychology and the social sciences which believes understanding can only be achieved as a result of careful analysis of the cultural and historical contexts of social life. They argue that any coherent model of therapy must base itself in an understanding of the causes of people’s problems and difficulties (socially constructed and defined) which is matched by the nature and form of intervention offered. Social constructionism, as a philosophical approach, offers a way of understanding the world which acknowledges the historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people, and which defines or redefines psychological constructs such as ‘mind’ ‘self’ and ‘emotion’ as socially constructed processes within the realm of social discourse. In doing so it offers a critical approach to assumptions about the nature of the social world which reinforce the interests of dominant social groups (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 1985; McLeod, 1997, McNamee & Gergen, 1992), and challenges what Hoffman (1992) calls “... a kind of colonial mentality in the minds of academics and practitioners” (p. 13).

Bruner (1990) regarded culture and the quest for meaning as the causal factors of human action. He emphasized the nature and cultural shaping of meaning–making, and the central place it plays in human action. Bruner argued that human nature cannot be
independent of culture but rather psychology is immersed in culture around those meaning-making and meaning-using processes that connect people to culture. Through participation in culture, meaning is made public and shared. A culturally adapted way of life is dependent upon shared meanings and shared concepts and a shared model of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation. According to Bruner (1990) “It is man’s participation in culture and the realization of his mental powers through culture that make it impossible to construct a human psychology on the basis of the individual alone” (p. 12).

Bruner (1990) believes the central concept of a human psychology should be ‘meaning’ and the processes involved in the construction of meaning – how experiences and acts are shaped by intentional states which are realized through participation in the symbolic systems created through culture. Bruner argues that “… it is culture, not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action by situating its underlying intentional states in an interpretive system” (p. 34). He refers to this as ‘cultural psychology’ and coins the term ‘folk psychology’ to name the system “… by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world” (p. 34). The organizing principle here he defines as narrative, rather than conceptual – it is narrative that organizes experience. This relatively recent revelation in psychology resonates deeply with ancient Indigenous wisdom.

5.6 Storytelling from an Indigenous Perspective

Aboriginal culture is the longest recorded, continuous culture in the world. Remaining connected to, and having knowledge of, the natural world is a cultural imperative. Literal story continues to be expressed through painting, dancing, singing, and speaking (Bell, 2009). Aboriginal people have long been telling stories in which they have created a sense of
landscape, community and place, and this has taken the form of community oral history and life stories. The significance of life stories and storytelling is well documented in Indigenous literature where they hold a significance that stretches from the dawn of time, from the stories of the Dreamtime (Attwood & Magowan, 2001; Bibby, 1997; Bird, 1998; Morgan, Mia & Kwaymullina, 2007; Oxenham et al., 1999).

Personal histories are related as ancestral stories and ancestral songs, creating a series of life events that are intimately related to others both local and further afield. Stories are told about the practical difficulties of journeys between places, about the ancestral journeying of megafauna creatures of ancient times, and their trials and tribulations along the way. The landscape acquires significance through the cartographic marking and mapping of experience and events. Places are spoken or ‘sung’ into being. The cartography of the country also becomes a cartography of the mind (Magowan, 2001).

In their life stories, Indigenous narratives seldom represent their lives in terms of ‘I’ but rather of ‘we’. Relationships with family, kin and others are emphasized. Through story, Indigenous people know who they are, where they belong and what this knowledge means in terms of responsibilities, relationships and connections with others. Values, and the sense of identity of their social groups are transmitted from generation to generation through myths and legend. The presence of Aboriginal people in Australia has been significant and long standing. To survive in such a diverse location, subject as it is to a range of climates and environments, speaks of great resilience and the ability to adapt both individually and collectively. As Garvey (2007) notes “It is doubtful whether a single ‘culture’ could have endured or ensured survival... thus many ways of living were enacted, respected and transmitted to succeeding generations” (p. 32). The consequences of any disconnection or loss of an Indigenous cultural heritage are, therefore, far-reaching.
Indigenous stories also tell of experiences of colonialism. Such narratives relate not only to a series of events, but more importantly, to the sense that has and can be made of these events. Narrative is a cognitive instrument, a primary means of making sense and understanding. Through meaning making, tragedy, trauma, and loss may become more bearable (Riessman, 2008). Stories become not only vehicles for learning and understanding; they also become a means of remembrance. The past is remembered through telling stories. Through this process, narrative becomes a fundamental mnemonic act. The story becomes much more than a series of events. Story becomes an expressive embodiment of all that has taken place. By understanding the past Indigenous people are more able to critique the present, and actively shape the future. By recounting histories of colonialism, Indigenous people have created both an understanding and a critique of it, paving the way for the construction of stories of freedom to challenge their oppression and offer a valuable and viable future.

The importance of Indigenous stories to Indigenous people is captured well by Kwaymullina, in Morgan, Mia & Kwaymullina (2007) when he states:

Our culture is shaped around stories, our history transmitted through them. Stories spoken from the heart hold a transformational power, they are a way for one heart to speak to another. They are a means of sharing knowledge, experience and emotion. A story spoken from the heart can pierce you, become a part of you and change the way you see yourself and the world. Listening to a heart story is a way of showing respect, a silent acknowledgement of what the speaker has lived through and where they have come from. Stories can also transform the speaker. Sharing the past can ease old pains, soothe deep hurts and remind you of old joys, hopes and dreams (p. 6).
So, story-telling remains in an Indigenous world, and (re-)emerges in the world of Western style psychology and counselling, as an essence of healing and hope for the future.

5.7 Back to the Future

When compared to other existing mainstream therapeutic approaches, social constructionist theory offers a much greater culturally sensitive explanation of why people experience difficulties in the first place (McLeod, 1997). The cause or aetiology of the experienced difficulty or difficulties may be rooted in cultural, interpersonal or individual conditions, or any combination of all three. Factors determining whether clients experience healing in a therapeutic setting may include their capacity to tell their story, the opportunity given to do so, and the invitation to narrativise central aspects of their experience which will be heard.

According to McLeod (1997), a story communicates:

1. A description of an event, including data about time, place and behaviour;
2. An expression of subjectivity, intentionality and identity – ‘this is who I am’;
3. An expression of relationship – ‘this is the story I choose to tell to you’;
4. Data about the teller’s understanding of his/her social world: ‘this is what I would expect, but look what happened yesterday…’;
5. An expression of feeling;
6. The location of events within a moral order (p. 110).

As a form of sense-making or thinking, a story also serves several functions: it brings order, sequence and a sense of completion to any given experience. By providing a causal explanation for an experience, it becomes a method of problem-solving and by enabling a
sense of perspective, it allows singular events to be brought into a broader context (McLeod, 1997).

McLeod (1997) offers discussion on how two key figures in the development of narrative theory, White and Epston, turn to the French social philosopher Michel Foucault, to account for the cultural origins of narrative difficulties. Foucault believed the knowledge people have regarding their lives reflects the apparatus through which power and control are exerted in society. “The ‘knowledges’ that people possess reflect dominant ideologies” (p. 99).

Oppressive cultural labelling can result in minority populations having their stories written and interpreted for them in a way that contains a narrative of pathology and deficit. A clash of culture may supply stories that do not fit experience and/or experience that does not live up to the story. It may also fail to offer the means by which the story can be told at all, leaving only the experience of silence, of living with a story that cannot be told or heard. Such enforced silence is amplified by a cultural silencing arising from an unwillingness to acknowledge a situation that challenges, frightens or threatens what is valued. As such silencing can be understood as a pervasive cultural phenomenon (McLeod, 1997, p. 101).

Social constructionist thinking recognises each client’s story to be an individual account of a broader cultural narrative. As McLeod (1997) notes, when clients in therapy recount their stories, they are choosing from many story forms available to them from within their cultural tradition. If we acknowledge that an experience can be shared in many different forms, then the factors that influence how the story is told and in what circumstances, become key issues for counselling. However, if the cultural setting for counselling holds a default,
deficit, or pathology position, then this setting will result in a disempowering encounter which further emphasises “... the therapeutic encounter as a meeting of unequals grounded in the inadequacy of the client” (p. 102). It is, therefore, essential that any potential for a hierarchical relationship in which the counsellor’s view of the world is regarded as being inherently superior to that of the client, is removed and replaced by an equality of authority through which counsellor and client can relate collaboratively as co-constructors of meaning (Rickwood, Dudgeon & Gridley, 2010).

Achieving such equality of authority can be attained through the counsellor adopting what Anderson and Goolishian (1992) term a ‘not-knowing’ approach to their client. The therapist relinquishes any thought of having access to a definitive view of the world and accepts that their view is but one voice in a conversation. This idea of ‘not knowing’ stems directly from hermeneutic and postmodern modes of understanding which challenge the notion of ‘privileged discourse’. The principle of ‘not knowing’ is implicit in hermeneutic, interpretive approaches to knowing, so ‘not knowing’ can be regarded as applying hermeneutic principles to therapy (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).

Anderson and Goolishian (1992) invite counsellors to be curious about the uniqueness of individual narrative truth and to avoid a search for patterns in their client’s narrative which may support the counsellor’s view but “... invalidate the uniqueness of the clients’ stories and thus their very identity” (p. 30). The goal of social constructionist narrative therapy is not to replace one story with another but to empower clients to participate in a continuous process of creating and transforming meaning (McLeod, 1997).

To be an effective practitioner requires counsellors to develop reflective competency in, and respect for, the distinct and diverse nature of Indigenous cultural identity and experience. Applying hermeneutic and postmodern modes of understanding will challenge any notion of ‘privileged discourse’.
5.8 The Emergence of Qualitative Research

When psychotherapeutic research was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, the methodology chosen replicated as closely as possible the physical sciences. An understanding of the ‘inner world’ of experience was approached experimentally and quantitatively. Events and behaviours were studied objectively. Hypotheses were developed regarding the relationship between variables of interest, and were tested through the use of precise, carefully controlled events and environments. The experimental method became the hallmark of scientific positivism.

With the emergence of postmodern theories and approaches, however, came the realization that, while the methods of positivistic science offered much in the way of understanding our physical, biological nature, they failed to “... encompass some of the fundamental features of human life – the creative construction of meaning that is at the centre of every social activity. It is the need to investigate meaning that is at the heart of naturalistic inquiry” (Stringer, 2004, pp. 20/21).

Naturalistic or qualitative approaches provide the means to investigate the complexity of human interaction, and offer insight into the ways people interpret events from their own subjective experience. Such approaches construct detailed descriptions of events and behaviours. They allow events to unfold naturally and use interpretive methods to analyze data. Chapter 6 will offer a review of the qualitative conceptual framework and methods used in this research.
CHAPTER 6

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

This chapter provides an understanding of the conceptual framework and the research methodology used in this study. The sampling technique reflected the manner in which data were collected, and the method of analysis will be described. Ethical considerations will also be discussed.

6.1 An Interpretative-Phenomenological Approach

A qualitative method was followed in this research, relevant to the lives of Indigenous people, to ensure new epistemologies could emerge through the direct pursuit of the lived experience. An interpretative-phenomenological approach was adopted, using an unstructured interview technique as the data-gathering instrument, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the preferred data analysis system (Smith & Osborn, 2004). This choice of methodology was determined by the research question: What is the ‘lived experience’ reported by adults, who, as children, left their home communities to attend school?

This study investigated meaning within a particular context through describing individual experiences, and exploring the meaning participants assigned to their perceptions and experiences. Such a task is best approached through the use of a naturalist, qualitative approach because a naturalistic inquiry studies people’s subjective experience (Berg, 2004; Hooley, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Punch, 2005; Reid et al., 2005; Spradley, 1979; Stringer, 2004). This approach allows for the exploration
of perspectives on a particular issue. A qualitative approach to data analysis allows themes to emerge and unfold through the use of interpretive methods and builds up detailed descriptions of events and behaviours. These behaviours are setting and person specific, thus providing culturally and contextually relevant information (Spradley, 1979; Stringer, 2004). The adoption of a qualitative approach allows the research process to include descriptions, understandings, interpretations and explanations that make sense to Indigenous people and which enhance cultural knowledge, as opposed to such knowledge being “silenced” through the “… restrictions of positivistic scientific method” (Abdullah & Stringer, 1997, p. 6). As the phenomenon under investigation is embedded in psychological, social and cultural contexts, using an interpretive frame of reference provided a medium for extracting both the complexities and subtleties of participants meaning making. The emphasis in such an approach is to listen to and learn from the other’s voice.

6.2 Sample

Purposive, “typical sampling” (Stringer, 2004, p. 50) was used to obtain a homogenous group of participants for whom the research question was significant. Eight Indigenous participants and one non-Indigenous participant were interviewed. This sample size allowed the available time and space needed to generate the necessary richness of data demanded by this topic. This data-gathering strategy has been described by Stringer (2004) as the process of obtaining deep, personal insights and thickly-descriptive portrayals of the studied context. In determining sample size, attention was paid to the concept of ‘saturation’ or the point when no new information or additional themes are observed in the data. Guest et al. (2006) advise “... saturation
occurs within the first twelve interviews” (p. 59) although the basic elements for metathemes can be present in as early as six interviews. According to Smith and Osborn (2004) “IPA studies have been published with samples of one, four, nine and fifteen” (p. 54). They suggest, however, five or six participants to be a reasonable size for a project using IPA, as this “… provides enough cases to examine similarities and differences between participants but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated” (p. 55). Saturation was also facilitated in the study by seeking diverse sources of data (Orange, 2011). Snowball sampling was used to identify cases believed to be information-rich. The participants in the study were regarded as experts in their own life stories.

6.3 The In-Depth, Semi-Structured, One-on-One Interview

The provision of a one-on-one interview effectively offered participants the ability to express themselves as fully as possible and so provide a vivid picture of their perspective on the research topic (Family Health International, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2004; Spradley, 1979; Stringer, 2004).

Interviews involve the direct pursuit of the lived perspective. The qualitative research interview seeks to obtain information and an understanding of the themes of the lived daily world from the participant’s perspective. The data obtained are analysed, by the researcher, with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996). In this research, interviews enabled participants to use their own terms in describing their situation and interpreting the issue under investigation. The interview process provided opportunities for participants to freely
revisit those parts of their lives prompted by the interview question, and extend their understanding of their own life stories or narratives (Riessman, 2008).

The in-depth interview in this research focused on the interpretive perspective – the connections and relationships that participants see between particular events, phenomena, and beliefs. The goal of the interview was to obtain the authentic view of the person interviewed. Care was taken to ensure that, while the interview process retained a high level of scientific rigour, the participant experienced the interview as essentially a ‘guided conversation’ during which the interviewer posed questions as naturally as possible, relying on situationally-appropriate ‘prompts’, for example, “Can you tell me more about that?” “How did that make you feel?” This strategy kept the discussion on track and ensured that as much as possible of the participant’s subjective experience and inner world was being accessed (Kvale, 1996).

Spradley (1979) has provided a framework of questions (descriptive questions, explanation questions, example questions, extension questions and contrast questions) he has used to elicit natural structures of meaning used by people to describe their social worlds. His ethnographic methodology utilises neutral, non-leading questions that minimize the extent to which participant responses will be contaminated through inadvertent attribution of meaning by the researcher. Instead of asking people questions that encourage them to share opinions or beliefs ‘about’ the issues of concern, the ethnographic interviewer asks the respondent to recall and describe ‘real events’. These events describe what he or she did or felt, explain why he or she did it or felt that way, and express opinions on why the event occurred, who has been impacted by it, and whether the outcome has been positive or negative. After the interview is complete, it becomes the researcher’s task, from careful analysis of the transcripts, to infer answers to the question(s) set for the study. It is not the
participant’s job to answer the research question directly. Rather, the participant simply describes real events, real experiences and real feelings, in his or her own words, in direct recollection of those described events. By subsequent, careful analysis of the transcribed record of what was said, the qualitative researcher makes inferences about what personal ‘meanings’ those events must have held for the respondent. The analyst uses the natural language and shared recollections of the participant as the principal route to ‘getting inside the head’ of the respondent, to uncover the below-surface perspectives, beliefs, values and motivations that ultimately ‘explain’ the participant’s behaviour and expressed opinions. In this way the ethnographic interview technique can reveal information that cannot be obtained easily (if at all) by other means.

It was the aim of this research to conduct extended interviews that would elicit detailed descriptions of events and interactions and provide opportunities to explore significant issues and experiences in depth, enabling participants to be able to “… define, describe, and interpret experience in their own terms” (Spradley, 1979, p. 65).

A cascade approach was used to obtain information. The researcher shared her perception of the issues she wished to explore and invited participants to respond to her interpretations and ideas from the wealth of his or her story. In this way the interviewer was not directing the process via questions but rather inviting the participant to enter her world of understanding from the perspective of his or her world of history. Thus a person–reflective/reflexive process was employed.

At times participants were invited to expand upon their initial responses. This further probing by the interviewer aimed at seeking the depth and richness in understanding and perspective provided by the participant’s response. Sufficient time was allowed to enable the viewpoint to be explored in depth.
At the time of the interview, data were audio recorded. Following the interview session, audio recordings were transcribed. This transcript of the interview was then sent to participants with a request that they check the transcript for accuracy. Prior to analysis, participant’s responses were coded, thus enabling the most salient themes emerging across the set of interviews to be highlighted.

Sykes (1986) advises that the traditional Indigenous method of announcing an impending visit and introducing the broad reason for the visit was to dispatch a ‘runner’ who carried a message stick denoting as much or as little information as was necessary to meet established protocols. Respecting this process, the researcher met with each participant prior to their interview to share with them information about her work and her experiences and to ask for their help in writing her thesis. At this meeting the researcher explained her interest in their life story and the impact of their educational experience on that story. Participants were advised they would be asked the ‘grand tour’ question. “Can you tell me about your story, who you are, where you come from, and how education has impacted on your story”. This initial meeting was carried out to help participants consider how they may wish to reply to the question, manage any unease they may have about the process, and offer an opportunity to withdraw from the study if they so chose.

While participants were encouraged to tell their story in a manner chosen by them, probing questions were used to maintain focus on the desired area of inquiry and to increase the researcher’s comprehension of meaning and priority. No predetermined set of categories were employed other than the inquiry around the broad theme that was being raised. Subject matter brought to the interview by the participant was respected, listened to and acknowledged.
Throughout the interview process the researcher remained aware of the need for her to be (and to be perceived by participants to be) objective and able to bracket her own views and perceptions in order to obtain and report the authentic view of the person being interviewed. As Corey (2005) notes “… we all have certain blind spots and distortions of reality” (p. 38). Researchers need to recognise their own ‘reality’ and consider how this reality may affect participants and the research process, so they can manage their research in a manner that can best ensure the integrity and authenticity of the knowledge produced (O’Leary, 2004). “We all wear glasses to see reality, glasses formed by our experience of life, our culture, our language, our worldview. No one sees the world as it is in itself, not even the scientist” (Crotty, 1999, p. 3). This understanding heightened the awareness of the researcher to be fully alert to any bias or prejudice that could have contaminated the interview process.

6.4 Data Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to transform raw qualitative data into a format that enabled appropriate interpretation and application. IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith in the 1990s.

IPA research has been described as “… hearing the voices of participants from across the socio-cultural spectrum” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22). IPA challenges the traditional view that the value of any research is enhanced by the greater size of the participant sample. IPA studies are conducted on small samples (Guest et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborne, 2004). IPA is particularly useful when working with a homogenous participant sample. As ongoing data emerge, later contributions to the data pool both enrich previous contributions, and build upon what has been
offered by the responses of previous participants. When one phenomenon is explored from multiple perspectives, this can help develop a more detailed and multifaceted account of that phenomenon. This approach provides the safeguard of ‘triangulation’ and inserts analytical rigour into the process of getting from raw data to defensible inferences.

6.5 IPA Analysis

Within IPA there is a balance between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ positions. In ‘emic’, (insider) positions, the researcher focuses on hearing people’s stories without the intrusion of interpretation. In the ‘etic’ position (interpretative, outsider) the researcher attempts to make sense of the participant’s experience in a way that answers a particular research question (or questions). This approach is underpinned by a process of coding, organising, integrating and interpreting the data. A number of methodological requirements, such as ‘transparency’ of the data, and ‘reflexivity’ in the interpretation, provide good benchmarks for qualitative ‘good practice’, (Elliot et al., 1999; Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2004).

In IPA analysis, care must be taken to distinguish clearly between what the participant said and the analyst’s interpretation of it (Smith & Osborn, 2004). To address this issue a system of inter-rater reliability was adopted to enable the data to be tested in relation to highlighting themes, and allow data outcomes to reflect a robust foundation. This was done through the researcher’s supervisor studying the transcripts and undertaking independent analysis.

The analysis of data using IPA followed five main stages:
Stage one focused on identifying themes, summaries, metaphors and the use of key words. The analysis involves reading and re-reading each individual transcript in order to elicit a full understanding of what is being stated. Any observations about the data (e.g. any themes, summaries, questions, use of words, metaphors, etc.) are noted and ideas are recorded down the left side of the transcript.

Stage two focused on the rater generating theme titles in an attempt to capture the essence of participants’ lived experience as described in the text of their interviews. This stage involved re-reading the transcript and identifying and labelling themes that characterised each section in the right hand margin. Initial themes were transformed into concise phrases that captured the essence of what was found in the text. During this stage the rater was seeking to find expressions that allowed theoretical connections to be made while remaining grounded within the data.

Stage three focused on the rater connecting themes and looking for relationships between themes. This stage involved listing the themes from Stage 2 and considering the relationship between them, (i.e. clustering the themes to see if any overarching themes occurred), and checking with the transcripts to ensure or confirm they respect the actual words of the participant. Once validated in this way, these themes were ordered coherently in a multi-tiered approach. The first tier identified themes throughout the transcripts. The next tier clustered these themes into groups, and the third tier introduced umbrella themes which pulled together the clustered themes. In this
process certain themes were omitted from the analysis at this point, as they did not fit well in the emerging structure and/or were not very rich in evidence.

- Stage four focused on drawing out and verifying conclusions. Consonant with the iterative process of IPA, earlier scripts were reviewed by the researcher and her supervisor in the light of the new ‘super-ordinate’ themes and were included in the ongoing analysis.

- Stage five. The final stage was concerned with translating the super-ordinate themes into a write-up and final statement outlining the meanings inherent in the participants’ experience. This stage was concerned with translating themes into a narrative account.

The literature pertinent to this study includes life history, life story and narrative literature. The distinction between life history and life story appears to mean different things to different people. Watson (1976) argues the purpose of a life history “... is as a commentary of the individual’s very personal view of his own experience as he understands it” (p. 97). Watson and Watson-Franke (1985) offer a broader definition when they state a “... life history is any retrospective account by the individual of his life in whole or part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited or prompted by another person” (p. 2). This is similar to Denzin’s (1989) assertion that a life history is “... an account of a life based on interviews and observations” (p. 48). However, Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) advise “... analysis of the social, historical, political and economic contexts of a life story by the researcher is what turns a life story into a life history” (p. 125).
Participants in the study were invited to share their stories, i.e. how they describe and make sense of experiences in their own lives. This approach, gathering stories, was adopted because it holds particular relevance for Indigenous culture.

As the research data were collected through participants’ narratives, they contained qualities unique to the participants’ experience. Results, therefore, were not predictable. This unpredictability of data strengthened the research as it led to exploration into areas not first thought of when the research commenced.

Narrative accounts are shaped by personal choice and selective memory (Riessman, 2008). Memories are recalled precisely because they are important to the person concerned. Recall is more than the memory of an event “… it also produces identity” (Tierney, 2003, p. 306).

In life, all narratives are provisional; they are subject to change as new information becomes available. It is not that the narrator is trying to mislead the listener but rather, from a more extended perspective, different pieces of information become available for the story. In telling their story, the narrator is aware of where they have come in their journey. They are aware of where they are currently and they construct their account from there (Murray, 2003; Riessman, 2008).

6.6 Ethical Considerations: Consent and Participants’ Protection.

Prior to the collection of data, approval was sought from the University of Notre Dame Research Ethics Committee. In undertaking this research the researcher was also bound by the Code of Ethics of the Australian Psychological Society of which she is a member.
Informed consent was obtained and issues regarding the rights of individual privacy and confidentiality were addressed prior to interviews taking place. Anonymity was ensured by the use of participant codes for the names of the participants, thus ensuring that all data collected was non-identifiable. Data storage and retention follows the requirements set out in the Notre Dame University Policy: Research integrity and the code of conduct for research.

6.7 Significance of the Study

Although many studies have demonstrated the profound disadvantage suffered by Indigenous students and some have investigated factors which may encourage greater educational attainment for this population, the researcher is unaware of a comparable study which investigates the quality of outcome of an educational experience through the self report of the student as an adult, and an analysis of how their life stories or narratives can enhance the counselling and educational profession’s ability to support those who make this journey. This research sought to provide opportunities to increase the relevance of policies and programmes which affect the academic and cultural lives of Indigenous children. It is intended that the adopted methodology will allow new epistemologies to emerge which will be relevant to Indigenous students and their communities.
Eight Indigenous participants were interviewed and asked to share as much of their story as they felt comfortable in doing, and to talk about the place their experience of leaving home to attend school, held within that story. Six participants were female and two were male. Seven were from Western Australia; one was from New South Wales. The participant’s stories span five decades, from the 1950s to the 1990s. This chapter offers an initial cluster of themes for each participant following a thematic analysis of their interview transcripts. Each cluster is supported by a sample of quotes, incorporating and honouring as much of participant’s stories as possible. Page numbers for the quotes from the original transcripts are retained to illustrate where each theme emerged in the interview, and the emphasis they were given.

A ninth participant, a non-Indigenous carer with responsibility for Indigenous and non-Indigenous boarders was also interviewed and a thematic analysis of the transcript of their interview is offered also.

7.1 Participant 1

Cluster of Themes

| 1. Family Support: Role Models, Support, Promotion of Education |
| 2. Community Acceptance |
| 3. School Experience: A Sense of Value, Achievement, Roles & Responsibilities |
| 4. Racism |
| 5. High School Accommodation |
| 6. Leadership |
| 7. Homesickness |
Theme 1

Family Support: Role Models, Support, Promotion of Education

I grew up with lots of family around… we were out there with parents, and uncles and aunties and grandparents and cousins when they were doing the fencing and when they were doing the land clearing, we were there. We had wonderful role models of people who worked and they worked hard, it wasn’t easy work, they were limited in lots of tools, yet they did a really good job and they were these amazing role models…people who did work hard… and provided homes for us.

