

## DOCTORAL THESIS

### **Choral Singing and the Construction of Australian Aboriginal Identities: an applied ethnomusicological study in Hopevale, Northern Queensland, Australia**

Swijghuisen Reigersberg, Muriel E.

*Award date:*  
2008

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**Choral Singing and the Construction of Australian  
Aboriginal Identities: an applied ethnomusicological study  
in Hopevale, Northern Queensland, Australia.**

**by**

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**Ethnomusicology**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD**

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## **Abstract Thesis**

This thesis examines the effects that choral singing can have on the construction of Australian Aboriginal identities. The research is based on outcomes of an applied ethnomusicological project undertaken in the Lutheran Australian Aboriginal community of Hopevale, Northern Queensland Australia between September 2004 and June 2005.

The project methodology used was participatory action research (PAR). I facilitated the Hopevale Community Choir to promote local wellbeing. The theoretical basis underpinning this approach is outlined in chapter one. Chapter two looks at the practicalities of the applied methodology and how I developed an ethnographically informed approach to choral facilitation. In the third chapter I use choir members' biographies to investigate how choral singing influenced the lives of individual singers. Here I describe Hopevalian performance aesthetics based on the concept of 'communal individuality' where individual performers are seen as being as important as the choir as a whole.

Chapter four, five and six discuss the influences of Australian social history and local Hopevalian history on the construction of identities. Chapter four presents the non-localised meta-theory related to constructs of Aboriginality. Chapters five and six examine localised, context-specific Hopevalian history and historiography and its impact on constructs of Hopevalian identity. In chapter six I show how hymnody was used in Hopevale during missionisation to influence local identities. In chapter seven I describe the choir's four-day tour through Northern Queensland. I use the tour to further examine the relationship between Aboriginality, spirituality, tourism and wellbeing in relation to

choral singing. The conclusion functions as an evaluation and summary of the applied project. It assesses the implications of the research outcomes and offers suggestions for future research. Throughout this thesis there is an emphasis on Aboriginal diversity, a concern for 'voice' in the construction of ethnography and advocacy for Aboriginal rights.

**'To lead or to follow?': beginning applied research in Hopevale**

Fieldtext, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2004

*Turns out it was really Pastor Tom Jantke's idea to reintroduce choral singing into the Hopevale community, and to invite me to become the local 'choir lady'. Whilst Pastor Tom's idea was met with great enthusiasm by the people from what I gather, nobody turned up at the first rehearsal. Does this in any way hamper my argument that I am undertaking a project of the community's choice? Do the potential choral singers accept the Pastor as a member of the community seeing the duration of his stay and the fact that many so-called 'locals' also herald from afar?*

*Pastor Tom mentioned the choir during the Sunday service, and how he had heard that only a small gathering had turned up. He told the congregation that this choir was here for their benefit and that he believed in the therapeutic properties of choral singing, where the music and togetherness help as an emotional outlet.*

*Again it was emphasised by Pastor Tom that this was not a church choir, and that secular music would be performed as well. The notice in the Pew Bulletin said the following:*

***CHOIR CHOIR CHOIR!*** *Finally at last our choir will begin again. All old members and heaps of new members are invited to begin practising. This is not just a church choir, but a community choir so just turn up with your voices and friends to the training centre*

Fieldtext, 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2004

*Monica Gibson [Hopevale community member] commented that she thought the choir was a good idea. It would give people something to do. She was interested in its progress and so I told her that the first rehearsal was not too well attended. It was her opinion that many people here, have very low self-esteem and that they were too afraid to perform in public or come out.*

*I met Dorothy Rosendale. She invited me to come to June Pearson's farm tonight to help out with a rehearsal they are having. The older chorus members from Pastor Vic Wenke's time are getting together to rehearse a song that they used to sing. It seems Pastor Wenke worked with the choir and community between 1942 and 1956. The singers will perform the song at Roy Dick's funeral on Thursday. Roy Dick, I was told, was a man from the Thuupi warra people, one of the kinship groups that make up the Hopevalian community, born in 1920 and*

*passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October. He was a staunch Lutheran and member of the choir. Dorothy was hoping I might come along 'to give some tips'.*

*Helping with the singing would my main task, but it also transpired that Dorothy had no driver that evening to take her to June Pearson's Farm. Dorothy wondered if I could drive her there. I said that I would love to, but was only on my learner's licence and did not have much experience driving a four-wheel drive. She seemed worried by this (naturally). I told her that I would still love to come though, and gave her my phone number, just in case. I hope she does ring, because it would be a wonderful opportunity to get to know a few people, maybe to make a recording and have a listen at what types of voice I may be able to look forward to working with. Fingers crossed.*

Fieldtext, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2004

*Well, I did go! The ladies came to collect me at about 19:30 (rather than 19:00) and Dorothy decided that I should drive regardless of my learner's licence. It was an interesting journey there. I was in a big car (although not in four-wheel drive mode thankfully) and it was mostly dirt track after we left the village. There was very little lighting and a few wandering horses about. Luckily I could follow June on her way home, which made things a bit easier in the dark. What an adventure! We got there OK though.*

*The ladies present were: Dorothy Rosendale (alto), Daisy Hamlot (soprano), Dora Deemal (alto), Grace Rosendale (alto), Myrtle Bambie (soprano), June Pearson (key board), Marie Gibson (soprano). Where are the men?*

*The songs we rehearsed were taken from Children's Hosanna (1929) and entitled: Happy Sabbath Day, What a Meeting, Open the Beautiful Gates. The ladies professed that they had not really sung the songs since their teens and when Pastor Wenke was about with his violin.*

Fieldtext, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2004

*Word sheets of the above songs were handed out. The ladies remembered the tune and alto harmony part well. I, of course, knew neither so I tried to listen a lot and I peered over June's shoulder and did a bit of sight-singing. The music was fairly straight-forward, which is good. To help out the ladies at some sections I sang along either with the soprano or alto part, where they had difficulty. They responded well to a confident vocal example. When I sang confidently and accurately they immediately joined in, in a similar fashion.*

*This evening I did not wish to interfere too much, for various reasons. Firstly, I wanted to see what they sounded like without my intervention and what types of voices I would have to work with. Secondly, I wanted to listen to the music and learn it as well, so that required less practical intervention. Thirdly, I wanted to see how their rehearsal progressed and how the group practised. Lastly, I was wary of asserting myself because all the ladies are of course much older than myself and with the formidable June at the keyboard I was reluctant to be too interventionist.*

*Here is a summary of the first 'rehearsal's' observations:*

*The voices are good and strident, with a nasal quality. There are a few problems on the higher notes for the sopranos. It was asked whether we could sing the songs in a lower key or rather at a lower pitch. I offered to transpose, but it seems there is a knob on the church organ which will allow us to alter the key. Otherwise a few vocal exercises may do the trick and often knowing a tune well and confidence can do wonders together with a good singing posture.*

*The music is church hymnody and uses diatonic harmonies and melodies. Most of the songs have unison entries throughout and homophonic movement, with the soprano line carrying the melody.*

*The choir's rehearsal technique was very much what I, and other Western choral singers, would call "note bashing". The group would sing through the song and then try to pick out the sections where there were evident problems harmonising or maybe the melody part needed to be refreshed. They would then repeat the section a few times and continue singing.*

*June would mainly lead the session calling out the parts the singers needed to rehearse and would tell the singers when to enter. June is actually very good at leading and I don't see why I am needed here, but there you go.*

*After this "note bashing" session I had rehearsals with the 'funeral choir' again, practising the three songs rehearsed on Monday. There were some new additions to the choir. Four more ladies joined: Maureen Wallace (alto), Ella Woibo (soprano), Violet Cobus (alto) and a lady whose name I do not yet know.*

*As community elder Walter Jack hinted earlier, it was Dorothy Rosendale's doing. Walter had said that in "the olden days" Dorothy used to go around collecting the women singers and that her husband Leonard Rosendale was always encouraging the men to come. Dorothy had apparently phoned several ladies on this occasion to entice them to come along and they had responded to her request.*

Fieldtext, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2004

*Thursday evening it became clear that local people have various explanations for my appearance in their midst. I had spent the evening reading a bit in my student Bible which was given to me by Dorothy and the Hopevale congregation. I also chatted with community elder Peter Costello, night carer Clarence Bowen and Clarence's wife Esmae Bowen. We were discussing Christianity and Peter said that he had decided that I had come to Hopevale for a reason. My arrival is seen by him as "a miracle" as "the Spirit of God working here". He said that I thought I may have come on my own account, but that in fact it was "God's Spirit that sent me to Hopevale". Peter felt that I had "love" for the people here. He asked what I thought about this. Did I agree with him? I had to say honestly that I did not believe I or my arrival were a miracle, but that I was glad he thought so and that "yes" I did care for the people here.*

Fieldtext, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2004

*I have come to the conclusion that my choice of 'religiously neutral' rehearsal location might be one of the reasons why people are not joining the choir's rehearsals after the initial few for Roy Dick's funeral. I asked Tammy and Dora Gibson and Daisy Hamlot where they thought we ought to have our practices. To everybody it made more sense to have them in the church, because this is where we have the organ as well as a good acoustic.*

