

**The development of the culture
of non-Aboriginal government workers
in remote Aboriginal settlements
in Central Australia.**

**By
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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

The successes and failures of interventions to close the disadvantage gap for remote Aboriginal communities have been well documented but the role of the non-Indigenous advisers tasked with carrying out those interventions has remained obscure. This study explores the development of the culture of non-Indigenous government staff living and working in remote Aboriginal settlements in Central Australia in the 1960s and early 1970s. Elements of Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology and its methods were used to analyse interviews of a representative group of workers. Three core themes were identified: *Confronting disconnectedness*, *Finding our own space within the institution*, and *We formed a new social framework*. Further analysis led to a descriptive narrative that incorporated personal characteristics, social processes, reactions to ambiguous governance structures, and the creation of a new social structure. From this analysis, three propositions can be drawn: (1) Remote communities with an absence of governance structures attracted workers characterised by a preference for autonomy and self-organisation, workers who sought difference, meaning and adventure. (2) Remote Aboriginal settlements with inadequate governance structures resulted, paradoxically, in social connectedness being contingent on the ability to maintain and navigate distance from other people. (3) The stronger the governance structures, the more cohesive the group. This led to less need for external networking, which, in turn, lessened the likelihood that remote workers would be influenced by other external factors. The relationship between the strength of governance structures and the workers' personal characteristics determined how, and with whom, non-Indigenous workers formed meaningful connections. Conclusions: The ongoing heterarchical network – an unranked collective of absent, unclear or frequently changing hierarchies - that is

identified in this thesis, would likely benefit from the development of a national peak body which could aggregate and maintain an organisational structure, and formalise training and the maintenance of professional standards of workers in remote settlements.

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Originality and copyright statement

I, Penelope Joan Bergen, hereby declare that this work, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Charles Darwin University and the Australian National University, is my own, original work, and that, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penelope Bergen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Penelope Bergen

January 2020

Ethical considerations

Consent was derived from each participant as required by the ethics approval given to me by the Charles Darwin University Human Ethics Committee (approval number H15001 on 2 February 2015) (see **Appendix A**) to conduct studies.

The interviewees all agreed to be identified for this research and were clearly informed about the focus of this study. All participants were given consent forms and plain language statements. Most chose to give verbal approval to be interviewed and to have their interviews recorded for transcription and analysis. One participant could not be reached in person due to time limitations and distance, and so chose to give written answers to the formal list of questions.

While the participants agreed to be identified, there were points in two interviews with different people where the recorders were turned off at the participant's request in order to discuss something they did not wish to make public. In transcribing the interviews, it also became clear that some of the information that was being recorded would have to be treated with some delicacy. As it is not the intention of this thesis to embarrass, shame, libel, or otherwise hurt any individual I have therefore chosen to change the names of the participants for privacy reasons. All the participants know each other, they are easily identifiable to each other due to their positions and the times and places in which they worked. Therefore, where potentially contentious or divisive comments may have been made, all attempts have been made to conceal the origins of the comments.

Names of other workers not included in this study are identified by their initials only. Where a sample of interview is displayed verbatim, for the sake of brevity, the name of the participant is represented by their first name initial and the interviewer is represented by the letter Q for questioner. Personal quotes and comments are used to illustrate the formation of codes and further discussion of the concepts and issues raised by the participants. None of the participants were paid for their time. Their involvement was purely voluntary.

Glossary

The following is a list of terms that are central to the writing of this thesis. They are presented in alphabetical order, not in order of importance or appearance.

ASOPA

The Australian School of Pacific Administration opened in 1945. It was originally part of the Duntroon Military College in Canberra, Australia, but was transferred a year later to Georges Heights, and later, to Middle Head in Sydney where it became a civil institution. The school was responsible for training schoolteachers and patrol officers who were sent to Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory (Jackson 2018).

Blackfella and whitefella

The terms whitefella and blackfella are commonly used in the Northern Territory and across Central Australian borders today. They were used throughout the interviews by the participants for this research to name and describe two distinct cultures.

Simply, 'Blackfella' means a person with the law and language of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group. 'Whitefella' means anyone (Australian born or immigrant) who is not Aboriginal. These terms are used sparingly, and are interchangeable with 'non-Indigenous', 'remote worker', 'Indigenous and Aboriginal', and 'Aboriginal settlers', where appropriate. The term 'Aboriginal' rather than 'Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander' will be used in this thesis because, to the best of my knowledge and that of the participants, no Torres Strait Islanders

were living in the remote settlements during the decade in which the experiences discussed by the participants took place. No names of Aboriginal people will be mentioned in this thesis. In this thesis the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ are used wherever the indigenous language or cultural group is not clear. As there were mixed language groups in most remote communities, this thesis errs on the side of caution by using the general terminology rather than specifying “Pitjantjatjara” or “Yankunytjatjara” etc. Where there is no doubt, the language name will be used.

Central Australia

Central Australia was a separate state in its own right from 1927 to 1931, and as a recognisable region bound by the borders of Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and the Tropic of Capricorn, it will be referred to in this thesis as a proper noun with both words capitalised. The central town in the region is Alice Springs, in what is now the Northern Territory. For the purposes of this study, and for the sake of brevity, the name Central Australia also incorporates settlements in areas where Aboriginal language groups cross borders by up to about 300 kilometres in South Australia and Western Australia.

Culture

Culture is always difficult to define, and it is pointless trying to define ‘culture’ as a general, philosophical term (Goldstein 1957). Therefore, for the purposes of this research, I am relying on the Useem and Useem (1963) definition of ‘the learned and shared behaviour of a community of interacting human beings’ (Useem and Useem 1963, p. 169). The term culture will be used to denote a ‘social heritage’ (Useem

1971, p. 5). It is in defining the phenomena of specific cultures that we define behaviours; the culture of a workplace, community or family provides individuals with a reference point from which they view their entire experience of the world. In a workplace setting, culture can also be a determinant of performance and productivity (Tooby and Cosmides 1995). Culture does not refer to statistical descriptions of overt behaviour, but rather to ‘the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them’ (Goodenough 1957 p. 167).

This research does not, therefore, look at the essential nature of culture, as it would provide little assistance in defining the space in which this research is focused. Rather, it would be more productive to ascertain the specifics of the social space relevant to this inquiry.

Remote and mainstream Australia

The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses an index of remoteness known as the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) which measures remoteness according to ‘a point based on the physical road distance to the nearest town or service centre in each of five population size classes’. Within the Australian Geographical Classification (ASGC) the ASGC defines six ‘remoteness areas’:

1. Major cities of Australia
2. Inner Regional Australia
3. Outer Regional Australia
4. Remote Australia
5. Very Remote Australia

6. Migratory (offshore and shipping)

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018).

The areas under study here are very remote, but for ease of reading will be referred to as remote for the most part. ‘Mainstream’ here refers to areas 1, 2 and 3. The term ‘mainstream’ refers to the culture and discourses of Australians who do not live in Central Australia’s arid zones, deserts, remote or very remote areas as defined within Australian Geographical Classification (ASGC).

Settlements and communities

A ‘remote community’ is a term used in Central Australia (and other parts of remote Australia) to name what were referred to as ‘settlements’ in the era being researched here. When discussing the 1960s and early 1970s I will employ the language of the day and refer to them as settlements. While these settlements are gazetted today, they are not referred to as towns, townships, or villages, but as ‘communities’. When referring to the contemporary space I will refer to them as communities to distinguish between past and present.

Sojourner

This term is used on occasion in this thesis to describe individuals who work outside their own culture, with or within another host culture for the purposes of what is referred to contemporarily as community development or capacity building. This term is not commonly used in the Australian setting to refer to those working in remote Aboriginal settlements or communities. I have chosen to use this term because it is commonly used in research carried out on foreign workers outside

Australia (Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000; Sussman, 2002). Sojourners often work with non-governmental organisations, as governmental advisers, with the United Nations Development Program and other United Nations programs, with the World Bank, USAID, etc. Sojourners in other similar situations may also play a role in human rights observation and evaluation. Within Australia, they work in remote Aboriginal communities. The term sojourner is indicative of the transient nature of the role of remote workers and the development sector in general. They are not immigrants and the majority do not settle permanently in one community.

The State

This research relies on Heywood's (2013) definition of the state as a 'political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders, and exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions' (Heywood 2013, p. 57). The state is the 'body politic' (Heywood 2013, p. 57). Scott (1998) exemplifies the use of the word in his book *Seeing like a State* (Scott 1998), referring to the nation-state – combining the political and the cultural. Unless specifying a state within Australia, such as South Australia, Western Australia etc. or making comparisons between the political provinces within Australia such as 'territory or state borders', the term state will refer to the nation state of Australia.

‘Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.’

Clifford Geertz

Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1

Introduction and background of this study

Much has been said and written about the successes and failures of interventions into Aboriginal communities, from the missionary days to the stolen generations, to the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response, ‘The Intervention’ (Altman and Hinkson 2012) and policies around closing the gap of Indigenous disadvantage. However, a part of those interventions that has always remained obscure is the role played by non-Indigenous advisers who carried out government policies or interventions. The socio-political and professional space that those individuals inhabited for decades in Central Australia, continues to go unacknowledged (Batty 2005). If future Indigenous policy is going to have a chance to learn from the past, and if the historical intersection of white and black is going to have a chance to inform current and future sociological discourses, part of those successes must lie in examining this past and undefined sector. Tracing the development of the culture of non-Indigenous remote workers may help to develop an understanding of what has happened in that space so that what continues to happen there can be better understood.

The non-Indigenous people working in this region in the 1960s and early 1970s were neither the pioneers who facilitated first contact with very remote Aboriginal people, nor were they part of an entrenched bureaucracy such as is the case today. While not, strictly speaking, ‘development workers’ or ‘international aid workers’ – a concept which had yet to develop in the late 1960s and early 1970s, – the closest category

into which the type of work non-Indigenous people in remote settlements carry out is ‘development’ or ‘aid’. Up until recently, tropes and discourses around remote non-Indigenous workers relied on stereotypes of the three ems: ‘mercenaries, missionaries or misfits’ (Schulz 2017; Mahood 2012; Kowal 2011). These are stereotypes used by development workers across the globe (Beedell 2016; Martyna and Munroe 2011; Stirrat 2008; Warah 2008) so they do not specify or differentiate between, remote non-Aboriginal workers and development or aid workers in India, Timor, South Sudan, or any other developing nation. By categorising this phenomenon in a more nuanced way, this thesis develops an understanding of the social organisation of this remote sector. This may, in turn, identify problems to be further researched, named and solved (Murray Li 2007).

1.2

The scope of this study

This research does not look at the narratives of Indigenous people or Aboriginal cultural development. It does not focus on improvement schemes, improvement policies, relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal subjectivity, or the rationale of the will to improve in the development sector. This is not a history thesis or an ethnography. That would involve a distinct methodological framework, different theories and a different approach, which would entirely change the focus of this study. This study takes the stance that the position held by non-Indigenous remote workers was one of inherent power and privilege due to their whiteness under colonial assimilation policies, and during a time of institutionalised racism under the White Australia Policy (Immigration Restriction Act 1901 (Cth)). However, this is not a critique of the non-Indigenous experience as seen from the

eyes of Indigenous observers, nor does it need to be. It would be equally valid to conduct an examination of the Aboriginal point of view alone. Such a study, however, would have involved a separate ethics proposal. It would have required fluent speakers of several Aboriginal languages who could find suitable participants to interview, transcribe, translate and code the interviews in a similar manner to this thesis. Limits on time, finances and linguistic expertise meant that this study focused solely on the adaptation process of the non-Indigenous government workers. This is an exploration of how non-Indigenous government workers interpret their own experiences of that time and place, and how they adapted to the circumstances in which they found themselves.

There were (and remain) two groups of people living in remote Aboriginal settlements: Newly settled Aboriginal people, and non-Aboriginal people who were there as agents of the state to manage the settlements and ‘train’ Aboriginal people as part of federal assimilation policies. By examining this past space, it is hoped that this thesis will reveal the complexities involved in the development of the culture of this historical group of remote workers and will contribute to the shaping of this sector’s future. The ultimate goal is to enable these workers to have more effective engagement with Aboriginal communities, and also with each other.

This research focuses on participants who committed to a minimum of three years in remote settlements. Most of the participants lived and worked in one main area along the tri-state border region (see this chapter, **1.2.2 The tri-state border region**), within a ten-year period from 1964 to 1974. One of the participants lived in another remote settlement west of Alice Springs until 1963 but has been included for his

extensive knowledge and personal profile (see **Chapter Three: Methods 3.12 Second round of interviews** and **3.13 Tony Mackey**), and one participant provided the perspective of a remote worker who was based in Alice Springs, but frequented remote settlements at the time (see **Chapter Three: Methods 3.12 Second round of interviews** and **3.15 Duncan Karsten**). These extra interviews were carried out according to the tenets of data collection and analysis of the methodology for this research – Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 1995; Bryant and Charmaz 2007) (see **Chapter Two: Methodology and Research Design** and **Chapter Three: Methods**).

1.2.1 The time frame

This research focuses on the ten-year period from 1964 to 1974, the time that two of the key contributing participants in this research spent living in the region. One participant from the second round of interviews (see **Chapter Three: Methods 3.12 Second round of interviews**) was present in Central Australia slightly earlier, from 1958 to 1963. In this period, national Indigenous policy transitioned from assimilation to integration to self-management. It was a pivotal decade in the history of very remote Australia (Edward 2014; Batty 2005).

It is important to understand that Australia as a nation state (having federated in 1901) was still in its infancy at the end of World War Two, as were policies regarding Aboriginal Affairs. It was not until the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act in 1942 that the Australian parliament was given legislative (and therefore, ultimately, judicial) independence from the British parliament. It is no surprise then

that influences on the government's approach to remote Aboriginal settlements in the 1950s and 1960s were borrowed from elsewhere. The Commonwealth government's approach to remote Aboriginal Australia was based on the example set by British nationalism (Jenkins 2002) and the British Colonial Service in its African colonies (Long 1992).

The predecessor to the remote government worker was the patrol officer service, introduced in Australia's Northern Territory in 1936. While inspired by British field officers in Africa, the patrol officer service was modelled on the service of the 'military administration' of Papua New Guinea after World War Two, to the point of simply replacing place names in documents and training manuals (Long 1992).

Patrol officer training was transferred to civilian administration by 1947 and became the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) (Jackson 2014). In 1954 ASOPA began training schoolteachers who would be sent to Papua New Guinea and Australia's Northern Territory.

From 1964 to 1974, the *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964* overrode the 1953 Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance in which the word 'Aborigine' or 'Aboriginal' was never mentioned but which legislated a level of control over the lives of Aboriginal people that 'abridged' their rights and curtailed their autonomy to a 'demeaning and derogatory' degree (McGregor 2005, p. 521-522). The new Social Welfare Ordinance provided for the welfare of Aboriginal people in the same manner as other members of the community (National Archives of Australia 2016). This led to the development of the commonwealth's 'formal role in Aboriginal affairs' (Hope 1984, p. 243), particularly after the 1967 referendum which saw two discriminatory

statements against Aboriginal people removed from the Australian constitution. The beginning of the end of this overtly colonial period was marked in 1974, when the last of the (ASOPA-trained patrol officers was sent to the Northern Territory.

1.2.2

The tri-state border region

It was during the Second World War that ration depots (and, inadvertently, the foundations for the growth of Alice Springs and more remote Indigenous settlements) were established in Central Australia to protect and separate ‘semi-civilised natives’ from “considerable danger” and to avoid the “wholesale movement of the native population at this critical time” (Northern Territory Welfare Branch 1960/61). These protectionist motives were framed within a colonial paternalism and an overt need to control both movement and, therefore, behaviours.

A strong influence on the government’s decision-making in Indigenous Affairs in Central Australia during this time came from ‘down south’, in the form of lobby groups and interest groups, as well as individual personalities (Long 1992). Action was demanded when news of conflicts became known, advocating for the protection and preservation of Aboriginal culture.

‘... The sequence goes something like this: scandals in the North, followed by alarm in the southern capitals about stories of what was going on ‘up North’. Thus, events in Cape York alarmed the growing and increasingly prosperous populations in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1880s, and led to new initiatives in dealing with Aboriginal people,

including the introduction of legislation to control and improve the situation', (Long 1992, p. 6).

The initial push from 'down South', which resulted in the creation of the department of the Native Affairs Branch, continued its momentum. The Commonwealth Government ignored a critical report on Australia's administration of Papua New Guinea by the United Nations visiting mission, Sir Hugh Foot, to the Trusteeship Council (1962). Foot damned the lack of handover to Indigenous Papua New Guineans in administrative roles and was critical of the lack of higher education for Papua New Guineans. At the same time, in the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth Government was fortifying the very approach that had just been critiqued in Papua New Guinea. The only key change was in the role of the patrol officer. The changing nature of the service meant that those roles were starting to be filled by individuals trained for specific professions: nurses, anthropologists, teachers and administrators. And they were coming from all over Australia, having been trained at whichever local tertiary establishment suited their needs (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).

The tri-state border region was the last region in Central Australia where Aboriginal people were being settled after 30,000 to 50,000 years of nomadic existence in the region (Kimber 2014). This corresponded, perhaps symbiotically, with the watershed period in which policies in the Northern Territory changed from assimilation, to integration, to self-determination. It was a time of rapid change, a time during which

the seeds of today's non-Indigenous roles and culture in remote settlements were sown.

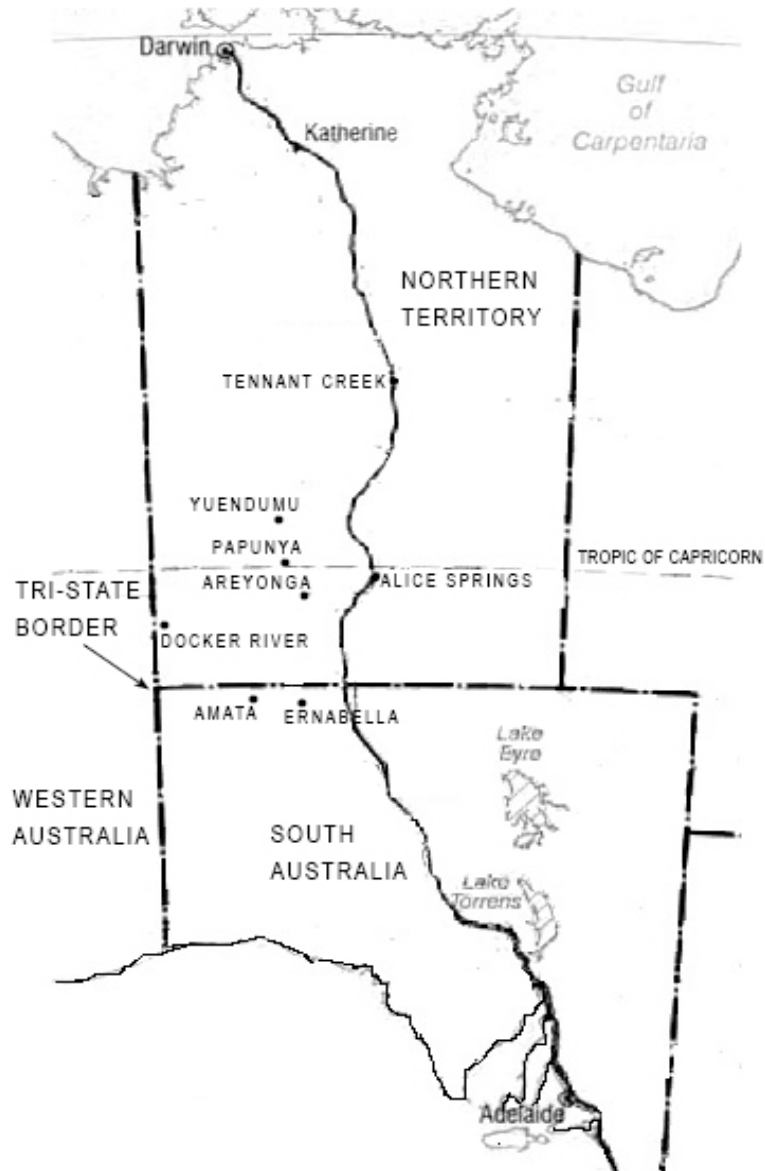


Figure 1.1
State and Territory boundaries and settlement placement

1.3 **The settlements**

The following section will provide a brief sketch of each of the main settlements in which the participants in this research worked. One of these settlements was a

Presbyterian mission. This mission is included here as it serves as an important comparison with the governance structures of other settlements for three of the participants.

1.3.1 Amata

The first settlement in which the first participants for this research lived and worked was Amata, a small settlement in the far north-west of South Australia, about 115 kilometres south of Uluru (formerly Ayers Rock), close to the Northern Territory border (see map above **1.2.2 The tri-state border region**). Amata (then called Musgrave Park), was first settled by six Aboriginal families from Ernabella at the behest of the South Australian government (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). This new settlement was meant to relieve some of the growing population pressure at the Ernabella mission further east. At the start of 1964, the Aboriginal population of about 250 people lived in *wiltjas* (lean-tos made of branches and other found coverings) near the foot of the northern side of the Musgrave Ranges.

In 1964 the non-Aboriginal population consisted of the cattle overseer and his wife and young son, a nurse, and a remote area nurse who was rarely present, spending the bulk of her time travelling to remote outstations and cattle stations to attend to the health needs of Aboriginal people. There were three buildings: a superintendent's house, the cattle overseer's house and the health clinic in which the nurse also lived. There was no school, and no other facilities beyond the three houses including the clinic and a store, which was a small shed. In the second half of 1964 when the first two participants for this research arrived, there was no superintendent, and no other

administration of any kind in the settlement. Remote workers in this community were on their own. The only communication with the outside world was a two-way radio situated in the (then empty) superintendent's house.

Amata was meant to serve as a training ground for Aboriginal men to work in the cattle industry – despite the fact that cattle stations preferred to train their own men. Not a single man from Amata ever went to work on a cattle station (Telford, B, interview, March 21, 2015). In 2016, according to Census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018), Amata had a population of 455 people, 45 of whom were non-Aboriginal.

1.3.2 Ernabella

The second settlement where the first two participants for this research went to live and work was Ernabella (now called Pukatja). It is about an hour further east of Amata, also in South Australia. Ernabella was set up as a Presbyterian mission as a response to the concerns of Adelaide surgeon, Dr Charles Duguid, a well-known Aboriginal rights campaigner of the time (Edwards 2008). The mission ran from 1937 to 1974 (Pybus 2012).

The superintendent at the time the participants for this research were in the region was Bill Edwards. He was a scholar, Pitjantjatjara translator and missionary, who was there from 1958 until 1972. This was a settlement with a clear humanitarian, practical and evangelistic mandate (Pybus 2012), a clear church hierarchy and strong, committed, long-term leadership. All permanent missionary staff were

required to learn Pitjantjatjara (Sheppard 2004). The staff at Ernabella were given as much supervision, professional support and guidance as their superintendent could provide.

The Aboriginal population from 1962 to 1974 was ‘between 300 and 400’ (Pybus 2012, p. 26), with many more Aboriginal people from the region making use of the mission on an as-needs basis at this time. In the 1960s the number of non-Indigenous workers there was between seven (Sheppard 2004) and sixteen (Edwards 2011). This number would increase slightly in the 1960s. In the 2016 census, the Aboriginal population numbered 412 and the non-Indigenous population numbered 85.

1.3.3 Papunya

In the 1950s, many bores were sunk in and around the region west of Alice Springs. This allowed those living in the area to access water without having to move in to a central settlement (Long 1989). Papunya, which lies about 250km west of Alice Springs, was initially the site for a bore and rations depot. However, after a prolonged dry spell in the 1950s, settlement by Aboriginal people began there in earnest and Papunya became a settlement in 1958/1959 (Long 1992). Many Pintubi people emigrated from the Western Desert to the Papunya area during this time. As Long (1989) says of the emigration process,

‘The decision to leave traditional country which the Pintubi and their neighbours to the south in the Petermann Ranges took were consistent with a tradition of opportunist exploitation of resources when and where

they appeared. It was not a helpless ‘drift’ but a series of highly motivated and purposeful moves’, (Long 1989, p. 40).

Long cites an emigrant from the Petermann Ranges, saying ‘we were like perishing bullocks rushing to a waterhole’ (Long 1989, p. 40). Both Long (1992) and Pybus (2012) dismiss ‘the coercion thesis’, saying it represents ‘a distortion or misreading of the evidence in the historical record’ (Long 1989) and ‘allows no room for Aboriginal initiative’ (Long 1989, p. 40), where ‘even the most superficial examination of the process reveals Aboriginal people as active participants, as people making choices and decisions about their lives, rather than as helpless victims’ (Long 1989, p. 13).

Between 1962 and 1966 the population of Papunya was about 800 (Long 1989). The non-Indigenous population was between 30 and 50, depending on sources. Long says they were the last and the worst years of the dry spell before rain fell in the summer of 1966/67. It was proving to be extremely difficult to fill patrol officer positions (see this chapter **1.4 Historical context**) for the remote settlements in this region, with less than half the positions filled in 1962 (Long 1989). By 1968 there were ‘about 30 whitefellas’ (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) living and working in the settlement, with up to fourteen working at the school at any one time. The non-Indigenous men and women were housed in shared, single-sex accommodation. The Aboriginal people, a population comprised largely of Warlpiri, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara and Pintubi people, many of whom had recently emigrated from the Western Desert, ‘all lived in “humpies”’ (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The governance structures of Papunya included a superintendent and administrative staff. The style of leadership and management has been described as excessively institutionalised and colonial (Bardon and Bardon 2004; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Regimented violence between the different language groups was a daily occurrence. The superintendent was also known for drunken violence (Bardon and Bardon 2004; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

1.3.4 Areyonga

Areyonga sits in a narrow and spectacular valley between towering cliffs about 220 kilometres west of Alice Springs. It was settled by Aboriginal people who had been living at the Hermannsburg mission, 130 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The Hermannsburg mission had been set up in 1877. It was after a prolonged dry spell in the 1920s that Pitjantjatjara people from the Petermann Ranges (near the tri-state border region of Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia) headed north-east to the mission at Hermannsburg, before settling in Areyonga.

A Lutheran mission was established in the settlement in the 1940s. That mission closed in the 1990s. In 1968, the settlement had an Aboriginal population of 'about 100' (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015) and by halfway through 1969 the population was about 300-350 (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). There were between fifteen and twenty non-Aboriginal staff in Areyonga between 1968 and 1972. It was the third settlement lived in by two of the participants for this research, Joan and Brian Telford. The missionary presence was still strong in the settlement at this time.

The settlement had a school in 1969, houses for the non-Indigenous staff, a mechanic's workshops, a clinic and offices for government administration. As in the other settlements, the Aboriginal population lived in *wiltjas* at a distance from the staff housing. According to 2016 Census data, Areyonga had a population that year of 195, of whom twenty were non-Indigenous.

1.3.5 Docker River

Docker River, now called Kaltukatjara, was the fourth community lived in by the first set of participants who would end up spending ten years in Central Australia from 1964 to 1974. Docker River in the 1970s had one house which was for the manager. The settlement was not deemed large enough for a superintendent. There were seven non-Indigenous staff who all had to live in caravans or 'silver bullets' (transportable caravan-like housing). Like Papunya, it was initially set up as a ration depot and the population grew exponentially once the depot was established. By 1970, the settlement had a high staff turnover in a community of about 250 settled Aboriginal people, plus visitors from Western Australia.

The Commonwealth government wanted Docker River, like Amata, to become a training ground for the cattle industry, and to that end employed a cattle overseer. There were never any cattle there, however, due to an environmental report recommending against it (Telford, interview, March 21, 2015).

1.3.6 Yuendumu

Yuendumu was originally set up as a ration depot, like Docker River and Papunya, but in 1947 the settlement was established as a Baptist mission (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). By the late 1950s and early 1960s when the participant for this research was superintendent there, the Aboriginal population of Yuendumu was ‘about one thousand’ while the non-Indigenous population was ‘less than ten’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Yuendumu was known as a ‘model community’ for its self-sufficiency and community order (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015). According to the 2016 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018), Yuendumu had a total population of 759 people, 107 of whom were non-Indigenous.

1.4 The participants

The participants for this research were all people who spent a minimum of three years living and working in remote Central Australia in the decade before self-determination policies in Aboriginal Affairs were introduced in 1972. I deliberately chose people who had had a long-term relationship with the region in the hope that they would have a comprehensive understanding of their place within the history of this space, be able to verbalise their understandings and observations and contribute in-depth self-reflection. One couple (see **Chapter Three: Methods** for more details on all the participants) have lived and worked in a total of twenty-six remote Aboriginal communities spanning over fifty years. Their experience saw them adjust to many settlements across state and territory borders. In South Australia they lived

in Amata, Ernabella (Pukatja), Watarru, Pipalyatjara and Kalka, all in the far north of the state. In the Northern Territory in Central Australia, they lived in Areyonga, Docker River (Kaltukatjara), and Kintore (Walungurru). Their extensive experience, longevity and knowledge of this whole region has been invaluable to this research. They took me on a week-long trip across the entire region, to every settlement they had worked in and with which they still maintain strong relationships.

According to the participants, remote non-Indigenous staff were employed by the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, and in the Northern Territory, they were employed by the Department of the Interior (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Karsten, interviews, July 16, 2015). Three of the participants for this research lived at Amata at the same time – two from 1964 until 1967 (Brian Telford and Joan Telford nee Taylor), the third arriving in 1966 (Bill Stoddart). All three participants from Amata would end up living and working in Ernabella (Joan and Brian Telford, and Bill Stoddart). The Telfords were there for just under two years across 1967/69, and the third participant went to Ernabella in a voluntary capacity in 1971.

Five of the participants for this research lived and/or worked in Papunya at different points in time. The Burstons arrived separately and lived there in 1968-1969. Linda Burston had done her teacher training at ASOPA in Sydney. Keith Burston had done his teacher training in Victoria. Leon Parsons lived there in the early 1970s as an assistant superintendent, having trained at ASOPA. Nurse Joan Telford had a short sojourn in the settlement in 1966 when extra nurses were required during a disease

outbreak during her first ten years in Central Australia, and Tony Mackey spent time there and knew the settlement well during his time based at Yuendumu. A sixth participant (Duncan Karsten) spent time working there in the early 1970s.

Five of the participants for this research, including the first four participants in the data gathering process (the Telfords and the Burstons), went on to live and work in Areyonga in 1969. Leon Parsons also lived and worked in Areyonga at about the same time, prior to moving to Papunya.

The Telfords went from Amata in South Australia to Ernabella, then Areyonga in the Northern Territory and then Docker River further west near the Western Australian border, where they lived for about five years. They subsequently lived in a Western Australian settlement for a short time. Tony Mackey lived in Yuendumu for about five years from 1958. He trained for one year at the Australia School of Pacific Administration prior to becoming the Northern Territory's youngest superintendent at the age of 26.

Obviously, not everyone who went to work in these remote settlements had the intention of staying long-term or of showing any interest above and beyond a short-term work contract. Not everyone left a legacy of positive relationships behind them. Some people took to criminal behaviour, and took advantage of their remoteness, leaving destruction in their wake. And many people, well-intentioned or not, did not have the personality traits or the understanding needed to be able to function with positive results. No individual is a saint. Every person who went to remote settlements would have made mistakes, professional and personal. The question here

is not about the intentions, the kindness or the workplace results produced by any individual. Neither is it holding any one individual above another as a picture of some kind of virtue against which all must be held.

At the beginning of this study, I wanted to get a broad picture of who these workers were and how they fitted into broader Australian discourses at the time. I did an extensive search through National Archives and at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, looking for stories. I looked through newspapers and news journals of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. There are stories of the pioneers who set up cattle stations; of schoolgirls going on bus trips to remote Uluru; of policy makers, and of the Aboriginal people who had just made first contact with European Australians. There are stories about atomic bomb testing and even stories of tourists from abroad working their way around the world, stopping to work at Uluru on the way. There were small community notices in New South Wales regional areas or Victoria, announcing talks by somebody who had visited Central Australia. There is the occasional story about the difficulties faced by missionaries. But nowhere was there a story about the individuals employed by the government, donning their sensible shoes and heading off to the remotest reaches of the driest continent on earth to implement a remaking of an entire society of people. The most striking thing about this group of remote workers – some of whom were and are remarkable people with extraordinary tales to tell - is that they were, and remain, largely, invisible.

1.4.1 Researcher's positioning

I am a white, middle class, educated, cisgender Dutch and Australian woman. I am also an immigrant several times over and a Third Culture Kid. I am part of a 1% world-wide minority in being a redheaded, blue-eyed, fair-skinned person who grew up in a country with a large majority Indigenous population – Papua New Guinea – and a country with a small minority Indigenous population - Australia. I have spent my life moving from country to country, ever the observer, never wanting to admit I was also a participant. In 2005 I went to live and work in Timor Leste. I was making radio documentaries for Radio Netherlands World Service which had a dedicated program for reports on human rights and development issues around the world. I was eventually offered a media training position working for the United Nations Development Program in Timor's capital city, Dili. It was in Timor Leste that I started to review my place in the world, constantly asking in my personal journals 'what are we [non-Indigenous workers] doing here'? I returned to Australia in 2007 after ten years living overseas and took a media job in remote Central Australia. I was expecting my experience to be similar to the one I had had in Timor Leste. It was not.

'There are three societies in remote Aboriginal communities: There's blackfellas; there's whitefellas and there's camp dogs' (Baarda W, interview, March 14, 2008). This is a quote from a non-Indigenous woman who had lived in a remote Aboriginal community for about thirty years at the time. Her decades of observations resonated with my own relatively short experience. The culture of non-Indigenous staff was completely different to Timor Leste and I became curious as to why. Not long after I

moved to Alice Springs, a friend from Timor asked me what those differences were. I found it hard to explain, as there were many similarities regarding the type of work I had done in both countries. I determined then that I would investigate the origins of this space to be able to answer the question and find out what the underlying causes were for the differences between these two groups of non-Indigenous sojourners.

In light of the ‘three societies’ I made a seven-part radio series on camp dogs for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation the year after I left that community. Due to my own positioning as a white, European Australian with an experience of non-Indigenous culture in more contemporary remote communities I cannot make presumptions about the Aboriginal experience or the Aboriginal gaze, so I am now researching the only other of those ‘three societies’ that I feel qualified to research. I wanted to explore the nature of the adaptation process of the part of this cultural and social setting that is within my own realm of experience. But even with the participants of this research, I am not of their time, so I cannot view their experience of 1960s remote Central Australia with the eyes of somebody brought up in colonial and post-colonial Papua New Guinea and Australia. Because I have worked in remote communities in Central Australia, was brought up as Third Culture Kid by Third Culture Adults in Papua New Guinea, and worked in the development sector in Timor Leste, I am acutely aware that I have an affinity with the type of environments under question in this research, and direct experiences and relationships with people who live in remote communities and have worked or continue to work in remote communities. I also have an awareness of my discomfort around examining these spaces and these people for that same reason. This research could be very confronting. However, as a person who has spent their life living and

working in in-between spaces, my curiosity was piqued as to the contributing factors that made one culture of workers so different to the other. By doing this research, I will be able to give my friend in Timor an answer.

1.5 Aims of this research

This project will examine the development of the culture of remote non-Indigenous workers in the decade from 1964 until 1974, by analysing interviews with remote workers from the time frame in question, and by framing it within its general social context. The aim of this research is to fill the gaps in that history and define this ambiguous space in which these white staff members worked. In completing this thesis, four goals will be achieved:

- To find out what the key cultural features of the non-Indigenous worker community in remote Central Australian Aboriginal settlements were.
- To define that culture by examining the group's characteristics and the contexts in which they worked.
- To see if there is a theory that might be relevant to supporting further inquiry into the contemporary space now occupied by new generations of remote workers.
- To preserve the stories and experiences of those who contributed to settlement development in the tri-state border region during the decade in question.

1.5.1

Research questions

The research questions are:

- How did the characteristics of this group develop?
- What were the factors that defined remote workers as a group?
- In trying to account for the culture of this group, is there a theory that describes and explains the development of the culture of this sector that might be relevant to supporting further inquiry into the contemporary space?

It is hoped that this research will contribute to literature on the cultural adaptation of remote workers and differentiations between this group of remote workers and any other in the development or government sectors. It is also hoped that it will contribute to furthering the research of those working in the international aid and development sector as well as to further study of workers in remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia.

1.5.2

Expectations

Expectations about what would be found via this research included a broad picture of life within Aboriginal settlements for the non-Aboriginal workers who lived and worked there and how the culture of this group could be accounted for. This research probed memories, experiences, and the knowledge of this group of workers, and in doing so provided the potential for defining the origins of the ‘whitefella’ culture in which they worked - and within which non-Indigenous people in remote settlements continue to work to this day. Having had personal experience of working in remote

communities in the contemporary era, my perceptions would naturally be shaped by the process of striving to understand this culture. The process taught me that any ontological assumptions I may have had – would be false. The application of the findings of this study is expected to be primarily for Aboriginal Australian communities, secondarily for those working in international aid settings, and may potentially have implications for other remote or isolated workers in various settings.

1.6 Literature review

In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), Glaser and Strauss stress that the most effective strategy in a grounded theory study is ‘to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 37) in order not to ‘contaminate’ the emerging concepts. But, as Urquhart (2007) says, there is no reason why a researcher cannot or should not have an awareness of existing knowledge in their field of study, and of themselves and their own knowledge, without feeling ‘trapped in the view that it represents the final truth in the area’ (Urquhart 2007, p. 351). Proponents of Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology do not suggest that the researcher is a tabula rasa, rather, that the methodology emphasises the researcher’s positioning (see this chapter **1.7 Brief overview of methodology and methods** and **Chapter Two: Methodology research and design**). The aim of this literature review is to orient this study in a general set of contexts and histories, thus taking the first step in increasing sensitivity to the generation of theory. This section presents a brief overview of relevant key literature on comparable non-Indigenous and/or isolated workers in Australia and around the world. Much literature was collected, evaluated and ultimately selected for this

review. It was unclear what the data would hold at this point of the research so the focus was to look for literature in which non-Indigenous workers in remote and or isolated small group settings in Indigenous settlements (in which I include those working in the development sector as sojourners in developing countries), and other small groups settings in the most remote and isolated places on earth (the Arctic regions) wrote about their experiences in a manner that may correspond with the types of interviews I was planning to do. What sort of social and professional experiences did they have? How did their experience of their social setting change over time? What, if any threads, connect all these narratives. Literature will also play an important part in the discussion and rendering of the grounded theory.

1.6.1 Missionaries

There are two main points made by literature on missions or missionaries in Central Australia set in the same time frame as this research. The first is a refutation of the coercion thesis regarding Aboriginal peoples' movement towards Christian mission settlements. Pybus's *We grew up in this place: Ernabella Mission 1937 – 1974* (2012) focuses on the autonomy and agency of the Pitjantjatjara in their relationship with the Ernabella mission. Bill Edwards (former superintendent, scholar, Pitjantjatjara translator and missionary) also focuses on a similar theme in many of his papers, such as *Missiology and Australian Aboriginal Missions: A Personal Journey* and *A Personal Journey with Anangu History and Politics* (Edwards 2008). The second main point of research on missionaries in Central Australia includes a focus on conversion, whether physical, cultural or spiritual but there is little

literature, such as in Trudinger's *Converting salvation: protestant missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s* (2004).

1.6.2

Personal histories

There are a number of autobiographical and historical accounts of those who worked in Central Australia and other parts of remote Australia within this time frame. The personal accounts tend to recount experiences with Aboriginal culture, the patrol officers, and/or the behaviours of others in remote settings. But few do much to advance any thoughtful theories on the dynamics and development of the culture of this place and time. They tend to focus purely on subjective personal experience, and/or a purely historical timeline of events.

A well-known case of a personal history is that of schoolteacher Geoffrey Bardon, written after he found himself the instigator of the Papunya Tula art movement. In his description of the beginnings of that movement (Bardon and Bardon 2004), Bardon recounts his thoughts on the reaction of some of the other non-Indigenous workers in Papunya to his relationships with the Aboriginal men of the settlement:

‘I was to understand very clearly and all at once that I was also challenging and seemingly setting aside, even dismantling, the assumptions of racial superiority which had given comfort to many of the mediocre, venal or mentally unstable white people of Papunya’, (Bardon and Bardon 2004, p. 38).

These are harsh words, used to describe his peers. He describes his own relationship building as ‘a fierce struggle for the men and me in disciplining the paintings and without interfering with or changing their souls’ (Bardon and Bardon 2004, p. 39).

He also talks about his first experience with the administrators of Papunya as a bunch of ‘drunken, foul-mouthed, violent men’. However, a description of Bardon by a participant for this research described Mr Bardon, who did not normally drink, in a similar fashion (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). Bardon only lightly touches on the nature of his experience with non-Aboriginal culture in Papunya in his book, even though it led to his mental breakdown and subsequent hospitalisation in Melbourne.

Other examples include MacLeod’s *Patrol in the Dreamtime* (2003) a personal account of his experience as a patrol officer and welfare officer in Central Australia and the Top End in the 1950s. It has an overall tone of remembering, looking at past actions, and distancing from, or maintaining a belief in the policies of the past through a lens of youthful exuberance and a thirst for adventure; Gray’s *The Protectors* (2011), a linear history of administrators, and patrol officers, also driven by the personal narrative of the writer; and a slim volume entitled *Sojourn on another planet* by Nancy Sheppard, a teacher at the Ernabella Mission in South Australia from 1955 until 1964. Her account does, to some extent, enlighten the reader regarding the type of culture she came from, moved into and then navigated in her years as a teacher in the far north of South Australia.

A historical account of the patrol officer service in the Northern Territory is presented in Long’s (1992) history of patrol officers in the Northern Territory, *The Go-Betweens*. This is a comprehensive history of the Patrol Officer service which sent Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) – trained officers initially to Papua New Guinea but then also to Australia’s other Territory at the time, the

Northern Territory. While Long goes into great detail and has a great depth of knowledge of the service, he does not cover the culture of the subsequent group of remote staff. He does describe the difficulty of recruiting ‘mature people’ (Long 1992, p. 162) to the service in 1968 and the reality of the shortage of staff in remote communities at the time.

1.6.3 Contemporary literature

The main points of contemporary literature on non-Indigenous workers in remote communities in Australia include a focus on the difficulties of professional isolation. Whittle (2013) explored the norms of the task-oriented, individualistic non-Indigenous culture reflected in workers in contemporary, remote communities. Relationships with Aboriginal people were shown as difficult to establish, partly due to the constant negotiation of cross-cultural values, and partly due to the high turnover of non-Indigenous staff. Lea’s *Bureaucrats and bleeding hearts: Indigenous health in northern Australia* (2008) is an examination of ‘government officers in the helping services’ (Lea 2008, p. 7) which focuses on the helpers and how they resolve the contradictions in their position – a position in which they are either ‘invisible or to blame’ (Lea 2008, p. 8). Bain’s *White Men are Liars* (2005) suggests that these are not communities in the Western sense but rather, a mere aggregation of various groups brought together under past pressure of Western settlement making it ‘difficult to apply good principles of community development in such situations’, (Bain 2005, p. 37).

Mahood's (2012) essay *Kartiya are like Toyotas: White workers on Australia's cultural frontier*, is a deeply insightful piece about the process of constant negotiation required of remote workers in a constantly changing social environment. The essay highlights the importance of, and the strain within relationships of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and the conflict that can occur among non-Aboriginal people. Mahood's essay offers rare insight into the attitudes of non-Indigenous workers and the daily challenges they face.

Another main point in contemporary literature on non-Indigenous workers in remote communities in Australia is a focus on whiteness and post-colonialism. The challenges of working within Aboriginal cultures are discussed in Schulz's 2007 paper *Inside the Contract Zone: White Teachers in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands*. Schulz focuses on middle and upper class 'whiteness' and the privileges that result from it, putting forward the thesis that whiteness is itself prohibitive in developing relationships with or working within Aboriginal cultures; Emma Kowal's *Trapped in the Gap: Doing good in Indigenous Australia* (2015) also elaborates on the contemporary space where terms like 'self-determination' and 'post-colonial' appear to be the backbone of a new culture of what Kowal refers to as 'anti-racists'.

The third main point in contemporary literature on non-Indigenous workers in remote communities in Australia is on interculturality and/or Aboriginal subjectivity in traditional anthropological studies. Zohl dé Ishtar's *Holding Yawulyu: White Culture & Black Women's Law* (2016) is an ethnographic focus on the Aboriginal perspective but it does display the complexities of that intercultural space. Hinkson

and Smith (2005) refer to the ‘(as yet unnamed) intercultural’ in ethnographic studies around the ‘Aboriginal side of the relationship’ (Hinkson and Smith 2005, p. 159) with white Australia, and point out that the focus up until that point has been, largely, on Aboriginal subjectivity. Merlan, an anthropologist, (1998) focuses on the interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory town of Katherine and, as Hinkson said it best: ‘Seeks to extend the intercultural to saturate the entire field of cultural production’ (Hinkson and Smith 2005 p. 161). Rowse (1992) refers to the ‘Aboriginal domain’, a term which is used widely used and which may occasionally be used in this thesis. Nakata (2008) refers to the interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal as the ‘cultural interface’ – the intersection of western knowledge systems with Indigenous culture (Nakata 2008, p 8) - between the ‘institution’ and the Aboriginal people. Batty (2005) also discusses the complex relationships between remote Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Central Australia. Batty describes the ‘more-or-less permanent administrative class of “white advisers”’ (Batty 2005, p. 215). This is a space where ‘ambiguity and obscurity have become vital tools in the operation of state rule’ (Batty 2005, p. 216). He cites Foucault, stating that ‘power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms’ (Foucault 1976, p. 86). ‘As a consequence,’ he continues, ‘the position and role of this non-Aboriginal administrative class has continued to occupy an ambiguous space in order to remain effective’. These advisers, he states, occupy a space of ‘official “invisibility”’ (Batty 2005, p. 216).

1.6.4

Canada, United States and New Zealand

Literature on North American Indigenous settlements reveals two fundamental differences to Central Australian remote Aboriginal settlements. Firstly, the time frame for the colonial development of Indigenous settlements in some North American sites was significantly earlier in the Americas than in Central Australia, where first contact is within living memory. Sites in far western Canada are the exception. Secondly, white agents did not, for the most part, live in groups on Indigenous reservations, so the context for the culture among non-Indigenous residents was remarkably different.

Dorais studied the history of an Inuit community on the Hudson Strait on the northern coast of Quebec: *Quaqtaq: Modernity and Identity in an Inuit Community* (1997) but missed an opportunity to study the 'transient population of seven' non-Indigenous workers who visited the settlement regularly. Braroe's 'Indian & White' (1975) details the life of a band of Cree Indians in western Canada and the historical settlement of white people in the area. According to Braroe (1975) non-Indigenous workers were seldom seen on the reserve. Indian agents (the go-betweens for the Federal Indian Affairs Branch) and nurses would visit about three times per year, but they did not live on the reserve. He does discuss the 'moral universe' of the interaction between Indian and White but there is nothing about the interaction between the non-Indigenous workers and nothing that reveals the 'universe' inhabited by the white workers who did occasionally visit the Indigenous communities. Similarly, Lithman's 1984 book *The Community Apart* looks at the plains Indians of Manitoba, but the developing culture of non-Indigenous people is

limited to the visiting Indian agent, farming lessees and interactions in nearby European townships. Van den Brink's (1974) history of the Haida on the west coast and Carsten's *The Queen's People* (1991), which includes the Lilloet and Shuswap regions of the Rocky Mountains, describe much the same arrangement. There were non-Indigenous towns near the Indian reservations but no permanent non-Indigenous staff on the reservations themselves. Newcomb's (1966) *Navaho Neighbors*, similarly discusses one non-Indigenous teacher at a boarding school for Indians close to a Navaho reserve. But the permanent staff of non-Indigenous people on Aboriginal reserves is not present there in the way that develops in Central Australia.

New Zealand had its early European travellers and explorers (Taylor 1959) and there is literature on the expeditions of surveyors, missionaries, prospectors and the like. European settlers published narratives of their search for suitable land for settlement (Heaphy 1842). But New Zealand, unlike remote Central Australia, Canada and the United States is geographically small, its Indigenous groups therefore less isolated from each other in comparison to Central Australia and its first non-Indigenous settlers moved to the nation as permanent immigrants, not as sojourners in the manner of those being interviewed for this research who were part of a larger government push to manage new remote Aboriginal settlements. For the first non-Indigenous settlers of New Zealand, the trip to the other side of the world was one that offered opportunity for the likes of the miners, the weavers, the hop pickers, the domestic servants, the "knitters and fisher folk" (Phillips 2013). This situation is not comparable with those interviewed for this thesis, who did not go to the remotest reaches of their own country of birth (or adoption in the case of one participant) for the purposes of improving their social standing or carving out professional

opportunities. They were heading to new, permanent Aboriginal settlements on Aboriginal reservations, far from opportunity and far from the social world from which they had come. Their social standing in remote Aboriginal settlements became something altogether different. One thing these two very different groups of Europeans seem to have in common, however, is that, as with the social development of the group of people under study here, New Zealanders only relatively recently began to explore exactly who their early immigrants were (Phillips 2013).

1.6.5 Papua New Guinea

People who lived and worked in Papua New Guinea as employees of the Australian Commonwealth government in the decade before Papua New Guinean independence recount personal memoirs, such as Radford's *Singsings, Sutures & Sorcery* (2012) – a personal memoir of over fifty years working in the country. There are the permanent old hands of the colonial years, such as in *Australians in Papua New Guinea 1960 to 1975* (Spark, Spark and Twomey 2014), including interviews with the likes of Anthony and Robin Radford, Dame Carol Kidu, and Dame Meg Taylor. This book includes an introduction by the then Premier of Tasmania, Lara Giddings. In it she sums up the attitudes that prevailed in Papua New Guinea, attitudes that were very similar to those in Central Australia in the same time period:

‘My parents discuss how foreigners approached living and working in another people’s country. Some respected the cultural difference and were fascinated to learn about another society, while others wanted to be part of some colonial past, ringing bells for house boys or girls to meet

their needs. In order to progress, it is important to know your past',
(Giddings 2014, p. 10).

1.6.6 The development sector

Much of the work we know about policies and how they affect remote workers comes from literature on the aid and development sector. The main arguments tend to be about policy development and the subsequent ambiguity regarding the role of development workers. Mosse's *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice* (2005) focuses on international aid and development. Murray Li's (2007) study, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*, (2007) again provides insight into development practice and ideas around the remaking of remote communities. In Warah's *Mercenaries, Missionaries and Misfits: An anthology* (2008), the key finding was that the fundamental problem with planned settlements and development in general is that results do not matter (Warah 2008). Similarly, Dichter (2003), noted complex bureaucracy as one of the key reasons the development sector struggled to produce positive results.

1.6.7 The Arctic, Antarctic and *Lord of the Flies*

Literature on remote workers in the Arctic regions reveals a lot about the psychology of small groups in isolation, although much of the literature until recently, has focused on military personnel. The main points of literature on remote workers in the

Arctic regions are about the adjustment to remote living in small groups and with varying types of leadership/governance.

Eibert & Glaser, (1959), *The Differences Between Well and Poorly Adjusted Groups in an Isolated Environment*) found that selecting the right individuals, familiarisation with the environment and the right group structure and management could 'mitigate any undesirable effects of isolated living' - but that more study was needed.

Gunderson and Orvik's (1963), *Personal History Correlates of Military Performance at a Large Antarctic Station* also found that 'military experience was consistently predictive of satisfactory performance in the Antarctic setting, regardless of station size' (Gunderson and Orvik 1963, p. 5). Thus, experience and rank were key contributors to positive performance. They also found that:

'...the large station was a more open and normal society for Navy men than the smaller stations which were characterised by close, confined living, very limited recreational facilities, and an egalitarian social structure. It seemed plausible that intense or idiosyncratic personal needs and behaviours might have different consequences in these different type of isolated communities', (Gunderson and Orvik 1963, p. 5).

In more contemporary literature, there is more of a focus on anxiety and stress levels of isolated workers. Mocellin et al's (2000) *Levels of Anxiety in Polar Environments* concluded that the environment was not a contributor to stress levels in either the Arctic or the Antarctic, regardless of nationality. Personnel were chosen for their job skills, not their personalities. One thing that did seem to make a difference was prior experience in isolated situations. They concluded, however, that environmental stress

should be investigated through a different conceptual starting point – namely ‘interaction effects-experiences within settings.’ In that sense, this research is looking at the social group as a whole within their particular setting - and how they interacted. A 1989 study looking at the *Sociocultural Influences on psychosocial adjustment in Antarctica* (Palinkas 1989), found that ‘the process of social comparison which fosters group homogeneity’ also ‘generates group conflict’. Being so isolated, there are no resources to call on to deal with these situations, such as might be possible in a less isolated location. The recommendations of the study were that ‘organisation of station personnel should allow for individuals with different backgrounds to maintain some sense of status and self-control’ (Palinkas 1989, pp. 2-3).

Anxiety and deprivation leading to group ganging was a key finding for two studies by psychotherapists Canham and Wadell (Canham 2002, *Group and Gang States of Mind*; Wadell 2007, *Grouping or Ganging: The Psychodynamics of Bullying*). Both researchers examined the states of mind of those isolated from the structure of their dominant culture by looking at William Golding’s novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) about a group of young boys alone on a tropical island. Their conclusions were much the same: individuals and whole societies can be predisposed to group or gang states of mind depending on the presence of ‘thoughtful and considerate’ authority figures (tending towards grouping) (Canham 2002, p. 125), or anxiety and deprivation (Waddell 2007) (leading more to gang states of mind).