… certainly there was lots of support from the family, the extended family … from the word go. That’s why we moved … For the family to move … was a big thing. We could have stayed down there and caught the bus every day but moving, that was part of seeing the importance of being near the high school. You look back these days and you do appreciate that families wanted to do that.

... at the end of the second year, year nine, my auntie gave me the option to stay at ... or stay at a hostel or boarding place and go to ... Senior High School … I remember
nearing the end of year ten my auntie encouraged me to go on and finish year twelve, so that’s what I did.

... at that time we were all from families... who had just come out of the Stolen Generation, the missions and settlements, and they were empowering themselves and in doing that, they were empowering us.

Theme 2

Community Acceptance

... there were a number of families working and living in the area. If we had a contract with particular farmers on their property, doing the work there, then we would be living on that property in a house. They made these tin shacks that were liveable in, that’s what people built and lived in, that’s the way it was. Going back a bit further they would go and ask permission when they did decide to find work in that area, they would go to the farmer and ask him if they could build some sort of camping area while they worked there. And the farmers were really good about it, they were very supportive, they were receiving good labour, good professional fences.

Those people (the farming community) were also very important to us because it gave us another part of the community. We grew up as kids, not just as kids from the other side of the train track, out the back sort of area, living in an old farm house. When we went to school we were kids like all the other kids, and so being treated fairly we
responded in a way that you would. We did a good job at school as regards being as normal as possible in the education area, the academic side, so it was a good time.

Theme 3

School experience: A Sense of Value, Achievement, Roles and Responsibilities

... the schools were very supportive. Both schools were very supportive. They just had some amazing teachers who basically looked after all the kids, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. They were those who we look back and even think about these days, those sorts of people who did make a difference in our lives... the school system, as well as family, who were amazing people... I guess the biggest thing was to treat us fairly so we didn’t see ourselves as different from the other kids. We were good at different sports, mainly football and cricket for the boys and netball and soft ball for the girls. We were just gifted.

... we had our own jobs, different jobs we would do as well as the school work. After lunch burning the rubbish in the school incinerator....things like distributing the milk to the different classes, just things that were roles and responsibilities. I guess as a kid, seeing that I’m doing something that everyone else is doing, that is something that I valued at the time and still do as a normal part of the school day and the life of a kid at school, a Noongar kid at school. We were very fortunate to have those particular teachers who saw and valued us as kids and who saw and appreciated that we were trying our best there.
I also worked in the school canteen ... to work in a school canteen or kiosk, those days, money would be given to you. You would give them something, sometimes a can of coke and they would give you $5 or sometimes they would give you a $20 or $10 or $2 or what ever it was, but all the adding up you were doing in your head and you would have to give them the correct change ... and you got to a point where you were pretty good ... when you looked at your maths in that way... from primary school there was a good solid grounding... your confidence grew, you were working in this sort of location, and people, who were the adults there, appreciated that greatly.

… I took that on as a challenge and I learnt some good things from that, from mental maths... I remember in year twelve, well year ten, eleven and twelve we had the school balls. They were wonderful opportunities to dance with people who were your mates and all that stuff, socialise and take photos.

Theme 4
Racism

As little country kids ... we were treated to a bit more racism which ended up in a bit of a punch up sometimes ... they were kids from a bigger school area who didn’t know us and so they reacted in a negative way, but once people got to know people it was a lot better ... Just name calling, mainly that, no-one really punched someone out, it was mainly name calling but one of the other bigger cousins, because of his size, he was
picked on a lot and he was quite happy to take them down to the bottom oval and throttle them. That was just boys being boys, the stupidity of it all.

**Theme 5**

**High School Accommodation: Support/Expectations**

page 9

... staying at a hostel ... I was with another family… they looked after boys from up in the Kimberleys, from Kalumburu, Meekathara, Wiluna, and down south. We had boys from Moora as well, around that area, the Wheat Belt. So I stayed in the hostel for three years and the things that were important to teenagers in those days were football and basketball ... also playing the guitar. There were a number of boys there who wanted to play the guitar and I learned ... those sorts of things, the social things, going out and seeing movies. The responsibilities of the hostel itself, the running of the hostel, we had our jobs there from washing up, setting the table, clearing away, putting the rubbish out, vacuuming, all those sorts of things, so in a way that was also showing us that when we have our own home one day, we would need to do that, all those sorts of things. At the time it was a pain in the neck like any home I suppose, but it was a responsibility and something that needed to be done, so that’s what we did… on the Saturdays, before we could go out, we had to do our chores, yard clearing and mowing and all that stuff.

Sometimes going and working for plumbers you could earn a bit of money, and we didn’t mind doing that. It was hard work digging leech drains, but that’s what we did, you know, and they were good things that built character in us that we took with us along with the strong role models we had in our lives, so they were all good things… The hostel was a community welfare hostel I think it was called at the time. A
family - mother, father and two boys - they were looking after us. That was three good years as well for me because … I lived with another family and they showed me, I guess, how another family would live, being a white family, a non-Aboriginal family. They showed the boys other things, you know, which maybe helped to equip us as well.

page 13
We became a family there, the hostel boys. We were like this family, staying there together as this group and we did have things in common. We did have different age groupings from different year levels, so the older boys did take care of the younger boys… you establish being brothers in a place that is far away from your home area.

page 16
… we were a very small group. We did stay together most of the time. We did have friends who were non-Aboriginal friends and class mates, but as a family group, at the end of the day, we stayed as a family group.

page 20
The thing I did experience was we were encouraged. At the hostel we had tutors who came up a couple of times a week, so we had access to tutors.

page 27
… at the hostel, a couple of the tutors were teachers, a husband and wife couple who were tutoring there. They suggested I become a teacher… Over twenty years now I’ve been an educator.
Theme 6

Leadership

I can remember between ten and twelve boys. They were good people, good young blokes from different areas, all Aboriginal. They would have been ear marked for leadership within their own communities and their own people and families, and many of them have gone on to have some good jobs through getting a better education.

... in that Church, us boys took on some sort of role there, in their working with youth. There were the boys who wanted to develop as young leaders who had taken some responsibility and the roles of just being part of the youth group. We did receive some amazing leadership opportunities and were able to develop those opportunities from within the Sunday service, I guess. Also youth camps ... we would have gone to camp a number of times and from that we still have these strong networks.

... that’s where that leadership stuff came in, where a lot of it developed. They were three good years ... going from fifteen to eighteen ... they were good solid years of character building.

... there were a number of families... who I fondly recall now, the family names were from historically very strong families, who have since gone on to become very
strong within themselves as leaders in their own family groups. Some amazing professional people these days in community.

Theme 7

Homesickness

page 13

... some of them came from the country and remote areas, they got terribly home sick, we all did but for us when we came from a bit down south then we could go home once a month or so and spend a bit of time with family, but these guys they would go home about four times a year, over the holidays.

Theme 8

Self-motivation, Confidence, Goals, Expectations & Opportunities

page 14

... other teachers, like one who came across on some sort of exchange, said that I should leave in year 10 and go and find a job. I thought, well get stuffed, I had my reasons for being there ... that’s when my auntie encouraged me to go on and certainly my family didn’t want me to just do fencing or do land clearing or shearing. The opportunities were there at school and where I was in a hostel away from home ... I was in a place that was fairly free from distractions, so you could focus on a decent education, and at the same time, through the social stuff, develop some good leadership skills there, which we all appreciated.
We had expectations of ourselves, even from the number of us who played the guitar. We jammed, we played music on camps and when we played... we could play the songs because we didn’t read music, we didn’t need sheet music, we just played from ear. So those expectations of developing skills in that way, that was very strong. Expectations of doing well at school, I had those.

The teachers had their expectations. I would like to think that they wanted us to do well. I guess the opposite of that would be blatant not wanting us to do well and I didn’t experience that. The thing I did experience was we were encouraged.

... it was more if you saw the value of it in your life, and how you would take it home and use it maybe day to day ... it may be a future job that you were picturing as well. What you might have.

I guess the beginning years of getting a good grounding, and once you got that good grounding ... being a student and being confident at school, having a go. If you don’t understand something, ask. I was pretty good at maths, very good at the tables we did. We use to have a tables competition. I was reasonably good at writing a descent story. Once you’ve gained that foundation stuff, that gives you a good grounding in how to climb that ladder of the different levels of education you need down the track. It’s very important to do that. I guess where I came through really well was basically to have a
go. I don’t think that I was brilliant at everything but I was certainly a person who decided, “Yes, I’m going to do this”, and once I started doing that, it was about how can I best make the most of all the opportunities that come my way. And I still did my sport, my football, my basketball, still loved that, but to do with education, it’s basically that, you make the most of the opportunities that come your way.

page 32
There are things that will always limit your opportunities, so you’ve got to be, you know, goal orientated. You’ve got to have these goals of looking at yourself in five years time, ten years time and see where you go with it.

We’ve got to go ahead and not stay in the past, and that’s important because if you stay in the past you get left behind. So, doing that, we all have the opportunity of building ourselves and our culture and ourselves in mainstream.

Theme 9
Identity and Culture

page 15
I was away from home and we were developing our own sense of identity, and also at that time realising there were lots of different Aboriginal people around the place from different areas, it wasn’t just Noongars. We couldn’t call people from up in the Kimberley or the Gold Fields or wherever Noongars, because they were people, Indigenous people, from different language groups and they called themselves their own name, wherever they were from, from their own language group.
My cultural obligations at that time, I had more family obligations at that time. Funerals came up... You can’t really separate cultural and family because the way that you are raised a lot of culture was in there, and a lot of language was in that ... lots of language in terms of words being used and your mannerisms, you just knew ... all the family stuff, your culture was immersed in, that was all part of it…

I lived a couple of hours away, not even that, it wasn’t an issue. If I was to stay away a number of days then the hostel parents would provide a note explaining. Whereas ... if the boys didn’t come back because they had to go to a funeral, if they had to fly up for a family funeral, or something like that, then that took weeks and that was different circumstances to us because they had family and cultural obligations to be part of.

Well, I don’t think it was a problem in terms of the boys. We just knew that was what they had to do. In terms of the school, I think they would have missed out in some important learning subject areas, but somehow, with the tutoring, you always managed to catch up or at least have a go at catching up. That could be a bit of a disadvantage sometimes when you look at it academically but culturally, and nurturing your own self as a person, it wasn’t a disadvantage, you know, for the young fellas who did come down from the Kimberley and that, because you always pick up along the line what you needed to do academically. But, if you let yourself down culturally and you let your family down and your own self down, then that was a stronger negative in your life.
Theme 10

Cultural Awareness & Curriculum

page 21

There was an obvious awareness that we were Aboriginal kids from different areas and I guess the school tried to accommodate that if it came up as a problem. Otherwise, in the day to day stuff, no, I can’t really say. I’m just trying to remember examples of where it could have been ... At that time in the mid and late seventies ... they would have expected us to be just like the other students. You turn up for school, you know, you have a good go at school and they support you academically.

page 23

I think the school tried as well as it could. I don’t remember any class after hours at the school that you could go to, to catch up. I think it was up to the tutors, who came around a couple of times a week, to try and help the child catch up, the young person catch up.

page 25

I think what was an issue at the time for me was that they didn’t teach Aboriginal studies, they didn’t teach Aboriginal language ... the only thing we learnt was very minimal about Aboriginal people. That was just the way the curriculum was at the time, and what they had in their text books about Australia and Aboriginal people. I think we probably learnt more about other Indigenous people. I think I learnt more about the Kalahari people than I did in general studies of Aboriginal people, let alone going into specific nations.
The name itself, Governor Stirling, to me is a terrible example of naming any school, you know, because ... Governor Stirling was responsible for the murders, the killings of many Noongar people in Pinjarra. At the time I was a teenager there, I didn’t really know that or understand that. Maybe at the time I would have asked to go to another school, but Governor Stirling, the name itself rings bells these days of where a leader of a colony, along with other settlers and police and soldiers went and massacred Noongar people, early in the morning, when there were other ways of sorting out the problems between that group of people from Pinjarra and settlers. What he did was take the easy way out and exterminate people. These days I have a real problem with the name James Stirling.

Theme 11
Balance: Living Between Two Worlds

With me, I guess being away from family… you missed out on those years of living with family and being around family…

... we all have the opportunity of building ourselves and our culture and ourselves in mainstream. And that’s very important, that’s one of the most important things to me. Stick to our culture and our language and then do both. White man’s ways and what we can do there, what we need to do but don’t forget where we come from because we come from a very strong traditional background of healing.
7.2 Participant 2

Cluster of Themes

| 1. Early School Experience & Family Support |
| 2. Decision-making                        |
| 3. Culture Shock                          |
| 4. High School Accommodation: Group Mix, Structure, Activities |
| 5. Homoeickness                           |
| 6. Racism                                 |
| 7. High School Experience: Cultural awareness & Curriculum |
| 8. Support, Encouragement & Opportunities  |

Theme 1

Early School Experience and Family Support

page 1

We went to (primary) school there but we were also at ... hostel when it was open ... because Mum had to go for work, so she put us in there but I can’t remember for how long we were there for ... There was no family to mind us ... There was no family that I can remember ... I remember no family supports.

page 3

… it was lucky our Uncle … was down there so we had a little bit of family. They were distanced to me but they still made me feel welcome and we used to take off every weekend to them, just to get out of the hostel.
We were in one place and we had no family … Mum had a friend there and we used to go now and again to her house but we didn’t really know her, so we normally just stayed in the room or we walked to the shops. We just amused ourselves more or less.

**Theme 2**

**Decision-making**

… when I was in year seven my mother said “Do you want to go away to school?” So I said “OK”, because I didn’t know any better. I was just a kid.

I was crying to go home the second night I was there and Mum wouldn’t let me go home.

**Theme 3**

**Culture Shock**

I went to the furtherest place you could possibly be … It was very different when I first went there. Different in ways, different houses, different climate. It was a shock at first.

... the distance from home.
Theme 4

High School Accommodation: Group Mix, Support, Structure, Activities

page 2

... I liked the house parents who looked after me. This is in the hostel … I felt comfortable with my house parents. They made us feel welcome and that’s probably why I stayed down there. I stayed down there for year 8 … I think it closed when I was in year 9 or 10 … something like that. They had to go away for family matters … I stayed there until it closed and then there was this other hostel … I moved over to them because I still wanted to stay at the same school … but I didn’t get on with the manager. I didn’t feel wanted. I didn’t like it.

page 3

… it was a mixture of girls and we all were in year 8, 9, 10 sections and then 11 and 12. From the start she didn’t take to us and she was very strict with us. We just used to stay in our own little group, trying to get through the day … They (the first hostel) made us feel welcome. They took us out shopping, they took us fishing, we did a lot of things like that, like family things, I suppose. I just felt comfortable with them. But when I went to that … hostel, I abided by the rules and everything, it’s just they didn’t make me feel comfortable with them. So, I think I finished that year off there and then I didn’t want to go back.

Then I went to … I went there but I didn’t like it. Maybe I was older, I don’t know. The nuns ran it then … The nuns were good. They had rules and regulations, fair enough, but in some ways you could see Aboriginal kids stayed together and so did the white kids. The hostel was on top of the school, so we were there twenty-four hours, every minute … We were in one place and we had no family there … Mum had a friend
there and we used to go now and again to her house but we didn’t really know her, so we normally just stayed in the room or we walked to the shops. We just amused ourselves, more or less.

page 5
After that, back up north, I stayed with my Auntie for year 11 and then in the hostel. I did year 12 in there. The hostel was good. It was all Aboriginal kids. White people were running it … and they were very good. There were Onslow kids, and all that area down there and then there was the Kimberley kids … There might have been about fifty kids there … we had a bus full. We had dormitories with beds and little cupboards separating us.

That was good because they knew how we liked fishing. We had something to do every weekend. I really liked that, that’s probably why I stayed there too. We went fishing, we went hunting because we had Aboriginal supervisors … they took us to basket ball. It was really good. It was a pity to hear that it closed down.

page 6
We had to wash our own clothes … Buy our own stationary. We were only given money every fortnight, like little $5 cheques, but $5 then was about $50. Mum used to send money but that’s all I can remember living off … you had to keep your room clean and everything … I’ve learnt to be very independent from going away to school … when I was sent away you had to be independent straight away for yourself.
It goes back even to your house parents. If you feel comfortable you go to school. If you don’t get that, then what? You go to school and sit in the back and just don’t do anything. Just sit there and don’t want to learn anything. That’s when you start crying “I want to go back home”, when you don’t feel the support.

… we had groups, that’s probably how we survived. We had Kimberley groups and all the Kimberley boys and girls stayed together because they knew they had their own ways. Onslow and Roebourne, they all stuck together, that’s how they probably coped. Being among ourselves, knowing their background, that’s probably how we survived.

Theme 5
Homesickness

They used to come down from all over the place. They were home sick all the time.

So I said I wanted to come back and I did year 10 here, and it was good to be back with my Mother because it was the first time in two years. I hadn’t been with her.

They were ringing up their family everyday, crying and that. If it got really bad they got sent back but I don’t know how they coped.
Theme 6

Racism

page 2

... I didn’t get on with the manager, I didn’t feel wanted. I didn’t like it. It seemed she was very racist with the Aboriginal kids compared with the white kids.

page 14

They had (racist) language ... swearing or whatever. We ignored them ... We just walked away and mainly stayed in our own groups. I found the children were very racist ... there were little comments, “Oh, this room stinks in here”. Little comments like that or if we wearing clothes that they didn’t like or weren’t to their standard, that’s all we could afford, we were told to go back and change our clothes, or we weren’t allowed to go out, we had to stay in the hostel ... I didn’t like it. That’s why I was crying but Mum made me stay there the one term. The only freedom we had was on the weekend if we could go with an auntie ... just to get out of the hostel, that’s how bad it was. I didn’t like it.

Theme 7

High School Experience: Cultural Awareness & Curriculum

page 8

They really didn’t do anything for that, I can remember, only in the Aboriginal hostel you could see it ... I think I lost culture ... Then when you come back to family, then you start it again, get to know your own culture again ... you forget, well not forget but you don’t practice because kids come from all different places.
We just did normal school work but I can’t remember anything having a real impact on me ... When I was older I did think what they were teaching us didn’t matter in the real world.

**Theme 8**

**Support, Encouragement & Opportunities**

I never had tutors. We were just struggling and doing the best we could during our schooling.

I didn’t feel encouraged to learn. I normally just used to sit there and do the best I could, that’s how I looked at it. But I can’t remember any teacher encouraging me. Only when I was in (an Aboriginal) ... hostel. When I went down south I didn’t get support. Nothing that I can remember ... Like no-one would sit down and say “Oh, what are you going to do this year, do you want to be a nurse?” You know what I mean?

Nobody asked me what I wanted to do or anything that I can remember...It was like they didn’t bother. The only time they asked me was in year 10 and that was about work experience ... Year 11 and 12 they never really gave me any support and then when I finished year 12 I didn’t know what I wanted to be ... I went and worked at the Community Development Programme (CDP) and all we knew was CDP ... Now I know different. I know you can get more if you have more qualifications or if you have
TAFE. But that was what I learnt, to go with the CDP. Coming out of year 12, that was all I knew… I didn’t know what to do with myself.

I reckon no support that was the main thing.

**Theme 9**

**Balance – Living Between Two Worlds: Identity & Culture, Stability & Friendship**

The distance from home. I don’t worry much for family probably because they weren’t around … I look for Mum but I do my own thing.

Going away to school gave me independence and gave me life skills... but I did lose that contact with my family. It’s still hard to communicate with them I find. I mean like we talk but I find, we really don’t know each other. We know each other now, we are getting older but we didn’t know what happened when they were kids, their experience. We didn’t get to grow up together.

I just stop with my kids now ... because of how I went away ... I had no family around me and I still live like that. I might have my Mum but I do what I do … I don’t have many friends … I just live for my children ... I just go to work, that’s what I do because I’ve been used to routine.
I think maybe stability, maybe just one place. We were everywhere. But then again that
gave us life experience, different places. I don’t know … I didn’t like that. I felt
uncomfortable for a long time. I shut up then and became a quiet little girl and just
mixed with the hostel kids. We probably all felt like that … As I’m saying we just all
stuck together … I see them now and again, but now we all have our own different
lives, I suppose. That’s the thing too, because I reckon I’ve been in different places,
they are scattered everywhere so you don’t have your friends … I had friends in primary
school but I feel I can’t really approach them because, they still know me but I’ve been
away. Family is a bit like that too. They know you but you don’t know them.

7.3 Participant 3

Cluster of Themes

| 1. Homesickness |
| 2. Decision-making |
| 3. Family Support/Role Models |
| 4. School Experience & Support |
| 5. High School Accommodation |
| 6. Friendship |
| 7. Identity: Shared Culture/Cultural Diversity/Cultural Isolation |
| 8. Racism |
| 9. Curriculum & Cultural Awareness |

Theme 1

Homesickness

Half way through year 11 I got really home sick and stressed out. I ended up coming
home.
I found that I had been away from home so long, it felt like so long anyway, that I wanted to come home.

I think what all changed when I was 16 was that my Mum had had my little brother and all of a sudden there was new baby at home that I felt I was missing out on him growing up and having something to do with him.

I just got really homesick, my Mum had got this new baby. At the time I can’t remember. I had had a disagreement with my friends as well. So my friends and I weren’t talking. I was home sick. I didn’t have the people who were supporting me and it was year 11 and I was “Oh my God”, stressed out. I think at the end of it all I was so upset about everything. Not having my support, not being at home, missing my baby brother. At the end of it all my Mum and Dad just said “OK. Finish this term. You can come home and stay home.

Theme 2

Decision-making

I decided after being away, seeing so much and having my eyes opened (my home town) was just too small for me. I decided I wanted to do year 12 away, I didn’t want to do it here ... seeing what people were up to at that age. It was a bit daunting, I suppose, because I hadn’t been exposed to that being at boarding school. Mainly alcohol and
drugs, that stuff was happening here at the time. It was probably happening (there) too but I wasn’t exposed to it. So I ended up going for my year 12. I had pretty much decided that when I left school I wanted to be a teacher, and I went straight from year 12 into uni.

page 2

Going away to boarding school for me was a good experience. It opened my eyes up to other things, I suppose it made me more goal focused. I can make a decision and say “Well that’s where I’m going.” It’s given me really good direction. If I hadn’t gone away I wouldn’t be independent, I wouldn’t have this direction that I’ve got ... Just the importance of education and starting at a young age, then the decision can be made.

page 18

I don’t really feel negative about it. I don’t feel that because it was my choice to go as well. My parents gave me this choice. They were moving out of town and the only other option was to stay here ... and live with an Auntie or go away to school, and to me being able to have that option to go away and know that it was my choice, I suppose that played a big part too.

page 22

We were all on the same road, my Mum and Dad and me. I think that’s a big thing, if your kids agree to go to boarding school and you understand where you both are coming from or what you both want, that’s good.
Theme 3

Family Support / Role Modelling

I am driven because I know it was very important to my Mum. She worked in education, she was a teacher’s assistant for many years, so education was very important to her. She wanted the best for her children. She gave that to us. Because I know how hard my parents have worked, I put my all into it as well. Now I’m just that bit better off because I took that opportunity and ran with it … they valued education and I’m glad that they valued education because it made me value education and I’ve carried that on.

I got an education which has set me up for life. I was able to get different jobs and get better and better. Along the way I have done further education and I’m currently doing a degree … so education still plays a major role in my life. In the end I want that degree so my younger brothers and sisters can see that if you put your head to it, you put your head down and get to it, then you can do it.

... our parents gave us everything. We didn’t have a need or want, sort of thing.

They did help us as much as they could towards study … I always had that thinking that this was important to my Mum and Dad. They had done a lot to send us away to school and they constantly had to send us money, so we had money to go out on the weekend
and do stuff like that and buy things. I suppose it was the constant thought of knowing that they wanted this for us. I had to challenge myself to get better and better at things so that I wasn’t letting them down.

page 22
I’ve had the strong back bone of my Mum, my Dad, saying education is important.

page 23
It all about that support at the end of the day. You need to be able to support your kids and make sure that whoever is looking after them are supportive as well.

Theme 4
School Experience/Support

page 14
You weren’t sort of singled out ... You weren’t afraid to ask questions because you weren’t going to be singled out. The way they taught ... if you put your hand up and asked a question it was an overall “OK. Who’s having trouble with this?” And then the whole thing would be up on the board or whatever, or a discussion about it. But it wasn’t “... is having trouble doing this. Can someone show ... how to do it?”

page 18
There was an Indigenous Liaison Officer at the school as well. She would come and hang out with us every now and again. Just pop into the classroom and see how we were going. I think the good thing about it was it wasn’t like the singling out thing again, if she was in the classroom, she would talk to everyone. She would have a yarn
to everyone, not just to the Indigenous students. She was very supportive. I think that knowing you had that person to talk to if you needed to, was good too. Knowing this person could help you if you were feeling down and out and in the dumps, or if you did want to go home, they could reassure you. “You’re here because you wanted to be here, or you’re here because your parents wanted you to be here because they wanted to give you a better opportunity.” This lady was really nice. She always brought it back to you and the family.

page 20

We did have tutors. I can remember having a tutor come and we would work in groups of three. The tutor would come up and see us for a few hours a week, or a few hours every second day ... It was done as separate to our normal study times. If we agreed to a time to meet our tutor, it was an extra hour.

page 21

The positive thing was having the Indigenous Liaison Officer, someone who was going to be there for you. Having your teachers be supportive and understanding and at boarding school having your houseparents and your friends.

page 23

I know my little brother has an orientation day which included all the new students and he also has an Indigenous orientation day for the Indigenous boys where they went over the extra stuff about where there was support and what they could do and I think being up front and letting new students know what they are entitled to and I suppose the rules, if they do this what they will get out of it. If it’s all up front then nobody can go off the
rails but if you do go off the rails, knowing that you can get this support and you are not going to get your head bitten off will help.