*I asked them whether this would maybe discourage those who were less religious from joining, but I did not receive a direct answer to this. I also told them that I wanted to try songs that perhaps were not religious to which Dora Gibson emphatically said that it did not matter if the lyrics were religious as Hopevalians like Country Gospel, which of course, has Christian lyrics.*

*So, this Sunday, my rehearsal venue was more or less changed and confirmed by Pastor Tom Jantke when he wrote in the Pew Bulletin:*

*CHOIR CHOIR CHOIR! Yes, the choir is up and away and looking for more members, especially men, younger women and anyone who can sing. Please meet in the church on Wednesday at 05:30 pm.*

### I.1 The what, where, when and why

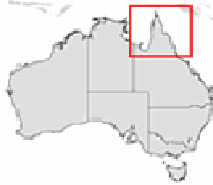
The above edited fieldnotes from my field diary describe the first tentative steps I took towards reintroducing choral singing in the Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> community of Hopevale, Northern Queensland, Australia in October 2004. These early fieldnotes, made less than a month after my arrival in Hopevale, are extremely revealing in that they already foreshadow some of the practical and theoretical issues with which I would grapple during my work there as a music facilitator. The fieldnotes address issues of gender, age, spirituality, and musical and missionary histories, and the problematical nature of the term 'community'. The notes also describe the methodology that I was to employ to fulfil my research aim: to reintroduce and further develop community choral singing to promote local, physical and emotional

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the capitalised version of the word 'Aboriginal' throughout this thesis when referring to things which are Australian Aboriginal. This capitalisation is now common practice in Australian Aboriginal studies for political reasons as it aims to distinguish Aboriginal Australians from other indigenous peoples worldwide. Also see the glossary for details.

communal wellbeing through choral performance. It was especially hoped that choral singing might be taken up by younger Hopevalians.

The research aim had been developed to help answer the research question: Does choral singing have a positive effect on the construction of Aboriginal identities? To answer this question I employed participatory action research, discussed for in the next chapter. This involved facilitating the Hopevale Community Choir as a: musical facilitator; administrator; PR manager, and friend, whilst living and working in Hopevale between September 2004 and June 2005.



**Figure I.1: Location Cape York Peninsula, Northern Queensland, Australia**  
([http://www.exploroz.com/PointPlace/Plt/FullPlotDetails.asp?TrackPlotID=348&FromPage=/TrekNotes/FNQ/Cape\\_York.asp&xc=1](http://www.exploroz.com/PointPlace/Plt/FullPlotDetails.asp?TrackPlotID=348&FromPage=/TrekNotes/FNQ/Cape_York.asp&xc=1), accessed, June 2005)



**Figure I.2: Location Hopevale, Cape York Peninsula, Northern Queensland, Australia**  
([http://www.exploroz.com/PointPlace/Plt/FullPlotDetails.asp?TrackPlotID=348&FromPage=/TrekNotes/FNQ/Cape\\_York.asp&xc=1](http://www.exploroz.com/PointPlace/Plt/FullPlotDetails.asp?TrackPlotID=348&FromPage=/TrekNotes/FNQ/Cape_York.asp&xc=1), accessed, June 2005)



Hopevale lies about five hours north by car of the city Cairns on Australia's Cape York peninsula. At the time of research it had a fluctuating population of about 1,600 inhabitants. The climate is tropical, and coastal. An abundance of starfruit, mangoes, custard apples and paw paws is available when in season and the area supports a rich supply of fauna including large fruit bats, dingoes, wild pigs, bush turkey and small kangaroo. There are also large numbers of horses, bulls and dogs roaming freely in the area which belong to various Hopevalian families.

The coastline or 'the beach', as the locals refer to it, is half an hour away by car when the roads were accessible and most Hopevalian families have a *bajan* (shelter or house)<sup>2</sup> there where they spend weekends and holiday periods hunting for *guuju* (fish) *ngawiya* (green backed sea turtle), *girrbathi* (dugong or 'sea cow') and relaxing.

Hopevale's small village centre is often referred to as 'the mission' by residents, due to the community's mission-history. The centre, at my time of research, comprised of a church, primary school, community council buildings, and store, post office, bakery, hospital, petrol station, garage, youth centre, sports hall, police station, arts centre and a rest home for the elderly which doubled up as a hostel for Hopevale's frequent visitors, myself included.

The community operates its own internet café, a local news letter entitled the *Hopevale Milbi* and in 2004 was in the process of reintroducing its own radio station. The area's infrastructure is reasonably good. At the time the roads towards Cooktown and Cairns were being surfaced and during the dry season quite accessible. Aeroplanes fly from Cairns to Cooktown. Hopevale has its own airstrip for dignitaries or figures of special interest such as Father Christmas. In the event of severe road flooding during the wet season the airstrip is also used to help supply the community with sustenance.

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<sup>2</sup> I shall use the orthography suggested by John Haviland (1988) where Guugu Yimithirr words are used, unless direct quotation requires that I use alternative spellings. Also see glossary for the details.

The three languages used regularly by Hopevalians are Aboriginal English and two Indigenous<sup>3</sup> languages: Guugu Yimithirr and sometimes Guugu Yalanji. The local residents use various terms to refer to themselves, the most general term being *bama* (Hopevalian people of Indigenous descent) and the term *wangarr* is used for white people like myself. Occasionally Hopevalians use the term *Murri* to refer to all Indigenous people in the Australian state of Queensland, which includes themselves. When referring to each other in casual conversation younger people refer to more senior men and women as ‘Uncle’ or ‘Auntie’ regardless of kinship affiliations as a sign of respect. I adopted this practice of using ‘Uncle’ and ‘Auntie’ whilst working in Hopevale, which will be reflected in this thesis throughout.

On different occasions, Hopevalians also use kinship terms such as *mugay* (senior aunt or uncle on either maternal or paternal side holding important position of authority in the family kinship system). Other terms of kinship classification are related to the various kin groups represented in Hopevale, the most prominent groups being *Thuupi* and *Nugal warra*, as these groups have been present in the area prior to European settlement. It was in this tropical, Lutheran Aboriginal community that I was invited to take up the position as a music facilitator or ‘choir lady’, as I was referred to.

The decision to work as a music facilitator in Hopevale was not one taken by myself *before* contacting Hopevale, and other former Indigenous Australian missions. My research question and aims were developed to fulfil a local need *after* I had been given permission to work in the Hopevale community. My initial desire to work with Aboriginal Christian choral music was not driven by religious fervour, as I am an atheist. Nor was I misled by romanticized and stereotyped images of Aboriginality that still typify the portrayal of

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<sup>3</sup> I will use the capitalised version of the word ‘Indigenous’ throughout this thesis when referring to things which are Australian Aboriginal. This capitalisation is now common practice in Australian Aboriginal studies for political reasons as it aims to distinguish Aboriginal Australians from other indigenous peoples worldwide. Also see the glossary for details.

Indigenous people in advertising and tourist parks throughout Australia today. I was well aware of Aboriginal diversity and the effects of missionisation and colonisation on Aboriginal society, due to earlier visits to Australia and background reading.

Previously, I had wanted to work with traditional women's music. When I discussed possible options with colleagues in Australia, many suggested that, in light of the ethical and highly political debates associated with recording, archiving and documenting traditional Aboriginal music, I should perhaps consider working with popular or Christian music instead. Traditional Aboriginal historical information or fieldwork materials can be restricted to age, sex, kinship group, initiation status and other factors. It may be difficult to gain permission to conduct research in some localities and often materials or information cannot be used or accessed due to cultural restrictions. Archives such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) have special guidelines for storing and archiving materials to which they stringently adhere, making historical research difficult.

In light of these restrictions and obstacles, it was ethnomusicologist Professor Linda Barwick at the University of Sydney who suggested that it would be ideal if I could look at Aboriginal Christian choral music. The nature of the materials and work would prove easier to access and Linda knew that I am a keen singer myself, performing both as a soloist and choral singer in and around London. Additionally, the areas of Aboriginal Christianity and Indigenous Christian musical practices are an under-researched area and so my work would fill a significant lacuna in knowledge about these practices.

Finding a suitable location to work became the next challenge. For personal and ethical reasons I wanted my work to be reciprocal in nature, and needed to find a community which would accept me as a temporary resident in order to conduct research. To develop my research proposal and ethical approach I referenced AIATSIS' ethical guidelines. Due to AIATSIS'

reputation as a renowned archive and institution which specialises in Indigenous Australian studies, it seemed appropriate and practical to abide by their specific ethical guidelines.

The AIATSIS guidelines stipulate that “[a] researched community should benefit from, and not be disadvantaged by, the research project” and that “[r]esearch in Indigenous studies should benefit Indigenous peoples at a local level, and more generally”. The same guidelines also suggest that a reciprocal benefit should accrue for the Indigenous people “for their allowing researchers often intimate access to their personal and community knowledge” (AIATSIS, 2000: point 9). Because of these stipulations, I decided that I would write to several communities, describing my research. I attached my curriculum vitae and explained that I would be happy to work in whatever manner they wished to engage me, without remuneration, if they offered me permission to conduct research and would lend their help. I received two responses: one from Pastor Tom Jantke in Hopevale and one from Pastor Roennfeldt in Hermannsburg. Both communities are Lutheran.