1.7

Brief overview of methodology and methods

The elements of the research methodology used for this project, Constructivist Grounded Theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Denzin and Lincoln 2011), sits in the qualitative interpretivist paradigm. This is not a hypothetico-deductive methodology. Grounded Theory is ‘both a method of analysis and inquiry’ (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 315) and employs a family of methods used together to emphasise theory development (Strauss and Corbin 1994) grounded in the data. The constructivist approach ‘emphasises the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant, and the co-construction of meaning’ (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2006, p. 26). It recognises that the researcher is part of the process and has the flexibility to maintain the data as a co-construction by researcher and subject, while recognising the researcher’s limitations. The researcher is not seen as an objective observer and becomes part of the research as the ‘data don’t speak for themselves’ (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, p. 38). The methods of Constructivist Grounded Theory were chosen as the methodology is designed for small-scale studies, to allow for theories to arise after engaging with the data.

The data collected includes:

Structured interviews – following a list of set questions.

Semi-structured interviews – exploring issues, themes and broad concepts.

Unstructured interviews – driven by the interviewee as topics emerged.

Documents and other texts – private and professional letters, diaries, newspaper articles, historical policies covering the states and territory in question and other official documents, films, photographs, other archival material created a board contact, background and understand of the time and places in question.

Observations – recording and interpreting the emotions of the interviewees, their mannerisms, ways of storytelling, their reactions to places and their questions.

Wider social, political and historical factors – examining the world order at the time through critiques, media, interviews, theoretical texts etc.

The research design was based on examining and analysing the narratives of a group of eight government workers living and working in the tri-state border region in the nominated time. They each fulfilled at least one of the key roles taken on by remote workers at the time in question, forming a picture of how they operated as a social and professional group. This research looks at how they interacted with each other in particular remote settings and analysed their own narratives about their perceptions and experiences. For a more detailed description, see **Chapter Two: Methodology and research design**, and **Chapter Three: Methods**.

1.7.1 Narratives, memory and myth

The question of distinguishing history, memory and myth in this study can be answered by focusing on the particulars. This will be an analysis of select participants as primary sources connected with this study. Oral narratives by those

who lived in these settlements during the decade in question, will be supplemented by documentary evidence regarding the background and known history of the time, including observations of other participants living in the region. This will include discussion of literature on similar or related concepts derived from extensive analysis of the participants' interviews.

Relying on memory to interpret the past is considered by some to be problematic. Cowlshaw (2004, p. 203) has this to say about the complexity of recording personal histories: 'It is widely acknowledged that knowledge of the past is always selective, limited, and mythic...'. But history is revisionist by its very nature. It is in remembering that people build their understanding of themselves and their place in the world (Singer and Bluck 2001). It is through remembering that a person's role in a particular place or time is cemented mentally. People make sense of their experiences, accurately or not, through the re-telling of their stories (Sheppard 2004). Accuracy as to the facts of an event or place may be verified by other sources but defining a culture or social group is all about the telling and re-telling of personal stories. That they are once-removed - through memory - from the actual period of time in question opens up great opportunities for research. The future they wish to build on will also contribute to their interpretation of the past (Collins 1981). As teacher Nancy Sheppard said of her stories about her time at South Australia's Ernabella mission in the 1950s: 'Their shape has been sculpted by my life' (Sheppard 2004). These narratives are windows into the lives of individuals who did, and continue to, create a history from their experiences. They are not 'wrong', and they are not 'inaccurate'. What they are, is revealing and, perhaps, all the more so for being told at this later stage of their lives when they can make more sense of their

overall experience and find a narrative thread running through their choices and experiences.

Engaging with memory and the gap in time between the experience and the exploring of that experience is always going to be fraught with the complexities of recall. All memories are flawed and fractured, and no one can say they have lived exemplary lives that leave behind no confusion or legacies, no matter how small, that expose personal failings. The everyday lives of these people, who were witness to an extraordinary time in extraordinary places, have not only captured a history in its imperfect re-telling, but a weight of personal involvement that scientific rigour could never capture or quantify. No one will ever be able to fully agree about what should have been, nor is there any obligation to come to some kind of conclusion about that imperfect past. But there is value in examining how the culture associated with that history may have been passed on, and how and what of the experiences of those involved are recalled.

1.7.2 Defining a culture

The memories and narratives of the participants will reveal the way decisions were made, processes were enacted, and contexts were absorbed. These are the forces that define a culture. 'Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organisational situations that derive from culture are powerful. If we don't understand the operation of these forces, we become victim of them' (Schein 2006, p. 3).

In the 1960s, there had been little or no ‘generational continuity’ (Tooby and Cosmides 1995, p. 9) or collective experience in evolutionary psychology through which to explore the nature of the culture of remote non-Indigenous workers. That being the case, the origins of the group can now be examined, some sixty years later, as the kernel of the culture that exemplifies and led to the space it is today.

The predecessors of the 1960s remote workers were the patrol officers (see this chapter **1.8 Historical context**) and before them, the missionaries. They each had their own histories and transmitted their own knowledge from one trainee to the next, imparting their own working culture. There were also pastoralists, dingo scalpers (usually men paid a bounty by the South Australian government for each scalp presented to a local representative), and other individuals such as prospectors and miners who made their way through Central Australia in the early days of its white settlement (Coppock 1999; Gara 2005; Telford, B, interview, March 12, 2015). The culture of a workplace, community or family provides individuals with a reference point from which they view their entire experience of the world. The length of time it takes to develop a culture varies. Tooby and Cosmides (1995) describe the formation of culture as follows:

‘When such inferential reconstruction becomes common enough in a group, and some representations begin to be stably re-created in sequential chains of individuals across generations, then the structure of events begins to warrant being called ‘cultural’, (Tooby and Cosmides 1995, p. 69).

As learned behaviour, transmitted by individuals, a culture can develop quickly. As soon as one new worker arrives and transmits the little they know of the work and

living arrangements they have encountered, they have experience to pass on. In looking at the origins of this space, it is fair to say that it is a culture that is being examined, rather than just the psychology of a group of disparate individuals. Those forces, phenomena of significance within the group, are not something rooted in objectivity necessarily, and therefore could and should be explored with this in mind.

This was, in a sense, a social canvas combining administrative culture and a shared 'expatriate' experience, in an extremely remote setting within host, Indigenous cultures that are alien to the dominant Anglo/European culture of mainstream Australia. The Western culture and the colonial/power positioning that the workers brought with them had to adapt and adjust along with Aboriginal people and their cultures which were also changing rapidly to accommodate a whole new set of circumstances. But they were presented with an opportunity to re-make themselves in a new image.

1.8 Arrangement of this thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. The next chapter will provide an epistemological account of Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology in much more detail. Chapter Three details the methods employed, illustrating how the data were examined. Chapter Four reveals the findings of that examination and identifies how the data were analysed. Chapter Five discusses the storyline and relevant literature to reveal the contexts and social constructs that were revealed in the findings. Chapter Six discusses the grounded theory, the three propositions that were developed from it, and the core unit of analysis and Chapter Seven evaluates the

theory, the implications and contributions to the field, validity, and provides a conclusion to the study.

Chapter Two: Methodology and research design

2.1

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to explore the questions for this research. It will provide an epistemological account for the methodology and the differences between its founding tenets and subsequent constructivist model.

Validity, strengths and limitations and other methodologies considered will also be discussed.

2.2

Grounded Theory: An epistemological account

The research methodology used for this thesis is Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). I chose this methodology because it seemed the best way to achieve the aims of this research: This is an off-shoot of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM), which is ‘both a method of inquiry and a method of analysis’ (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 313), the purpose of which, like any science, is to produce new knowledge, ‘convincing in its own right’ (Kvale 1983, p.3). Any discussion on CGT must start with its origins in GTM.

The *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, was published in 1967. It formed a combination of Glaser’s positivist, or fact-driven epistemology, based in realism, with Strauss’s qualitative research and abductive reasoning in small-scale studies at a time when there was a trend to support cultural and social studies with the rigid, ahistorical framework of structuralism (Appadurai

1986). At the same time, quantitative studies and the hard sciences continued to dictate that the only way to study a phenomenon was through precise, controllable formulas (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

There is so much knowledge and context that can be excluded in a purely quantitative (and structural or even post-structural) paradigm, particularly when researching social or cultural phenomena. As a response to the limits of quantitative or positivist research and a realist ontology, interpretivist paradigms were able to provide the characteristics needed for the creation of new knowledge in the study of social and cultural phenomena. An interpretivist approach, in the subjective search for truth requires a continuous dialogue with qualitative research. Therefore, inductive research began to engage with epistemologies and ontologies that took into consideration aspects of personality, values, context, variables, emic views, the importance of individual cases, and divergent and creative thinking (Guba and Lincoln 1994). The interpretivist axiology fits with CGT as the researcher cannot be separated from the research and so small, in-depth qualitative research fits perfectly with the proposal for this study. These characteristics make CGT the best methodology with which to explore the seemingly nebulous nature of a culture.

2.2.1

Data gathering, Qualitative Data Analysis and traditional Grounded Theory

GTM and CGT and traditional Grounded Theory (GT) are not the same as Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA). QDA usually follows a process where data are collected before analysis begins (Luckerhoff and Guillemette 2011). In contrast, all forms of Grounded Theory begin with the concurrent gathering and constant

comparative analysis of the data (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Birks and Mills 2015). This means that “data coding and memo writing begin with the very first interviews and/or field notes” (Wiener 2007, p. 301). The reason for this is that constant comparison in coding and analysing the data determines the direction of the research. The researcher generates data with and from the data source, in this case the interviewees. The interviews resulted in fieldnotes and memos, and transcriptions which were categorized and coded. While I began the process with a set of questions for the purpose of being thorough and prepared, with limited time, the interviews themselves varied greatly. Each participant responded differently to the same questions and focused on different aspects of their lives and stories. As an interviewer, it was my role to accommodate both the unique story and focus of the participant, and to corral the participant through the focus of my study in order to construct the developing theory.

Contrast this approach with a hypothetico-deductive method in ethnographic research, for example, where the researcher will examine the data using existing theoretical frameworks. The result is a speculative, deductive theory applied to empirical data and observed phenomena (Luckerhoff and Guillemette 2011). In Grounded Theory research, Glaser and Strauss (1965) inverted this process. By analysing the data as they are collected, without a theoretical framework at the beginning, the data become pieces of a puzzle, able to show the researcher what the key issues are ‘rather than to force them into preconceived categories’ (Charmaz 1995, p. 47). Each participant guided me, and I them, in different ways. It was in the concurrent analysis of the data that saturation point was reached. No researcher can know beforehand how much data they need in order to reach saturation point. A

grounded theory, then, is one that is led by and is constructed directly from the data. It is in the further analysis and discussion of what has been revealed that inductive and deductive reasoning can be employed, as in the hypothetico-deductive methodology.

According to Glaser, a lot of professionals, including researchers, could and did write what Glaser refers to as walking surveys – theories that are grounded in personal experience (Glaser 2007). He cites Goffman as a perfect example of a researcher whose methodology was, as Goffman himself called it ‘unsystematic, naturalistic observation’ (Goffman 1971, p. *xxiv*) which has major limitations (Glaser 2007). A grounded theory, however, is not speculative as it is derived from empirical observations (Dey 2007).

In response to questions of bias in qualitative methodologies, the same question can be asked of any positivist or quantitative researcher: how do we account for the bias of the subjectively formed question in the first place when it is the epistemology and ontology of individual scientists that rely on identifying patterns and relationships in their data? (Star 2007). GTM generates general theories based on social structures (Addelson 1991), developed and explained by systematic methods and processes of analysis (Charmaz 1995). The patterns that are revealed through the grounded theory must be useful to both the researcher and the people for whom the research may be relevant (Addelson 1991). Glaser and Strauss’s GT addresses both the restrictions of the quantitative approach as well as the limitations of a purely qualitative walking survey by providing a framework within which data can be examined using a family of methods. QDA employs qualitative methods such as ethnography, narrative

inquiry, phenomenology etc. Where QDA tends toward the testing of hypotheses, GT, GTM and CGT's focus is on the generation of a theory grounded in the data. Where QDA can employ any number of qualitative methods, grounded theory studies, including CGT, employ specific coding paradigms.

2.2.2

What is traditional Grounded Theory?

This section will start with what traditional Grounded Theory (GT) is not: It is not 'grand theory' or 'high-falutin' theory (Glaser 2007, p. 100). The main difference between GT and other inductive research is the emphasis on theory development (Strauss and Corbin 1994). As in family resemblances, Strauss and Corbin explained that a theory is a set of relationships that offer 'plausible explanations' of the phenomenon under study (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p. 279). As with substantive theories, GT sits between 'minor working hypotheses of everyday life and the "all-inclusive" grand theories' (Glaser and Strauss 1967, pp. 32-33).

A common preconception about GTM is to attribute its foundation to Symbolic Interactionism (SI) due to its influence on Anselm Strauss, one of the originators of the methodology (Holton 2007). But GTM, while an inductive method, is not specifically a qualitative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It can, however, take on the philosophical perspective of whichever methods are being employed and whichever, if any, theoretical frameworks may eventually emerge during theory generation and discussion – which may or may not be SI. 'Classic grounded theory can adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and ontological stance of the research' (Holton 2007 p. 269) (see this chapter, **2.4 Theoretical**

frameworks). It is the data that will determine how analysis should be constructed in any given field (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

2.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Analysis and interpretation of the data for this research was conducted using key methods of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). The core difference between the Constructivist approach and Strauss and Corbin's GT and is that CGT not only acknowledges the situational positioning of the researcher, but also emphasises the subjective relationship between researcher and subject. The early iterations of GT did not consider the researcher's position in its principles. Instead, GT sees the researcher as an impartial observer looking at objective data (Hildenbrand 2007). CGT differs from other iterations of grounded theory because constructivism 'recognises that reality is constructed by those who experience it and thus research is a process of reconstructing that reality' (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 177). It makes allowances for 'how authors interact with the data gleaned from their research' (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2006, p. 27). Charmaz (2006) sees the analyses of the data as a process of reflective, social construction. The allowance for reflexivity makes the practice of CGT innovative. Like the sorting of the data, and the writing of the text, our own points of view are not fixed or easy to pin down, rather, all these elements of the process are re-imagined concurrently and simultaneously (Barthes 1986).

What CGT does that the earlier iterations of GT do not, therefore, is acknowledge the epistemological nature of the process of the co-constructed reality between the

researcher and the participants (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2006). It allows for flexibility while still recognising the researcher's limitations. It is inevitable that, having acknowledged their own positioning, the researcher becomes part of the outcome (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2006). After all, 'data don't speak for themselves' (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, p. 38). The researcher is not a *tabula rasa*. In fact, it is the perspective of the researcher that leads to the construction of the theory through the scrutiny and abstraction of the relevant data. (Glaser and Strauss 1967 p. 3; Kelle 2005).

Co-construction between researcher and participants does not mean the researcher has to become absorbed by the world they are studying (Boyle 1994). Quite the opposite: the researcher is required to immerse themselves in the process of the constant comparison of codes and categories rather than ethnography. Prolonged and intensive participation is done as much in the coding, memo writing and categorisation process as it is in the interview process (Lee, Saunders and Goulding 2005). The constructivist approach is qualitative, post-positivist, inductive and abductive.

Another difference between CGT and earlier iterations of GTM is that CGT does not necessarily adhere to a strict GTM process; rather it allows the researcher to recognise and address individual actions, multiple realities and how these are placed within a larger social world (Charmaz 2006). On a sliding scale of positivist to ethnographic, GT and CGT sit towards opposite ends.

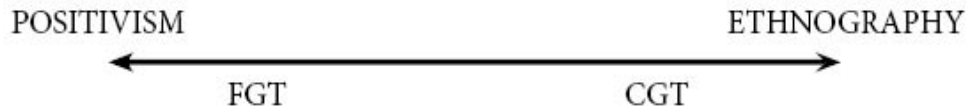


Figure 2.1
The scale of difference between GT and CGT
Source: Author’s representation of the scale of difference between (formal) grounded theory and Constructivist Grounded Theory.

But CGT does not preclude GT as a fundamental part of its methods and procedures.

For positivists, data is simply something that is observed and noted.

(Bryant and Charmaz 2007). In CGT everything can be used as data, from interviews and observations, to published reports and personal correspondence (Goulding 1998). The analysis of the data in CGT includes non-verbalised phenomena, processes, individual voices, heterogeneities and contexts. Interpretive methodologies involve the researcher looking beyond what people say to understand the shared system of meaning we call culture (Geertz 1973). The process should be understandable and straightforward. Charmaz’s approach is that neophytes should not read the methodology as if it were the Bible, rather, as a set of guidelines to be adapted (Allen 2010; Charmaz 2006).

Part of the process of GT is referred to as “sensitising concepts” - a term, coined by sociologist Herbert Blumer (1954), in which ideas derived from the participant’s own narratives (van den Hoonaard 2008), as well as existing theories, are used by the researcher to explore the categories and concepts that begin to form the core ideas or categories of the research, to refine and develop the concepts. Blumer believed that, in order to study specific social phenomena or situations, meaningful pictures must be created through the grounding of sensitised concepts to produce relevant social

theories (Blumer 1954). Blumer acknowledges the importance of including diverse perspectives, variations, and uncertainties in the process of rendering a theory (Bryant and Charmaz 2007). We begin research with sensitizing concepts, using them to sensitize us to theory as we analyse data and do theoretical sampling. ‘We can think of categories as forming the theoretical bones of the analysis, later fleshed out by identifying and analysing in detail their various properties and relations’ (Dey 2007, p. 168). Kelle (2007) referred to sensitising concepts as ‘heuristic devices for the construction of empirically grounded categories’ (Kelle 2007, p. 208). Faulkner (2009) refers to sensitising concepts as improvising with new ideas in a spontaneous and indeterminate process. This is where a qualitative study begins (Bowen 2006). Charmaz (2003) referred to this stage of CGT as the foundation upon which the overall research sits (Charmaz 2003). Sensitising concepts fits with an inductive relativist social ontology, in contrast to the positivist approach of seeking ‘internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity’ (Bowen 2006 p. 15). What sensitising concepts do is contribute to the thick description, identifying patterns, context and relationships, and visibly contributing to the construction process of theory development.

2.3.1

Induction and abduction

A constructivist grounded theory develops through the use of various criteria and methods, referred to in GTM as a ‘family of methods’ (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, p. 11). Those methods include: data gathering, coding the data (initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding) in a process of constant comparison, memo writing and situational mapping (a visual way of exploring the complex relationships and

interactions of the elements of a social world) (Clarke 2003). The constructed theory is based on the categories and concepts that come out of the coded data. The flexibility of the family of methods that can be employed by CGT allows the theory to evolve. To summarise the process, abstract concepts and interpretations are drawn from the data to form a bigger picture (Charmaz 2006).

Induction – finding patterns or categories in data and making inferences from those patterns or categories - is part of the process of coding and theory generation in GTM. One of the other key components in this research is that of abduction.

Abduction is the intuitive process of forming hypotheses or conceptual explanations for observed data (Birks and Mills 2015; Reichertz 2007) for which a researcher can never be prepared – except to be open to surprises (Reichartz 2007).

Abductive reasoning ‘links empirical observation with imaginative interpretation’ but does so by seeking accountability through returning to the empirical world (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, p. 46). Abduction is intuitive, but it is used to form tentative hypotheses using data, which one then explores using other data. It is a process of going back-and-forth between data and a tentative hypotheses, combining inductive and deductive movement and logic.

Unlike deduction, which starts with a general concept that is proven or disproven by specific examples, GT research does not start with a premise to be proven or disproven. Induction does the opposite; it starts with specifics, which are analysed in order for broad concepts – the theory, which reveals itself through both the inductive and abductive processes – to emerge: ‘The act of reflexivity creates new thoughts

and ideas at the same time as going back over old thoughts and ideas ... That reflexive process is elusive and exhausting and often threatens to disrupt the very thing it sets out to observe” (Davies et al. 2004, p. 386).

2.3.1.1 Situational mapping

As part of this inductive and abductive process, situational mapping could be employed (see **Appendix C, Situational mapping**). As an evolving methodology, (Khaw 2012) CGT methods such as Clarke’s (2003) situational analysis or situational mapping can be used to explore ‘interviews, ethnographic, historical, visual, and other discursive materials, including multisite research’ (Clarke 2003, pp. 553-554). Where traditional GTM would have relied solely on theory generation that is grounded in action through a basic social process (BSP) (Clarke 2003), situational mapping doesn’t just focus on the action or the process, but also on the ‘situation of inquiry broadly conceived’ (Clarke 2003, p. 556). Situational mapping helps ‘to interpret the field differently and more deeply’ (Mathar 2008, section 3, para 1). Situational maps can help the researcher to sort and define the many elements emerging in the coding, from personal relationships to context, geography and history (Mathar 2008).

The rigorous process of analysing data by coding and constant comparisons provides the systematic analysis which inductive research (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton 2013) has been criticised as lacking. Using a more traditional deductive approach employed by other sciences can limit the development of theory to those theories already in

existence (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton 2013), therefore limiting the means for creating new knowledge.

The research design for this thesis was based on using these methods for the comparative examination and analysis of personal narratives and associated documentation such as letters, government documents, photographs and other relevant materials to make generalisations from which a theory that would help to answer the core questions could be generated (See **Chapter One: Introduction 1.5 Research questions** and **Chapter Three: Methods**). This technique can help explore relationships between categories (Urquhart 2007), ‘forces the researcher to consider the data in a detailed and systematic manner’ (Urquhart 2007, p. 352) and complements the coding process. Situational mapping is a practical method in the toolbox of CGT.

2.3.2

The storyline

The theory is further grounded into a storyline (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Dey 2007). This is a narrative that integrates and summarises all the core elements of the findings. The storyline is a way of combining the more positivist origins of the grounded theory methodology and coding methods, with the qualitative analysis of the intensely personal and human elements of the research. It builds a comprehensive picture of the historical, geographical and social constructs that combine to create the grounded theory of what is a human inquiry. It is the result of logical and chronological induction, to form an ‘overarching plot’ (Dey 2007, p. 185).

The storyline accommodates variations (Birks and Mills 2015) where the data and concepts have been sourced from many variables that can all be related to a conceptual or abstract narrative. It 'limits gaps' (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 116) in that the story must be structurally sound and avoid turning into fiction (Charmaz 2006). The evidence is grounded (Birks and Mills 2015) in that the narrative must be saturated and grounded by the participants' experiences. The storyline 'can be used throughout the research process, with the intent of constructing, integrating and making visible the final theory' (Birks, Mills, Francis and Chapman 2009, p. 407). It will be a narrative that begins its identification at the start of the research process.

2.3.3

Finding the core unit of analysis: the cutting point

There are various stages of comparative analysis that lead to a grounded theory within this methodology. This theory has the potential to be both substantive ('produced for the purpose of understanding a tangible phenomenon in a clearly defined situation') (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 150) and conceptually grounded (having the potential to be applied to other areas). Together with the knowledge of the researcher, the relevance of the themes that emerge, along with the memos and the constant comparison of data through this process then lead to the development of a workable theory.

The inductive CGT process means the researcher starts without a hypothesis and without a clear expectation of what will come out of the coding process. In this thesis it began with open coding of data, the sorting of the themes that came out of the interviews, line by line, categorising the data into main categories, themes or related

concepts (Holton 2007). Once the main categories emerged, selective coding began, and the categories were further refined. Through constant comparison of the categories and properties in the data, the coding process reached saturation point – the point where no new properties or themes were emerging (Holton 2007). It was after this point that theoretical codes could be explored, and concepts were further sensitised. In conjunction with the coding process, which began at the start of the interview process, memos were kept, exploring every possible hypothesis and/or theoretical level of the analysis process.

The end point of a grounded theory is what *The discovery of grounded theory* by Glaser and Strauss (1967) refers to as specifying a concept through the use of constant comparative analysis. This is the identification of one common thread, or a ‘specific unit of analysis’ (Birks and Mills, p. 25) that cuts across the main categories and is relevant to as much of the coded data as possible (Holton 2007). This common element is also referred to as the ‘cutting point’ (Gibson and Hartman 2013, p. 97). The aim of this grounded theory is to find that common unit of analysis or cutting point.

2.4

Theoretical frameworks

The nature of the inductive process means that CGT asks that the researcher start without a theoretical framework, without preconceived ideas as to what will come out of research, without a lens through which the starting premise or statement or questions are to be viewed – while simultaneously taking into account personal experiences and ideas (Hesse-Biber 2007). Starting grounded theory research

without a hypothesis allows for complete openness in the construction of any and all types of theoretical concepts throughout the analysis of the data. The strength of CGT means that any number of theoretical frameworks can emerge as relevant to the categories and concepts that themselves came from the data (see this chapter **2.2.2 What is traditional Grounded Theory?**).

2.5 Validity

As notions of validity find their origins in positivism they tend towards notions of objectivity, deduction, and facts (Golafshani 2003). In order to be relevant to a post-positivist, constructionist, inductive and abductive paradigm, notions of validity need to be redefined. By 1954 there were four ways to classify research validity: content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity, and construct validity (Wainer and Braun 2013) - the last one being a new way of evaluating qualitative research in the 1950s and 1960s. Even the positivists had to concede that extrapolation in quantitative research relies on themes or categories inferred by the researcher (Wainer and Braun 2013).

Contemporary critiques of the validity of qualitative research argue stereotypical commentaries on bias and subjectivity (see this chapter **2.2.1 Qualitative Data Analysis and traditional Grounded Theory: What's the difference?**). These standard arguments call for equally standard responses: This is qualitative, inductive and abductive research, using a constructivist and post-positivist epistemology. My own positioning in this research has been outlined in **Chapter One: Introduction 1.4.1 Researcher's positioning**.

Sparkes (2001) cites many other forms of validity not rooted in the positivist or traditional paradigms, which all lead to the question of whether or not validity is valid in a constructivist, post-positivist study. Stenbacka (2001) also claims that reliability in a naturalist, interpretive paradigm is irrelevant and that validity on its own is sufficient. But a purely anarchical approach is probably not advisable for anyone, let alone a neophyte! Criteria will be employed, regardless, to interpret the validity of this grounded theory.

Arguments about qualitative and constructivist grounded theory validity must accept that the emergent and fluid nature of investigation is driven by the area under study (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle 2001; Lincoln 1995). The success of a grounded theory study must be measured by whether or not answers are found to the questions set out by the research (Golafshani 2003). Dey (2007) explains that in grounded theory, validity concerns tend to focus on ‘the degree to which the concepts we use are meaningful ways of interpreting the data we investigate’ (Dey 2007, p. 177). As Morse stated, ‘excellent qualitative inquiry is inherently biased’ (Morse 2007, p. 234). To do good, rigorous qualitative work, Morse says, means not being impaired by cases that may obscure or confuse results. He goes on to say that qualitative researchers are not to look for average but rather, ‘optimal’ examples to study (Morse 2007, p. 234). The best way, therefore, to validate your data and your grounded theory, is to choose the strongest, best samples, the most focused demographic, the most purposefully selected candidates who have the most or the best knowledge of the subject being investigated (Morse 2007). Validity here, therefore, tends to rest on construct validity that must be well-grounded and

conceptually acute. According to Reichertz (2007) validity also lies in the ‘usefulness’ of a grounded theory obtained through an abductive process that determines its value.

In CGT the study’s validity therefore rests more on the reliability of the methods and processes employed, and how inferences and theories are formed and adequately explained. Charmaz explains that a grounded theory is evaluated on the basis of its process and the interpretive patterns and connections that are accounted for (Charmaz 2006). This research will, therefore, be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria that she lays out:

Credibility: Has the research ‘made systematic comparison between observations and between categories’? Are the links between data and analysis logical and clear enough for the reader to reach the same conclusions as the researcher?

Originality: Has constructivist grounded theory methodology been employed to present new insights? Has it provided a new conceptual understanding of the group’s context? Has it added to the limited studies on the identity of workers in this field?

Resonance: Does the theory make sense to participants and offer them insight into their world and lives? Do the categories and concepts ‘portray the fullness of the studied experience’? Can I demonstrate a sound understanding of the themes, the context and interpretations, the usefulness and the process of grounded theory generation, with self-reflexivity and thoroughness?

Usefulness: Does this research contribute positively to related studies and/or further discussion on this topic? Has the inductive and abductive theory-generation process been adequately explained in order that the ethics and usefulness of the grounded theory are supported through critical reflection?

2.6

Other methodologies considered

This research could have been carried out in a number of ways. It could have been a history thesis, in which a greater emphasis could have been placed on Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal subjectivity, policy making, missionary and other histories.

While these elements of this story are relevant, they are more contextual in the examination of the culture of the first full-time white government staff rather than the focus. The methods of CGT allow for reflexivity. It allowed me, as the researcher, to continually re-evaluate my own position throughout the research process and to adapt to the information I was receiving. As somebody who had worked in remote Aboriginal communities, I had to continuously check my own preconceptions and be in a position to remain focused on the methods at hand.

This thesis could not have been an anthropological one, as traditional empirical ethnography would involve being immersed in the contemporary situation. I had already experienced this situation as a contemporary remote worker. As a writer, I wrote about twenty-thousand words on my experience as I was going through it. My desire was not to be re-immersed in that experience again, rather, to look at it from a different angle for some clues as to how the modern culture may have developed.

Other qualitative methods considered included narrative inquiry, phenomenology, and discourse analysis. All three form a part of the methods used to examine the interviews for this research, but none were all-encompassing enough to consider using alone as a sole methodology or method. Considering the relative lack of discourses on or about the early culture of government employees in remote Aboriginal settlements in Central Australia at the time in question, and the subsequently limited discourses on the culture of the white government workers within those settlements today, adopting only discourse analysis purely from a contemporary perspective would change the focus of this research to one of comparison between today's situation, and its historical past. While discourse forms part of this research in its relevance and implications, it is not the sole focus. The linguistic and semiotic focus on discourse analysis, in defining social practices (Alvesson and Kärreman 2000) would also narrow the parameters of what needs to be a much more all-inclusive research paradigm.

A similar case could be made for phenomenology (Wimpenny and Gass 2000; Lee, Saunders and Goulding 2005) which relies on an individual's interpretation of experiencing a phenomenon for data gathering. While that is part of the interviewing and examination process, phenomenology alone would not be suitable as a methodology for this project. That is because this research is focused on finding out what phenomena could account for the key cultural features of a group of people rather than just their interpretation of their experience; or whether or not they can be defined as a social group, and if so, how? The breadth of topics and theories about the birth of a culture and group dynamics cannot be contained by a methodology that does not allow for such a broad, all-encompassing set of dynamics.

Narrative inquiry would have been the other choice as a methodology. It, too, is particularly suited to personal stories, ‘small stories’ but also to ‘grand narratives’ (Georgakopoulou 2006, p. 122), all of which constitute a part of this research.

Narrative inquiry, phenomenology and discourse analysis differ from grounded theory in that they do not allow for an explanatory framework to be produced directly from the data, a framework that can be developed into a model that can be used for planning, predicting and intervening in existing situations (Charmaz and McMullen 2011).

Pure ethnography’s reflexive nature is not critical or necessary for GTM. The Insider/Outsider dilemma of ethnographic inquiry is a moot point, as cases can be made for and against both. Also, the historical nature of this research means it cannot be pure ethnography in the immersion sense. CGT ‘rightly appeals to novice researchers because it encourages them to develop their own theories rather than merely fine-tuning existing ones. They may become conceptual entrepreneurs...’ (Bryant and Charmaz 2007, p. 17).

2.7

Limitations and strengths

CGT, which is designed for smaller-scale inductive research such as this, was painstaking, and at times difficult to navigate. It was time-consuming when it came to the coding and constant comparison of data. I initially relied on the expectation that the interviews themselves would provide a saturation point. In this case, they did not. It is easy to be confused by the process until all the data had been fully immersed in the coding process. To that end, a methodology that started with a clear

and existing theoretical framework through which I could have viewed the data may have been a somewhat easier process to navigate. As it was, my theoretical gaze (see **Chapter 1: Introduction, 1.4.1 Researcher's positioning**) was something with which I was continuously engaged. Expecting to find my own experience mirrored back to me, and not having that occur, was disconcerting. Being able to adapt my own gaze and be aware of the phenomena within which I was immersed, was essential.

Because of the reflexive nature of CGT, what it does is allow for a great deal of detailed information to be abstracted from a small sample. *The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research* (Crouch 2006) justifies small sample sizes in that it focuses on depth, richness of material, a broad scope of inquiry, as well as the 'psychological benefits respondents may obtain from the opportunity to "tell their story"' (Crouch 2006, p. 487). This is supported by Dreher (1994), who concludes that 'in inductive research in naturalistic settings, small samples, which permit repeated contact with respondents and greater involvement of the investigator, enhance validity and reliability' (Dreher 1994, p. 286). Toner (2009) addresses the lack of literature on very small focus groups in qualitative research using CGT. Toner notes that the increase in intimacy and the establishment of a relational base with a focus group of four women for her CGT thesis led to more structural analysis due to the depth of intimacy in the interviews and to say that "local social process inform us about larger social structures" (Toner 2009, p. 187). The extremely small focus group in her study did not in any way diminish the data collected. A larger group, she states, may have yielded different data but the small group offered a rare dynamic, alliance, and shared characteristics that a large group

could not. The idiographic nature of small sample sizes allows for a rich, thick description. Considering that three of the aims of this research can be explained by the search for a thick description, and that this thesis is about very small groups living in isolated settlements, it is just this intimacy and characteristic that is maintained by interviewing a small group of those workers.

Being constrained by a small sample was vital in considering a methodology. There were a number of reasons for this constraint (see **Chapter One: Introduction, 1.1.1 Background of this study** and **Chapter Seven: Evaluation and Conclusion, 7.4 Limitations**). It was important for this research to include only those who had spent a minimum of three years in remote settlements, as this was the minimum length of time those trained at ASOPA were required to stay in a remote community.

Longevity in the region was important for collecting data regarding the aims of this research (see **Chapter One Introduction**). At least fourteen people had been identified for possible inclusion. However, of those who did not take part, half did not do so for reasons of age. One potential participant's spouse had an age-related illness and another died. Yet another potential participant refused to take part, two did not respond to requests for interviews and another could not be found. It was also important for this research to find participants who knew each other at the time in question, in order to get a sense of the overall culture that they all contributed to and took part in as a social group.

Knowing 'how much data to gather in advance' (Baker & Edwards 2012, pp. 4-5) is not possible. A qualitative CGT methodology would suggest that the approach should focus on continuing until commonalities from a heterogeneous selection

reach saturation point in the data (Ragin 2012). Bear in mind, regarding site samples, that of these eight participants, across this ten-year-period, three worked in Amata in South Australia, three worked in Areyonga in the Northern Territory, five worked in Papunya in the Northern Territory, three also worked at the mission in Ernabella, one worked in Yuendumu north-west of Alice Springs, and two also worked at a number of sites in Western Australia. Between them there is a wide variety of experiences in an equally wide variety of placements and contexts.

Charmaz (2006) states that the combination of the aims of the study and reaching a saturation point should be the determining factors of sample size. In *Determining Sample Size* (Morse 2000), the nature of the topic and the quality of the data should also be considered. Atran, Medin and Ross (2005) used fewer than ten participants to establish a consensus in cultural modelling across populations. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) established that a sample of six interviews was the point at which their data - an analysis of reproductive health care in Africa - was returning no new codes and was therefore saturated. Morse's (2000) findings of sample size in 560 Doctor of Philosophy studies showed, of the distribution of sample sizes 'that included 10, 20, 30 or 40 participants as their sample size' more than half of those samples included eight participants or less.

2.8 Conclusion

The epistemological foundations of CGT underpin the theoretical approach of this thesis. This is not a hypothetico-deductive methodology and does not begin with a theoretical framework. Rather, CGT's epistemology lies in it being a speculative,

deductive methodology in which minor working hypotheses of everyday life are applied to empirical data and observed phenomena from which relevant theoretical frameworks can emerge. CGT differs from other iterations of grounded theory in its emphasis on the subjective relationship between researcher and subject. In CGT the study's validity relies more on the methods and processes employed, and how inferences and theories are formed and explained. The stand-out value of CGT for this research has been outlined and compared with other possible methodologies and their methods. The reasons for choosing CGT have been discussed, and its validity presented and outlined along with other considerations. The next chapter will expand on the methods employed through the coding process.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1

Introduction

This research will make use of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) basic strategies and methods for grounded theory research, as well as CGT premises of entertaining a 'range of theoretical possibilities' and examining my 'own epistemological premises and research principles and practices' (Charmaz 2008, p. 163). Data collection and its analysis occur simultaneously in grounded theory. This helps to focus the direction in which the study will go. The methods, processes and participants will be introduced according to this strategy. Inferences, categories, concepts and their relationships will be explained as they are formed. Saturation point is reached 'when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data' (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 136). In GT, codes identify social and psychological processes and actions as opposed to themes" (Chun Tie, Birks & Francis 2019, p. 5).

The terminology I am using for the processes in this research is as follows:

Code/coding – a node and/or number of nodes created in NVivo software, each one a sentence, word or paragraph from an interview, sorted into related groups.

Category – a collective name given to a selection of codes that fit within similar or related groups.

Concept – a collective name given to a group of categories that fit within a similar or related idea.

Theme – A mixture of the concepts, plus other related data, ideas, notions, patterns and other relevant data that has come out of examining the concepts.

3.2

The participants

Participants for this study were chosen by a method called purposive sampling. The participants had to have lived and worked in remote settlements for longer than three years. This was the amount of time required for teachers to work off their study debt. Choosing to stay longer indicated a commitment to the region, regardless of motivation. It was also important that the participants knew each other as this would provide a sense of belonging to the same peer group. It was also important that they worked within the same time frame (1964-1974 – the period that the first two participants – with whom I spent the most time - lived during their first sojourn in Central Australia) for the same reasons. It was preferable that I could interview them all face to face, although that was not possible with one participant due to time constraints allowing for me to travel.

The ‘snowballing’ method of recruiting participants was employed, starting with one couple, Brian and Joan Telford (see **Ethical considerations** in the introduction of this thesis for details on naming and anonymity). Due to the level of trust needed for deeply personal interviews, it felt important that I be recommended to other interviewees by a known party. The Telfords were asked to suggest other

participants across the sector who might be willing to participate. They spoke with select people and introduced me to those individuals via email. I then contacted those potential participants myself via email, then by telephone. The participants lived in Alice Springs, Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. It was made clear to them that interviews could be done in whichever medium they felt most comfortable – although in person would be optimal for this research. It was also important that the participants had some sense of affinity with each other due to the hope that they would have a sense of a shared experience which would be useful for the study of a group culture.

Both of the Telfords have been awarded one of Australia's highest civilian orders, the Order of Australia, for more than 50 years' service to remote Aboriginal communities. They both lived in communities in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (see **Chapter One: Introduction 1.2.3 The settlements and 1.3 The participants**). They both lived in the South Australian settlement of Amata in 1964 not long after the settlement had been set up. Joan was the first nurse in the Docker River settlement in 1970. They continue to live in the region and have ongoing relationships with the communities and individuals within the communities where they lived and worked in the 1960s and 1970s. Their personal stories will be revealed further in the course of analysis.

3.3

The interviews

An advantage of using CGT is that face-to-face interviews, unstructured so that they could be conducted and allowed to develop according to the needs and focus of the interviewees. This allowed for a great depth of discussion. The fluid nature of the interviews meant that questions deemed inappropriate during discussion could be adapted or changed to suit the development of the conversation. It provided respondents with the opportunity to answer in much greater detail in person than they could to a questionnaire. A list of written, open-ended questions was prepared for the sake of thoroughness and checking that all topics were applied consistently to each interview (see **Appendix B**). All the interviews began with the same list of questions. Every interview began with the same basic premise: a timeline of places worked, and positions held in Central Australia, and personal and family background, and personal influences and motivations as a young person. They were asked about the places they lived and/or visited in the region, what their arrival was like in the remote settlements and what they could recall about their place within this group of people. Questions were directed at retrieving as much recall as possible, so they were not asked simply, what was your arrival like in the community? To elicit as much information as possible, each aspect of their time and life was explored in great depth: Did they feel prepared? What sort of preparation had they received? What sort of expectations did they have? How did their family backgrounds/childhoods contribute to their decision-making? Who did they first meet on arrival? How did they actually get there? Recalling the social scene on arrival, how they fitted in (or not), how they made friends (if at all), where were they living? Who were their nearest neighbours? Did they get on with their neighbours?

Do they remember what they saw when they first entered the settlement? Was it day or night? Did they feel homesick? What sort of things did they miss from 'normal' life? Was there anything that frightened them? What were their impressions of the other workers on arrival? Did they know who they were answering to on arrival? If so, who was that and how did they communicate that (etc.)?

As every individual is so different, some people were able to answer an entire page of questions in one paragraph; for others, many questions were irrelevant; for still others there were questions that came up in the course of discussion that may not have been on the written list. This list was a guideline only, for myself, in making sure I covered as much of the same ground as possible with each participant. At various points in each interview I went through my list of questions to see if there were important questions I had not asked, marked off questions I had asked, and wrote notes for myself about other topics that came up and might be relevant for further investigation.

All participants were sent the list of questions before the interviews in order to allow their memories to become more active beforehand or in case they wanted or needed to look up facts and figures they felt might help the inquiry. There was nothing careless about these interviews (Allan 2003). Having over a decade of interview experience as a journalist, counselling training, and experience designing and conducting quantitative research on the Remote Indigenous Broadcast Service for the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, I believe the interviews were as thorough as they could be. I was fortunate to have the luxury of being able to ask follow-up questions when the need arose, after the interviews had taken place.

Interviews were conducted in the participants' homes where they would feel most comfortable. My experience in the region, and a relaxed and casual atmosphere provided some rapport with participants I did not know prior to the interviews. Throughout the interview process I sought feedback from the interviewees as to my conduct and the interview process. I repeatedly invited the participants to share information or stories they felt were relevant to their experience. They were asked to comment on my questions and their relevance to their experience, and to lead the interview to discussions they felt might be more pertinent to their experience. This helped me to maintain my own aim of gathering information regarding the social life and culture, conditions and contexts of the lives of this group of people. The interviews were all recorded and then transcribed.

3.4 Data collection

Having already conducted a preliminary literature review and gathered data I felt might be relevant for background research (in the form of academic papers, theses, documentaries, newspaper articles, documents, letters, photographs, books etc.), I began the interview process with Brian and Joan Telford who each had 51 years' experience living and working in remote Central Australian Aboriginal settlements at the time of the interviews. They provided ten hours of recorded interview time, sometimes together, sometimes apart. Those interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo software for ease of sorting and analysis. I prepared a background list of questions (see **Appendix B**) as a guide for myself. The way the participants answered or discussed their experiences would depend on whether or not I asked the exact same questions of different people. No two people are the same, no

two answers to the same question will be the same, so I had to be flexible. As long as I felt there were answers that covered the topics I had listed on my preparation list of questions, I would check the list and move on.

3.4.1

Memo writing

Memo writing is one of the core methods of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967 and 2006). It was used in three key ways in this research. The first was note-taking during interviews. This included observations, feelings, thoughts, emphasising stand-out words and phrases. The second way was during the coding and analysis process in NVivo, playing with comparisons, theory ideas and sensitising concepts. I wrote notes on quotations in the NVivo nodes. The third way was in journaling the process, as I did on a trip to the APY Lands with Brian and Joan Telford. This included notes of impressions, sometimes drawings and scribbles, and questions to be posed.

3.5

Brian and Joan Telford

Brian Telford and Joan Taylor met in Amata in 1964. Joan arrived in October and Brian arrived in November. They lived in Amata for three years. Brian then went to Alice Springs and worked at Pine Gap, building the 'Space Base' (Joint Defence Space Research Facility) before going to what was then Warrabri (now called Ali Curung) north-west of Alice Springs, to do some building work. He then went to Ernabella for nearly two years. Joan was also in Ernabella in 1968 and then Alice Springs in 1969. They married in 1969 and went to Areyonga for ten months where

they met Keith and Linda Burston (the next set of participants in the interview process). The newly set-up Docker River community needed a nurse and so the Telfords moved to Docker River in 1970 for just under five years.

The Telfords have also worked (in the capacity of store managers, or other relief positions, as well as in their original roles) in Warburton, Watarru, Pipalyatjara, Kalka, Kintore, Wingellina, Jameson, Blackstone, Wanarn, Warakurna, Tjukurla, Tjirrkarli, Kiwirrkurra, Patjarr and in the Kimberley and Lake Nash in the Barkly region. Joan was a nurse who had previously spent time working with sick Aboriginal children in South Australia. Brian was a 22-year-old electrician who had spent two years working in the Snowy Mountains. They lived in the tri-state border region for ten years, from 1964 to 1974. They worked in Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley for many years before returning (after a brief sojourn in New South Wales) to Central Australia, where they now live in Alice Springs. They continue to work in and with remote communities in various capacities, in spite of their advanced age.

Joan was ‘born and bred’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015) in Newcastle in New South Wales but studied and worked in Adelaide. She had always wanted ‘an adventurous life’. Brian’s father was a protestant missionary who travelled a lot and spent time in the United States. Brian had previously travelled to Central Australia to do volunteer work building St Philip’s College in Alice Springs and to Coober Pedy in remote South Australia. It was on his way to Alice Springs with a geologist colleague that he met John Miller – the man who would offer Brian a job in Amata in South Australia.

For both Brian and Joan, working in remote Central Australia was and remains a vocation, of sorts. They both came from families where reading was encouraged and books were a part of family life. While both are Christian, they were not employed as missionaries, and their motivation to work in Central Australia was not born of a missionary zeal to evangelise or convert, rather, as Joan put it, life in mainstream Australia was ‘a pointless existence in some ways... by working with Aboriginal people you felt you were working with someone who couldn’t do any better for themselves, by themselves I suppose. I don’t know if that’s the right way to put it but... I was always glad to go back [to Amata]’. She went to Central Australia ‘for something a bit different’. She felt needed and wanted there in her role as nurse. They had both been inspired by books. For Joan it was the *Billabong* series about a family in rural Victoria. For Brian it was Arthur Groom’s book *I saw a strange land* (1950) in which a camel trip to Hermannsburg (west of Alice Springs) captured young Brian’s adventurous spirit. Having been a Scout he loved camping, the outdoors and had a feel for the bush. Living in Amata, Brian felt a ‘real pride in achieving building projects’. Having previously thought he might go to Europe and work in camps for displaced people still operating as a result of World War Two, Brian’s motivations for going to and staying in Central Australia were that it was more than ‘just a job’. It was not what he imagined it to be but by the time he had been in Amata for about a year he had come to the realisation that living in a remote settlement was about much more than just taking up a job. It was the place as much as the people that got under both their skins.

As Amata at that point was an off-shoot of another missionary-run settlement, they naturally became part of a network of other workers, including the missionaries at

Ernabella (see map in **1.2.2 The tri-state border region**). Ernabella was the nearest neighbouring settlement to Amata. There were also neighbouring cattle stations and regular visitors such as those who flew with the mail plane.

As part of this research, the Telfords and I undertook a trip to visit all the communities in which they lived and worked from 1964 to 1974. They knew that country intimately and were perfectly comfortable sleeping under the stars, taking ‘back roads’ and driving on dirt tracks in their two-wheel drive Land Rover (not a four-wheel drive!), permanently set up for remote survival with a fridge, camp stove, tucker box, table, chairs, and other fold-away necessities for daily life.

The most striking thing about visiting the regions in which they lived (South Australia’s APY and Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Western Desert area in Western Australia, and the far south-west of the Northern Territory) was how much at home Brian and Joan Telford were in the landscape. There was nothing more natural to them, at the respective ages of 75 and 79 in 2015, than to pack up their trusty Land Rover and drive into some of the, seemingly, most inhospitable country on earth and sleep in swags on a rolled-out canvas. It’s something they have both been doing for over fifty years - taking ‘back roads’ down barely discernible tyre tracks with nothing but the landscape to guide them and then, to the eyes of the uninitiated, miraculously ending up exactly where they wanted to go. The following memo (see previous section **3.4.1 Memo writing**) is a narrative of part of our trip, written at the end of the day’s journey:

‘Just down here is the grave,’ Brian said (Telford, B, interview, April 21, 2015), walking across scrubby, stony earth that reveals nothing to a

casual observer like me. But to them, this almost anachronistic gravesite, situated in a place where few people will ever go, literally hundreds of miles from anywhere or anything, is the very important resting place of an old Aboriginal man they once knew; a small axis around which this big sky sweeps - for a select few. And it is here that they carefully removed the grass and weeds from around the grave, cleared the dust from the plaque, which had, some months earlier, been ordered and made in the distant Northern Territory town of Alice Springs. It proclaims to the world that here, in this unlikeliest of places, lie the remains of a person of great significance. Their care of this grave was not an act of paternalism nor the colonial 'master' reviewing the results of their work; it was not an act with superficial intentions or born of superficial guilt for perceived wrongs – it was an act of love and friendship: It was the act of a long-term commitment to a place and its people – the 'vocation' as they put it – of two people who, once they started, never imagined themselves doing anything else but living and working with Aboriginal people in the remotest reaches of the Central Australian deserts.

The Telfords were happy to talk about anything and everything to do with their personal histories. As well as their extraordinary memories and encyclopaedic knowledge, Brian and Joan also have a sizeable library of their own, dedicated to books on Central Australia. They provided a wealth of archival material, allowed me access to their photographs and other personal material (much of which has also been donated to the Ara Iritja archive in South Australia) to get a feel of life in remote settlements during their time there.

3.6 Initial coding

The first stage of analysis is what Strauss and Corbin (1994) referred to as open or substantial coding, and Charmaz (2006) called initial coding. In allowing the data to speak for themselves, this first stage of research revealed ‘in vivo’ codes (the use of specific words), action codes (generally gerunds, revealing achievements, activities, plans etcetera) and process coding (everyday life, social observations and experiences, personal thoughts and feelings).

In initial coding, the names of codes and classifications are provisional, and sorted codes are placed into the first level of conceptual categories (Birks and Mills 2015). Star (2007) explains coding as a process of looking repeatedly through the data for things such as ‘anomalies, distaste, liking one person more than another, a shock of recognition as a respondent uses a phrase in local jargon that captures something about the site or acts’ (Star 2007, p. 80). I was also struck by a number of strong emotions – delight, grief, anger, confusion - connections and disconnections with people or place; a sense of belonging or separateness depending on people and place; differences between settlements; general attitudes to others both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This extensive organising process enabled the language of the texts to be analysed. It fleshed out the impressions I was left with during and after the interviews; it showed a deeper understanding of motivations; it separated the minutiae of life from the broad picture and enabled me to ascertain how these people categorised themselves within their surrounds, their culture, their professions and the broader context of their reasons for being there. Some examples follow.

- **In vivo coding** (also called ‘literal coding’, ‘emic coding’ or ‘natural coding’ (Saldana 2016, p 105) fractured the data by breaking them down into categories based solely on the actual words of the participants. For example, the following statements were grouped according to the words in the brackets:
 - ‘Can’t drop standards’ (standards)
 - ‘Do-gooders don’t know the full story’ (do-gooders)
 - ‘The teachers had very little to do with the community staff’ (teachers)

All in vivo codes were initially grouped into categories according to those words or statements.

- **Action coding** (Saldana 2016) is another of the initial coding methods. This sort of coding helped track how the experience of the participants began and their experience evolved. These were coded under the stages that represented those processes, for example:
 - ‘Arriving’
 - ‘Adapting’
 - ‘Socialising
 - ‘ASOPA, jobs & training’
- **Process coding** (also referred to as values coding) – noting in vivo values towards people, processes and place, such as:
 - ‘Personalities matter’
 - ‘Wives needed support’
 - ‘Vocation’

‘Mistrust among remote staff’

‘Bad attitude to Aborigines’

‘No privacy’

Sorting the codes at face value was a beginning. At this point, conditions, contexts, interactions and consequences (Birks and Mills 2015) were also becoming apparent. I came away from my first round of interviews having had the distinct impression that both Brian and Joan felt they were ‘not a part of’ a group (separate from the administration of the settlement; disconnected from anything to do with policy or government decisions and separate from other staff in the settlement). Joan was ‘always busy’ (at the clinic, at work, with the women) and Brian saying he was ‘always with the men’ or ‘working with the men’ or socialising ‘with the men’ [Aboriginal men].

I noticed during this initial coding that a large number of the first in vivo codes were also to do with observations of, relationships with, and changes within Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal people were not, however, people with whom Joan and Brian compared their experiences, despite the fact that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal were settling in these remote places together, often for the first time. At face value, the coding revealed that Aboriginal people were going through cultural and social processes of their own, quite separate to the non-Aboriginal workers. I would have liked to have had the capacity, the knowledge and experience to have been able to conduct similar interviews with Aboriginal inhabitants of these settlements who were there at the same time as the participants. The realities of finding and paying for trusted interpreters, spending the time it would have taken to stay in each of the relevant communities, was not going to be accommodated by the time and financial

limits and my situation. As I was also focused on the culture of the non-Indigenous workers, I thought it would be unhelpful and unethical to add the point of view of Aboriginal people. A thesis on how the two groups (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) adapted together would have been a different thesis and it was not the thesis that I was writing. What I did note, regarding the gaze of the non-Indigenous workers within this paradigm was that there was already a sense of ownership over accrued knowledge about Aboriginal culture and relationships with Aboriginal people. The question for me at this point in the interview process was whether or not this sense of ownership of knowledge was part a process or general attitude of objectification or domination of Aboriginal people or if it was something that was directed more at the development of their own culture for the purely utilitarian purposes of surviving, adapting, competing for social status and creating their own norms.