Theme 5

High School Accommodation

page 4

I stayed in a boarding school. We stayed in a boarding house.

page 6

We had house parents ... One of them was really nice, she was young, she didn’t have any kids, she wasn’t married. I think I had her in year 9. I think she might have been 25 or something at the time but easy to relate to, I don’t know why but maybe it was because she was younger ... Then in year 10 there was an older lady. I remember thinking of her as my Gran but she was really lovely. Obviously she had grandchildren of her own. You know, you just knew not to get on her bad side. It wasn’t a bad experience. I remember that everything was pretty much good, like it was happy. The only thing I missed was not being at home but I didn’t miss it that much that I had to be back.

page 21

I suppose it needs to work at the boarding school, having your houseparents and your friends. I suppose it needs to work at the boarding school first, otherwise everything at school gets stuffed up. If it is not working at the boarding side of things, it is not going to work anywhere and I think that was a green light for me. It was working here, so it did work here.
Theme 6

Friendships

... two girls I had previously gone to school with. We grew up together, so we already had a close bond. It took a little bit of time to try and have friendships with the other girls ... but once that was established, we weren’t really close but we were supportive of each other, but we didn’t hang off each other every day. When we went to school we had day students who were our friends, who we mixed with. They didn’t really mix. I don’t know if they didn’t want to mix but they just stayed in their own little group whereas we sort of mixed with the day students … non-Indigenous students. We formed quite a close bond with these girls who we would still talk to now.

Theme 7

Identity: Shared Culture/ Cultural Diversity/ Cultural Isolation

Because there were other people there from the Kimberley, you were away from home, but you weren’t really ‘Away’ from home. You had other people there to support you... Yes, that was important to have people there, from your home, who could relate to you and relate to how you were feeling. When you were sad and why you were sad, sort of thing ... There would have been 10 or 11 of us all up from the Kimberley.

... there were heaps of different people. There were a lot of Asian students there who were flying in and out of Australia to go to school. There were other people from the
Wheatbelt area but they weren’t all Indigenous. Everybody from the Kimberley, they were the Indigenous students.

I wanted to go away somewhere by myself, where I didn’t know anyone and where I could be me or find me, if that makes sense. It was weird going to school (interstate) ... because I went to a boarding school there too ... Being at school in (home State) ... was like “Go out there and get it” sort of thing, no shame factor, you were encouraged to do things. I got to school (interstate) … and it was the opposite, it was like you were being encouraged by the teacher to “Go out there and do something”, but everybody around you, because the school was mostly Indigenous, was “Oh that’s shame, that’s a shame job. That’s shame.” After years and years of being in school in (home state), coming out of your shell and ... getting put in the spotlight when you are out of your shell, and you want to be out there and you’ve got all these people around you, other Indigenous students, saying “Oh that’s shame.” That was a bit weird. I excelled at my studies in year 12. I got a certificate, some Indigenous Student of the Year thing … At the graduation ceremony, that’s where they handed out these certificates, it was a big deal, and everyone was like “That’s shame, that’s shame.” To me it was like “Why is it shame, I’ve just achieved. I have done really well this year, why was it shame? At the same time it did bring me down a little bit. Well maybe it is shame that I have to go out in front of all of these people. I don’t know. It was a very different experience.

No. I don’t feel that I’ve lost anything. I’ve never denied who I am. If anything I get very overprotective of it, like any Indigenous person would.
I had gone out for the whole weekend with my friends, and I came back and she (sister) was really upset. I said to her “What’s going on,” And she said “They’re blaming me saying I stole their bathers.” ... apparently one of the girls, she had put her clothes into the dryer. My sister didn’t realise that everything wasn’t out and she just chucked her stuff in and so, while her clothes were drying these bathers were still in there. Instead of thinking, you know, I might have forgotten them in the dryer, I was in the dryer before, this girl had gone to the houseparent and told them my sister had stolen her bathers. So instead of finding out the whole story, the houseparents jumped to conclusions saying “You stole her bathers, blah, blah, blah.” My sister was really upset because she was saying “I didn’t steal the bathers. I used the dryer after her.” And this lady didn’t want to hear it … and then no-one actually turned around and said to her “Oh, I’m really sorry, you know, it was our fault the mix up.” That was the one thing that really pissed me off because it was sort of like, “Well because you’re Indigenous, you are obviously going to steal something if you don’t have it.”... I suppose that was the only real negative thing, that you had some students who didn’t like Aboriginal people, who knew nothing about Aboriginal people, who didn’t want to know anything about Aboriginal people but, you know, they used to stereotype and stuff like that.

There was ... a day student who came up to me and said “You’re a Noongar, have you got screwdrivers ?”... I said “I’m not a Noongar … I’m from the Kimberley. No I don’t have a screwdriver.” She’s like, “But you all do.” She was making assumptions that
because I’m an Indigenous person, it means I’m walking around with a knife or a screwdriver. That I’m going to steal your bag or I’m a dangerous person. It wasn’t a common thing but it did come up. I suppose it was the way that you dealt with it, whether you cracked it or whether you turned around and spoke to them and said, “No. This is who I am. Don’t label me.” You know. That was a way of putting people back in their place.

When I came back ... and started looking for work it was like they didn’t care if I had a year twelve certificate. That didn’t mean a thing to them. They wanted to know if I had any work experience … I know every job application that I have ever completed always asks if you have completed year twelve ... and I always got an interview but not many times that I applied did I get the job straight off, just like that ... when I got my first job it was ... my auntie who actually worked at the place and said that they needed someone to fill in part time and I thought OK, I’ll do this because I might not be getting a lot of money but it was a way in. I did that for a while and then I applied for a job with an Aboriginal organisation. I think that was my safety net because I had tried to apply to government places, like Homeswest, and Centrelink … but I didn’t get the jobs there. I then applied to an Indigenous organisation and I got the job ... I just always thought maybe I didn’t have the right skills or experience.

Negative would be I suppose that whole stereotyping thing, “You’re Indigenous, you get everything for free. You’re a stealer, you’re a stabber”, you know? Yes, just that bringing you down thing which some people automatically do without even thinking.
They just talk and they don’t realise they are doing it ... It’s made me more aware of what kind of people are out there.

page 22
I suppose it’s a bit hard ... my Dad is what they would say is a full-blood Aboriginal, so when they see me and they see my Dad, I always had to deal with that aspect as well. I suppose because I have gone through all of that and I’ve had to deal with it, I’m sort of like there’s no skin of my nose. No. You can wear me down but you are not going to keep me down, if that makes sense. If I didn’t think like that, if I wasn’t raised like that I wouldn’t be where I am today ... I’ve grown each year having to have those kinds of people in my face along the way and I’m getting bigger and better at how to deal with them ... to be educated enough to not let them upset you.

Theme 9
Curriculum & Culture Awareness

page 13
I had teachers who wanted to know who I was and where I was from. Even if they could build that into whatever they were teaching for the day, it made you feel good about yourself.

page 19
We never ever celebrated NAIDOC. I don’t remember us having anything NAIDOC week ... I know the other girls had to go back ... for funerals and it wasn’t looked upon badly, it was just that they had to go home. It wasn’t like “Oh, going home again for another funeral, you know, when does it stop?” There was understanding. They made
sure they got their travel and all that stuff was organised, taken to and from the airport, I suppose just the little things that you do, like if your parents ring up and say you need to be here, the houseparent was understanding but they were also willing to help in a practical way if needed.

7.4 Participant 4

Cluster of Themes

| 1. Identity: Culture Shock/Shared Culture/Cultural Diversity/Cultural Isolation |
| 2. Racism |
| 3. Boarding School Experience |
| 4. Distance & Homoeickness |
| 5. Balance: Living Between Two Worlds |

Theme 1.

Identity: Culture Shock/Shared Culture/Cultural Diversity/Cultural Isolation

page 1

I am very much a Kimberley girl ...

page 2

... (Boarding School) was just a complete culture shock in a sense, coming from the Kimberley… It was hard for me being Aboriginal. There were not many boarding students that were Aboriginal descent, so we were very much a minority group. During the day, mingling with the rest of the school, with the day scholars, we were still a very small percentage.
I lost contact with who was back home. I only had the short trips back home and you tend to grow apart. I don’t think that’s too healthy. There is that mainstream dominance but then, when you leave school, you’re going back looking for your identity, to strengthen your roots as a person to go forward in life and spread out the branches of your tree, your knowledge of yourself as a person.

… (my primary school) gave me a foundation ... (boarding school) gave me more of whom I started to be in personality, and then (Aboriginal hostel and public school) got me back to knowing my identity.

You could be Aboriginal but you also acknowledged your township, your language. You were still divided within being an Aboriginal person. There were Saltwater People, Cattle and Range lands, Desert People and River People and even when you go out to the desert there are other sections of different Desert People, there are different sections of Saltwater People. They speak their own languages. It is very diverse being with Aboriginal people. Imagine being in a hostel with all these mobs. So all these influences came through.

(my Sister) said “I don’t like schooling away because I lost knowing who my family was.” ... I think that was true, we started to lose the knowledge of who we are, as a people, as a person, our identity, our language, knowing the seasons and the knowledge
... I missed out on a few of the ceremonies, but I got to the end one … I think I had an awakening then. Being away at boarding school you really lose that understanding.

Mum flew down when I first settled in because it was all different to me and they allowed parents to escort you. I would highly recommend that they do that for students today. It’s just the culture shock, I guess … my parents were just doing the best they could.

Theme 2

Racism

I recall one Sister (nun) saying to me at one stage, she pulled me into the office and she said “I don’t want you mingling with those people,” and I said “What do you mean, those people?” and she said “All those Aboriginal students” (the Aboriginal day scholars). I couldn’t understand because Mother didn’t bring us up racist or prejudiced. In a sense, I guess, being a young person and starting to develop my awareness of the world, it was a bit of a puzzle for me … this particular Sister said “Don’t mingle with them,” and I didn’t understand why ... I didn’t know that we stand out in the crowd, sort of thing.” I refused to not see my friends. I still continued to mingle with the day scholars and the boarding girls as well. I felt I had a very balanced relationship.

Theme 3

Boarding School Experience
The school consisted of day scholars ... we were called boarders. We actually lived on the same level as the year 11 and 12 classrooms, so you could just walk out on the veranda and into the classrooms. We were petitioned off in a section that had a common-room, we did our washing on the weekends. They washed our sheets and our uniforms. It was very strict. We wore aprons over our uniforms to go down for meals. We would get rostered on certain jobs, like cleaning the dormitory every morning. I think what I liked about it was that I had security. I had everything provided. It gave me a time in my life where I really got to know myself better in terms of what I was able to do academically. I actually had a very good year that year. I was ranked as an A student.

... we studied every night, starting on a Monday night. After school we would do our chores and have time off and then we would go into study before tea, and then after tea we would get a break. We would all go down to a hall, a big hall and we would sit at desks and study, depending on our year, year 8, 9, 10 and 11. Then after tea, you were allowed to do private study in your room and I liked that. In year 10 I think I got an extra hour and a half. Because it was routine I put a lot into my work and it paid off. In one of my social studies subjects, in one of the tests that we did, I topped the class and I got an A. I was a little Aboriginal girl, sitting in the corner and she goes “these are the results back and the student whom came highest in the class,” and she named me and I was in shock mode, and I thought “Gee, this homework thing works!” It was good. That was good for me because when you are back home you are disrupted with extended family visits and that. So I could see that kind of discipline started to pay off for me.
... they helped to set up our uniforms but we had to supply our own linen and doona. I
didn’t even know what a doona was, I only knew blankets. So everybody in the hostel
was probably used to it because they had all the best shops down there. I just had my
doona, I didn’t know you could buy covers back then because I was just this little bush
girl. I use to freeze at night. I would go to bed with two or three socks on and jumpers
to try and keep warm. Little did I know if I got a cover, I would have been warmer.

We went to church every Saturday. The only day off when we didn’t study was
Saturday. We could be signed out on the weekends and signed back in on Sunday
afternoons. We would study Sunday night, all through the week except Friday night and
Saturday night but we would study Saturday morning before we could be signed out,
and then study Sunday night. I just loved that. I really got taught that when you are
away from your family, you get to be you, you get to be more educated, you start to
learn all this and you get fascinated.

We didn’t have an Aboriginal liaison officer at that school. Someone you could go and
talk to about what you were feeling. Someone who could say “Well, ring your family,”
and then they could speak to your Mother and Father.

Theme 4
Distance & Homesickness
Being away from home, some of the down side was that I was completely away from my family. I didn’t have anybody there, immediate family or extended family … The down side is that distance from home and not being there.

With my parents living remote, I can remember not getting a call from them for 6 or 7 weeks. I couldn’t ring them, I didn’t have any money. We were given no allowances when we were there. Only when Mum could afford it, then I would get sent an allowance and space it out and spend my pocket money on our 45 minute walks, once a week. I didn’t hear from her for 6 or 7 weeks and I got freaked out.

Theme 5

Balance: Living Between Worlds

I lived a remote life then … So my two week holiday was out in the bush…Then I would go back in to get the plane back to … (boarding school). I would have red dirt all over my suitcase, coming from the bush. I felt I was different when there were other students better off than me but, at the end of the day, you just make the best of what you can do. I remember that standing out.

Sister … says “I’m shifting you from that girl. I’ve met a girl like you before, you can really help your people, you know.” I looked at her and I thought … “Help your people?” Aren’t we all the same here? I had the innocence of a child. I classed everyone as everybody … I didn’t know there was this boundary. She would say “You
can help your people. I met another girl like you, but the only thing is watch out for those boyfriends. Get the wrong one and it can stuff you up.”

page 7
Being a bush girl in a city, because … was classed as a city, there was so much building and I so longed for country. I so longed to swim in the natural running waters when it’s like now in the wet season, I remember swimming the creeks … So, here I am sitting in ... the cement dominated place and I just fretted, so I compromised and did a scrapbook up of all nature. It made me feel good inside as an Aboriginal person, connected to country, I needed it.

page 8
Being an Aboriginal person and having a traditional upbringing as well, I grew up with language, Law and culture, what you and can’t do when you walk into country, it was hard.

page 9
Aboriginal people talk about our ‘Liyarn’, ‘our inner spirit’ that connects us to our country and to our people … If you look at that it would give information to help you with your studies on how the inner spirit connects, connects to land and to our people.

page 10
I was in year ten … I wanted to complete my year. It was at that stage that my Mother thought I was becoming more mainstream and starting to loss contact with the Aboriginal side. One of the big downfalls of being away if you look at your calendar
year, you only get two weeks back home and then the big six weeks break at the end of
the year. So, with my time being away, I started to lose names and people’s faces. I
didn’t know their names. Some of the older ones had seen me grow up and knew me
and I would be faced with, “Oh look at you now, bah, bah,” and I would think “Who
are you?” I would have to go and ask someone and they would say, “Well you should
know that.” I was expecting to know everybody and I didn’t know them. I had just lost
that contact.

When I look back on it, I’m glad Mum made me go there because I probably would
have become consumed by mainstream and become a nurse or something else and just
be ignorant of what gifts I had been given and who I am in my identity, my heritage as
an Aboriginal person. By learning history after school, I researched who I am as a
traditional owner, my identity from my grandparents. I also know my father’s side.

I am conscious there are different lifestyles but there are common principles that let
everyone get on. It has given me the people skills to mingle with all walks.

I believe education is very much the key for these young students, but they need to find
that balance regarding their identity. The schools now are becoming campuses for
Reconciliation with action plans. I think acknowledging the Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islanders helps the remote area children and it also brings awareness to anyone
who comes from overseas as well, to really connect with what heritage is here. I’m glad society has turned it around so that you’re not in denial.

Where you go to school does influence how you are going to conduct yourself in the long run. The Catholic boarding school … you have your trying moments like with the Sisters … They probably both meant well but now I have to question whether they were following the old policy of assimilation.

Being away at boarding school you really lose that understanding. I remember in … on one of the school holidays … walking past the post office and seeing an Aboriginal Land Rights flag, this yellow sun with red and black, and I’m going “What’s that place?” it didn’t have a sign. I was told “Oh that’s the Land Council.” So I said “Well, what do they do?” So not only was I ignorant, not by choice, of whom I was related to, my connection to country and story lines, I didn’t even know organisations and stuff like that. Honestly I didn’t know. In my interview they said “… do you know what Terra Nullius is?” and I said “Well, go on.” And they said it was “Land belonging to no-one.” So I said “Oh, OK.”

There were some constraints there with some community mobs. Some couldn’t handle it. They had to go back out to the desert, to the … area or wherever … you had those kinds of influences, so they just couldn’t handle it. Or they would do the wrong thing and get kicked out, like having boyfriends, you know. I have never forgotten them and I
have dedicated part of my life to trying to get the young people working with the Elders. I’m still on a mission, it’s never finished but I’m getting there.

page 24

Those secondary years are very important. I don’t know where you find the balance … (my sister) … has said she wouldn’t send her kids away. I question with my two if I would take that same path.

7.5 Participant 5

Cluster of Themes

| 1.  | Identity: Cultural Shock/Shared Culture/ Cultural Diversity/ Cultural Isolation/Cultural Influences |
| 2.  | Decision-making |
| 3.  | Hostel Experience |
| 4.  | Homesickness & Distance |
| 5.  | Living Between Two Worlds |
| 6.  | Racism |
| 7.  | Curriculum |

Theme 1

Identity: Culture Shock/Shared Culture/Cultural Diversity/Cultural Isolation/Cultural Influences

I was born and grew up in the Kimberley ... I wasn’t actually prepared for how different … would be and it took me a long, long time to be comfortable with a city. It was very different ... I hadn’t really mixed with white people, they were all Aboriginal or Asian
people. The only white people I knew quite well were the Nuns, the Priests and the Brothers. There weren’t that many white people in town then and also the size of the place.

page 4

Primary school I suppose was idyllic in some ways. Where we lived, when we came home at lunchtime, if the tide was in we would go for a swim at lunchtime and then race back to school. Going home everyday for lunch and going for a swim if the tide was in but down there we were spending an entire day at school, that was quite difficult I found. It was lucky I had my older sisters at school because we lived at … (the hostel) and we got the bus to … (the school).

page 5

The … (hostel) was for Aboriginal kids from all over the State actually. It was interesting meeting Aboriginal kids from down south and the Pilbara and elsewhere, you know. A lot of the Aboriginal children from where I come from here, are all Asian/Aboriginal. A couple of Aboriginal white kids but not many. Then going down there and meeting all these Aboriginal or Aboriginal/white kids was just, well they spoke funny.

page 6

I do remember one occasion we were quite shocked. I think we were in year nine and I remember there were some white girls who were being really cheeky to our French teacher and they went and got their mother to dub this teacher in and we were horrified, so one of our girls went up and told the girls off and said that they shouldn’t do that,
that we would belt them the next time they said anything about the teacher. I always remember that because where we grew up, the teachers were just sacred, you gave them that respect so we were just horrified by these girls ... I always remember being very shocked at that ... I think they were quite surprised that we were defending a teacher, but when you grow up with that respect we were just horrified to think that those girls had no respect. Well, they might have had some respect but, I don’t know, that was an eye opener to realise that you can stand up for yourself if you don’t agree with what teachers are saying or people in authority. That was a big eye opener, that made an impression. I had never seen anyone defy authority like that.

There was no such thing as cultural activities, in terms of the Aboriginal culture, no, there was nothing. Coming back and losing that contact with your culture after we left was hard. The other thing I guess was when we went down we thought we were speaking English but we weren’t really, not their English down there. There was a bit of language difficulty. Not huge, but just a couple of things that could be misinterpreted, just the way sometimes when we ask questions it can sound like a statement or when we make a statement it can sound like a question. People got offended when they thought we were demanding things but it was a question, we were not demanding. I do remember sometimes thinking and not understanding what the other kids and the teachers wanted ... they would just repeat themselves or they would physically show us how to do something. It didn’t worry me too much. We picked it up fairly quickly but a lot of the other kids found it far more difficult than we did.
I seem to remember that before I went away I was quite an extroverted type of person. I can remember walking out in the street and saying “Hello” to complete strangers, they weren’t too many, but there were people I had no idea who they were. Being very confident in myself and then I think I actually came away losing a lot of my self confidence in myself. I still have pockets of that confidence and I know I am a strong kind of person in my own way, but as a person – the difference was too big. Leaving a small country town, going to a big city, being lobbed together with a whole group of kids, and it wasn’t a bad time, it was reasonable, but it was so different. It forced me to sit back, I think, and observe more, even though I was in my own world and most things didn’t bother me, but I think maybe I went into my own world for protection. I really do think I did lose a lot of confidence in myself, in my ability and who I was. As a kid you don’t ask who you are but going round in the groups in the city, you know, people are looking at you and going “Ah yeah, Aboriginal kids,” and whatever. Otherwise I’ve come out alright I think, but apart from that I think it did change me in that I wasn’t a very confident person when I left.

**Theme 2**

**Decision Making**

I can always remember ... (a Priest) coming up from … wanting to take the kids down...

It is sort of a blur. I think it was just assumed that I was one of the kids who would be going down, because … all of my older brothers and sisters has already gone ... to be educated, so I just assumed that was the thing to do, and I went off with quite a large number of kids.
Well, it was not really my decision at all. I suppose back then in those days a 12 year old actually didn’t have a say in anything regardless of where you came from, it was the school and your parents. My parents did look on it as a good educational opportunity. I must admit we all came out of it well educated.

I got out of it myself. I don’t know how other people do it but I just told them, I said “I can’t handle being here anymore.” I rang Mum and Dad and of course they tried to convince me to stay there but I said “No. I’m coming home.” I told the … (hostel staff) “I’m going home. You have to organise me a flight home because I’m leaving.” … when you’re desperate, if you have just had enough. I basically said, “If I have to walk or hitch-hike home I will, so you better get me a flight.”… I didn’t really want to go back to start with, you know, but I felt forced to go back and at that age, 16, you do crumble under pressure from your parents, from the Priests and from the Nuns, the teachers and all of that. So I said “Oh they must be right,” and I went back and I think I lasted about two and a half terms, so that’s not bad. It was just building and building, it was a waste of time and money being there.

Theme 3
Hostel Experience
the other kids. Sometimes I think if you weren’t within a group you would have been forced to mix socially with other people.

page 3

The ... (hostel) was set up in houses. They had the younger groups, year 8s, year 9, in one house. 10s, 11s, in a different house, boys on the other side of the paddock, girls this side. How we grew up … there was never a bed to yourself, there were two or three people in a bed, and then actually going down and having a bed to yourself was quite a big difference … a good difference but you just missed that closeness I think. You grew up and people were constantly around you, even when you’re asleep ... They used to have house parents in charge of each cottage and we would get the bus to school every morning. We had to make our lunches, we had rosters to make the lunches. The concept of shoes was quite strange. Having to come back from school each day and polish your shoes, things like that. It was a very regimented type of living which I wasn’t used to.

page 5

... (the hostel staff) never bothered me, they were on a different plane. Some kids were always in a lot of trouble but I guess I went under the radar and I wasn’t really observant of other people. I can remember the other kids grumbling about the house parents, being too strict or whatever. That didn’t bother me.

page 7

They (hostel staff) were Aboriginal themselves, so that was handy. I didn’t find it difficult because they were Aboriginal people themselves so they knew in some ways
what we were going through. But then I guess they would have to follow their rules and regulations. Actually I lie, at one stage there was I think a … missionary lady who came over. She was a bit weird, I couldn’t take to her. I mean she was OK in her own way, but she was different to the Aboriginal house mums, not as laid back I suppose. They let us do things a lot more whereas she was way more strict. You would have your room inspections, like you do in boarding school, I guess, but she was just so much more strict on things like that. Stupid things, like how tight your bed was tucked in, whereas the other houseparents didn’t care as long as it was clean. You know, neat and clean and tidy.

They would take us to the beach, take us to the footie. Of course you had your homework sessions in the evenings, not that we did our homework, we had a totally different concept, had no idea what that meant. We did a fair bit. Saturday evenings we would meet up with the boys and have little dos or whatever. Otherwise, it’s a blur, I’m really struggling to remember.

Theme 4
Homesickness and Distance

I would have gone in year 8, so that would have been 12 turning 13. And of course there is no concept of homesickness or anything like that because everyone’s going. My brothers and sisters had never spoken of homesickness, so I had no idea that was going to happen.
I didn’t last there that long, I dropped out in year 11. I had no concept of homework, a waste of time. So I dropped out of school in year 11 and came back here to work.

... I had to come home. I wasn’t going to stay in ... a minute longer than I had to.

When we went there at first, that’s when it started that we could get the air fares for the term holidays. Before that the kids would only come back Christmas, so we were very lucky ... Mum used to try and get enough money together to get them back in the middle of the year for a little while, but otherwise you were there with no break. I can remember we were uncertain about whether we would be going home for the two week holidays or not, so when it came through it was like “Oh, God, the celebrations, we can go home.” I don’t know if that made it worse or made it better because it was just hard coming back every time. I remember my Mum and Dad rounding us up days before, getting us ready to go back to ... and I was trying to avoid packing and all that stuff, but we always came back. By the time I hit year 11 I had had enough ... Homesickness. Not prepared to do any academic work.

Theme 5
Living Between Two Worlds

I didn’t realise until after, when I came back to live here, that in gaining a Western education we lost contact with our Aboriginal identity a fair bit. You lose contact with
people you grew up with, Aunties, Uncles. You would see them a little bit but you wouldn’t have that same intimacy that we used to have. For me, it has taken quite a long time to get it back. I mean I’m comfortable with where I am now but before I had to relearn when I came back to live. So I do feel that’s a shame. So when it came round to my kids turn for school I decided “No, they are not going away to school. They’re going to stay here, knowing all their family.”

I can vaguely remember all my Grandparents, we had so many Grandparents and Aunties … and I forgot a lot of them when I went away, and coming back I have had to relearn who they were and who a lot of my relations are because you go away and when you are back for a holiday you wouldn’t hang with your family, you would go off with kids your own age. So I lost track of that whole extended family.

**Theme 6**

**Racism**

... we didn’t have that much contact with white people up here, we never really experienced racism like in our face. I think we were very protected. Of course it was there when you look back now but because we never mixed with white people we had no conception of what it meant, and we were too busy doing other things as well. Whereas I think with some of the other kids who grew up down south, mixing more with white people, they might have come across a bit more racism and things like that. So in some ways, sometimes, you know, they would say something and we’d go “Oh, what happened to you,” type of thing ... I never had any, but then maybe I protected
myself by forming my own little world so I was never quite aware of what was happening outside of it, unless my face was shoved in it, but no, I wasn’t aware of it.