The more promising response and offer was from Pastor Tom Jantke. Pastor Tom had immediately decided that what the community really wanted and needed was a ‘choir mistress’. The community and Pastor Tom hoped that choral singing would provide a diversion for young as well as older people, thereby combating, but not curing, the social problems of alcoholism, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy and mental illness from which Hopevale and many other Aboriginal communities suffer.

As can be seen from the introductory fieldnotes this position of ‘choir lady’ was by no means straight forward. From the beginning I questioned whether my ‘appointment’ as music facilitator was merely an idea which the Pastor had conceived or whether it was something that the local Aboriginal people supported. I also asked myself, after that first rehearsal, whether I was truly needed, as the singers already appeared to possess the basic skills to be able to reintroduce and develop choral singing using their own resources and

talents. Particularly in the first month or so, when hardly a single person attended my rehearsals, I seriously questioned my approach. As time went on, however, it became apparent that whilst many people thought the idea of having a choir on the whole was a good one, only certain people would actually participate in the singing or attend concerts due to Hopevale's diversity. This diversity is reflected in this thesis as the thesis addresses several broad themes in relation to identity and performativity, namely the relationships that exist between gender, age, ethnicity, spirituality and personal and communal histories, all of which have a bearing on the way in which choral singing is able to influence the constructions of identities. I address these themes later in this introduction after offering some definitions which clarify the theoretical basis from which I am working.

## I.2 Thesis themes and concepts outlined

Concepts of community, ethnicity, and spirituality as well as authenticity, performance and gender all have a bearing on the construction of individual Aboriginal identities and it is therefore necessary to briefly outline these concepts in the context of this thesis before setting out the thesis structure. All the above concepts are fluid in nature. Their use has been critiqued, but they serve their practical purpose in defining concepts and processes which have no alternative names precisely because of their fluid nature. To help outline what I intend the above concepts to mean within the context of this thesis, I will mainly rely upon definitions as summarised in Stokes (1994) Barz (2003) and Toner (2005) as I find them helpful to my work.

The first term, "community", I will define not so much by what it is, but by what it does socially through music. Communities are fluid and can exist for long periods of time through, for example, residency or family ties. Communities can also be temporary groups of

people who come together for a purpose. These groups of people, whether temporary or not, are active participants and organisers of their own actions and existence which form systems of communicative events. Communities exist in relation to the reformation, reaffirmation and continuous expectation of these communicative events, which include musical performance. Performance in turn, functions in a way which allows for the self-definition of communities within society. Barz (2003: 90- 92) references Titon, who suggests that communities carry traditions and norms of performance whilst simultaneously perpetuating them. “Musical affect, performances and communities change over time and space; they have a history, and that history reflects changes in the rules governing music as well as the effect of music on human relationships.” Barz (2003: 91) adds that “history exists in many levels in the community’s collective memory”.

When I refer to the Hopevale community in this thesis, therefore, I am not referring to a well-bounded and defined group of people who live in Hopevale and share identical values which are discernable through performance. Quite the opposite. The Hopevale community is divided and united along various lines. Hopevale receives frequent visitors who become part of the social fabric. Visitors might include researchers like myself, John Haviland, and Fiona Powell or mission staff, Pastors and more recently teaching, hospital and administrative staff. Despite their differing social and ethnic backgrounds these visitors or residents participate in social actions, sometimes through musical performance, and thus I conceive of them as being part of the Hopevale community. This approach also reflects a Hopevalian one in that community members consider some visitors as “belonging to Hopevale”, particularly if the visitors frequently interact with Hopevalians. For example, I had ‘relatives’ and ‘belonged to Hopevale’ due to my work with the choir and close relationship with Henry Warren, a man from Papua New Guinea whose sister is married to a Hopevalian Indigenous man.

Because ethnicity is another way in which Hopevalians define themselves as being different from other Hopevalians I outline the concept “ethnicity” as I intend to use it here. To Stokes (1994:6), referring to Barth, the term “ethnicity” can be understood in terms of the construction, maintenance and negotiation of boundaries. This it has in common with the term “community”. Ethnic boundaries define and maintain social identities and they are negotiated through musical performance. These same boundaries are created and contested and upheld by various ethnic groups. The definition of “ethnic group” I intend to use here can be found in *The MacMillan Dictionary of Anthropology* and is “any group of people who set themselves apart and are set apart from other groups with whom they interact or coexist in terms of some distinctive criterion or criteria which may be linguistic, racial or cultural. The study of ethnicity focuses precisely on the interrelation of cultural and social process in the identification of and interaction between such groups.” (1986: 95).

In Hopevale ethnic boundaries are delineated along racial and kinship lines. During my time of research there was social separation between white people and those who had an Aboriginal ancestry. Amongst the Indigenous population of Hopevale there were further divisions between those with European ancestry and those from an entirely Aboriginal background as well as those who were in mixed-heritage partnerships and marriages. Other boundaries included those of Indigenous kinship classifications in terms of group name and sub-group name referred to as *warra*. Most Indigenous people would identify themselves as being Guugu Yimithirr or Guugu Yalanji. These two groups were further divided into *warra* which included, *Thuupi, Nugal, Binhthi, Gaamay, Nguymbarr Nguymbarr, Dhanil, Ngurrumungu, Dingaal, Gullal, Daarba, Ngaagdha, and Dhiidharr warra*<sup>4</sup> (cf Pohlner, 1986: appendix 3). Additionally, some older residents and survivors are members of The Stolen Generation. These elders were removed from their Aboriginal families as children. Their birth

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<sup>4</sup> These *warra* are kinship and family groups which are sub-groups of the Guugu Yimithirr population. They do not all have their own languages. The concept of *warra* and its implications for Hopevalian identities will be discussed in chapter five.

families lived outside what are now mission grounds. The Stolen Generation elders have different kinship affiliations yet again, depending on where they were taken from and who their parents were. In this thesis, the study of ethnicity focuses on the examination of the fluid boundaries along racial, rather than linguistic or kinship lines, as these were, like spirituality, most discernable to myself as a researcher, as well as being divisive and having a direct impact on performative and social practices.

Spirituality was linked to ethnicity in that many Hopevalians with a European ancestry were more likely to attend church services and it was believed they had been favoured by missionaries of the past. The term “spirituality”, as I use it in this thesis, will have a specific meaning. I shall use Barz’s definition of spirituality, which is “the capacity to perceive and relate to a reality outside oneself” (2003: 108) because this describes the way in which the Hopevale Community Choir was able to create meaning through its everyday interactions with people of different faiths and social backgrounds in performance and worship. The definition here is Barz’s and a Western academic one. Hopevalians such as Pastor Rosendale also referred to Hopevalians as being spiritual, by which they meant they “worshipped a Creator Being” (Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005). The expression of spirituality within a community, as Barz (2003: 108) notes, is influenced by, amongst other things, social identity, socio-economic status, age, gender, history and religion as well as life experience. The Hopevale Community Choir members performed their spiritual and social identities through choral singing and therefore Hopevalian spirituality is addressed in this thesis.

In Hopevale, spirituality is predominantly tied to Lutheran Christian religious beliefs. Most Hopevalians at the time of research were baptised and would attend the local church, St John’s, for the major Christian festivals of Good Friday, Easter, and Christmas as well as for funerals. Children also attended confirmation camps where they were confirmed as Christians



and taught the theological principles of Christianity whilst enjoying a camping trip with other children.

When asked, Hopevalians labelled themselves Lutheran or Christian even if they did not attend church regularly. At the time of research I did not encounter Hopevalians who proclaimed themselves to be agnostics or atheists. Neither did I meet Hopevalians who openly disputed the validity or truth of the Christian doctrine. This is by no means an indication, however, that atheists or agnostics do not reside in Hopevale or that there are no people who are not Christian.

Most Hopevalians have adapted and accommodated what they know of pre-colonial spirituality and religion to a specific form of Lutheranism which, on the face of it, is very conservative. These Indigenous understandings of the Christian doctrine, however, have not yet been incorporated into formal, public church worship. There are, however, Hopevalians who are investigating the incorporation of Indigenous interpretations of the Christian doctrine into church worship. Due to contact with other Indigenous communities further North in the Cape and taught courses on Indigenous concepts of Christianity at theological training institutes such as Wontulp-Bi-Buya near Cairns, some Hopevalians are becoming more aware of their own uniquely Indigenous spirituality.

During fieldwork, I encountered occasions where questions of authenticity were raised, especially when the choir performed for tourist audiences during its tour through Northern Queensland in April 2005. The issues which presented themselves are discussed further in chapter seven, which deals with the tour. Here I look briefly at the terms ‘authenticity’ and ‘traditional’ in the context of this thesis.