Many of the codes were placed in more than one category when conditions and contexts were taken into consideration. The following example shows that, after their first year in Amata, Brian and Joan asserted that there was a right way and a wrong way to do things:

‘I was spending a lot of time with the men, but when B. came along, [he] was happy to give them a lot more [food/money/goods from the store]. They [Aboriginal men] directed their attention to him. Well, I wasn’t very impressed really. I just felt that they [other white workers] weren’t taking the right approach. It probably didn’t affect our working relationship but certainly the time I spent with them [Aboriginal men] outside working hours changed a bit. But I think, they [another white couple] only spent about nine months there and I think again, they found

it wasn't a suitable place to bring up kids', (Telford, D, interview, March 21, 2015).

This passage reveals in vivo codes (Aboriginal men; outside working hours), action (spending time; affecting relationships) and process codes (right approach; not very impressed). Strong emotion and judgement can be seen toward the new worker and his behaviour. There is a disconnect between the new worker and the one with more experience, and a set of values around the accumulation of social capital ('they *only* spent about nine months there').

As I gained confidence in the inductive process (building up categories by constantly comparing, and moving between the data and the codes) I was building a bank of codes based around the naming of roles, places, and positions within the social and professional setting (in vivo codes); a set of action codes based on their adaptation over time; and a set of codes that seemed to be focusing on values, needs and navigating daily life. As this process saw this group of categorisations shaping up to be one of the larger initial codes, and as teachers had been mentioned several times as being different to all other workers, it felt important to next invite one or two teachers to participate. Because the teachers were by far the largest single professional group in remote settlements, I was lucky that the next two participants perfectly fitted the criteria.

3.7

Keith and Linda Burston

Keith and Linda met in Papunya in 1968. Linda was born in England and moved to Australia in 1952. She had grown up in rural New South Wales, in an area bounded

by Dubbo, Wagga and Cooma. Linda completed teacher training at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) in Sydney and turned twenty-one the year she went to Papunya. Keith, who was about the same age, had chosen not to study at ASOPA, studying instead at Geelong Teacher's College in Victoria, with a scholarship from the Northern Territory administration. A musician, Keith chose to stay in Geelong so he could continue to play in his band. Keith had lived 'all through the Victorian countryside, mainly in Gippsland'. Both Keith and Linda had 'moved around' as children because Keith's father was in the church and Linda's father was a teacher, so as young people neither of them had close ties to any particular place.

They both came from Christian families and, like the Telfords, they both attended church in remote settlements. They arrived at Papunya within weeks of each other. They were engaged within six months of meeting and married within 12 months. Two other non-Indigenous couples married in Papunya in 1968. Because ASOPA paid its students to study and Keith had a Northern Territory scholarship, they were both obliged to commit to three years of working in remote Northern Territory. They lived and worked in Papunya for 15 months before moving to Areyonga, further south. They did not always see eye to eye with the missionaries in Areyonga and were deeply affected by Aboriginal culture and spirituality over their years in Central Australia. They stayed with Brian and Joan Telford in Docker River in the early 1970s. They lived in Areyonga for about five years, where, according to Linda - who kept a book of all the staff that went through the community - they saw 'about 80 or 90' staff come and go over those five years. It was there they also got to know Leon Parsons, another participant for this research. They also spent time living in Darwin before moving to Canberra, where Keith took up a position as a school principal.

They continue to travel the country. I went to Canberra and spent a day with Keith and Linda Burston in their home (and subsequently met up with them many times when I moved to Canberra to complete my study). As this was the second set of interviews, the process of constant comparative analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1998) occurred during the interview process itself. This is a process of “‘identifying similarities and differences in order to facilitate the development of concepts’ (Sengstock 2008, p. 63). The purpose of interviewing these participants was to see if patterns in the data would be repeated in subsequent coding and analyses. The concepts and categories that began to emerge through abductive reasoning (coming to an understanding of how the patterns fit together) would form the beginnings of the grounded theory.

My interview with the Burstons was surprising. I came away with a very similar set of responses to the first participants. They too, expressed in very similar ways, that they were ‘not part of that’ (without specific prompting from me). In their case, it was a distinct separation from the people in administration in Papunya who were all ‘drunken, foul-mouthed’ men (also mentioned in Mahood’s 2012 paper *Kartiya are like Toyotas*, and Geoffrey Bardon’s 1994 memoirs, *Papunya: a place made after the story*). It was while coding the Burston’s interviews that I saw many of the same sorts of codes emerging as I had with the Telfords:

- ‘Being separate’
- ‘Missionaries’
- ‘Drinkers and non-drinkers’
- ‘Misfits’
- ‘Do-gooders/Newcomers/old hands’
- ‘Aboriginal culture’

They also had action codes such as ‘arriving’, ‘socialising’, ‘building relationships’, ‘Institutionalisation’ etc. and process codes such as specific values around drinking, and community development. These processes of adaptation to the institutional setting, the culture that they were creating, and adapting to Aboriginal cultures around them showed that this was not just a case of people talking about each other, it was a systematic classification process, a way of ordering and making sense of their lives and culture. All four individuals had particular values and went through similar processes on arriving and adapting, to staying and committing to their lives in remote settlements. A comparison of in vivo, process, and value codes follows, showing how the process codes can ‘stimulate more evocative analytic memo writing about the phenomenon’ (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 78):

Telfords	Burstons	In vivo codes	Process or value codes
‘We arrived at Amata, Musgrave Park, at midnight. There was an agency nurse who said, “five people in the hospital – they’re all on these drugs. I’m going and I won’t be back”’.	‘When I first got to Papunya and I thought “Oh Lord” and I really was quite keen to go home.’	Arriving	In at the deep end (process)
‘P was the superintendent and he had degrees in agriculture. BV didn’t see eye to eye with him. He’d done a course in agriculture at Roseworthy Agricultural College. BV just saw P as a young	‘It was very much, “we’ve set this up. This is how we operate either go along with it, basically”... but see, we weren’t really in that because the school was always different, separate. And that’s where I had a few clashes with [the superintendent]. Cause he would just come barging into the school	Superintendents	Longevity dictates hierarchy (value)/ Creating territory (process)

<p>fellow who knew nothing [laughs].’</p>	<p>and just try and do things and I’d say “Hey mate, this is my little territory” [laughs].</p>		
<p>‘People often used to ask the general question: “What’s it like out there?” And you’d start to tell them and they’d get this glazed look in their eye. I think in some ways it was better to show slides so that they could see.’</p>	<p>‘We felt like we were living on the moon, to a point. And that’s probably why we wrote home so much because it’s interesting ... I mean one day we were sitting having breakfast and all these people came rushing up the road, in our yard, over the fence and they said “oh the kadaitcha men are coming” [laughs].</p>	<p>Living on the moon/People’s eyes glazed over when we told them what it was like.</p>	<p>Separation/ disconnection from mainstream Australia (process).</p>
<p>‘I think I wasn’t sort of dropping my standards at all although you certainly did see it in some staff who came later – who started walking around in dirty clothes and barefooted and unshaven because that was the way the Aborigines were. That didn’t happen in our time.’</p>	<p>‘My perception was that here I am trying to juggle between two cultures, working with ideas that weren’t respected in the department and constantly wondering whether you’re doing the right thing or not; constantly wondering whether you’ve lost the plot and my colleagues would quite clearly tell me I’d lost the plot, you know? At departmental meetings, where the director of education – and at that stage I was in charge of all the bilingual programs – he once called me an effing woolly idiot, you know, in front of all the other directors and people.’</p>	<p>Maintaining standards/ juggling between cultures</p>	<p>Setting an example/ Maintaining a sense of right and wrong. (value)</p>

‘I’m sure we had lots of complaints. And I guess for me, a lot of it would be what was happening with the food.’	‘If we didn’t like a policy we’d just ignore it.’	Complaints about policies	Maintaining independence. (value)
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Table 3.1
Examples of in vivo, process and value codes

Like the Telfords, the Burstons had a code called ‘being separate’ which included statements from in vivo codes about not being part of the group, or separating from others:

‘I’d say ‘Hey, mate, this is my little territory’’, [creating territory]
(Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The coding revealed a sense of separating from administration in all four participants.

Analysis of this kind was used throughout the process. The interviews were read, and taken, first at face value for the information they shared, but subsequent re-readings of the interviews meant that context, impressions and overall themes could be accounted for in the categorisation and coding process. Memo keeping during this process helped to track the coding process and how these themes emerged. A complete immersion in the interviews and the coding process meant that saturation point was reached through creating a structure by systematic analysis. Every single sentence was considered and labelled, sorted and re-sorted from a code to a category to a concept. The initial coding of all four participants revealed the same main categories. The Burstons had one specific category regarding ‘policies’ (which was a

sub-category in the Telford's 'Community as Institution') and they had 'community development' as a separate code, which was specific to their roles as teachers.

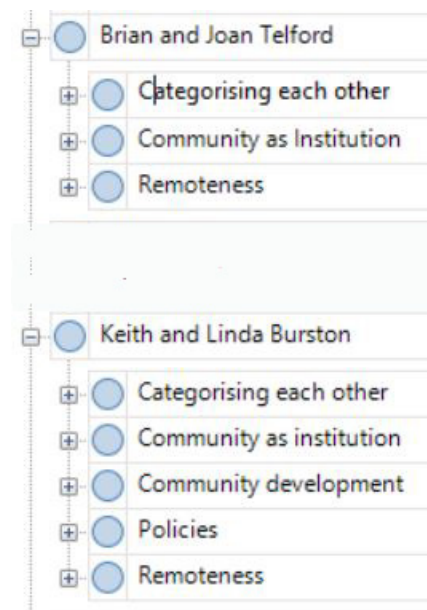


Figure 3.1
Core initial categories

I had then interviewed two men, two women, a nurse, a teacher, a school principle, an electrician/storekeeper/builder, and all of them had expressed the sense that they 'weren't part of' administration/the running of the settlement. They had lived in a variety of settlements which were starting to reveal context and conditions relevant to their narratives and to the coding paradigm. The earlier observation in the initial coding (see **this chapter 3.7**) of the potential objectification of Aboriginal people regarding the accrual and ownership of knowledge had, by this point, been answered: There was no evidence whatsoever of objectification or domination of Aboriginal people. The four participants to this point of the research had a Christian background and were brought up within the era of assimilation policies. While this was pertinent for their sense of place in the world, their desire for adventure and their sense of their own culture, the evidence that was emerging was that their conditioning into mainstream Australian culture was very quickly replaced by the process of

adaptation through culture shock and the socialization process of being in a whole new paradigm that was out of place and out of time to that which they were previously experienced. They were not acting as state-like instruments, rather, they were adapting and creating their own culture and their own norms and forging relationships with Aboriginal people. There was a significant level of insight, both at the time, and in retrospect, that these workers were able to verbalise regarding the changes they went through. Their classifications of one another in particular add weight to the consequences of these changes: they were focused on creating their own culture and their own norms.

There was one classification that brought up strong responses from all four participants and which needed to be addressed: superintendents.

3.8 Leon Parsons

While I was in Canberra with the Burstons, I was introduced to Leon Parsons. Leon took his wife on a honeymoon to Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory in 1966 and started his career in the town in the same year. He met his wife in Melbourne but they both wanted a life that would get them ‘away from the mundane existence of city life’. He initially went to Alice Springs with the Department of Construction before going to Tennant Creek to work at a mine as a survey assistant. It was there that he was asked to apply for a job as a temporary patrol officer. Many cattle stations claimed they could not afford to employ Aboriginal men under the new equal pay legislation and Leon was charged with finding work for the newly unemployed. When he graduated from ASOPA in 1968/69, he was sent to a

temporary relief position in Yuendumu as a Cadet Patrol Officer. He then went to Areyonga, where he met Brian and Joan Telford and Keith and Linda Burston. In the early 1970s he was the superintendent in Papunya – a place, he says, that still has his heart. He had great respect for the missionaries who had dedicated their lives to working in remote settlements but was also anti-institutional due to his anthropological training at ASOPA. He very graciously spent an afternoon with me, talking in great detail about his peripatetic youth and how that contributed to the time he eventually spent in remote Central Australia.

In that discussion with Leon, the same classifications that was revealed with the first four participants continued to appear. The regularity of similarities in word use and the similarities in characterisations of each other formed a pattern. Although the participants presented as ‘predictably different’ (Saldana 2016, p. 7), there were far greater commonalities than differences. While Leon did not say that he was ‘not a part of’ something, as the one who was in charge of administration in his last role, he did, however, discuss institutionalisation of settlements which resulted in:

- ‘coteries’ among the white staff – small cliques;
- the importance of longevity in remote settlements;
- ASOPA training as important.

More importantly, he did also have codes that corresponded with the earlier four participants which, in the initial stages of coding revealed:

- ‘teachers’,
- ‘drinkers’,
- ‘missions’,
- ‘do-gooders’,

- 'newcomers/old hands' etc.
- A distinct way of grouping people according to their role, their longevity in remote settlements,
- Processes they went through such as arriving, adapting, socialising, etc.
- And values around the right and wrong ways to behave in your role in a remote settlement.

Having now interviewed teachers and a superintendent, it was clear that this notion of 'not being part of' the group was not just a self-designated separation from the administering superintendent. It was not a perception of one group separating themselves from the others, nor was it just about a denial of 'any complicity' (Cowlshaw 2004, p. 74) with some kind of regime with which the rest of the staff did not wish to be associated in retrospect, although self-censorship is no doubt a fundamental part of anyone making sense of their own past. 'Not being part of the group' also manifested in the superintendent's language of separateness with the same type of classification as among the rest of the staff. This, I felt, was worth pursuing as it was the most striking theme that united all the compared data from the participants to this point. The following table shows the categories under which all the other in vivo, action and value codes had been folded and ordered:

Brian & Joan Telford	Keith & Linda Burston	Leon Parsons
Aboriginal Culture	Aboriginal Culture	Aboriginal culture
Anthropologists		
ASOPA, jobs & training	ASOPA, jobs & training	ASOPA & training
Being separate	Being separate	
Do-gooders	Being between	Drinking culture

Longevity		Longevity
Long-term relationships		
Maintaining standards		
Misfits & bad behaviour	Misfits	
Missions & missionaries	Missionaries	Missionaries
Newcomers	Old hands, station people & hippies	
Personal background	Personal background	Personal background
Personalities matter		
Socialising	Socialising	
Teachers		Teachers
	Third Culture Individuals	
Vocation		
Wives needed support		

Table 3.2 Category sorting

3.9 Intermediate coding

The next stage of the coding process was focused coding (Birks and Mills 2015). This is where the open coding is explored in terms of the properties and dimensions - the 'range of variance' (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 95) where categories and sub-categories might be linked or integrated. Focused coding is the process of re-assembling the fractured data - having been teased apart and categorised - into larger patterns. This was a process of looking for 'the most frequent or significant codes' (Saldana 2016, p. 240) to develop higher-order categories. This was a sorting of the themes or comparable concepts. Focused coding is the process that will determine which codes are the dominant and which are less important (Birks and Mills 2015).

The ways this group could find to remain separate or disconnected from each other were growing. The sub-category ‘being separate’ (from the do-gooder/newcomers) was created. The tension between belonging/connectedness (to the group of bush workers) and the separation within the group had to be explored. It was at this point of the coding process that it felt important to negate, as much as possible, any unintentional coercing or forcing of the data into any particular direction so I engaged situational mapping (see **Appendix C**) for details). Through this process I found that all the categories could be collapsed under three to five specific categories (see **Table 3.3 The main categories**, below). I could have further collapsed ‘community development’ and ‘policies’ into ‘community as institution’ but left them separate at this point, in case further interviews needed to be conducted, to compare with any potential new codes. However, the main categories coming through were clear enough and these were categories that had emerged after the first two and again after the first four interviews. Now five interviews had taken place and two of the three main categories had again emerged.

Telfords	Burstons	Parsons
Categorising each other	Categorising each other	Categorising each other
Community as Institution	Community as Institution	Community as Institution
Remoteness	Remoteness	
	Policies	
	Community development	

Table 3.3 The main categories

3.9 Higher categories

After the codes had been through the intermediate coding and the mapping process, main categories began to emerge. This began the theoretical coding phase in which all codes and categories would be accounted for (Saldana 2016). The main concepts that had emerged from the earlier stages of coding could be further collapsed into higher-order categories. About a third of the codes could be collapsed under a category based around separateness/disconnectedness. About a third of the codes could be categorised into a group that included stories about everyday life, being a part of something new, going through a process that led to adaptation to people and place, and there was a third category into which the remaining concepts fell, concepts including other influences such as context, background, history, policies and place. In the first round of ordering these categories into higher concepts, those three main groupings had no fixed names but were classified by a group of words that covered a number of impressions for each concept:

- 'Us and them, separateness & the politics of personal relationship, paired opposites'.
- 'Third cultures, the space in between, adaptation, co-existing, intercultural'.
- Institution, conditions, context, remoteness, policies and politics.

The three themes fell within three families: 1) paired opposites; 2) social processes, and the (3) contexts and conditions. But the sheer volume of statements regarding classifications/categorising each other indicated that, while there were a lot of 'them', there was, in fact, no sense of 'us'. When I asked myself '*what is actually going on here?*' (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p. 276), it appeared that the essence of the

group was a picture of these workers in a circle with their backs to one another, nobody 'being a part of' the circle to which they all belonged. They were focused on the Aboriginal people around them, with various levels of administration, organisation, and government policies in the middle (and to whom they were showing their backs while standing in the circle). This was eventually encapsulated by the words 'separating/disconnectedness'. Taking separating to be an action that both resulted in and was a response to disconnectedness, that first higher concept went from being called 'us and them, separateness & the politics of personal relationship, paired opposites' to 'confronting disconnectedness'.

The second group of categories displayed processes born of the many layers of disconnectedness, and of finding a sense of relatedness and dedication to a place and process. From being first called 'third cultures, the space in between, adaptation, co-existing, intercultural', it was renamed 'building a new sense of relatedness'. This was not the final name of this category, but it would continue as a working title. The third set of categories, 'institution, conditions, context, remoteness, policies and politics,' had many of its codes absorbed into the other two concepts. However, there remained many codes and categories that contributed to a broader context of life. This then became 'time, place and daily life' until further clarification could be gained.

I kept trying to find a way of uniting these concepts, of finding a sense of unity in the culture of these people and this group. I felt I might have had enough information from the interviews, but I was not yet quite making sense of what it was I was seeing. I had identified main categories around which my grounded theory might

crystallise (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 111): a web of disconnectedness, a web of relatedness/connectedness, and the bridging of the two within a specific context. The ‘core’ of ‘theoretical analysis’ (Krassen Covan 2007, p. 64) was emerging.

3.10

Second round of interviews

As all the codes and categories had been accounted for (Saldana 2016) and wanting to be absolutely sure that I was on the right track, I decide to conduct some more interviews in the hope of gaining further clarity. As all the participants to date had been non-drinkers, I had yet to speak with a drinker and I had yet to speak with somebody who might illuminate the differences between the Alice Springs workers and the bush workers. I wanted to explore this space ‘in between’ the disconnectedness and the new sense of relatedness.

3.11

Tony Mackey

I spoke with Tony Mackey, who was, by his own admission, a big drinker. Tony is a stalwart of the Northern Territory who moved from Melbourne to the Top End at the age of sixteen. He became the youngest ever superintendent of a remote Aboriginal community, in Yuendumu from 1958 to 1962, at the age of twenty-six. He ran what was to become known as a ‘model community’, always taking seriously the then Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck’s command, that ‘Native Affairs officers should at all times be “working yourselves out of a job”’ (Egan, 2008, p. 49). He briefly worked in Canberra under the Labor Whitlam government in 1972 before returning to the Northern Territory. He was the Administrator of the Northern

Territory from 2003 to 2007 and has had a long, parallel career as a folk singer. He eventually settled in Alice Springs where he still lives. He was interviewed because of his extensive overall experience in remote communities as a bureaucrat, and in the administration and policies of remote Central Australian settlements. Tony's experience added a new dimension to the various divisions among the bush workers, having also been one of the people who worked in policy development for remote settlements and remote Aboriginal Australia. He continues to push for a complete overhaul of the management of remote communities (Egan 2008). I had interviewed him a number of times in my role as a journalist in Central Australia and he was always happy to talk about his views – particularly over a glass of wine. He was and remains a self-described big drinker and a larger-than-life character.

3.12

Bill Stoddart

I also interviewed a man called Bill Stoddart who was sent to Amata to teach Aboriginal men how to polish gems in 1966. Bill now lives in Adelaide and has become an academic. A political science graduate, Bill went to Amata (Musgrave Park) at the age of twenty-three. He spent a year in the settlement teaching Aboriginal men how to cut and polish chrysoprase, a green stone that occurs naturally at Mt Davies (or what is now called Pipalyatjara, near the Western Australian border). Bill, like Brian Telford, also helped in the store, as there was no full-time store manager at the time. The store in Amata was just a small shed. About six months after he arrived, his then wife, June, joined him for six months. Bill went on to spend time in Ernabella in a voluntary capacity until late 1971. He has been described by his then wife, in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald as 'a bit of a

rebel and rode a motorbike' ('What I know about men', Anne Summers 2014). He had no preparation for his time in Central Australia beyond his own reading and he was pleased to head off to the great unknown. There were about eight non-Aboriginal people living in Amata at the time he arrived, including Brian and Joan Telford. They were all employed by the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Bill continues to work with his hands today, making violins. He has had a successful career as an academic, focusing on Aboriginal Affairs and continues to observe and comment on changes in remote South Australia since his time living and working there. He is the only contributor to this project who answered in writing, rather than participating in a personal face-to-face interview. This was because no mutually convenient time could be arranged.

3.13

Duncan Karsten

I also felt it might be important at this stage to widen the scope of the interviews and compare data from somebody who could shed light on the group, but who was not necessarily in the group. I decided to get a perspective of the bush workers from somebody who had an understanding of working in remote settlements but who was largely based in Alice Springs in this period in question. That person was Duncan Karsten. Duncan trained as a teacher in Adelaide. He was sent to Alice Springs – the last place he wanted to go. He spent time at Mount Conner, Uluru, Kata Tjuta, Docker River and Wingelina between 1964 and 1974. He said that, of the Alice Springs population of about 9000 people in the 1960s, he was one of the oldest at the age of 30 when he arrived. In 1970 he met Brian and Joan Telford in Docker River. From 1976-1978 he was the coordinator for Papunya Tula Artists, and worked in

Aboriginal education. Duncan's involvement in the remote settlements in the tri-state border region has been vast, ranging from the repatriation of sacred objects, to conflict management and education, publishing books and articles, writing submissions for Native Title claims, radio interviews, public talks on local history and ecology, and lecturing at various universities. In 2001 Duncan was awarded an A.M. for 'the recording of information of national interest in the areas of history, anthropology, Aboriginal art, ecology and land management practices in Central Australia' and received an honorary PhD from Charles Darwin University in 2006. Most recently, he was involved in travel to, and south of, Docker River for a film about Harold Lasseter. At the time of his interview, he had advanced Parkinson's disease but was still able to make himself heard and spoke eloquently about his experiences. His time spent in the tri-state border region, his general knowledge of the region, and his perspective on remote workers from the point of view of somebody based mostly in Alice Springs, provided an invaluable, broader picture of the group and time in question. He is undoubtedly one of Australia's living treasures. I have known Duncan for several years, and our paths have crossed on and off in my previous work in media, and also socially. I did not want to spend too much time with him as his health at the time meant that he was easily exhausted. He was still very happy to spend several hours with me.

3.14 Analysing the second round of interviews

I went through the same in vivo process of coding with the second round of interviews as with the first. I then sorted them into axial codes and compared them to the first group of sub-categories. It was time to see if there were further categories

into which all these codes could be folded. The new categories that emerged for the second round of interviews closely followed the in vivo coding in the first round, and left me with the following categories:

Duncan Karsten	Tony Mackey	Bill Stoddart
Categorising each other	Categorising each other	Whitefella culture - Categorising each other - Daily life Aboriginal culture
	Yuendumu	Community as institution
	Politics Coombs Federal Government Giese	Policies
Socialising in Alice Springs		

Table 3.4 Further coding

Under ‘categorising each other’, I saw the same sub-categories as in the earlier round of interviews: Aboriginal culture, ASOPA & training, do-gooders, station owners, drinkers & non-drinkers, superintendents, personal background, bush and town workers, teachers, rogues, missionaries, mistrust among whitefellas and no cohesion.

Constantly moving between the other categories and the results of the second round of interviews led to further clarification. The first core category ‘confronting disconnectedness’ remained clear in this second round. The following chapter will show how the other two main categories were eventually identified. Refining the categories, identifying the properties and dimensions and integrating as much of the data as possible into the three main categories continued throughout this process, as laid out in **Chapter Four: Findings**.

3.15 Conclusion

This was an extensive process, drawing on close to thirty hours of audio transcriptions. What these methods provided was the opportunity to go into great depth in the early stage of analysis. This resulted in saturation point being achieved within the analysis of the interviews of the first four participants (rather than in the interview process itself). This surprised me, as I was unsure what to expect from this process, which is why I continued with the interviewing process though I did not really need to do so. After completing the extra interviews, despite the natural variations and outlying codes and categories one would expect to see, it was clear that interviewing could stop. It was time to continue with the coding and refine the categories. Due to the small sample size, this method of coding was a reliable way of analysing as much data as possible. The coding process was a sound and dependable way to show reliability in the process, particularly as I was aware of my own positioning. Because I've worked in these environments before, I have an awareness that my discomfort at not fitting into any mainstream culture means that I too enjoy separateness and feel comfortable within a culture that is disconnected, different, or unusual. This thread that runs through my entire life experience led to me becoming a classical violinist, to emigrating several times to various countries, and to working in the development sector as a sojourner myself. That I too wanted to get away from mainstream culture could have been affecting the way I viewed the data.

Having deliberately sought and found participants who could act as outliers, the same main categories and concepts were still emerging. The extra interviews did, however, help to triangulate, or focus a convergence of the categories into the core

concepts. The following chapter shows the detailed results of that process. I have deliberately included as much detail as possible, in order to show the consistency, reliability, and dependability of analysing a relatively small sample size in great depth.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1

Introduction

This findings chapter builds on **Chapter Three: Methods** to reveal the organisation of the data and the construction of the three main categories: Confronting disconnectedness, Finding our own space within the institution, and We formed a new social framework, which were constructed from the data and which led to the core category of Forging connectedness (see **Figure 4.1** below).

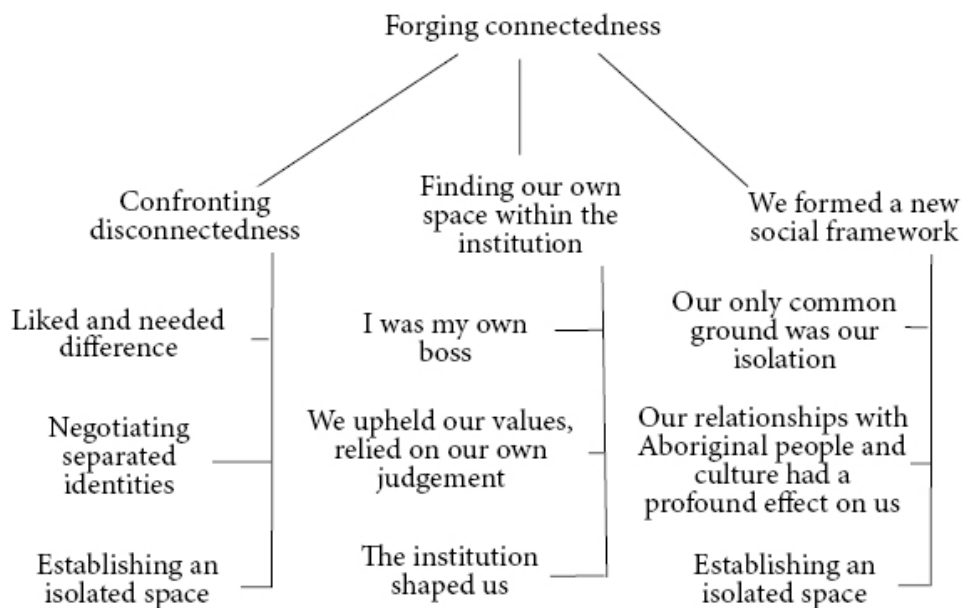


Figure 4.1 – The construction of the data and the core category

The data illustrate observations, patterns, and categories in the results (Dey 2007; Holton 2007). These findings also draw on the situational mapping (see **Appendix C**) and relational mapping to reveal the contexts and conditions that contributed to the development of the cultural features of this group.

This chapter is divided into three sections, based on the three main categories that emerged: *Confronting disconnectedness*, *Finding our own space within the institution*, and *We formed a new social framework*. The coded data for each category was formulated into a dendrogram (Lock 1999, pp. 76-77), with the core category of each dendrogram at the top. The results of each dendrogram will be presented in this chapter. The codes and categories were selected with the express purpose of identifying commonalities and patterns. The findings are emergent, therefore not viewed through a specific existing theoretical framework (Gibson 2007). As these findings are emergent, they will be further sensitized and discussed in Chapter 5 in order to find the core category of this study, which is laid out in Chapter 6. This leads to a key recommendation which is presented at the end of Chapter 6.

4.2

The formation of the main categories

The categories that have emerged through the coding process are meaningful interpretations (Denzin 2007). The properties that make up these coded categories are linked by themes, similarities, meanings, conditions, language use and actions. The salient codes and categories were abstracted in a way that reveals the higher-order categories and core category of the phenomena being revealed. Examples of the data are used throughout this chapter.

4.3

Confronting disconnectedness

Disconnectedness began with all but one of the participants having had a peripatetic childhood and therefore no particular attachment to a place (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford B and J interview, March 4, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Their motivation to go to remote Central Australia was to experience ‘something different’ or to have an adventure (Telford; B and J, interview, March 4, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). They were not in remote Aboriginal settlements to recreate a social scene reminiscent of what they had left behind. Neither were they anarchists or rebels. Where mainstream Australian culture was concerned, they would have been considered young, educated, sensible, professional people from middle class Christian families – and in fact that is, largely, how they considered themselves. These were individuals who liked and needed difference within a framework. They were self-assured and had the ability to withstand feelings of loneliness or isolation, each maintaining a stoic independence and faith in their own ability to cope on personal, social and professional levels. These workers experienced long-term separation from mainstream (European) Australian culture. The longer the participants stayed in remote Central Australia, the more expert they became as ‘old hands’. The longer they stayed, the greater the division between them and ‘newcomers’.

Their history and culture, and their colonial positioning as those in charge, separated remote workers from Aboriginal people, many of whom were still living a traditional

hunter-gatherer life. Aboriginal people lived in separate ‘camps’ (Telford, J interview, March 4, 2015). The remote workers were also disconnected as a result of their geographical context (remoteness and isolation). They were disconnected from the social discourses happening in the rest of the country and around the world. The key properties of this core category are laid out in the figure below. For the full dendrogram, including initial and intermediate-level codes see **Appendices, Appendix D1.**

Appendix D1.

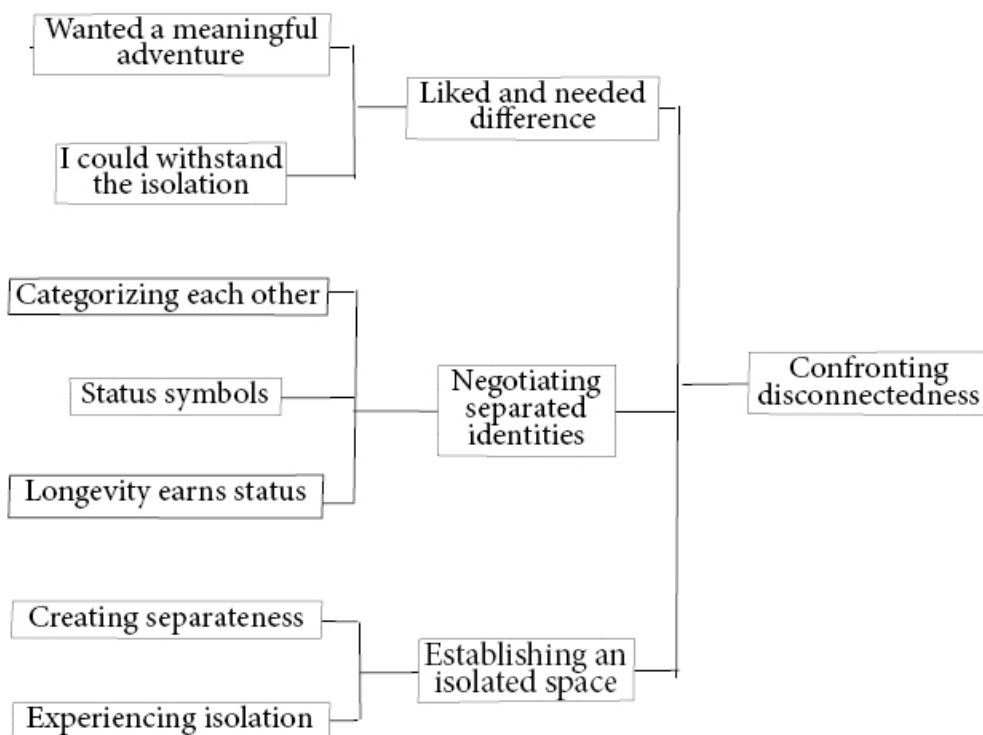


Figure 4.2
The properties and categories of *Confronting Disconnectedness*, read from left to right.

4.3.1

Liked and needed difference

Liking and needing difference was identified as a property of *Confronting Disconnectedness* and is made up of two key properties: *Wanting a meaningful*

adventure, and *I could withstand the isolation*. These properties emerged as the underlying motivations regarding working in remote settlements, and the subsequent acceptance of isolation on arrival. The participants' motivation was not specifically to work with Aboriginal people, nor was there any idealistic reminiscing about what they thought they might be heading to or what they were expecting regarding Aboriginal people or their culture. There was little evidence of much prior knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

The participants each displayed the ability to maintain their separateness, and pride in being quietly different. 'I got on well with most of them [other remote workers] but my real interests were very *different from most of them*' (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

Being able to withstand the isolation was a core part of the personalities of these individuals. All of them, regardless of their reasons for being there, had the fortitude and mettle to be able to cope with their geographical isolation. This was illustrated in the way they talked about their experience:

- 'The isolation didn't seem to worry me that much', (Telford, B, interview, March 4, 2015).
- 'The vastness and openness of the landscape didn't have a detrimental effect on me ... I was never short of something to do', (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).
- 'The isolation was never a problem for me', (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

The combination of wanting a meaningful adventure and going to a remote desert outpost within your own country to have that adventure led to these individuals setting themselves apart from mainstream European Australian culture: ‘There was a great divide between where we were [in remote Central Australia], and living in mainstream Australia ...’ (Telford, B, interview, March 9, 2015).

4.3.1.1 Wanting a meaningful adventure

The journey taken by these young, middle class, educated workers, to remote Aboriginal Central Australia, began with personal motivation. Their initial motivations held no specific mention of wanting to work with Aboriginal people, and they had little to no understanding of Aboriginal culture. Two participants had read about the Aboriginal people of Central Australia, but nothing more. These were young adults off to have an adventure and ‘to do a job’ (Telford, J and B interview, March 5, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). They each had one core task: they were there to teach, build, nurse or manage. In essence, they were ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky 1980).

But these were also people who liked and needed difference. They were motivated by ‘wanting something a bit different’ (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).), wanting ‘a bit of an adventure’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) and wanting ‘an adventurous life’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). Ted Mackey explained that he fell in love with the landscape, the warmth, and was subsequently unable to imagine a suburban life:

‘I loved it [the Northern Territory] because I was born in suburban Melbourne, but I hated that. That was why I went to Darwin for three months and never, ever left really’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

These were fundamental needs and characteristics of all the participants (to varying degrees). There was a sense of excitement about the unknown:

‘Most of the roads were dirt. The road to Adelaide was totally dirt and so it was very much a frontier atmosphere, so you certainly did feel like you were breaking new ground, yeah. It was exciting!’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

For most of the participants, it was their peripatetic childhood and/or early adulthood that contributed to the decision, and the ability, to head off into the unknown.

‘Keith moved around as a child. His father was in the church. I moved as a child because my father was a teacher. So, and we came from England. I was born in England. So, we came to Australia in 1952. So, it’s been the story of my life, really’, (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Former superintendent, welfare officer and Patrol Officer in Training (POIT) Leon Parsons, explained that it was a combination of his own peripatetic childhood, and a fascination with the romanticised story of Harold Lasseter’s lost gold reef, which led to an extremely adventurous early adulthood travelling around the world. This formed the foundation of his decision to move to Central Australia:

‘I probably never felt like I would fit into mainstream Australia. You realise that if you never had a good, stable family life, that people regarded you a little bit pejoratively. My youth and early adulthood were

quite an adventure. My wife and I wanted to have an adventurous life',
(Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Leon was the only participant who specifically mentioned not fitting into mainstream Australia, but this sentiment corresponds with the subtext for several of the participants who did not want to live in suburbia. A troubled family life as a child left Leon with two choices: do as an uncle said and work on the farm or get away and get an education. He chose the latter, with the help of good neighbours, other caring family members, and the Marist Brothers, who helped him finish his matriculation because he 'wanted very much to finish school' (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). His desire for something 'more' that led to him doing three years of medical training. He then left the country on board a Finnish freighter, working in the ship's sick bay. When he eventually got married, he and his wife agreed they did not want the 'mundane existence of city life' and they ended up in Alice Springs, having their honeymoon there and in Tennant Creek. Leon, like Brian Telford, was influenced by 'some of Ian Idriss's books' and a television show, *Boney*, 'the Aboriginal detective who'd track down baddies out in the bush' (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). Whether it was not fitting in, or not wanting to fit in, liking and needing difference by wanting a meaningful adventure was at the heart of the participants' motivation and personal values.

For a nurse like Joan Telford, then Joan Taylor, who 'wanted something a bit different', there was also a desire to follow a different path to her peers:

'Everyone in my peer group went to England after they finished their nursing except me. I didn't want to go. I didn't like the thought of stepping off this wonderful Australian soil they tell me about [laughs],

it's just that there hasn't been a purpose in my life to leave Australia',
(Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

After her nursing studies, Joan was offered a position at an Australian Inland Mission children's home in Adelaide. Eventually, Joan and the matron under whom she worked were both offered roles in the far north of South Australia, the matron as one of the few female patrol officers inspecting the health and treatment of Aboriginal people on cattle and sheep stations, and Joan as a nurse, based in Amata: 'They just said they needed a nurse and I thought, well, I've always wanted to work out bush' (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015). When asked why, she said:

'For the difference. To see what the difference was, really, between city life and bush life, because I read a lot of *Billabong* books, Mary Grant Bruce. Still got them. I mean, that's a growing up thing but you know, made me want to come bush anyway', (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Mary Grant Bruce's *Billabong* series of fifteen novels for children, is set in rural Victoria and it was a memory that made Joan's eyes light up with delight. For her, the decision to work in the outback was based partly on a desire to see 'something out of the ordinary' (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015). Everyday life in urban Australia was 'a pointless existence' (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Two of the other participants were also influenced by books that created a picture of a place yet to be fully explored by white Australians. For Brian Telford it was a spark of inspiration from a tale of camels and expeditions into the desert:

'My father always gave us books for birthdays and Christmas. And I remember one of the first books I read about Central Australia was Arthur Groom's book *I Saw a Strange Land*. And that really inspired me.

He described a trip on camels from Hermannsburg down to Uluru. And when I read that, I was still doing an apprenticeship in Sydney, I thought, gee, I'd like to go out and see that country. But I certainly didn't imagine working there and certainly didn't expect that, many years later, I'd still be out there', (Telford, B, interview, March 9, 2015).

For the teachers whose training had been paid for by the Commonwealth Government, whether through ASOPA training (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015) or another scholarship (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) it was a case of committing to three years of service to pay off their training debt, and they had no choice about where they were sent. Other teachers, at the end of their training, were given three choices for their placement on completion of their studies. One ended up in Alice Springs on the understanding that 'nobody got their first choice' (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). It was not somewhere he ever expected or wanted to be. But agreeing to such an arrangement in the first place indicates a willingness to partake in something that leads to the unknown. The adventure was in not knowing. For all the participants, their actual appointments were by happenstance rather than by design. For two of them it was a chance meeting (Telford, B, interview, March 4, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015), for three others it was an unexpected offer (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). The three teachers, having studied under scholarship, had no choice (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). For some, there were also underlying personal and family values that led to being open to such an experience in the first place, as well as the desire to do something meaningful with their lives. For Brian Telford coming from a family that

had a strong sense of ‘social justice’ (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015), there was already a desire to work in a helping profession:

‘I used to read accounts of camps where people from Europe were living and they needed people to build temporary accommodation and run camps. When I was at high school, I always wanted to be a carpenter. I wanted to build things. I had the opportunity of an apprenticeship in the electrical trade so I said, ‘oh well, even if I do that I’ll still have a trade I can use overseas in a developing country or a camp for displaced people somewhere in Europe’. That was my ambition’, (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015).

But that plan to go to Europe changed when the young Brian went to Central Australia from his home in the Snowy Mountains, to do some building work at St Philip’s College in Alice Springs. He said he ‘thought it was important to work for a couple of years in Australia first’, doing the same kind of work he’d imagined doing in Europe. It was while doing volunteer work in Coober Pedy in remote South Australia on that same trip, that he had a chance meeting with the director of the South Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, John Miller. Miller said to Brian ‘we’re looking for somebody like you to go up to Amata’. Thus, a career path opened up to him and he gave it ‘six months’ (Telford, B, interview, March 4, 2015): ‘I just vaguely knew something about Amata. I knew it was a government settlement in the Musgrave Ranges’ (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015). He has now been working in the region for over fifty years.

4.3.1.2

I could withstand the isolation

A strong contributing factor to liking and needing difference was having the fortitude to withstand isolation. To be able to live in an extreme environment in isolation requires a self-assured, self-contained disposition. For a young woman, alone in an isolated desert outpost, Joan Telford was remarkably resilient. Like all the participants in this research, ‘going troppo’, a term used in the Pacific to describe the effect of the tropics on a person’s sanity, was something none of them envisaged could ever happen to them.

‘I doubt [I could ever have lost perspective]. It wouldn’t have changed for me because I was a nurse. I had to be clean and tidy. I think it was too ingrained in us by our family to be like that’, (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

Joan, like the other participants, talked about being largely unaffected by any potential consequences of living in an extremely remote arid zone: ‘It wasn’t absolutely overwhelming for me but when the opportunity presented itself, I went’ (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015). This statement indicates that it did have an effect on her, but that she employed mechanisms to cope.

Feeling self-contained and enjoying your own company – maintaining a hobby – whether it was reading, photography, stone polishing, mapping, geography, history, four-wheel-driving (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015); Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) and for one of the participants, drinking alcohol (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015) – were activities and character trait that helped to maintain perspective

when they were so far away from the everyday structures and institutions that had framed their daily lives in an urban environment.

One participant who took up photography said he was never bored:

‘Especially wildflowers, and I was interested in the explorers and the origin of names that they gave to features through the Musgrave Ranges and further west. And I could combine these two activities with travelling out with the men to places they wanted to show me. I loved maps and had lots of maps of the area’, (Telford, B., 2015 pers. comm.).

Visiting local sites, doing craftwork and ‘sitting around’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) were common weekend activities among all the participants. Like the other participants, nurse Joan had a hobby suitable to the region: reading. She had always been a keen reader, something also done in isolation. She liked her own company.

A strong work ethic was a common value among the participants in this research; always keeping ‘busy’ (Telford B and J, interview, March 5, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). Nobody had time to get bored or distracted (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). Most of them were often ‘too busy’ to feel they were lacking anything in their lives (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). The way they talked about withstanding isolation seemed like they were wanting to pass a self-imposed test designed to show fortitude and moral fibre: They could withstand the isolation because they were busy and had strong self-belief. For those in settlements with no management or supervision, this was a trait that was vital.

Withstanding isolation also meant knowing when to 'get out' (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). There were not many options in terms of where to go, however, particularly as few people had their own motorcars. This meant forming alliances when necessary with those who did have cars (Stoddart interview, July 2, 2015), or with a superintendent who might lend you a government car for the weekend (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). If you had access to a motorcar you would go out camping (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) or drive a few hours to 'have a cup of tea' at a cattle station if you knew the owners (Telford J, interview, March 4, 2015). Both Brian and Joan Telford said they never felt lonely, but always had things to do and people to talk to. Though neither spoke Pitjantjatjara, they both had Aboriginal go-betweens. These were Pitjantjatjatja people who had learned English at the Ernabella mission and who acted as interpreters both linguistically and culturally on occasion:

'Some of the people who'd been educated at Ernabella spoke English. They spoke English better than we do but they didn't use it unless they had to because all the missionaries spoke Pitjantjatjara', (Telford, B, interview, March 21, 2015).

There is a sense of an inner strength in these characters who, by liking and needing difference, set themselves up to support the self-perception of being able to cope. They had a mental, emotional, and spiritual fortitude that made them completely independent. This ability and desire to stand apart was vital to that next stage of social and cultural development in the group.

4.3.2 Negotiating Separated Identities

Negotiating Separated Identities is a category that shows the remote workers creating a non-cohesive, disconnected space by using classification, role-delineation, the accrual of remote capital, and the creation of status symbols. It was not one group classifying another, in an ‘us and them’ fashion, it was the way every individual talked about every other individual. Negotiating relationships and negotiating their space and their own territory was something they had to do in their daily lives.

Each participant made distinctions about themselves which separated them from other workers, such as always being ‘busy’ therefore ‘not part of’ anything outside their own workplace (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4 and 5, 2015); Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). They made distinctions between themselves and other government staff, for example: stating that there was a separation between the administrative staff and other workers (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 12 and 21, 2015); Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). The teachers were generally described as antisocial and the prima donnas of the settlements (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015; Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015); Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015); ‘The teachers stuck to themselves’ etc. (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). Nobody escaped the classification system, not the drinkers and non-drinkers: ‘They’re drinkers, we’re not’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015); Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015); not the anthropologists: ‘Nobody had much time for the anthropologists’ (Telford, B

and J, interview, March 9, 2015).; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015); not the wives of workers: ‘It was really tough on women’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015); ‘For the mother who didn’t know anything about isolation ...’ (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).); and not the newcomer/do-gooders: ‘They’re do-gooders, we’re not’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 21, 2015); Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

All the participants demonstrated this same way of classifying one another with the same labels. This classification was across the board, regardless of role, gender, religion, personal motivation etc. *Negotiating Separated Identities* occurred in three ways: *Categorising each other*, *status symbols* and *longevity*. Each person saw themselves as categorically separate from other government workers.

4.3.2.1

Categorising each other

There was a notable categorisation that divided the workers on arrival – and was a source of separation between the white government workers and the Aboriginal people – and that was the drinking culture. This was a distinct category that should be mentioned here. Most of the participants had either a full category listing or several comments relating to the drinking culture. Drinking created a distinct demarcation between black and white: ‘*There was suddenly a great division*’ [in 1964 when Aboriginal people were allowed the legal right to drink alcohol] ... “They’ve [Aboriginal people] inherited this mindset from some of the abhorrent behaviour of people like me ... you were expected to get (a), aggressive, and (b), drunk and if you didn’t do both, you’d wasted your money ... They don’t have the

mindset: Never have alcohol without food. This afternoon I'll have a drink here, probably with my son and we'll have a bit of cheese and have a chat, and alcohol and food have got to go together. Aboriginals don't do that" (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015); between drinker and non-drinker, and between the men and the women (anecdotally, most of the heavy drinkers were described as being male although women, too were part of the drinking culture). The following examples reveal other distinctions and categorisations of each other, which stood out in the interviews. 'There was a definite division in the community between drinkers and non-drinkers. We were outside that drinking group' (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The demarcation between administrators and 'other' staff was also emphasised in discussions about drinking culture: 'Everybody used to drink, but then, everybody got together whereas we didn't get together so much with the admin staff at Areyonga' (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

There were the Papunya administrators who were 'drunken, foul-mouthed people' (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015), and a perception that not drinking and smoking set you apart: 'We didn't smoke or drink. People don't like you not smoking or drinking – in those days' (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). Even one of the administrators, who was, for all intents and purposes 'in charge' (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015), felt he didn't belong because of others who were heavy drinkers:

'We didn't get on well then because of one particular person who was a heavy drinker and (W) was a bit of a heavy drinker too and the district welfare officer at the time, when I was first introduced to the place, was

part of that drinking clique. They'd go up to the club every night and I was a bit excluded from that', (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Although the non-drinkers made up the bulk of the participants for this research, and they each perceived themselves as being set apart and 'not part of' the drinkers' coterie, they were perceived by heavy drinkers as being 'so few' that 'you didn't see them because they were non-drinking. They were at church or at home' (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

This was in stark contrast to the culture of those living and working in Alice Springs, where drinkers and non-drinkers would socialise together without any stigma being attached to either side:

'I always went to the parties that were on even though I wasn't a drinker. I'd take a carton of beer anyway. There was much more a sense of camaraderie in Alice compared to the remotes', (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).

That is not to say that there was not regular socialising among white workers in remote settlements; there was, and according to the participants it generally occurred at people's homes – but statements about socialising were always qualified by some kind of social separation.

- 'We'd sometimes go to the drinkers' parties, *but we didn't drink*', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).
- 'Yeah the teachers we socialised with. *But they would drink* every night of the week. The headmaster used to get six cases of beer a week. But everybody would drink his beer though. But the

superintendent would have got the same', (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

In Amata in 1965, there was no alcohol. It was afternoon teas during the week and trips out bush on the weekend that brought people together when more staff arrived that same year. Prior to that, when it was just Brian Telford, Joan Taylor and the cattle overseer, socialisation took place in two forms: Brian and Joan would have dinner together, and/or socialise with the Aboriginal men and women in the course of their work day.

There was also a clear delineation between 'administration' and other government workers. Non-administrators were 'just there to do a job' (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015). There was a perception that administrative staff were separate to the rest of the staff because they 'thought along a certain line' (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015). And the 'rest' of the staff did not want to 'pick up the government line and go and do what the government thinks' (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015). If it was not thinking along a certain line, it was general bad behaviour that was expected from administrators in some settlements. As well as alcoholism and violence being displayed by administrators in one or two settlements, there was little sense of the administrators taking care of a settlement: 'The administration would send a tractor out and a trailer and they'd bring back the beer and leave all the food on the truck' (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

There was a division between the ‘do-gooders, newcomers and old hands’, which was a significant category in the participants’ narratives. Striking words that stood out in the interviews included:

‘Do-gooders’

‘Newcomers’ (or ‘new-timers’ and ‘first-comers’)

‘Old hands’ (also referred to as ‘old-timers’)

There was not much tolerance for newcomers, who came with a seemingly default ‘do-gooder’ attitude – a term that by all accounts was not in use in the 1960s (Stoddart interview, July 2, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford, B., and J., 2015, pers. comm.) but which all participants used to describe a certain type of person. According to the data, the do-gooder was always a newcomer and was a thorn in the side of the old hand who ‘knew what was what’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015):

‘Do-gooders are those with rose coloured glasses when it came to Aboriginal people. They’re the people who go into communities and believe that everything the government is doing is wrong and that somehow they can fix it or change it’, (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).

The inference here is that the newcomer/do-gooders are disruptive to the balance that an old hand has gained through experience. The second inference is that those who have experience and knowledge of remote Aboriginal settlements do not view remote Aboriginal culture through rose-coloured glasses. They are the old hands with something far more powerful, something not yet held by the newcomers: cultural, or rather, remote capital.

The other reference in this comment – that not everything the government does is necessarily wrong as the ‘do-gooders’ like to believe – suggests that the old hands who have adapted and attained longevity in the field know better. They have learned how to work within the system. For Tony Mackey, the do-gooders are those for whom remote life is a kind of martyrdom:

‘It’s the people who don’t have a grasp of the reality of Aboriginal life are invariably called do-gooders. ‘They need me because I’m here to help’. They more often than not get over it and ten years later they’re looking out for do-gooders. They feel like they’re on a vacation in life, which is to do noble things for ill-treated Aboriginal people’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

The actions of do-gooders caused friction within the settlement, creating further divisions among the government workers.

‘One of the things that always annoyed us anyway was that they always gave money to the people if they asked. And it was very hard, very hard to stop that, wasn’t it? Some of them would stop it after a while but some of them didn’t. And the people used to say ‘oh, you’re not a Christian if you won’t give me any money’, (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

Three participants mentioned that *‘there was a lot of antipathy towards teachers’* (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). They were described as ‘wanting things over and above the ordinary mainstream or requirements’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). They tended to suffer in car rollovers when making ‘hasty exits’ for their summer break (Telford J, interview, March 9, 2015).

J: ‘The teachers were really a hard group to get to know.’

Q: ‘Why’s that?’

A: ‘I think one of the reasons was in their orientation they were told not to get mixed up in community politics, so they cut themselves off all-together.’

Q: ‘What sort of politics are we talking about?’

J: ‘Oh I’m not sure ... I guess amongst other staff they might fight and involve the people, you know. Some would be on one side, some would be on another. And we did have some of that, I don’t know that it was terribly bad, but the education department obviously didn’t want them [involved]’, (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

The sense of separation was also evident in the distinctions in remote settlements between the white government workers and other white workers, such as missionaries, station owners and anthropologists. There were friendships that were formed between government people and non-government people (missionaries, cattle station workers, visiting anthropologists etc.), but the interviewees also expressed strong emotions – either positive or negative – when they spoke about these three groups. The sense of separation between the non-government workers and the government workers was verbalised very clearly and remarkably in the interviews. The anthropologists were the first to come under review: ‘Nobody had much time for the anthropologists’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

This was a statement from a woman who made good friends with a visiting anthropologist. But even at the time, Joan Telford was not impressed with the studies of Aboriginal people that involved measuring the size of their heads or the sweat on

their arms, as were the research methods of the times: ‘The anthropologists were [quite critical of the missions] too. They seemed to think that it was altering the Aboriginal culture. But none of them came up with an alternative’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). Here we also see the distinct disconnect between government workers having remote capital and anthropologists (who would have had far more knowledge about Aboriginal culture per se), having no place within the permanent white government workers’ social/professional grouping. This was a distinct culture.