Theme 7

Curriculum

Just normal school stuff. Well, for a start, absolutely nothing about Aboriginal history. It was actually quite funny because I remember when I got to year 8 ... I completely stuffed up their programme because I was useless at maths and really good at everything else. You know your normal maths, English, science, basic stuff like that. The school work was all very easy for me, it didn’t phase me but a lot of my other mates found it a bit difficult.

7.6 Participant 6

Cluster of Themes

1. Decision-making
2. Family/Support/Role Models
3. Cultural Isolation/Culture Shock/Identity
4. Survival Skills & Racism
5. School Experience
6. Boarding Experience
7. Curriculum
8. Friendships
9. Expectations/Achievements
10. Living Between Two Worlds
Theme 1
Decision Making

page 1
My Uncle had met with the Bishop ... who had said they had scholarships but no Indigenous people had taken them up, and they wondered why, and he came home one day and said “Why don’t you give this a go? Lots of influential people go to boarding schools”... So I thought it can’t hurt to see what happens ... so we went and had a look and ... I decided to go and was enrolled.

page 2
So I took up this opportunity to go to this flash school. There were lots of opportunities in areas of music I was interested in, sport and education and all those sorts of things, and it was in a very nice part of ... which also was very seductive at the time.

Theme 2
Family/ Support/Role Models

page 8
My now brother-in- law, who was going out with my sister, lived and worked as a youth worker ... and every so often he would drive up and come and get me ... And as a favour to my sister he would come and look after me and say “How are you going?” So those little things were really precious, but other than that it was a lonely time of pushing things down, trying to find fun, trying to find other ways of communicating with people.
My mother’s brother had passed away. He had been the one to encourage me to go away in the first place. He had died ... He was the one who inspired me. “Son, go to boarding school. Take the opportunity. Learn how to think and talk like the white man.” And I’d think, “Uncle I can do it ‘cause you can do it.” … He was really formative in my own self image.

I would have loved a link to tertiary education, some young black student to drop in on me and say “Hi.” A mentor. The support thing would have been a big thing.

I would have loved more support. I would have loved to have been around other black kids. There’s a lot I wanted that I see other kids have now.

**Theme 3**

**Cultural Isolation/ Culture Shock/ Identity**

So, at one stage, we were the only two blackfellas in a sea of middle class, upper middle class, white Australia. There were a few international students that were there as well, but by and large it was a fairly white, Anglo-Saxon ... environment.

It was strange. I was used to being with white people ... but I had never been in the context of really affluent white people where their pocket money was more than my
Mum had in her purse at the end of pay week. So, it was quite a surreal experience being around a really wealthy environment. I was conscious of my Aboriginality in ways I had never been, or in ways that were different to other places.

I didn’t know how to catch public transport and I had to catch two sets of buses ... They had weird bus services that didn’t always connect and there was a fair walk from the station to the school. That was a big thing for me, finding my way around … the suburb where I was living … the traffic was heavy. It wasn’t as if I could ride my pushbike there. I did think it would be easier to get a pushbike and just ride to school but nobody rode to school, there were no places to stick your bike because kids would be catching the trains or they were being dropped off in BMWS or Mercedes Benz. It wasn’t the done thing so there wasn’t a bike rack in the whole school. It was the first school I had ever been to with no bike racks. So that was pretty severe.

None of them had met a blackfella before. Or if they were country kids they would have been in fights with them, that’s about it. Or they proceeded to tell me about the one blackfella they had met once upon a time. They didn’t know how to talk. They didn’t know how to engage with me.

They asked me what my name was, did I have a tribal name. I come from ... and a lot of that stuff is lost. So I said “Well I born up in the Northern Territory and my Walpri skin name was Djabamunga. So that’s what I ended up getting stuck with, Djabo, as a
nickname. I said it was Djabamunga, but they said that was too hard and they would just stick with Djabo.

page 7
They didn’t seem to understand how it must have felt for me to be there away from Community. I would go for months without seeing an Aboriginal person. There was … but she didn’t board. There was no boarding for girls at that time. But we were it. We were the only two little blackfellas. Every now and then I would catch the train and go into … If there was something going on … I would jump on a train and go down and hang out. If there were family or people passing through, I would go down there.

page 8
I was the first in that sense. I was the first blackfella that went to that school. I was also the first in my family to go through year eleven and twelve.

page 13
I think there were a couple of thousand kids if you include junior school as well, and two Aboriginal kids.

Theme 4
Survival Skills & Racism

page 2
We moved around a fair bit as a family and I had a certain set of survival skills, but I had to find new ones at this place because these weren’t like any other whitefellas I had met before, these were really rich white people … you had to be quick with your wit
and cynicism. If you could bring the other person down in a witty way, that seemed to be their culture, their terms of endearment. So it was a very nasty way of viewing the world. But I remember having to adjust when I went home for holidays and then come back and remember I had to re-engage my cynical bastard putdowns. That’s the way people talked to each other. If you can come back with a quick putdown, you’re ‘in type stuff’. So they were some of the skills. Humour was the other thing I had to learn as well. That was always my survivor skill in a lot of places. I knew I couldn’t fight and I couldn’t run and I wasn’t as smart as some of them there, so the only other sort of tool I had available in my survival kit bag was humour. So I thought that if I could be funny I would be alright. If you can make the whitefella laugh you’ve gotten underneath his defence mechanism. Now they might be laughing at my expense because I had to use self-deprecating humour, that’s the only way they would let me, let them feel safe with their racism. That was one way to survive.

It took time to build relationships with people when I used to move around with other kids. When I first moved around to other areas previously, I always used to make friends with a group of girls first and then they would introduce me to their mates and I’d be right. But there were no girls in year 10, they only came in year 11 and 12. Girls were more able to come up to you and say “Hello, welcome to our school.” Boys don’t seem to have that way of saying “Good day mate. How are you?” 15 year old guys don’t do it like 15 year girls do. So it took me a while to get in the groove. So all I had was the opportunity to make them laugh and to use my guitar to talk to other musos and stuff like that.
I remember when I started boarding the conversations that would come up with kids would be like “So you’re the Aboriginal guy. You’re here on the scholarship. Are you really smart?” Well I had to say I wasn’t. Then “Are you a really good footballer? Are you a brilliant athlete?” I had to say “No. I’m not that either.” “So, you’re just here because you’re a blackfella? The scholarship money you’ve got is our parent’s fees money then. We’re paying for you.” “…Why should you get this? We’re paying for you.”

Every time something would go wrong with Aboriginals they would go “See - Aboriginals.” At night when we would watch the news back at the boarding house there might be something about the police and a man who would have been held up and shot by so and so at a service station … and they would say “Oh that’s terrible. I wonder what colour he was, I bet he was a white guy.” They would make all these generalisations about us and I was trying to get them to see that their generalisations about us were wrong.

... very rarely was I outwardly attacked and terrorised. There would have been a handful of times when that would have happened … There would be kids going past going “Wong, Gong, Bong” that kind of thing. There would be a few guys who would do that sort of thing. But there would be other kids who would take you at face value.
… everyone thought that Djabo was a cool, funny guy. That was the way I defended myself, through self-deprecation. I figured that if I could laugh at myself they got nothing. That was the way I tried to defeat their sort of racism. That lasted for so long and then I got angry after a while. I met a few international lads from overseas. There was an Indian guy and a Chinese guy from Hong Kong, and we would get together and try out our swear words, because the white guys couldn’t understand the choice language.

(Interviewer: how did you manage the hurt and the anger?)

I internalised it. I really internalised it. To this day if I feel I’m under stress, I will go back to my time there, to my time at boarding school. To this day I carry around low self esteem that was shaped by my three years there at boarding school, about not ever being good enough.

Always trying to find an angle if there was an amusing game or a game of basketball or a footy to be kicked, I’d find it and do it in such a way to try and get them to get to know ‘me’ under the Aboriginal.
Now I did muck around a bit because that was my way of coping to try and fit in. I would over compensate by showing off at parties and being silly and gregarious as a way of covering up the hurt of their racism.

I did a lot of self damage to survive there ... My brother came in after me once I had left, so the guys that were younger than me told him they thought I was a funny bastard and they looked up to me. “Your brother was the best, he was so cool and funny. Everybody loved him.” Everybody loved me because I let them get away with that shit. My little brother never allowed them. I don’t know if they would have liked me if I hadn’t put myself down in such a self-deprecating way. Their common ground was taking the piss out of me.

Theme 5
School Experience

... nobody gave diddle swat about blackfellas on the whole campus. For them creating the space was enough. We, me and my parents, hadn’t thought about it either. We were thinking about how much it cost to buy the uniform ... we had to find the money for the trousers, which were much more expensive than what my Mother would pick out from Big W or Target. There were regulation shirts, not just any shirt, they were white shirts to look like everybody else. The ties made you look like everybody else. You couldn’t knit your own jumper, the jumpers had to be the school jumper. The blazer was over a hundred dollars which was big money ... Those sorts of things we weren’t prepared for.
They didn’t have accommodation for me when I came in, the boarding houses were all full. There was no room for me … It was back in the days of three terms. The first two terms I was living with a family who had just put an extension on the back of their house and I stayed there until a room became available … And that was OK. They were a regular working class family so I felt I was getting back to semi-normality although it was a white family, they were a white family that were like us. But it meant I had to go along and do everything that they did and it was a while before the room became available, and it meant building new friendships and establishing a new direction too.

page 10

There was no support. No pastoral care from an (church) ... school. It was really piss poor. There was piss poor pastoral support. I think everyone made the mistake that I was so much like them that they didn’t understand the difference for me.

page 12

It was harder than school, than the High School. They imposed extra curriculum activity. I felt as if there was no time for myself. You had to play sport on Saturday. You had to play rugby or tennis. I played non-competition tennis. There were ones who played competition tennis on Saturday … But this was for the non-competitive people, people who were too uncoordinated to play soccer or rugby. So you had a whole lot of academic nerds who had no coordination and social misfits who were neither smart or coordinated. I did like basketball so I played that as well. That’s what was expected of you. The education was OK. The teaching, I don’t recall negative experiences in the classroom.
The school didn’t know what to do with me. The guidance counsellor said “What do you want to do? Do you want to be a social worker or something like that? You realise you need more than what you’ve got?” I don’t think they knew what to do with me. It wasn’t very encouraging. They didn’t have any conversation with any Indigenous support networks. They were used to dealing with bright kids and the not so bright kids had rich parents.

Theme 6

Boarding Experience

... this was the days before mobiles and everything, so you only had one phone and people were on duty for answering the phone in the boarding house and running around with messages. Our accommodation units, where we were, were not dormitories but were like houses, like the staff house on campus, so we had a series of those houses dotted around the central accommodation common room house that was where we would all go for tea and play table tennis and pool, that was where the pay phone was and someone was on duty to receive the phone calls and send messages around when some of the family would phone. I had a phone call from my Uncle’s Widow months later, the same year, and that never got to me. Someone just forgot to tell me “Oh yeah, shit, sorry.” Those were the times when I found it really hard to be there. I wanted to be home with family and be validated properly and just be together. That was definitely a hard time.
In year 10 it was just me and another guy in a room by ourselves. That was the same until the end of year 11. Beginning of year 11 there was me and another guy to a room and in year 12 we were like house monitors in each of the houses, and the boarding masters would just rotate and drop in to see how we were going. They use to do the rounds at night to make sure we were all in bed ... We would have to walk all the way up to where the dormitories were which was communal. We had to clean, do our beds and make sure everything was spick and span.

(Interviewer: Were no adults present in the houses?)

Not after dark. Not continuously. I remember getting into a fight with one of my mates because everyone would take me for granted because I was a push over, and my duvet cover which my mother had given me, ash had been dropped on it. They use to walk all over my stuff. There was one time I came back from home and this one house mate was hallucinating on something and he said “Don’t you judge me. Who do you think you are to judge me.” I asked him “What are you talking about?” And he said “You know what I’m talking about.” And he started punching into me and we started fighting but there was no boarding house master present until after the damage was done ... He just said “Everyone get back to bed. You guys want to talk about it? What happened?” I said “No, no, I’m alright, I don’t want to talk about it.” You just had to wear it, the black kid had to wear it. The bastardisation was dying off but he was still at it. He was known as the big rugby guy. He knew how to handle himself in ways others were intimated by.
I would go home at the end of the term. That would require you to pack up your whole room. Everything had to be taken because sometimes they would shift you around when you came back. You would have a different room.

Theme 7

Curriculum

It had nothing to do with Australian history. I remember covering Indigenous issues in year 11, in General Studies, it was very contentious in the classroom. The teacher who was facilitating it, I could tell he was onside but it was interesting what people define as the middle ground you know. There was a view from a guy from the country who said “They did nothing to develop the land, of course we had to take it. What we need is Aboriginals who will do the work. There’s an Asian lady who has come in, she’s not white but she has understood what she needs to do.” Those were the dominant views. Other kids would say “I don’t know why it’s wrong but it just feels wrong what you are saying.” I knew my teacher was supportive of Indigenous issues but his definition of the middle ground and what was reasonable was still too abusive for me. I sensed at least he was honest. That’s a good thing. I really valued that but I didn’t value his abuse. I found that abusive and violent but I didn’t have those words to use back then. I didn’t have the language to put over the emotions. I felt unsafe.

There was one term I remember being particularly impacting. Another term of General Studies I remember, was when they asked us to do family trees. They said “I want you to go back in your family trees.” I said “I can’t do it. I can only go back so far, my Grandmother won’t talk about my relatives who were removed.” And my
Grandmother, I had to be rude with her and she had to say it and it was painful for her to say it. “I can’t go back Son, because this is what happened to us.” I felt embarrassed to go back with this family tree. All the other kids came back with stuff that went back to the Earl or Duke or something, back to the convicts that came over and I could only go back so far. I didn’t have the right to ask for that stuff. It was too painful. That was really uncomfortable.

(Interviewer: Did the teacher understand that?)

He took that on board but it was talked about. Other kids would say “Oh I heard about you.” It was talked about in the staff room and I thought “What the hell is going on here. That shouldn’t be staff room conversation.”

**Theme 8**

**Friendship**

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There were key friendships but none of them have lasted. Some of them have found me now with the event of ‘Facebook’. So some of these school mates have tracked me down but that’s a closed culture … because all them rich fellas go to the same universities, hang out with the same crews and do the same things. There’s a generic … sameness.

**Theme 9**

**Expectations/Achievements**

page 7
... what was happening too was that the expectation was still oppressive. I don’t think people expected much of me academically. I didn’t feel encouraged to do better.

There was no doubt in my mind that I was there for other blackfellas, for other Communities. It wasn’t explicitly put on me. It wasn’t said “Do this for your people.” But I think other people, other students, other teachers would say “It’s good to see what you doing for your people. You’re getting an opportunity here to better yourself.” It was very elitist, a real sense of superiority around everything they do and how lucky I was to a part of that elite.

I was really good at stuff, music, performance and stuff like that. Artistic stuff, being in a band within the school, a jazz band, I use to play guitar. So I did stuff that was really good. We got into competitions and there were performances we would do at school and people would turn up with their black coats, tuxedos and parents would come along. It was a big deal. I would perform at lots of these things and I would always be sad that my parents were too poor to come and see me. Well, I didn’t think they were too poor, I’d just think why don’t Mum and Dad come up and see me do good? I’m doing a lot of good stuff here and nobody is getting to see me. So that was pretty sad.

Everyone was proud of me. When I came home, I think the family was living vicariously, they were proud of what I would do and achieve, particularly my Uncle. He would go “Tell me another story, son.” Or if I came back playing music differently, I
would play guitar with my cousins, “Oh, where did you learn that from? Did you get that from music class. See, that’s that deadly school.”… But some of the most important transforming experiences happened in that time as well. Pieces of music I would never have learnt in the bush. I wouldn’t have been in this choir singing this kind of music. Music is kind of my soul language. There were some formative experiences in chapel which were meaningful but often I just didn’t connect with what was being said.

I didn’t do well in year 12 … there wasn’t a lot of time to grief or to feel bad about missed opportunities … There wasn’t the time to feel bad but I didn’t feel confident about my education any more. I didn’t confident around education for a long time.

Well positive, I learned the white people’s ways. I had an insight into the powerful culture that I had never seen before. I learnt their language and I thought that would come in handy one day. I had some amazing artistic experiences as well I might not have had.

**Theme 10**

**Living Between Two Worlds**

Even switching from blackfella to whitefella talk, all of that I learned … Because they just don’t get blackfellas. I made up my mind I would learn to speak the whitefella’s talk.
I learned the white people's ways. I had an insight into the powerful culture that I had never seen before. I learnt their language and I thought that would come in handy one day.

7.7 Participant 7

Cluster of Themes

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Theme 1

Early Experience

Growing up as a young kid I thought I would never have the education that I do have at this point. Going to school was not my forte I did not like going to school because of the way I was brought up by my grandparents. There were times when I didn't go to school, it was very hard for me. There were times I didn't go to school at all. I was
missing school. Looking back at it all now has made me feel like how did I get here? ...
During my young days I travelled to and from ... Community to ... Town … we went to
live in … Community permanently then. I was in year five. In year six and seven I
stayed at ... Community school. I suppose because we were more stable I attended
school regularly.

Theme 2

Boarding Experience

I went down to ... boarding school from year 8 to year 12 ... I think it was good ... to
actually have a boarding school that we could go to. They gave us a place that we could
call home. That made it easier for us to study, I suppose.

We came with a group of kids from the Community and we knew other kids ... who
were there already ... people coming from other Communities and meeting up in this
particular boarding school, and you knew a few familiar faces.

From my background I didn't have my own room so it was something special having
your own little room and your own little study desk where you could just go on and
study. It made you feel responsible for your own little area. So that made a difference I
suppose. The meals were good. It was like a luxury really being from the Community…
you had your own bed, your own drawers, your own clothes. Meals were three times a
day. We didn't have that type of thing living in the Community.
I didn't know that people had gone previously but when I got there I knew people who were there so that was good. There were a couple of my cousins ... We had to travel from the hostel to the different schools ... so we were spread out all different ways. I don't know who made the decision for us to go to the different areas, how we ended up at the different schools.

It was run by house parents, there were two house parents in each section ... for year 8s to year 9s and then you had the girls Lodge for year 10 and then the older girls from years 11 to 12. There was a cottage for girls who were older and wanted to go further into their studies. That was available for them. So I think if we hadn't had that, we wouldn't have got the education. It probably would have been too difficult for us to go down there ... it wasn't too bad I suppose, to me it was like a second home.

(The house parents) They were good. When I first went down in year 8 and I had my first menstruation, that was a hard thing. I probably wasn’t told by my parents about it, so I remember when it was happening thinking “Oh my God, what is happening to me?” It was very frightening and she was very comforting and she explained it to me, so that was good because she was there for me as a mother as well. It was a turning point for me in my life, and it was an important one when you think about it, when you look at your kids and think we were lucky to have that because if you were in Community you think what is happening to you and there would be no one to understand or explain it to you. I think that was a big thing in my life to experience that.
differently … they were Caucasian staff, lay missionaries I think they call them. They were there to cook our meals and pick us up from school.

They had a strict structure. You had to do as you're told, like all places. You had a routine you had to stick to. The activities were good because we used to go to places … that we wouldn't have got to see like the zoo, and to the city to see the lights, things like that. Football, we would go and see that, and we would go on picnics and have fun days, we would go up to the National Parks, to the beaches. Every month we would have the first Sunday out, you could go out and spend time with family if you had family … I did have friends with family.

Theme 3
Opportunities/Expectations/ Goals/Motivation

… that was an opportunity for me, and an experience for me, coming from the Community to the big city.

... if you set your mind to it, it gets a bit easier … I knew I was there for a reason. So I did struggle a little bit but I feel as though I settled. It was a long way away but I just said well I'm here to study. Going back home during school holidays it was good.

We were there to get our education and that was it.
Being down there taught me a lot of things, especially for myself. You know when you are a Mother you learn all these different ideas, and with your experience of being able to achieve, it's better for your kids.

I remember when I was just eight years old growing up ... I thought to myself “I don't want this kind of life”... I think that was strong within myself and then I met my partner while I was at school, we met and married and had kids. It was something that I strived for, to be strong in my life.

… what I've learned from school is education is the best thing you need to do. You need to know how to write, and how to spell, how to read, especially reading. I used to hate reading and now I love reading. This year I've read my first book and I thought I'd never read a book but when you get older you feel you need to do other things that you haven’t been able to do, especially if you have children.

And my kids, I didn't have much in my life and I thought when it comes to my kids, I would like my kids to have something better than I had. I teach them that it is not easy to get what you want, you have to achieve it, it's not easy. Nowadays to get what you want you need an education ... I think it is important to do something you want to do and not waste your time with something you don't want to do. They are a lot of opportunities out there now that were not there for us.
Theme 4

Living Between Two Worlds

Going to … was like another world, a bigger world I suppose, from the Community that I used to live out at … It was hard going to school with other kids. The way we had to dress.

... going from school in the Community to … was difficult, very difficult.

At the boarding school you were with Aboriginal kids, the majority were from all over WA, but when you went to the school it was all Caucasian and I think that that was hard for us because they looked at you, you know, as if to say “What are you doing here?”

You were learning about two different worlds, if you stayed in the Community you wouldn't have had that experience, you wouldn't have learnt about that. I appreciated that experience, learning to cope in two different worlds … I got to live in two different worlds. At home you don't have the things you have at boarding school so that was like a luxury thing to me. I don't think I did experience any downsides. I was able to manage and I don't think I got into too much trouble.
Yes, a culture switch straight away. You would come home and it wouldn’t be the way you would have done it in … I was able to manage that (maintain connection). I would just come home and get straight into it again, then I would go back down and get into that again. I think that was the biggest experience because you can go to one area and just stay there and not get out of it or you can go to different places and move around.

Theme 5
School Experience

The education was a higher standard than we had at the Community, reading and writing. I managed to get right up there.

... it was very difficult for me education wise. As I said in the beginning I didn't have much of an education when I was growing up because I missed a lot of school.

We had our school holidays, they use to call it the May and August school holidays … There were two times in the year that we would go to school whereas now it’s three times a year, no four times a year. It was like a long, long year.

I think the school was good too. The principals were really good too, they would make sure you were alright, they would come and ask you how you were and be interested in you and how things were going. I think between the hostel and the school they had a good connection and made sure that the kids were okay and alright. They
were just interested in how you are feeling and how things were going. If there were problems or issues then it was reported back to the hostel … (The school) catered from years eight to year twelve, and there was about seven hundred or eight hundred students. About 20% were Aboriginal.

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I think if I hadn't gone … and stayed here … it would've been different. You get to know more, know different ways, it was a different education. It's not easy to study... I think it's very hard. Like we didn't get homework here … from primary school, it meant nothing to us. So when we went down … and got homework, I'm going “what's homework?” and that was a big thing to us. We had to study straight after tea for two hours every night. It was like, “Why do we have to do this, it is a waste of time?” But then when it came to the exams you could understand why you had to study. It's going to help you get better results. You can understand the kids nowadays when they say “Why do we have to have homework?” And we can say to them “This is why you have homework.” We can help them understand. Whereas before, we didn't have homework, so to start to do it was very hard because we didn't understand.

page 8
We had tutors. We had a maths tutor and an English tutor and they would try to help you. If we had stayed in the community we wouldn't have had that, we probably would've struggled.
I would have liked more help with my education, more tutoring if you didn't understand what you were doing.

**Theme 6**

**Homesickness**

I think the difficulties were how home sick you would get, very homesick because it’s far away. You felt lonely because you missed your family, you know.

**Theme 7**

**Decision Making**

Well they gave you that choice. I suppose your parents, like my Grandparents more or less, they grew me up more than my actual parents. I think it was our choice. I think I wanted to see what it was like to go.

**Theme 8**

**Friendships**

The thing about going ... for the five years was that you got to know people and they became your friends. So they held you there to be together, to study together. You don’t feel homesick then.
Theme 9
Racism

page 3

I suppose I didn’t get into that racist thing. I was just a genuine person. I just treated everyone the same. If they didn’t treat me well, they were the ones with the problem. I was just there to get an education. That didn’t worry me. There were times when people would look at you differently and say nasty things about you but you just get on with it and forget about it, you know.

page 4

It was difficult at times. It wasn’t too bad, I suppose, for our generation. It must’ve been even harder before us but I think we came in when everything was better. It wasn’t so racist, every now and then it was but it wasn’t as much as before the 1970s. When we started coming in the 1980s that was alright, I suppose, we didn’t have too much of that. I know a lot of people who would say, you know, that there was a lot of racism and we had this and that, but I think, in our day, we just went to school. It probably was there but we just didn’t take notice of it.

Theme 10
Independence & Life Skills

page 5

We learned to clean our clothes which was good, wash yourself and keep your general hygiene up, and look after yourself.
It was about responsibility too, you would go out and survive out there on public transport. If you wanted to go out you would have to catch the bus. It was getting you used to it so you weren’t always taken care off. You had to learn to survive too. I think that was good because it made you aware that there are going to be times when it’s going to be hard and you have to be able to know what you’re doing. That was good too, you had to know which bus to catch and how to get there, so that was all good, especially when you come from Community, that is all hard. They made you go through it so you knew what to do and then the next time you went on your own. When you have kids, because you’ve been through it, you can pass it on to your kids and they can see two sides of the world as well. Like we always went back to … Community and, from our experiences, we could tell them we used to do that. So we were telling them and then they could see it for themselves.

We learnt about food nutrition which was good at high school. We learned how to cook, how to prepare ingredients, what to buy and how to eat the right food.

It taught me to have an expectation in life and how to survive ... It helped me to understand socially as well, to mix with other people. Just life in general. How to cope with life. If you want to go places you need an education. If you go to a place like Centerlink you need to be able to read and know what you’re signing. Understanding what you are signing on the dotted line. What it all means. I know people who don’t
know that. They don’t know what they are signing. Having the knowledge of how to read and how to spell and using calculations and mathematics, that’s important.