Authenticity, as Stokes (1994: 7) points out, is not a property or quality of people. Nor is authenticity a quality which can be discerned in music or a performer’s relationship with an audience. Neither is it an “aura” of uniqueness which surrounds live situations and

performances. It is, however, a discursive term of great persuasive power which focuses ways of talking about music and societies, and denotes what is truly significant about a musical genre, community or performance. Authenticity is also intimately tied to concepts of aesthetic or monetary value in that authentic performances or items are usually sought after and valued highly, whereas inauthentic ones are not. What is truly authentic and to whom varies and is highly context specific.

In populist and tourist-orientated literature, definitions of Aboriginality are closely tied to, or synonymous with, the notion of ‘authenticity’. Perceptions of what is ‘traditional’, (the term ‘traditional’ usually being a substitute for ‘non-Western’ and ‘pre-colonial’), can determine what audiences perceive of as being ‘authentic’. The terms ‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’ differ, however, in that the first is inappropriate and should not be used, whereas the second can be employed usefully.

Because Indigenous Australian communities have always adapted their practices to accommodate new circumstances, these practices should be understood as products of long and varied histories. Arguably, all aspects of Aboriginal culture are ‘authentic’ on the grounds that they form part of the lived experiences of Aborigines. The term ‘traditional’, however, might be used to describe those elements of Aboriginal culture which can be traced back to pre-settlement practices. However, this does not imply they are more ‘authentic’. Toner argues that what is needed, “is that the use of the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ be qualified by a clear indication of what they are intended to represent.” (2005: 31) to provide a vocabulary for researchers for comparison between cultural elements.

Toner uses Yolngu definitions of what it means for something to be ‘traditional’. To Yolngu anything ‘traditional’ is that which has an Ancestral<sup>5</sup> precedent. All else is ‘non-

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<sup>5</sup>I will use the capitalised version of the word ‘Ancestral’ throughout this thesis when referring to things which are related Australian Aboriginal concepts of Ancestry. This capitalisation is now common practice in Australian Aboriginal studies for political reasons and to distinguish Aboriginal Australians from other indigenous peoples worldwide. Also see the glossary for details.

traditional' (Toner, 2005: 30-31). Thoner's approach to labelling performative aspects works well in the Yolngu context where Ancestral precedents are still remembered and performed. In other areas, however, such as Hopevale, it is much harder to determine which elements of a performance can be said to have an Ancestral precedent because the Dreaming as a form of spirituality is no longer ceremonially practised. I therefore do not base my use of the word 'traditional' on Hopevalian definitions of the term. To Hopevalians, Christianity is the traditional spirituality of Hopevale. I use the term here, to refer to that which has an Ancestral or pre-contact origin. I avoid the term 'authentic', however, unless it is used in quotations.

The question of what constitutes a 'performance' also requires answering. When writing about choral, or *kwaya*, performances in Tanzania, Barz notes that these events encode social behaviour. Barz draws on Goffman as well as Schechner to help define the term 'performance'. Goffman thought performance to be 'human action', where intent, reception, and interpretation were crucial components of his performance-based approach. These components need to be incorporated into the analysis of social action and therefore performance. Barz further refers to Schechner, who developed more performative analyses of community formation. Schechner suggests that there are two distinct levels of performance. The first is a type of performance which is bracketed within another performance and time frame. The second type is the daily, non-reflective, performance which Schechner suggests includes the act of 'being ourselves'. The latter he sees as the manifestation of our interaction with others. We are therefore constantly 'performing ourselves into being'. Choral performances of the liturgy, Barz suggests, are clearly a manifestation of the first, self-conscious category (2003: 87- 88). Choir members, whilst at rehearsals or social functions, are 'being themselves' and their interactions therefore fall into the second type of performance. Like Barz (2003: 88), however, I also believe that the boundaries between Schechner's two levels are blurred. In Hopevale, for example, the first level of performance bracketed and set

aside from 'every day events' and designated as a 'performance' varied from venue to venue. In the Hopevale community itself, a performance could be very informal. Community members who were not regular singers left and entered the performance space as and when they felt they wanted to sing. During performance events, adults and children, dogs and, when outside, horses and bulls, would come and go (often noisily). Similarly, there were many spontaneous renditions of choral repertoire by 'choir members' at social gatherings in the evenings when people were not performing in pre-determined, bracketed time slot. In Hopevale, every community member was a potential performer at a choir performance. Outside the community or whilst on tour, the choir's performances were more bracketed within a designated time frame, in a specifically allocated performance space and for a specific audience. Audience members at tourist locations and churches would not join the choir at will in the designated performance space. The concepts of what constitutes a 'performance' and who is a potential 'performer' or 'audience member' are therefore socially constructed ones.

Gender is another socially constructed concept. The term, as used in the social sciences, refers to the differences between men and women and their gendered, socially constructed identities or an individual's self-conception as being male or female. The term gender is distinguished from actual biological sex and gendered identities are not fixed at birth. Physiological and social factors both contribute to the early establishment of a core identity, which is modified by social factors (Encyclopedia Britannica on-line, accessed 29<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

This concept of gender as a social construct is a Western academic one. Hopevalians equated their gender with their biological sex. I did not encounter individuals who defined themselves as being 'transgender' or 'genderqueer' or people who felt that their gender was incongruent with their biological sex. Hopevalian concepts of gender also meant that no

person, as far as I could tell, openly expressed homoerotic feelings. Homosexuality in Hopevale was generally not in evidence and frowned upon. This does not indicate, however, that homoeroticism was absent in the community or that there were no individuals who were experiencing a conflict between their biological sex and their socially constructed, gendered lives. There may well have been, but they did not openly define themselves as such. This is why, in this thesis, I do not discuss issues related to transgenderism or homosexuality, but instead examine the gendered nature of choral singing and the effects it had on the construction of Hopevalian identities.

In the construction of Hopevalian identities there is an enormous diversity. This diversity is created by differences in personal and shared social histories. Hopevale's social history in relation to diversity is therefore another theme in this thesis because it impacted on Hopevalian wellbeing and choral singing. It did so in various ways. The historical paternalism of the church and Australian government, the introduction of Christian practices, globalisation and the community's unique cultural heritage all influenced the way the choir sang and rehearsed. The community's history determined the ways in which singers interacted with audiences and each other. It influenced the choir's choice of repertoire, the types of harmony used and the language employed during the singing, the choir attire, and other general performance practices. Social history is also able to account for the lamentable state of Hopevalian social disadvantage, alcohol misuse and other social problems experienced in the Hopevale community at the time of writing.

Hopevale's mission history means that many of the community elders are members of the Stolen Generation. Members of this generation were either placed on the former mission, then called Cape Bedford<sup>6</sup>, by the Australian government or left there by their parents at an early age. Consequently, a mission identity formed and several generations of Hopevalians

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<sup>6</sup> Cape Bedford was a geographical area nearer to the coast on mission grounds where the Hopevale community resided previously. Throughout the mission's history natural phenomena such as cyclones and soil poverty meant that the mission's township and its people had to relocate several times.

have now lived and died on the former mission's territory. Due to their early removal from their Aboriginal parents and the influence of Christianity, many elders are not very familiar with the pre-contact cultural traditions of their ancestors. Others have never felt fully at home in Hopevale, because originally they or their ancestors were not born on Hopevale territory. Some remains of a pre-contact culture are the division of the community along clan or family-group lines, and clan associations with particular geographical areas and local flora and fauna. Many aspects of social interaction and elements of spirituality are also non-Western. Here again there are differences between generations, families and individuals as to how much they know about, and how strongly they adhere to, the traditional practices and beliefs and how willing and able they are to accept these as part of their identity.

In the musical context of Hopevale's history as a mission, many Hopevalians are intimately familiar with Christian hymnody. The main songs sung in church are from *The Australian Lutheran Hymnbook* (1950), *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1989), *Together in Song* (1999) and the 'All Together' series (1981, 1996). Country Gospel is another favourite genre of both young and old people. Younger people also enjoy rap, hip hop and reggae. The harmonies of choral and other songs used are diatonic and often homophonic. Due to the preservation of the language through hymnody and Bible translation as well as the active encouragement of the missionaries, most Hopevalians still speak and understand the local language, Guugu Yimithirr, as well as English and sometimes Guugu Yalanji. Other traditional ceremonial performance practices have not been maintained, however, as they were discouraged by missionaries and later Christian church elders.

Differences amongst individuals in age, gender and social history, all affected individual and communal performativity and demonstrate that even within a small community like Hopevale, there can be an enormous amount of diversity in the ways in which identities are constructed. Due to this diversity and my high level of involvement in determining the research outcomes, I

have adopted a specific way of writing in this thesis to try to reflect the research processes and social circumstances at the time of research. I will therefore now further explicate and justify my approach.

### I.3 A justification for the style and structure of this thesis

Barz, 2006: 2

My presence in the story that follows is as complicated as it is simple. As a now middle-aged ethnomusicologist I have long given up on objectivity; I am strongly affected by what I have experienced in Uganda and thus my stories reveal a rather personal engagement concerning how I came to know what I know about HIV/AIDS in Africa. In the singing of this tale, therefore, I find it tiresome to feign unemotional detachment; those reactions to perceived authorial reflexivity, subjectivity, and perhaps even self-indulgence that will likely be raised by many readers are thus understandable...I am present in this story as I am in the lives of friends – colleagues, informants, collaborators...