It was not just the anthropologists. There was animosity between some of the cattle station people and the government workers, according to two participants, because of the role played by government workers ‘in educating Aboriginal people’ (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). ‘We didn’t get to know the station people much. *They didn’t like government people*’ (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

But the attitude difference between station workers and remote settlement workers ran much deeper than a dispute about roles. Once equal rights were introduced in 1967, most cattle stations were not prepared to pay Aboriginal people the same wages for the same work as white station workers (Burston L, interview, June 7, 2015). One participant explained it this way:

‘It was a white man’s stance. On principle ‘we’re going to show that we don’t need these blackfellas, get them off my property’. That was the disaster time and the dilemma is that it had to happen to world policy terms because Australia was making noises about Fiji and South Africa, and their reply always was ‘how are you treating your [Indigenous

people]', you know? The answer was 'not too good'. Why? 'Because you don't pay them equal wages', so equal wages came in ... the whitefellas [cattle stations] weren't going to let it happen. They [Aboriginal people] were denied it in that 'we'll show these bastards'', (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

Joan and Brian Telford said the travelling nurses were not always well received on cattle stations because their concern was the health and welfare of the Aboriginal people:

'One of her roles was to make sure that the station owners, you know, a lot of them were paid money by the government to provide blankets and essentials to the Aboriginal community living on their station but part of Dot's [the remote area nurse] role was to make sure that they were spending that money on Aboriginal people and they weren't sort of diverting it to their own needs. So, in that respect she did become unpopular with some of the station owners', (Telford, B, interview, March 4, 2015.)

The same sort of welcome awaited welfare officers like Leon Parsons when he was working in Tennant Creek: 'It was very interesting. You got varying receptions [at cattle stations] 'cause you [patrol officers/welfare officers] were seen as the bad guys.' (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). Overall, there was a disconnect between the remote settlement workers and the cattle station as Joan Telford explained: '*We don't know very much of what happened* on stations because no one talked about it much', (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

What happened on the cattle stations stayed on the cattle stations. But it was not just the anthropologists and the station people from whom the white government workers were disconnected. While there were positive relationships between some station managers/owners and some government people, and some good relationships between anthropologists and government staff, there was much admiration and/or respect for the work of some missionaries, and long-lasting relationships that were formed between government staff and missionaries such as Bill Edwards from Ernabella in South Australia, and Brian and Joan Telford. Not everyone saw eye to eye with the methods of some of the missionaries – in Areyonga in the Northern Territory, for example, where traditional Aboriginal ceremonies had been forbidden:

‘In the summer we had no airconditioning, so we thought well, maybe if we started school early. So, we’ll start school at eight o’clock. Oh my gosh, did the S-H-I-T hit the fan! ‘Cause the pastor said: ‘No, that’s our devotional time in the camp’. There was conflict there and, to a point, he even did that with the superintendent and other people in the community, so the pastor was very dominant’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

There were a several examples of participants strongly disagreeing with the methods of the missions, particularly when those missions, as was the case in Areyonga, were housed in what would become a government-run settlement. Conflict between the government staff and the missionaries was almost inevitable, according to Keith and Linda Burston, a school principal and teacher, respectively, in a bi-lingual school:

K: ‘At Areyonga, the people were told absolutely clearly that they weren’t allowed to practice ceremony by the missionaries. ... They wouldn’t talk about their culture. Basically, they wouldn’t talk about it’.

L: ‘When the bilingual program came in in ‘73 we then started doing

Inma [corroborree] with the boys and the girls. And, we got some of the old women and the old men to come up and start doing some ... we'd go down into the creek because there's just down from the school. We'd go into the creek and the kids didn't know what to do. They had absolutely no idea. And I think that's the missionary influence there, which said that, literally pushed it away', (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

What these comments show, among other things, is a clear division between the various groups of white workers: the missionaries, the cattle station workers, the government staff and the anthropologists.

There were other workers who were also classified in particular ways. The gangers were men who did hard labour.

'We used to say, rather disparagingly that when the department wanted to employ gangers and cooks and people like that, they'd wait outside the prison and when they were released, they'd give them a job. And some of these people, they got out to Areyonga. They were drunk when they got there. When they sobered up, they asked where the pub was and we said, well there's no pub here, the pub's in Alice, they'd just get in the car and go', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The storekeepers were of a similar ilk:

- 'Most storekeepers were rogues – not all, but most. They'd make off with thousands of dollars and disappear', (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

- 'And the storemen in these places - some of them were absolute crooks 'cause they get all these government stores in and half of it would go to them. A bit like the third world countries now with our foreign aid', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The criminal – but oftentimes funny - exploits of one such character, a one-armed man, were described as follows:

'He came back from Alice Springs, and he was driving a new Haflinger, which is a little old four-wheel drive which was around 40 years ago. And I said, 'Oh, have you got a new car J'? He used to live next door to us. Anyway, he said, 'oh yeah, it's not bad. It's pretty good actually'. And about two weeks later the police roll up. He'd taken it for a test drive. He still had it', (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Other more serious criminal activities included stealing large amounts of government supplies: 'They got away with a lot of furniture and a lot of money. And no one's ever prosecuted them' (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).

The participants did not employ this method of classification when talking about Aboriginal people. But the notion of classifying each other was not restricted to the government workers. Most of the interviewees also talked about classifications Aboriginal people made about each other and some of that terminology would be adopted by the white workers when classifying Aboriginal people, giving examples of the sorts of classifications they heard, such as:

- 'They're bush people, we're not,' (Mackey, T, interview, July 22, 2015).
- 'They eat people, we don't', (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

- 'They're black. We're brown', (Burston L, interview, June 7, 2015).

There appears to have been a distinct pecking order within which each Aboriginal language group placed each other in relation to the non-Indigenous workers and each other:

- 'There were quite a few Warlpiri people in Papunya. They were the top of the tree I think, the Warlpiri. Pintubi were at the bottom. Everybody blamed anything [that] happened 'oh, them Pintubi people!' (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).
- 'Amongst the Aboriginal groups ... they're also quite racist when it comes to comparing themselves to other Aboriginal groups. So 'that group over there, they've got no morals!' you know? [They would call them] 'terrible people' [laughs]', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The nature of the Aboriginal categorisations of each other mirrored the status inherent in the European categorisations of the newcomer and the old hand.

'There was a bit of a hierarchy with the Aboriginal people, too ... I know I went down one day, looking for Bellrock Jacky. Didn't speak English, came from the Bellrock Ranges, had three wives, umpteen kids, and I asked one of the Christian women from Ernabella where was Bellrock Jacky and she said: 'They're over there but don't go over there 'cause they eat people. Savages!' And I said 'oh, he wouldn't eat me!' They said, 'yes he will'. And I went over and I didn't get eaten so that proved

them wrong. I was quite surprised that someone would say that’,
(Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

Those who ‘came in from the desert’ (made contact with European Australians) later than other language groups (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Telford B and J, interview, March 9, 2015) were referred to as ‘bush people’ by other Aboriginal groups. Joan Telford explained ‘it was almost as if they sort of, are a lower class than the people who’d gone to school at Ernabella’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). This was also evident even in the Top End, when a group of Aboriginal children from Areyonga were taken to Darwin for a singing competition.

‘When we took our group to Darwin for the Eisteddfod. We slept at the showground with the kids and we took a couple of Aboriginal adults with us. We were walking along one day and one of the kids said to me, ‘oh, look at those blackfellas over there’. And they were from the Top End, like, jet black. And I said, ‘well, aren’t you a blackfella?’ And they said ‘no, no, no, no, we’re chocolate,’ they said: ‘We’re not blackfellas’’,
(Burston, J, interview, June 7, 2015).

Using the term ‘bush people’ was common across settlements, from South Australia to the Top End, some 1600 kilometres away. Another participant explained:

‘They actually used to refer to the Aboriginals who had just come in from the bush as bush people – other Aboriginal people did. There was certainly an element of that [length of contact with white people equalling sophistication, which was thought of as superior]. And, because there were only a very few who were able to relate to white people in that way’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

4.3.2.2

Building status and status symbols

A key part of *Negotiating Separated Identities* was creating status symbols. This is not a unique social phenomenon. What is of note is that status symbols were very specific. As noted in *Categorising each other*, there was social influence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, newcomer and old hand, administrators and non-administrators. Remote workers earned or gained a unique position in the settlement by virtue of accruing status symbols.

As all their furniture and household items came with the house, the items were rented by the occupants for a minimal charge of a few cents per item. For that reason: ‘A mat on the floor was a really big status symbol’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015). ‘You got this quirky behaviour I think because of isolation. And a big thing for us, for example, and for many people in the communities, was to buy a mat!’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Just as owning a floor mat, a record player or a car denoted status (Telford B and J interview, March 9, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015), so too did being able to speak the local language of the non-Indigenous workers, peppered with Aboriginal words. Local jargon showed status because it indicated longevity and knowledge. The Burston’s story about the floor mat, for example, denoted that the owner of the mat was an ‘old hand’ and not a ‘newcomer’ or ‘do-gooder’. If you had lived in the settlement long enough to go on leave, buy a mat, and return with it, you were an old hand and therefore had more remote capital, which created yet another level of division between the newcomer/do-gooder and the old hands.

Status was self-appointed. There was no concrete conferral of status upon somebody, except perhaps the possibility of being trusted by particular Aboriginal people in a settlement if you returned after your first year. That meant you no were longer considered a ‘newcomer’ or a ‘do-gooder’ by other old hands. Some people were conferred with an Aboriginal skin name (detailing kinship ties) once they had returned to a settlement after annual leave, but some received skin names immediately on arrival (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). Some never received them at all (Telford, B and J, interview, March 5, 2015). It depended on the settlement.

While some of the language and symbols of the group have been mentioned explicitly in the way they categorise each other, there were some notable symbols in the form of naming things or acquiring things that gave a remote worker a sense of achieving remote capital. As mentioned in **Chapter Three: Methods** regarding the coding, there were a few obvious symbols that placed you as an old hand:

K: ‘The government supplied all the furniture.’

L: ‘And we hired it. So, you’d pay 5 cents for a table and 2 cents for a chair and a fridge was a dollar fifty a fortnight.’

K: ‘So we paid about 4 or 5 dollars a fortnight in rent and stuff while we were there.’

L: ‘I mean, admittedly we were only earning ...’

K: ‘Eighty dollars a fortnight!’

L: ‘Two-thousand dollars a year or something, wasn’t it?’

K: ‘But because of that, *a mat on the floor was a really big status symbol.*’

L: *'And a record player'*, (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015)

Cars were also coveted items due to remoteness and the limited options for travelling anywhere. 'I was in a quite a strategic position there because I was one of the few people working out there who had a vehicle', (Telford, B, interview, March 12, 2015).

According to the participants, those status symbols were the same for Aboriginal people:

'Aboriginal people still used camels, donkeys, horses and walking in the early days. There were only two cars in Yuendumu in the early seventies and Aboriginal people would fill them with petrol, drive around the community until the petrol ran out and then wait until pension day and fill them again and just drive around the community', (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).

Knowing places in the remote regions was a bonus too. According to the participants it indicated a sense of knowing, that you were experienced and possibly an old hand.

There were names that were commonly spoken about:

Len Beadell, who graded the road west to Docker River.

Dave Fogarty, who owned Mulga Park Station.

Peter Severin at Curtin Springs station.

Yami Lester, an Aboriginal human rights activist.

Reverend Jim Downing, an Aboriginal rights activist.

ASOPA – the Australian School of Pacific administration.

Using Aboriginal words:

Inma – a type of celebration/corroborree.

Kumanjayi – a name used to refer to somebody when they have died or applied to a person with the same name as the deceased.

Skin name/skin group – while English terms, “skin” is commonly used by black and white in remote communities to refer to placement within an Aboriginal kinship system.

Everyday words such as:

‘Silver bullet’ - a type of aluminium-clad portable home.

Donga – another name for a portable home.

Camp – have a rest after lunch.

4.3.2.3

Longevity earns status

The third category in this process of confronting disconnectedness was longevity, which earned status. The longer they stayed, the more remote capital they accrued. The more remote capital you had, the more likely you were to be an old hand and have knowledge, wisdom, commitment, and a sense of what was considered right and wrong in a remote settlement when it came to working with Aboriginal people. Being sought for advice was a sign of having longevity and status.

‘Actually, BQ often used to come to me for advice too, which I felt quite humbled about. I think he valued my local knowledge. I mean, he certainly didn’t ask me for advice on technical things because he knew a lot more than I did. But, just on local geography’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Longevity meant a newcomer ‘do-gooder’, who saw the world through ‘rose-coloured glasses’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015) could have a chance to redeem themselves by becoming an ‘old hand’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). A

newcomer did not understand ‘the right approach’ (Telford, B, interview, March 21, 2015). Getting past the ‘bleeding heart’ stage was something to aim for:

‘Do-gooders, to use a term, are people who are bleeding hearts, you know. Aboriginals have been badly done by blah blah blah. Certainly, there’s been some of that too, but we’ve got to put those things aside. But people run around wringing their hands sort of with guilt. That’s what I see as a do-gooder’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

With the accrual of knowledge came a certain amount of power, in that you would be considered wise and knowledgeable ‘providing you acquitted yourself’ in an appropriate way (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

‘Once the [Aboriginal] people know that you’re sincere and you’re interested it really opens a lot of doors. I think that’s one reason why we got on so well there. They knew we were sincere. Even if we made mistakes, they knew that it was a sincerely made mistake’, (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).

Knowledge of remote life, of Aboriginal culture, of basic survival, and of how to adapt in the remote space, was part of building remote capital, which added to an individual’s status and could only be attained with longevity:

‘There was a bloke at Papunya called BC and he became, actually, initiated into the Pintubi group – had his tooth knocked out and everything. He was a linguist. A teacher/linguist. And there was sort of an element of pride about the fact that he knew more about Aboriginals than other people. I think that’s a sense of ownership’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Further discussion revealed that that ownership was about the ownership of knowledge. The more knowledge, the more status. That status, as an outback survivor, was something even those in Alice Springs coveted – but clearly, didn't earn, according to the remote workers: 'The ones who lived in town didn't have much understanding of the bush. They would all profess that they did, but take them out of town, turn them around three times and they'd be bushed' (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

4.3.3 Establishing an isolated space

The isolation of a remote Aboriginal settlement, for a white Australian worker is replete with absences: the absences of family, friendships; institutions such as sports clubs, religious groups, volunteer organisations, professional, governmental and personal support systems etc.; absences of general options for your spare time; of all the normative aspects of Western life. There were two properties that made up this category: *Experiencing isolation* and *Creating separateness*.

4.3.3.1 Experiencing isolation

Isolation was a core part of the participants' experience. The geography of the settlements remains immutable. In the 1960s and early 1970s, that isolation contributed to the participants being cut off from the world they had come from. There was a large divide between life in a remote settlement and the 'outside world'

(Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015); Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

Q: ‘Did you know much about what was happening in the outside world?’

J: ‘I didn’t’, (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

There was no easy way for a worker to leave a settlement in a hurry or when the need arose.

L: ‘Your grandmother died when you were at Papunya, didn’t she? And so, you didn’t go down for the funeral, did you? Because ...’

K: ‘It was too expensive to fly in those days’, (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Their feelings of isolation were exacerbated when the workers were able to return to mainstream Australia on leave, and/or when they tried to talk about their lives in a remote settlement.

- ‘Privately we’d say, look, people just don’t understand so whatever words you used to describe life out there just didn’t seem adequate. People would say oh, is it hot? Well, it was hot, but you know, we didn’t have any airconditioning and in my little house I didn’t have any power either’, (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015).
- ‘You’d start to tell them [what life was like in a remote settlement] and they’d get this glazed look in their eye’, (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Their isolation from mainstream Australian culture meant remote workers missed out on a great deal of cultural change and common discourses, and thus developed gaps in their general knowledge of popular mainstream culture. ‘There’s a huge gap in our

musical knowledge of pop music from 1969 through to about 1980 or so. We missed out on a huge chunk of all the cultural developments that went on' (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Living in Docker River the Northern Territory, or Warburton in Western Australia just over the border meant 'the only communication was the flying doctor radio' (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015). There was no privacy on the line, although it was one of the few resources for remote networking for women on stations. The remote nurses used it daily: 'I used to hear the local gossip on the transceiver after five o'clock sometimes. I became friendly with one of the nurses at Fregon and sometimes we'd have a bit of a chat' (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Otherwise, however, they were 'completely isolated' (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015). Some of the workers had access to windows into the outside world. Brian Telford, for example, 'was usually able to tune into the radio in the evenings. I had a good radio and I could pick up ABC radio from Adelaide, 5CL, just in the evenings.'

There was Keith Burston who would listen to shortwave ABC radio and ordered *Time* magazines to get a glimpse into the 'real' world, but they were just that – glimpses. Remote workers were not a part of it. They remained casual observers in their isolation:

'There was no way to get information. There was no local radio and there was no regular mail service so that [radio and ordering magazines and papers which arrived by plane] was the only way to get it', (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

4.3.3.2

Creating separateness

The culture of remote white workers was described by one participant as one of ‘constantly changing alliances’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). They would ‘pull together if they were frightened but usually, they were *quite separate* from each other’ (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015). Being in settlements with such small numbers of white workers, it was vital to keep a sense of disconnectedness from other government workers for ‘self-preservation’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015). The lack of cohesiveness among the remote workers did not go unobserved by those living in Alice Springs at the time.

‘I had a friend in Alice Springs who got a job in Areyonga. He told me that he went out and introduced himself to people. Every person he went to he said they seemed quite nice – but every single one told him to be wary of the last or next person he was going to meet. Every one. So there was a deep sense of mistrust between the individuals in Areyonga’, (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

They set themselves apart from other workers: ‘There was no mixing of the two [remote workers and Alice Springs workers]. Those in the remotes were not expected to ever go into town’ (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Ironically, some of them did define themselves in opposition to those living and working in Alice Springs, calling themselves ‘bush workers’ (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) if they went into town for supplies. But there remained a mutual separation (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015) between the two groups.

In spite of this separation, there was no feeling or need among remote workers, however, to band together. This was particularly the case in all the communities that

were government-run or had both a government and missionary presence such as Areyonga.

- 'You would have expected that [people would band together] at Amata but it just didn't work that way', (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).
- 'There was no sense that you were working together as a team – all the whitefellas – it was really every man for himself', (Burston, K., interview, June 7, 2015).

Considering this lack of need for cohesion as a group, and a desire to be and remain 'different', particularly in these smaller settlements in the tri-state border region, there was no great desire or need to make friends if the only choices you had were people you would never ordinarily associate with.

'I think that it could be said that all the European staff had some things in common in terms of their relationship with the Aboriginal people, in the way described by Erving Goffman in his book *Asylums*, but there was a vast gulf between them in other ways. They came from very diverse backgrounds. There was no single 'whitefella culture'', (Stoddart, 2015 pers. comm.).

They did not see themselves as being part of, from, or contributing to, a particular culture: 'In terms of some behaviour it could be seen as a culture but not one that unified the staff' (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

'You tend to stick with your own but when you've moved outside that obviously, for social things, particularly, yeah, if someone was interested in camping or four-wheel-driving, we'd go out with them, you know', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

When asked if there was ‘any sense of community between the white people’ in Amata in 1964, the answer was a resounding ‘no’ from both Brian and Joan Telford. ‘Because I didn’t find much in common at all with [BV], I spent a lot of time with the Aboriginal men’ (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015).

The reticence or inability of the white workers, particularly teachers, to become part of a cohesive group culture was explained by Joan Telford: ‘I always blamed the fact that you “don’t get involved” in the community, and that the teachers took it to an extreme’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). However, it appears everyone took it to an extreme, because every participant was ‘part of that’.

One settlement lived in by participants for this research, where separateness was not as strong as elsewhere was the Ernabella mission. Ernabella was described as ‘cohesive’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015) and as having a strong community feel. The settlement was run very differently to the government-run settlements, with a long-term leader, prior training for staff, language training and a sense of a common goal among the small number of staff who worked there (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015); Edwards, B, interview, September 23, 2014). The other settlement described as having a sense of cohesiveness among the workers was Yuendumu. Despite being a government-run community in the Northern Territory, it too had a (prior) missionary framework and was similarly run with strong leadership, clear goals and therefore a strong sense of community (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Strangely, the participants who lived in those settlements still saw themselves as separate from, and not a part of, a group culture. In

settlements like Areyonga where government superintendents and missionaries vied for leadership (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015), disconnectedness became incorporated into the fabric of their everyday lives.

4.4 Finding our own space within the institution

The first core category explains how a narrative around disconnectedness was constructed from the data based on classifying and categorising each other. The workers formed a disconnected space within which they could remain independent and accrue status in the process. This second category was constructed through a vast selection of coded data which revealed a process of adaptation and questioning. It both parallels and stems from the classifications used in *confronting disconnectedness*. The process of making their own way to an unknown, isolated place, and being left to their own devices, set the remote workers on a course of separation and independence from each other in the first instance, and then, in this second core category, from the institutional setting.

There were three core properties that contributed to *Finding our own space within the institution*: *I was my own boss*; *We tried to uphold our values & relied on our own judgements*, and *The institution had a big impact on us* (see **Figure 4.3 below**). Each remote worker arrived alone and had little to no professional supervision; each had a unique role in a remote settlement, with no boss looking over their shoulder; they had no professional or social terms of reference with which to measure their goals or achievements. They were also working within a policy framework, the aims

of which were often either unknown or unclear. It was therefore up to each individual how they navigated this unknown, ambiguous space. The figure below shows how the data for this category were classified. For the full dendrogram, including initial and intermediate-level codes see **Appendices, Appendix D2**.

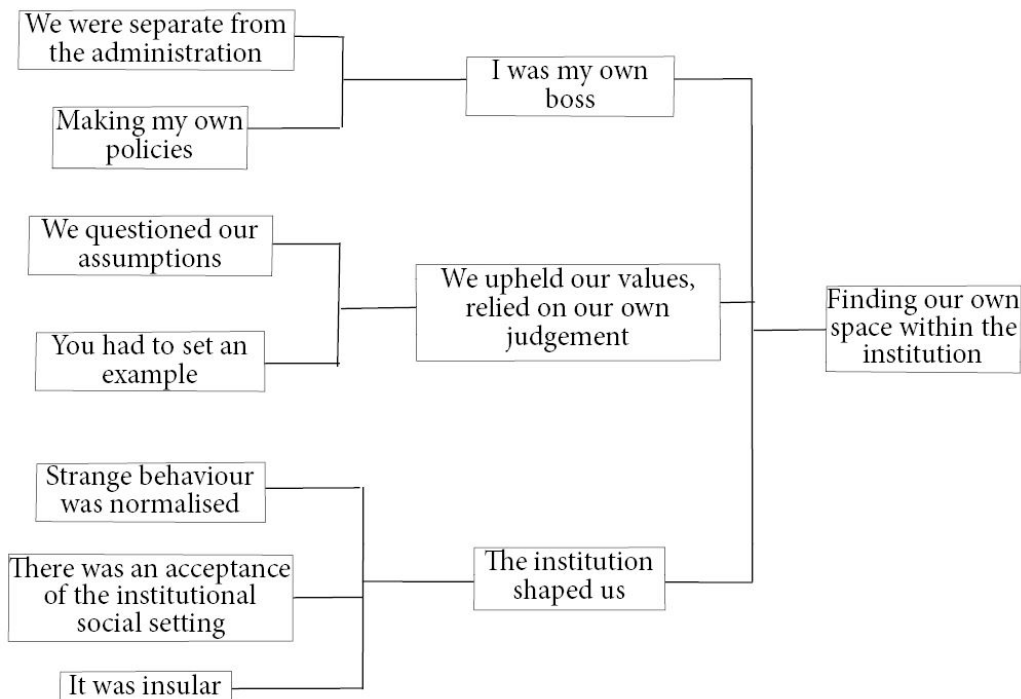


Figure 4.3
The properties and categories of *Finding our own space within the institution*, read from left to right.

In the case of the teachers in Areyonga, they had no curriculum and would ‘get ideas from other places’ from which they eventually developed ‘a sort of framework’ of their own (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). Having no goalposts by which to measure their success also gave them the freedom to ignore that which did not suit them. They had autonomy due to their isolation. This included ignoring policies they did not like once they established their ‘little territory’ (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). Bosses from Darwin or Adelaide rarely, if ever, went to check on them

(Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

Neither did those bosses ever ask for a remote worker's advice on changes to policy (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). Administrative visitors were generally not a welcome sight in a remote settlement.

'Visitors were a pain in the arse - whitefellas. It's what they call works and jerks and the stock inspectors. They're all on travelling allowance. 'I've got to do my bush trip'. Some of them were terrific to welcome as friends and good guests but some of them were just a pain in the back. They'd come out full of bullshit and start telling you how to run the place. No idea what they're talking about', (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

Administrative visitors from capital cities could only scratch the surface of the realities of remote life, thinking they were in charge. But in a remote settlement, it was a case of every man or woman being their own boss.

4.4.1

I was my own boss

There were two key properties to the category *I was my own boss*:

- *We were separate from the administration*
- *Making my own policies.*

These two properties were formulated from the data in response to the great volume of remarks and observations in the participants' narratives describing their separation from the administration and their lack of knowledge about policies, policy direction,

and the inherent lack of clarity about their positions. While they all utilised the same classification language to separate from each other (see this chapter **4.3.2.1 Categorising each other**), there was a distinct and deep separation between ‘the administration’ – those who managed the institution - and the rest of the staff. This had an impact on the workers as individuals, and as a group. A core part of being your own boss in a remote settlement was feeling a sense of separation from anyone perceived as being in charge.

4.4.1.1

We were separate from the administration

The first and most remarkable aspect of the data which emerged during the interview process was that every single participant gave the impression that they were ‘not part of’ something.

‘We weren’t really part of that administration side of things except we had to go to them if we wanted to borrow the truck or we wanted to borrow a tractor or whatever’, (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

More often than not, the non-administrative workers in remote settlements paid scant attention to superintendents. They all spoke of superintendents as being ‘in charge’. Every superintendent spoken about during this time was a man. No women superintendents were ever mentioned. However, if a worker did not like a superintendent, or any policies they tried to impose, the staff member simply ignored them. After all, ‘bureaucracy is set up frustrate you’ (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The superintendents were also often perceived as short-term visitors by other staff because working in a remote settlement was considered “‘stepping stone’ for the administrative staff (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) to a higher position within the public service. They might ‘only’ stay for six months, while the rest of the staff who stayed for years gained expertise which brought with it the status of becoming an old hand. The result of this difference was that superintendents rarely became old hands, and rarely achieved the status that other staff could achieve. Their positions therefore had little or no legitimacy in the eyes of other staff.

The government staff that were not superintendents did not see themselves as being “in charge” of Aboriginal people (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015; Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015), despite their inherent positions of relative power (over Aboriginal people) as the agents of the state in the government’s assimilation policies. Just being white in Australia at that point in time, when the White Australia policies were being enacted, put these government workers a position of power and privilege (Kowal 2011). Administrators, however, were described as being “in charge” (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015), A consequence of this separation is that criticisms levelled at remote settlement staff could be re-directed to administrators:

B: ‘That was often a criticism levelled at staff in remote communities – that they had power over people that they wouldn’t have anywhere else.’

J: ‘Yes, that’s right.’

D: 'I don't know whether it's a fair comment or not, but it was felt that a lot of people abused this privilege.'

Q: 'Do you think they did?'

M: 'Some of them did.'

D: 'Well... um, the last superintendent we had at Amata certainly did'.

The separation from the superintendent as the representative of the state's policies was spelled out by Joan Telford:

J: 'I think if you might have [studied at ASOPA], you'd be thinking along a certain line. You might end up picking up the government line and going and doing what the government thinks whereas we didn't actually do that – unless we did it unknowingly.'

The intention *not* to pick up the government line' is clear. There is a disconnection between remote workers and the top-down institution and its policies. They describe themselves as there to do a job and see no connection between their role and government policy or institutional administration. They saw themselves as separate from the state and its decision makers. The workers who were not superintendents/administration distanced themselves from association with the rule makers, even in passing comments: 'Papunya was interesting because the superintendent there reminds me of the British colonial type ... I think he even had the pith hat!'

The superintendents saw themselves as being in charge, which set them apart from the rest of the staff: 'I say I was God. I had the key to the rations store. My will would and did prevail in lots of areas' (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). The superintendent was also the one who decided who could enter a settlement.

‘Compared to back then, it was more the bureaucrats rather than other individuals who had ownership over entry [to a remote Aboriginal settlement]. The manager of the community or the superintendent was the main gatekeeper. It’s not like that now’, (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).

Thinking they were in charge, however, did not mean that the superintendent could necessarily exert power over other staff.

K: ‘I had a few clashes with L [the superintendent], ‘cause he would just come barging into the school and just try and do things and I’d say ‘hey mate, this is my little territory’’ [laughs].

L: ‘This is our patch!’

K: ‘Don’t bring your ideas here. We know where we’re going. So, you know, and he got a bit upset about that because he was the superintendent. He’s the bigwig. And here’s a scrawny little 22-year-old, 23-year-old telling him where to go. So, there were some expectations. And particularly when you set something up for your own benefit, you don’t want someone coming in and undermining that, you see? And that’s what they would see.’

Considering the classification of superintendents as short-term visitors (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 12 and 21, 2015) (see **Chapter Four: Findings, 4.3.2.1 Categorising each other**), gaining the respect of the other staff was going to be an uphill battle. It was not just the other white staff who ignored directives from the superintendents. Other government staff were occasionally called on to mediate between Aboriginal people and the superintendent, whose ideas regarding the management of settlements were not always well received by Aboriginal people.

‘You had to mediate between them [the Aboriginal people] and the administration, and them and the K’s [the missionaries] sometimes. I mean there was one point when the [Aboriginal] people got totally frustrated with the superintendent and they came up to me late at night, and said, ‘we’re going to get him’ and ‘we’re going shut the system down, we’re going to put sugar in the fuel in the diesel generator, so nobody can call the police’, and I thought oh, great! [laughs]. ‘We’re going to shut the whole place down and we’re going to get the superintendent’ [laughs]. So, I had to talk them out of that and they managed to settle down and go back to camp but they were very upset’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The reasons given for this type of mediation were that the superintendent’s ideas for the settlement were considered ‘a little bit hair-brained’ by other staff and by the Aboriginal residents: ‘These are [Aboriginal] people who have a deep intelligence. They’re not stupid. And I think they’d had enough - whatever it was’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

It was noted by three participants (Telford B and J, interview, March 9 and 12, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) that a redeeming feature of one very-much-disliked superintendent was that he held ‘regular staff meetings’ (of all staff in the settlement). While his other personal attributes were grounds for official complaints, his leadership skills in terms of coordinating staff and awareness of activities across the settlement, were highly valued. Professional coordination was longed for by the staff and made a big difference to their working lives. Coordinating staff and their

goals, something that could only be initiated by a superintendent, also made for ‘a formidable and effective team’ according to one superintendent, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015), resulting in clear motivations, a clear set of goals and tangible results. Not all administrators, however, and even fewer policies, were that clear:

‘Criterion-based referencing, sort of thing, where you set some goals and you work towards them, I don’t know that that was part of the thinking of administrations in those days. I think it was basically, these people [administrators in capital cities] had gotten themselves into a position, often at a very young age and they wanted to protect it. And so they would build up little empires before them if they could. And they were quite open about that’, (Burston, K., interview, June 7, 2015).

Ultimately the remote staff, including the superintendents, each felt they answered to no-one, and equally, nobody sought their counsel on their growing social and professional expertise. Within that growing expertise and separation from administration, remote workers made their own policies.

4.4.1.2 Making my own policies

There were those who knew what government policies were and ignored them (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015), often getting themselves into trouble for thinking outside the government’s accepted parameters (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) when far-off bosses finally did hear about their subordinates’ behaviour. In settlements where there was no management or administration whatsoever, workers were completely free to adapt

their roles to suit their clients (Aboriginal people) without fear of repercussion. They could rely on their own judgement and autonomy:

- Q: 'Were you aware of government policies?'

J: '(laughs) No... no, wouldn't have had a clue', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

Even job descriptions, at the time, shed little light on what it was the government was trying to achieve (see **Appendix D**), or what the role of the workers was to be, regarding the national policies of assimilation at the time. Joan Telford went to Central Australia to take up a nursing job which, to her, was going to be the same as any other nursing job. And all she got were two pieces of advice: 'Speak proper English,' and 'don't go to the camps if there's fighting', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

Over time, as the participants became aware of government policies and how they operated within a settlement, they distanced themselves from the policies they did not like. Many of the participants did not agree with the government's feeding policies. It was a challenging situation for any policy maker, as many of the Aboriginal people were living in settlements that were far from their traditional lands and much larger and more permanent than their traditional camps.

- 'Well, we didn't agree with some of the things, I think, did we? Some of the things that were happening around the place I think we thought were a bit off. I'm sure we had lots of complaints. And I guess for me, a lot of it would be what was happening with the food'. (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

- ‘There was a terrible over-institutionalisation of Aboriginal communities. For instance, we had a catering facility on all these communities – mass feeding of people. Part of the objective, of course was to, importantly, have school children going to school with something in their tummies, as we have the same problem in depressed communities here in Australia ... I thought people should get away from this expectation that they all march up, sort of like troops to the mess hall and sort of, be doled out food and, in fact I thought that meals should be taken more in the home situation. It just might be a crazy idea, but I thought, well, that’s one of the things that I saw as the start for de-institutionalisation and getting away from dependency on everything, you know’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

As the remote workers found their way, they eventually became the experts in their field, but they did so in spite of the government’s lack of clarity. It was not clear to workers like Joan Telford what it was the government wanted them to achieve: ‘I think perhaps we didn’t have a very clear view of the government’s aims’ (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015). In settlements where there was an administration or a superintendent, staff who disagreed with government policies would find their own way to enact their own goals and values:

‘It was a constant series of surprises. And then as you go on, of course, you become more cynical and you sort of look into things a bit more. You don’t accept things at face value’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

This is how Brian Telford understood his role when he arrived at Amata (see

Appendix E):

‘[I was] just told that I would be working with the Aboriginal men.

But the first job I was given – BV [the cattle overseer] - pointed to a heap of building materials and he said: “This is a shed that has to be put up”. That was to be a kitchen and dining room where the kids could be fed every day’, (Telford, B., interview, March 5, 2015).

Brian’s job continued in this vein, building himself a shed to live in, and setting up tasks and projects for himself and the Aboriginal men and children to complete.

The teachers, too, figured out their own way as they went. With no curriculum, the teachers did what they could, ignoring policies they didn’t like and ‘creating policy on the ground - without any permission to do so’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015). The teachers describe putting together their own curriculum in a school full of non-English-speaking children:

‘We used to be fairly eclectic about where you’d find out what was going on in different places and you’d try and pick the best out of those’,
(Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

From singing songs, writing their own books, plays and poems for the children, teaching in Pitjantjatjara, re-designing the curriculum to suit their situation, these teachers’ efforts eventually did make it to the ears of the education department, and the department had other ideas. With no clear long-term goals or direction, no job descriptions, no bosses within 1400 kilometres in every direction, it was much easier to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission.

‘I got threatened with the crimes act once - and jail - because I was seeing Jim Downing [an Aboriginal rights activist] in Alice Springs. He was talking a lot in those days about redesigning Aboriginal communities, so you had clusters of housing according to the skin groups and that sort of thing. And they thought that I was talking to him about departmental policies and things like that. And I actually got called into the Alice Springs office at about 8 o’clock at night and was threatened with the crimes act’, (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Even settlement superintendents ignored directives from above. As long as you told the powers-that-be what they wanted to hear, you could get away with an awful lot due to the tyranny of distance.

‘It was always good because I was a bit of a maverick. I always did what I wanted to do, and I always wrote them good reports at the end so they felt good about it. That’s the most important thing; you’ve got to get the reports right’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

Other staff members saw divisions between themselves and the administrative staff because administrative staff could get away with things that other staff could not:

‘The other thing I used to object to was the administration people because they’d just take the office vehicles, the four-wheel drives and that and just take them off camping and all that sort of stuff which was completely illegal. They used to do it all the time and of course I couldn’t do that, so I was terribly jealous [laughs]’, (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

One of the major challenges for superintendents was that management of remote settlements in Central Australia was based on the government's policies for managing Papua New Guinea (see **Chapter One Introduction 1.8 Historical overview**). Remote Aboriginal Australia was nothing like Papua New Guinea. Neither was it anything like mainstream European Australia:

‘At the time I guess we were a little bit lost because *we needed guidance* but at the same time, it was pretty difficult to relay the European-type curriculum to an Aboriginal community where the kids could barely speak English’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The disconnect between administration and remote staff went both ways. While the staff could and did ignore policies from above, nobody in an administrative position in Darwin, Adelaide, Canberra, or even Alice Springs, asked for input on policy from the workers who had now accrued local wisdom (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9 and 12, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). Those in South Australia were very much on their own.

‘The only thing I had to do was send to South Australia registrations of births and deaths. That’s all they wanted to know about ... it was a great freedom’, (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

When Joan Telford went to work in the Northern Territory it was much more bureaucratic, requiring the nurse to ‘report every sickness to Alice Springs’, but even then, she and the Aboriginal people ignored directives that clashed with the norms of remote life.

‘In the Northern Territory, you’re supposed to wait, notify the coroner [by telegram] and wait for his permission for burial. Well, they were

long buried before we got permission off the coroner because they, the [Aboriginal] people, wouldn't wait a day. I mean, what are you going to do with the body? So, they were buried immediately', (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

Some remote staff had big ideas for change and tried to avoid the frustrations of bureaucracy whenever and wherever they could. Democratisation became something many of them tried to work towards, even within the institutional setting

- 'When we had staff meetings, we'd include the Aboriginals as well. So they always came along, and they ate all the biscuits', (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).
- 'We had a council, a community council, where Aboriginal elders would come in and I'd try to encourage the elders to come in and have a sort of a meeting with the superintendent, tell them about their gripes and what their concerns were. And that's what I thought – that's part of democratisation but on such a miniscule scale', (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).
- 'I was selected for my job by Paul Hasluck, no one less than Paul, and he said to me, from day one he said, 'you've got to work yourself out of a job. These are your clients, you have skills that they don't have, work out how to impart western skills to them', (Mackey interview, July 22, 2015).

Another superintendent had the same notion: that white workers should be aiming to work themselves out of a job, not build personal empires.

‘I think it was always apparent that this was not supposed to go on forever – that Aboriginal communities would become self-administering’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

In trying to be democratic, in trying to change or ignore or make their own policies, they were making their own judgements in situations in which they found themselves.

4.4.2

We tried to uphold our values and relied on our own judgement

This category had two core properties:

- *We questioned our assumptions*
- *You had to set an example*

There was a process of adaptation occurring from arriving as a newcomer/do-gooder to becoming an old hand (see **Chapter Four Findings, 4.3.2.1 Categorising each other**). On arrival in a remote settlement, the workers were far from their own culture, experiencing the fatigue that anyone in a new culture would experience, and trying to rely on the cultural and social references that made sense to them.

- ‘I got out of the car and I could hear the generator for the settlement, you know, the diesel generator, and I went into the office and I said to the bloke ‘oh you’ve got cows here?’ He said: ‘What are you talking about?’ I said: ‘I can hear the milking machine’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).
- ‘I said to him what’s your name? He told me. And I thought, well, I won’t forget that man because he’s got his front tooth missing. And

it was weeks before I realised that every able-bodied adult male had their front tooth missing. I'd been calling them all by this fella's name but...they were very forgiving', (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

On arrival, they also made assumptions about what was expected of them. Brian Telford had nowhere to live and was 'told' he would be joining the family of the cattle overseer, whose wife did not want a young man sleeping on their veranda. Brian made a 500-kilometre round-trip west, on dirt tracks, to find resources with which to build himself a shed to live in.

Q: 'So there was a superintendent's house and that was there when you arrived, but you weren't allowed to stay there?'

B: 'No.'

J: 'Because the superintendent might come. Even though, you could have stayed there easily, really, couldn't you? Because he didn't come.'

Q: 'Who told you that you couldn't stay there? [Laughter]'

B: 'It was just assumed that this was the superintendent's house. In fact, I think JM, told me that they were in the process of appointing a superintendent and that BV was only temporary [in the position of acting superintendent]. Ah, but I think, it was at least six months before PG arrived on the scene'.

Despite being homeless in the middle of a remote desert, the superintendent's house remained out of bounds to young Brian due to the presumption that there was a kind of hierarchy and/or order that was to be followed by newcomers. Some beliefs were clearly not questioned at all in the attempt to maintain a sense of normalcy through a perceived hierarchical order that was literally non-existent in the settlement itself.

There were, however, other assumptions about remote life that were questioned and abandoned with experience.

4.4.2.1

We questioned our assumptions

After getting through the initial culture shock and adapting to their situation, remote workers ‘had to be prepared to question’ their assumptions (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Telford B and J, interview, March 21, 2015). 2015, pers. comm.). They ‘constantly questioned what the hell we were doing there’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). This was apparent when workers continued to carry out policies they disagreed with. Several disagreed with policies that directed the feeding of Aboriginal people three times a day – policies which Joan Telford thought ‘were a bit off’ (Telford, J, interview, March 12 and 21, 2015). In being ‘prepared to question’ and being ‘open to new ideas’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) they would alter such policies if and when they could (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Telford, interview, March 21, 2015); Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

K: ‘We used to say a dreadful thing. We used to say, we’ll have to give up this current generation and educate the next generation and that’s where change will come. And that was commonly acceptable: Give up on the adults. Don’t waste your time with them. And that was believed amongst the people that were running the communities. So, you can imagine how that influenced the decisions. And I don’t think we necessarily believed that but certainly it was part of the common

parlance. Now, up until then, community development just wasn't a word. You never saw those two words together. I only first became aware of it through Jim Downing in Alice Springs. And, then I wished I wasn't a teacher, I [wished I] was a community development person because I would have much rather done that. But I don't believe that was part of the thinking of the department. At all. I would be really surprised if it was, because I saw no evidence of it at all', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Another participant questioned her assumptions about feeding policies, the cargo cult culture she thought it was contributing to, and the pressure that was placing on the remote workers.

Q: 'So you said you didn't agree with the policy of feeding people three times a day. Tell me a bit more about that.'

J: 'Well I think it took away their responsibility. Everyone's responsibility is to look after themselves and the parents, especially, to look after the children. The alternative, what was it? When you're put together with another thousand people and you've got no money and don't work, it can't work. I'm not sure why that happened but it's just, I wouldn't agree with it now either. It was paternalism; everything was paternalistic in those days, wasn't it?'

Q: 'Do you think that placed certain pressures on white people working there?'

J: 'Oh, yeah.'

Q: 'Did you feel that?'

J: 'I think we did, well I did in a way. People expected you to hand over

whatever they wanted. It was a bit like what happened in New Guinea, with the cargo cult. It's just another offshoot of that really, that's how it ended up, I think. Everything has to come from the whitefellow and look at it; it has come from the whitefellow.'

Q: 'How did you reconcile that at the time? You're doing it; you're there to do a job, both of you and yet, was it confusing? Did it ever trouble you?'

J: 'I suppose it made us think about it. The only time it troubled us was if someone came up and wanted to borrow something or [wanted] me [to] give them money. I'd say no and they'd say you're not a Christian or something like that. There was also that expectation that thought that Jesus was meek and mild.'

Q: 'And that wasn't your idea?'

J: 'No. It was very prevalent in the Northern Territory, not so much on the mission [in South Australia]. It's pretty much the same these days [across borders]', (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

This last comment reveals that the culture of 'everything has to come from the whitefellow' – was less prevalent in the South Australian mission at Ernabella at the time than it was in the Northern Territory. There, it was more heavily regulated (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015), and administrative staff and the bureaucracy were already entrenched, (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015); Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) being under Commonwealth control. The more regulation, the more complex the policies, the more frustrating the bureaucracy. The more that was expected of the state, the more difficult it became for remote workers to navigate relationships with Aboriginal

people. While the remote workers were doing their jobs, and continued to do what was asked of them, they had also started to question why they were doing it and think more critically about the situation in which they had found themselves. An understanding and interpretation of the bigger picture started to grow.

J: 'I think part of the problem - and why it might've started was to give rations to [Aboriginal people]. I don't know how often they do it, weekly? It means everything had to get eaten on the first day and there'd be nothing left for the rest of the week. It was too difficult.'

Q: 'Why were there rations at all?'

J: 'Because those people were normally hunters and gatherers.'

Q: 'They couldn't continue to do that?'

J: 'It was too far from their lands. Everything had been hunted out. Papunya had twelve or thirteen hundred people. You couldn't expect them all to go out hunting and gathering every day. Maybe that had something to do with the policy, I don't know', (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

The last sentence in this quote illustrates the disconnect between the workers and the policy makers: not knowing how or why policies were made or who made them. The situation the workers were in was difficult to navigate in that they were being asked to 'do a job', they wanted to do their jobs, but often did not know why they were doing particular activities, and more often than not, did not know who was making policy or why. Superintendent Leon Parsons also questioned the government's feeding policies:

'There was certainly an overall institutional sort of environment that I felt had to be broken down, and it started with food: you know, let the

people go back and have their meals in a family group around the campfire or particular residence, and I thought that also, for instance, rather than people traipsing up to the hospital, to see the nursing sisters, maybe nursing sisters should go down to the camp', (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Parsons was referring to his time in the Northern Territory. Nurse Joan Telford instigated that very change not long after she arrived in Amata in South Australia in 1964:

'I decided it was better to go down [to the Aboriginal camp, about 300 metres away from the European houses] and also it gave me the opportunity of having an excuse to go to the camp', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

The difference this made was important. It meant Joan was involved in the lives of the Aboriginal women and their families. She forged daily relationships with them where they felt most comfortable. It also meant that she got to keep her health clinic in good order.

'That morning [her first morning in Amata in 1964] when I got up and had to face five people in hospital [laughs] and one of the reasons that the other registered nurse had kept them in the hospital was they weren't necessarily sick, but she couldn't get them to take their tablets. They wouldn't take tablets. And so, she kept them in hospital so every four hours she could give them tablets. But on the whole after that I didn't do that. I'd rather go to the camp because the hospital was also part of my living quarters. So, if they wanted anything in the night, instead of getting up and getting it themselves they'd sing out to me, you know. So

it was a matter of who was going to survive the most [laughs]', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

The workers struggled to balance their own values, assumptions and growing knowledge about life in remote settlements with government policy and what was expected of them. They found themselves relying more and more on their own personal values and judgements. In doing so they were questioning the culture of the institution and the policies they were learning about and within which they were living and working.

4.4.2.2

You had to set an example

Part of upholding values and personal judgements included 'maintaining standards' and 'setting an example' (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). Those "standards" were professional, personal and moral. That example was as much for each other as it was a display of European norms for their Aboriginal neighbours. In that sense, this was a way of maintaining a sense of self and a sense of their own cultural values. These were not rebels or hippies (who had yet to make an appearance in remote Aboriginal settlements). They were educated, middle class European Australians, with sensible shoes and pressed shirts. They did, however, exhibit resourcefulness and independence. They were 'maintaining standards' and 'setting an example' (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015) as much for themselves as for their roles in the assimilation policies aimed at Aboriginal people.

J: 'It wouldn't have changed for me because I was a nurse. I had to be clean and tidy, but I think it was too ingrained in us by our family to be like that', (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

In the isolation of the desert, ‘going troppo’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015), or losing perspective of personal ‘standards’ (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015), was something that occurred anecdotally, but the participants for this research say they did not experience it personally – largely, they said, because of their upbringing. Losing standards was described by Leon Parsons as a loss of professional skills due to isolation and the lack of opportunity for professional development:

‘Some, certainly a couple of the carpenters in particular, they lose their skills after a while because of the limitations [of isolation] ... and some of the work, particularly the mechanics would be perennially, sort of, trying to get a vehicle running reliably and could never get it done’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Having to ‘maintain standards’ in the face of extreme isolation was spoken about in reference to the changing times, and the eventual arrival of ‘hippies’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015; Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015; Parsons interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

‘I think, I wasn’t *dropping my standards* at all, although you certainly did see it in some staff who came later – who started walking around in dirty clothes and barefooted and unshaven because that was the way the Aborigines were. Well, that didn’t happen in our time. No, that came later ... *we didn’t agree with their standards because it’s no example. If you set no example people haven’t got anything to look at*’, (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time when some people from western cultures became involved in the exploration and ideation of non-traditional ways of life which included Aboriginal spiritualities. It became a reason for some people to want

to work in remote Central Australia: a reason which is still frowned upon by workers with a longer history in the region:

‘Only recently we were in Woolworths and there were these absolute ferals. They're buying their mung beans and hippy stuff and one of them said ‘we’re teaching’, I think it was at Areyonga or Yuendumu. Jesus, what’s the place coming to? I think that’s a huge factor nowadays - that sort of was kindred spirits [to Aboriginal people and their culture], they were all a bit tribal and there’s all this mindless percussion stuff. There’s drumming!’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

The remote workers of the 1960s were trying to distance themselves from decisions about government policies, disagreed with government policies, and did not see themselves as connected to critique directed at government policies as they originated ‘down south’ or ‘up north’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). It was important that ‘standards’ not be lowered (in terms of hygiene, clothing, general appearance and some behaviours) just because they were living in a remote settlement. Consciously adopting elements of Aboriginal culture would have meant you were ‘dropping your standards’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015). All the participants were adamant that professional standards and clear boundaries should be maintained between the two cultures.

There is a sense that they were trying to hold on to a kind of structure for how to live in a remote settlement; how to act in the face of culture shock, how to deal with remoteness, how to work with the lack of reference-based criteria for professional goals and the lack of social structure, and with power and decision-making sitting elsewhere. Instead of affiliating themselves with either government administration

and its policies, or Aboriginal people and their culture, they navigated a path through the middle, and started to rely on their own values, judgements, autonomy and agency. This had consequences for the collective culture of the remote white worker.

4.4.3

The institution had a big impact on us

This third category included two core properties: *Strange behaviour was normalised* and *It was insular*. The context of remote settlements was described by several participants as ‘goffmanesque institutions’ or just as ‘institutions’(Goffman 1961) (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford, B and J, interview, March 12 and 21, 2015). This isolated institutional space resulted in institutional responses or behaviours (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). While not total institutions in the Goffman (1961) sense, institutionalisation was nevertheless seen as a problem in remote settlements by most of the participants. It was something from which the remote worker could not escape. Each settlement was, for all intents and purposes, a ‘watered down government department’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). The institution itself was seen in the data in a number of ways.

- The superintendent: somebody who thought of themselves as being in charge, but who was often ignored and not considered part of the rest of the staff (see **Chapter Four: Findings, 4.3.2 Negotiating separated identities** and **4.4.1.1 We were separate from the administration**).

- The housing disparity: In the 1960s, the Aboriginal people settling in communities in this region were people who, for the most part, had been living or were still living as hunter-gatherers. Houses were erected for some of the white government staff. In some settlements, such as Docker River in 1970, the Telfords lived in a caravan, and in 1964 on arrival in Amata, Brian Telford lived on a veranda and then a shed he built himself. But the majority of workers lived in houses or demountable buildings, while Aboriginal people still lived in ‘wiltjas’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015) –traditional lean-tos made of branches and leaves.
- Rules and regulations for black and white. For example: all Aboriginal adults had to have a job (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015); Government policies such as the mass feeding policies were enacted; In the settlements with a strong missionary presence, all Aboriginal people had to attend devotional services (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Keith Burston described his feeling that the white staff were working as ‘overseers’ of the Aboriginal population, like a kind of boarding school or training school (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015), particularly further north in Papunya. That started to change on their arrival in Areyonga, a smaller settlement further south. There, they implemented a bi-lingual teaching program (going against education department policies), and always employed an Aboriginal assistant in classes. But that institutional feeling of living in your workplace was something all the participants mentioned (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford, B and J,

interview, March 9, 2015); Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

4.4.3.1

Strange behaviour was normalised

The institutional feeling manifested in strange behaviours: ‘People are strange in communities’ (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015). Institutional responses produced ‘behaviour you’d never see anywhere else’ (Telford., J, interview, March 5, 2015); ‘We saw some rather strange people working in those communities’ (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015): the schoolteacher who shot at flies on the ceiling with a pistol, or the ganger who filled an entire toilet block with cement (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) before leaving a settlement. Remote institutional living affected workers in particular ways. Far from their own culture, far from everything and everyone, the representative of the remote institution (the superintendent) provided little protection or guidance – instead, there was an underlying unease.

‘Some people are concerned about moving away from their place of residence for fear that the outback might sort of consume them or, that they might get lost or they might be attacked by a dingo, or the Aboriginal people might threaten them’, (Telford, B, interview, March 21, 2015).

This was reiterated by another participant who said: ‘The whitefellas would pull together if they were frightened, but usually they were quite separate from each other’ (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

The intense focus on maintaining individual (rather than institutional) values and standards, on personal behaviour and responsibility, on categorising each other and creating individual territories, accruing personal and cultural status symbols in the process of moving from newcomer to old hand status all in a remote and isolated space, also took place within an institutional setting. Rather than that focus being external, in terms of looking up to the institution, or taking direction from the powers-that-be, the focus was intensely internal and personal (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). This strange behaviour was described by Leon Parsons as a kind of ‘secondary institutional response’. It was easy to lose perspective (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2011; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015) when there was no other perspective against which to judge your situation.

4.4.3.2

It was insular

All the participants described living and working in their workplace (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 12 and 21, 2015); Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; 2015, pers. comm.). Living in their workplace was a contributing factor to their unusual behaviours.

T: ‘You’re on the job twenty-four-seven as they say.’