Theme 11
Cultural Awareness

Yes they were (house parents) because they understood lots of kids, they had been to previous boarding schools before ours. The lady who looked after us had been in Geraldton and she had also been at Tardon, another boarding school. So she was very experienced before she came to us. So she understood a lot of things like the cultural side of it. Even when family passed away she made sure we would go back home to attend funerals, so that was really good. But the thing was some people would never go back. That was hard too.

Theme 12
Role Models/ Family Support

I think my Grandparents had a lot to do with it. My Grandmother was really a Catholic person and my Grandfather was there and supported her a lot, and supported us kids … I had older Brothers who could write for her because she couldn’t write a letter to me. One was a schoolteacher and that helped. He used to write for her. Occasionally they would send me a little pocket money but we would struggle as a big family. That wasn’t an issue for me ... She always told us when we were little “Make sure you guys go out there and see the world because it’s big.” I remember that to this day. I was
thinking to myself “What is she talking about? I was a little kid but I remembered it and I can understand that now.

Well I suppose when you talk about role models, he (my Brother, who was a schoolteacher) was one of my role models ... You look at him and you think, if he can do it, so can I.

7.8 Participant 8

Cluster of Themes

1. Decision-making
2. Family Support
3. Culture Shock/Cultural Isolation/Cultural Awareness
4. Boarding Experience
5. Motivation/Goals/Opportunities
6. Family History/Identity/Connection/Loss
7. Friendships
8. Living Between Two Worlds
9. Racism
10. Curriculum
11. Role Models/Support
12. School Experience

Theme 1

Decision Making

When I was in year 4, turning nine, my parents sent me away to boarding school...I spent eight years in boarding school ... We didn’t have the ‘School of the Air’ then, at
least not on our out station so Dad, being a strict Catholic ... and Mum being a Catholic, they wanted us to have a Catholic education. Dad decided, although he couldn’t really afford it, he decided to battle and try and get us through Catholic schooling.

I was taken away from Mum and Dad in a sense, because our parents believed strongly in education, probably Dad more than Mum … being taken away from my family, yes it was really hard, you know, especially being away from my Mum, she was a very loving and generous kind of woman. I’m sure it was hard for Dad too, but they saw an education, especially a Catholic education, as very important.

I knew Dad was struggling financially … Obviously Mum and Dad wouldn’t talk about it and also I wanted to get out of boarding school, I had had enough of it so I said I’ll come home … They obviously wanted me to stay and finish off my education but I think I didn’t have the confidence, it’s what it’s all about, as you know, self esteem and confidence, that for some reason wasn’t there, so I said “I just want to go home.”

One of the things I decided was that my children were not going to go to boarding school. So I didn’t send them to boarding school for that reason, because I didn’t like it. It wasn’t anything bad about the boarding school, it was just that real sense of loss.
Theme 2

Family Support

So my first cousin ... she also came down ... with me. She’s 4 or 5 years older than me.

It was good ... because she is my cousin and we remained pretty close most of the time. ... Then later on my sister joined me. She is four years younger than me. She was actually there for nine years, from grade two or three.

I can’t say I remember crying a lot, maybe it was good because I had ... (my cousin) and in time there were others going down too, so we all went together, you know, so probably it wasn’t quite so lonely.

Theme 3

Culture Shock/Cultural Isolation/ Cultural Awareness

It was the first time I had ever been south ... and I had never been in an airplane ... but we went in the big plane and we both flew down ... We were the first Aboriginal students ... as far as I know. A bit later another girl came ... Aboriginal people started to come ... but we were the first boarders to come from the north, the first Aboriginal students to come.
Aboriginal extended families like to be together not disconnected because it creates, I think it has created a lot of problems in the whole history of what has happened in Australia to Aboriginal families, when children have been taken away from their families.

Every time I looked at her, I don’t know if it is an inherent thing, Aboriginal people out of respect don’t look at you in the face, you know, and she used to always say “Look at me girl.” I remember her saying so many times “Look at me girl.” I don’t know whether it was an inherent thing or I was scared of her or what, but I always used to look away.

The majority were white children. There weren’t many Aboriginal kids boarding. There were a few from the town … who came to the school but mainly they were white and also from overseas, Asia and Thailand.

That was another thing, when I got there I had never seen a two storey house and going up these steps was overwhelming and quite scary too. Coming from the station … I hadn’t mixed a lot with a lot of people. We lived down in the bush on our own and had occasional visits from the family. I remember there was just a sea of faces of girls looking at you … (cousin) and I were obviously a bit different.
Theme 4

Boarding Experience

page 2

It was a big boarding school and it was very difficult for me, quite difficult for those 8 years ... the Nuns ... were themselves quite young, the Nuns teaching us and looking after us. They had dual roles. They would be houseparents at night and during the day they were teaching. So they were under great stress, the Sisters. I kind of feel for them now but then it was quite difficult because we didn’t understand all that.

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The Nuns were very welcoming ... They were pretty good the Sisters. There were one or two, one in particular I didn’t get on with ... To compensate that was our music teacher who was just beautiful and taught me music. That was one of the nice positive things to come out of that boarding school ... there was a great big dormitory and … (cousin) was in the same room until she was a bit older, and then she went into the room the big girls went to, the other dormitory.

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The other thing about school was the food. The food was pretty ordinary and of course they didn’t have fly screens and ... all these blow flies were mixed into our food. You got fruit which was good. But we were often hungry because we were growing kids. The kids that lived on the farms around that were boarding, their parents would bring them in a nice big sponge cake or something ... Sport was good, it distracted you from thinking about home too much.
I played sport and that was an advantage ... It was difficult. It was difficult for the Nuns as well as the students. My Sister will say “Oh, they were pretty cruel”. I think they would take their frustrations out on us sometimes ... I can’t remember being hit or smacked but there were other disciplines like not being allowed to do something. We had to have our hair washed once a week and the Sister would just push you in the trough and it felt like drowning. I think it was a frustration thing. My sister has more stories than me because she’s more fiery than me, I’m more easy going, going with the flow. The Nuns didn’t have much choice. It was expected there would be one or two Nuns in a family ... There were some very nice experiences but it was a bit isolated, a bit lonely in a sense because you just had to fit in with that scene there, and you had to be part of it.

You had to be up at 6.00am. Fortunately because I played the piano I had practice from 6.30am -7.00am, so I didn’t have to go to Church. All the others had to go to Church. That was another thing that was difficult, you had to go to Church. Sometimes you didn’t feel well and you hadn’t even had your breakfast. It was a big Cathedral and sometimes it was hot in the summer and a lot of kids used to faint, but those sorts of things you had to do. When the Monsignor died, his body was laid out in the Church and you had to file past. That was terrifying for me. I had never seen a dead person before. Same as the other girls, we were just terrified. He was a really big fellow and his nose was up there, he had a really big nose and his feet were down this end and we were filing past on each side. I thought I won’t look. I thought his head was down the other side and I thought I won’t look until I get to the end and then I’ll have a quick
look, but when I looked it was his face. At the time it was really scary, frightening, but you had no choice in that, there was no choice. When this Nun died they had her in the convent and they kept this vigil for her, for twenty-four hours they used to in those days and someone had to sit with her all the time. I was terrified. I thought I am going to have to go in there in the middle of the night. I said to someone “That’s my favourite nun, I can’t do it,” and they let me off. So anyway, when they went to Church I would be practicing the piano, which was good, then we would have breakfast and then we would do chores. After breakfast we all had certain chores to do like polishing the stairs.

Then you had your chores and then school, sports and meals and study period from 6.00pm-7.00pm ... I think you were in bed by 9.00pm or 8.30pm ... That was the routine.

**Theme 5**

*Motivation/ Goals/ Opportunities*

page 2

I started learning the piano when I was nine. I’ve been playing ever since, to this day... So, I have to say, out of the whole experience at boarding school, that would have to be the most valued, the most important experience. It’s just really been great.

**Theme 6**

*Family History/ Identity/ Connection/ Loss*

page 3
My Grandmother was taken away from her Mum when she was about six ... She was living a traditional lifestyle with her parents. Her Mother, that’s my Great-grandmother on my Mother’s side, was a full blood Aboriginal woman. My Grandmother’s Father ... ended up at the station with my Great-grandmother and they had my Grandmother, and her and her Sister were both taken at the age of six and seven. The police came to visit and said they were going to take them for a ride ... She said they were taking them for a ride and then suddenly they realised they had been taken away. She remembers her Mother just standing there looking at them being driven off, bashing her head with a stone. My Grandfather’s Mother was also a full blood Aboriginal and his Father was an Englishman. My Grandfather was taken at age twelve ... My Grandparents met at (the) Mission.

There’s a thing with Aboriginal people, not that I was brought up traditionally, but I did have a lot of contact with my Aboriginal family because they lived on these stations. I knew they were my family because Mum would say “That’s Auntie” whoever it was and she would tell me who she was. She would go and visit them where they were living away from the station, because the station was the big homestead and then you had these little huts away from the station where they lived ... We were all connected anyway because even the people up at the big house were relations to us ... My Grandfather was taken from his adoptive Step-dad … I don’t know where his Aboriginal Mother was. He was taken … when he was about twelve. Later on when he was of marrying age, he was brought down to … that’s where he met my Granny and had their family. … station was where my Dad was working and my Mum and he met ... So I never identified myself in boarding school as an Aboriginal
person, I was (European), I had an (European) name, but I was treated as an Aboriginal person, and it was sort of you don’t know yourself until you are much older and then you start to realise. I had been brought up in a very European way. But I did know who I was and I knew my roots were connected to that country and to those people. Only today ... I’m starting to really connect with my Aboriginal family … They will say “You have to call that one Auntie” in the Aboriginal way … So I’m learning at this age … The identity stuff is quite hard actually.

You’re not with your Mother, you’re not with your Father. My parents were good parents, I was fortunate. Maybe if they weren’t so good it would have been different … It was very hard to leave Mum mostly, because Dad was trying to be the Father of the house and bring in the money and was quite strict. Dad was very strict, very Catholic, said the rosary everyday ... Leaving was very hard and I do remember that I wet my bed up until quite a late stage. I think that was a nervous thing actually, I don’t think it was the cold. I’m pretty sure it was a nervous thing. I was always wetting my bed and having to wash the sheets and whatever, but they were pretty good about that. Those sorts of things, it was pretty difficult for me.

It was very hard because there was no communication except for a letter that would come occasionally. The mail was a bit slower then. That was difficult because you couldn’t talk to them on the phone. Mum and Dad didn’t have a phone anyway, out in the bush, so that was another thing. So there was no contact until you went home on the school holidays … It was really lovely actually going home, that was the best thing.
You have brothers and sisters but you’re not with them, you don’t know how to live in a family unit, in a sense. You miss out on that growing up with your family, but that’s boarding school.

I think I probably would have (had involvement in traditional cultural activities) if I had stayed out at the station ... I wasn’t living in the traditional way. I didn’t have that contact or the language and all that … My Mum was always trying to maintain contact with her family but I guess the situation didn’t allow me at that time to do it.

I was saying recently “Oh, I don’t know my language and I wish I knew my language”. I could learn it but I don’t think I’m very good at languages … Language for me is quite a challenge. Comprehension was hard for me as well. Well (my Cousin) … said to me that what I’d said was good because I wanted to belong to my Aboriginal roots, to my family. “You do want to belong but you know you are on the outside for some reason.” … There’s a regret about that sort of connection with my roots, and she didn’t say much but she said “You know who you are.” And I thought “Yes, I know who I am. I don’t have to prove anything. I don’t have to say anything, you know, I know who I am,” and that’s what it’s about … You know who you are, like spiritually, I have that feeling for this country which is my spiritual home … When we lived on the station and every time we came home for holidays, we just loved it because we would be back home in this country … We would come into the hills that I knew so well and I would always feel this definite special spiritual connection with this land. When people
say about the Aboriginal connection to the land I know exactly what they mean because I’ve felt that for most of my life. I still do.

page 15
Everyone else thought of me as Aboriginal but I didn’t have that strong identity because I didn’t grow up in the traditional way ... they belonged to this group. They had their own people, their own country too. I have never had that. I knew where I came from but it was different. There is a loss of identity.

page 19
I thought the socialising and interaction with your family was sort of all broken up because you’re not with your young brother

page 20
There is a certain amount of loss, loss of that interaction with the family.

Theme 7
Friendships
page 8
That was one of the nice positive things to come out of that boarding school ... life long friends.

page 9
... but it was kind of like quite lonely in a way, except for your friends which you made.
You had to make friends otherwise you would be a bit lonely.

Theme 8

Living Between Two Worlds

It’s very hard when you are caught between two worlds.

Yeah, you sort of live in between two worlds.

… but when you are being brought up in the bush like I was, isolated from people, you are quite shy and I’m still quite shy to this day although I have come out of myself a lot, but still very shy. So in school, you know, you haven’t mixed with a lot of people and you are thrown into this totally different environment and you just have to get on with it. It’s pretty hard. I didn’t really like boarding school to be quite honest with you … Not really, no, apart from the music. … I know it was very traumatic leaving. I know the week before we had the old boiler boiling all the clothes so they would be nice and white for me to go to school. White we used to wear, and Mum and Dad worked so hard they were out there in the bush with nothing. So there was this big boiling pot and we were trying to get all these nice clothes ready for the south, for boarding school and then leaving was very hard.
Theme 9

Racism

page 5

I do remember sometimes being with my friend … she is white … and her locker could be an absolute mess, just total junk and whatever, and mine would be nice and clean and neat but I would still get picked on for something, one article of clothing would be dropped. I just remember little things like that. At the time I never thought of it as being anything, maybe a clash between that particular Sister or whatever, I didn’t think it was anything else.

page 16

Little kinds of subtle racism used to occur in the school like that incident with the Nun picking on me, was that because she thought that Aboriginals were dirty? That’s what I think a bit of the mentality was but not all the Nuns were like that. I can’t really remember how they treated me quite honestly. I think we were treated as a bit different but really it was not a bad boarding school. You were accepted pretty well by the Nuns and pupils. I don’t think there was a lot of racism really. I can’t remember it myself.

page 20

I didn’t seem to get picked on like that for some reason, occasionally it was a bit racist but I didn’t pick it up because I didn’t think like that … I don’t look very Aboriginal.
Theme 10.

Curriculum

page 14

Yes I think it was a good education. Of course you had to learn ... British history, all the wars and all that. That’s what I remember. We had Australian history as well but I can’t remember as much about the Australian history as the British. It was very British then ... I think the education was relevant except you didn’t really learn about Australian history, certainly not Aboriginal history, that just wasn’t there … You didn’t learn about Aboriginal history at all. I’m only reading about it now, you know, the massacres and so forth, what happened. I never knew about it, what really happened because it wasn’t taught.

Theme 11

Role Models/ Support

page 16

There was no-one I could talk to. One of the Nuns, a music teacher, you could talk to. I remember, one day I had to have this Nun, she wasn’t my usual music teacher who was also a lovely person, and she was a very soft Australian Nun, quite gentle. I remember talking to her, letting out a little bit of stuff to her. There was a lot of keeping stuff to yourself really. I didn’t talk to anyone myself, if I had any problems. Wetting my bed may have had something to do with it. There was one older girl who I could talk to. She was my sponsor when I got confirmed but there was no counselling, there was no structure or counselling that I can remember. You just had to get on with it … I think it was just one or two of the older girls you could talk to apart from your own age group. If you had real problems there wasn’t anyone to talk to.
In a sense if there had been more of us although we might have got more picked on then … We needed support, you need some support set in place and more visiting. I used to go out with a family … they were my second family, they were Italian, they took me out and that was lovely to belong to a family, so maybe more family type environments… Someone you could talk to, counsellors in place who are approachable type people. If I had an issue and I knew there was a nice lady I could go and talk to…. I think for kids like me, kids who are very sensitive and shy, they get into situations that are difficult for them and it depends what is happening at home too. Some students have ongoing problems at home … stuff happening. They definitely need a lot of support. I don’t know what kind of support, but maybe like a counsellor, someone that they can talk to if they are having problems … A suitable counsellor would have made a difference, an Aboriginal counsellor, a mentor or older student with good listening and empathetic skills.

Theme 12

School Experience

It’s a shame there weren’t any tutors then like there is now, because I was struggling. I did year 11. Of course I did well in music and I did speech and drama and I did well there, those two, but then the other subjects, I was doing home science, I failed that would you believe? It was the only subject I failed, home science. That Nun just terrified me. They all had their issues, you know, so I forgive them all but she was just very loud. “What are you doing girl?” and all that kind of stuff she would shout when
she was talking to you. I wasn’t used to that language, I don’t think. Not with my Mum who was very gentle … I went to year 11 and I just did the first term I think and then I wasn’t doing very well in school. I was battling with year 11 and 12. I do remember that, it was quite difficult for me academically apart from music and speech and drama, so there must have been some discussion, decisions were always made for you. I don’t think you were involved in discussion it was like, well she is battling with that so we will put her into here. So I was put into the commercial class doing typing. And that wasn’t my thing either ... I think they were trying to work out what to do with me as I wasn’t doing too well and I think it was a lack of confidence, that shyness, a lack of self esteem really, because I don’t believe anybody can’t do well if they are given the right support and encouragement. Everyone has their gifts in some area. I wanted to be a teacher and obviously I wasn’t going to get there and then there were all these issues happening at home and it was so far away.

I regret in a way that I didn’t do year 12. My friends finished year 12. So, my education was good but there was not the support. We had homework at night, for an hour or so, and you were on your own to do it with the other girls.

7.9 Participant 9: A non-Indigenous carer

In this interview the Carer is speaking specifically about her experience of two Indigenous students attending a private boarding school.
Cluster of Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Decision-making</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2. Activities</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. Boarding School Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Homesickness &amp; Behavioural Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Expectations, Opportunity, Motivation &amp; Supports</td>
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<td>6. Family Support</td>
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<td>7. Cultural Awareness</td>
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<td>8. Assimilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Racism</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1.

Decision-making

Each girl came with her mother. They knew each other. They were from the same community. They weren’t close friends but they knew each other. I can remember meeting them and I was concerned about one of the girls, she seemed quite nervous, a bit troubled. Her mother was so thrilled that she had been accepted. I thought at the time, is she doing this for her Mum or herself. It was really hard because they didn’t know what they were coming to.

Theme 2

Activities

They started in the February and both girls seemed very excited with the induction week and all the activities because we always keep them very busy in the first couple of weeks so they actually get exhausted and they don’t get the time to miss home too
much because they are so busy. It’s harder actually on the parents who have to let them
go.

page 7

Well each weekend something would be organised. It would be things like going to the
zoo, going up to Hillarys to the water park. There were little socials with other schools
… There was always something organised every weekend like the movies, trips to the
city but very much, again, traditional white Australian behaviour, I guess.

Theme 3

Boarding School Experience

page 2

The dormitory arrangements were four girls to a room in year 8. We deliberately made
the decision to split them so they would start to integrate with all the other girls, this
wasn’t any different to anyone else. We didn’t like to keep the girls from the same area
together as they tend to get a little bit isolated in their comfort zones. Each term the
girls would move rooms and after the first term they could request who they wanted to
be with.

Theme 4

Homesickness & Behavioural Difficulties

page 2

The year supervisor for the year 8s was a very young, just graduated teacher who didn’t
see the signs that maybe someone more experienced would have seen and it wasn’t
until after the young girl left, which was during second term, she went back to her
Mum, that I actually found out that she had been bedwetting as well. The young supervisor hadn’t really caught on that that was relevant to her situation and her sadness. The girls were pretty good during the first term but it was quite apparent when … came back after first term that she didn’t want to be there. Her Mum had just had a baby and I think she really wanted to be at home with Mum. She tried to do her best but as the weeks progressed she became more and more difficult to deal … I went to the principal at the time and I said “You know I’m really concerned about … She doesn’t seem happy in her soul.” The principal at the time quite offended me. She said “I think you are being racist,” which absolutely horrified me … I thought I would get the year supervisor to keep a log book. So she started to document every day how she was going … and I also put notes in there … Her behaviour got more and more aggressive and I could see that she was just trying to get into trouble by hitting another girl, and I think at some level she thought that might be her way out of here. She continued to get quite aggressive with other students at the boarding house.

I kept a record of this escalating behaviour and went back to the principal three weeks later and I said “This child is dying in her soul.” I could see she was, she was just so unhappy. The principal then agreed to talk to her Mum and she actually did go home.

She just acted out. I didn’t really understand her culture, I just saw her as a heart that was very sad. I saw her as a person not as a cultural being. I just saw her as a child who was very, very unhappy.
Theme 5

Expectations, Opportunity, Motivation & Support

The other girl continued to do really well but I left the boarding house two years later. I heard that (she) … was very successful at sport, she was below average regarding her academic ability but everybody absolutely supported her and loved her. She was a real character. But sadly she didn’t finish year 11. I don’t know the reasons because I left when she was in year ten, but I was so disappointed she didn’t go on to finish year twelve. She did, I believe, get a lot out of her private school education. Because she was able to excel in her sport she had more opportunities with inter-school sport.

(The principal) was very supportive of the programme and really didn’t want to see or think that we had failed, so when I went to see her and she sort of bit my nose off, I felt quite offended. It was like “No. Just get on with it”... Failure was seen as a girl going home. The principal didn’t want her to go home. She even made the comment to me “Oh well, you know, life’s tough she just has to do this for the long term. She just has to adapt and settle, that’s life. She’s been given a great opportunity.”

(Interviewer) So it was seen as a great opportunity?

Oh absolutely, absolutely.

(Interviewer) Was there an expectation that they would do well academically?
No. I don’t think that really there was. I think the school was very excited with (second girl’s) sporting ability, but it was more just to give these students a pathway because we knew academically you could get into UWA\(^1\) doing various courses at a lower level on special programmes. So it was just to give these kids a leg up.

I just look back now and I think why didn’t we get a mentor for them in the community, but I didn’t know … looking back now I would make sure the interview process was much more rigorous. I would have a mentor within the school and I would like to think that mentor would go up to that girl’s homeland and visit their homeland and meet with their family, so the girls actually feel when they are in Perth\(^2\) that that person would understand where they came from and their culture. I would also have another mentor in Perth so these girls could go out for weekends because they were stuck at the boarding school every week. Other girls could go home three weekends a term, they couldn’t. I believe a mentor/counsellor needs to have some background understanding of cultural norms, ceremonies etc. If that is not possible there could be a link made with the local Aboriginal mentor and possibly the mentor could be invited to the counselling sessions if this was acceptable to the student.

**Theme 6**

**Family Support**

She did have a few relatives in Perth. That I think was a great support for her. The other girl just did not have that.

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\(^1\) University of Western Australia

\(^2\) Capital of Western Australia
Theme 7

Cultural Awareness

page 4

I was quite ignorant then too. This was 1996. When I think about it we just treated
everyone the same. We didn’t have any special education on the needs of Aboriginal
students. We just treated everyone the same. We opened our hearts and welcomed them
and that was it. There was no specific training. Only what we knew from our own life
experience. It (cultural obligations) was never mentioned. I was ignorant, I had only
been in Australia for a few years and I didn’t understand.

page 5

I think the principal was much more understanding being a West Australian. She was
probably a lot more understanding but it just didn’t get down to the people on the
ground about the cultural needs.

Theme 8

Assimilation

page 6

I would say in 1996 that (assimilation) was still the case.

Theme 9

Racism

page 7

I do not believe there was racism. There was a real acceptance of each other in the
boarding house. There was bond between the girls, each other was all they had when
they are separated from their families. The girls who shared (the first girl’s) dorm became unsettled when she became increasingly aggressive but it was not on racist grounds. I did not hear and did not see or sense any racism.

Chapter 8 reports on the development and analysis of themes emerging from the study of these participant stories.
CHAPTER 8

Data Analysis: Stage Two – Thematic Analysis

Stage two of the analysis involved the development of superordinate/ordinate/subordinate themes, which captured data from all nine transcripts. The researcher was looking for common themes or meanings of personal significance within the data. An interpretative-phenomenological study, such as this, seeks to gather depth of meaning from the participants and so offer a hermeneutical element regarding how the researcher understands and interprets what the participant is saying. The researcher attempts to ‘give meaning to the meaning’ as it is expressed by the participant. This process involves the use of ‘careful description’ as used by Husserl (1960).

Adopting this approach led to the identification of the following subordinate themes:

- Role models & Support: Expectation: Self-efficacy & Independence:
  Decision-making:

- Home sickness & distance: Boarding experience: Academic & Social Support: Friendships:

- Racism: Cultural identity: Curriculum:
The researcher sought to capture meaning within three ordinate themes:

- Recognition
- Living environment
- Realism

Through this process a meta or super-ordinate theme emerged - ‘Living Between Two Worlds’- which is represented as a never-ending ‘Journey’ involving both ‘Loss and Gain’. These themes are presented in Model 1 – The Lived Experience (p. 250).
8.1 Model 1 – The Lived Experience

“The Lived Experience”

- Role models & support
- Expectation
- Self-efficacy & independence
- Decision-making

- Home-sickness & distance
- Boarding experience
- Academic & social support
- Friendships

- Audit of balance in the present:
  What is the balance between loss and gain following the journey?

- Loss and gain in the journey

- Recognition

- Realism

- Living Environment

- Living between two worlds

- The context for developing an optimal counselling approach and foundation

- The journey is ongoing

Loss and gain in the journey

Living Environment

Realism
A broad story arises from the many stories around these various themes and their content. The literature review (chapters 1-5) provides a sense of context, relevance, salience, and a description of issues that reflects the content of the stories. The initial task, therefore, in presenting this part of the story will involve the provision of a coherent, interconnected summary of the literature that speaks to the thematic structures developed in the model (See 8.1). The rigour of this approach lies in the fact that, although the participant stories presented in Chapter 7 hold intrinsic value within themselves and have generated the summarial themes, they also reflect the writings of authors cited in the literature review, relevant to this thesis. The Indigenous participants are the living experience of the literature.

This literature summary is presented through a set of Tables outlining the specifically relevant references that together with the stories generated the themes of the model.