The above quotation from Barz summarises my sentiments with regard to the writing of this thesis. Like Barz, I have been strongly affected by my experiences in ‘the field’. My use of participatory action research (PAR), a form of applied research, meant that my personal influence on the outcome of the research question was exceptionally high. Because of this personal influence and my emotional responses as an individual to the fieldwork, this thesis will necessarily reflect “a rather personal engagement concerning how I came to know what I know” about the influence of choral singing on the construction of Aboriginal identities. My value judgments, subjectivity and personality all influenced the decisions I made. Far from being irrelevant, therefore, my personal subjective perceptions of performative experiences are highly relevant to this thesis. Like Barz, I question the possibility of achieving objectivity, particularly in applied ethnomusicological research, as the scholar’s presence and influence is

a given. I shall therefore be present in this thesis as I was in the “lives of my friends – colleagues, informants, collaborators” – in Hopevale and in my writing I aim to be an unabashed supporter of ethnomusicological advocacy.

To account for my presence and influence on the research events, I have opted to write in a performative style which builds on theories and performative writing styles already presented by Gourlay (1978) Kisliuk (1997, 1998), Hagedorn (2001), Barz (1997, 2003, 2006) Feld (1982) Magowan (2007) and Chernoff (1979). My performative style will incorporate reflexivity, the use of fieldnotes or ‘fieldtext’ and a more personalized account of my field experience. This thesis will not just be a personal account of my applied work in the Hopevale community, however. My own experiences will be complemented by academic texts and reflections which will answer a specific research question and offer an insight into Hopevalian musical performativity and how it can influence the construction of local identities. The performative approach will be reflected in both the style and structure of this thesis.

The writing style of this thesis has to be, at the very least, reflexive due to the strong influence my presence had on the research outcome. As Gourlay (1978: 2) notes:

The intrusion of the ethnomusicologist into a field situation which, by definition, includes both observer and observed, is, in its universality, qualitatively different from other situational constraints and...crucial to the evolution of theory.

Early examples of experimental, personalised writing include Chernoff’s *African Rhythm and African Sensibility* (1979). Chernoff (1979: 3) uses personal anecdotes and accounts of his African teachers as descriptive devices to communicate his personal experiences, observations and understanding of what it means to be involved with music in Africa. More recently Hagedorn (2001) has used performative writing to convey her experiences of Cuban Santería performances. In *Divine Utterances* (2001) she describes her dreams and perceptions of musical performances, using a personalised writing style. Her book includes transcriptions of



music, song texts heard, and references to other academic works related to the topic.

Hagedorn's work, therefore, is a mixture of academic content, a personalised narrative and creative writing. Fiona Magowan in *Melodies of Mourning* (2007) also uses a performative approach which allows readers to be privy to key individuals' interpretations of musical experience. Magowan writes that the performative text "entails a certain structural homology between my own thoughts, actions and emotional engagement with 'being in the field' that are depicted in theoretical argument, and the musical and experiential representations of Yolngu participants." (2007: 19). Similarly, Barz (2003, 2006) uses a personalised style by incorporating fieldnotes, song texts and narrative 'interludes' which describe and convey his research outcomes in Tanzania and Uganda. My approach to writing this thesis will be similar to the above-mentioned texts.

The second reason why I have opted to write in a more personalised style is that the processes and outcomes of the research project were very much experiential and performative in nature, and as such difficult to capture in standard academic writing. The transient nature of performative events, their sensitiveness to context and individual experience do not easily translate into text. The fact that I am representing the performance experiences of the Hopevale *bama* in a Western academic text creates further authorial challenges in that there is no one 'truthful' way in which to represent the experiences of others, particularly if the others have been born and raised in a different performative tradition. Anthropologists Marcus and Fischer (1999:46) have recognised this:

[T]he [writing] experiments recognize more profoundly that feelings and experience can never be apprehended directly, and certainly not conveyed across cultures, without careful attention to their diverse, mediating modes of expression. Such experimental ethnographies are especially interested in theories and construction of the person, derived from indigenous discourses and commentaries. These contain reflections on human development and the life-cycle, on the nature of thought, on gender differences, and on appropriate expressions of emotions – all seen from within different cultural perspectives.

On the subject ethnomusicologist Kisliuk (1997: 33), when documenting her performative experiences amongst the BaAka pygmies, rationalises:

Because of our participation in performance, ethnomusicologists are especially aware that there is much one can only know by doing. If...we partially “share the same narratives” - and songs - with those expressive lives we hope to understand, then an account of our experience is indeed exactly where we should focus.

Kisliuk (1997: 33) believes that rather than seeing experience as a two sided narrative; that of the ethnographer and that of the other performers, it is more constructive to conceive of the ethnography of performative experience as a dialogue within which learning is located, during the research process and whilst writing the ethnography.

An example of such writing is Feld’s *Sound and Sentiment* (1982) in which he uses ethnopoetics. Feld takes multivocality or polysemy and incorporates it into the ethnographic interpretations and the construction of meaning by using indigenous concepts and mythology and fusing them with Western theoretical ideas. He predicates his interpretations of the Kaluli and their musical life on their myths, concepts of ornithology and weeping, as well as on his and their own abstract understanding thereof. In his text there is “a continual back and forth movement between texts and contexts, conventions and constraints, codes and variations, forms and performances, expectations and ruptures, Kaluli abstractions and verbalizations”, and his “own interpretations and deductions.” (Feld,1982: 13). Feld’s ethnopoetics aimed to establish culturally appropriate ways in which to read indigenous oral narratives as a literary form.

Stylistically I shall not use Feld’s ethnopoetics. In my particular instance, it is not justifiable to devise intricate poetic descriptions of Hopevalian aesthetics and music as Feld

did for the Kaluli. Feld's unique approach was a response to a musical Kaluli aesthetic which was markedly different to his own. Feld's novel approach to ethnography allows non-Kaluli to gain an insight into Kaluli musical practices by interpreting Kaluli practices for a Westernised readership. I, in contrast, found that Hopevalian musical aesthetics and the ways in which these were presented were close to my own. Hopevalian musicians use the diatonic scale, very accurately tune their guitars and autoharps to this same scale and sing melodies in diatonic harmony. At the Rodeo Talent Quest, which I was asked to adjudicate as an 'impartial outsider', I found that local judges adopted criteria such as 'singing in tune', 'stage presence' and 'microphone technique'. Upon further enquiry it became evident that my perceptions of these concepts and related aesthetics did not differ from those of the Hopevalian judges.

The aesthetic differences in vocal timbre, tempo and the more frequent use of glissandi in singing which I did perceive do not warrant the creation of a novel, ethnopoetic authorial style to clarify these differences for a non-Hopevalian audience. To use such a narrative would be inappropriate because it would unnecessarily exoticise the music performed in Hopevale at the time of research. The English language already possesses the terminology which adequately represents the musical aesthetics and performance practices in Hopevale for the purposes of this thesis. Instead, it is the experiential and performative nature of the research outcomes and the fact that I aim to describe my perceptions of other people's musical experiences, which requires that I adopt a performative writing approach.

The ethnopoetical style and performative writing are approaches which were developed after a need for increased reflexivity was perceived in ethnographic writing. An early text which addresses the need for an increase in reflexivity is Gourlay's 1978 seminal article in which he conceives of ethnomusicologists as having various 'constraints'. Gourlay (1978: 1-2) categorised these as: a) personal, b) situational and c) universal. These categories in my research field could be defined as: a) my personal background and training in a Western

educational setting, b) Hopevale's particular mission history and musical situation in existence combined with my influence as a music facilitator and c) the fact that, as with any music-making endeavour, the field involved people who are thinking, acting and emotional beings. Thoughts, actions and emotions cannot always be fully anticipated or cogently explained.

Gourlay continues by listing three broad areas in which the ethnomusicologist and his/her background is implicated. The areas are a) the preparatory period, b) the research process and c) the presentation process. With reference to my work in Hopevale these could be defined as including, but not limited to: a) my Western education as an ethnomusicologist, Western training as a classical singer and choral conductor, the referencing of archival materials about Hopevale's history in Australia, b) my work as a music facilitator in Hopevale, and c) taking the choir on tour through Northern Queensland and working with them on presenting their music to a wider public as well as writing this thesis and presenting my work to academic audiences.

To accommodate the highly reflexive nature of my work, I have opted to include edited sections from my fieldwork diary, where relevant, to clarify research findings and to demonstrate how I arrived at certain understandings of the research process through writing fieldnotes. My 'fieldnotes' were not notes such as short phrases, lists of names or facts, however. When in the field I would write my 'notes' in a narrative format using a computer. I therefore technically wrote a 'fieldtext' which became the narrative of my field experience. This writing method I based on Barz's suggestion that fieldnotes can become integral to both the process of field research and ethnography. He found that fieldnotes functioned as an intermediary point which linked the process of ethnography back to the processes of field research. This intermediary point, to Barz, is malleable and fluid resulting in the boundaries between experience and its interpretation becoming less distinct (1997: 49). I shall employ a modified version of Barz's concept in the writing of this thesis.