Q: ‘There was no separation between social and work, they were intertwined?’

T: ‘Yeah, yeah. Work could be on at two o’clock in the morning; someone is dead or there’s been a big fight and you’d be expected to go

and pick up the fresh meat. That often did happen’, (Mackey, interview, July 2, 2015).

As with all institutions, ‘there were coteries’ which produced a kind of ‘mental set’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). While finding ways to separate from each other, and the institution, they were still working under government policies, in government-designated institutional settlements – with other people having to do the same.

‘There’s a mental set, you know. I must admit too, that there was a danger of that, settling in, in this institutional thing with the white staff. They had expectations and attitudes and they were sort of, coteries of, no I don’t know how I quite describe it, but there were certainly, there was an overall institutional sort of environment’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

All the participants described living and working in an institution, and secondary, or institutional responses. This was behaviour where the guards start behaving like the inmates and vice-versa (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). This was described in various ways by all participants:

- The Telfords thought that the government’s feeding policies were ‘a bit off’ encouraging paternalism on the part of the white workers and a cargo cult on the part of the Aboriginal recipients.
- Leon Parsons, who studied at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA), brought back ideas about de-institutionalisation of both black and white. He was aware of ‘secondary responses’, read Goffman’s *Asylums* and understood what institutional living can do to a group of people.

- Robert Karsten said: ‘Up until 1972 it was the role of whitefellas to be teaching Aboriginal people under the assimilationist policies so the dynamic was very different. It was meant to be like that. Each individual whitefella was very important because there were so few of them and their roles were vital’.
- Bill Stoddart said: ‘It could be said that all the European staff had some things in common in terms of their relationship with the Aboriginal people (in the way described by Erving Goffman in his book *Asylums*) but there was a vast gulf between them in other ways. For him, he said, ‘it was not possible to entirely escape the job’.

Those coterie were part of the ‘constantly changing alliances’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015), a way to normalise a situation far outside anything they had experienced before. They also provided an outlet for relationship building, discussion, and socialising. They supported secondary responses and normalised the inward-focused ‘mental set’. The result of ‘institutionalisation’ was that small coterie within an otherwise disconnected, heterogeneous group were drawn together. The result of extreme isolation, with nowhere to go and no way to get out, was that they were essentially living in their workplace. The Burstons, felt as though they were living and working in an institution, and noted the residual effects of the assimilation policies, even after those policies changed in the early 1970s. They had privacy to a certain degree but there was little chance of escaping the confines of the institutional settlement.

4.5

We formed a new social framework

As remote workers accrued experience and knowledge, they did not need to rely on the institution and its policies for direction or structure, rather, they turned their focus inward to rely on their own values and newfound experience. This was even easier to do where no administration had been present in the first place. A big influence on remote workers was their relationships with Aboriginal people and the influence of Aboriginal culture. They questioned their assumptions, they questioned policies they learned over time, and they emerged, in this third core category, as old hands, negotiating a new group identity, a new culture based on local influences in time and place. The full listing of categories and codes in this core category can be seen in **Appendices, Appendix D3**. This category has three sub-categories culminating in the re-definition of a social/cultural framework:

- *Our only common ground was our isolation*
- *Our experience (of Aboriginal culture) had a profound effect on us*
- *Experiencing a special time and place.*

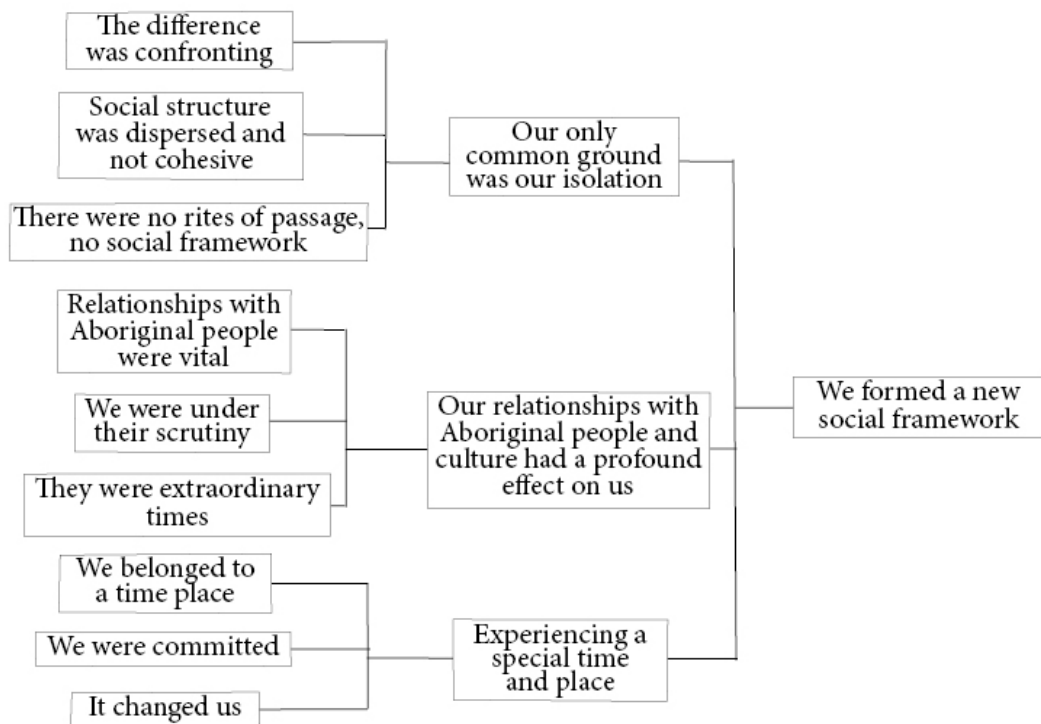


Figure 4.4
 The properties and categories of *We formed a new social framework*, read from left to right.

4.5.1 Our only common ground was our isolation

The properties that contributed to *Our only common ground was our isolation* began on the journey to a remote settlement. The remote workers found themselves in a previously unknown space. They were few in number, in small settlements, sparsely dotted around a vast area with no guidance, no goal posts with which to measure their experience, no cohesion as a group, no rites of passage and no clear social framework on arrival.

4.5.1.1

The difference was confronting

Arrival in a remote settlement was confronting. They each made their own way there. Only two of the participants drove (alone) in their own cars. The others travelled by train and were then met by somebody - a stranger to them - who would take them, by car, to the settlement they were being sent to: 'Well when I first got to Papunya and I thought Oh Lord...and I really, you know, I was quite keen to go home', (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

For Linda Burston, there was no retreat as she was obliged to pay off her teacher-training study with a minimum of three years' work in remote settlements. She realised she knew a chap there that she had trained with at ASOPA. She also soon met her future husband Keith. But even then, the culture shock was a struggle. Joan Telford, too, had a sharp awakening to life in a remote settlement the very night of her arrival.

'We arrived at Amata, Musgrave Park, at midnight. There was an agency nurse who said: 'Five people in the hospital – they're all on these drugs. I'm going and I won't be back!' I thought it was a bit quick. I probably did panic a bit but, oh well, I wouldn't have slept much and so I was up at five ...', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

For another participant, the culture shock began with the long drive to Papunya from Geelong – a drive that could have resulted in his death, had anything happened to his car on the remote dirt tracks.

'I'd never driven on bush roads. Not that sort of bush. The drive up was terrible. I was scared. Not as scared as I would have been today but ...

the roads were completely unmade and very sandy in parts’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Nothing compared to life in remote Central Australia. Three participants used the words ‘very different’ to describe a new ‘world’:

- ‘It’s very different from the world you know if you’ve never been in it before’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).
- ‘It is of course a very different world (especially at that time when it felt so much more remote than it does now)’, (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).
- ‘It was very different [to anywhere else]’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).
- Q: ‘Did you feel like you were living on the moon?’
K: ‘Yeah, to a point. And that’s probably why we wrote home so much because it’s so interesting’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

One participant described being confronted by new terminology, a new kind of remote language that had to be learned.

‘There were quite a few terms that I had to learn but I think I quickly got hold of the local jargon. You know, people who talk about having a camp – well having a camp was just having a rest after lunch’, (Telford, B, interview, March 4, 2015).

It was equally confronting for a young woman on her own to be faced with the culture shock of sudden arrival and having to be self-sufficient:

‘When you come to think about it [a young woman being sent, on her own, to a remote desert settlement with no supervision], it’s a bit strange

I suppose [and] because it was also, I guess, a bit overwhelming, I didn't think anything about it. I was so busy learning what I had to do because I'd never seen a transceiver radio before either', (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

Confrontations and difference were the start of their disconnectedness, dispersal and lack of cohesiveness.

4.5.1.2 Social structure was dispersed and not cohesive

The lack of social structure of this dispersed, non-cohesive group, was evident in discussions around social contact and isolation. Most of these people had never met before. They had not socialised with one another and had not trained together. There was nothing binding them socially or professionally. The confronting isolation and difference was one of the few things they all had in common. But that experience was something each individual went through alone, thinking it was unique to them, further exacerbating and internalising the web of disconnectedness (see **Chapter Four: Findings, 4.3 Confronting Disconnectedness**). In attempting to make sense of their experience, they tried to forge connections where they could 'for survival':

- You also are very isolated - well up there you are. Extremely isolated and you've got to get on with people (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).
- For survival, you've got to have someone you can talk to and people you can have a bit of fun with (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

There was no ‘pecking order’ (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015), or hierarchy among the white staff, beyond an understanding that the superintendent was ‘in charge’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 5, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Macke, interview, July 22, 2015). And those who trained at ASOPA all agreed that staff, to this day, might benefit from training that provided group social cohesion and a common goal before they were deployed to remote settlements (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The absence of a solid social or professional framework in their lives left a need to forge connections and relationships across the sparse, vast isolation of the region. Those connections were flexible. They mediated fickle and volatile relationships and tried to navigate around the disconnected space they negotiated daily. As they were living in a sparsely populated and remote area, those connections were equally dispersed. They forged connections where ever they could within a disconnected space, and of, course with Aboriginal people (Telford B and J, interview, March 5, 12 and 21, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Those connections came in various forms: visitors such as researchers, or people living in other settlements, usually hundreds of kilometres away. (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4, 5, 9, 12 and 21, 2015):

‘I always liked to see visitors. And we certainly had some interesting visitors there [in Amata]. For two winters, the South Australian mines department was doing mineral exploration further west ... and they used to come in and get their supplies from the store. They had a couple of

Aboriginal men who worked with them. So, whenever they turned up at the store, I tried to take the opportunity to invite them up for a cup of tea and I valued their presence ... Or with visiting staff from Ernabella. And we had a team of birdwatchers through at one stage. And a group from Adelaide museum who were looking for the bilby', (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015).

The transceiver radio was another way in which connections were made across vast distances (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015):

'I used to hear the local gossip on the transceiver after five o'clock. Sometimes I'd wait through ... sometimes you'd pick up something when you did: a medical session, or you'd call someone. I became friendly with one of the nurses at Fregon and sometimes we'd just have a bit of a chat. So, I knew all the nurses around just by name. Never, very rarely met any of them. I think gossip was an important part of just sort of connecting with people – most of the station women. I didn't always listen, but if I had time, and no-one wanted to use the radio themselves I'd go over and have a listen', (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Brian Telford also found social contact with regular visitors:

'It was always a great occasion when the flying doctor came in for their routine visits ... every six weeks. I used to think oh, wouldn't it be great to catch up with the flying doctor but the pilots with the flying doctor – they were always in an interesting position because if the doctor was on the ground for two or three hours, the pilot had to fill in time. Sometimes they'd stay out at the airstrip ... but usually they'd come in and quite

often the pilot would wander over to the workshop and just see what I was doing’, (Telford, B, interview, March 9, 2015).

Isolation was their common ground. Their relationships and the general culture of the group developed accordingly. In such a remote, isolated and sparsely populated part of the world, ‘if you get people offside, you’re well and truly stuffed’ (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015). Just as with the Aboriginal people who had adapted over thousands of years to this way of life, within a few short years, the white workers found themselves adapting to a similar kind of dispersed network-like social world.

As ‘there was no alternative to the group’ isolation ‘placed pressure on individuals’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015, pers. comm.). This led to the ‘complex and changing alliances’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) which depended on a range of contexts, personal needs, social developments at the time, personal values, random events, etc. The lack of a nucleus, the lack of hierarchical organisation, the rejection of those ‘in charge’, the focus on small groups and the constantly changing alliances had led to a group culture that was network-based, rather than hierarchical. The socialising that did take place tended to be focused around gatherings at drinkers’ parties, or on leaving the settlement to go camping on a weekend – usually with somebody who had an appropriate vehicle.

- ‘At Areyonga the teachers weren’t drunks. Whereas they were at Papunya. It was a terrible place. Dreadful place. Everybody used to drink [in Papunya]. But then, everybody got together, whereas we didn’t get together so much with the admin staff at Areyonga. We went camping out to Palm Valley with K – the guy that had the

four-wheel drive. He worked at the office. And then when those other teachers came, the guy that had the jeep', (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

- 'When Brian came and he had his own vehicle and we went across to Mulga Park and Joyce Fogarty always made us very welcome, didn't she darling?' (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

- Q: 'We sort of talked a bit about socialising, the drinking as the main way that people would socialise. Well, the drinkers ...'

K: 'Yeah it was.'

Q: 'Did you get together regularly with people?'

K: 'Yeah we'd go camping and we'd have ... I can't really remember more, can you?'

L: 'No well...'

K: 'We'd have people around for dinner and that sort of thing.'

L: 'mm [assents].'

K: 'Just do that sort of stuff. We'd sometimes go to the drinkers' parties, but we didn't drink', (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The participants individually formed their own social structure, alone in their experience. The newly-arrived remote workers had to 'make assumptions' (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015) about the rules regarding social and professional conduct. There was no sense of community among the few white workers in places like Amata in the early 1960s and 'we didn't know anything about the place' (Telford, B and J, interview, March 4, 2015). This was 'not a culture that transcended the many things that divided them' (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

The strength of 'cultural values' differed (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) not just between black and white, but also within the white staff. As a group they had no social or professional cohesion and no common goals or group preparation prior to their placement. They each made up their own work plans for the week or month or term, with no guidance from above (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford B and J, interview, March 4, 5, 9, and 12, 2015); Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). They were on their own.

4.5.1.3

There were no rites of passage or social definitions

The lack of cohesion among the group was further illustrated in the participants' narratives by the absence of any rites of passage or obvious social framework. A newcomer inevitably became an old hand. For some it took a year, for others a few months, for one it was 'five minutes' (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). Returning to a remote settlement after the first year's annual leave would have been an automatic occurrence for those obliged to work for a minimum of three years in a remote settlement in order to pay off their training.

'My thoughts on the first sort of old hands and first-comers you might call them, was, you cut your teeth in the business in a particular Aboriginal community. When you'd moved around to a couple of communities, by then you were an old hand. It would take a couple of years. There was a sense that the longer you stay in a community the more respect you earn - provided you've acquitted yourself appropriately', (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

In discussions about the divide between newcomers/do-gooders and old hands, every participant answered with confidence. Questions such as: ‘Can you describe the difference between a do-gooder and yourself? And ‘How does a newcomer/do-gooder become an old hand?’ were put to the participants. There was a general description given of a do-gooder, but not of an old hand. The question that provoked the most meaningful responses and greatest discrepancies was ‘how long did it take to go from being a newcomer to an old hand?’

‘The second year. See, if you finish the first year and you go back, they’d say ‘my god, what’s wrong with you?’ And you’re back – you’re an old hand’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

‘I think there were at least two classes there: the newcomers and the old hands. We probably considered ourselves old hands by the time we went to Areyonga. I’d been around for six years. I guess I considered myself fairly experienced. I was still young, I was only twenty-eight when we went to Areyonga. I think that these days, [it’s] probably six months’, (Telford, B, interview, March 21, 2015).

L: ‘Well my thoughts on the first sort of old hands and first-comers you might call them, was, you cut your teeth in the business in a particular Aboriginal community. When you’d moved around to a couple of communities, by then you were an old hand.’

Q: ‘How long do you think it would take?’

L: ‘Oh just a couple of years’, (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

Q: ‘How long does it take to become old hands?’

T: ‘Sometimes five minutes’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015.).

Q: 'How long were you there before you no longer felt like a newcomer?'

B: 'Don't know. A few months maybe', (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

Whether it took five minutes, six months or a year, each remote worker went through the process of arriving as a newcomer, to becoming an old hand. They did not know it at the time, but this process appears to have fulfilled the role of their missing rites of passage. The lack of consistency regarding the time it took reveals that, like the accrual of remote capital and status, becoming an old hand was self-determined; every individual determined their own personal criteria and framework for adaptation. The absence of any solid social or professional model, added to the disconnectedness in their lives and left a need to forge connections and relationships across the sparse, vast isolation of the region. Those connections were flexible.

4.5.2

Our relationships with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture had a profound effect on us

At the centre of the higher-order categories that make up this core category sits the profound effect that Aboriginal culture and relationships with Aboriginal people had on the participants. The influence of Aboriginal people and their culture, their isolation, and the culture that remote workers created, was something the Commonwealth Government never anticipated (Hope 1984; Batty 2005). All the participants had a large number of codes dedicated to discussions on Aboriginal culture, violence, health, relationships, extraordinary times and events, working with

the men, the camps, change, and tracking. There are three core properties that made up this category:

- *Relationships with Aboriginal people were vital*
- *We were under their scrutiny*
- *They were extraordinary times*

4.5.2.1

Relationships with Aboriginal people were vital

In Amata in 1964, there were three full-time government workers: a nurse, a maintenance officer, and a cattle overseer. Due to the disconnectedness between them, the lack of common ground, and the desire for ‘something a bit different’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015) ‘there was no sense of community between the white people’ (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015). Two of those people, Brian Telford and Joan Taylor (who married three years later) thought of themselves as ‘very fortunate’ because they were in a position to forge strong relationships with Aboriginal people due to the lack of administration at the time they arrived:

‘It gave us probably a better insight with the [Aboriginal] people than we would have got if we’d started at Ernabella. I think it was easier to make the transition [from Amata to the Ernabella mission] but to make the transition the other way may have been more difficult’, (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).

They both discussed the natural tendency for people with the same cultural background and the same purpose (referring specifically to the missionaries in Ernabella) to form a cohesive social and cultural group when disconnected from their

own culture. That cohesion, they said, led to relationships among the workers that were not common in government settlements:

‘They would’ve had a social life and I really feel that most government places we worked on, I don’t think have an invested social life ... there was a strong community spirit at Ernabella which, unfortunately, we didn’t have at Amata’, (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).

The lack of commonalities between the government workers led to both Joan and Brian spending their time with the Aboriginal women and men respectively, people with whom they would have had even less in common than they had with other white people.

‘In those days, because I didn’t find much in common at all with [the cattle overseer], I spent a lot of time with the Aboriginal men’, (Telford, B, interview, March 5, 2015).

Considering that they had gone to the remote north of South Australia for ‘something a bit different’ – not specifically because they wanted to live and work with Aboriginal people – the absences in their lives on arrival needed filling. As they went from newcomer to old hand, they adapted and forged a new way of viewing the world with a new social structure.

- ‘They became family so whatever happened affected me as well as them, like the death of a baby and all that sort of stuff, had an effect on me as well as on the mother. So, I suppose emotionally that would have broadened my outlook or deepened my thoughts or whatever...um...yeah, I don’t think I would have been exactly the same person after three years there than I was when I went’, (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

- 'I don't think I thought at the time that I was particularly close to the Aboriginal men, but looking back on it now, I think I was, yeah, quite close to them. I think that came out with the death of one or two men that I worked with that I really felt that as if they had been members of my family', (Telford, B, interview, March 12, 2015).

The building of relationships with Aboriginal people was not just a matter of happenstance. The lack of options for socialising with other white government staff was clear, but there was a subsequent desire and need for meaning, and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal people. The participants' retelling of those relationships shows how important they were in the overall structure of their lives.

'I think because I was dealing with the women – and women, you know it's basically the same: kids, kids and family and all that, more so than - where men would have different ideas about doing different things and going different places, I think it might be a bit easier to connect. And once the people know that you're sincere and you're interested it really opens a lot of doors. ... And after we left there, many years later it was, we were in South Australia and this lady that was so good to me, Naningtja, came to church and we both burst into tears. We hadn't seen each other for I don't know how long but obviously we still had a lot of emotional stuff there. And she'd lost a couple of, both her older girls had died. A terrible business but anyway, so you know, and people still sing out – 'hey Joan how are you going?' – or 'sister' – that tells me what era they came from because it was always 'sister' at Amata. Yeah, I think there was a deep connection', (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

For those who lived and worked in the less structured, smaller settlements of South Australia, those relationships with Aboriginal people were much more valuable and they ‘became like family’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015).

Every participant spoke of their relationships with Aboriginal people with great care and affection. According to the accounts of participants, those relationships with their Aboriginal counterparts seemed to be important. Affection was often reciprocated both at the time and on later returns to the settlements, as evidenced in letters such as one from Pitjantjatjara friends to Brian Telford after he left Amata in 1967 (personal library of Brian and Joan Telford, translated from the original Pitjantjatjara by Dr Samuel Osbourne, University of South Australia. See translator’s full translation notes in **Appendix F**). The use of the words ‘family’, ‘attached’, ‘sincere’, ‘close contact’, ‘connection’, ‘overjoyed’, ‘thrilled’ and ‘love’ is just a part of the dynamic between the participants and their Aboriginal friends in remote settlements at the time, an expression of great joy at their wellness and happiness (see figure below).

Dear [REDACTED]

You are (both of you) our truly wonderful family (brother/sister in Christ).

So, you are well?

We are also doing well here in the community but Henry has had a huge amount of work and is absolutely exhausted and his back is really worn out.

But it's almost finished and we're apparently going (there) soon.

But they're working well, everyone is happy and we had a great service here on Sunday.

And we heard that Miss Nicholson got engaged (lit. a really good man promised to her). And sister Baker is well.

Wow! My two sisters (in Christ).

Are you well? No sickness? We are also well, we have no sickness and we're happy.

But we're both grieving (crying) only for the children and we both are just praying and only finding comfort (joy) after praying (asking Jesus).

But at present we're both truly happy and after receiving wonderful letters.

The other day we saw those men, Ivan and the others, and we were overjoyed and we went to see and saw many beautiful things.

We were so thrilled. And they left again and returned and are doing well.

Right, so I'm writing as your dearly beloved brother/sister in Christ.

Love from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Written by [REDACTED] just after [REDACTED] left Amata in November 1967.

Figure 4.5
A translation of a letter written to Brain Telford in 1967 by a Pitjantjatjara friend from Amata

Other participants, too, developed long-lasting relationships with Aboriginal people in other settlements. These relationships have lasted over fifty years.

‘They will ring up and say look, you know, we’re in town or they’ll ring up sometimes and say ‘oh, so and so died’. And then just recently one of our ex-students passed away and she said ‘oh, can you send, do you have some photos, can you send some photos’ and so we did. We sent some photos and we wrote something about her which they then read out I think at the funeral ... so we stay in touch’, (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Tony Mackey still has people ‘come and stay’ with him and his wife in Alice Springs, and Robert Karsten maintains his relationships with Aboriginal people from remote settlements after more than fifty years.

4.5.2.2

We were under their scrutiny

There was nowhere to hide in a remote Aboriginal settlement. It was ‘confronting’ and there were ‘no distractions’ from yourself. Remote workers were also under the gaze of expert trackers in the form of Aboriginal people who knew their every move.

There was no escaping that gaze:

‘Aboriginal people are extremely perceptive about human relationships and your own psyche and so, you can try and hide your faults, but they know them all. And, so you are very much, you’re an open book, in a sense, in an Aboriginal community. I think that’s an incredible skill – that understanding of social behaviour’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

For the Burstons, that scrutiny on their arrival in Papunya, determined what their individual futures would hold:

‘We were both given skin names and that’s traditional because they can’t talk about you unless you’ve got a skin name. It was interesting, at Papunya they were very open about our skin names and they gave us the right skin names so we could get married’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

The renowned tracking ability of Aboriginal people was not just a skill; it also provided canny and intelligent observations that could be confronting to government workers.

‘You’re pretty exposed in that sense, I mean, you can’t go anywhere for example, without them knowing exactly where you’ve been, ’cause they can just read that’, (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Another participant used the same language to talk about the lack of privacy in a remote settlement:

‘One interesting feature of the situation was that the Aboriginal people could track everywhere you had been, either walking or driving’, (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

Having a superior ability to track relationships as well as physical movement gave Aboriginal people other advantages, which, according to the participants, affected relationships between black and white and between the government workers.

‘There was a lot of pressure put on whitefellas by blackfellas. They basically knew which buttons to push and how to manipulate people. After a year in a community, the Aboriginal people would then think they could invest in a whitefella and would not give a skin name until that person had been there for at least twelve months, so once they [the government worker] returned [from annual leave], they [the Aboriginal

people] could give them a skin name and associate them with a particular family – and therefore also know how to put pressure on them to get what they wanted’, (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

One participant discussed the ‘intricate and ingenious kinship system’ which contributed to Aboriginal people’s ability to observe and understand relationships and social structures (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). This understanding of social structures, he explained, contributed to the shaping of the relationship between black and white in Central Australia:

‘It’s a limited friendship because, and I’ve raised a few eyebrows when I saw this, there’s no reciprocity. We’ve had lots of Aboriginals stay here with us in town ... We’d never go to live with them because they don’t have a house. They don’t say can you come to dinner on Tuesday night but if you say can you come to dinner on Tuesday night, my word. You know, I, sadly, a lot of Aboriginals today meet me and say can you give me five dollars and I say no, I just say *lowa* which means no. I am appalled at their turning into bloody humbuggers or scroungers or beggars. I wouldn’t contemplate going to them and saying could you lend me five dollars even though if I said to them can you give me five dollars and they had it, they’d probably give it to me but I wouldn’t do it because I don’t do that and again I’m not saying I’m a good bloke. I go to the bank if I want to borrow money’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

That scrutiny, and the ability to ‘put pressure’ on remote workers (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015) was summarised by

another participant as: ‘They basically knew which buttons to push and how to manipulate people’ (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Understanding the divisions among remote workers and using that to their advantage also had the potential to contribute to further conflicts and further disconnectedness between remote workers.

4.5.2.3

They were extraordinary times

All the participants discussed the time and place as extraordinary. By their own admission, they were visitors in a strange land (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Macke, interview, July 22, 2015). They witnessed a time when Aboriginal people in Central Australia were still making first contact with European culture. Many of those who made first contact had done so only a few years before the participants arrived. The participants witnessed Aboriginal cultural events that now no longer occur. Some of the memorable occasions include seeing Aboriginal people ‘coming in from the desert’:

‘I was at Yuendumu and they came in from the desert. They were glowing, they'd never worn clothes and they were just glowing and none of them had ever had a bath or a shower in their lives. Their skin was just golden’, (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

Like other participants, at the time these events occurred, Tony Mackey was not conscious that they were extraordinary events: this was part of daily life. If he had his time over, he says, he would have taken more photographs and learned the local language (Warlpiri). He did, however, understand that he was living in an extraordinary place ‘because people down south used to say gee, can you speak

Aboriginal?’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). Other participants were also unaware at the time that their daily lives around Aboriginal people were part of a pivotal time in history.

J: ‘It’s only as looking back that we realise how, how important it was. I think we were too close anyway, at that stage, working – and you’re just working. But when you look back there was a lot of change and different people came through all the time.’

B: ‘Well, you know, we were very fortunate to be there during that era. It didn’t mean anything at the time but, you know, 40 or 50 years later, we, we were extremely fortunate I think’, (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12, 2015).

The Pitjantjatjara men of Amata showed Brian Telford things that few people would ever see today.

‘On another occasion the men showed me a cave with some paintings in it and obviously going back a long, long time. I felt really privileged to see these places’, (Telford, B, interview, March 9, 2015).

There were events that the participants witnessed and took part in that would not be possible now, because some of those Aboriginal traditions are no longer carried out (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 9 and 12, 2015). Even those living in Alice Springs were privy to Aboriginal cultural events that no longer occur (at all, in public, or in front of European Australians).

‘Once a year or thereabouts, the Red Ochre men would come into town. When they did all the Aboriginal people would hide. They came to hurt people or point the bone. They’d be real men, covered all over with red ochre’, (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

While the anecdotes about witnessing Aboriginal cultural events were many and considered part of daily life for the government workers, there were other aspects of Aboriginal culture that were more difficult to cope with – but which still formed an important part of the larger picture of this extraordinary time and place: violence. This was common in the larger settlements where a number of language groups were living together in close quarters.

‘Everyone found it hard going in the remotes due to constant clashes between Aboriginal people. I once had to hide behind a car with somebody in Papunya because spears were flying through the air and Aboriginal men were frequently dying from spear wounds’, (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

The exact same phrase ‘spears flying through the air’ was used by another participant who spent time in Papunya on arrival in remote Central Australia.

‘You’d be walking to school Monday morning and all the blokes would be sitting outside the hospital with spears through their legs’, (Burston, K interview, June 7, 2015).

It was not just the Aboriginal men who were violent, but also the women: ‘Lots of fights. We would often see nulla fights’ (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

Although there was less violence in places like Areyonga, it was still a daily occurrence.

- They’d [Aboriginal children] throw stones at the teachers [in Areyonga]. There were holes in the blackboard where kids said, ‘oh that’s where so and so threw a rock at Mister Patricks’’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

- ‘You had a razor blade pulled on you at Papunya and another person came up and was bashing on your door - and all the kids were saying ‘he’s gonna kill you! He’ll kill you! He’ll kill you! [Laughter]’, (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The everyday occurrences of those extraordinary times involved coming to understand remote Aboriginal culture in ways the participants could never have expected.

‘There was a lady who was married, a young woman in a relationship with another man, and the husband did give her a bang. It was the only case I really knew of domestic violence. He never hit her on the face, only arms or legs but a lot of fighting between the women; they really got stuck into each other and drew blood - but not a domestic. Anyhow, she became pregnant and I didn’t know she was pregnant but they all moved out to Mt Davies, which, people did that regularly back and forth because they still liked to go out bush. Then something, they’re terrible doobers, Aboriginal people, they tell you everything that goes on. Someone came on and mentioned she’d had the baby and they killed it because that was the punishment. I thought what do we do about this now?’ (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

The rest of this anecdote is included below to illustrate the complexities of the situation. It shows how the everyday life of the remote worker was affected, the knowledge of Aboriginal culture she accrued and how it influenced her everyday life and the staff’s relationships with Aboriginal people.

‘I didn’t have to do anything because by the time I heard about it, the rumour had got to Oodnadatta where the policeman was and Bruce came

up, the sergeant, and said I'm up here because of this child and I said 'oh yeah', maybe he told me, I don't know but anyhow I knew it was some time after the child died. He said yes and I rang up Joan, and I'm picking up the ladies and I'll take them back to Oodnadatta because this cannot be allowed. We have to show the flag, that there is a difference. Out he goes and he picks up four or five bushy ladies and they were bushy. They hadn't been to the mission or anything, they'd just been [living in the bush]. Off they go, they spend six months in Oodnadatta and they had to stay around the jail. He wouldn't have kept them in jail. The court case came up and they got six months, then he was able to bring them back and they hadn't really, they'd only spent that time at Oodnadatta. I thought that was a very wise move, I thought, they were out of their country for six months, terrified probably because they came from much further west and they were brought back as soon as the judge said you did wrong, you served your sentence here now off you go. As far as I know, the lady who did that is still alive. She was still alive at [W] when we were working out there; a very good painter. Obviously a lot younger than her husband and her co-wives because they're all dead and so is that lady. That lady I think died at Laverton from too much drink. You don't recover from things like that happening to you. The only child she had to the man died of petrol sniffing, the little boy', (Telford, J, interview, March 21, 2015).

When Joan refers to 'the lady' she is of course referring to two different Aboriginal women – the one whose child was killed, and the one who would have killed the baby. In this narrative, Joan uses categorisations – 'the bushy' ladies – a

categorisation used by Aboriginal people about each other (Telford, B and J, interview, March 9, 2015; Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015). She shows the importance of her relationships to the women and children in the region by the fact that she knows their current situations, knows their stories, and understands the long-term effects of the trauma of losing a child in such horrific circumstances. She shows an understanding of the everyday complexities of dealing with cultural clashes born of events out of her normal realm of experience, mentioning the police officer's 'very wise move' in deciding not to lock the women in jail, but to 'wave the flag' instead. These experiences and her growing knowledge had a profound effect on this young, single, white nurse, living alone in the remotest outreaches of the central deserts.

4.5.3 Experiencing a special time and place

There were three sets of data that contributed to the properties making up this category:

- *We belonged to a place*
- *We were committed*
- *It changed us*

There was a large amount of data that corresponded with the theme of relatedness, a part of the process of becoming an old hand and feeling a connection with a time and place. Even though the participants did not see themselves as a distinct culture or group, they all contributed to an overall narrative about co-existing and feeling a sense of belonging, not to each other at the time, but to the place and their

relationships with that place and its people in general, particularly the Aboriginal people in whichever settlement they were living.

4.5.3.1

We belonged to a time and place

In spite of not seeing themselves as a particular group or culture, and in spite of their disconnectedness, the remote workers had an identity. They were described by their nearest European neighbours in Alice Springs as ‘bush workers’. It was explained by one participant the sense of belonging only manifested when set in opposition to an outside group such as those from Alice Springs.

‘Even in Alice for example: We’d go in at the weekends for shopping, and you’d buy stuff at the butcher’s and the butcher would [say] ‘oh, I’ll leave it in the cool room and when you’re finished your shopping just help yourself. The shop’ll be closed but go in the back door and get your stuff out of the cool room.’ And that sort of feeling was around Alice at the time. So, we were seen as part of the bush community. And, in some ways you had more in common because of where you were living, than the differences. And whilst the differences were fairly striking, you really looked for common ground if you were going to form relationships with them, sort of thing’, (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

One reason why ‘bush workers’ did not see themselves as an identifiable culture was due to their disconnectedness. But their individual roles at that time were also their sole focus. Their roles gave them purpose, which, in turn, gave them a sense of belonging – they belonged to their role - in a particular time and place. One participant explained it this way:

‘Up until 1972 it was the role of whitefellas to be teaching Aboriginal people under the assimilationist policies so the dynamic was very different [to today]. It was meant to be like that. Each individual whitefella was very important because there were so few of them and their roles were vital’, (Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015).

The need to belong somewhere, to something or someone, manifested in the accrual of remote capital. For most it was the esteem that came with having the knowledge of an old hand that provided that sense of relatedness, or belonging, as Keith Burston described.

‘I mean, there’s different levels of esteem too. There’s esteem because they’re prepared to put the time and effort in and then there’s esteem because they’re forward thinking and progressive and so on and I would never have said that about the pastor. But certainly I respect him for the time and effort he put in. There were people who lived out in the bush and not necessarily teachers or people like that, who’d been out there for a long time and you certainly look up to them because they’re survivors. You know, they know how it all works’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Burston went on to describe it as ‘a sense of needing to belong’ that led to that accrual of esteem and knowledge in order to become an old hand. For some it may have been a reaction to not fitting in to mainstream society. That accrual of knowledge gives the knowledge-holder even more remote capital today, as Bill Stoddart explained.

‘In those days there weren’t white gatekeepers at the time – the types that felt a certain ownership over the community or over the Aboriginal

people – not in the way I have seen subsequently’, (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015).

The bonds that did form in this space were deep. Time at work and relationships with Aboriginal people formed the bulk of remote workers’ hours. At the same time, they felt that they were part of something, even if they did not know how to name it. Joan Telford put it like this, drawing comparisons with families living on cattle stations:

‘But everyone else around us was doing it, too, weren’t they?

Like...there was Mulga Park, Victory Downs, and they had families – big families at Mulga Park. And they were all out there with their kids.

We experienced something together’, (Telford, J, interview, March 9, 2015).

That sense of relatedness in the data was initially categorised as *Belonging*, *Being between*, and *Third Culture Individuals*. These highlight a process of adaptation in relation to navigating Aboriginal and administrative cultures. One participant described it as ‘the melting pot’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).

4.5.3.2

We were committed

There was enough data in the interviews about vocation, purpose and achievements to constitute a sense of focus and commitment. This contributed to the overall experience of it as a special time and place. It was a time when ‘the men were keen, and we seemed to achieve a lot. We built this big store building. The [Aboriginal] men took a real pride in that’ (Telford, B, interview, March 9, 2015). It was a time when the participants felt like they were ‘doing something worthwhile’ (Telford, J,

interview, March 4, 2015) in ‘working with somebody who couldn’t do better for themselves’. It was more like a vocation than just a job (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015). This commitment to the people and the place grew with experience and personal investment over time. Nobody went or stayed there for the money:

‘I don’t think anybody would have wanted to work at Amata because of the money. Whilst I think it was a reasonable wage, it wasn’t anything that you’d get rich on’, (Telford, B, interview, March 12, 2015).

Brian and Joan Telford laughed at the idea of having personal and professional ambitions. Commitment was driven by personal values (**see Chapter Four: Findings, 4.3.1.1 Wanting a meaningful adventure**). They had no ambition beyond the achievements of Aboriginal people (Telford, B and J, interview, March 5, 2015). For them it was more like a vocation. For women entering nursing or teaching, this seemed to be a particularly strong sentiment: ‘I believe God has a plan for all of us. And I felt that that was his plan for me so I went up’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015).

Another participant described ‘a number of white staff’ in this period in Central Australia as having ‘a sense of the history and of there being a special and particular purpose’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). The longer you were there, he said, the more your perceptions of mainstream Australia changed, too. Several participants left remote Central Australia, not because they did not like being there anymore, but due to family commitments usually to do with having children.

‘One of the main reasons we came down, back to, well, Canberra – by that stage we had one child – and as a child I never knew my grandparents. We left England when I was five and we never went back.

I never saw them again. I never had the influence of grandparents. And I was determined that this was never going to happen to our child – at that stage only one ... And so, that was one of the deciding factors. I mean, maybe if we hadn't had [our daughter] we may not have come down', (Burston L, interview, June 7, 2015).

But of all the participants, half still live in Alice Springs over fifty years later. One lives in Adelaide and continued to work in Aboriginal Affairs, and three live in Canberra and maintain contact with the Aboriginal people they worked with and befriended during their years in remote Central Australia.

4.5.3.3 It changed us

Because of this shared experience, regardless of the lack of cohesion between them at the time, it was an experience that defined them in a time and place.

'I guess in a sense it's almost like going to war and the returned soldiers. It is special and, like Brian and Joan, we might only see them every couple of years but it's like we've never been apart', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

That time and place was so significant in the lives of these young people that Keith Burston referred to it as having defined the rest of his life.

K: 'It defines you. To me, that's the most significant thing I've done in my life. And it was only six years in the bush. And that's more significant to me than starting a brand new school from scratch, winning all sorts of awards and rubbish like that and um, that defines your life. It's interesting, isn't it?'

Q: 'How do you think it's defined you?'

K: 'Well it changes your whole outlook on your culture, your language, and basically, your world view, as I was talking to you about Christianity before and how it modifies all that. And it just leads you to question life. And I'm one of these people who has no answers, unfortunately. I've got lots of questions [laughs] so I'll go to my grave continually questioning things', (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

For those who eventually left Central Australia to return to mainstream life, they found that, despite their best intentions to listen to the radio or get magazines by post, they had missed out on changes in the outside world. The 'swinging sixties', and the discourses that developed during that time, had passed them by.

Q: 'You would have missed all the cultural developments that went on...'

K: 'We did. Totally ... so there's a massive gap in our cultural understanding of European life in that period.'

Q: 'Does that still occasionally come up?'

K: 'Oh all the time!'

The Burstons also gave a perfect example of how their experience of separation from the mainstream manifested as something special to that time and place:

'We didn't watch the landing of the moon on tellie. We listened to it on the radio and we sat in the school playground [in Areyonga] in the sand so the kids could hear it as well', (Burston, J interview, June 7, 2015).

The Burstons described an image of a group of Aboriginal children, some of whom had made first contact with white European culture, with their parents, just a few years earlier, sitting in the red dust, the heat and the flies, their white teachers in their

pressed cotton frocks, shorts and shirts, listening on the radio, to the reports of the first ever moon landing, is a lesson in cognitive dissonance for the uninitiated and a memory to be treasured by those who lived it.

4.6

Forging connectedness

The core category shows that all three main categories, result in one core aim of the group: to find a sense of relatedness by forging connectedness. The concept of “relatedness” or forging connectedness might, prima facie, seem contradictory to their initial desire for difference, but rather than being contradictory, the two run parallel. While their need for difference is related to other non-Aboriginal people, and other non-Aboriginal cultures, the theme of relatedness or forging connectedness was borne of a distinct group of categories in which the participants revealed that, parallel to a general perception of disconnectedness from everyone and everything at the time, in retrospect, they see themselves as having belonged to a special time and place. The theme of relatedness/forging connectedness also emerged through the process of situational mapping (see **Appendix C, Situational Map 1**), where it initially showed up in the category “newcomers and old hands”.

4.7

Conclusion

The three main categories and the core category found in the analysis of the data were the result of a detailed coding process. This whole process of coding and sorting and categorizing led to a struggle to try and find a sense of unity in the culture of these people and this group. It took a long time, a lot of sorting and a lot of

mapping to make sense of all the data. It was an article by Professor John Traphagan in the *Harvard Business Review* that made me realise that culture is not just about unity, rather, ‘culture is something people use, often strategically, to achieve goals’ (Traphagan 2017, p. 1). I was reminded that this process was about finding key markers that identified the elements that formed the group. Their disconnectedness was partly contextual, and partly processual (in that the workers exhibited exaggerated levels of disconnectedness due to an over-reliance on roles and a desire for difference), and which would lead to the overall concept or unit of research.

Forging connectedness was a network of elements that contributed to how people made sense of and remained committed to their roles and place in remote settlements (separate to the institutional setting and top-down policies etc.). Traphagan goes on to say that culture is ‘a web of power relationships in which people are embedded’ (Traphagan 2017, p. 1). This resonated with my own experience, as a European child in Papua New Guinea, a development worker in Timor Leste, and in remote Aboriginal communities (see **Chapter 1 Introduction 1.4.1 Researcher’s positioning**). I grew up being told that it was good to be different. But I still struggle today with the dichotomy of always wanting to be "normal". Except that there is no normal. Trying to maintain a balancing act for myself, between the different, the normal, the present and the past, that was where my gaze had to keep falling - to a far horizon to enable some sense of space to examine clearly what I was observing, what was mine, what was theirs and what fell in between. I, too, had spent my first few months in Timor Leste in a very remote community, living with a Timorese family, understanding the experiences and difficulties of life in the remote regions before heading back to the capital city, Dili. I could see other similarities in that I,

too, went to a developing country for the adventure and the desire to be useful. The building of status, longevity, dealing with isolation, building relationships with Aboriginal people, experiencing a special time and place, were all categories that could apply to my time both Timor Leste and remote Central Australia. What was different, however, was the general context. The time was different. There was less red tape in the form of policymakers being absent from the remote space. Many of the actual policies were more overtly racist toward Aboriginal people than they might be today in terms of rights and prohibitions. The freedom that these workers had was therefore far greater than what I might have experienced in remote Central Australia. They had the freedom to ignore policies if they chose to do so. They were their own boss, they were much more isolated due to the lack of telecommunications, the smaller numbers of other non-Indigenous workers in the settlements and top-down institutional setting all operated to provide an overall context that culminated in the great need and desire to create separated identities and which ultimately led to the creation of a new type of social framework. The similarities that resonated with me, soon started to clarify that what I was in fact seeing, was the experience of my parents in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. As an author I was indulging in a view of history that gazes into this period through a post-colonial lens. However, my reflexive stance as an outsider also meant I was in a position to mitigate the risk of objectifying both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people subject to that gaze due to the methods of constant comparison, memo writing and situational mapping. I was ready to confront my own expectations.

What this all meant to me was that there were processes going on in relation to personal goals, personal relationships, knowledge and power (Foucault 1976) and

webs or networks were playing a role. This was not the first time I had read about webs as a symbolic way of showing how culture is trapped or displayed (Jimenez 2009).

The three main categories and the core category answer the first two questions for this research: How did the characteristics of this group develop and what were the factors that defined them as a group? At the beginning of this process, the expectation was that it might lead to a theory about the history of politics, policies and neo-colonialism. The social, historical and geographical contexts in the findings converge to reveal more elements that will go into the foundations of the storyline: A set of absences which included a lack of social, professional and governance structures; personal characteristics and values; separation from institutional policies; the social process of normalising and adapting to their new experience, and the incorporation of the elements of the time and place that impacted them. In doing so, they forged a much-needed sense of connectedness and formed a new sense of relatedness.

The following two chapters will answer the third and fourth research questions for this thesis. Chapters 5 and 6 will account for the culture of the group and will draw up a theory that leads to the core category. Chapter 5 and 6 describe and explain the development of the culture of this sector that is relevant to the contemporary culture of remote workers, supporting further inquiry into this space.

Chapter Five: Storyline and Discussion

5.1

Introduction

This chapter is in two parts. The first part presents the storyline. A storyline is a key part of the methods employed by CGT (see **Chapter Two: Methodology 2.3.2 The storyline**) as an in-depth rendering (Birks and Mills 2015) of the main categories in the **Chapter Four: Findings**. The storyline is a technique which identifies the core elements and concepts captured in the findings (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Dey 2007) and provides a way of constructing the findings into a coherent theory. It takes those categories through the inductive, abductive and iterative process of analysis and integrates the categories as a ‘conceptual interpretation of the data’ (Birks et al. 2009, p. 410). The Storyline will ‘facilitate identification of the central category and the integration of concepts’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 148), making inferences in looking for the thread that draws together the key elements of the data. This was a process that took time, returning over and over to the data and asking: ‘What is going on here?’ (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 152). The storyline takes the findings to a ‘higher level of abstraction’ (Scott 2004).

The second part of this chapter is a discussion drawing on supporting literature that will contribute to broadening the key aspects of key elements of the storyline. These elements, arranged under the storyline headings, are included here due to their contribution to the resulting theory in **Chapter Six: A new framework**. The discussion of these elements will provide a richer understanding of the storyline and the culture that was found in the analysis of the data.

Chapter Five: Part One

5.2

The Storyline

The findings of this research revealed a lot about the personal characteristics of remote workers. After extensive writing and searching, in looking for the thread that draws this theory together, the following storyline provides a ‘descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 116). In this narrative, four key elements are laid out under the following headings: (1) Personal characteristics and values (2) Ambiguous organisation (3) Social processes, and (4) Internalising influences.

5.2.1

Personal characteristics and values of participants

The most striking thing about the participants for this research, was that they created a picture of themselves as separate from, ‘not a part of’ (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015), or not ‘mixed up so much with the staff’ (Telford, J, interview, March 5, 2015) which was happening outside their own job. These were people who had strong values, particularly around autonomy. Their stories began with the powerful motive of wanting an adventure, something ‘a bit different’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015), to the point that their appointments occurred by happenstance, not design. This was a time when ‘the war had made people more itinerant’ (Telford, J, interview, March 4, 2015), particularly for those working in essential services. Their profile included having had a peripatetic childhood or early adulthood so there was no attachment to place. On arrival they felt like they were ‘breaking new ground’

(Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015): It was ‘very much a frontier atmosphere’

(Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015) in the 1960s.

5.2.2

Ambiguous organisation

Arriving in a remote settlement, the lives of remote workers were replete with absences: no family or friends; no institutions; far from mainstream culture and its daily discourses; the absence of bosses, all residing in far-off cities. They had no prior socialisation and few of them had had any training. Those who had were taught that they were ‘there to change them [Aboriginal people]’ (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015). There were tiny, new settlements with a lack of governance structures and organisation (no clear goals, ambiguous or unknown policies, no leadership, no professional support). There were settlements with colonial-style government superintendents whose management style was inadequate in that it was authoritarian and divisive. There were missionary settlements which had a clear mandate, clear goals, and strong leadership which contributed to a more cohesive, well-adjusted group of people. There were settlements that had both a government and a missionary presence, making for an even more ambiguous space. As was the case with the authoritarian-style leaders, this resulted in further disconnectedness between administrative staff and other workers.

Overall, the goals for the development of remote Aboriginal settlements that were government-run were ambiguous. There was no clear set of procedures, no clear reporting structures, and no clear governance structures. The professional and governance structures they were entering were, more often than not, ambiguous and

undefined. They had ambiguously written job descriptions, if they had any at all. Even those who trained at ASOPA would ignore policies if they did not like them. Most of the workers, however, had no idea what government policies they were supposed to be upholding and/or engaging with on arrival. They were on their own.

5.2.3 Social processes

On arrival, life for remote workers was complex. The following creates an overall picture of their daily lives. Remote workers were faced with many absences in their lives – from friends and family, to social structures. They had to create their own social networks and their own sense of connectedness. They did this by using strategies to navigate socialisation processes. Those strategies included using symbolic interaction, ascribing meaning to social, abstract and physical objects (Blumer 1969). They used language and symbols as a form of status building, categorising each other by role (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.3.2 Negotiating separated identities**). Their status was self-determined (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.5.1.3 There were no rites of passage or social definitions**). The daily structure of their roles gave them stability and a sense of a personal identity. Across the board there were constantly changing alliances and a sense of mistrust among them. They forged relationships across vast distances, and in intermittent meetings such as over the two-way radio or via a visit from the mail plane, using the only means available to them. In the smaller communities where there were far fewer other non-Indigenous workers, they forged strong social connections with Aboriginal people who ‘became like family’ (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015). For the larger settlements there were deep divisions between drinkers and non-drinkers, and

there was a distinct division between the newcomer/do-gooders (who were disruptive to the new order) and the old hands, who had remote (social) capital. These processes reduced the need to affiliate with a bureaucratic or administrative organisation. Using these strategies, they created a new social structure. This was both a result of their separation from the government apparatus that sent them there and a contribution to it: They ‘didn’t agree with [paternalistic policies] then and don’t agree with it now’, (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015).

5.2.4 Internalising influences

There were other key influences that became internalised as part of their adaptation to remote life. Isolation determined which workers stayed, who did not stay, how they built relationships with a sparse and itinerant population, and how they filled their time. Relationships with Aboriginal people were vital to longevity in the field. Aboriginal culture became a part of everyday life for the non-Indigenous workers when they started to ‘internalise some of the cultural norms of Aboriginal life’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015). The settlement itself, its ambiguous history, institutional or ‘quirky behaviours’ (Telford J, interview, March 9, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015) were normalised.

All these influences were internalised, filling the absences in their lives. They were embedded into a new social structure that was present across all sites. Building a sense of connectedness depended on a number of things: the extent of the absences in each settlement and the extent to which remote workers were able to adapt their habitus (embodied dispositions and acquired perceptions) and doxa (internalised

beliefs thought to be self-evident) in order to change their internal practice (Bourdieu 1977), the type of governance and leadership in each settlement, the ability to forge relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across vast distances and the ability to adapt to the socialisation processes. Overall, this was ‘a defining experience’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) and the most meaningful thing any of them had ever done.

Chapter Five: Part Two

5.3 Discussion

The discussion section that follows will use literature and data to support and expand on the key aspects of each of the core elements of the storyline. By explicating the storyline, the discussion seeks to validate and support these findings. It will include data from literature on the contemporary experiences of people working in remote Indigenous art centres in Australia, the international aid and development sector in sub-Saharan Africa, small, isolated groups in Antarctica and the Arctic, the experiences of nurses in remote northern Canada, World War Two Japanese internment camps in remote Arizona, literature on third cultures, and small groups in extraordinary situations. This literature was included as a response to the initial literature review for this thesis. It was designed to include a thorough evaluation of current research, topical studies with comparable data, and enduring research that continues to impact studies with similar data sets.

5.3.1

Personal characteristics and values

A key finding in this research is that there existed a kind of non-Indigenous Australian who chose to leave their family and friends to go and live and work in an isolated, remote, desert outpost in an Indigenous settlement (Telford, B and J; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Stoddart interview, July 2, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015). The detail in the data for this research is important for an understanding of the profiles and characteristics of the people who went to work in remote settlements in the 1960s. It provides an overall understanding of the socialisation processes and the work culture that resulted. By examining those characteristics, this study adds great depth of detail to the limited data on the profiles and dispositions of people drawn to working in isolated outposts. The overall profile of these individuals shows that the desire for adventure and independence were more important than social structure, workplace collaborations or institutional support of any kind (Telford, B and J; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Stoddart interview, July 2, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015;). Indeed, these were all lacking on their arrival in the remote settlement. For example, for one non-Indigenous, church-going woman in her early twenties in 1964, deciding to live and work alone in an unstructured environment, valuing something ‘a bit different’ that was ‘meaningful’ (Telford, J., 2015, pers. comm.) far outweighed any other personal and professional needs she may have had.

Much of the literature on aid and development (which includes literature on the remote Aboriginal domain) focuses on institutions, policy making, programs, culture

shock and the intercultural experience. The lack of detailed research into the personal characteristics of those in extreme environments has been noted by other researchers (Fechter 2012; Kowal 2011; Mocellin 2000). Literature taking personal characteristics as the starting point for studies on group performance, policy implementation or organisational frameworks are rare, but a small number of ethnographies and/or psychological data gathering has been found. The characteristics they include support the findings of this research.

5.3.1.1

The role-reliant autonomous worker who likes difference and adventure

Liking and needing difference, wanting a meaningful adventure, wanting autonomy and agency, and adhering to personal values were all key characteristics of the participants for this research. There was a strong element of personal character that motivated these participants to accept what was a chance offer for all of them.

Similar themes regarding characteristics in Martin’s (1997) ethnography of female outpost nurses in Northern Manitoba support these findings. Martin profiled eleven nurses, including six non-Indigenous and five Indigenous women, living and working in remote Indigenous communities and employed by the national health department. The Manitoba nurses presented strikingly similar values and personal profiles (and experiences) to the participants for this research, as laid out in the table below.