8.2 Tables of Themes – Loss and Gain in the Journey – Reflections from the Literature

8.2.1 Table 1. Super-ordinate Theme – Living Between Two Worlds

This Table presents the reference source and the relevant literary content supporting this super-ordinate theme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Relevant Source</th>
<th>Literary Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>Behrendt (2003) ch.1 p.15</td>
<td>Aboriginal ‘Sovereignty’ exists within the Australian Commonwealth &amp; by right has the authority to determine its own means of governance on land traditionally owned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Between Two Worlds</td>
<td>Bennett (1996) ch.1 p.18</td>
<td>Australian &amp; Torres Strait Islander peoples are, today, the most disadvantaged group within the Australian community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adler et al. (1981) ch.1 pp. 25/26</td>
<td>‘the White problem’- the social means &amp; practices by which black minorities are alienated from the decision-making levels as well as the corridors of effective power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budney &amp; Salloum (2011) ch.4 p.76</td>
<td>The position of the dominant white community binds to it its own power &amp; privilege, so that this community’s own culture becomes a self-invisible norm &amp; all other cultures are seen as the Other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kev Carmondy (1995) ch.3 p. 65</td>
<td>“Saw the white walls of freedom, never found the black door.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jimmie Barker as told to Mathews (1988) ch.2 p. 34</td>
<td>“I feel that I am living between two worlds.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2.2 Table 2 Ordinate Themes

The ordinate themes, together with their relevant literary sources and contents, are presented in Table 2. The ordinate themes have been defined by the researcher as follows:

- **Realism** - *the showing or viewing of things as they really are*

- **Living Environment** - *the surroundings or circumstances in which a person lives*

- **Recognition** - *the act of admitting or acknowledging*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Relevant Literary Source</th>
<th>Relevant Literary Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realism</strong></td>
<td>Hunter (1993); Dudgeon (2000a) ch.1 p.24/25</td>
<td>Systematic conflict, removal, displacement &amp; incursion of people into reserves &amp; missions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch.2 p.36</td>
<td>Psychological repercussions of relinquishing identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris (1991) ch.3 p.53</td>
<td>Role of education - training for labour &amp; assimilation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mead (1973) ch.3 p. 52</td>
<td>Education to create discontinuities – a sort of deliberate violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallacher (1969); deLemos (1969); Rickwood, Dudgeon &amp; Gridley 2010; Sykes (1986) ch.3 p.56</td>
<td>Education to promote Western style learning as superior. Modify Aboriginal values.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallacher (1969); McConnochie (1982) ch.3 p.63</td>
<td>Curriculum designed to remove Aboriginal children from source of spiritual &amp; emotional nourishment &amp; traditional social organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vickers (2005) ch.4 p.84</td>
<td>Colonial, race-based societies hierarchical – whiteness puts you at the top.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King-Boyces (1977) ch.4 p.88</td>
<td>Sacred knowledge is eroded. Process of acculturation takes place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hage (2003); Markus (2001); Mawani (2011); Moreton-Robinson (2007) ch.4 p.92</td>
<td>Role played by race in transition from colony to nation state.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicoll (2005); Smith (1999); Trudgen (2000) ch.4 p.93</td>
<td>The continuation of a war.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Source</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Content</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berndt &amp; Berndt (1985) ch.2 p.32</td>
<td>Kinship; structured interpersonal space; sustained social fabric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993); Garvey (2007); Sarra (2005) ch.2 p.31</td>
<td>Importance of family &amp; belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>King-Boyes (1977) ch. 4 p.88</td>
<td>Removal of Aboriginal people from an Aboriginal world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch.1 pp.24/25</td>
<td>Imposition of non-Aboriginal social structures such as missions, stations &amp; orphanages – changing all facets of Aboriginal lifestyle – language, clothing, settlement, housing, food, economy, work, religion, education, law &amp; health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attwood (1989); Watson (2007) ch.4 p.87</td>
<td>Missionaries control, settle, ‘civilise’ &amp; convert Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>McConnochie (1982) ch.3 p.63</td>
<td>Enforced replacement of Aboriginal social &amp; educational groupings with western style groupings leads to breakdown of traditional organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oberg (1960)</td>
<td>Introduction p. 2</td>
<td>Culture shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudgeon (2000); Hunter (1993); Pilger (1989); Stokes (1997)</td>
<td>ch.2 p.35</td>
<td>Shame-based trauma stemming from lack of valued identity &amp; inferior, racial cultural image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green (2007)</td>
<td>ch.4 p.95</td>
<td>Aboriginal people observed, studied, classified &amp; negatively labelled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart (26/08/2009)</td>
<td>ch.4 p. 108</td>
<td>Richard Down, on behalf of the Alyawarra Nation applies to the UN Human Rights Rapporteur for refugee status as internally displaced persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss and gain in the Journey: Recognition</td>
<td>Berndt (1974); Berndt &amp; Berndt 1985; Dudgeon et al., (2000) ch.2 p. 32/33</td>
<td>Aboriginal attachment to land is non-transferable. For each grouping there are specific ceremonies, legends, stories, songs &amp; other cultural &amp; spiritual links that connect a specific group to a specific country. Interrelationships between people, country, ancestral beings &amp; totems, norms, moral codes, values &amp; ideals are all embodied in the Dreamtime which governs all aspects of life &amp; how to live it.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maddox (2005) ch.1 p.17</td>
<td>The Terra Nullius doctrine No Indigenous relinquishment of traditional lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tatz (1983) ch.1 p.15</td>
<td>Little social acknowledgement of the consequences of colonisation &amp; policies of genocide, dispossession, isolation &amp; assimilation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dodson (2000) ch.1 p. 14</td>
<td>1967 referendum leads to repeal of section 127 of the Australian Constitution which allowed for Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maddox (2005) ch.1 p.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maddox (2005) ch.1 p.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Government legislates amendments to the Act extinguishing the grounds for the <em>Wik</em> decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett (1996) ch.1 p.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous people suffer unacceptably below Australian standards in terms of life expectancy, health, housing, employment, rates of imprisonment &amp; education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth of Australia (1998) ch.2 p.38</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance of ATSIC definition of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodson (2000) ch.1 p.27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia stands accused of racism by the UN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willmott &amp; Dowse (2004) ch.1 p.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 50% of Australian population see any necessity for a treaty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudd Government, 2008 ch.1 p.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apology honours the Indigenous peoples of Australia as the oldest continuing cultures in human history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zembylas (2008) ch.9 p. 307</td>
<td></td>
<td>Political struggles on national identity are struggles for recognition.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>Berndt &amp; Berndt (1985) ch.2 p.32</td>
<td>Group &amp; kinship systems woven into the fabric of life ... weaving the individual into a sustaining social fabric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism: Role models and support</td>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch.2 p.32</td>
<td>Aboriginal society characterised by stability: hierarchical structuring, personal integration, role definition, predictability &amp; mutual support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koorie Education ch.3 p.46</td>
<td>Education was a community responsibility &amp; everyone was involved in the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sykes (1986) ch.3. p.46</td>
<td>It was the lifetime duty of some people to carry the knowledge of each subject and pass it on to whoever would be replacing them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mead (1973) ch.3 p.52</td>
<td>Education was a process maintained between parents &amp; children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keefe (1992) ch.3. p.66</td>
<td>Aboriginal children learn about their dreaming, their language, their ceremonies, and their country from their grandmothers &amp; grandfathers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch.2 p.35</td>
<td>Erosion in power base of Aboriginal men being displaced as stock men &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s) &amp; Citation</td>
<td>Forced to move from stations.</td>
<td>The categorisation of Aboriginal men as racists, sexual abusers</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘concerned Australians’ (2010) ch.4 p.103</td>
<td>Intervention policies brand all Aboriginal people as alcoholics, irresponsible parents &amp; child molesters.</td>
<td>The <strong>walypala</strong> are teaching the children about their non-Aboriginal language &amp; culture. The <strong>yanangu</strong> are not involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders (28/11/11) ch.4 p.109</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students acquire the tastes, benefits &amp; privileges of living within the dominant culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeffe (1992) ch.3 p.67</td>
<td></td>
<td>Schools that are led by individuals who have a positive &amp; accurate understanding of being Aboriginal will challenge, nurture &amp; embrace Aboriginal students who will undoubtedly become stronger &amp; smarter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarra (2005) ch.3 pp.77/78</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss and Gain in the Journey:</td>
<td>Bates (1938); Neville (1948); Beresford (2006) ch.2 p.33</td>
<td>Aboriginal people expected to die off following European invasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neville (1948) ch.2 p.33</td>
<td>All visible signs of Aboriginality could be 'bred out'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mounsey (1979) ch.3 p.51</td>
<td>Aboriginal children only educable to the 4th &amp; 5th grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member for Beverley in Hunter (1993) ch.3 p.51</td>
<td>Education would serve no purpose for Aboriginal children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green (2007) ch.4 p.94</td>
<td>Aboriginal people viewed as a problem to be solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austin (1998); Harris (1991); Mounsey (1979) ch.3 p.52</td>
<td>Education &amp; training would result in assimilation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Lemos (1969) ch.3 p.57</td>
<td>Aboriginal children regarded as being ‘retarded’. Aboriginal parents believed unable to provide an environment conducive to learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freire (1996) ch.3 p.53</td>
<td>Aboriginal people would acknowledge the superiority of the invaders and want to be like them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>Attwood (1989); Hunter (1993); Moreton-Robinson (2007); Watson (2007) ch.4 p. 89</td>
<td>Missionary goals limited to training Aboriginal girls for domestic duty &amp; Aboriginal boys for farm labour. The aim was to create a cultural &amp; economic dependency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism: Self-efficacy &amp; Independance</td>
<td>Attwood (1989); Hunter (1993); Moreton-Robinson (2007); Watson (2007) ch.4 p. 89</td>
<td>Aboriginal independence &amp; solidarity to be thwarted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attwood (1989) ch.4 p. 89</td>
<td>Life on the missions leads to Aboriginal people becoming institutionalised, passive, hopeless &amp; dependent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jimmie Barker (in Mathews, 1988) ch.2 p.36</td>
<td>Developing an inferiority complex – confidence lost, difficult to regain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pederson (2003); Sarra (2005) ch.3 p.75/76</td>
<td>School experience fails, alienates &amp; excludes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarra (2005) ch.3 p.81</td>
<td>‘factories of failure’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scott (2005) ch.2 pp.37/38</td>
<td>Don’t achieve – don’t succeed. Success is associated with a ‘white’ identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chi &amp; Pigram in Pilger (1989) ch.3 p. 65</td>
<td>I saw that nothing I did could open the door - you’re nothing more than an acceptable coon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>Maddox (2005) ch.1 p.17</td>
<td>The declaration of Terra Nullius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch1 p. 24</td>
<td>European structuring &amp; control has influenced every facet of Aboriginal lifestyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adler et al. (1981) ch.1. pp.25/26</td>
<td>World Council of Churches called the ‘White Problem’ the social means &amp; practices by which black minorities are alienated from the decision-making levels as well as the corridors of effective power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sehdev (2011) ch.1 p.26</td>
<td>Treaty is the space where power is negotiated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch. 2 p.36</td>
<td>Repression of Aboriginal culture enshrined in the application progress for accessing citizenship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch.2 p. 40</td>
<td>Aboriginal questioning of ‘who is Aboriginal ?’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Key Points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch.2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Individual identity is formed by how the group defines factors through personal, family, community &amp; social events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennett (1977) ch.2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Religiously &amp; economically, people were placed quite firmly within the total system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonkinson (1982) ch.2 p. 35</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children attending school &amp; learning English gained powers they never had including the ability to choose English culture over Aboriginal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch.2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Aboriginal people become dependent on power exercised by colonial governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch.2 p.41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of Aboriginal Tent Embassy &amp; adoption of Aboriginal flag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downing (1988) ch.3</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Outstation Homelands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Centres movement started so Aboriginal people could leave government &amp; church missions &amp; return to clan communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austen (1998); Harris (1991); &amp; Mounsey, (1980) ch. 3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Policy of assimilation through education implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian (2011) ch.3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Advised by Grandmother “Go to school, we need to know how these people think”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attwood (1989) ch. 4 p. 90</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Victorian (Half Cast) Act (1886) sought to establish colonial labelling &amp; regulation over Aboriginal lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidd (1997) ch. 4 p. 91</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeal of section 127 of the Australian Constitution allowed for Aboriginal people to be counted in the national census.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch. 2 p. 36</td>
<td></td>
<td>The repression of Aboriginal culture was enshrined in the application process for accessing citizenship following the 1967 referendum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders (2011) ch. 4 p. 108</td>
<td></td>
<td>November 2011, Gillard government announces the extension of the N.T. Intervention for another 10 years.</td>
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</table>
### 8.2.4 Table 4 Subordinate Themes of Recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993); Doolan (2000); Dudgeon (2000a) ch. 1 p. 24/25</td>
<td>It has influenced every facet of Aboriginal lifestyle. It is an endemic &amp; intrinsic part of our society. Australian history is built upon racial crimes &amp; the ongoing denial of this history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fesl (1987) ch. 4 pp. 85/86</td>
<td>The colonisation of ‘racial’ groups was a key feature of the expanding British Empire.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moreton-Robinson (2007); Markus (2001); Hage (2003) ch. 4 p. 92</td>
<td>The question of race remains central to Australian politics, nation building &amp; national identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moreton-Robinson (2005) ch. 4 p. 94</td>
<td>The political &amp; social climate regarding race has taken a reactive, conservative turn since the early 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruner (1990) ch. 5 p. 121</td>
<td>Psychotherapy has remained largely a white, class-based activity, which gives itself the authority to pathologise other images of self, ways of knowing, and ways of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>Dudgeon &amp; Oxenham (1989) ch.2 p. 39</td>
<td>Aboriginal cultural diversity has a number of different manifestations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bennett (1996) &amp; Berndt (1974) ch.2 p.32</td>
<td>Each Aboriginal grouping has many stories, legends, songs &amp; other cultural &amp; spiritual links that link their specific group to a specific country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch.2 p.36</td>
<td>Repression of Aboriginal culture was enshrined in the application process for accessing Australian citizenship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scougall &amp; Dick (1997) ch.2 pp. 38/39</td>
<td>Aboriginal people make judgements regarding who is ‘real’ &amp; who has rights &amp; a sense of belonging to a particular community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunter (1993) ch. 2 p. 39</td>
<td>pan-Aboriginality is frequently seen as un-Aboriginality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition: Cultural Identity</td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch.2 p.39</td>
<td>Construction of Aboriginality is as much about the deconstruction of Aboriginality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dudgeon (2000) ch.2 p.40</td>
<td>Aboriginal people need to go through a process of ‘decolonisation’ in acknowledging their Aboriginal identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bennett (1996) ch. 2 pp.32/33</td>
<td>Indigenous identity is bound to their association with their land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Relevant Source</td>
<td>Relevant Literary Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss &amp; Gain in the Journey</td>
<td>de Lemos (1969); Gallacher (1969); Rickwood, Dudgeon &amp; Gridley (2010); Sykes (1986) ch.3 p. 56</td>
<td>The curriculum, theoretical orientation, methods and rationale underpinning educational programmes, follow models of cognition developed by Western psychologists to promote Western style learning &amp; evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition: Curriculum</td>
<td>Gallacher (1969) ch. 3 p. 63</td>
<td>If Aboriginal children are removed from their source of spiritual &amp; emotional base, the curriculum becomes empty &amp; superficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freire (1996) ch.3 p. 70</td>
<td>Warns against teachers “filling” students with a curriculum detached from their own reality &amp; instead promotes a system of cultural synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeffe (1992) ch.3 p. 72</td>
<td>Yanangu, assistant teachers, want the curriculum to reflect the needs of their community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pederson (2003); Sarra (2005) ch.3 p. 76</td>
<td>Curriculum focussed on the needs of mainstream severely disadvantages Indigenous students.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behrendt (2000) ch.3 p. 73</td>
<td>Aboriginal issues ignored in the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pederson (2003); Sarra (2005) ch.3 p. 76</td>
<td>Curriculum needs to include an Indigenous historical &amp; cultural component &amp; allow for multiple critical discourses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greville (2000) ch.9 p.312</td>
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</table>
The subordinate themes of ‘Living Environment’, presented in the model, are excluded from the tabulated literature summary as they relate directly to the personal experience of the participants, and were researched purely from participant stories.

8.3 Subordinate Theme Narrative

The following section offers a narrative account of the themes, supported by a sample of direct quotes from the participants. Each quote has been allocated an identifier (e.g. P.1: for participant one, followed by page number) which allows immediate access to the point in the narratives (Chapter 7) where the full context of the quote can be found.

8.3.1 Subordinate Theme of Realism – Role Models and Support

The literature highlights the importance of role models from group and kinship systems in traditional Aboriginal society. Knowledge gained and skills developed were handed down within a model of mentoring and social learning. Participant 1 talks first in general terms about how important role models were in his life.

_We had wonderful role models of people who worked and they worked hard._

(_P.1: p. 147_).

His focus then narrows to the personal support he received in extending his education.
I remember getting up nearing the end of year 10 and my Auntie encouraged me to go on and finish year 12 (P.1: pp. 147/8).

The historical context relating to his family was also important to him.

... at that time we were all from families... who.... had just come out of the Stolen Generation, the missions and the settlements, and they were empowering themselves and, in doing that, they were empowering us (P.1: p. 148).

Participants 3, 6 and 7 also draw directly from their personal experience of family members (trailblazers) who were involved in the education system.

I am driven because I know it was very important to my Mum. She worked in education, she was a teacher’s assistant for many years, so education was very important to her (P.3: p. 171).

And I’d think, “Uncle I can do it because you can do it.”.... He was really formative in my own self image (P.6: p. 200).

I had older Brothers.... One was a schoolteacher and that helped...he was one of my role models... You look at him and you think, if he can do it, so can I (P.7: p. 225).
Participant 9, the non-Indigenous, white carer also regarded the provision of role models and appropriate support to be vital in achieving successful outcomes. She bemoans the fact this was not available to the girls in her care.

... why didn’t we get a mentor for them in the community... I would have a mentor within the school and I would like to think that mentor would go up to that girl’s homeland and visit their homeland and meet with their family, so the girls actually feel when they are in Perth that that person would understand where they came from and their culture (P.9: (non-Indigenous, white carer) p. 246).

As participant 3 notes:

*It’s all about that support at the end of the day (P.3 p.172).*

### 8.3.2 Subordinate Theme of Realism - Expectation

The views of the Indigenous participants regarding ‘Expectations’ did not reflect the dismal reports recorded in the literature, summarised in Table 3 ‘Subordinate Themes of Realism - Expectation’ (p. 255) although, for some, a strong sense of ambivalence still prevailed. Of all the participants, participant 1 reports the most positive experience.
We had expectations of ourselves, even from the number of us who played the guitar. We jammed, we played music on camps... we could play the songs because we didn’t read music, we didn’t need sheet music, we just played from ear. So those expectations of developing skills in that way, that was very strong. Expectations of doing well at school, I had those... The teachers had their expectations... The thing I did experience was we were encouraged... (P.1: p. 155).

Other participants, however, report pressure exerted by teaching staff that they felt was unhelpful, reflecting the pressure of racist type thinking - ‘the white way is the right way’.

... in one of the tests that we did, I topped the class and I got an A. I was a little Aboriginal girl sitting in the corner... (P. 4: p.183) Sister... says... I’ve met a girl like you before, you can really help your people, you know... (pp.185/186)... They probably meant well but now I have to question whether they were following the old policy of assimilation (p. 188).

... what was happening too was that the expectation was still oppressive. I don’t think people expected much of me academically. I didn’t feel encouraged to do better... There was no doubt in my mind that I was there for other blackfellas, for other Communities. It wasn’t explicitly put on me. It wasn’t said “Do this for your people.” But I think other people, other students, other teachers would say “It’s good to see what you doing for your people. You’re getting an opportunity
“Here to better yourself.” It was very elitist, a real sense of superiority around everything they do and how lucky I was to be a part of that elite (P. 6: p. 212).

Pedersen (2003) and Sarra (2005) highlight the problem of low teacher expectations regarding academic achievement of Indigenous students. Sarra (2005) also raises issues regarding stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous students (for example, focusing on their sporting prowess), which he believes can severely undermine the potential for any academic success they may have. These concerns are confirmed by the comments of participant 9.

No. I don’t think that really there was (an expectation the Indigenous students would do well academically). I think the school was very excited with (this child’s)... sporting ability, but it was more just to give these students a pathway because we knew academically you could get into UWA doing various courses at a lower level on special programmes. So it was just to give these kids a leg up (P. 9: (non-Indigenous, white carer) p. 246).

8.3.3 Subordinate Theme of Realism – Self-Efficacy and Independence

This subordinate theme produced the most consistently positive responses from participants. However, the emphasis participants offered on what worked for them, varied, highlighting the need for awareness of individual differences. Participants 1, 3 and 4 stressed the importance of developing a positive, goal focussed mindset which they felt enabled them to successfully grasp presented opportunities.
I was certainly a person who decided, “Yes, I’m going to do this”, and once I started doing that, it was about how can I best make the most of all the opportunities that come my way... I still did my sport, my football, my basketball, still loved that, but to do with education, it’s basically that, you make the most of the opportunities that come your way... There are things that will always limit your opportunities, so you’ve got to be goal orientated. You’ve got to have these goals of looking at yourself in five years time, ten years time and see where you go with it (P.1: p. 156).

Going away to boarding school for me was a good experience. It opened my eyes up to other things, I suppose it made me more goal focused. I can make a decision and say “Well that’s where I’m going.” It’s given me really good direction. If I hadn’t gone away I wouldn’t be independent, I wouldn’t have this direction that I’ve got... I got an education which has set me up for life (P.3: p. 164).

I really got taught that when you are away from your family, you get to be you, you get to be more educated, you start to learn all this and you get fascinated (P. 4: p. 184).

Participants 2 and 7 highlighted the practical skills they learnt which enabled them to gain greater personal independence.

We had to wash our own clothes... Buy our own stationery. We were only given money every fortnight, like little $5 cheques, but $5 then was about $50... you
had to keep your room clean and everything... I’ve learnt to be very independent from going away to school... When I was sent away you had to be independent straight away for yourself (P.2: p. 163).

We learned to clean our clothes which was good, wash yourself and keep your general hygiene up, and look after yourself... It was about responsibility too, you would go out and survive out there on public transport... I think that was good because it made you aware that there are going to be times when it’s going to be hard and you have to be able to know what you’re doing... We learnt about food nutrition... We learned how to cook, how to prepare ingredients... and how to eat the right food... It taught me to have an expectation in life and how to survive... It helped me to understand socially as well, to mix with other people. Just life in general, how to cope with life. If you want to go places you need an education (P.7: pp. 223/224).

The opportunity to learn enhanced music skills provided a tremendous boost to self-esteem and self-efficacy for participants 6 and 8.

I was really good at stuff, music, performance and stuff like that. Artistic stuff, being in a band within the school, a jazz band, I use to play guitar. So I did stuff that was really good. We got into competitions and there were performances we would do at school and people would turn up with their black coats, tuxedos and parents would come along. It was a big deal. I would perform at lots of these things (P.6: p. 212).
I started learning the piano when I was nine. I’ve been playing ever since to this day... So, I have to say, out of the whole experience at boarding school, that would have to be the most valued, the most important experience. It’s just really been great (P.8: p. 232).

**8.3.4 Subordinate Theme of Realism –Decision-Making**

Those participants who felt actively involved in the decision-making process regarding school attendance (participants 3 and 7) reported a sense of personal integrity and empowerment.

*I don’t really feel negative about it. I don’t feel that because it was my choice to go as well. My parents gave me this choice... being able to have that option to go away and know that it was my choice, I suppose that played a big part too... We were all on the same road, my Mum and Dad and me. I think that’s a big thing, if your kids agree to go to boarding school and you understand where you both are coming from or what you both want, that’s good (P.3: p. 170).*

*Well they gave you that choice... I think it was our choice. I think I wanted to see what it was like to go (P.7: p. 222).*

Those who felt they were passive recipients of this process, however, fared less well. ...

*... when I was in year 7 my Mother said “Do you want to go away to school?” So I said “OK”, because I didn’t know any better. I was just a kid... I was crying*
to go home the second night I was there and Mum wouldn’t let me go home (P2: p. 155).

I can always remember … (a Priest) coming up from … wanting to take the kids down... I think it was just assumed that I was one of the kids who would be going down, because... all of my older brothers and sisters has already gone... so I just assumed that was the thing to do, and I went off with quite a large number of kids... Well, it was not really my decision at all... I got out of it myself. I don’t know how other people do it but I just told them, I said “I can’t handle being here anymore.” I rang Mum and Dad and of course they tried to convince me to stay there but I said “No. I’m coming home” (P.5: pp. 192/193).

The literature review highlights the tensions that can accompany the practice of decision-making. In the main, decisions are made by the powerful. They become the prerogative of the conqueror and are related to the ongoing success of conquest (for example the quest for assimilation through education). Decisions are made by, or on behalf of, those who are active in powerful positions. Recipients of such decisions try to maintain, retain or obtain that which is lost or diminished, for example the authority to define who is Aboriginal (Dudgeon 2000), establishing a national identity through the establishment of the Tent Embassy and adoption of the Aboriginal flag, determining where and how to live through the creation of the Outstation Homelands Movement (Downing, 1988), and, sometimes, advising their children to attend Western schools so they can learn about this other world (Christian, 2011). Most participants’ responses reflected elements of all these influences.
A mix of motivations behind the decision-making was reported by participant 6. He reported how his Uncle advised him to:

... go to boarding school. Take the opportunity. Learn how to think and talk like the white man... (P.6: p.200),... My Uncle had met with the Bishop ... who had said they had scholarships but no Indigenous people had taken them up, and they wondered why, and he came home one day and said “Why don’t you give this a go? Lots of influential people go to boarding schools... So I thought it can’t hurt to see what would happen... so we went and had a look and ... I decided to go and was enrolled... So I took up this opportunity to go to this flash school. There were lots of opportunities in areas of music I was interested in, sport and education and all those sorts of things, and it was in a very nice part of ... which also was very seductive at the time... (p. 199)... I learned the white people’s ways I had an insight into the powerful culture that I had never seen before. I learnt their language and I thought that would come in handy one day (p. 214).

This response constitutes a powerful statement of self-determination, highlighting the ability of Aboriginal people to be self-directed in the face of adverse challenges. The decision by the mother of participant 4 to remove her child from school in order to preserve her Aboriginality identity also reflects this response.