In his illustration of how fieldnotes are integral to a researcher's construction of ethnography, Barz presents three voices. The first voice is the one used whilst still in the field, the second a voice of reflection after a note has been written and the third voice is the one of a more distanced experience. Barz presents the first voice in the present tense using italic typeface. The second reflective voice used by Barz is often associated with a memory and connected to a particular field experience. Barz employs the past tense and capital and small capital letters for this voice. The third voice is printed in roman typeface and is more analytical than the first two voices, signifying Barz's interactions with his fieldnotes once "out of the field" (1997: 46).

The fieldtext I wrote combined Barz's first two voices: the first voice of experience whilst still in the field and the second voice of reflection. The reason I amalgamated the two is that I had read Barz's article prior to departure for Hopevale, and thus had written my 'fieldtext' with the intention of including it in this thesis. I therefore reflected on my notes as soon as I had written them, whilst still in the field, because, like Barz's wife, I relied more on 'head-notes' which I incorporated directly into the fieldtext. The amalgamation of the first two voices also reflects my position within the research process whereby my reflections on the fieldtext made whilst still in the field influenced future 'actions' to be taken as part of my participatory action research methodology. In some ways my fieldtext became a reflexive 'evaluation' or 'project report' of my work with the choir. Where I use my edited fieldtext I have printed it using an italic typeface. I have separated the third, more analytical voice spatially from the amalgamated first two voices, using a roman type face and supplemented it with other sources of knowledge. I also acknowledge that for reasons of relevance and ease of reading I have chosen to modify the original fieldtext, but have attempted to remain as faithful as possible to the original text.

Another reason I have opted to write in a more performative style is that it remains an authorial challenge to interpret and describe effectively, in a written text, the relationship between music, emotions and performative experiences, and how these experiences are perceived and lived through by others. My research processes, music, emotions and performance played important roles in constructions of Hopevalian identities. Performance contexts stimulated a diverse set of emotional responses which could not be accurately quantified or qualified empirically. The performative writing I employ addresses this authorial challenge to some extent, allowing for a more emotional response.

In Sloboda and Juslin's *Music and Emotion*, Becker addresses the problem of interpreting the emotions of others from an anthropological perspective, and warns against merely employing Western scientific approaches to the study of the relationships between emotion and music. "Emotions related to music" she writes, "are culturally embedded and socially constructed and can usefully be viewed as being about an individual within a community, rather than being exclusively internal states." (Becker, 2001: 151). Becker also feels that:

First-person descriptions of music and emotion are rife with tropes of interiority, yet the understanding of how music affects interiors takes place within consensual, shared views of what makes up 'reality'. Musical events set up an aural domain of coordination that envelops all those present. (2001: 151)

Whilst I agree with Becker that the ways in which music affects interiors can take place in a realm which holds shared views of what constitutes 'reality', I also believe that the descriptions of music and emotion should use the first-person. 'Empirically' a person can only be entirely certain of how he or she feels and is affected by music. Thus tropes of interiority when writing about music and emotions are highly appropriate. However, such descriptions of emotional responses to music must not be limited to conveying interior

responses to music alone, precisely because such responses are shaped by exterior events. First-person, interior accounts must be complemented by descriptions of exterior events, observations and even ‘data’ which might help to demonstrate to what extent these emotions could potentially be shared ones.

In their chapter on the psychological perspectives on the relationship between music and emotion, Juslin and Sloboda (2001: 74) suggest three main ways in which it might be possible to ‘quantify’ emotional responses to music. These methods could be employed to ascertain if emotional responses to music are shared: a) through self-report by performers and audiences using questionnaires and interviews; b) by measuring expressive behaviour or the product of expressive behaviour; c) by measuring physiological responses to music, such as heart rate, respiration and muscle tension. Juslin and Sloboda (2001: 74) acknowledge that all of these methodologies have their own constraints and that it can be difficult to differentiate between emotions and ‘moods’. It is also difficult to quantify ‘secondary’ emotions which involve ‘blends’ of what Juslin and Sloboda label the ‘basic’ emotions of happiness, anger, sadness, fear and disgust. Thus I believe, quantitative data must be complemented by qualitative information and performative descriptions if research is to come closer to assessing the relationship between the emotions and music.

To describe choral performances and the experienced emotions in this thesis I have opted to combine the method of emotional ‘measurement’ through self-report with performative writing. In chapter seven I have incorporated the Hopevale Community Choir’s answers to a structured questionnaire into a text which uses a more narrative, performative style. This performative style uses a first-person account of performance events. Using it, I compare and contrast my own emotional responses with those of the singers. The answers to the questionnaire are included in appendix E.

This writing approach recognises that, within our performance contexts, the choir and I learnt and experienced music and emotional responses to music together as an ensemble, rather than individually. Through using a more personalised narrative account, I simultaneously acknowledge that the emotional experiences were my own, as were my perceptions of the responses of others. The 'data' from the self-measurement questionnaire, combined with interviews and observations, complements this to demonstrate that there was a commonality between performers and their emotive responses to music. Overall, this approach to writing the thesis allows me to use a wider range of linguistic approaches which are more effective at conveying or evoking performance contexts and emotive states, without becoming too self-focussed.

The final stylistic feature I am employing which I feel needs justifying, is my decision to present interview excerpts as unmitigated as possible. This is necessary because of the unique way in which Hopevalians express themselves in Aboriginal English and their use of Guugu Yimithirr. Their specific use of Aboriginal English mixed with their local language is a way in which their identities as Hopevalians are shaped. Some Aboriginal English expressions also have a slightly different meaning from the standardised English expressions, without obscuring the overall meaning. I therefore feel it would be disrespectful to alter interview quotations because it wrongfully obliterates an aspect of Hopevalian identity and incorrectly suggests that Aboriginal English is incomprehensible to an English readership. Altering quotations could also obliquely suggest that Hopevalians were worried about their use of a localised form of English, thinking it inferior. From my research experience I found they were not worried about their localised use of English and thus I shall only moderately edit interview quotations. Additionally, I have included an audiovisual recording of a speech given by community elder Pastor George Rosendale and



audio samples of some interview segments, with permission, to allow the readers a further insight into Hopevalian modes of expression.

Structurally, I have separated meta-theory on constructions of Aboriginality as much as possible from my applied research outcomes. My reasons for doing so are a) that I wish it to be clear that my work was locally specific and that my actions may not have been appropriate for other Indigenous communities and cannot be replicated and b) that I wish to emphasise that, due to Indigenous diversity, meta-theory is only partially able to account for localised research outcomes. Other scholars who have addressed the relationship between meta-theory and localised research outcomes are anthropologists Marcus and Fischer (1999:9):

While retaining its politicized dimensions as a legacy of the 1960s, social thought in the years since has grown more suspicious of the ability of encompassing paradigms to ask the right questions, let alone provide answers, about the variety of local responses to the operation of global systems.

And Kisiuk (1997: 33) writes that:

[R]esearch is to a great extent particularized by time, place, personality and social circumstance. One of the most common errors in conventional ethnography is the tendency to generalize into theory based on experiences particular to a certain interpretive situation.

I agree with Kisiuk in that I believe sociological meta-theories about identity construction very rarely, if ever, hold true for all individuals and their living circumstances. Thus, whilst all research must have a theoretical point of departure, I have structured my thesis in such a way that I present sociological theories on the constructions of Aboriginality separately from the constructions of Hopevalian identities. This is not to say meta-theory about Aboriginality and its construction and locally specific constructions of Aboriginal identities in Hopevale are mutually exclusive or incompatible. They are not. The separation of meta-theory and locally

specific detail merely demonstrates that “one size does not fit all” and that exceptions or variations to the theoretical “rules” do exist.

To emphasise Indigenous diversity further in the structure of this thesis, I have opted to include short biographies of all members of the choir, rather than just one person. This is similar to the Aboriginal practice of ‘naming’ where lists of individual and place names are cited. In Hopevalian and Aboriginal culture more generally, the naming of an individual or place is an important way in which the existence and importance of a place or person is acknowledged. In the choir every singer contributed to the communal whole and thus should be ‘named’. It is also necessary to employ biographical detail to represent a concept which I call ‘communal individuality’. Communal individuality is further described in chapter three. It is a specific ‘sense of self’ which I observed in Hopevale and interpreted as differing from Western European constructs of self in relation to society. In Hopevale, personal autonomy and a sense of a communal, shared identity are not viewed as being opposing concepts.

Structurally and stylistically, some authors have employed the practice of ‘naming’ in the body of a text to acknowledge this Indigenous practice. An author and anthropologist of Hopevale who makes use of such naming lists is Haviland (1998: xviii) who documents the life of Hopevalian Roger Hart and his connection to Barrow Point, north of Hopevale, and Cooktown, as narrated to him by Roger Hart. In keeping with the customary practices of local Aborigines, Haviland makes many references to places, territories, and clan estates – the traditional “runs” of different Aboriginal families and groups in the area.