Manitoba outpost nurses	Central Australian remote workers
Northern nursing has been associated with a sense of adventure	Liked and needed difference Wanting a meaningful adventure
When I asked participants what they liked about their job, they readily replied: ‘Independence!’	I was my own boss

We do everything	
We don't have to rely on anybody	We made our own policies
We're allowed to do what we want that matters to the community	We relied on our own judgement
Participants demonstrated and expressed that they valued the traditional, scientific model of medicine	We tried to uphold our values Maintaining standards – you had to set an example
They were minimally involved in community activities.	We weren't part of that

Table 5.1
Comparing profile data to Manitoba outpost nurses

The Manitoba nurses (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) all found fulfilment in their independence, and were in a position to do everything themselves, act as surrogate doctors and do whatever they thought was right for the community. Like the participants for this research, they relied on their personal values around autonomy, professionalism and relationship building. These were key personal values that contributed to their feelings of relative satisfaction in their jobs. They relished their independence (Martin 1997) as their 'most significant positive work-life factor' (Martin 1997, p. viii).

While this study has examined non-Indigenous Australian workers in Indigenous settlements, the Manitoba study included Indigenous nurses whose motivations and characteristics aligned, for the most part, with their non-Indigenous counterparts. This points to there being a characteristic, rather than cultural suitability to remote work in Indigenous communities. It is their role as government representatives, not

their ethnicity or Indigeneity, that puts a remote worker in the difficult position of having to negotiate relationships every day, and which results in their reliance on that role as an important part of their identity. The only significant difference between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous nurses was that it was culturally more acceptable for the Indigenous nurses to socialise with local Indigenous people. The non-Indigenous nurses' social and professional lives were therefore more restricted and presented frustrations not experienced by the Indigenous nurses. For the non-Indigenous workers, resilience and independence needed to be even greater, in that they were more restricted by the limitations on their social lives.

A key theme in the studies on the Manitoba nurses was the need for them to be resourceful in their role: 'We do everything' (Martin 1997, p. 163). The greatest difficulty for these nurses was the lack of administrative support which left them feeling powerless to make changes or confront problems. This parallels the perceived powerlessness and lack of support for the participants in this research. Speaking up against a doctor, for the Manitoba outpost nurses was also a rarity, even for those who stayed for several years. Having an aptitude for building resilience in the form of self-sufficiency, could therefore be said to be a common and/or necessary characteristic for any non-Indigenous worker in either Central Australia 1960s or northern Manitoba in the 1990s.

Table 5.2 (below) shows that Fedha's 2009 study of African aid workers employed by non-governmental organisations in Darfur also revealed similar themes to those found in this study. Fedha's findings, however, particularly emphasised the need for aid workers to strike a balance between remaining open to the influences around

them (including relationship building) and safeguarding themselves from being overwhelmed by the complexities of their position. This has helped deepen the meaning and understanding of the part of this research that explores the need for constant, daily negotiation in a combined social and professional space. The relationships with clients, in both the Darfur displaced persons camp, and Central Australian remote settlements are a key to the perceived success of the mission.

Darfur aid workers	Central Australian remote workers
Wanting to make a difference At times, this job is about enjoying those adventurous moments	Liked and needed difference Wanting a meaningful adventure
Working independently Being adaptable	I was my own boss If we didn't like a policy, we'd ignore it
Developing a good rapport/constant and informal interactions	We tried to be democratic
Using our own judgement	We relied on our own judgement We tried to uphold our values
Committed	We were committed Maintaining standards – you had to set an example
Disconnection from headquarters	We weren't part of that No-one came to check on me
Having to manage and withstand the intense scrutiny of the displaced people in their charge.	We were under their [Aboriginal] scrutiny.
They are compelled to strike a balance between (a) remaining open to influences from their environment, and (b) safeguarding themselves in instances when complexity and uncertainty surrounding them becomes overwhelming.	Negotiating relationships (Time and place) had a profound effect on us (The institution) had a big impact on us

Table 5.2 Comparison of characteristics of Darfur aid workers and Central Australian remote workers

The literature in the table below shows that the profiles found in this study are supported by other data and research on non-Aboriginal people working in remote Aboriginal Australia. This includes examinations of non-Indigenous workers in health, art centre management, missionary teaching and project management from 1955 to 2013. The table also features literature on small groups of workers in other isolated places at various times and in varied places: this includes studies on:

- small and large military and civilian groups;
- personality factors and social adaptation in the polar regions from 1963 to 2017;
- personal and professional experiences and the cultural adaptation of Westerners working in the international aid and development sector, from 1963 to 2012;
- the psychology of small groups in unusual places or situations, such as emergency survivors, 2002 to 2015.

Wanting a meaningful adventure, negotiating relationships within a remote space, role-reliance, being able to withstand isolation, enjoying professional independence, and the importance of a sense of status were all key elements of these authors' studies of those working in remote or extreme environments regardless of time or place (see **Table 5.3** below).

Other research	Central Australia remote workers
Sheppard 2004 Lea 2008 Drury, Cocking & Reicher, 2009 Mahood 2012 Driskell, Salas & Driskell, 2017	Role reliance
Gunderson and Orvick 1963 Canham 2002	Strange behaviour was normalised

Johnson 2005 Stirrat 2008 Mahood 2012 McLean 2015	
Wright, Sisler, & Chylinski 1963 Palinkas 1989 Sheppard 2004 Whittle 2013	I could withstand the isolation I was my own boss
Mocellin 2000 Stirrat 2008	We created our own policy
Mocellin 2000 Sheppard 2004 Stirrat 2008	We were committed
Stirrat 2008 Kowal 2011	We weren't part of that/ we were separate Wanting difference
Sheppard 2004 Johnson 2005 Stirrat 2008 Eyben 2012 Mahood 2012	We wanted a meaningful adventure
Useem, Useem & Donoghue. 1963 Lea 2008 Stirrat 2008 Eyben 2012 Driskell, Salas and Driskell 2017	Status building/categorising each other
Useem, Useem and Donoghue 1963 Sheppard 2004 Lea 2008 Mahood 2012 Eyben 2012 Whittle 2013 Driskell 2017	Negotiating relationships, cultures and expectations

Table 5.3
Other literature supporting common participant profiles and characteristics

These studies have found similar themes in the profiles of their participants, though none of them took the personal characteristics of their participants as the starting

point for their research. Gunderson and Orvick (1963), Palinkas (1989) and Mocellin (2000) were studies on the effect of isolation on military personnel who had been trained and socialised within a formal military framework and were chosen for their expertise in their roles rather than for personal characteristics. The amount of independence and autonomy they were allowed to exercise in their roles was limited by this professional background. As in Central Australia, drinking was a common social activity for Arctic and Antarctic workers. Mocellin concluded that it was psychosocial rather than environmental factors that determined whether or not they could withstand living in small groups in isolation (Mocellin et al. 2000, p. 33). As with the participants for this research, who enjoyed their own company and had no problem living in isolation, Palinkas (1986) also found that it was the introverted (those who highly valued their own autonomy) who adjusted better to isolated life.

Whittle (2013), Mahood (2012), Kowal (2011), and Lea (2008) all examine bureaucratic practice, the intercultural experience, and the place of the non-Indigenous worker within that practice in Australia. They speak to the characters of individuals as part of that context. Canham (2002), Drury, Cocking and Reicher (2009) and Driskell, Salas and Driskell (2017) focused on group cohesion and how people are shaped by group experiences.

Having a strong sense of self (in being able to withstand isolation, and the culture of small groups in isolation), the ability to negotiate a variety of relationships, needs and expectations; creating a sense of status (built on personal and professional experience); and relying strongly on roles to fill the cultural and institutional absences in a remote or isolated environment are key elements across the board for

those working in remote environments, regardless of background, institutional settings or motivations.

The strong sense of self that led to workers being able to withstand isolation and enact their autonomy through a reliance on roles created a sense of unacknowledged social or group identity of like-minded individuals. This phenomenon has been identified in other literature (Drury 2018; Tajfel 2010; Drury, Cocking and Reicher 2009; Bowker and Star, 2000; Jetten, Spears and Manstead, 1996; Brown 1988; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Other small, isolated, heterogeneous groups rely on role categorisations as a means of creating a sense of unity or, at least, the perception of cohesion. That same focus on role classification was described by Johnson (2005) in his memoir of life in Antarctica, discussing social organisation at McMurdo Station. Though they worked in different departments, all the Antarctica workers were employed under the auspices of one organisation. Johnson refers to certain categorisations by role or division as the representation of ‘civic identity’ (Johnson 2005, p. 20). If you were trying to describe somebody, they would, for the most part, be defined by their role division before attempting to verbalise personal characteristics:

- by department or division
- by job title or function
- by past department
- by office location

(Johnson 2005, pp. 20-21).

This civic identity acted as a strategy from which social structures would develop, and which would end up being ‘built into wide-scale bureaucracies’ (Bowker and

Star, 2000 p. 53). By ‘making distinctions’ the workers make the invisible visible, creating regularity, and ‘thus enhancing communication’ (Bowker and Star 2000, p. 231). The uniqueness made explicit in each role is a way of using ordinary, everyday language in ‘constructing boundaries of difference’ which ‘indicates collectivised understandings of difference’ (Anthias 2012, p. 124). These are the ‘differences that matter’ (Anthias 2012, p. 128).

5.3.1.2

The frontier mentality

The ‘frontier atmosphere’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) of the 1960s that attracted young people to live and work in remote Aboriginal settlements contributed to the resulting culture of remote workers. The remote worker, as a newcomer, left behind the institutions and social relationships that contributed to their habitus and doxa (Bourdieu 1977) and allowed themselves to be changed by conditions and contexts that had been influencing Indigenous cultures for millennia. The result is not a re-creation of ‘the old Europe’ (Turner 1928, p. 4) or in this case, mainstream (European) Australia, but a new culture built on new conditions and contexts.

Turner’s 1928 frontier thesis is about the creation of modern American culture and its contribution to American exceptionalism. It theorises that time and place (the Mississippi Valley versus the Rocky Mountains, the Great Plains or the Alleghanies, farming country versus mining, for example), and variations (in the lack) of governance structures resulted in variations in the new customs and cultural norms in each place. According to Turner, it was the combination of cultures on the frontier that contributed to an overall American character. The basic premise of this theory is relevant here on several fronts (see **Table 5.4 below**).

Core elements	Remote workers	Frontier theory
Personal values	Independence, autonomy, adventure	Rugged individualism, autonomy, adventure
Context	Cultural development influenced by sparse population, isolation and external influences	Cultural development differs according to governance structures; Cultural development influenced by sparse population, isolation and external influences
Reactions to governance structures	The more effective governance structures in place, the more cohesive & normative the Western culture remains	Mistrust of government & governance structures. No leadership wanted
Social processes	Determined by isolation/context and solitary role-reliance.	
Policy implementation	Personal values take precedence	Personal values take precedence
Knowledge	Time, relationships with Aboriginal people build remote capital & knowledge	Time, relationships with Aboriginal people build remote capital & knowledge
Role of language/symbols	Categorisations reinforce social development	Time, experience, knowledge reinforce social capital

Table 5.4
Common elements for remote workers and frontier theory

Turner described the frontier as a ‘steady movement away from the influence of Europe’ where ‘the wilderness masters the colonist’ (Turner 1928, p. 4). A frontier is a place of ‘continual beginnings’ (Huber 1999 p. 26); a lawless place of autonomous individualism. In America the frontier was forever moving westward (Turner 1928). While Turner used his theory to underscore the notion of American exceptionalism, those very same traits of rugged individualism, independence, freedom and democracy (for land-owning, Protestant, Western European men) (Turner 1928)

were also being embedded in colonial Australian culture. The outback was, and remains, the 'dead heart' (Haynes 1998, p. 67) and the last frontier for non-Indigenous Australians.

The American frontier was a place where new connections were made according to whichever governance structures existed in that time and place. The less structure there was, the more personal values were enacted, and the more meaningful relationships were because they were not institutional, but democratic, independent and free, to a large extent, of a dominating, external influence.

In the Central Australian frontier in the 1960s the result of this freedom and agency was that non-Indigenous workers found themselves adapting through their culture shock and building relationships directly under the gaze of, and with, Aboriginal people. They very quickly went from being observers, arriving with the colonial gaze of the 1960s assimilation policies as part of mainstream discourse, to being participants in co-constructing a negotiated space (Wearing and Wearing 2006) in which that colonial positioning went from potentially harmful to accommodating and understanding. It was in this co-construction that non-Indigenous and Indigenous operated in the respective settlements in which they each lived and worked. The extent of the governance structures in each of these settlements also determined to what extent the non-Indigenous workers could and did adapt. The findings in this research showed that the individual gaze very quickly became inward focused; government policies were ignored or adapted, relationships with other non-Indigenous people were based on the desire for continued disconnectedness from each other. They did not form a cohesive 'other' in opposition to the Aboriginal

inhabitants of the settlements. These remote workers were as isolated and segregated from mainstream Australian culture in their daily lives (Norman 2019) as the Aboriginal inhabitants.

If these remote workers had arrived as agents of the state, imbued with the colonial discourses that dictated the government policies of the day regarding Aboriginal affairs, the data and the storyline have clearly shown that their awareness of, and time spent in the context of remote Aboriginal settlements, resulted in social processes that placed remote workers firmly within a whole new paradigm. The inter-cultural space was and remains one of constant conflict (Mahood 2012). It is also in this space that the “mutuality of influence” (Seeman and Marinova 2010) occurs between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. The white colonial gaze they brought with them on arrival soon became grounded in the landscape, the relationships with Aboriginal people and the local circumstances that resulted in the daily negotiations and adaptations required to live, in proximity to Aboriginal people. Rather than compromising their personal values, those values resulted in ‘subverting the “white gaze” of development’ (Pailey 2019), p. 1). Remote workers adapted to their environment with a new habitus and created a new place for themselves with a new culture of their own. They became deeply embedded in individual relationships with Aboriginal people, always navigating the tension between appearing to subscribe to colonial policies, while re-placing themselves – not as masters, overlords, colonial overseers or objectifiers of Aboriginal people or culture – but as people in the position of challenging established norms, of changing minds, and critically reflecting on their daily lives. Non-Aboriginal workers were also living under the direct and very studied gaze of Aboriginal people. Self-

reflection was almost inevitable for those who chose for longevity in remote settlements. That influence changed the way the participants in this research understood their place in the world. Their lifestyles changed; their ideas of work, relationships and institutions were not what they once were. Soon they found that they no longer belonged in mainstream Australia. Explaining their experience and how it had changed them to their mainstream peers was almost impossible. They had formed a new culture.

Presuming that a small, heterogeneous group of isolated lay workers coming from the same cultural background could become a cohesive team is therefore not going to provide predictable or desired outcomes: 'Personality traits do not uniformly predict for adaptation' (Palinkas 1989). What may be more useful is to understand that cultural development among the group will be dependent on individual values, reactions to existing frameworks, other external factors such as other cultures, isolation, access to relevant social groups, ability to adapt and so on.

Expectations of what might happen as a result of placing young European Australians in the outback frontier have been described in Hope's (1984) thesis on the far north-west of South Australia. Hope describes a belief in some kind of imagined, glorious, (anti-intellectual) past where the (white) 'practical man' (Hope 1984, p. 188) is elevated to a legendary status. The non-Indigenous Australians who inhabit it are seen as being the essence and heart of Australianness (Elder 2007). Tropes about the frontier life made regular appearances in the newspapers, news journals and magazines like *Australian Post* and *The Bulletin* in the early years of modern Australian cultural development. The influence of these magazines is

evident in making poet Banjo Patterson a household name. His epic poetry such as *The Man From Snowy River* was published in *The Bulletin* in 1895. Tales of pioneer battlers became an integral part of non-Indigenous Australian cultural life. The outback is viewed as ‘the real Australia’ (Elder 2007, p. 213). If this is the real Australia, then it is a place ‘peopled with real Australians’ (Elder 2007, p. 214).

The core elements of the culture of remote workers were revealed, not by their places of origin, but, as Turner (1928) observed, from a new and specific time and place. As agents of the state, working within policies built on ideas of re-making societies, remote workers were in what Huber (1999) called a ‘constant struggle to remake the wilderness into civilisation’ (Huber 1999, p. 29). This process is a ‘constant motion through the primitive and civilised states’ (Huber 1999, p. 29) for the purpose of settling an area (Turner 1928). To know and understand the contexts and conditions of how this culture developed, then, is to understand a core aspect of frontier cultures, whether they be remote Central Australia, the American Frontier, a refugee camp in Darfur or a new colony on Mars.

5.3.2 Ambiguous organisation

The second key element identified by the findings and storyline in this research is the lack of professional and governance structures in remote settlements. This includes a disconnect between policy makers and remote workers as the implementers of that policy. This disconnect comes about by way of inadequate job descriptions and organisation, a lack of administrative support, lack of procedures, preparation and

training, a lack of accountability, a lack of knowledge about policies on arrival, a lack of leadership and a lack of goals.

The lack of accountability and leadership left remote workers with little or no idea of what their mandate was (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4.1.2 Making my own policies**). Goals were rarely stated; if they had a job description it was ambiguously written and procedures were unclear (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4.1.2 Making my own policies**). Expectations on all fronts were ambiguous, unspoken and often undocumented. In effect, the absence of professional and governance organisation gave remote workers implicit permission to develop their ‘own little territories’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015), and do things their own way, without adherence to a clear hierarchy. In effect, they were creating their ‘own policies on the ground’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015). The situation was underscored by a complete disconnect between the policy makers and these ground-level bureaucrats. To this end, the top-down, colonial gaze of the government was interrupted at the ground level. The following section will seek to validate these findings using relevant literature looking at the effect the lack of organisation and structure had on small, isolated groups of workers.

5.3.2.1 Lack of governance structures

Policies in remote settlements were not visible or necessarily made explicit to the remote worker. The central space in which they operated in the 1960s was one of constant negotiation between their own values and experiences, relationships with Aboriginal people, and the governmental institution and its policies (see **Chapter**

Four 4.4 Finding our own space within the institution). Variations in governance structures existed across state and territory borders. The type of governance structures in place depended on the size of the Aboriginal population in a settlement. For example, a settlement in the Northern Territory with fewer than 250 Aboriginal inhabitants did not warrant a superintendent, but Amata in South Australia did. The age of the settlement was also a factor. A new settlement in either state or territory was likely to have no governance structures at all until the population was big enough, or until infrastructure, such as a housing for some staff, water and power, was in place. The Northern Territory had ‘more guidelines in place’ where ‘the policies were a lot more clear-cut’ (Telford, B 2015 pers. comm.) whereas in South Australia and Western Australia they were considered less so due to less government interference at the time (Telford, B and J; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Stoddart interview, July 2, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015). Those guidelines, however, did not extend to supporting changes in Commonwealth law that affected both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal in very remote areas. A perfect example of the confusion wrought by the top-down, external governance was the lack of forethought that went into the practical results of the 1967 referendum (which led to equal pay for equal work for Aboriginal people):

‘I remember that referendum that we all voted in ... that really stuffed things up (for Aboriginal people). The trouble was they lost their jobs, basically, because the people weren’t prepared to pay the money. As soon as equal pay came in their all got lost. They were gone. There were no jobs anymore. It was good in a sense. In another sense it left them with this problem of welfare dependency and then become dispirited and then they

start drinking and then you've got massive social destruction" (Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015).

The lack of attention paid by policy makers regarding the potential results of their lack of support for the coming change meant that no subsidies were offered to cattle stations, no replacement jobs were considered for remote Aboriginal people who had lost income, social standing and expertise in the cattle industry and no options were presented to remote workers in regard to managing their own roles when such a massive shift in the social and professional lives of remote Aboriginal people was about to occur in the settlements in which they all lived. The above comment shows that the long-term harm done by top-down colonial policies can still be felt to this day.

Governance structures also depended on whether or not the settlement had a strong missionary presence or had been government-run from its inception. Some settlements had both a missionary and a government administrative presence, in which case both appeared to have a mandate for the management of the settlement. This caused friction. The smaller, newer settlements in South Australia and the Northern Territory had few or no governance structures in place. Eventually, the management of all missionary settlements would shift governance from the state to the community-level under self-determination policies in the early 1970s.

For the remote worker, if they knew what the policies were, they were considered negotiable. There are a number of examples of this. Teachers who had no curriculum implemented their own bi-lingual primary school programmes and did so against the express policies of the government (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015);

There was the superintendent who lied to his superiors in Darwin, saying that Aboriginal people in a remote settlement were already doing the work that had been allocated to the new non-Indigenous remote workers his superiors wanted to send (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015) He then had to produce a convincing report of the successes of that particular project which had not yet begun. There was a nurse who was supposed to wait for the coroner's permission to bury the dead but 'we just went out with the men and they buried whoever died ... they were long buried before we got permission off the coroner' (Telford, J, 2015, pers. comm.). The non-administrative staff did not see themselves as 'part of that administration side of things' (Burston, L, interview, June 7, 2015). The superintendents were full of 'hair-brained schemes' (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) or 'taking the government line' (Telford, J, 2015, pers. comm.). Ignoring government or changing government policy on the ground was something in which all but one of the participants for this research said they engaged. The one who said he did not ignore government policies ended up leaving his post because he did not agree with the way the government was managing settlements and went on to be a volunteer in another settlement.

This disconnect between 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky 1980) and policy makers or those higher up in a bureaucratic hierarchy is not unique to Central Australia. Fedha's (2009) ethnography of aid workers in Darfur shows that aid workers in isolated refugee camps also operate with a similar level of policy adaptation and discretion due to the disconnect with administrators and/or upper management (see **Table 5.5** below).

Darfur aid workers	Remote Central Australia 1960s
Disconnection from headquarters	No-one came to check on me
‘Instead of rules set in stone, guidelines can be developed (and renegotiated when necessary).’	‘I came back imbued with the idea of de-institutionalisation and more to a community development model.’
	‘They didn’t worry about coffins. I buried a couple of babies – just wrapped in a blanket. But all that stopped I think probably when the department of health took over the medical side of things because you can’t bury people not in a coffin these days.’
‘You wonder what goes through the managers’ heads when they start putting pressure on you to compile a results-based management questionnaire – such a disconnect from the reality here’	‘Criterion-based referencing, where you set goals and work towards them; that wasn’t part of the thinking of administrations in those days.’
‘Rather than meeting endlessly over it trying to pick the “right” approach, experiment with several approaches. See what happens.’	‘We used to be fairly eclectic about where you’d find out what was going on in different places and you’d try and pick the best out of those.’
‘They are compelled to strike a balance between (a) remaining open to influences from their environment, and (b) safeguarding themselves in instances when complexity and uncertainty surrounding them becomes overwhelming’	‘It wasn’t absolutely overwhelming for me but when the opportunity presented itself, I went.’ ‘You had to mediate between them and the administration and [Aboriginal people] and the [missionaries] sometimes. I mean there was one point when the people got totally frustrated with the superintendent and they came up to me late at night.’
‘We work and live in a highly complex environment where most of the people you deal with everyday do not know what the word “rule” means and they don’t even have the term “law” in their lives. If any situation occurs it is to be resolved there and then, nobody waits for you to read them their rights.’	‘At the time I guess we were a little bit lost because we needed guidance but at the same time, it was pretty difficult to relay the European-type curriculum to an Aboriginal community where the kids could barely speak English ... we’d get our own materials ... and eventually they did develop a sort of a framework.’

Table 5.5
Similarities in policy adaptation due to the disconnect with administrators.

While discretion and autonomy may be common in any ground-level worker far away from their top-level bureaucrats, the one key difference between aid workers in Darfur and Central Australian remote workers is that the situation in Darfur led to a ‘strong inter-connection among aid workers’ and ‘a clear dependence on each other’ (Fedha 2009, p. 128). This was not the case for workers in remote Central Australia who remained quite separate from each other, their relationships marred by a deep sense of mistrust.

The negative effects of the lack of governance structures experienced by remote workers underscored a conflicted and ambiguous space which caused friction between bosses and workers on the ground. Similar negative effects were also found by Visser et al. (2016) in their study into the experiences of international humanitarian aid workers. They argue that ‘trust in management ... buffers negative effects of high autonomy among expatriate humanitarian aid workers’ (Visser et al. 2016, p. 1191). They found that those who choose to live and work in unconventional situations (such as expatriate/sojourner aid workers) tend to work longer days, and the separation between work and private life is negligible. Isolated workers have fewer strategies available to mitigate the lack of clarity around roles and personal lives, but Visser et al.’s key 2016 finding was that autonomy and lack of personal resources and professional support and/or job descriptions can be managed better by individuals if they know that the autonomous decisions they make are trusted by their off-site employers.

Similar narratives were found in the Biosphere 2 experiments in Arizona in the late 1980s, early 1990s. The experiment sent four men and four women into a closed,

isolated ecological system to understand more about the Earth's own biosphere and the potential for creating sustainable human life on other planets. The crew members complained of a lack of communication and support from 'mission control' (MacCallum, Poynter & Bearden 2004, p. 5). Ultimately, it was a 'power struggle between owners of the project over its management and direction' (Nelson, Gray & Allen 2015, p. 81) which happened, largely, externally to the crewmembers, that led to the end of the experiment after two years of isolation. It is one thing to train those going to live in isolated contexts, but, as MacCallum, Poynter & Bearden (2004) also pointed out: 'Management as well as the crew and mission control personnel must be trained to conduct extended missions. The root cause of failures during early robotic Moon missions was determined to be bad management of the mission control room and support personnel', (MacCallum, Poynter & Bearden, 2004, p. 8).

5.3.2.2

Lack of professional support

The absence of professional support and governance structures resulted in remote workers' lack of knowledge about policies, and a lack of association with administration. Their agency and autonomy further separated remote workers from each other professionally. The value placed on their own autonomy remained the core driver behind their professional motivation. The ultimate result was that the participants could and often did create their own policies on the ground. They did things their way, to suit their experience, and once policies were known or explained, they often ignored them.

None of the participants could name the exact goal or aims of government policies, even in the Northern Territory, where the government had ‘firm guidelines’ (Telford, B., 2015, pers. comm.). All descriptions were suppositions or beliefs but none of the participants interviewed knew concretely what those policies were, beyond generalities:

- ‘*I think* it was bringing them [Aboriginal people] into the twentieth century’, (Telford, J., 2015, pers. comm.).
- ‘*I think* the focus was also on training the people so that they could go out and live a self-supporting life’, (Telford, B, 2015. pers. comm.).
- ‘*That was more of a goal, to protect your position rather than do anything external ...* although there was a goal and the goal was to make them [Aboriginal people] able to participate in European society’, (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015).

What that meant in practice was also not clear. Because of their autonomy and separation, if policy makers did interfere in the daily negotiations of remote workers, it had the potential to undermine them in their work. The lack of professional and governance structures that led to this ambiguity and to a clash of expectations, required constant vigilance and maintenance. The participants for this study, for example, did not see the need to inform bosses in far off cities about what was being implemented on the ground. For a participant to have been ‘threatened with the crimes act’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015) for indicating that his methods did not fit the top-down approach, reveals this to be a space that is confusing, disconnected, and lacking in support and trust. The workers were not trusted to do the right thing for Aboriginal people, and the managers did not support workers

when they became aware that the workers were adapting policies to suit their lived experience (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015).

Whittle’s 2013 study on the challenges faced by non-Indigenous remote community art centre managers identified similar themes relating to a lack of professional support in the contemporary experience. **Table 5.6** below shows that remote, non-Indigenous art centre managers (a role which did not develop in remote communities until the early to mid-1970s), expressed a need for vast improvements in human resource practices. These include preparation, training, support, goals and professional boundaries for the workers in question, suggesting that there continues to be a lack of good policy and governance structures in the contemporary experience of this role. **Table 5.6** compares the similarities between the 1960s remote workers and contemporary art centre managers. They experienced isolation in their role, a lack of support from government and peak bodies, a lack of training and inadequate job descriptions. Unclear boundaries around the expectations of their roles also display a similar sense of disconnectedness, isolation and lack of structures as was present in the 1960s. This clearly still needs to be addressed for those working alone or without a team today.

Remote Art Centre Managers (Whittle 2013)	Remote workers 1960s
Insufficient job descriptions	Vague or no job descriptions
Lack of training and preparation	Went in knowing nothing
Most participants felt underprepared	‘I was quite keen to go home’ (with two years training)
Lacked support from government and peak bodies	‘We weren’t part of that’ (administration side of things)
Few or no levels of management	‘They had no input. No-one came to check on me.’

What is needed may be unclear	<p>‘Criterion-based referencing, where you set goals and work towards them, that wasn’t part of the thinking of administrations in those days.’</p> <p>‘The government had no clear aim’</p> <p>There was no government plan.</p>
Individualistic	The community did not work together as a team.
Negotiating is a way of life	We negotiated a new framework.
Lack of group cohesion	There were constantly changing alliances
It’s a different country	<p>It was a different world</p> <p>It was another planet</p>
Working 24/7	We were on call 24/7

Table 5.6
A comparison of the lack of governance structures between the 1960s and 2013.

Whittle’s study found that remote art centre managers were motivated to stay in their jobs due to their relationships with Aboriginal people, and because they enjoyed the work. The lack of support from government and a lack of peak bodies was a problem. Rather than drawing remote workers together in the 1960s, the lack of professional support contributed to exacerbating the characteristics of an already heterogeneous group of people. It contributed to further disconnectedness.

Whittle’s study found no regular cross-organisational community meetings and little opportunity for art centre managers to discuss their challenges and experiences. This aligns with the experience of Central Australian remote workers in the 1960s. What this also reveals is that there remains in place today, a non-hierarchical, network-driven nature to remote community culture. All the elements of isolation leave remote workers dispersed across the country, operating within complex social

negotiations. These negotiations involve Aboriginal people, navigating various top-down organisational structures including their own employer, local community councils and federal policies in terms of fundraising. These are different hierarchies and networks all operating within and across the same space with few, if any, peak bodies or organisations monitoring or supporting remote workers in those difficult positions.

5.3.2.3

Lack of leadership

The lack of leadership was just as problematic as the lack of professional support and lack of governance structures (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4 Finding our own space within the institution** and **4.5 We formed a new social framework influenced by time and place**). Attempts at leadership by the superintendent in at least two of the settlements mentioned in this study led to further alienation of other workers and, in both cases, ultimately led to conflict either with other non-Indigenous workers and/or with Aboriginal people (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford, B., and J, interview, March 9 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). Due to the heterogeneous nature of the group, leadership across the professions was often impractical or entirely absent. There were some pockets of leadership within one small group of professionals. The schoolteachers worked together, ‘as a team’ (Burston, K, interview, June 7, 2015). But for a single nurse on her own (there was no mention of male nurses at the time), it was up to her to decide what was important, what were the aims of her role, and how to achieve them (Telford, J, interview, March 12, 2015). There were some settlements where staff were ‘required to be very subservient to the superintendent’ (Parsons, interview,

June 8, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015). But the overall narrative of the participants was that leadership was lacking, (beyond the administrative functions performed by the superintendent) and, according to the participants, it was sorely needed. While the participants for this research committed and stayed for many years – some for a lifetime – it was by and large in spite of the ambiguous organisation and lack of leadership, not because of it.

The heterogeneity of the group meant that superintendents were not always in a position to command the legitimacy to make decisions on behalf of individuals who saw themselves as autonomous and in charge of their own territory (such as the teachers and the nurses). On the rare occasion that there was leadership in the form of coordination among the various professions in remote settlements, regular meetings, and organised group activities either social or professional, it was noted as remarkable, and made a positive difference to the group as a whole (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Telford, B and J, interview, March 21, 2015) (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4.1. We were separate from the administration**).

The effects of positive leadership in small, isolated groups in polar environments were examined by Gunderson and Orvick (1963) at McMurdo Sound in Antarctica. Their findings showed that maintaining social frameworks was helpful for positive adaptation; those with prior training within a regimented framework such as the military coped and worked better than those without. Nelson (1962) also found that for those working in small groups in Antarctica, structural clarity and democratic leadership were important for the esteem of the group. Mocellin et al. (2000) found

that those with prior experience who were trained and well-prepared for polar environments, fared better in Antarctica than those without.

5.3.2.4

The ambiguous institution community

To Australian bureaucrats during a time of high modernism, immediately after World War Two, the remaking of nomadic Aboriginal societies must have seemed like a modernist utopian dream: creating a community ‘from scratch’ as it were, and teaching ‘natives’ how to live in a community of the state’s making. ‘... At its most radical, high modernism imagined wiping the slate utterly clean and beginning from zero’ (Scott 1998, p. 94). The re-making of these Indigenous societies (Scott 1998; Anderson 2006) by policy makers was a social experiment that the policy makers themselves were not carrying out. That was left to the remote workers, for whom daily life in remote Aboriginal settlements bore little resemblance to any imagined government policy. The role of these settlements at a time in which ‘the past is an impediment, a history that must be transcended’ (Scott 1998, p. 95) gives rise to one of the precise aims of the Northern Territory 1964 Social Welfare Ordinance:

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10 (a)

- (i) to bring natives together into a community and to teach them the habits and skills of living in such a community;
- (ii) to provide welfare services fitter to their needs and to their stage of social development; (Social Welfare Ordinance 1964).

Providing basic services for their ‘stage of social development’ – such as vocational training (where possible), providing medical care, improving nutrition and

promoting hygiene, underscores the notion that the state's role is to regulate the group to the point of changing behaviours and social norms. Since the 1953 Social Welfare Ordinance which made Aboriginal people wards of the state (Northern Territory of Australia. Welfare Ordinance 1953-1955: Schedule, Welfare Ordinance, Register of Wards. Northern Territory Government Gazette no. 19B, 13th May 1957), Aboriginal people's lives have been seen as needing management and control (van Krieken 1999). The assistants who were expected to act out that management – the nurses, the tradesmen, the government overseers – had to come from somewhere. They were the first of the 'white adviser[s]' (Batty 2005, p. 215) who would, by the middle of the 1970s become permanent fixtures as the invisible go-betweens (Batty 2005) between the government and the newly incorporated Aboriginal organisations. As 'place invaders' (Kabachnik 2010, p. 1) these workers were outsiders from a different culture, speaking a different language. They had stepped into a new world of their own making; a world which, in its beginnings, had no boundaries and no foundations on which to base itself except as a variance of the societies they had come from. The ambiguity of these government workers' roles in remote Aboriginal settlements was there from the start. The ambiguous space of the non-Indigenous worker leaves them without any of the definable identities of a psychiatrist, a mother superior, or a headmaster of an entire group that is there to be 're-educated'. It does, however, leave both staff and Aboriginal 'client' (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015) with the autonomy and agency to create something of their own making.

Changing behaviours and social norms was by no means limited to the state's role in remote Aboriginal settlements. Creating order out of a perceived chaos with people who, up until the 1950s were seen by colonising governments as a dying race, does, however, lend itself to notions of social experimentation. 'A new community is thus,

also by definition, a community demobilised, and hence a community more amenable to control from above and outside' (Scott 1998, p. 191). Tension arises when attempts are made to reconcile the differences between remote Aboriginal culture and western notions of community in the establishment of remote Aboriginal settlements. Their differences are so disparate as to be incommensurable (Verran 2008).

According to all the participants, remote settlements were 'terribly over-institutionalised' (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4 Finding our own space within the institution**). The term 'institution' is not being used here as a pejorative term, nor does this study view these settlements as total institutions in Goffman's (1961) sense of a closed institution such as a mental asylum, a boarding school or prison. While notions of control, protection, re-education etc. comply with the notion of a total institution as a place for regulating behaviours through the bureaucratic organisation of whole groups of people, Goffman's notion of the total institution cannot be 'stretched with impunity' (Davies 1989, p. 79).

However, in caring for the 'helpless' and pursuing a 'work-like' task (Goffman 1961), the Welfare Branch Northern Territory Administration report on Pintubi Aboriginal Reserves in Central Australia (1961) sets a clear goal of institutional control:

- (iii) provide the means whereby training may be given, particularly to children and adolescents;

- (iv) introduce the general concept of “work” as a worthwhile aim in life;
- (v) develop in the younger and middle-age groups an attitude that the settlements and mission stations are there to provide health and educational services for their children, so that the latter may be prepared for a future life as adults living in a wider community than the tribe (NTA 1960/61, 46).

Protecting Aboriginal people from themselves and the outside world - does fulfil the requirements for total institutions. The language in the above report on Pintubi Aboriginal Reserves in Central Australia indicates that the state is exercising its values around ‘community’. Bain (2005) describes remote settlements, not as communities in the Western sense, rather as ‘a mere aggregation of various groups brought together under past pressure of Western settlement’ making it ‘difficult to apply good principles of community development in such situations’ (Bain 2005, p. 37). As well as that, remote Aboriginal settlements had various elements of each or all of Goffman’s (1961) institutions, yet some of those working in this space belied the coloniser/colonised roles of Goffman’s total institutions. This means either that these roles, so integral to a state institution, were transcended by the individuals involved in the relationship (on both sides) or that they were never mutually exclusive positions to begin with.

It is here, in the free agency between the non-Aboriginal remote worker and the Aboriginal ‘friend’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015), ‘family’ (Telford, interview, March 21, 2015) or ‘client’ (Mackey, interviews, July 22, 2015), that these government workers, whether they knew it or not, were enacting their agency and

forging a place for themselves. Together, in creating a localised culture, they had already become something greater than the sum of its parts. As Henry (1999) put it: 'In the process of making place, people bestow on it its own agency so that they come to experience place as itself inherently powerful. Place thus becomes materially determinative of the social' (Henry 1999, p. 39).

Neither the remote workers nor the Commonwealth Government were prepared for the profound effect that the isolated setting would have on the people who were instructed to carry out government policies. As Hope (1984) pointed out:

The policy of assimilation was dangerous, not only because of what it might have done, and possibly very nearly did, to the Pitjantjatjara – but what it did to their mentors ... It was not realised by policy makers that in those remote settlements, each day was of long duration, and not all the good natured barbequing lubricated with beer, could disguise the inner conviction that whatever was happening, it was being done at the cost of alienation from their own (European) culture (Hope 1984, pp. 214-215).

Social and behavioural problems also contributed to a distortion of 'the tenets of professionalism' (Hope (1984, p. 235). This was particularly so, according to Hope, 'in the case of health care due to using nursing sisters as surrogate doctors, as well of course, to the absence of any training in the sociology of settlement life and in Aboriginal affairs politics' (Hope 1984, p. 235).

By the early 1960s, the Commonwealth's mandate for Northern Territory patrol officers included reference to remote Aboriginal settlements as 'institution communities' (AA CRS: F1 65/3547: memorandum 4 October 1962). Long's (1992), history of the patrol officer service shows that the framework within which the patrol officers worked in the 1960s, included a 'key text', *The Governing of Men*, by Alexander Leighton, about the problems of managing 'wartime internment camps for Japanese in the United States', (Leighton 1945) (Long 1992, p. 161). The report was an examination of the deterioration of social order in the Poston Japanese internment camp situated on an Indian reservation in the state of Arizona in the United States of America. What is of note is some of Leighton's recommendations regarding the effect of isolation, and the power dynamics of the administration staff living at the internment camp:

'In the course of time the strain on the conscientious and responsible members became very great and probably worse than anything suffered by the majority of the Poston residents. For one thing, coming, as many of the administrators did, with the desire to build something better for the evacuees, it was very hard to find themselves powerless to relieve much of the suffering which they saw and it was still harder to bear the brunt of the antagonism engendered in the residents', (Leighton 1945, p. 150).

This highlights the manner and extent of the management that was expected of these newly settled populations and of those who were being trained to set them up and supervise them. As first contact had been made with most Aboriginal people in very remote Central Australia by this point, training for Northern Territory patrol officers shifted towards managing these 'institution communities' (Long 1992, pp. 161-162).

The use of Leighton's manual as a management tool for Aboriginal settlements reveals the extremity of the institutionalisation and control that government workers expected of these newly settled populations.

Leighton's work supports the findings of this thesis regarding the behavioural changes in people working within an isolated, institutional setting. The similarities of his observations with those in remote Aboriginal settlements in the 1960s is stark. Leighton reconsiders Poston's failures by examining the administrative class, including them in his observations about 'individuals under stress'. His recommendations included pointing out that administrators of a different race or nationality to the administered can be tempted to "make scapegoats out of the people" and goes on to say that Colonial and Indian Service experience in the United States:

'... has repeatedly shown that no matter how good a plan is, whether it be an irrigation project or a system of self-government, if the people who are to participate in it fail to feel it belongs to them, it will not work successfully', (Leighton 1945, pp 283-284).

It was not just the imposition on Aboriginal people that was deeply problematic. The agents of the state in these settlements also needed to feel that their participation belonged to them. Scott (1998) reinforces this finding: 'Strong neighbourhoods, like strong cities, are the product of complex processes that cannot be replicated from above' (Scott 1998, p. 144).

5.3.3

Social processes

The many social absences in the lives of remote workers resulted in the need to create new, place-specific social and cultural norms. The merging of the personal and professional became a surrogate for more concrete social and professional structures that would otherwise have been such a big part of life (Fechter 2012, p. 1392) (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4 We formed a new social framework**). The all-encompassing roles of remote workers meant they were on call 24/7 (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford B., and J.; 2015 pers. comm.). Nurses in remote Canadian outposts experienced a similar phenomenon, feeling that they were always on duty (Martin 1997), as did aid workers in Darfur (Fedha 2009).

5.3.3.1

The lack of social structure: merging the social and the professional

Utilising the same literature listed for **Table 5.3, Table 5.7** (below), it can be seen that other isolated groups in extreme environments have also shown that the absence of social structures results in the merging of the social and the professional. Remote workers were navigating towards a sense of who they were and what they were doing: they were building a new cultural identity born of their values, beliefs and acquired knowledge. Their habitus and doxa (Bourdieu 1977) were disrupted in the second phase of cultural adjustment, which is generally known as culture shock. This is the phase in which fascination becomes frustration, or excitement turns to disillusionment (Zapf 1991, p. 108; Zapf 1993) (see **Appendix G**). Confronting internalised beliefs is an uncomfortable and sometimes even a traumatic interruption.

But in the merging of the social and the professional, it is the mundane and everyday relationships, and the adjustment to the various contexts of life that lead to a group of people adapting their own culture and creating a new place for themselves in the world.

Research included here regarding the problematic results of the lack of clear professional and social structure includes: Purtil's (2017) in-depth memoir on his personal experience as a community manager in the Ngaanyatjarra region near the tri-state border region in Central Australia; Visser et al.'s (2016) work on the work-life balance of humanitarian aid workers; Schein's (2006) book on organisational culture and leadership; McGrath (1997) – an examination of research and schools of thought on small groups, and Nelson's (1962) paper on military and civilian leadership in small isolated groups in Antarctica.

Other research on remote groups	Problematic absences (in 1960s Central Australia)
Martin (1997) Stirrat (2008) Fedha (2009) Mahood (2012) Whittle (2013)	Insufficient or no job descriptions (are not helpful)
Johnson (2005) Fechter (2012) Mahood (2012) McGrath (1997)	Heterogeneity and lack of prior socialisation (is problematic)
Martin (1997) Mahood (2012) Whittle (2013)	Lack of site-specific training or preparation (is problematic)
Martin (1997) Fedha (2009) Mahood (2012) Whittle (2013) Visser et al. (2016)	Lack of administrative support (is problematic)

Purtill (2017)	
Nelson (1962) Schein (2006) Driskell, Salas & Driskell (2017)	Lack of leadership (is problematic)
Stirrat (2008) Fedha (2009) Driskell, Salas & Driskell (2017)	Lack of hierarchy (can be problematic)
Johnson (2005) Mahood (2012) Visser et al. (2016) Purtill (2017)	Working independently of each other (can be problematic)
Martin (1997) Fedha (2009) Mahood (2012) Whittle (2013) Visser et al. (2016)	On call 24/7 and unclear boundaries between the private and the professional (is problematic)

Table 5.7
Other research and problematic framework absences

Remote workers in the 1960s had ambiguous or non-existent job descriptions, which also gave them licence to create their own duty descriptions (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.4.1.2 Making my own policies**). The international aid workers in Darfur had job descriptions, but they, too, were adaptive and experimental in the ways they carried out their roles.

‘You have to be alert all the time because in this place we no longer have a traditional job description; the job is to save lives and if you try to waste time reading your contract, generic job profile, and performance plan, you will never work in a place like Darfur because those things are so disconnected from what we do here every day’, (Fedha 2009, pp. 118-119).

The two key differences between the Central Australian workers and those in Darfur, are that in Darfur, the workers made sense of their roles through their regular meetings with each other. They also had the clear goal of ‘saving lives’ (Fedha 2009, p. 122) and a clear mandate (Fedha 2009, p. 122) which they believed in. Their regular meetings and clear goals contributed to a professional network which provided professional support on the ground. As with health workers in Indigenous health in Australia (Lea 2008), health workers in isolated outposts in Manitoba had a strong belief in the accepted rules and regulations of their health care system (Martin 1997). The Darfur aid workers felt it important ‘to conform to organisational policies, rules and procedures at all times’ even though those policies and procedures may have been considered out of date (Fedha 2009, p. 125). That level of professional support (as scant as it may have been), and the existence of accepted rules and regulations such as within a health department, made a difference to the degrees of disconnection and cohesion in these isolated groups.

Having a cohesive group as a starting point for social development in isolation is also no guarantee that cohesion and beliefs in communal goals will be maintained. This was seen in the Biosphere 2 experiments in Arizona (see this chapter **5.3.2.1 Lack of governance structures**), where the four men and four women living in a closed, isolated, self-sustaining system, worked ‘60 – 80 hours’ per week (MacCallum, Poynter & Bearden 2004, p. 1098). Crewmembers in the experiment reported group dynamics as ‘one of the more difficult aspects of living inside the enclosure for two years’ (MacCallum, Poynter & Bearden 2004, pp 1102-1003). Within six months of entering the enclosure, the group had split into two sub-groups due to medical issues and a subsequent desire for ‘mission change’ (Nelson, Gray &

Allen 2015, p. 84). The phenomenon of ‘cabin fever’ or ‘going troppo’ as it is referred to in the tropics and Central Australia, results when stuck with the same people, day in, day out: ‘In a polar camp, little things like [a person in the mess hall who solemnly chewed 28 times before swallowing] have the power to drive even disciplined men to the brink of insanity’ (Byrd 1938, p. 16).

The participants for this research are similar to other isolated workers, including international aid workers in isolated places, in their lack of professional and governance structures and a clear social structure (see this chapter, **5.3.3 Social processes,**) and their autonomy. Their personal profiles were also similar (see this chapter, **5.3.1 Characteristics and values**). The one point of difference is that, unlike most of the situations described in Central Australia in the 1960s, the Darfur aid workers all engaged in regular, formal and informal meetings with each other, with beneficiaries and with local government authorities (Fedha 2009, p. 127). Building trust among all stakeholders was vital in that situation, for security, decision making and coordination.

The remote Central Australian workers did not have a strong inter-connection or a clear reliance on one another, and their autonomy and freedom allowed them to navigate the disconnectedness that defined their relationships. This disconnectedness therefore underscored the culture of the group as a whole. In studies on individual versus social identity formation, Postmes Haslam and Swaab (2005) argue that ‘solidarity and heterogeneity are not incompatible, nor are homogeneity and disunity’ (Postmes, Haslam and Swaab. 2005, p. 2). Instead of reacting against their disconnectedness, remote Central Australian staff utilised it as a means of avoiding

red tape (Telford, J., 2015 pers. comm.). In enacting their autonomy, they were able to create their own policy on the ground (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015) and to cover their tracks so they could be ‘mavericks’ and do what they wanted (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015). The group was navigating a new identity.

5.3.4 Internalising influences

Localised interaction with all the complex components of a self-organising system such as a remote settlement involves constant adaptation to surroundings, and ongoing efforts to find or maintain equilibrium. This is a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) which is non-linear, de-centralised and unpredictable. CASs may be counter-intuitive and tends toward chaos. They combined social and professional system which is vulnerable to unpredictability, unexpected individual characteristics, and emergent properties and capabilities (Pryor & Bright 2007). The underlying idea of a CAS is that all interactions tend to self-organise into local systems where the behaviour of the system is full of apparent surprises yet remains essentially orderly and potentially predictable (Mason and Staude 2009).

Traditional organisations are hierarchical and ordered. Power in a remote Central Australian community doesn’t lie in an organisational chart. The power of the system lies in how the different individuals and small organisations operate together. In a remote community with conflicting leadership issues, the most powerful person was not the superintendent. The most powerful person was the one who had the greatest longevity – the missionary – and the one who stood up to the superintendent – the teacher. In a settlement with no leadership or governance structures, power in

the form of the strongest influences and influencers lay in the relationships between white staff and the Aboriginal people who became ‘like family’. Status came with the internalising of influences such as relationships with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture (see **Chapter Four Findings, 4.3.2 Negotiating Separated Identities**). Other key elements in this self-organising system were just as influential but more difficult to pinpoint because they were part of everyday life and the everyday context.

5.3.4.1 Desert drivers

The same geographical environment that shaped remote, sparsely populated Aboriginal desert cultures over tens of thousands of years was also a key driver influencing non-Aboriginal government workers. It is ‘not unreasonable to imagine non-Aboriginal people self-selecting to stay in such environments only if their worldview and approaches to social networks are compatible with these characteristics’ (Stafford Smith 2008, p. 11). This adds weight and support to this thesis’ findings, that influences such as Aboriginal culture, isolation, and other contextual influences are internalised by remote workers, contributing to their adaptation.

Isolation was one of the main influences in people’s lives in remote settlements. It contributed to social uncertainty and scarce availability of options socially and professionally. Geographical remoteness and isolation were words used repeatedly by the participants. It literally disconnected the white worker from the rest of the

world – leading them into another world (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.5.1 Our only common ground was our isolation**).

Relationships with other non-Indigenous Australians were therefore forged across vast distances or in intermittent meetings. The extent of the influences on remote workers and the findings of this research correspond with the notion of ‘desert drivers’ (Stafford Smith 2008; Stafford Smith and Huigen 2009). **Table 5.8** below shows how these desert characteristics played out in the experience of the participants for this research.

Desert drivers and the desert system Stafford Smith 2008; Stafford Smith and Huigen 2009	1960s Remote workers findings in this thesis
Remoteness: distant markets, business, political centres, mental models	Separate from administration Making their own policies Distant from family, friends, institutions and discourses. ‘Didn’t know what was happening in the outside world’ (Telford, J., 2015, perse. comm.) ‘It was too expensive to fly [out] in those days’ (Burston, K and L, interview, June 7, 2015)
Sparse population: sparse, mobile and patchy human population	Being able to withstand the isolation. We forged relationships wherever we could. Not enough people to socialise. ‘There was a high turnover of staff’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) ‘I always liked to see visitors ... South Australian Mines Department ... a team of birdwatchers ... a botanist ... visiting anthropologists ...’ (Telford, B., 2015 pers. comm.)

<p>Limited livelihood: lack of diverse small business and livelihood options</p>	<p>‘They lose their skills after a while because of limitations’ (Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015)</p> <p>‘Each individual whitefella was very important because there were so few of them and their roles were vital’ (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).</p>
<p>Scarce resources: patchy natural resources and widespread low soil fertility</p>	<p>‘He and I went out there [Blackstone, 280km west), demolished four of these small buildings ... put them on the truck and brought them back to Amata. Over the next couple of months, I put these together to build a little house. But I didn’t have a bathroom so I still had to use V’s bathroom but at least I could cook my own meals’ (Telford, B., 2015, pers. comm.)</p>
<p>Cultural differences: particular types of people, cultures and institutions.</p>	<p>People are quirky or strange in remote communities.</p> <p>(Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Telford B and J, interview, March 9, 2015); Karston, interview, July 16, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015; Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015).</p>
<p>Local knowledge: limited research, local/traditional knowledge more important.</p>	<p>Building status through the accrual of knowledge and remote capital.</p> <p>‘The ones who lived in town didn’t have much understanding of the bush. They would all profess that they did but take them out of town, turn them around three times and they'd be bushed!’ (Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).</p>
<p>Scarce capital: low levels of financial, physical and human investment.</p>	<p>We were on our own. I was my own boss. Experiencing isolation</p> <p>‘Whitefellas would pull together if they were frightened but usually they were quite separate from each other’ (Karston, interview, July 16, 2015).</p>

Unpredictable climate: variability and extremes in primary drivers (rainfall, other weather)	‘You don’t leave yourself stranded out in the bush without food. It can rain and you can’t get to town for a week, you know’ (Burston, J, interview, June 7, 2015).
Social uncertainty: unpredictability in or lack of control over markets, labour, policy	High turnover of staff ‘Amata became bigger almost overnight ... maybe they got more money off the government to do some policy. I don’t know’ (Telford, B and J, interview, March 5, 2015).

Table 5.8
Comparison of characteristics of isolation driving remote social networks

Balancing and negotiating intricate relationships in unusual ways is also a characteristic of life for nurses in remote outposts in northern Manitoba (Martin 1997), contemporary art centre managers in remote Australia (Whittle 2013), for workers in Antarctica (Johnson 2005) and for aid workers in Darfur (Fedha 2009). The aid workers in the Darfur study also had workplace supervisors who are far away and with whom they must forge connections via telecommunications. They also forge relationships by daily exchanges with militia and military (Fedha 2009, p. 115). Interaction with other beneficiaries, local governments, local community leaders etc. is also a daily part of forging relationships and dealing with isolation. They, too, live with limited resources, uncertainty, and unpredictable climates (Darfur is also in an arid zone). The high turnover of staff contributes to instability in the social structure (Whittle 2013; Mahood 2012; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Telford B and J, interview, March 21, 2015) and a deficit in the collective or organisational memory of the sector. There is no succession planning, little evidence of mentoring and when a person leaves, all the knowledge and expertise of their role leaves with them (Whittle, 2013; Mahood 2012; Martin 1997; Burston K and L,

interview, June 7, 2015). The commonalities between remote Central Australia and Darfur are many, even though the Darfur refugee camps have a vastly larger population than the remote settlements in Central Australia. The situation for those working within these environments is strikingly similar.