... my Mother thought I was becoming more mainstream and starting to loss contact with the Aboriginal side... When I look back on it, I’m glad Mum made me go... because I probably would have become consumed by mainstream and...
become a nurse or something else and just be ignorant of what gifts I had been given and who I am in my identity, my heritage as an Aboriginal person (P.4: pp. 186/7).

The most poignant response regarding the consequences of the decision for her to attend boarding school came from Participant 8.

When I was in year 4, turning nine, my parents sent me away to boarding school... I spent eight years in boarding school... I was taken away from Mum and Dad in a sense, because our parents believed strongly in education... being taken away from my family, yes it was really hard, you know, especially being away from my Mum, she was a very loving and generous kind of woman... I wanted to get out of boarding school. I had had enough of it so I said I’ll come home... They obviously wanted me to stay and finish off my education but I think I didn’t have the confidence, it’s what it’s all about, as you know, self esteem and confidence, that for some reason wasn’t there, so I said “I just want to go home... One of the things I decided was that my children were not going to go to boarding school. So I didn’t send them to boarding school for that reason, because I didn’t like it. It wasn’t anything bad about the boarding school, it was just that real sense of loss (P.8: p. 227).

Participant 9 also shared her misgivings regarding how decisions were made.

I can remember meeting them and I was concerned about one of the girls, she seemed quite nervous, a bit troubled. Her mother was so thrilled that she had
been accepted. I thought at the time, is she doing this for her Mum or herself. It was really very hard because they didn’t know what they were coming to (P.9: (non-Indigenous, white carer) p. 242).

### 8.4.1 Subordinate Theme of Living Environment – Home-Sickness and Distance

The importance of family to Indigenous people is clearly highlighted in the literature (Berndt & Berndt, 1985; Garvey, 2007; Hunter, 1993; Sarra, 2005). Sacrificing being with their family in order to attend school was reported as being the most consistently difficult aspect of participant experience. Each of the eight participants shared their feelings of immense homesickness. Distance from family and country, resulting in long absences, was reported as a major contributing factor to such feelings.

... some of them came from the country and remote areas, they got terribly homesick, we all did but for us when we came from a bit down south then we could go home once a month or so and spend a bit of time with family, but these guys they would go home about four times a year (P.1: p. 154).

They used to come down from all over the place. They were homesick all the time... They were ringing up their family every day, crying and that. If it got really bad they got sent back but I don’t know how they coped (P.2: p. 164).

Half way through year 11 I got really homesick and stressed out. I ended up coming home... I found that I had been away from home so long, it felt like so long anyway, that I wanted to come home (P.3: pp. 168/9)
Being away from home, some of the down side was that I was completely away from my family. I didn’t have anyone there, immediate family or extended family... The down side is that distance from home and not being there (P.4: p. 185).

I said “I can’t handle being here any more... I rang Mum and Dad and of course they tried to convince me to stay there but I said ”No. I’m coming home... If I have to walk or hitch-hike home I will, so you better get me a lift (P. 5: p. 193).

They didn’t seem to understand how it must have felt for me to be there away from Community. I would go for months without seeing an Aboriginal person ... (P.6: p. 202). There were the times when I wanted to be home with family and be validated properly and just be together. That was definitely a hard time (p. 208).

I think the difficulties were how home sick you would get, very homesick because it’s far away. You felt lonely because you missed your family (P.7: p. 222).

Aboriginal extended families like to be together not disconnected... it creates a lot of problems in the whole history of what has happened in Australia to Aboriginal families, when children have been taken from their families (P.8: p. 229).

Participant 9 aptly described the level of distress suffered by Aboriginal children who were living away from home.
... I said “This child is dying in her soul” (P.9: (non-Indigenous, white carer) p. 244).

8.3.6 Subordinate Theme of Living Environment – Boarding Experience

The boarding experience provided the greatest variation in report from the participants. While some reported primarily positive experiences, others were more negative in their accounts. Varying accounts covered a range of issues – prior knowledge and relationship with other students; the size and structure of the establishment; the range of activities and supports available; the personalities and cultural awareness of the staff; the level of acceptance within the environment, all contributed to how the experience was regarded. The best outcome model was one that offered a welcoming family type structure and atmosphere. Participants 1, 2 and 7 all commented on this aspect of ‘family’.

We became a family there, the hostel boys. We were like this family, staying there together as this group and we did have things in common, and we did have different age groupings from different year levels, so the older boys did take care of the boys... you establish being brothers in a place that is far away from your home area (P.1: p. 152).

I liked the house parents who looked after me... I felt comfortable with my house parents. They made us feel welcome and that’s probably why I stayed down
there... They took us out shopping, they took us fishing, we did a lot of things like that, like family things (P.2: p. 162).

I think it was good to actually have a boarding school we could go to. They gave us a place we could call home (P.7: p. 215).

For participant 7 it was important to have the company of a familiar group.

We came with a group of kids from the Community and we knew other kids who were already there (P. 7: p. 215).

Participant 2, commenting on her first experience of hostel living, highlighted engagement in familiar activities with Aboriginal staff who shared cultural awareness as important and conducive to success.

... that was good because they knew how we liked fishing. We had something to do each weekend. I really like that, that’s probably why we stayed there. We went fishing, we went hunting because we had Aboriginal supervisors (P.2: p. 163).

Her second boarding experience, however, was not positive. Her comments highlight the importance of good relationships with staff and students, and how isolating and stressful negative experiences can be.
... I didn’t get on with the manager. I didn’t feel wanted. I didn’t like it ... From the start she didn’t take to us and she was very strict with us... we used to stay in our own little group, trying to get through the day... Then I went to... but I didn’t like it... They had rules and regulations, fair enough, but in some ways you could see Aboriginal kids stayed together and so did the white kids (P.2: p. 162).

The need to feel welcomed or valued certainly was not addressed for participant 6 when, after leaving community to attend an elite school in the city, he found:

They didn’t have accommodation for me when I came in, the boarding houses were all full. There was no room for me... The first two terms I was living with a family who had just put an extension on the back of their house and I stayed there until a room became available (P.6: p. 207).

The sense of isolation arising from cold and impersonal relationships is also apparent in the comment made by participant 8.

It was a big boarding school and it was very difficult for me (P.8: p. 230).

Quite a different, unique perspective of boarding school life, however, is offered by participant 7, again highlighting the need for awareness of individual differences and personal value.
From my background I didn’t have my own room so it was something special having your own little room and your own little study desk where you could just go and study. It made you feel responsible for your own little area. So that made a difference I suppose. The meals were good. It was like a luxury really being from Community... you had your own bed, your own clothes. Meals were three times a day. We didn’t have that type of living in the Community (P.7: p. 215).

8.3.7 Subordinate Theme of Living Environment – Academic and Social Support

Participant responses regarding academic and social support reflected polar positions – those who enjoyed support and those who didn’t. Three participants report positive experiences.

They just had some amazing teachers who basically looked after all the kids, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids... We were very fortunate to have those particular teachers who saw and valued us as kids and who saw and appreciated that we were trying our best there (P.1: p. 149).

Although this participant received support from most of his teachers, not all rated his academic ability. As he noted:

Other teachers like the one who came across on some sort of exchange, said that I should leave in year 10 and go and find a job. I thought, well get stuffed. I had my reasons for being there (P.1: p. 154).
Participants 3 and 7 commented on the importance of different kinds of support.

We did have tutors... The tutor would come up and see us for a few hours a week, or a few hours every second day. The positive thing was having the Indigenous Liaison Officer, someone who was going to be there for you. Having your teachers be supportive and understanding, and at boarding school having your houseparents and your friends (P.3: p. 173).

The principals were really good too. They would make sure you were alright, they would come and ask you how you were and be interested in you and how things were going. I think between the hostel and the school they had a good connection and made sure that the kids were okay and alright. They were just interested in how you were feeling and how things were going... We had tutors. We had a maths tutor and an English tutor and they would try and help you (P.7: pp. 220/221).

Other participants, sadly, had very different experiences.

We didn’t have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer at that school. Someone you could go and talk to about what you were feeling (P.4: p. 184).

There was no-one I could talk to... There was a lot of keeping stuff to yourself really. I didn’t talk to anyone myself if I had any problems... there was no counselling, there was no structure or counselling that I can remember. You just
had to get on with it... It’s a shame there weren’t any tutors... because I was struggling (P.8: pp. 239/240).

I never had tutors. We were just struggling and doing the best we could... I didn’t feel encouraged to learn... I can’t remember any teacher encouraging me... Nobody asked me what I wanted to do... It was like they didn’t bother. The only time they asked me was in year 10 and that was about work experience... Year 11 and 12 they never gave any support and then when I finished year 12 I didn’t know what I wanted to be... I went and worked at the Community Development Programme (CDP) and all we knew was CDP... Coming out of year 12 that was all I knew... I didn’t know what to do with myself... I reckon no support that was the main thing (P.2: pp. 166/167).

The school didn’t know what to do with me. The guidance counsellor said “What do you want to do? Do you want to be a social worker or something like that? You realise you need more than you’ve got?” I don’t think they knew what to do with me. It wasn’t very encouraging. They didn’t have any conversation with any Indigenous support networks. They were used to dealing with bright kids and the not so bright kids had rich parents (P.6: p.208) ... nobody gave diddle squat about blackfellas on the whole campus. For them creating the space was enough (p. 206).

Despite the lack of support and guidance experienced, participants 6 and 8 both made excellent suggestions regarding how improved levels of support could be developed.
I would have loved a link to tertiary education, some young black student to drop in on me and say “Hi!” A mentor. The support thing would have been a big thing... I would have loved more support (P.6: p. 200).

We needed support... and more visiting. I used to go out with a family... they were my second family, they were Italian, they took me out and that was lovely to belong to a family, so maybe more family type environments... Someone you could talk to, counsellors in place who are approachable type people... I think for kids like me, kids who are very sensitive and shy, they get into situations that are difficult for them... They definitely need a lot of support... maybe like a counsellor, someone that they can talk to if they are having problems... A suitable counsellor would have made a difference, an Aboriginal counsellor, a mentor or older student with good listening and empathetic skills (P.8: p. 240).

Participant 9, the non-Indigenous carer, also believed support along the lines of mentoring, counselling, visiting and links to communities was crucial if positive outcomes are to be achieved.

8.3.8 Subordinate Theme of Living Environment – Friendships

Mixed feelings relating to developing and maintaining friendships were reported. For some participants developing meaningful friendships was essential to the success of their educational experience.
The thing about going... for the five years was that you got to know people and they became your friends. So they held you there to be together, to study together. You didn’t feel homesick then (P.7: p. 222).

That was one of the positive things to come out of that boarding school... lifelong friends... You had to make friends otherwise you would be a bit lonely (P.8: p. 236).

It took a little bit of time to try and have friendships with the other girls... but once that was established, we weren’t really close but we were supportive of each other... When we went to school we had day students who were our friends, who we mixed with... non-Indigenous students. We formed quite a strong bond with these girls who we would still talk to now (P.3: p. 175).

Maintaining friendships across distance was, for some, problematic after returning home.

I see them now and again, but now we all have our own different lives... I’ve been in different places, they are scattered everywhere so you don’t have your friends (P.2: p. 168).

There were key friendships but none of them have lasted (P.6: p. 211).

Participant 2 reported a feeling of overall loss as she felt alienated from connection with local friends as a result of her experience away.
I had friends in primary school but I feel I can’t approach them because, they still know me but I’ve been away (P.2: p. 162).

Participant 6 highlights the difficulty of maintaining friendships across different worlds.

...that’s a closed culture... because all them rich fellas go to the same universities, hang out with the same crews and do the same things. There’s a generic... sameness (P.6: p. 211).

The forming of friendships would seem to be a natural experience, particularly among children who find themselves cut off from their home communities and supports. However, this statement suggests that these particular friendships, formed out of natural need, were overlaid with a sense of being different, even unwanted.

8.3.9 Subordinate Theme of Recognition - The Experience of Racism

In the literature racism is described as endemic and intrinsic to our Australian society (Hunter, 1993; Doolan, 2000; Dudgeon, 2000a). Paradies and Cunningham (2009) advise racism occurs across three different dimensions – interpersonal, systemic and internalised. Responses from the eight Indigenous participants provide evidence of these realities.
... the manager ... It seemed she was very racist with the Aboriginal kids compared with the white kids... They had racist language... swearing or whatever... I found the children very racist (P.2: p. 159).

She pulled me into the office and she said “... I don’t want you mingling with those people”, and I said “What do you mean, those people?” and she said “All those Aboriginal students (P.4: p. 182).

Sarra (2005) advises “... white Australians perceive Indigenous Australians in a particular way” (p. 42). Such perceptions can not only be grossly inaccurate (Sarra, 2005), but they can be inaccurate and damaging in a variety of ways. Participant 3, for example, reported a typical negative response from a fellow student:

... a day student who came up to me and said “You’re a Noongar, have you got screwdrivers?” I said “I’m not a Noongar... I’m from the Kimberley. No I don’t have a screwdriver”. She’s like “But you all do” ... that whole stereotyping thing, “You’re Indigenous, you get everything for free. You’re a stealer, you’re a stabber” (P.3: p. 178).

In contrast, participant 6 was subjected to an unrealistic positive response to his situation. However, when this stereotype was challenged, the racism reverted to a more negative, traditional form.

“So you’re the Aboriginal guy. You’re here on a scholarship. Are you really smart?” Well I had to say I wasn’t. Then “Are you a really good footballer?
Are you a brilliant athlete?” I had to say “No. I’m not that either.” “So you’re just here because you’re a blackfella? The scholarship money you’ve got is our parent’s fees money then. We’re paying for you.”... “Why should you get this? We’re paying for you?”... Very rarely was I outwardly attacked and terrorised. There would have been a handful of times when that would have happened...

There would be kids going past going “Wong, Gong, Bong” that kind of thing (P.6: p.204) ... Their common ground was taking the piss out of me (p. 206)...

You just had to wear it, the black kid had to wear it. The bastardisation was dying off but he was still at it (p. 209)

The impact of racism is insidious. To survive, those on the receiving end of this abuse may feel forced to develop strategies which, in and of themselves, are also damaging, and can have severe psychological repercussions. Participant 6 describes how he adopted such a strategy.

... everyone thought that Djabo was a cool funny, guy. That was the way I defended myself, through self-depreciation. I figured out that if I could laugh at myself they got nothing. That was the way I tried to defeat their sort of racism. That lasted so long and then I got angry (P.6: p. 205).

Only one participant felt ambivalent regarding racist attitudes directed towards her.

We didn’t have that much contact with white people up here, we never really experienced racism like in our face. I think we were very protected. Of course it was there when you look back now but because we never mixed with white
people we had no conception of what it meant, and we were too busy doing other things as well (P.5: p. 197).

However, on further reflection, she recognised she may have also developed defensive strategies to cope with this experience:

... maybe I protected myself by forming my own little world so I was never quite aware of what was happening outside of it, unless my face was shoved in it, but no, I wasn’t aware of it (P.5: pp. 197/8).

In contrast, participant 9, the non-Indigenous, white carer, was categorical in her statement:

“I do not believe there was racism... I did not hear and did not sense any racism” (P.9: pp. 247/248).

This disparity in viewpoint and experience raises critical questions: Is it difficult for white people to develop awareness of racism in a white world? Are white people shielded from such awareness unless they encounter it directly? Is this lack of awareness as Sarra (2005) describes “... one of those luxuries of whiteness... where the dominant group is not aware of, and simply does not see any need to examine or justify itself” (p. 105).
8.3.10 Subordinate Theme of Recognition - Cultural Identity

The Indigenous participants recognised the diversity of Indigenous cultural and geographical populations, and the importance of developing an awareness of different cultural manifestations.

... we were developing our own sort of sense of identity and also at that time realising there were lots of different Aboriginal people around the place from different areas, it wasn’t just Noongars, we couldn’t call people from up the Kimberley or the Gold Fields or wherever Noongars because they were people, Indigenous people, from different language groups and they called themselves their own name, wherever they were from, from their own language group (P1: p. 156).

You could be Aboriginal but you also acknowledge your township, your language. You were still divided being an Aboriginal person. There were Saltwater People, Cattle and Range lands, Desert People and River People, and even when you go out to the desert there are other sections of Desert People, there are different sections of Saltwater People. They speak their own languages. It is very diverse being with Aboriginal people (P.4: p. 181).

Participants varied with regard to their involvement with culture across a continuum that extended from those who described themselves as ‘traditional’, living a remote life, to those who identified their families as having lost traditional knowledge and cultural expression.
Being an Aboriginal person and having a traditional upbringing as well, I grew up with language, Law and culture, what you can and can’t do when you walk into country... (P.4: p. 186).

... I had more family obligations at that time... You can’t really separate cultural and family because the way that you were raised a lot of culture was in there, and a lot of language was in that... all the family stuff your culture was immersed in, that was all part of it... (P.1: p. 157).

The sense of loss of culture for many participants was very strong.

I come from... and a lot of that stuff is lost (P.6: p. 201).

I think I lost culture (P.2: p. 159).

... we started to lose the knowledge of who we are, as a people, as a person, our identity, our language, knowing the seasons and the knowledge... I missed out on a few ceremonies but I got to the end one... I think I had an awakening then. Being away at boarding school you really lose that understanding (P.4: pp. 181/182).

Coming back and losing that contact with your culture after we left was hard (P.5: p. 185).

I think I probably would have (had involvement in traditional cultural activities) if I had stayed out at the station... I wasn’t living in the traditional way. I didn’t
have that contact or the language and all that... Everyone else thought of me as Aboriginal but I didn’t have that strong identity because I didn’t grow up in the traditional way... they belonged to this group. They had their own people, their own country too. I have never had that. I knew where I came from but it was different. There is a loss of identity (P.8: pp. 235/236).

The participants’ knowledge of Aboriginal diversity was not reflected in their school communities. Rather, Indigenous students appeared to be regarded more as a ‘collective’. This perception impeded teacher and carer insight into the beauty and value of such diversity and therefore, their ability to offer a fully meaningful school, and out-of-school, life-experience. Worst still, it was reflected in racism. A lack of recognition of the consequences of cultural loss and cultural identity was also apparent. As participant 9 states:

*When I think about it we just treated everyone the same. We didn’t have any special education on the needs of Aboriginal students... There was no special training. Only what we knew from our own life experience. It (cultural needs and obligations) was never mentioned* (P.9: (non-Indigenous, white carer) p. 247).

There is a strong sense here of the Aboriginal child being placed between two worlds. On the one hand, he/she is not fully accepted into the white person’s world, but they also suffer loss from isolation from their own community and culture.
8.3.11 Subordinate Theme of Recognition - Curriculum

The criticisms made by Indigenous participants regarding curriculum content offer an almost exact reflection of the views presented in the literature review. Participants 1, 3 and 8 highlight the total lack of an Indigenous historical and cultural component.

... they didn’t teach Aboriginal studies, they didn’t teach Aboriginal language... the only thing we learnt was very minimal I guess about Aboriginal people... I think we probably learnt more about other Indigenous people. I think I learnt about the Kalahari people more than I did in General Studies of Aboriginal people, let alone going into specific nations (P.1: p. 158).

Well for a start, absolutely nothing about Aboriginal history (P.5: p. 192).

Of course you had to learn... British history, all the wars and all that. That’s what I remember. We had Australian history as well but I can’t remember as much about the Australian history as the British. It was very British then... you didn’t learn about Australian history, certainly not Aboriginal history, that just wasn’t there... You didn’t learn about Aboriginal history at all, I’m only reading about it now, you know, the massacres and so forth, what happened. I never knew about it, what really happened, because it wasn’t taught (P. 8: p. 239).

Participant 2 questioned the relevance of what was taught.
We just did normal school work but I can’t remember anything having a real impact on me... When I was older I did think what they were teaching us didn’t matter in the real world (P.2: p. 160).

Although participant 6 did study Indigenous issues as part of General Studies, the form and content this took in the curriculum was reflected as highly insensitive and abusive.

I remember covering Indigenous issues in year 11, in General Studies, it was very contentious in the classroom... There was a view from a guy from the country who said “They did nothing to develop the land, of course we had to take it. What we need is Aboriginals who will do the work... Another term of General Studies, I remember, was when they asked us to do family trees. They said “I want you to go back in your family trees.” I said “I can’t do it. I can only go back so far, my Grandmother won’t talk about my relatives who were removed.” And my Grandmother, I had to be rude with her and she had to say it and it was painful for her to say it. “I can’t go back Son, because this is what happened to us.” I felt embarrassed to go back with this family tree. All the other kids came back with stuff that went back to the Earl or Duke or something, back to the convicts that came over and I could only go back so far. I didn’t have the right to ask for that stuff. It was too painful. That was really uncomfortable (P.6: pp. 210/211).

This is a very powerful statement reflecting the power and domination of a minority. For this young man, cultural identity, personal history and uniqueness were lost in the
insensitivity, ignorance and racism of white authority. Participant 6 knows he has a past, but he does not know his past and cannot be taken into it – he has been removed from his past.

It is apparent that the school curriculum, as experienced by these participants, was solely based on the needs and values of the mainstream and did not acknowledge or reflect the world view or the needs of Aboriginal students, confirming the findings of Behrendt (2000); Clarke (2011); Freire (1996); Harrison (2004); Pederson (2003) and Sarra (2005). These children were taught by non-Indigenous teachers, who, too often, offered descriptions of the world which excluded them in a way that challenged their psychic equilibrium. Such an experience may be described as akin to being invited to look into a mirror and seeing only emptiness.

Participant 3, however, reports a very different experience, one that seems to draw strongly on the approach advocated by the authors listed above. She reports:

I had teachers who wanted to know who I was and where I came from. Even if they built that into whatever they were teaching for the day, it made you feel good about yourself (P.3: p. 179).

8.4 Summary of Subordinate Theme Narratives

Table 5 offers a summary of the positive, negative and ambivalent experiences arising from the thematic analysis.
### Table 5

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**Key:**
- RM = role models; E = expectations; S & I = self-efficacy & independence;
- D = decision-making; H = homesickness; B = boarding experience;
- AS = academic support; F = friendships; R = racism; CI = cultural identity; C = curriculum’
- ✓ = positive experience; - = negative experience; ✓- = ambivalent experience.

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Total ✓ = 25
      √- = 40
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The next part of the story is illustrated in ‘The Lived Experience’, described as Model

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Chapter 9 will discuss the nature of the ‘Lived Experience’ within a counselling context.
The ‘Lived Experience’ Within a Counselling Context

The stories of the eight Indigenous participants produced a high level of profile diversity regarding culture, location in country, time period and experience. Despite this diversity, however, the themes emerging from this study are very similar to those highlighted in the stories compiled by Bin-Sallik (2000). Both sets of respondents identified losses which include: loss of family; connection to country; friendships, lack of mentoring and support; absence of positive expectations for achievement; active racism; the development of behavioural defences; lack of Indigenous content in the school curriculum. While, on the gains side: gains of independence, autonomy, whitefella knowledge and language, mentoring, support, positive expectations for achievement, friendships and increased self efficacy were all deemed important.

The strong sense of ambivalence emerging from the themes of this current research is expressed clearly by Holt (2000) and Ungunmerr-Baumann (2000) when they state:

I see so many well-meaning whitefellas working in the Aboriginal industry who think that, by putting a bit of ‘spit and polish’ on blackfellas, turning them into academics, professionals, intellectuals (that’s someone with an IQ of 140, isn’t it?) - you name it – somehow it solves the problem. I see myself and others being marketable and acceptable because of those acquired externals. I see a further insidious adulteration by being asked to opt into a bereft system. I see, I see, I see. But in seeing, I see more
clearly now. I had to be churned through the system in order to experience the whole
goddammed cost to me as an Aborigine, a woman and a human being. That’s the paradox of life – the yin and the yang, the dark before the dawn. But I wouldn’t have missed the journey for quids (Holt, 2000, p. 17).

Despite being an acclaimed artist, writer and teacher I still had to deal with the struggle, the heartache, the rejection and the disappointments of being a Black woman moving in a White world. I knew that the women wanting to follow in my path in education would meet the same struggles and hurts, but it was not for me to dissuade them. I had to encourage them, because the joys far outweigh the sorrows (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2000, p. 175/6).

It could be argued as the research participants in this study were adults, reporting on their childhood attendance through a white education system, their experience may have limited relevance to the experiential world of students today and the challenges they may be facing, culturally and socially. However, the experience of the eight Indigenous participants spans five decades - from the 1950s to the 1990s, and very few cues are apparent in the content of their stories which accurately assign them to their relevant decade. Over three decades ago, Libermann (1981), described government education policy as one of providing education to Aboriginal youth as a way of socialising them into Anglo-Australian culture (Chapter 3, p. 75). This sentiment is echoed in the statement from Yolngu Elders, issued in November 2011 (Chapter 4, pp. 108/9). The challenge, it seems, lies not in the particular time period identified, but in the discovery of how gains for Indigenous students, through...
involvement in a ‘Westernised’ education system can be increased and expanded, and how losses can be reduced and repaired.

Analysis of participant stories highlights the nature of the never-ending ‘Journey’. Many of the positives and negatives of their educational experience were felt in the moment; others had life-long repercussions. This highlights the need for a ‘Loss / Gain’ assessment to be considered across the life span.

9.1 Some Basic Counselling Truths

The fear of rejection and the desire for approval can negatively impact on our sense of self. There are those of us from an early age who have so thoroughly internalised a degree of self worth, that life’s little or big failures and disappointments are painful but not devastating. When we are rejected or left out we feel it but do not become it. We continue to feel safe and attractive, right and purposeful. We develop predominantly positive and healthy responses to life’s challenges. A ‘good’ education can make you feel good about yourself, enable you to present well and feel that you are ‘enough’. Stories shared, by participants 1 and 3, reflect this. However, when ignorance and prejudice heighten feelings of homesickness and the pain of non-acceptance, of feeling a failure or interloper, maladaptive, then self-defeating defensive behaviours may be adopted. Such was the case for participant 6 who became the ‘class clown’ to divert the impact of direct racism and feelings of never being good enough, and participant 5 who lost so much confidence in her ability, in who she was, that she retreated into her own little world to seek protection. A similar reaction was reported by participant 2, “I felt uncomfortable for a long time. I shut up then and became a quiet little
The story shared by participant 8 also speaks of great loss – loss of identity, loss of connection. Individual survivor skills, built around a negative, can have very long lasting consequences.