I will not use ‘naming’ as a stylistic feature but aim to use it structurally instead. I therefore do not incorporate lists of people’s names and places in the main body of this thesis, unless they are part of an interview quotation or an oral history. Such lists would seem repetitive or superfluous to the Western academic reader. I do, however, acknowledge the importance of concepts of ‘Country’ (an Indigenous concept which embodies a concept that

differs from the English, Western meaning of the word)<sup>7</sup> and naming to my Hopevalian friends. I have also included some lists in appendix D for reference purposes and to acknowledge that I visited the places where I performed and that these have now taken on a special significance for choir members and myself alike. The practice of ‘naming’, however, is employed structurally through presenting individual biographies of the choir singers who went on the tour through Northern Queensland in April 2005, to emphasise Indigenous diversity.

#### I.4 Summary of the thesis chapters

Having accounted for the style and structure of this thesis, I offer a summary of all the chapters and their content. In this introductory chapter, I presented the research aim, my research question and the location of my field research, the time at which I undertook the research and why I chose the topic and location that I did. Then I defined the main concepts and themes of this thesis, namely: concepts of community, ethnicity, spirituality, authenticity, performance and gender and the theme of Aboriginal diversity. I acknowledge that my work was not set in an ahistorical vacuum and that things have changed since I left Hopevale. This does not imply that the outcomes of my research have become invalid, despite the locally specific, highly context-sensitive nature of my applied work. It merely means that the reader should view this document as a historical record. In the last section of this chapter, I have addressed how Aboriginal diversity, identity constructions<sup>7</sup>, and reflexivity have influenced my choice of writing style and thesis structure. I have explained and justified my use of a more performative style.

Chapter one looks at the applied methodology which I used during the research processes. I elaborate on the concept of participatory action research (PAR) as defined by

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<sup>7</sup> See glossary and chapters four, five and six for further information about the term.

Trotter and Schensul (1998: 693) and compare and contrast it with Barz' medical ethnomusicology (2006:60), Blacking's dialectical approach (1995: 233 – 234) and Sheehy's (1992: 323) definitions of applied ethnomusicology. This is followed by an ethical and politically informed justification of the methodology. This justification is necessary due to Australia's particularly troubled relationship with the discipline of anthropology and this discipline's historical links with colonial rule and social Darwinism (*cf* McKnight, 1990). The justification of the methodology will highlight the fact that PAR cannot deny Aboriginal diversity and agency or input because of its inherently collaborative nature. It is therefore singularly suited to emphasising Aboriginal diversity.

The first chapter also presents critiques of PAR which will include the very 'meddlesome' nature of the approach, which can be obtrusive and is designed to effect change. Other critiques of PAR revolve around ethical arguments which suggest that those who collaborate with the researcher may not fully understand the implications of the changes being made or the theorising which underpins the rationale for introducing these changes. Additionally, I emphasise the fact that applied research has to be socially responsible and ethically sound precisely because of the changes it aims to make and that it has to be rigorous in every respect. To conclude the second chapter I discuss the more standardised methodologies I used alongside choral conducting which included archival research, writing fieldtext, interviewing, designing questionnaires, as well as filming, and performing. I demonstrate their appropriateness, strengths and limitations in the context of Hopevale.

Chapter two examines my particular approach to ethnographically informed choral conducting. I assess to what extent the literature on choral conducting available and the training I received in choral conducting, were able to prepare me successfully for my work in Hopevale. This is necessary because I feel that all applied research must be held accountable for its outcomes. These outcomes cannot be understood fully unless the reader is familiar with

the practical and theoretical thinking which informed them. Part of this assessment looks more specifically at Durrant's (2003) model for choral conducting and how I applied it in the context of Hopevale. Hereafter, I analyse DVD 1, which accompanies this thesis. DVD 1 contains segments of the choir rehearsal on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2005. I contextualise this particular rehearsal and then discuss the various segments in more detail. At the end of the chapter, I suggest a modification to Durrant's visual model of the 'five orientations' in choral conducting.

Chapter three presents select biographical details of the individual singers who made up the core membership of the Hopevale Community Choir during my research time. Before I present the individual biographies of the choir, I discuss the use of biographies in ethnomusicological literature generally and its advantages and limitations as a way of presenting aspects of a performance culture. I then introduce the ways in which I interpreted a Hopevalian 'sense of self' in relation to community. After the presentation of the singers' biographies I interpret these, using further interview excerpts. I expand on the choir's perceptions of the importance of age, gender, spirituality, ethnicity, and race. Additionally I look at musical preferences and individual perceptions of musical ability and how these influenced choir membership and whether they helped to change or maintain identity constructs. I also assess whether these changes or the maintenance of identities are able to promote wellbeing. Whilst I separate the various constituents which form part of individual identities such as age and gender in this chapter, I acknowledge that these constituents interact in different ways which are context dependant.

In chapter four, I examine the meta-theories which influence contemporary constructs of Aboriginality. I begin by exploring Indigenous spirituality and its links to geography concepts of Country. This I then relate to various musical genres practised in Indigenous Australia to highlight musical diversity. This I follow with a discussion about the various

governmental policies and slogans such as assimilation, integration and reconciliation. Their fast succession and contradictory nature have resulted in the fragmentation of Aboriginal communities and identities and thus negatively influenced Indigenous wellbeing. I demonstrate that the fragmentation and politicisation of Aboriginal identities, is reflected in Aboriginal popular music making. The discussion includes a clarification of how past constructs of Aboriginality influence present ones. I also address the problem of how past constructs of 'traditional' Aboriginality are used by the media and even Aborigines themselves to justify violence in communities and how this perpetuates unjustifiable, negative stereotypes of Aborigines. Lastly, I look at how Social Darwinist theory and biblical exegesis influenced constructs of Aboriginality in preparation for chapter five about Hopevale's mission history.

In the fifth chapter of this thesis, I look specifically at how the processes of colonisation and missionisation have impacted on Hopevalian identities. I begin with presenting a tabulated chronological representation of Hopevalian history after which I survey Hopevale's historiography, which exists in written and aural format. I address the need for using Hopevale's historiography in a critical and nuanced manner, making sure that Hopevalians are seen as creators of history not just passive persons who are acted upon. I then look at the former mission's practice of focussing on young children and Hopevale's Stolen Generation, and how this impacted on the transmission of the body of pre-contact, non-Christian spiritual and ceremonial knowledge of Hopevalians. This I follow on concepts of colonisation, evangelism and their links with Social Darwinism and the introduction of Western concepts of 'civilisation' as manifested in Hopevale history. Thereafter I examine the relationship between gender and the processes of missionisation and how these have been detrimental to Hopevalian men in particular.

In chapter five, I also address the relationship between the pre-contact spirituality of the Dreaming and Christianity in Hopevale and how it has developed. This discussion includes

introducing the concept of *warra*, a Guugu Yimithirr word which is related to an individual's spirituality and sense of belonging, or identity. The chapter concludes by looking at why pre-contact spirituality has yet to be fully integrated into formal Christian worship and how this has affected Hopevalian worship practices and spiritual wellbeing.

Chapter six uses a section of fieldtext to introduce the conservative nature of Lutheran worship in Hopevale. The chapter examines how Hopevale's social history as a Lutheran mission has influenced the music performed at the time of research. I also examine how music of the past influenced the constructions of Hopevalian identities. To do this I look at archival literature based on missionary and governmental writing, which indicates that very little importance was accorded to Cape Bedford's traditional ceremonial practices. I then discuss how missionary hymn 'translation' was used to evangelise local Aborigines whilst simultaneously discrediting the non-Christian initiation practices and its practitioners, Indigenous male elders, thereby promoting negative, gendered constructs of Aboriginality. Thereafter I discuss how concepts of congregational singing and choral singing have converged and how this congregational hymn-singing has supported the maintenance of Hopevale's Lutheran identity. I also show how hymnody, congregational singing and, by extension, choral singing play an important part in the processes of maintaining and shaping social memory in the community of Hopevale today.

Chapter seven describes the choir tour through Northern Queensland, using a more narrative, "day-by-day" style. The thesis themes will be elaborated, tying them to contemporary scholarly literature and political issues about topics such as Aboriginal health and wellbeing, the representation of Aboriginality in tourist ventures, the relationship between performance and spirituality and lastly the use of choral music to promote wellbeing. Chapter seven and the concluding chapter demonstrate that this thesis contributes to, and has implications for, a diversity of theoretical and practical areas. These are:

1. the study of identity constructs, particularly in Aboriginal Australia, through performance
2. the potential for applied ethnomusicological methodologies to facilitate reciprocal and ethical research projects based on mutual musical learning
3. music therapy and the relationship between Indigenous wellbeing and musical performance and the need for ethnographically informed approaches
4. ethnographically informed music and choral facilitation and pedagogy more generally
5. the potential for ethnographically informed performance and teaching to facilitate non-confrontational audience participation and learning in tourist environments
6. the debates surrounding the culture and context-sensitive nature of the relationship between music, performativity and the emotions
7. postcolonial representations of Indigenous Australians in ethnographies
8. the potential for applied ethnomusicological methodologies to generate theory as well as to apply theory
9. studies of Indigenous Christianity and the performance of Indigenous spirituality through Christian choral singing.