5.3.4.2 Collective dynamics and the need for connectedness

Internalising the influences of time and place is something that happens intuitively (Moore and Barker 2012). Remote workers defined themselves in opposition to the top-down, state-driven institution within which they also had to navigate a finely tuned balance of needs. This contributed to a paradoxical sense of collective difference (Anthias 2012). Postmes, Haslam and Swaab (2005) argue that studies on individual versus social identity formation show that ‘solidarity and heterogeneity are not incompatible, nor are homogeneity and disunity’ (Postmes, Haslam and Swaab, 2005, p. 2). During this process of adaptation, remote workers were creating their own framework for engagement within an ambiguous, institutionalised space. The resulting group dynamics were influenced by this combination of the institution, ambiguous history and the lack of governance, social and professional structures. **Table 5.9** below shows that these findings are supported by broader literature on remote Aboriginal settlements, theoretical research into group dynamics, and studies of the way behavioural adjustments result in the normalisation of unusual behaviours within groups.

Literature	Group adjustments and collective dynamics
Hope (1984) Rowse (2000) Bardon and Bardon (2004)	Adjusting (to an institutional setting) in remote Aboriginal settlements.

Sullivan (2008) Mahood (2009, 2012) Pybus (2012)	
Eibert and Glaser (1959) Useem, Useem and Donoghue (1963) Shaw (1971) Foucault (1975) Bourdieu (1977, 1985) Ashforth and Mael (1989) Anthias (2002) Canham (2002) De Jaegher, Di Paolo and Gallagher (2010) Thibaut (2017) Ryan and Deci (2017)	Theory of group dynamics, social adjustments contributing to the development of new norms.
Leighton (1945) Goffman (1959, 1961) Empey and Newland (1968) Palinkas (1989) Johnson (2005) Waddell (2007) Piven (2011) McClellan (2015)	Institutional/secondary adjustments and the acceptance of strange, unusual or deviant behaviours.

Table 5.9
Literature on group adjustments and collective dynamics.

A collective disposition regarding the normalisation of behaviours within an institutional setting led to a heterogeneous, outgroup-focused ingroup in remote settlements. Canham (2002) and Waddell (2007) reveal that individuals and whole societies can be predisposed to particular behaviours and values which determine whether or not the group has the propensity to become a gang (a group where ‘destructive forces take over’) (Canham 2002, p. 115). This depends on the presence of ‘thoughtful and considerate’ authority figures (tending towards grouping) (Canham, 2002, p. 125), or anxiety and deprivation (Waddell, 2007, p. 199) (leading more to gang states of mind). Piven (2011) confirms that deviant behaviours often tend to be sublimated in mainstream cultural settings, due to social rituals and

hierarchies. In the isolated setting of a remote Aboriginal settlement, however, with ambiguous structures and the pressures of institutional life, that sublimation is no longer maintained.

Marques et al (1998) confirm that establishing ‘the legitimacy of in-group norms’ (Marques et al. 1998, p. 986) is important to small groups, even in circumstances where intragroup contrasts can foster what, to an outgroup, would be considered deviant behaviour (whether positive or negative). One way of maintaining a ‘civic identity’ (Johnson 2005, p. 20) is in the representation of the self. In Antarctica, social organisation at McMurdo Station is described in Johnson’s 2005 memoir of his time there in much the same way as is seen in the findings in this research.

Workers in Antarctica would, for the most part, be defined by their role division before attempts were made to verbalise their personal characteristics. They were defined by:

- department or division
- job title or function
- past department
- office location

(Johnson 2005, pp. 20-21).

Because remote workers are so far from their mainstream culture, family, and everyday institutions and hierarchies, the new needs of individuals therefore become a part of the essence of the group’s culture. Despite this, they remained an outgroup-focused ingroup (people who identify as being members of a group are an ingroup, while those who do not are an outgroup. In this case, I am describing people who are members of a group who insist they are not) (Tajfel 2010) due to their personal

characteristics, their role-based focus, the lack of leadership, and their socialisation processes, all of which led them to form a new group identity.

In that identity there is a clear, collective understanding of difference (Anthias 2013, p. 124) (newcomer/do-gooder versus old hand; drinkers and non-drinkers; policy makers and workers; blackfella and whitefella; etc.) which ‘enacts inequality’ (Anthias 2013, p. 124) without naming it as such. The lives and culture of this group is ‘translocation’ – ‘located across multiple but also fractured and interrelated social spaces of different types’ (Anthias 2013, p. 131). In other words, they engage their own values, and their reliance on their roles, in defining themselves either in accordance with or in opposition to other external influences. Drury, Cocking and Reicher (2009) confirm that a crowd in a mass emergency will go from being a problem to a solution, because, under trying circumstances, individuals redefine themselves according to a social or role identity rather than a personal self. This level of self-categorisation is the basis for explaining group conformity where people essentially see themselves in the other. In the case of remote workers, their collective difference became their identity.

The legitimacy of their collective difference was framed by their place of residence, their place of ‘community’, and further meaning was derived from their connection to the Aboriginal residents and the unusual, isolated setting. Foucault and Miskowiec refer to such a place as a ‘heterotopia’ (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986, p. 24), a place outside of time and space, rendered both real and unreal; an “elsewhere” or “nowhere” where crises, deviations, manifestations and transitions take place.

Military service, the honeymoon suite, psychiatric hospitals and boarding schools are

all heterotopias. For Bachelard (1958), ‘how we take root, day after day, in “our corner of the world”’ (Bachelard 1958, p. 26) is our ‘shell’, our ‘cosmos’ (Bachelard 1958, p. 26) where ‘there is a universal human nature, but that this universality exists primarily at the level of evolved psychological mechanisms, not of expressed cultural behaviours’ (Barkow, Cosmides and Tooby, 1992, p. 5). The collective group dynamic of this self-organising system therefore centres on the finding of personal meaning and connectedness (see **Chapter 4 Findings .3.1 Liked and needed difference**, p. 107) as central to the creation of the collective group dynamic in this space. Understanding the heterotopia, the ‘elsewhere’, enhances our understanding of the social processes revealed in the findings and discussion as being at the very centre of their isolated world. As Anthias (2002) posited: ‘These narratives of individuals are the stories that they tell and retell about their collective placement, about their place in the social order of things. By collecting such narrations, in tandem with investigating social practices, organisational frameworks and public discourses, we can begin to dismantle the category of identity itself’ (Anthias 2002, p. 512).

5.4 Conclusion

The data have shown that the remote, isolated workplace setting was a frontier space. Here a heterogeneous group of individuals formed a new identity, based in a unique time and place where their population was sparse and dispersed. They shared personal characteristics with workers in other sectors living and working in isolation, with external management, and in proximity to another host culture. This frontier-like situation placed workers in the position of great personal confrontation and

reflexivity regarding changes and adaptations to their sense of self and their collective culture. The absence of social, professional and governance structures in their lives shaped the new culture that developed according to their new circumstances. The top-down, colonial gaze was a formative part of the overarching context for the people and places being affected. But this was not a group of people who necessarily set out to become agents of a state-driven assimilation policy. The motivation to be there was for adventure. That in itself could be seen as problematic re the colonial gaze, but this would be no different to non-Indigenous people heading to remote communities today – and therein lies a whole other study that cannot be accommodated within the scope of this thesis. On arrival in remote settlements, these were people who were focused on adapting and on relationship building. They were creating something new for themselves, focusing on creating new norms and a new culture that was not like the mainstream culture they had come from. The external elements that influenced their daily lives created a new sense of self in the search of connectedness, and a new collective culture built on difference and disconnectedness. That search for connectedness is not unfamiliar to me. While I enjoy separateness as a former Third Culture Kid, the need to belong is as strong in me as anyone else. I recognize that need and I recognize that natural tendency, which was supported in the literature in this chapter, to create culture that resonates with, but is very different to, the culture and the gaze that you carry with you. These are the same characteristics of the individuals and the group were built into a new kind of structure (Bowker and Star, 2000 p. 53) of their own making.

Chapter Six: A new framework

6.1

Introduction

This chapter will highlight the relevance of **Chapter Five Storyline and Discussion** to the contemporary space. It will answer one of the questions for this research, namely, presenting a theory that describes and explains the development of the culture of this sector that might be relevant to supporting further inquiry into the contemporary space. This chapter will discuss the elements of the **Chapter Five Storyline and Discussion** that transcend time and place. It presents three propositions which reveal the core unit of analysis, and from which a key recommendation can be made. The storyline and discussion have added depth to the findings and contributed greater detail in defining the features of the development of these remote workers' culture.

6.2

Creating their own network

The ultimate result of this set of personal characteristics, lack of structures, social processes, and the internalising of other influences of the time and place was that, rather than gravitating towards each other, remote workers did the opposite. Every individual defined themselves in opposition to every other individual. In doing this, remote workers also reduced the need to affiliate with a bureaucratic or administrative organisation and separated from the government apparatus that sent them there (see **Chapter Four: Findings, 4.2 We negotiated our own space within the institution, 4.3 We formed a new social framework** and this chapter, **5.3.3.2**

Building status). This is not to say that there were not people who were drawn to each other. Friendships and even marriages were created. They ‘created their own network’ (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). The culture of Central Australian remote workers was ‘not a culture that transcended the many things that divided them’ (Stoddart 2015, pers. comm.) but a culture that accommodated their divisions and ambiguities. It did so to varying degrees, according to the way workers responded to the governance structures of each settlement.

6.3 The resulting heterarchy

The entrenched disconnectedness of the remote workers laid the groundwork for what can be called a heterarchical, or network-driven social space. The term heterarchy was first used in 1945 to describe a collective organisation consisting of a structure that did not fit a western-style hierarchical arrangement (McCulloch 1945). A heterarchy can be described as ‘overlapping, and ever-changing, hierarchies’ (Fosbrook 2016). It can also be explained as a network of elements (individuals, each favouring disconnectedness) that are unranked (non-hierarchical) or within which rankings can change (constantly changing alliances). In a social setting, it may contain elements that share the same positions of power and authority or where power and authority are dispersed; and in which groups can be divided or united according to different perspectives. The term heterarchy can be applied to objects, relationships or even places. A heterarchy is a space where structures may change according to need and circumstance (Fedha 2009; Zagarell 1995; White 1995; Crumley 1987). Some obvious examples include: forms of anarchy which “offer a consistent and coherent philosophical argument against the various forms of

organizational hierarchy” (Crumley 2005, p. 48); the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda – ‘neither centralized nor bureaucratic nor amorphous’ (Crumley 2005, p. 48). Some less obvious example include cross-functional teams in workplaces, where multiple teams may be working toward a common goal during which power shifts from one person or one group to another, depending on the task involved (Aime et al. 2014); transnational networks that cross borders, and change depending on who is a member; social groups on the Internet which may not have a central organising structure, but which self-organize depending on membership, time differences, changing relationships etc.

The culture of non-Indigenous remote workers in the 1960s was formed by ‘complex and changing alliances’ (Stoddart, interview, July 2, 2015) across vast distances and often in sporadic meetings. The social status of remote workers was adaptive and reflexive. This network was non-hierarchical or unranked beyond the distinctions between newcomers and old hands. This socialisation processes were ‘built into’ (Bowker and Star, 2000 p. 53), or rather, underscored this new culture. It became their social and professional structure - a heterarchy or network - rather than a standard hierarchical arrangement of ranks, one above another.

The examination of this past space has been a kind of ‘reading of the present’ (Glass 2016, p. 97). The ambiguity that resulted from the remote workers’ perception of inadequate governance structures, and the lack of social structures at the time, is as influential on the contemporary space as it was in remote settlements in the 1960s [see Whittle (2013) in **Chapter Five: Storyline and Discussion 5.3.1 Personal characteristics and values, 5.3.2 Ambiguous organisation, 5.3.3 Social processes**

and **5.3.4 Internalising influences**; Mahood (2012) in **5.3.1 Personal characteristics and values**, **5.3.3 Social processes**, **5.3.4 Internalising influences**; Lea (2008) in **5.3.1 Personal characteristics and values**, **5.3.3 Social processes** and **5.3.4 Internalising influences**; Kowal (2015) in **5.3.1 Personal characteristics and values** and **5.3.3 Social processes**). This literature shows that, despite the many changes in Aboriginal Affairs since the early 1970s, this culture is a space which always functions on 'shifting ground' (Burston K, interview, June 7, 2015). The link between an examination of the experience of workers in the 1960s and that of contemporary remote workers is that the heterarchical framework was and remains the natural response to the conditions and context of remote life. It was and remains a way of managing this form of heterogeneous social networking, in isolation, and across vast distances (Becker 1997; Drury, Cocking and Reicher 2009). This is despite a shift from a colonial administration, run directly by the state, to the contemporary heterarchical space. In this space state and non-state actors are expected to deliver project-based programmes administered by localised organisations, councils and Aboriginal Corporations, many of which overlap, converge and co-exist in various relationship frameworks or patterns (Fedha 2009; Bache and Flinders 2004). A lot of 'white advisers' (Batty 2005) continue to work in remote communities at the behest of an Aboriginal board or council, (Telford B and J, interview, March 21, 2015; Whittle 2013; Mahood 2012; Batty 2005; Lea 2008; Hope 1984).

The heterarchical network today is made up of multiple agencies and organisations, local councils, local families, funding bodies, volunteers, researchers, all vying for their own territory in an already overcrowded space (Altman 2006, and Altman

Biddle and Hunter 2018). These are not mainstream communities, so this type of isolated, network-driven space cannot be judged by the same fiscal markets used to evaluate mainstream community successes and failures (Wescott and Jones 2012). The nature of a heterarchy is inherently unstable and has the potential to lead to ‘organisational chaos and anarchy’ (Pearce, Conger and Locke 2008, p. 625). A heterarchical network continues to be re-imagined with each new worker. It has the potential to be chaotic and to become problematic and is a culture that will always be at risk of imbalance. The danger of anarchy or ganging is always present.

The **Chapter Five Storyline and Discussion** in this thesis shows that these drivers are not necessarily unique to Central Australia or desert populations, but they do continue to be a fundamental part of the context of life in contemporary Central Australia (Stafford Smith 2008; Whittle 2013; Kowal 2015 and 2011; Mahood 2012 and 2009; Lea 2008). These drivers of the remote, sparsely populated desert continue to play a role in other remote, sparsely populated places managed by a third culture. Examples include Darfur (Fedha 2009), remote northern Canadian Aboriginal communities (Martin 1997), and the Arctic regions (Johnson 2005; Mocellin 2000; Palinkas 1989; Gunderson and Orvick 1963; Eibert and Glaser 1959). **Table 6.1** below illustrates some comparisons between Central Australian remote workers and Darfur aid workers. The aid workers also adapted or ignored policy on the ground, were flexible in their professional and social networking, and operated within a larger network of overlapping aid agencies.

Darfur aid workers (Fedha 2009)	Central Australian remote workers	Heterarchy
<p>‘...disconnection from headquarters...’</p> <p>The role of any adaptive agent is dependent upon the role of other agents in the system. Each agent continually adapts to the adaptive behaviour of other agents in accomplishing his/her work assignments.</p>	<p>‘We weren’t part of that administrative side of things.’</p> <p>‘Whitefellas would pull together if they were frightened but usually they were quite separate from each other.’</p> <p>‘Not a culture that transcended the many things that divided them.’</p>	<p>Unranked (non-hierarchical)</p>
<p>‘Most of the aid workers advocated that instead of rules set in stone, guidelines can be developed (and renegotiated when necessary) to allow flexibility and personal judgment when faced with situations far from certainty and agreement.’</p> <p>The actions and decisions of aid workers demonstrate the behaviours that are generally considered to be characteristic of Complex Adaptive Systems</p>	<p>There was no “pecking order” or hierarchy, among the white staff, beyond an understanding that the superintendent was “in charge”.</p> <p>‘That’s where I had a few clashes with [the superintendent], because he would just come barging into the school and just try and do things and I’d say, “hey mate, this is my little territory”.’</p> <p>‘There was no single whitefella culture’.</p>	<p>Potential to be ranked in different ways</p>
<p>Previous daily experiences have shaped new policy in a way that each experience and decision builds the framework for the next, and parameters are related in complex and nonlinear ways.</p>	<p>‘If we didn’t like a policy we’d just ignore it ... In effect we were sort of creating policy on the ground. Without any permission to do so.’</p>	<p>Network of elements sharing the same position of power and authority</p>
<p>‘The <i>heterarchy</i> of aid work on a global level is</p>	<p>‘...the school had a team approach. You certainly</p>	<p>May contain hierarchies or be subsumed by them</p>

demonstrated by the multiple, massively entangled institutions.’	felt like you were part of the staff ... You tend to stick with your own but when you’ve moved outside that obviously for social things, particularly if someone was interested in camping or four-wheel drive, we’d go out with them, you know.’	
‘... making decisions and taking actions in the frontline is a process that is <i>nonlinear</i> and <i>dynamic</i> .’	‘Complex and changing alliances’	Divide and unite groups according to perspective

Table 6.1
Elements of heterarchy

Considering the great disconnect and the opposing perspectives between Central Australian remote workers and policy makers from ‘down south’ (Long 1992) (this covers all of south-eastern Australia but essentially refers to the capital cities of Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney or Canberra where policy decisions are made) or ‘up north’ (Darwin, the other distant capital where policy decisions are made for the Northern Territory) implementing policy was never going to be straightforward. Policy was lost in translation on the way down to ground level (see **Chapter Four: Findings 4.2.1.2 Making my own policies**). Communicating results in the opposite direction was also problematic (see this chapter **5.3.2.1 Lack of governance frameworks**).

A grand narrative (Altman and Hinkson 2010) or grand experiment (Rowse 2012; Scott 1998) in policy “requires the constant work of translation” (Mosse 2005, p. 9). Lea (2008) discusses how even communicating back to peers can be challenging

within the well-structured arena of contemporary health administration in remote communities. Having the report writers embedded in remote communities does not ‘democratise decision making’ (Mosse 2005, p. 98), it just ‘conceals the agency of external actors’ (Mosse 2005, p. 98). Here ‘ambiguity and obscurity have become vital tools in the operation of state rule’ (Batty 2005 p. 216). Any policy will be filtered through many and various levels of negotiation by organisations, boards, funding bodies, and lastly, by individual workers on the ground. In a remote settlement there is therefore an arbitrariness to that delivery (Hanna 2001; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015), an arbitrariness that is a result of distance from policy makers. Local (remote community) politics and daily negotiations therefore result in the generation of localised policy on the ground (Telford B and J, interview, March 21, 2015; Burston K and L, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015).

This heterarchical situation, these complex and changing alliances, and the many elements that contribute to this flexible network are supported by Stafford Smith’s ‘desert drivers’ (Stafford Smith 2008, p. 4) (See **Chapter Five: Discussion 5.3.4.1 Desert Drivers**), characteristics which form a syndrome peculiar to the non-Indigenous framework in remote and very remote Australia in the contemporary space. He states that there are ‘good reasons for social networks and cultural norms to operate differently in small populations subject to spatially and temporally variable environments’ (Stafford Smith 2008, p. 8).

6.4

Grounded theory propositions

The intersection of the four key elements of the storyline support a notion that the extent of the absences in a remote settlement (lack of family, friends, institutions, discourses etc.) and the type of governance structures in place, (including a lack of governance structures in the form of a lack of bosses, colleagues, leadership, policies, professional support and training) will directly influence how and with whom remote workers form a sense of connectedness. This notion gives rise to three key propositions:

- 1) The complete lack of governance structures in smaller, newer settlements, such as Amata and Docker River, where no leadership was present, no policies were known and only three workers were present in one community and seven in the other, resulted in remote workers having the freedom and autonomy to self-organise and self-manage. It promoted the formation of deep connections with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture and contributed to the establishment of connections across vast distances. Their sense of connectedness was founded on the elements of life they dealt with on a daily basis, and the Aboriginal people with whom they interacted all day. As a result, they described stronger or inadequate governance structures in remote settlements as a kind of cultural boundary between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

When government policies were introduced and (inadequate) leadership was eventually implemented, these workers continued to

enact their autonomy and eventually left the settlement, unhappy with the direction in which it was going. They maintained those relationships with their Aboriginal 'family' to the point that over fifty years later, they still visit those surviving friends regularly and are welcomed with tears and great joy. Despite the non-cohesive nature of the non-Indigenous engagement with each other in the 1960s, the lack of governance structures gave remote workers a freedom and autonomy which positively impacted on the way they felt they engaged with Aboriginal people.

This first proposition is that there was a perception of an absence of governance structures, goals and policies, and an actual absence of professional support in remote settlements. This attracted workers who wanted difference, meaning and adventure. Dominant characteristics of these workers included autonomy, self-organisation, self-management and self-described effective engagement with Aboriginal people.

- 2) Remote workers who found themselves in settlements with conflicting or inadequate governance structures, such as Areyonga - a settlement with both a government superintendent and a missionary vying for leadership - tended to react by defining themselves in opposition to institutional values. For example, they would ignore directives from a superintendent if they didn't like them. They would ignore government policies if they disagreed

with them. They would subvert the institutional setting by engaging with each other in constantly changing alliances. They would subvert it also in their relationships with Aboriginal people, attempting democratic relationships such as including them in decision making, which was not an accepted part of government policy at the time. This, too, was a heterarchy.

The second proposition, then, is that remote Aboriginal settlements with inadequate governance structures therefore resulted, paradoxically, in connectedness being contingent on the ability to maintain and navigate some distance from other people.

- 3) Workers who found themselves in settlements with strong governance structures, such as the Ernabella mission or Yuendumu, considered the group structure to be cohesive. Both settlements had fewer than ten non-Indigenous workers, so it was not necessarily the size of the population that made for a cohesive culture. While the cohesive experience may have been positive for the workers in that they slotted into an existing regime with a recognisable hierarchy, it also limited the way remote workers forged connections with Aboriginal people, limited the need to forge relationships across vast distances, and limited their need for self-organisation and autonomy.

The third proposition is that the stronger the governance structures, the more cohesive the culture of the non-Indigenous group. This led to less need for external networking, and this lessened the likelihood that remote workers would be influenced by other external factors. The relationship between the strength of governance structures and the workers' personal characteristics determined how, and with whom, non-Indigenous workers formed meaningful connections.

6.5

The core unit of analysis

The common factor that cuts across all the settings and characteristics in this grounded theory account is the relationship between strong, inadequate or absent governance structures and personal characteristics and values. This determined how, and with whom non-Indigenous workers formed meaningful connections within the context of time and place. See **Figure 6.1** below.

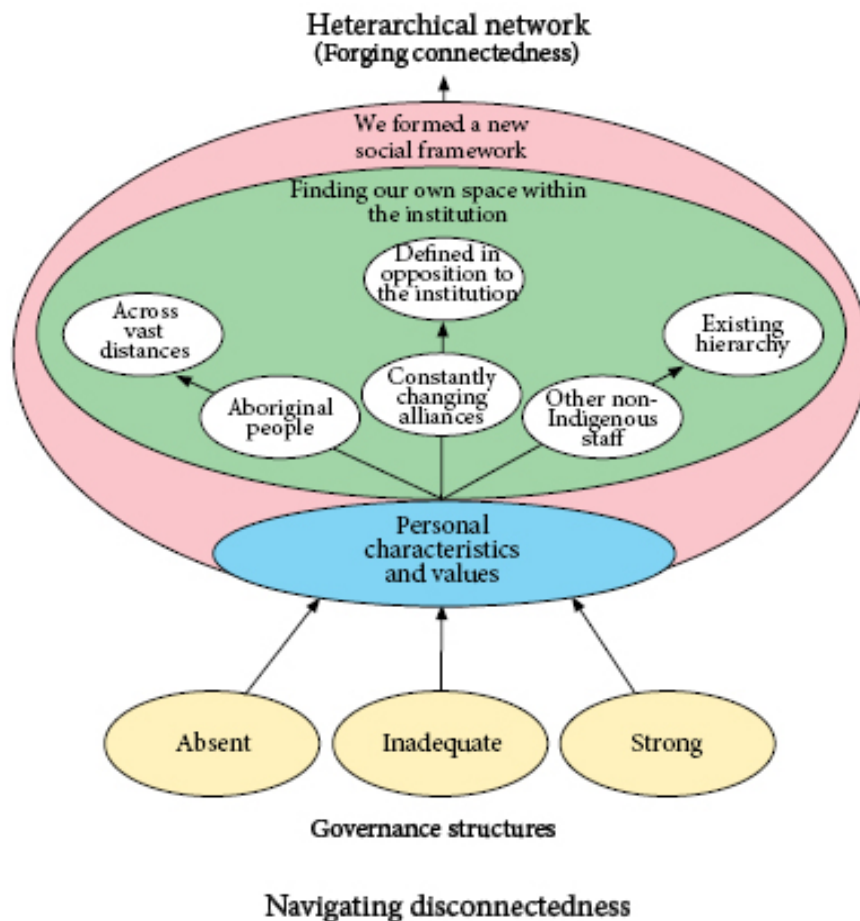


Figure 6.1
Navigating disconnectedness and forging connectedness

These propositions present the culmination of a grounded theory which can now be taken and tested. In future research, a broader investigation will allow more detail and refinement of these propositions. The four elements that contributed to the overall grounded theory may offer a framework for assessing the personal, social, professional and governance structures of a workplace or community. They may help in assessing the conditions, contexts and processes of an organisation in order to address the system as a whole, and provide an understanding of policy implementation, and where cultural changes could take place. In coming to a greater understanding of the origins and development of this culture, recommendations can now be made regarding its future.

6.6

Key recommendation

Instead of striving for unification and more surveillance of top-down structures and policies built on foreign doxa, this study points the way to the adoption of alternative models (Cumming 2016; Crumley 2005; Zagarrell 1995). Utilising the heterarchical network requires coordination, shared leadership, negotiation and a clear framework (Whittle 2013; Fedha 2009; Stirrat 2008; Girard and Stark 2002; Zagarell 1995).

‘A robust, lateral collaboration flattens hierarchy without flattening diversity. Heterarchies create wealth by inviting more than one way of evaluating worth’, (Girard and Stark 2002, p. 169).

A practical way that this alternative, heterarchical network could be accommodated and utilised, and which would allow for collaboration without flattening diversity, is through the creation of a peak body for Remote Area Workers. A peak body accommodates a collective, can support networking and collaboration, and provide adequate training and maintenance of professional standards. A formal professional body would be in a position to take the onus off individual remote organisations which are currently expected to provide levels of expert training and care for which they may not be equipped.

A peak body can also contribute to the building and maintenance of organisational memory which can be important for continuity and retention of knowledge (Lahaie 2005). This specific culture does not have a recorded history of its own in the way that other organisational cultures such as government departments commonly do. This is not a space with an organisational memory or one in which past successes have been documented or recorded. The culture is embedded and re-enacted every

day (Glass 2016) by the old hands and their newcomers in relationships and oral histories, and through their internal, invisible practice - their habitus and doxa (Bourdieu 1977).

Organisational memory could be useful in collecting more data on remote workers. This would be a rich resource for future research. A peak body could contribute to building a stronger sense of relatedness among remote workers, as was achieved by Remote Area Nurses (RANs) in Australia. Bush nurses completed their transition to RANs with the 1983 creation of a peak body for rural and remote nurses (the Council of Remote Area Nurse of Australia) (CRANApplus 2018). This 'is an independent, member-driven, non-profit organisation' (CRANApplus 2019) partly funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, and partly by the membership fees and services they provide. The importance of having a distinct classification regarding the worker's area of expertise was a message strongly expressed by nurses in northern Manitoba (Martin 1997). They suggested some sort of certification and recognition for their specific expertise in remote Indigenous communities in Canada. The benefits of a collective support network, peak body or other such organisation cannot be underestimated. It may also be a starting point for monitoring data on and increasing the inclusion of more Indigenous remote workers.

A designation such as Remote Area Workers (RAWs) does not just classify. It has the potential to designate certain standards, skills, practices, regulations and external frameworks (Bowker and Star 2000) to which this group of people can belong but will not undermine a place-based culture built on a heterarchical network. There is no 'remote workers'' union, no confirmed tenure for remote workers, few

frameworks or mechanisms for remote workers to deal with the difficulties of their various roles, and little professional or personal support from industry or other external bodies.

Considering that remote workers began building a culture by classifying each other, using language and symbols to create designations among themselves, the foundation of their social processes were in trying to create a sense of connectedness and a social framework that was responsive to the context in which they lived. They described themselves as ‘bush workers’, the same terminology used by the health sector to describe ‘bush nurses’ in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Becoming part of a larger network is a logical step in the development of remote workers’ own, original designations of each other. This may well be a heterogeneous, outgroup-focused ingroup. But they are a group and they have their own culture and history, and there is value in recognising them as such, particularly for their professional and personal development.

Having external eyes on remote workers as a sector could also be beneficial in bridging the gaps in the web of disconnectedness that expose remote workers to secondary and sometimes criminal behaviours (Telford, B and J, interview, March 12 and 21, 2015); Parsons, interview, June 8, 2015; Burston, interview, June 7, 2015; Mackey, interview, July 22, 2015; Karsten, interview, July 16, 2015; Stoddart 2015, pers. comm.). Shining a light on the bad behaviours of the ‘misfits’ (Mahood 2012; Lea 2008; Hope 1984) may be beneficial in bringing a change in culture, or at the very least, provide some sense of recourse or management for those who have to endure difficult situations. A national peak body or organisation would also open the

possibility for remote workers to be part of an even wider network in the international aid and development sector.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will reflect on the results of this thesis and its relevance to the contemporary space in remote Aboriginal communities. The discussion will explore some of the more recent disciplinary knowledge development to address the question of how remote workers today might be managed. This chapter will also reflect on the limitations of the research and on my own journey in drawing the threads of this discussion together.

7.2 The contemporary space

A question that these findings leave unanswered is: What would the differences be between the governance challenges of remote workplaces in the 1960s, and today? Two key factors immediately present themselves. The first is information and communication technology (ICT). The second is the knowledge advancement in governance and remote team management contributed by scholarly disciplines such as business management (BM), human resource management (HRM) and organisational behaviour (OB). It would be fair to presume that knowledge built over time in ICT, BM, HRM and OB would be utilised to lessen the isolation of small organisations and workers in remote communities.

Despite these improvements, however, researchers are still reporting that isolation is a major factor in the professional and personal dissatisfaction and challenges faced

by remote workers (Roberts 2004, Batty 2005; Schulz 2007; Altman 2010; Mahood 2012; Walker, Porter & Marsh 2012; Whittle 2013; dé Ishtar 2016; Humphreys et al. 2009; Purtill 2017). The literature points to managers having little training regarding how to manage remote staff, and subordinates having few, if any resources for social and professional support or training. To this end, neither managers in small remote organisations, nor their subordinates, are gaining the benefits of modern knowledge regarding the running of small organisations in isolated settings.

7.2.1

Opportunities that exist: Boundary management through ICT

Most professionals working in remote communities today have the opportunity to engage with ICT. Remote workers, managers or subordinates would most likely benefit from engaging with an external supervisor and/or mentor with whom they could communicate regularly via ICT. But isolation and remote locations have been cited as key reasons why professional development is limited (Walker, Porter and Marsh 2012; Humphreys et al. 2009; Lenthall et al. 2018).

Much of the contemporary research focuses on the remote health sector. Other contemporary remote workers therefore miss out on opportunities to improve their experience. The use of ICT to decrease isolation and improve workplace satisfaction has been well documented. Moran et al. (2014) identified various interventions in rural and remote health-related workplaces around the world that have had positive effects on workplace culture, individuals' confidence and workplace satisfaction. In the many studies they explored, overall, most of the strategies utilised included external support. Conger and Plager (2012) reported connectedness of staff and

longevity in rural nurses in the United States being enhanced by support networks, electronic communications and mentoring. These were all seen to be vital to staff wellbeing. Arora et al (2011) explored the use of a 'telehealth' clinic to bring together metro and rural professionals in New Mexico to deliver 'complex specialty care'. The impact of regular telecommunications showed a 'statistically significant improvement in providers' knowledge, self-efficacy, and professional satisfaction through participation' (Arora 2011). Bennett-Levy et al (2012) found that a 12-week, bi-weekly, 15-minute online training programme in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for urban, rural and remote therapists was 'almost unanimously endorsed' by a 'supported training group', as opposed to a group which did the training independently (Bennett-Levy et al 2012, p. 179). Overall, the 43 papers evaluated by Moran et al. (2014), found successful staff outcomes in support interventions for remote medical workers. Staff gained increased competence and were able to overcome feelings of isolation by forming a sense of connectedness with others in their given sector.

Through regular communication, performance and boundary concerns could be monitored and potentially resolved for contemporary remote workers. By continuous monitoring of a worker's stress levels, preventative measures can be implemented early on in the process to prevent withdrawal and subsequent staff turnover. Goolsby (1992) found that creating strategies to deal with role stress is 'a function of the available reservoir of support mechanisms' in place (Goolsby, p. 157).

External, ongoing support through the use of ICT would also be beneficial in managing the absence of boundaries between the personal and the professional for

remote workers. That this phenomenon leads to overwork and stress responses is confirmed by Eddleston and Mulki (2017). They found that remote workers have difficulty disengaging from work when at home and prefer to integrate work and family domains. This results in increased home and work conflict. External feedback and validation through a connection with the outside world would enable remote workers to continually refresh and clarify their positions, responsibilities and their accountability in their work. This would be effective whether they work at great distances geographically from their line managers or whether they experience workplace stress due to ambiguous organisational structures and a lack of professional support on the ground. As boundary management and work-life balance is an ongoing process, Cruz and Meisenbach (2018) found that it needs ongoing and regular attention. The professional and the personal 'exist along a continuum and are not permanent decisions' (Cruz and Meisenbach, p. 185).

One of the other opportunities that exists is in sharing this deeper understanding of remote non-Indigenous workers, what they bring with them in terms of values and expectations, and how this knowledge could also be utilized by Aboriginal people now living and working in remote communities in Central Australia. Bearing in mind that the participants for this research were people who committed to a minimum of three years in remote settlements, half of whom continue to have relationships with and/or work in remote communities and the other half of whom continue to have relationships with the communities today in which they worked in the 1960s and early 1970s. They were chosen for this research because of this. They were not average. Their narratives produced 'optimal' data for the purposes of understanding what the best possible outcome could be. The resulting heterarchical

nature of the culture of non-Indigenous workers is something that can be harnessed by remote Aboriginal organisations and used to their advantage in that this knowledge can be presented to non-Indigenous managers and subordinates alike, to create more options for external support, build longevity, and potentially reduce staff turnover.

7.2.2

Virtual team management

Virtual team management could also be nurtured and monitored through various ICT modalities. Teamwork behaviours and roles such as collaboration and support could be informed by models virtual team management. Gilson et al. (2015) found in a study on virtual team literature across 10 years that utilising traditional ICT options such as email and instant messaging in a personalised way had positive effects on ‘group network size and structural holes’ while communal communications (group discussions, group calendars, audio and video conferences) increased intragroup strength (Gilson et al. 2015, p. 6). Group trust and homogeneity were increased when actions of all staff were visible (Goh & Wasko 2012); a collectivist rather than individualistic approach was taken (Mockaitis, Rose and Zettinig 2012), and where possible, sub-groups could be formed (O’Leary & Mortensen 2010). The dynamics of virtual team management may be positively influenced by the use of wiki pages for information sharing, and online social media which enables virtual team development (Gilson et al. 2015) and can be used by mobile workers in multiple locations.

In the isolated, heterarchical network of remote Aboriginal communities, ambiguous contexts and dynamic workplaces demand an understanding of complex challenges. Management of remote teams of professionals could be informed by models of interdisciplinary teamwork and led by a person appropriately educated in HR systems of human resource management and worksite governance. Shuffler and Carter (2018) explore the management of multi-team systems (MTSs) across a range of sectors such as health care, disaster response and space exploration. Clarifying goals and flexibility are vital to cross-disciplinary teamwork (Shuffler and Carter 2018). Managing the balance of cohesion and flexibility is critical and can divide teams if not structured to be effective. Inter-team coordination, clear leadership and identifying influences and influencers within and between teams can also help manage 'system goals' (Shuffler and Carter 2018, p. 393).

Ford, Piccolo and Ford (2017) add weight to the propositions made in this thesis, that the success of virtual teams can be arranged around organisation, leadership and teams as interrelated strategies. Remote organisations need to develop collective capabilities (for example, by connecting with other remote teams via the use of ICT), to build trust within an organisation and across other virtual teams. Investing 'in conferencing capabilities' (Ford, Piccolo and Ford 2017, p. 4) is important, so remote workers can meet and see one another, have back-up plans when inevitable technology failures occur, establish communication norms to build trust and regular exchange of information, and maintain routines (Ford, Piccolo and Ford 2017).

The result of applying this disciplinary knowledge and these working models to a remote work site is that workers there can be guided to form both collaborative work

teams with a sense of local accountability to support each other and remain accountable to their employing organisation in another location.

7.3

Future research opportunities

This thesis has revealed several opportunities for future focus in addressing the limitations of this research (see **Chapter One: Introduction 1.2 The scope of this study**). Future research could add to this thesis by studying the perspective of Indigenous people who have a memory of the 1960s and the origins of the development of their own adaptation to remote settlement life. As this study focused on the development of the culture of workers employed to manage these sites, the Aboriginal adaptation to settlement life could add a deeper understanding of the underlying foundations and influences of their own cultural adaptation. This would enrich the findings of this research.

There is also an opportunity for future research on the contemporary space. Data collection for this research could have involved a comparison between stories recalled about the 1960s and remote workers in similar locations in 2015-2016. However, the focus of this research was on the origins of a workplace culture. That focus helped in the data analysis and subsequent discussion. With that in mind, the extensive data analysis that took place would have had to have been replicated for a second group of workers. Hindered by time and financial restrictions, the focus had to remain on one group of workers. With the understanding we now have about the origins and development of this culture, future research using the same methodology on the contemporary space is advised and recommended. There are currently a

number of organisations set up for remote workers in health (such as Remote Allied Health Network), and education etc. These could be explored in future research, to determine what models work best, and if this is the best way forward to reach the outcome of maintaining professional standards.

There is the potential for further research into locally developed Aboriginal-led organisations providing support for non-Indigenous people, as well as the potential to consider cultural prominence, land rights, Aboriginal community control. Applying ICT, BM, HRM and OB needs to be understood in the context of remote Indigenous community settings, as opposed to urban commercial settings, or other remote (as in working from home) settings.

7.4

Remaining issues: Policy and the future for remote workers

This research has shown that policy is almost incidental to the experience of those living and working in isolation. This group of public officials was charged with managing the policies and procedures of the state. They were the messengers of the purpose of government, whose policies they were formally implementing. Yet these policies often contradicted their lived and observed understanding of the realities of their daily lives resulting in social and professional change, and the adaption of policies in the process of navigating that space. Policy in remote communities was routinely ignored or altered to suit the needs of workers in remote Aboriginal communities. Altman (2010) supports this finding in the contemporary space, noting that ‘...those residing in the remotest homelands and outstations have become expert

in state evasion' (Altman p. 266). A remaining problem in the context of this study, then, is that of policy, policymakers and policy implementation.

Eighty-five percent of Australia's population 'now lives within 50 kilometres of the coast' and Australia is becoming 'the most urbanised continent in the world' (Walker, Porter and Marsh 2012 p. 9). The comprehensive Walker, Porter and Marsh report on the governance of remote Australia found that normal policies, governances and administrative practices do not serve the challenges faced by remote Australia and the people who live there. Scott (1998) describes the relationship between the state and local knowledge practices as being 'illegible' to the state in their raw form. They exhibited a diversity and intricacy that reflected a great variety of purely local, not state, interests (Scott 1998, p. 24).

Policymakers commonly respond to the shortcomings of programs with which they may be involved by 'more vigorous application of the same principles: develop a better organisation, introduce more efficient methods, secure a higher quality of personnel, add more technical staff, draw up new and better plans' (Useem, Useem & Donoghue 1963, p. 172). Understanding the complexities of balancing macro (governance-level) and micro (personal-level) structures as an ongoing practice may contribute to a shift in thinking that practice is shaped by policy (Mosse 2005) when this research has shown that is a dubious notion at best. Personal characteristics and values of individuals create a collective interpretation of their own experience that ultimately defines and drives the narrative in isolated settings such as these. The perceived success or failure of any policy depends on the interpretation and adaptation of the worker. There is 'a condition for non-compliance of lower-level

workers' (Lipsky 1980). From what the literature on state-driven policy and policy implementation suggests, it appears that policy, good or bad, will not necessarily provide good action or good outcomes (Mosse 2005, p. 230).

There is an opportunity in this space, therefore, to allow for new avenues of communication, participation, and mediation and for different values to be implemented and managed. Policymakers have the opportunity to utilise the knowledge of remote workers with longevity in remote communities. Remote Area Workers are in the position of creating policy from practice and state-level policymakers would do well to take that knowledge on board and to allow flexibility and innovation in localised policy creation for remote communities. This can only be done if Remote Area Workers have adequate external professional and personal support and the telecommunications capability to connect with the outside world. They need to be able to build and sustain positive, long-term relationships with Aboriginal people, while maintaining healthy boundaries and not seeing themselves as integral to the process. Therefore, Remote Area Workers also cannot assume that the poor or absent governance structures that contributed to the experience of earlier remote workers necessarily always mean better outcomes for Aboriginal people. Context must always be part of the process and for a non-indigenous person to lose sight of that context means the process and therefore policies can never be adequately interpreted, analysed or carried out.

This research of remote workers in 1960s Central Australia is still relevant today. It has not been superseded because the challenges faced by small, dispersed groups living and working in isolation are still being reported. There may be slight

differences in the type of isolation experienced by workers today, but it is still a core contributing factor to the experience for remote workers and remote Aboriginal communities in general. In fact, the experience for remote workers today could be said to be more difficult than it was in the 1960s. Central Australian remote Aboriginal communities today are now home to multiple, small organisations. Remote Area Workers are therefore more likely to have an in-situ manager than those in the 1960s. The possibility of being in a position where you are at the mercy of other non-Indigenous ‘sociopaths, the borderline criminals, the self-righteous bullies and the mentally unhinged...[who] contribute in no small degree to the malaise that haunts Indigenous communities’ (Mahood 2012 p. 2) is far greater today due to this change in the way remote communities are managed. The possibility that those individuals are acting with impunity due to their isolation continues to be problematic, as was the ‘quirky behaviour’ of the 1960s (see **Chapter Six 6.6 Key recommendation**). The managers and those in charge of small organisations in remote communities are not deriving the benefits of modern knowledge on organisational operations and management of staff.

7.5 Reflection on my own journey

No researcher can be completely objective (Charmaz 2005). I naturally came to this topic with my own experience and pre-conceived ideas about life as an outsider, as an immigrant, and as a sojourner. But the results were fascinating. A grounded theory is evaluated by the “degree to which the concepts we use are meaningful ways of interpreting the data that we investigate” (Dey 2007, p. 177). It is “the process of judging the quality and value of the products and processes of research using criteria

designed for that purpose” (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 178). The links between the data and the analysis reached a conclusion that is logical and clear. I have produced a grounded theory that is general enough to be transferrable. As it is presented here, it is the beginning of the development of the theory, which can be further refined. This research aimed to provide a rich, thick description of the origins of a particular group of workers and how they navigated a complex cultural and professional space. I present my theory here as the beginning of a discussion on its further development and transferability.

Lessons learned in this process include the consideration that must be given to the scope of such a study. Practical considerations such as tracking down and contacting potential participants was sometimes difficult. Organizing interviews was also difficult due to the geographical spread of potential participants. This limited the options in the theoretical sampling somewhat. Despite this, participants were tracked down to Canberra, Adelaide and Alice Springs. Making sense of the coding process took longer than expected, although the positive of that was a complete immersion in the data which made it easier later on to be sure of the concepts and theory emerging. Remaining as faithful to the data as possible proved useful in allowing the emergence of the theory.

Another lesson learned was the process of paying attention to my own gaze in this process. Engaging in different forms of critical judgement such as inductive, abductive and deductive thinking. Using my memo writing, interviewing, observations, analysis, creative thinking, all contributed to my position within the research, as is accommodated by CGT as a methodology. Not having a full

understanding of how the use of these methods to start with meant that I spent three years immersed in my data. The result was that I came to know these interviews inside out. My own reflexive gaze as a researcher was therefore integral to the construction of this theory.

I wrote in the third person mostly in order to assume a stance of distance in order to try to maintain some objectivity over the data: I wanted to do it 'right', to be disciplined and feel like I was gaining some kind of mastery or control over the process - a process which is reliant on accidental insight and intuition as well as discipline and order. My own assumed standpoint required frequent examination and deconstruction in order to reflect on details, assumptions, practice, and limitations. There were frequent moments of overwhelm and exhaustion, of confusion, like a dog chasing its own tail. Every point of moving toward what would feel like a new theoretical lens would take days of utter exhaustion and confusion. And then, after chasing and chasing my own thoughts and presumed understandings, a penny would drop, I would see the horizon. Being conscious of my own thought processes was both a process and an accident. It would often be a random sentence from a neighbour, a television drama, a news story or a random paper read during moments of distraction that would result in the shift in thinking.

Wanting to be morally self-aware, to be fair to the participants, fair to the position of the Aboriginal people in the various settlements whose situation was so drastically different to that of the non-Indigenous workers, placed more pressure on myself to achieve some perceived 'correct' stance. But there it was: being aware of the time, places, individuals, cultures, my own gaze as somebody in an arguably post-colonial

timeframe being fair to their reality rather than to my post-colonial version of what I might have wanted to see.

It was in stepping back from the data, and writing the storyline, that I came to a point of awareness of what this process had enabled me to do. If anything, my lack of understanding of the processes in the beginning of this research, left me in a position of finding it difficult to focus on the analysing of the data. I wanted to include everything. I wanted to be so diligent in my sorting and categorizing that it left little room for breathing. When I began to reflect on the higher categories and the core unit of analysis towards the end, I was able to better express an understanding of the issues, and my perceptions of the research as the observer that I am. I came full circle, in a way. I was mindful of how immersed I had become in the data, and how attached I had become to it for that same reason. Using methods like the situational mapping helped me stay grounded and to mitigate self-deception and unintentional bias. I could not be responsible for the gaze of my participants in the 1960s, but I could be responsible for and aware of my own. One such unintentional bias that I observed was that by spending so much time immersed in the stories of these individuals, I feared that I would be unable to see the wood for the trees when it came to analysing the data. At several points in the research process, that was certainly true. I was concerned about any harm that could be caused by the objectification of my participants, as well as the position of the Aboriginal people in the various settlements that formed the context for this research. Could Aboriginal people today see themselves objectified in the whole writing and investigation of the period? Perhaps by their omission from this research, yes. But I was also conscious that my focus was not on the adaptation of Aboriginal people to these settlements.

As a white, middle class third culture kid, I felt I was in no position to be examining the adaptation of people whose languages I do not speak, whose cultures I know little about, and whose narratives can only really be told by somebody they trust. I had no history with these settlements, except as a journalist and short-term visitor. Their stories are not mine to tell. The same approach went for how I conducted my research. The people I interviewed spoke the same language and came from similar cultural backgrounds to me. I knew most of them, and those I did not know were recommended by mutual acquaintance. I wanted to understand the underlying elements that contributed to the adaptation process of people who may have had a similar background to me, albeit during a different time and under different circumstances. What was their inclusion in these remote places during the 1960s really all about and what could it tell us about today?

The original question that prompted my interest in this research (see **Chapter One: Introduction 1.4.1 Researcher's positioning**) was, what makes one remote workplace a supportive and satisfying place to work, as against one that is not? I believe the answer lies in two levels of team governance. The first, the macro level, is associated with the effectiveness of governance structures that can potentially create support and accountability between isolated workers and, in this case, adapt to existing Indigenous systems of self-management and governance. The bigger problem with strengthening these structures at the macro level is that it could be interpreted as making improvements to colonial systems of governances, where the move for some years, has been towards self-determination.

This factor then impacts on the secondary level or the micro level, that is, the worker's experience of their own performance in their roles. While there will be Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who would want to see the removal of all non-Indigenous personnel from remote communities for self-determination to take full effect, there are many more who do not want that to happen. The likelihood of it happening is improbable. Remote communities will almost certainly always be home to non-Indigenous workers with expertise that is not available in situ. Therefore, the colonial gaze will always be there and it will always be problematic. The lessons of the 1960s are also, therefore, still relevant today. Validation of the worker in these contexts is important. The findings in this research show that objectification of remote Aboriginal life and culture was subsumed by the reality of their experience, their relationships with Aboriginal people, and through the experience of maturing in their professional role, working in an isolated setting and making effective decisions on their own. The reality is that remote non-Indigenous workers' will continue to be part of the picture of remote communities and those who choose to stay and commit to supporting those communities require support at various levels, as described in the literature reviewed above.

7.5.1

In closing

A final question in closing: How well will modern systems of human resource governance and leadership knowledge serve teamwork in far flung settings such as the Arctic regions, the international development and aid sector or a planned settlement on Mars? There are implications here for research on the growing space

sector (Tutton 2018) and plans for small-scale human settlements on other planets such as the Mars One mission – a Dutch-based not-for-profit project planning to send four individuals to live on Mars by 2027. There are implications, also, for military life (van Wijk 2008), the Arctic regions (Mocellin et al. 2000) and the international development and aid sector (Duffield 2012) - a new terrain in which ‘aid workers no longer understand or feel safe’ (Duffield 2012, p. 475) and which calls for individual workers to manage their own stresses, processes and resilience in environments that do not necessarily have built-in social or professional structures (Duffield 2012). Ambiguity or absence of structure at the macro-level will result in other actors or processes filling that void (Cheshire 2010). Enough external structures therefore need to be in place to maintain perspective and renew routine collaborations in order to validate the micro-level team structure. Ford, Piccolo and Ford (2017) support this micro-level development in their findings that ‘characteristics of the person being led, the task which that person performs, and the organisation’s structure can substitute for a leaders’ direct involvement’ (Ford, Piccolo and Ford, 2017, p. 6).

The other end of the macro-level organisation is positive leadership, staff support, a clear mandate and clear goals, which result in group cohesion (Canham 2002; Salo and Siebold 2005; Garrison et al. 2010; Nelson 1962). Focusing purely on micro-level support without a view of the macro-level organisational structure can also result in the need to fill a void.

An example of how focusing on an exhaustive selection process including extensive profiling, searching, and training can go terribly wrong is the disastrous end to the

sixth, NASA-funded, Mars simulation on a Hawaiian island, part of the HI-SEAS project in February 2018. This was a simulation where six specialists were isolated together for what should have been an eight-month stay, mimicking as much as possible the situation on Mars, a situation as isolated as a working group of people can get. The crew disbanded after four days (Koren 2018) after a medical emergency. Lack of support and a lack of clarity regarding safety procedures were cited by one crew member who decided that the risk to the personal health and safety of another crew member was more important than the mission. This ended the entire project, even though all the other crewmembers wanted to stay (Koren 2018).

Having a better understanding of the social and professional processes of isolated groups and the ways in which micro and macro-level structural absences are dealt with, will be instrumental in determining how well or how poorly groups will adjust in isolated environments. With the ‘trend towards isolated living’ particularly ‘with the advent of space exploration’ (Eilbert & Glaser 1959), understanding adjustment to living in small, isolated groups is becoming more pertinent and more important. If we have not solved the challenges around isolated living in small, dispersed settlements on earth, what can we expect to find when we send a small group to Mars?

Remote workers will face many situations where they will have to ignore organizational policy in order to solve or deal with a problem. Having the flexibility to always put their clients first and focus on their overall goals is beneficial to the organization and to the wider community. The various types of independent research, education, health and social changes taking place in remote Aboriginal communities are all specializations occurring within the same field of action. To that

end, namely “community development”, they are also interdependent on one another” (Girard and Stark 2002). The separation of each element within this field provides each actor or small group of actors autonomy within their chosen specialization. This autonomous space of interdependence “heightens the need for fine-grained coordination across the increasingly autonomous units.” (Girard and Stark 2002, p. 166). As outcomes are achieved, research is highlighted, change is occurring, Where an Aboriginal organization, with an Aboriginal board, employs non-Aboriginal staff, there is uncertainty about accountability. There remains a perception of hierarchy by the non-Aboriginal staff, but without the clear boundaries of traditional corporate or governmental management systems. According to Girard and Stark (2002), a clearer framework, even within one organization, results in greater accountability of each actor.

Contemporary daily life in remote communities continues to be a risky balancing act for the non-Indigenous worker:

“There are positives and negatives about entering the local economy and one has to regularly renegotiate the boundaries, but it opens up a world that is otherwise entirely hidden, and the rewards are both rich and dangerous” (Mahood 2009, p. 2).

The resultant ambiguity of such a space can, and is, exploited by all those invested in particular outcomes, according to the policies or other social and professional demands to which they must subscribe. Independent coordination and conflict management is therefore essential to easing the complexities of such spaces and could be an important starting point for future research. Recommendations therefore

lie in further research on the ways that this knowledge can be utilized in the preparation and expectation of policy.

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Appendices

Appendix A



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2 February 2015

Prof Rolf Gerritsen and Miss Penelope Bergen
The Northern Institute
Via email

Rolf.Gerritsen@cdu.edu.au

Dear Rolf and Penelope,

RE: H15001 – “Between the State and the Blackfellas”: Whitefella narratives of the origins of the culture of non-Indigenous staff in Indigenous settlements in Central Australia’s tri-state border region (Northern Territory/South Australia/Western Australia) 1964-1974

Human Research Ethics Committee - Proposal Approval

Thank you for submitting the above proposal for ethical review. The proposal has been considered under the auspices of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee (CDU-HREC) and is **approved from the date of this letter to the expiry date listed below.**

EXPIRY DATE: 20/05/2017

An annual progress report must be provided to the Ethics Office before each anniversary of the commencement date. This approval is contingent on submission of a satisfactory annual progress report.