Table 5 (p. 300) highlights that the most traumatic experiences suffered by participants reporting damaging life-long effects, resulted from predominantly negative and ambivalent experiences across a range of themes. This suggests the themes identified in this study may have strong predictive qualities which could be used to assess potential and actual vulnerability to loss. These themes could be used to develop a blueprint or assessment instrument which would offer rigour to the student selection and approval process (a point raised by participant 9), and support ongoing identification of potential areas of loss and, opportunities to maximise gains, according to individual need. Students may share a commonality of event(s), but their experience of it remains highly individual.

The themes emerging from the stories provide very practical applications for counselling practice. The worthiness of any instrument, however, is dependent on the knowledge, understanding and conceptual base of the person who applies it. What, for example, does the counsellor draw on to determine what is optimal and what is deficit? Are they culturally aware, competent and appropriate? Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett (2000) advise cultural competence is about one’s degree of effectiveness in communicating and behaving appropriately with people from another culture, both in terms of understanding and being understood. While cultural awareness is a key element in this, competence goes beyond just knowledge or awareness. The practitioner needs both an understanding of the manner of communication and the practical ability to enact that knowledge in communication and behaviour. According to these authors, being culturally appropriate involves the positive inclusion and the acceptance of direction from Indigenous people and their culture.

All truths about human functioning are relative to the kind of lens through which those truths are seen, and the language through which they are examined. What might be missed or misunderstood in our communication may be the false expectation that Indigenous knowledge will fit counselling questions, leading us to limit, define and describe their culture in terms of our own. How do counsellors learn to reconcile the notion of an ‘inner self’ that forms the basis for decision-making and action, with a self-identity that is defined externally by place, kinship, duty and tradition of historical connectedness?

Healing comprises physical, spiritual, psychological, social, collective, and restorative components. Restoration necessitates a holistic approach to healing in relation to the emotional, spiritual and physical nexus in terms of the individual and the collective, the political and the cultural. The restoring of wellbeing, spiritually, emotionally, physically and materially will require the involvement of counsellors in culturally competent practices. As participant 4 advises:

Aboriginal people talk about our ‘Liyarn’, ‘our inner spirit’ that connects us to our country and to our people ... If you look at that it would give you information to help you with your studies on how the inner spirit connects, connects to land and to our people (Chapter 7, p. 185).
“‘Liyarn’ or ‘Liyarn Ngarn’ comes from the Yawuru language from the Broome area of Western Australia and means ‘the coming together of spirit’; this ‘coming together of the spirit’ is at the heart of Aboriginal holistic health” (Henderson-Yates, 2008, p. 7). There are other Aboriginal names for this concept such as “Ngarlu”, a Karajarri word meaning the place of the inner spirit (Roe, 2000). Randa l (2006) highlights the importance of ‘Kanyini’ or ‘connectedness’ to life and life’s purpose. There are four elements of Kanyini:

- **Tjukurrpa**  
  Belief system

- **Kuranpa**  
  Spirituality

- **Ngura**  
  Land

- **Walyija**  
  Family

Kanyini is nurtured through caring and practicing responsibility. To be a ‘whole’ person all four aspects of Kanyini have to be connected and maintained.

Ungunmerr (-Baumann) (1995) offers the gift of *Dadirri* to non-Aboriginal Australians. She describes *Dadirri* as:

“... inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. *Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call ‘contemplation’. When I experience *dadirri*, I am made whole again ... I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need for words. A big part of *dadirra* is listening. Through the years we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by ... the stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. The contemplative
way of dadirri spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again (pp. 179/180).

These are the elements inherent in Indigenous culture that promote, restore and maintain health and wellbeing. As counsellors who might be invited into the lives of Indigenous people, we need to develop this understanding and open ourselves to ‘otherness’ without trying to ‘fix’ what is unfamiliar. To have endured for so long indicates these Indigenous knowledge systems are both functional and adaptive in their content, and health-promoting in their goals.

9.3 Pathways to a Brighter Future

Developing pathways to a brighter future is not an easy task. As Greville (2000) notes:

Creating an education program which offers equal opportunities to compete in the mainstream while giving due attention to things that are considered important from an Indigenous point of view creates turbulence. Turbulence makes the search to understand what is ‘appropriate’ and what is ‘equitable’, what is ‘education for the mainstream’ and what is ‘education for cultural transmission’ a tricky task, because the criteria for these judgements are context-specific and shifting (p. 96).
Zembylas (2008) highlights even more challenging realities advising that far from being a vehicle for developing understanding and reconciliation:

… educational practices are used to create nationalist subjects, and eliminate discussions on shameful acts of the past such as atrocities and violations of human rights... systematic efforts are undertaken in curriculum development and pedagogical practices to implore students to remember the pride brought to a nation-state by the leaders and warriors who defended its lands and values... past glories are highlighted while shameful actions are erased... students ... are repeatedly reminded what it means to belong to an ethnic or racial group by reasserting certain values, principles of patriotic responsibility and moral conceptions of right and wrong... political struggles on national identity are struggles for recognition... The assumption here is that positive recognition is achieved only through pride politics; there is no room for considering shame in these debates... To struggle for recognition is to struggle for a picture untarnished (p. 264).

So, how can counsellors, teachers, and policy makers decide what is appropriate, equitable and inclusive within a system designed for participation in work, and pride in nationhood? How can this system enable students as ‘becoming adults’ to develop advocacy skills for social and political change? How can children be prepared for inclusion into powerful discourses while at the same time become equipped to challenge their very validity, protect their cultural heritage, and faithfully maintain their traditions?
Zembylas (2008) suggests a shift in how ‘shame’ is viewed may be central to addressing such dilemmas. He believes if the dichotomy between shame-as-bad and pride-as-good can be transcended, it may be possible to explore the constructive, productive qualities of shame in a way that will aid reconciliation and enrich our society. The concept of shame and its use by Aboriginal English speakers, however, is broader than the one encapsulated in the non-Aboriginal definition of the word (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). In the Aboriginal sense of the word, Vallance & Tchacos, (2001) advise:

*Shame* has resonances of being singled out so that the individual is unduly the focus of attention, of the inexplicable, of deep feelings for which there are no words, a fear of trespassing across boundaries that may be sacred, a sense of being powerless and ineffectual. *Shame* is clearly not the same as the dictionary definition of the term in English usage (p. 7).

The Macquarie Dictionary (1991) defines shame as “… the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonourable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another.” Vallance and Tchacos (2001), however, advise, that in Aboriginal terms, shame is not:

… a single feeling but rather it is a set or group of feelings. It does not arise from a sense of an act by oneself or another, more it comes about due to attention or circumstances… *shame* engulfs one and disempowers and arises, in some real sense, from outside oneself… *shame* results in silence and lack of power. *Shame* is a form of
social control that directly targets personal dignity… it is more than emotion… Shame is linked to the importance of kinship ties and the extended family and is one of the most painful and powerful experiences for Aboriginals… the deepest feeling of heart and gut, something that wells up from within, and must be acknowledged beyond the rationality of logic or arguable fact (p. 7).

Within a therapeutic context, the concept of shame also goes beyond that which is captured by the dictionary definition. Teyber and McClure (2011) describe “toxic” or “core shame” as “… a total or all-encompassing feeling about one’s Self” (p. 137). They advise:

To suffer shame is to feel that the true self with all of its defects is exposed, naked, and vulnerable to the damaging judgement or criticism of others… clients may be without words to communicate their experience when they are suffering a profound shame reaction… A full-blown shame reaction is agonizing to suffer… (p. 137).

Teyber and McClure (2011) also differentiate between ‘internal and external shame’. Those who struggle with external shame are concerned about how they exist in the minds and opinions of others, while those with internal shame hold a devaluing and self-critical focus on themselves. Each individual is believed to have the capacity to experience both shame types concurrently.

Central to the role of counselling is the counsellor’s ability to help clients resolve negative symptoms of ‘shame-proneness’ (Teyber & McClure, 2011). Change in the dynamic
occurs when, through a compassionate, non-judgemental approach, the client is supported and encouraged to develop empathy and understanding for themselves, and the debilitating position in which they find themselves. In this therapeutic role, counsellors may be ideally positioned to offer a ‘cultural bridge’ for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to explore, contain and constructively address damaging shame dynamics, and any cultural taboos that may impede potential opportunities for healing.

Zembylas (2008) describes political struggles on national identity as struggles for recognition - recognition that past injustices occurred, and still continue to shape the present. If current political and cultural values of shame can be rehabilitated to a point where shame can be used to create openings conducive to constructive self-criticism and self-reflection, “… shame and dignity can be intertwined” (Zembylas, 2008, p. 267), in ways that promote cultural solidarity. Counselling and educational discourses that tackle the political and educational uses of shame will empower counsellors, educators, and their students to add a significant dimension to contemporary discussions in intercultural education, and true recognition of the need for genuine reconciliation.

Some factors Greville (2000) believes could assist in this process include:

A rich and diverse student base; existing, well articulated cross-cultural perspectives; multiple discourses informing the curriculum which will allow for multiple critical positions; a ‘practitioner role’ which incorporates the concept of change-agent and cultural broker; a group of staff who are willing to experiment and work collaboratively to develop new curriculum initiatives and transform their own practice; a staff culture of commitment to looking for possibilities for change (p. 96).
9.4 Summary of Findings

There is no such thing as a neutral education (Shaull, 1996). Keeffe (1992) highlights what he terms “… a clash in meanings between the common understanding of education as socially beneficial, offering equality of opportunity, and education as socially harmful, reproducing and even creating inequality” (p. 5), while Sykes (1986) advises “Education, which can be such a liberating force, is being used as a means of destruction of the basic essence of Aboriginal people – more surely than the gun” (p. 55).

It would seem positive results from a programme of education can only be achieved when an Indigenous view of the world is respected; otherwise it remains a powerful form of cultural invasion. Ways in which Indigenous people have the right to be Indigenous people within the complexity of Western structures need to be accommodated rather than suppressed. Education can become the most important strategy for achieving realistic self-determination for the Indigenous peoples of Australian, not as a method of producing an anglicised Aboriginal but rather, in the words of Sykes (1986):

… as an instrument for creating an informed community, with intellectual and technological skills, in harmony with our own cultural values and identity. We wish to be Aboriginal citizens in a changing Australia (p. 33).

Inherent to health and wellbeing is the ability of each cultural group to exert individual choice over those components of ethnicity and modernity they wish to embrace. Health and wellbeing is found in exerting that choice. We can transform our world and create new possibilities. We can create a story that tells of acceptance and tolerance rather
than cultural appropriation - a shared story of two cultures living side by side. The role counsellors play in this process will be dependent on their ability to ‘hold the space’ for the Indigenous client to constructively examine the truth of their lives, the direction and decisions they have taken, and decide whether these correlate with their desires and aspirations.

Chapter 10 will examine how an optimal counselling approach and foundation may be developed, which will enable counsellors to effectively ‘hold the space’ for their Indigenous clients.
Developing an Optimal Counselling Approach and Foundation

The aim of this research study was to enhance the counselling profession’s ability to develop an approach to counselling with Indigenous students that would enable the therapeutic relationship to strengthen the social, psychological, emotional wellbeing, and educational attainment of our current and future Indigenous students. From a sacred perspective, it is beyond the parameters of cultural sensitivity to present a predetermined approach to working with Indigenous people in the counselling setting. It is, however, appropriate within academic parameters to provide the reader with a firm foundation for developing, in collaboration with the Indigenous client, a mutually respectful therapeutic relationship.

Counselling is increasingly being regarded as an ‘interpersonal process’ (Teyber & McClure, 2011). The counsellor seeks to develop a therapeutic alliance with their clients which promotes a ‘helping relationship’ (Egan, 2010). The therapeutic alliance consists of factors such as openness, congruence, transparency, genuineness, and respect on the part of the counsellor towards the client. The counsellor should always be motivated to respond to the client’s needs and this, in most situations, refers to how the client defines his or her need. The therapeutic alliance relates directly to the particularity of the client’s situation. Indigenous Australians occupy a unique place in this country as Australia’s First Peoples. Their stories deserve particular attention. A counsellor’s duty of care requires an approach that values the uniqueness of these needs. Critical to the capacity to ‘value’ is the ability to understand, and to feel and express empathy. Egan (2010) refers to this ability as “social
radar” (p. 45) through which the counsellor can sense the feelings and perspectives of others and be actively interested in their concerns. Valuing and respecting any aspect of contemporary Indigenous life involves a keen understanding of the impact of colonisation in Australia. It also requires counsellors to engage in a journey of de-colonisation. Such a journey will take many of us as counsellors through two mindscapes, two worlds. De-colonisation is not a simple process. Managing its complexity requires personal, professional, and social introspection, and commitment to change.

Burgess (quoted in Muller, 2007) has developed a five-stage de-colonisation approach which is considered to support this de-colonisation process. The stages identified are: Rediscovery and Recovery; Mourning; Dreaming; Commitment, and Action. In this concluding chapter, the structure of Burgess’ ‘Five Stage Model’ will be used to explore how cultural, professional, and academic sensitivities and tensions might effectively be managed in this process of de-colonisation. Elements of Egan’s (2010) ‘Skilled Helper Model’ will also be utilised to enhance the counsellor’s ability to develop an optimally constructive, ‘helpful’ approach to Indigenous clients.

10.1 The Burgess Five Stage Model

10.1.1 Stage 1 - Rediscovery and Recovery

This first stage is referred to by Muller (2007) as a “… foundation phase” (p. 6). It offers an invitation to counsellors to:
... understand and acknowledge the process of colonisation and to collaborate in the de-
colonisation process with Indigenous people. For those who profess social justice and
human rights as central to the ethics of their profession, de-colonisation offers a
pathway to honouring these commitments and provides a framework of de-constructing
the curse of colonisation (Muller, 2007, p. 6).

The past is always in the present. It is only by understanding the past that we become more
able to critique the present, and actively shape the future. To effectively promote the health
and wellbeing of Indigenous clients, counsellors need to comprehensively understand the
historical and contemporary contexts and perspectives regarding the nature of Australian
colonisation (Chapters 1-5).

As a profession, we need to fully acknowledge historic truths in a way that enables
counsellor and client to regard history as offering opportunity and hope, not determinism.
The counselling profession is not solely about addressing pathology, weakness or damage.
It also involves identifying and developing unused potential, strengths, and opportunities
(Egan, 2010). As Dudgeon (2000) notes, a positive understanding of history will enable
Indigenous students to be proud of the resilience and strength of their people, their history,
and their heritage. In similar manner, the counsellor will benefit from engaging with the
Indigenous student at this level of story. This willingness will involve the counsellor within
the embrace of the Aboriginal story. It will not be sufficient for the counsellor to merely
become an external spectator, viewing the Aboriginal world from a safe distance. Rather, as
the Aboriginal student must journey with feet in two cultural and traditional worlds, so too
must the counsellor if he or she is to accept the invitation to enter the Aboriginal world with
sensitivity, respect, and genuine positive regard.
The concept of resilience applies not only to an invulnerability to stress, it also enhances adaptation to stress and change in healthy and constructive ways (Garvey, 2007). Indigenous people continue to face challenges in how they achieve personal and cultural persistence in a changing world. An honest and inclusive knowledge of history could establish a renewed, invigorated sense of identity for both Indigenous, and non-Indigenous Australians (Muller, 2007). The constructive energy arising from such a paradigm shift, could (therapeutically, at the very least) be channelled into resolving many of the negative issues regarding identity highlighted in Chapter 2. When the non-Indigenous counsellor listens without judgment and encourages self-determination and self-direction in their client, when they are willing to walk within the two worlds of the Aboriginal experience, then that counsellor is truly living out in practice all that the profession of counselling demands in terms of genuine regard and empathy.

10.1.2 Rediscovering Counselling and the Power of Story

Counselling, historically, has been complicit in the processes of colonisation and assimilation, and remains (largely) a white, class-based activity, where constructions of personhood and identity are drawn from culturally familiar norms. Chomsky (2012) advises “Historical amnesia is a very dangerous phenomenon, not only because it undermines moral and intellectual integrity, but also because it lays the groundwork for crimes that lie ahead” (p. 149). Acknowledging and owning this complicit history may help counsellors avoid making the mistakes of the past, and enable us to move forward towards new inclusive approaches based on mutual respect and learning.
To be effective ‘helpers’, counsellors need to fully understand the ways in which discourse patterns of our society privilege ‘white’ authority (Chapter 4). Engaging in a journey of de-colonisation will require counsellors to gain a heightened awareness of the role played by psychological theory, practice and research according to the part played by these constructs in supporting European cultural domination in Australia (Chapter 5).

McLeod (1997) believes stories and storytelling present the primary points of connection between what goes on in counselling and what goes on in culture as a whole. He remains unconvinced, however, as to whether counselling, in its current form, can provide the means for people to tell the stories they need to tell, and in the ways they need to tell them. Although each counsellor brings to their work a repertoire of personal experiences and values, their theoretical perspective, traditionally, has evolved through an educational system that places little value on stories. Rediscovering the power of ‘story’, learning to apply hermeneutic, postmodern modes of understanding which challenge the notion of ‘privileged discourse’, appears essential to the task of becoming ‘skilled helpers’ (Chapter 5). Story takes us into other worlds of language and knowing in ways that can transform us. Stories are media of knowledge. To access that knowledge, however, rhetorical or pedagogical questions (commonly used in traditional counselling) need to be replaced by therapeutic questions that welcome many possible answers, thus encouraging the evolution of new personal realities, new agency and meaning. Here the role of the counsellor takes on a style that allows them to provide an authentic audience to clients, enabling their story to be both told and heard. The counsellor sits side by side with the Aboriginal person, hears the many stories of that person, and waits to be welcomed into the midst of these stories as a fellow traveller, not knowing where the journey will lead or end, but trusting the other to guide the counsellor with confidence.
Who we are in relation to others in the world and how they define us are central questions. How, as counsellors, can we help establish a sense of place, connection and relationship within the contemporary and diverse lives of Indigenous students? The questions - Who am I? What am I to do? can only be answered by first considering the question: In what story or stories do I find myself a part? As McLeod (1997) advises:

The task of being a person in a culture involves creating a satisfactory–enough alignment between individual experiences and ‘the story’ of which I find myself a part. The job of the therapist is to help the person to do this, particularly at times of crisis or conflict when the alignment has been lost (p. 27).

The significance of life stories and storytelling is well documented in Indigenous literature. Stories are also to be found at the heart of any therapeutic encounter. Storytelling remained a constant in an Indigenous world. Now storytelling has been rediscovered in the world of Western style psychology and counselling, as an essence of healing and hope for the future (Chapter 5).

Counselling is a process in which a client comes to share, and then re-author an individual life story or personal narrative. The counselling experience is a process of telling and re-telling stories. The central task of the counsellor is to facilitate the telling of client’s stories, to help them make meaning of them by finding patterns within them and giving them a voice. Issues relating to ‘voice’, ‘visibility’, ‘silence’ and ‘invisibility’ need to be addressed. If the story is not heard, the counsellor and the client are deprived of the most effective and mutually involving mode of discourse open to them.
10.1.3 Stage 2 - Mourning:

The process of de-colonisation will require more than passing a law to remove oppression, or highlighting the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge. It will require a massive shift in understanding, and a new way of seeing the world which will inevitably “… unsettle the settler” (Costa & Clark, 2011, p. 332). Past and current wrongs need to be addressed, and issues relating to grief and loss, acknowledged. We may experience and express feelings of anger and injustice. Such expression hopefully, will lead us to question how we might create a different future (Chapter 4).

10.1.4 Stage 3 - Dreaming:

Dreaming involves imagining a better future for all Australians, and planning how this can be achieved. Through this process, hope may be established, enabling progress to be made towards a more socially just society - one in which critique and possibility strengthen values of freedom and equality (Chapter 3). According to Muller (2007), the dreaming stage is crucial for imagining a de-colonised future. A future that is inclusive, based on respect and connectedness, requires considerable and collective planning.

10.1.5 Stage 4 - Commitment:

Emerging from the dreaming phase provides the opportunity to move towards the type of society we wish to create. According to Corey (2006), the paradoxical theory of change holds that change tends to occur when we become aware of “… what we are, as opposed to trying to become what we are not. The more we attempt to deny some aspect of our being, the more we remain the same” (p. 5). Change becomes possible when we accept who we are, and
commit to working towards achieving who we want to become. When we embrace a vision, does this embrace not allow us to acknowledge and understand “… both our collective and disparate pasts and our possible and potential futures?” (Mathur, 2011, p. 8) (Chapter 4).

10.1.6 Stage 5 - Action

The ‘current picture’ is transformed into the ‘preferred picture’ (Egan, 2010).

10.2 Conclusion

In this research, the stories of the Indigenous participants have implications for current approaches to the provision of academic education, as well as how counsellors engage in their work with Indigenous people. Indigenous children today experience the same issues as those raised by the Indigenous participants in this study. Their journeys are steeped in complex ambivalence: tales of gain and loss. Action taken must ensure their experience of gain is increased and expanded, while their experience of loss is reduced and repaired. Central to the counsellor’s ability to form a meaningful therapeutic alliance with their Indigenous clients will be their ability to develop reflective competency in and respect for the distinct and diverse nature of Indigenous cultural identity and experience (Chapter 9). There is a difference between knowledge and declarative knowledge, with declarative knowledge being what can be shared and understood. There may be a need here for a ‘broker’. Maybe a role for Indigenous and non-Indigenous ‘brokers’, who can determine what the cultural markers are in this process, and how they can be utilised in a manner which ensures ‘best practice’. A partnership is required that seeks to develop counselling approaches which are
interventive (in dealing with the impact of harm experienced) and preventive (in avoiding possible harm occurring). A partnership such as this will be committed to genuine reconciliation, where the dominant narrative is decentred and Indigenous voices are intricately woven into the school curriculum and counselling practice. Such a partnership holds the capacity to action the ‘preferred picture’. Such a partnership will enable Indigenous students to live within two worlds, and emerge from the education system reporting a positive, holistic learning experience; elements of which have every potential to become transferable to those who walk in their footsteps.

Reflection

He pushed the buttons on his calculator. “If I divide 60,000 by 216”, said Yousef, “I get 277. Then 365 divided by 227 comes to 1.3. So, if we divide up 365 days, the Aboriginal people have been in Australia for 363 days before the white people came. The white people came about four p.m. on the 364th day and have only been here for the last part of that day and one single day!” Yousef switched off his calculator and put it in his pocket.

(Whelan, 2007, p. 160)
References


Carmody, K. (2001) This land is Mine, MusicArtsDanceFilms Pty. Ltd.


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Figure 2: Representation and key to painting

the painting refer (roughly) to the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s. During these periods different government policies of assimilation, integration, self-management and self-determination have been applied, shaping the nature of Pintupi educational experience. The painting speaks of their reactions to these changing general and educational policies and the directions for change as they see them. The particular focus of their concerns is the place of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and values in the schools of the time and for the schools of tomorrow.
and suggest the knowledge and skills of the grandparental generation. The colours also carry meaning — the red of the sand, the green of the food from the bush, the white of the salt lakes and the sometimes yellow of the spinifex. The use of the colours is bold and innovative, helping to convey the importance and optimism of the artists’ story.

The painting is in five panels, representing different periods of time, starting from the centre, and following the footsteps from the northwest (top left), to the northeast (top right), southeast (bottom right), and southwest (bottom left). It is intended to be read as a chronicle of a Pintupi journey from the past, through the present and into the future; from their land to the settlements, followed by a return to their own land. The painting has a special emphasis on their experience of schooling, and the values that they believe should be at the centre of an appropriate education. As such, it is both a historical and philosophical narrative. The journey is represented through the tracks of feet moving from one panel of the painting to another. Each panel refers to a different period of time, as explained briefly in the Pintupi text and translation accompanying the painting. From the top left, or northwest corner, and looking clockwise, the four corner sections of
APPENDIX 2


INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, (participant's name) __________________________________________ hereby agree to being a participant in the above research project.

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet about this project and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

- I understand that all information gathered by the researcher will be treated as strictly confidential.

- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT'S NAME:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCHER'S FULL NAME:</th>
<th>SUZANNE JENKINS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:</td>
<td>DATE:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0941.
APPENDIX 3

Dear potential participant,

My name is Suzanne Jenkins. I am a student at The University of Notre Dame Australia and am enrolled in a Doctorate of Counselling degree. As part of my course I am undertaking a research project.

The title of the project is ‘Indigenous Secondary Education: What implications for counsellors lie in the stories of Indigenous adults, who as children, left their home communities to attend school’.

My research concerns, through self report, the ‘lived experience’ of a sample of Indigenous adults who, as children, left their home communities to attend in schools.

The purpose of the study is to explore whether such information can be used to enhance the counselling profession’s ability to develop interventions which will strengthen the social, psychological and emotional health, wellbeing and educational attainment of current and future children and to discover if the results obtained will generate further linked research which will extend theory and practice.

Participants will be asked to take part in a 60 minute tape-recorded interview, in a location suitable for the participant. Follow up interviews will be arranged at the request of the researcher or the participant, to enable the participant to fully complete their story. Information collected during the interview will be strictly confidential. You will be offered a transcript of the interview, and I would be grateful if you would comment on whether you believe we have captured your experience. If there is any part of the transcript you do not wish to be included in the analysis, simple put a line through this section and it will be excluded.

Before the interview I will ask you to sign a consent form. You may withdraw from the project at any time.

Data collected will be stored securely according to University policy for five years. No identifying information will be used and the results from the study will be made freely available to all participants.

Due to the sensitive nature of this issue, the interview may raise some difficult feelings for you. If this happens I will make sure that support is available for you if you desire it. You will provided with relevant counselling information at the interview and contacted by the researcher one week afterwards.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Notre Dame Australia has approved this study.

Dr Gerard Stoyles, from the University of Wollongong is supervising the project. If you have any queries regarding the research, please contact Dr Stoyles (stoyles@uow.edu.au), or myself directly by phone (08) 9433 0220 or by email at sjenkins@nd.edu.au

I thank you for your consideration and hope you will agree to participate in this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Suzanne Jenkins

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively, to the Provost, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0941.