APPROVAL IS SUBJECT TO the following:

1. The safe and ethical conduct of this project is entirely the responsibility of the investigators and their institution(s).
2. The Principal Investigator must **report immediately any event or circumstance that might affect the ethical acceptability** of the project, including:
 - Adverse effects of the project on participants and the steps taken to deal with these;
 - All other unforeseen events that influence the protocol or participants; and
 - New information that may invalidate the ethical integrity of the study.
3. The Principal Investigator must obtain approval for any **variation to the protocol** (including the addition of new investigators) prior to implementation the proposed variations. Requests for approval of variations must be submitted in accordance with the procedures of the Ethics Office.
4. The Principal Investigator must advise the University immediately of **unapproved protocol deviations or protocol violations.**
5. The Principal Investigator may request an **extension of the project past the expiry date listed above.** An extension may be requested at any time, however, the preferred time and method of requesting an extension of ethical approval is in the **annual progress report.**

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, ETHICS
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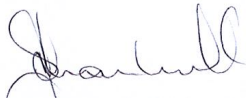
6. The Principal Investigator must notify the Ethics Office of his or her **inability to continue as Principal Investigator**, including the name of and contact information for their replacement. The research may not proceed without an approved Principal Investigator.
7. Confidentiality of personal information of research participants should be maintained at all times as required by law.
8. You must forward a copy of this letter to all investigators and to any associated organisations.

This letter constitutes ethical approval from the CDU Human Research Ethics Committee only.

Should you wish to discuss the above research project further, please contact the Executive Officer of the Ethics Office via email: ethics@cdu.edu.au or telephone: (08) 8946 6923.

Best wishes for the success of your project.

Yours sincerely



Dr Bev Turnbull
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
Charles Darwin University, NHMRC Registration No. EC00154
<http://www.cdu.edu.au/research/ori/human-ethics>

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Appendix B

Can you provide a timeline of places worked and positions held in Central Australia?

On arrival

- What were your motivations for going to live and work in Central Australia?
- Did you receive any kind of specific preparation for going to live in a remote community? If so, how did it prepare you? Was it enough once you arrived?
- What sort of things did you learn in your preparation?
- What sort of attitudes were conveyed to you about Aboriginal culture (if any)?
- What sort of attitudes were conveyed to you about living remotely with other whitefellas (if any)?
- How old were you?
- What sort of previous work experience had you had?
- What was your attitude toward the assignment once you knew you were heading to a particular community?
- What were your perceptions on arrival – of other people, the community as a whole, the relationships between whitefellas, the situation for Aboriginal people?
- How big was the population? How many whitefellas worked and lived there at the time?
- Were you all employed by the one agency or different organisations?
- Do you recall what you expected relationships with others would be like and was it vastly different to what you imagined?
- Did you get an immediate grasp of the social order when you arrived?
- Did you know what you were supposed to be doing when you got there?
- What were your living arrangements? Were your living arrangements similar in other remote communities (if you worked in other Centralian remote communities)?
- What did you actually think of the whitefellas you met there?
- How did you perceive yourself in that space? How did you see yourself fitting into the whitefella culture there?
- Did you think of it as a culture?
- If not, why not? If yes, did you ever give it a name?
- Did you feel you had anything in common with the other whitefellas?
- What did you think about that community of whitefellas on the whole?
- How did you feel you fitted in (both with black and whitefellas)?
- Did you feel uncomfortable?
- Did you take orders from anybody? Who did you answer to?
- Was it clear who you would be taking orders from on arrival? Did that change?
- Did you ever think they were asking unreasonable things of you?
- If yes, how did you deal with that?

- How much autonomy did you feel you had? Did you think you should have more/less?
- How did the whitefella social order (top dog?) compare to the work people did? (were people in some jobs considered higher up the pecking order than people in other jobs?)
- Did length of time in a place denote a higher place on a pecking order? If so, how was that made apparent? If not, how do you think the pecking order was established if there even was one?
- If there wasn't one, can you describe, how that whitefella group struck you as a culture of people in your first few months?
- Did that perception change over time?
- Was there a leader? What sort of leader were they? Benign? Malign?
- Was there any change in the social order while you were there?
- Do you think those who were trained at ASOPA were more prepared for living and working in remote communities than those who weren't?
- Did your motivations for being there change after a time? If yes, what did they change to? What was it that changed them? How long did it take for them to change?
- Was there any sort of social cohesion among whitefellas or was it every man to himself?
- Did you feel like you were all having comparable experiences? (or did your respective professions make it a very different type of experience for everyone?)
- Did you see the group as a coherent whole, having a common experience? Or did you see no relation between yourself and others who may have worked at the same time as, even in the same communities, but in different capacities?
- Did the fact that you were all out there together make you feel some sense of camaraderie with everyone? (or with some people and not others?)
- Did you ever witness behaviour or things said by people and thought 'they've been out here too long' or think they'd lost perspective?
- Was there a term for people like that? (in the tropics they say they've 'gone troppo')
- If you witnessed this, what did you think caused it? Remoteness? Lack of contact with the outside world? Culture shock? etc.
- Did you ever worry that might happen to you?
- Did you think there was a certain type of personality that could happen to or did you/do you think it could happen to anybody?
- Did you hear stories, then about other whitefellas (were there legendary characters people spoke about or looked up to)?
- What was the attitude to those characters or stories? Were they taken with a grain of salt? Did people aspire to be like them? Were they held up with any sort of esteem?
- Did you have spare time or did you think of yourself as always on the job?
- What did you do in your spare time (if you had any)?
- Did you feel isolated?

- If so, how did you deal with that?
- If not, how do you think that isolation affected or limited your social experiences?
- Were there words, phrases, aspects of language that you had to learn to fit in with the whitefellas (and blackfellas)?
- Were there things you came away knowing about remote Aboriginal and remote Whitefella life that you had no idea about before you went there? What sort of things?

- **Making sense of your experience**
 - In such an alien place, how do you think you made sense of where you were?
For example:
 - Did you find yourself comparing your experiences to earlier experiences?
 - What sort of comparisons did you make? (family, friends, social gatherings – anything that felt familiar)
 - Did your perceptions of mainstream Australia change when you first went to Central Australia?
 - Or later?
 - If so, how?
 - If not, why do you think they did not?
 - Did your perceptions of how you fitted in to ‘normal’ mainstream society change?
 - Did you feel like you were just visitors or sojourners in remote communities? Or did you have a sense of ‘this is home now’?
 - Tell me about some of the outstanding characters/people or events that occurred while you were there?
 - If you met people now who you worked with then, would you feel a certain kinship with them in terms of having had a shared experience?
 - Did you ever find yourself wishing you’d never gone there?
 - Did you think you’d be able to use what you learned there in other situations or back in mainstream Australia?
 - What did people back ‘home’ think about where you were and what you were doing?
 - How did you convey what your experience was like?
 - Did you feel a bit like you’d been living on the moon?!

- **A new and changing culture**
 - Were there whitefella gatekeepers (either positive or negative) at the time? (was there somebody who felt a certain ownership over the community or over the Aboriginal people in the community and displayed that in any way? – and not necessarily superintendents or community managers)

- Did you ever feel like that yourself?
- If yes, how did that happen? How did they behave? Towards you? Towards others?
- Did you witness bad behaviour early on from anybody that would not have been tolerated in mainstream Australia? If so can you describe what sort of behaviour?
- Were there ever times when you thought 'I wish somebody had told me ...' (did anybody prepare you for what you might expect to find?)
- What sort of attitudes were there towards missionaries at the time?
- At that point in time, did you hear non-missionaries blaming the missionaries for how things were turning out for Aboriginal people?
- Did you think of yourself as working in the development sector? If not, did you know at the time that such a sector existed outside Australia?
- If not, did you feel like you were working somewhere unique?
- Did you feel like you were working in an extraordinary place at an extraordinary time?
- Was the notion that mercenaries, missionaries and misfits work in the development sector something you heard back then?
- How applicable do you think it was/is?
- If so, did you think it applied to you in any way?
- Did whitefellas move around a lot, from community to community in those days?
- If so, why do you think that was?
- If not, why do you think people stayed?
- Did you have a feeling that, as a group, you (whitefellas) were creating something new (in terms of a culture?)
- Would you define that culture you were working in as organisational or social or both?
- Is it hard to separate the two as you were so remote?
- If the lines blurred, how do you think those lines blurred? (did you all talk about work when you were socialising?)
- Do you think that was the same for everyone? Did it depend on your job?
- Do you think there were different values that were important for whitefellas in remote settlements? (Compared to mainstream living)?
- Did whitefellas take care of each other in remote communities or was it more every man to himself?
- Was there a sense from anybody of wanting to improve the way things were done? If so, what sort of things? (for black or white)
- If not, why do you think that was? Was there a sense of hopelessness about what you were all doing out there?
- If not, was there a general idea about where things might be heading for Aboriginal people and those working in remote communities?
- Was there a sense that whitefellas were a temporary or permanent fixture in remote communities?

- If there was no sense of future orientation, do you think this was an indication of the government's ambition level at the time?
- Did you find yourself ignoring or working around government policy to accommodate the unexpected realities of life in remote settlements?
- Did you feel you were, in effect, creating or shaping policy by doing so?
- Did you have an awareness of there being any support for you outside of Central Australia (government-wise?) either socially or if you had trouble at work?
- Did you get a sense that you belonged or didn't belong to this group of whitefellas?
- Was there more than 'one group' of whitefellas in remote settlements at the time?
- If yes, can you talk about the different groups?
- Were they marked by their profession or their personality or both?
- Were there things you learned to put up with both professionally and socially that you think you wouldn't have had to endure in mainstream Australia?
- Do you think you saw yourselves – all the whitefellas – as like-minded people, pursuing a common goal?
- Did you find that you tended to make deep friendships very quickly with people in remote communities?
- Do you think the whitefella culture/social order affected the way you did your job?
- Were you ever able to describe to people down south what the culture of whitefellas was like in the centre?
- Did you see yourselves as part of a group of people or just an individual doing something you felt was worthwhile?
- Did you think what you were doing was worthwhile? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- Were you ever surprised, moving from one job in a community to another, how things were done differently? (Or was work mostly run in the same fashion in each settlement you worked in?)
- Once you'd been living remotely for a while, did you start to look at newcomers with different eyes?
- If so, how long were you there before you no longer felt like a newcomer?
- Did you ever give advice to people coming to work there for the first time?
- If so, what sort of things did you tell them about how to cope with their jobs or how to get along with other people or what was important to know?
- Did you ever have to tell people who to watch out for and how to deal with them (black or white)?
- Did you have an idea that you were becoming part of a particular heritage (with its own stories/characters/values/history to be passed on to newcomers)?
- Academic Kim Mahood, who grew up in a remote community and still works in remote communities, has referred to whitefellas working in communities as 'the gray zone of remote Indigenous service delivery' – is that how you might describe the situation of whitefellas working in remote communities? (a

situation where there is no real understanding of the history and long-term purpose and/or culture of whitefellas in the remotes)

- If yes, why? If not, why not?

- **On remoteness**

- How did your expectations change once you got there?
- Were there moments when you thought ‘what have I done?’ or wondered if you should just go home?
- Did you often feel homesick?
- Were there things you missed from ‘mainstream’ life? If so, what sort of things did you miss?
- If not, why do you think that was? (E.g. were you quick to adapt? Were you not there long enough? Did you have a strong sense of a temporary/lengthy stay that made a difference to you?)
- Did you know on arrival how long you’d be there before you would be able to go home or have a break from the remoteness?
- How did it feel to be that remote? Was it something that ever worried you?
- Did you ever feel scared of being so far from anywhere/help/family etc.?
- Did you get a sense that people could get away with anything out there?
- Was there any connection, socially or professionally, with the outside world?
- How did a lack of resources (due to remoteness) restrict your work, if at all? And social life (if at all).
- Do you remember having an awareness of what was happening in the world politically or socially while you lived out there?
- How did you receive news of the outside world?
- Were you able to relate what was happening in Central Australia to the world order in any way or did you feel you were living in a place that was out of context with the rest of the world?
- Did you ever feel like you were ‘*stuck*’ out there?
- Did you perceive differences between those working in South Australia/Central Australia/Western Australia?
- Was there a sense that it was better to work in one state/Territory or another?
- Did you ever feel that your isolation placed pressure on individuals?
- How do you think isolation affected you as a group?
- Did you find you needed to get out frequently and see the world?
- Did you ever feel like you could or were losing perspective on how the rest of the world lived and worked?
- Were there people who did?
- Were there people who had a lot of conflicts and found it difficult to maintain their professionalism?

- Do you think that professionalism or even socially, there might have been deterioration according to the length of time somebody had been out there in one stint?
- Had your training, if you receive training, prepared you for the remoteness?
- Do you think you had enough privacy?
- Was privacy ever a problem for you?
- Did you notice any change in whitefellas who lived out there a long time without returning to mainstream society? Did they 'go troppo' & if so, how did that manifest itself?
- Do you think the vastness and openness of the landscape had an effect on you (or others?)
- Did you find the lack of distractions (besides work) had an effect on you? Was it confronting? If so how?
- It was quite a distinct group of people to start with. Do you think you got more respect from other whitefellas the longer you stayed there or what is really just a matter of personalities that either liked each other or didn't?
- Was there respect for those who had been there a long time? And was that respect borne out of knowing what a harsh environment it was in which to survive?
- Did you think at any point that you would find it hard to go back to a 'normal' life?
- How did you find it when you did go back to mainstream Australia? Was it hard to adjust? Were there particular things you missed?
- Did you suffer from culture shock either on arriving in the remotes or on returning to the mainstream? If so how did that manifest?

- **Personal background**

- Tell me briefly about your family – parents' occupations, number of siblings, and your place in the family, general attitudes to life that may have influenced your choice to live in Central Australia.
- Where did you think of as home?
- Had your family moved around much when you were a child or did you grow up in the one same place?
- What did your family think of where you were and what you were doing?
- How did you communicate with them?
- How did you communicate your experiences?
- Did you find it hard to communicate what you were experiencing?
- If so, why?
- If not, why not?
- The first time you went back to mainstream Australia – do you remember how you felt?
- In your hometown, what sort of social life did you have?

- Did you belong to organisations or clubs?
- Did you have close friends?
- Do you remember what sort of plans or aspirations you had when you were younger?
- How would you have described your personality?
- How did others describe you?
- How old were you when you first left home to work?
- How do you think your upbringing or home life prepared you for this experience?
- What was the attitude of your family when you said you wanted to go to Central Australia and work with Aboriginal people?
- What about your friends who stayed in your hometown – what did they think?
- Did you stay friends with anybody from that time in those places of origin?
- What made you different to them? Was it family?
- Were you at all religious and did religion play a part in your life or decision-making?
- Were there others in your social group in your hometown who went off and did adventurous things like you?
- What impressions of the outback did you have as a young fellow? (Margaret Hewitt says she was heavily influenced by the Billabong books while David said he was influenced by Arthur Groom's *I saw a Strange Land*) Were there books or other media that made an impression on you?
- If not, what impression did you have? If none, do you recall any expectations you had of what it might be like?

- **Organisational**

- What did you know about NT and/or Federal policies around Aboriginal people at the time?
- Did anybody explain those policies or what they meant in reality?
- If yes, how did they play out in your everyday life?
- What was your mandate? Were you given a mandate?
- If yes, what did you think of those policies and your mandate?
- Did anybody come to check that you were carrying out government policies?
- Were you expected to achieve anything in particular within a given time frame?
- If not, did you give yourself a time limit by which you hoped to achieve something in particular?
- Was there even a sense that something in particular was meant to be achieved?
- Did you have any direct contact with policy makers or politicians?
- Were you able to communicate your experiences with anyone in power at the time?
- Were daily things you did that went against the policies of the time?
- Would you have discussed that with you colleagues? Or with bosses?

- What sort of administration was there to be done in communities when you were there?
- How did you get paid?
- Was there any coordination between people doing different jobs?
- Was there a sense of common achievement?
- Did anybody ever complain (either to each other or to the government) about conditions (work/living/anything)?
- Did you live or work in any other settlements? If yes, once you moved to a new settlement or community, what was that like? Did you go to a second community feeling like you knew more or less about the community you were going into?
- If you lived or worked in a settlement in the NT or WA, can you talk about the differences in your experience in other states/territories?
- How did you move on to new jobs? (How did you hear about them? Were you directed to move to other settlements?)
- Were you aware of State or Territory differences in terms of employment?
- Was there a division socially between the states/Territory workers?
- Was it better to be employed by one or the other?
- At the time, did you ever think ‘things could work better’ or be more effective if only the powers that be did things a certain way?
- Were government policies effective in achieving what the government wanted to achieve?
- Did you know what the government wanted to achieve?
- What did you think of that at the time? What do you think of that now?
- Do you think whitefellas working in remote settlements when you first went there were, in effect, creating their own policies by their practice? (Especially if it did not match the government policies?)
- Is that something that was noticed or do you think changed actual policies?
- At what point did you leave and why?

- **On Aboriginal/host culture**
 - Did you have an attitude of ‘when in Rome...’ when it came to adapting to Aboriginal culture, or did you think it was a two-way process of learning from each other’s cultures and both changing and adapting.
 - Or did you feel like it was a matter of Aboriginal people needing to adapt to a new way of doing things to fit into a new culture?
 - Did you think of Aboriginal culture as your host culture or did you feel that you were, by and large, working within mainstream Australian culture?
 - Was there a point at which you thought, like some academics and policy makers at the time, that maybe Aboriginal people should have been left alone to deal with/take charge of their own lives as they saw fit?

- Did you ever feel like you were either living in or presiding over a sort of re-education camp or work camp (a term once used by Nicolas Rothwell!)?
- Did you feel like you were mediators between Aboriginal culture and the rest of Australia and/or Aboriginal people and the government?
- Did you feel like go-betweens between the government and Aboriginal people? Was that part of your role?
- Did you find your way of doing things as a European Australian was ever NOT respected or questioned by Aboriginal people?
- If so, how was that as an experience?
- Did it tell you anything about what was happening for you in terms of how you see your place in the world/how you see yourself?
- Aboriginal ethics and morality is so vastly different to Western/Christian values. Do you remember how you were first struck by that difference and what you thought about it?
- Did it matter to you that people outside of Central Australia had some idea of what life was like there/ what sort of work you were doing? / What Aboriginal culture was like to work with?
- How did you make sense of what was happening both for Aboriginal people and for yourselves working out there?
- Did you think the outside world had any awareness of remote Central Australia?
- What sort of attitudes did you come across in whitefellas towards Aboriginal people?
- What did you think of (bad) attitudes?
- What made a bad attitude?
- Did you witness bad behaviour of whitefellas towards Aboriginal people or whitefellas?
- What did you think about that?
- Was it possible to report those people? Did you want to? Or was that not an option?
- Were there police in the area?
- Did others have similar attitudes to you or did you feel alone in your views?
- How did you deal with it?
- Did you ever think about leaving and going back to mainstream Australia at times like that?
- If not, why do you think that was?
- Do you know if those people who behaved badly either violently or abusively in some other way (bullying?) ever ended up getting admonished by the powers that be?
- Was there much bullying among whitefellas?
- Did you have any idea of how much time these settlements were going to have to adapt to this new way of living? (Was there any inkling of self-determination at this point?)
- What did you think of how Aboriginal people were living at the time?

- Did it feel like there were two very distinct cultures? There was white Australian culture and Aboriginal culture or did you feel like you were in their country?
- Margaret and David spoke about do-gooders – people who have pliable boundaries with Aboriginal people (for example constantly lending Aboriginal people their own money or not saying no to Aboriginal people wanting something for nothing). Was that a term you were familiar with?
- Were there are other terms people used to describe different types of whitefella behaviour?

- **Social life in settlements**

- Were there particular beliefs that people all subscribed to about living and working in remote settlements ('that's not how we do things out here' type of thinking)?
- Were there particular things or ways of doing things that were considered normal there but wouldn't be normal anywhere else?
- Did you tend to make deep friendships quite quickly?
- If so, were they long-lasting friendships?
- Was gossip a part of social life for whitefellas?
- Was it helpful? Harmful?
- Did you find that you had to learn new terms of phrase or words – that there was a particular language for this social group?
- Were there other sorts of daily patterns/rituals or ceremony-like aspects to social life? Habits that people picked up?
- What sort of stories did whitefellas share or tell about their experience (talking of specific people, dogs, monsters, remoteness, heat, water, conflicts etc.)
- Was there any music or art that people shared together? Or food/a way of eating or cooking?
- Do you think there was much of Aboriginal culture that affected whitefellas in terms of their daily routines? (Was there a natural adoption of or sharing of cultures?)
- Was there much conflict between whitefellas then?
- What sort of conflicts were there?
- How did that affect you?
- Did you ever feel a sense of shock at the way you had to live?
- Do you think you suffered culture shock? If yes, how did that manifest?
- If not, were there other people who did?
- If you didn't, what was the difference between you and those who did, do you think?
- How did socialising occur? (Was it haphazard? Was it every-day or occasional? Was it ever planned?)
- How do you find relief from everyday stresses/let off steam?
- If you lived or worked in other communities, how did the social situation differ in the next community you went to?

- Did you see many similarities?
- Did you come across similar characters with similar roles? Or was it a whole new kettle of fish?
- Were there individuals in one settlement who had sway in others or was the social situation very separate in each community?
- What was that like/what did you think of that at the time?
- Did you find you had to prove yourselves to people in each community? (Particularly those who'd been in Central Australia longer than you?)
- Were there some settlements where the whitefellas functioned better together than in others? (Or was it much the same everywhere?)
- If yes, what do you think some of the differences were between the well-functioning and the others?
- If it was good leadership – what sort of qualities made for a good leader in those situations?
- If it was an attitude to the work, what was that attitude?
- Did you think you all worked well together as a team or was it more every man to himself?
- Did the whitefellas pull together when something needed to get done or again, were you left to your own devices?
- Were things ever planned well ahead of time work-wise or was it more a matter of facing one day at a time?
- Did whitefellas take pride in their work or accomplishments? Did you?
- Did whitefellas form smaller groups or cliques rather than work together or socialise together as a whole?
- How did you motivate yourself and keep morale high?
- How did you measure how well a particular group of whitefellas was working together or living together?
- Did you find that, on the whole, groups of people in particular places were friendly, cooperative and efficient?
- Do you think it was easier to live and work in larger groups of whitefellas?
- If yes, what do you think made the difference?
- If no, what do you think made the difference?
- What sort of ages were people out there then? Varied? Were there people much younger than you in the beginning? Were most people much older?
- Did you have an idea of what everyone else was doing?
- One paper I read on third cultures referred to there being 3 'classes' in situations like this: 1) First-timers, 2) The 'experienced' and 3) 'Old Foreign Hands'. Do you think that holds true to remote Aboriginal communities, or is this not relevant to your experience? (David and Margaret described two classes of people: the 'first-timers' and the 'old hands').
- Do you agree? If yes, why? If not, why not? How would you describe it?
- How long did it take before you were an old hand (or simply no longer a first-timer?)

- Did you have any understanding of what it was you had become a part of, in terms of living so remotely with other whitefellas in the way you did?
- How would you describe that little group of people now, looking back? On arrival did you see those people as pioneers whose level of outback experience you wanted to achieve one day?
- How did you fit into that picture?
- Did you talk to each other, at the time, about what you were doing and what you thought of your lives there and of Aboriginal lives there at the time?
- Was there competition between people?
- Were you ambitious in any way?
- Could whitefellas advance in their careers in remote communities? Or not really?
- Do you think you had a strong sense of who you were at the time?
- Do you think these days that people should get the same sort of ASOPA training as in your time? Do you think it would help (either the whitefellas or the blackfellas)?
- Any questions I haven't brought up that you'd like to talk about: experiences, memories, looking back now how you might see certain things differently to the way you saw them at the time; ideas about your time there – all welcome.

Appendix C

Chapter 3 Situational mapping

According to Clarke (2005) situational mapping should occur after some initial coding has taken place (see **Chapter Two: Methodology and research design 2.3.1.1 Situational mapping**). Situational mapping is a way of throwing everything in the air and seeing if it lands differently. This is an analytical and visual tool that allows the researcher to look at all the elements of a situation that contribute to and constitute it. Mathar (2008) describes this technique as making ‘an ordered version of the mess’ (Mathar 2008, p. 1) of the coding process. The goal, say Clarke and Friese (2007), is to stimulate thinking, break down preconceptions and challenge assumptions. As I found the process confusing to navigate, I did the process manually by writing down the words and cutting them into separate pieces of paper. About 70 hand-written notes including categories and themes of the coded and categorised data were each written on separate pieces of paper, placed on a large flat surface, and mixed randomly in order to disrupt any patterns I thought I may have been seeing or may have wanted to see. Each element stood alone as a symbol awaiting fresh interpretation. The figure below is the random mix of the categories, not an ordered map. This was the beginning of trying to see if there could be other ways in which the categories and concepts could be re-ordered or connected, and whether or not they might seem less or more important if ordered differently. This method is part of the process of transparency.

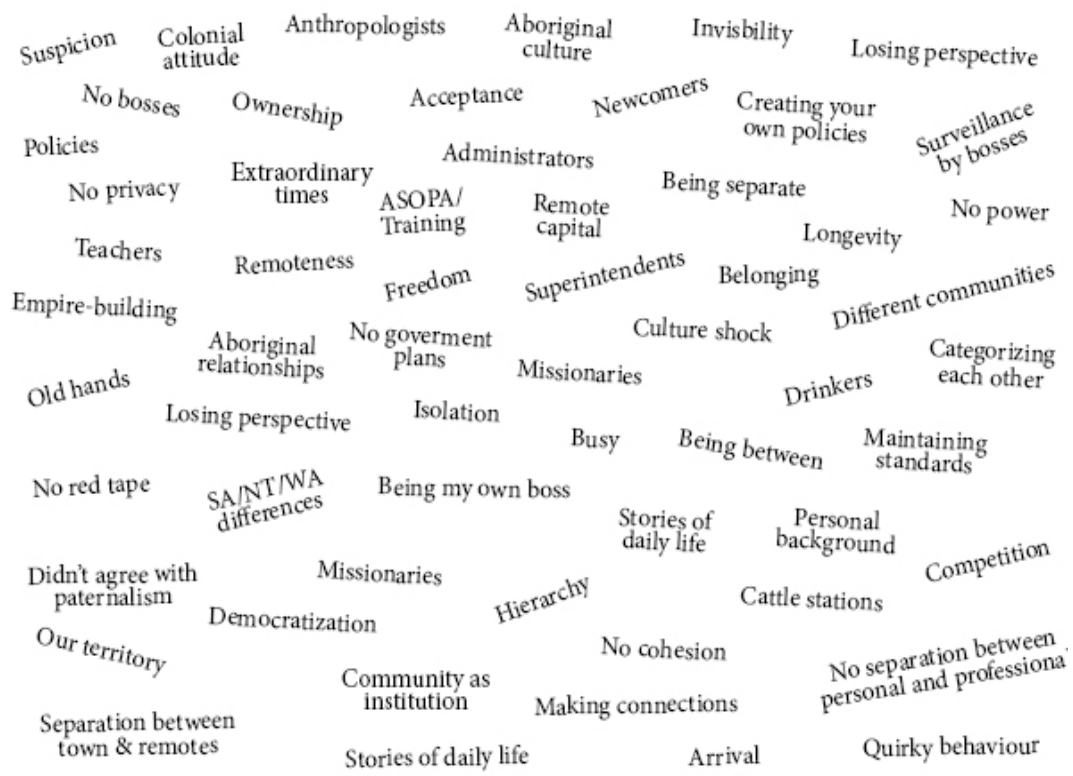


Figure 3.2
Laying out the codes and themes

Thirteen maps were created during this process. What proceeds are some examples of the maps illustrating the thought processes going into the interpretation and comparison of the data. The whole point of this process is to lay out all the elements of the situation, in order to see more clearly who and what constitute it, what matters, what is important, what is not important (Clarke 2003). The following samples show some of the key points in that process. In essence, this is a way of trying to create order from disorder, to avoid forcing the data into particular categories and to re-order existing codes or categories, where possible. This was the stage of coding and level of thinking that led to the ordering of the findings in **Chapter Four**.

3.9.1 Situational map 1



Figure 3.3
Situational map 1

At the beginning of this process, several smaller maps were made to try to capture any and all groupings that may have been missed up to that point. The first map showed a social process and some core influences and results of that social process. This map included participants' words and classifications that stood out during the interview process. This map

focused on individual actors and collective human elements (Mathar 2008). The first four categories (at the top) of the first map were common conceptions of the group and their collective organisation. The two columns underneath were polar opposites: the newcomer versus the old hand, the do-gooders versus those who could claim ownership of the very culture they said they were not a part of, the culture shock of the newcomer versus the knowledge ('remote capital') of the old hands. I wasn't entirely sure at that stage what I was seeing or what this collection of codes was going to mean. While not speculating or theorising in too much detail, the top circle seems to show a basic social transformation brought about by placement near a different culture. The bottom two maps are the beginning of that process (on the left) and the results of that process (on the right). This map was thrown back into the collection with all the other categories and concepts, mixed up, and the process began again, looking at whatever other relationships I could find between the categories and themes.

3.9.2 Situational map 2



Figure 3.4
Situational map 2

The second map showed two sets of groupings. Essentially, this showed a separation between the political/institutional elements of remote settlements, and the resulting responses of the rest of the staff. The bottom circle included other human actors, those in charge of running settlements in one group.

The top circle showed another layer of that hierarchy of administration: the policies and the policy makers, including the empire builders, who remained separated by distance. This included political elements such as policies. The right-hand circle showed the circumstances of the rest of the remote workers who saw themselves as separated from administration, policies and the institution. There was no real sense of surveillance by bosses. These elements intersected with the administration hierarchy but remain separated. Autonomy and freedom resulted in a lack of cohesion and being in an in-between space in the left-hand grouping. Mathar (2008) used the description ‘discursive constrictions of individual or collective human actors’ and ‘sociocultural/symbolic elements’ (Mathar 2008, p. 1) which aptly summarises these two sets of opposites.

During the process of creating these smaller maps, Clarke’s (2005) relational analysis was also employed. This is a tool for laying out the connections between the elements that shaped everyday life (Clarke 2005). It involved literally drawing lines,

using one element of the map as a starting point, to capture ‘one social world’ (Mathar 2008 p. 1). This process provoked deeper thinking about the relationships between people, contexts, social processes etc. For example, the following relational map used ‘being between’ as the centre. The map revealed that ‘being between’ was both a result of and contributing factor to ‘invisibility’, ‘suspicion’, ‘categorising each other’, ‘competition’ etc. It confirmed that most of the staff saw themselves as being separate from the administrators, policies, Alice Springs workers, the institutional setting, and Aboriginal culture. It also shows that ‘being between’ contributed to creating separation in that the workers had their own territory, maintained their own standards, took ownership of their experience to become old hands, built relationships with Aboriginal people, found a sense of their own power, created their own policies and made connections where they could. This revealed some of the depth of the relationships between the many elements in the coding.

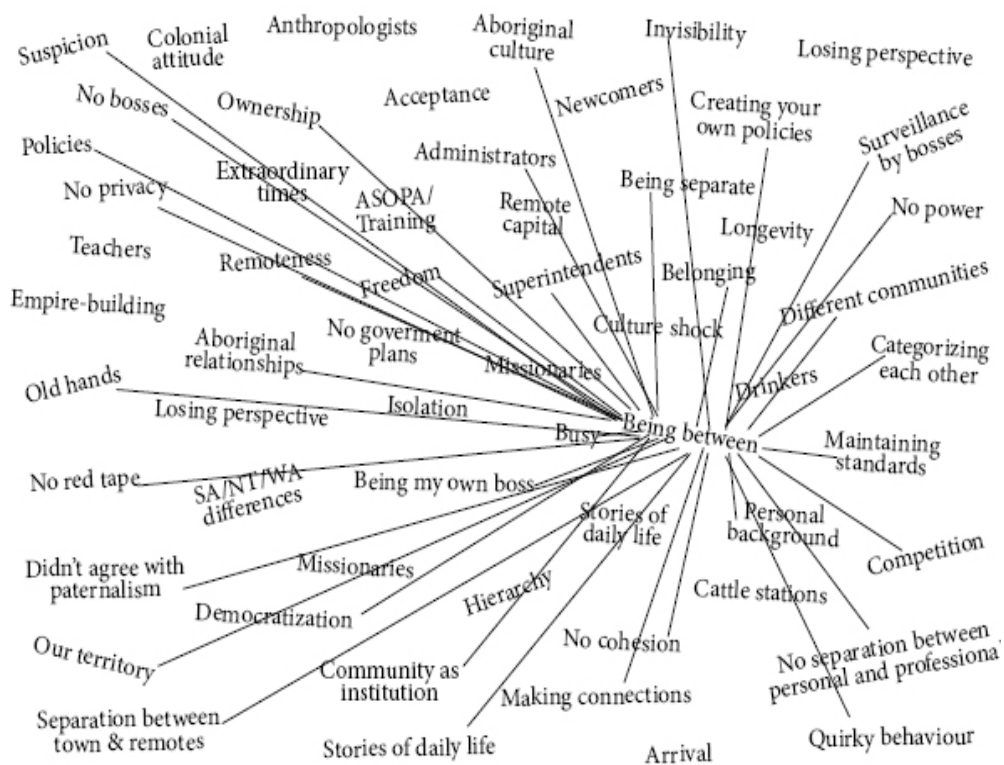


Figure 3.5
Relational map of “being between”

3.9.3 Situational map 3

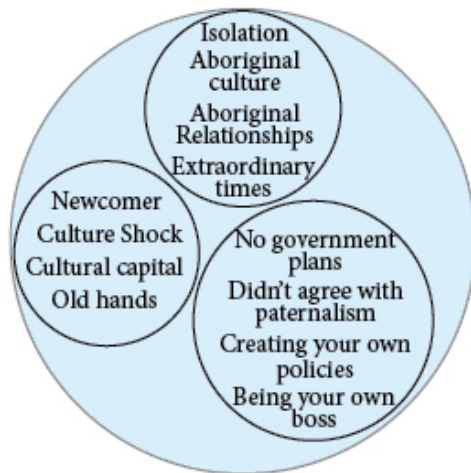


Figure 3.6
Situation map 3

This map is an example of how some of those elements came together to reveal some key influences on the creation of the remote workers' culture. This map combined elements of the earlier two maps, revealing a social process of adapting from newcomer to old hand (left-hand circle); the contribution of other influences on remote workers in the top circle (human and non-human actors and spatial elements) (Mathar 2008), and a political/policy context from which they separated to become their own boss. Becoming an old hand denoted status in having accrued remote capital. Old hands and newcomers each had their own social world (Mathar 2008; Clarke 2005) – as did teachers, superintendents, missionaries, the policy makers etc. The broader social arena into which each of these individual worlds fitted was explored using further relational mapping.

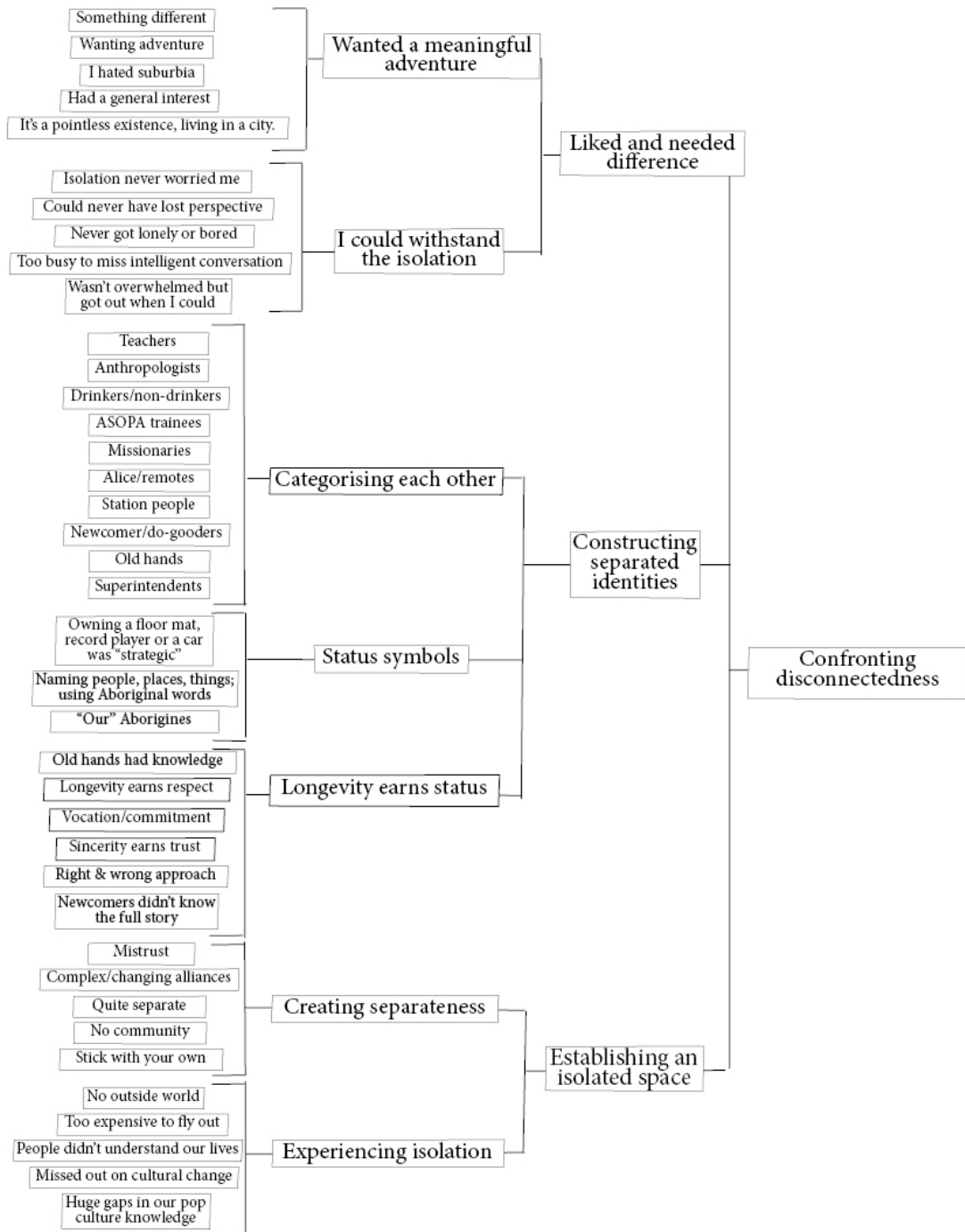
This method provided a way to start building the main categories and the beginnings of the storyline (see **Chapter Two: Methodology and research design, 2.3.2 The Storyline** and **Chapter Five: Storyline and Discussion**). The storyline is 'a strategy for facilitating integration, construction, formulation and presentation of research findings through the production of a coherent grounded theory' (Birks and Mills 2015, p. 180). Stories are not exclusive to grounded theory research but are utilised as a way of bringing some coherence to the concepts emerging in the data analysis.

A storyline provides an explanation of the theory (Birks and Mills 2015). Situational mapping contributed to the clarification of some key elements at play in the creation of this culture.

Appendix D

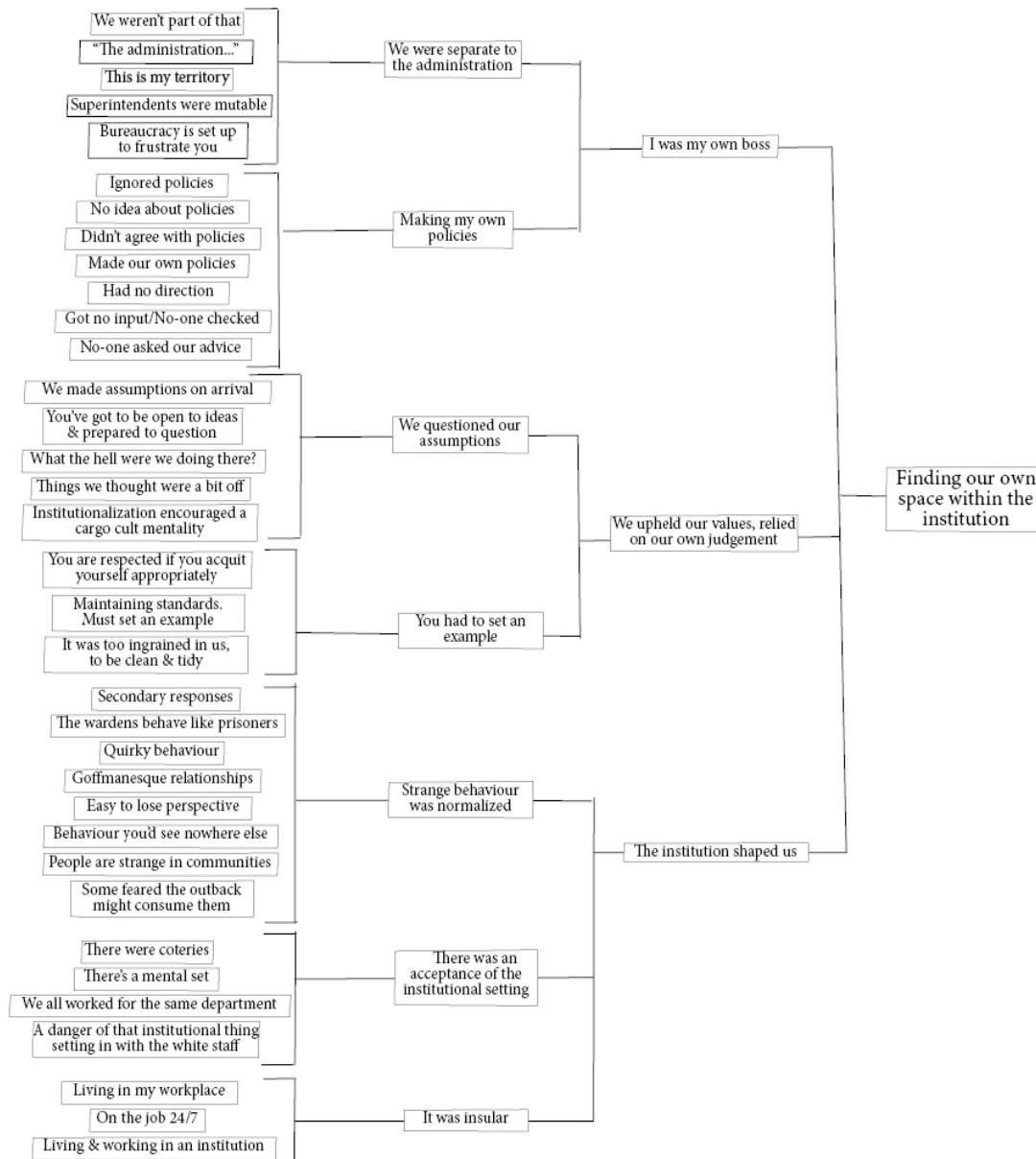
Appendix D1

Confronting Disconnectedness: Full category listings



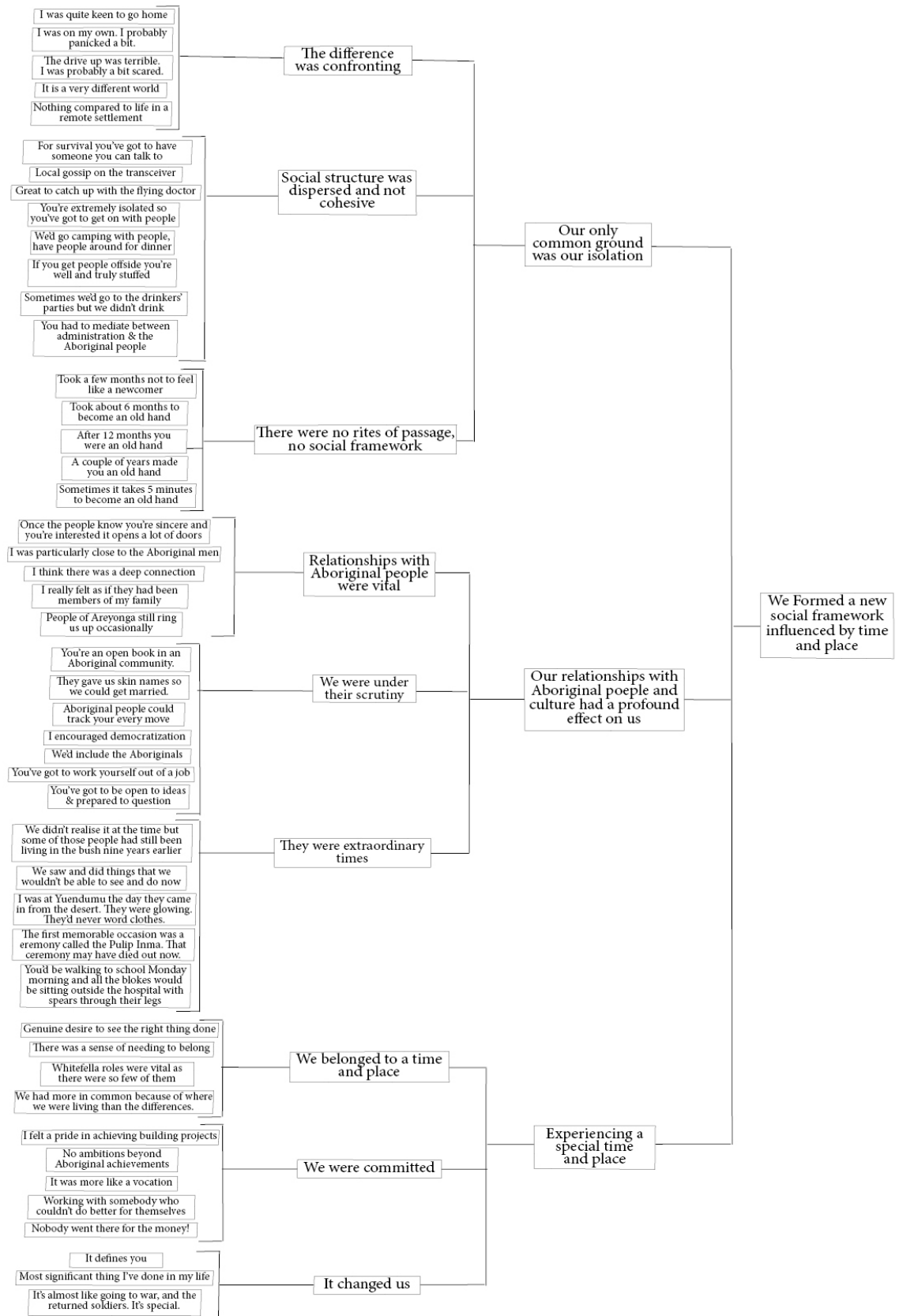
Appendix D2

Finding our own space within the institution: Full category listings



Appendix D3

We formed a new framework influenced by time and place: Full category listings.



Appendix E

Department of Aboriginal Affairs job description for a remote worker

All communications to be addressed to "The Director"

Please confine each letter to ONE subject
Telephone No. 8 0461

Your Ref.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

HINDMARSH BUILDING
132-140 GRENFELL STREET
ADELAIDE

In your reply please quote 24382 DAA 421/64 CJM:VW

9th October, 1964.

Mr. [REDACTED],
7 Muttama Road,
ARTARMON, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter dated 3rd October, and I wish to advise that approval has been obtained for your appointment to the temporary staff of the Department as soon as you are available.

As a member of the temporary staff, you will be in a position to apply for permanent positions as these become vacant on the seven different Reserves.

Initially you will be posted to Musgrave Park Station in the far north, (80 miles west of Ernabella Mission), to assist the Superintendent with the training and supervision of Aborigines in all aspects of the work at Musgrave Park. The work will include erection and maintenance of buildings, plant, vehicles and road maintenance; assist in operation of retail store, assist in maintenance of regular weekly vehicle patrol to Mount Davies Area (130 miles west of Musgrave Park), where nomadic Aborigines are constantly visiting.

I trust you will not be worried at the apparent multitudinous list of duties, but you will no doubt appreciate that by joining our staff in this capacity, you will be given the opportunity of working with the Aborigines in the full range of our activities, which will provide you with an invaluable background for the future.

Separate accommodation is not as yet available for you, so that you will be accommodated with the Acting Superintendent, (Mr. [REDACTED]), and live as a member of his family, which comprises husband, wife and son of ten years. (An older son is working in Adelaide.)

Other members of the staff at Musgrave Park are: Superintendent (a married man has recently been recommended to fill this vacant position and should take up residence within two months), a Nursing Sister and an Infant Welfare Sister (who spends at least one week and sometimes more of each month on vehicular patrol to the northern pastoral properties assisting and advising mothers in health, hygiene and child care).

The salary of the position is being determined by the Public Service Commissioner, at this time, and I am informed it will be in the vicinity of £24 per week, plus free board and lodging and an additional District Allowance of £2 per week. There is also an income tax concession which applies to residents living in this area (Zone B Allowance).

2.

I trust this will provide the information you desire and I look forward to seeing you again, as soon as you are fit and well, to take up the position, which I note will be on 9th November.

Yours faithfully,



DIRECTOR OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS.

Appendix F

Personal letter from H and W (names withheld) to Brian Telford.

orthography adopted - but not usually by others eg. Yolngu for Pit'ngi

Dear You are [both of] our ^{lit. good/beautiful} truly wonderful family

nyuntic ijalimpa ^{lit. good/beautiful} waltja wiru mutapa wanyu nyunt
 well? We are also doing well here

Palya nyinanyi ka ganana kuku Palyatu nyinanyi
 in the community but has had a huge amount of work

① wira nyanganka palu Henrynya work Puka mula
 and is absolutely exhausted and his back is really worn out
 muni Paka Puka mutapa muni witapt Paka
 but it's almost finished. And we're apparently ~~going~~

Puka palu watalpi wiyariganyi kala kunyu kuwa
 going (then) soon ^{maq} But they're working well,

nywanja ^{maq} pitjanyi palu wiruraya warkarinyi
 (everyone is) happy and we had a great service here on Sunday

kukulpa munula Sunday Inna wiru Inkananyi gura
 and we just heard that Miss Nicholas got engaged (lit. a really
 good man. promised [to her]) Miss N

nyanganka ka ganana kulinu Miss N Kalkun
 good man. promised [to her] And Sister Baker is well.

wiru mutapa watinku ka sister Palya
 Wow! My two ~~brothers/sisters~~ (in christ)

nyinanyi awari iyayuku waltja wiru kutjara.
 Are you all well? No sickness? We are also, we, no

kwankara nyura Palya(?) Pika wiya? ka ganana kule
 sickness and (we're) happy But we're both grieving (lit. crying)

Pika wiya Pukupa nyinanyi palu gali tjiti tjutaky
 only for the children, and we (both) are just praying and only ~~finding~~ ^{control} (lit. joy)

kulu palanyi munuli Jesula tapira kutju Pukupa
 after praying (lit. asking Jesus) But at present, we're both truly happy

nyinanyi palu kumarili Pukupa mutapa nyinanyi.
 after receiving great wonderful letters. The other day we saw

letter wiru tjuta mantjintjatanu. Munatu ganana
 those men, Ivan and the others and we were overjoyed

wati Panya tjutar nyana Ivan gananya munula Puka
 and we went to the see and saw many beautiful

Pukularinu munula Sea kutu anu munula wiru
 things; we were so thrilled. And they left again

tjuta nyapani wirurala Pukularigi Kaya Piruku anu
 and we returned and are doing well.

kala ganana malaku Pitjanu munula wirura nyinani
 Right, so I'm writing as you ^{dearly} beloved (lit. total/complete brother/sister
 ala waltja wiru alatjituna walkatjananyi in christ)

Love from

Letter from ~~myself~~ just after I left Amala
 in november 1967.

Appendix G

Stages of cultural adjustment (Zapf 1991, p. 108).

Table 1. Stages of cultural adjustment

Author	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Oberg 1954, 1960	Incubation	Crisis	Recovery	Full Recovery
Lysgaard 1955	Spectator	Crisis	Coming to Terms	Regained Adjustment
Smalley 1963	Fascination	Hostility/ Frustration	Adjustment	Biculturalism
Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963	Excitement	Disillusionment	Confusion	Positive Adjustment
Ex 1966	Uprooting	Frustration	Habituation	Restoration
Lifton 1969	Confrontation	Emptying	Reordering	Renewal
Rhinesmith and Hoopes 1970	Arrival	Unfreezing	Moving	Refreezing
Pfister-Ammende 1973	Transplantation	Uprooting	Resettlement	Adjustment
Curle 1973	Separation	Trauma/Shock	Reconnection	Adjustment
Richardson 1974	Elation	Depression	Recovery	Acculturation
Adler 1975	Contact	Disintegration	Reintegration	Autonomy
Klein 1977	Spectator	Stress	Coming to Terms	Decision
Kealey 1978	Exploration	Frustration	Coping	Adjustment
Harris and Moran 1979	Awareness	Rage	Introspection	Integration
Kohls 1979	Initial Euphoria	Hostility	Gradual Adjustment	Adaptation
Hertz 1981	Arrival	Impact	Rebound	Coping
Furnham and Bochner 1982	Elation/ Optimism	Frustration	Confusion	Confidence/ Satisfaction
Zwingmann and Gunn 1983	Impact/ Uprooting	Loss	Recovery	Reaction
Berry 1985, 1985b	Honeymoon/ Contact	Conflict	Identity Crisis	Adaptations