In this last area of contribution, no extensive research has been undertaken. No studies have looked at Aboriginal choral singing as a phenomenon or addressed the relationship between choral singing and the construction of Aboriginal identities in Australia. Choral singing is only mentioned briefly in passing in some textbooks (*cf* Walker, 2000: 24 and Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004: 41-42) and cited as being an influence on popular music styles such as Country Gospel, and Country and Western. Many recordings have been made of Aboriginal choirs, however. Karl Neuenfeldt and Nigel Pegrum have recorded several CDs which feature vocal



ensembles from the Torres Straits and Arnhem Land (cf Neuenfeldt and Pegrum: 2007) and the Lutheran recording studios, *Tracks of the Desert*, have an extensive output of their own, local choral and spiritual music (cf Apu Cross Ministries: 2002, and Ernabella Praise and Worship Singers: 2002/2003). The Ntaria Ladies Choir has also collaborated with modern classical composer Schultz in a piece which was performed at the Sydney Opera House entitled *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* (cf Schultz, 2004), but the implications of these recordings and performances have only recently started receiving academic attention. This thesis aims to look at the importance of choral singing in Hopevale and will contribute to the knowledge about the choral genre.

The result, is a thesis which intersperses Western academic theory with reflexive and experiential accounts of musical performances informed by Hopevalian concepts of identity, emotions and performativity. The thesis uses English, Aboriginal English and some Guugu Yimithirr words to indicate the linguistic diversity of the Hopevalian community, complemented by audio and audio-visual material. Chapter headings are sometimes more ‘scientific’ and at other times not dissimilar to chapter titles in a novel. This approach is not common in doctoral theses but more akin to a ‘bricolage’. It is my opinion, however, that it is the most effective way of describing the interaction between the methodology I used, the Western educational background I have, and the way in which I experienced musical performance with the Hopevale community choir to enable me to answer a research question. To present a thesis using but one style of writing, format and language would not accurately reflect the different influences that shaped it, the most important of which were Indigenous agency and consent.

The narration of the first rehearsal and in particular my uncertain journey by four wheel drive on the night of the 17th of October 2004, in many ways summarises the processes of the performative learning ‘journey’ I experienced. The way in which the first

rehearsal eventuated and took its course is an example of Indigenous agency. A fellow PhD student, Paul Hansen, suggested that, although I was in the ‘driver’s seat’ as a ‘choir lady’ in the four-wheel drive, I had no idea where I was going that evening or how my work would eventually pan out: would I be able to revive the choir and how would it be received? I had to follow June Pearson’s rear lights into the darkness on my way to ‘the light’ of her farm. What was unclear initially, gradually became apparent through shared performative experiences and learning. Essentially, it was not I who was leading, but the members of the choir and Hopevale community. Without their initial support and willingness to work with me, my applied research and this thesis would not have eventuated.

## **An applied methodology in Hopevale, Northern Queensland**

*Interview transcript, 29 November 2004 (Audio sample 1)*

*June Pearson: I think music is a very big...plays a big part in this community. People like functions, but it don't happen. It happens far and in between, you know? And I think we'll solve a lot of the problems here if we, introduce music back and basically getting happy families again, you know.*

*Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Do you think that music could somehow be helpful when it comes to reconciliation?*

*JP: I think, I think it will because...I feel that whatever type of music comes out, you know whether they're singing or play it always touches the heart in some way, you know? It makes you feel good or makes you feel sad, I mean you can sing a song that'll make you very sad and make you cry! But then again, it can touch the heart in a different way so...*

The above quotation demonstrates Hopevalian June Pearson's belief in the ability of music to stimulate an emotional response and implies that this response, whether it be one of happiness or sadness, is a beneficial, cathartic one. June's belief was shared by other Hopevalian choir and community members. It was for this reason that the Hopevale community requested I should become their 'choir lady'. I was happy to do so because I shared their conviction that music can offer a beneficial emotional outlet to both performers and listeners in the right circumstances. Because of this shared belief and the community's request, my work was applied from the outset.

In this chapter I introduce recent developments and studies in the area of applied ethnomusicology relevant to this thesis and how my work relates to these. I focus specifically on my theoretical understanding of the applied approach called 'participatory action research', and how it compares to other current ethnomusicological research methods and projects. In this discussion I also consider the critiques of my applied approach. I then discuss how my role as a facilitator

impacted on the research outcome. Lastly, I outline the other, more standardised methodologies I used such as interviewing and filming and how these contributed analytically to the fieldresearch process. Throughout this chapter I aim to pay particular attention to the areas of fieldwork ethics and politics because of the highly politicised nature of research into Australian Aboriginal topics. This extremely politicised research climate warrants particular attention because it framed the ways in which I collaborated with the Hopevale choir and it influenced my decisions on how to present the outcomes of my applied research in this thesis.

### 1.1 Applied ethnomusicology and participatory action research (PAR)

Applied methodologies are becoming increasingly popular as a way of making ethnomusicology useful and relevant to contemporary situations. Applied ethnomusicology at the time of writing is a developing area of interest. The Society for Ethnomusicology has a special interest group for applied ethnomusicology and at the International Council for Traditional Music and Dance conference in 2007 a new study group was created for applied ethnomusicology, which had its inaugural meeting in Slovenia in July 2008. Ethnomusicological research is increasingly being used to bring to the fore the detrimental political and/ or social situations in which some of the world's people find themselves today. Academic studies and applied work are employed to bring these issues to the attention of a wider public through raising conciousness, direct intervention, activism and advocacy. Applied research is aimed at contributing directly or indirectly to the amelioration of the political and/ or social situations researched. Examples of such studies include Baily's (2004) study on the censorship and the outlawing of music in Afghanistan, Tan's (2007) applied project in Malaysia which focuses on cultural conservation and conflict management through the arts (2007), Newsome's (2008) involvement with Indigenous Australian

musicians at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM) in Adelaide and Harrison's (2008) work with Pan-First nation people, music, healing and rehabilitation in Vancouver's inner city Canada.

Barz (2006) also offers an applied study which helps to raise awareness of the AIDS epidemic in Africa generally and Uganda specifically. Barz's work demonstrates the importance of music, dance and theatre as a communicative tool in disseminating information about and preventing AIDS in a culturally appropriate fashion. Barz's findings show that in Uganda the musical and social strategies employed have helped to reduce the spread of HIV and that music can be a powerful catalyst for change and medical intervention.

Because music is used as a tool in Uganda to save human lives and informed by biomedical and religious issues, Barz calls his approach 'medical ethnomusicology'. Barz (2006: 59) quotes an interviewee: "Music is taken as a medicine. Even if one is in pain, they will get back some life if there is music." As a sub-discipline Barz describes medical ethnomusicology as "involving collaborative participation from medical and music schools. Just as its sister discipline, medical anthropology, highlights the performance of culture, so does medical ethnomusicology..." (2006: 60). Unlike Barz I did not collaborate with medical personnel or focus my study on how lives are physically being saved through music. Instead, I worked with correctional facility and rehabilitation centre staff and Hopevalian people, aiming to improve social wellbeing and personal confidence through music-making. My approach was therefore not medical ethnomusicology, despite its incorporation of Indigenous concepts of the relationship between music and wellbeing. Rather, my research methodology was based on a different form of applied research.

Theoretically the applied methodology I employed was closely related, but not identical to, Participatory Action Research (PAR). This term was initially used in applied

anthropology. Trotter and Schensul (1998: 693) define PAR, when used in applied anthropology thus:

[PAR is the] continuous interaction of research with the action through joint researcher/ actor data collection, analysis, reflection; and use. In other forms of research..., the means (research) leads to an end (an evaluation, a program, a policy change, etc.) In participatory action research (PAR), the means is the end, and the conduct of research is embedded in the process of introducing or generating change. PAR is, first and foremost, locally specific and is intended to further local goals with local partners.

This definition comes close to describing my methodology, but is not the same in that my work did lead to the writing of this thesis and thus had ‘an end’. In other words, my work as a music facilitator was not the sole reason for my being in Hopevale. I was also there to answer a research question. The resulting thesis is an ethnographic account of my applied research in Hopevale and could also be conceived of as a ‘project report’.

PAR as a definitional term has not been directly employed by ethnomusicologists. Whilst volume 36, no. 3 of *Ethnomusicology* (1992) deals with applied ethnomusicological methods and adherent concepts, it does not specify the use of PAR. Theory on applied methods is presented by Sheehy, for instance, who believes “that all ethnomusicologists have at one time or another been applied ethnomusicologists” where researchers act for the benefit of a community as a form of reciprocity. This is not the type of applied work that I am referring to, however. In my research reciprocity was not an *outgrowth* of my research. Reciprocity, for ethical reasons, was an aim in itself.

I believe many applied methodologies in ethnomusicology to date have tended to occur on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than as a conscious practice. In fact there is little theory in the discipline which debates what constitutes ‘applied work’ save for the aforementioned issue of *Ethnomusicology* in which Sheehy states that “[i]f ethnomusicology is an approach to the study of music of the world’s peoples, then applied ethnomusicology is an *approach*

*to the approach.*” [emphasis original] He thinks that it begins with a sense of purpose larger than the advancement of knowledge (Sheehy, 1992: 323).

In my particular instance, I wanted to document not only the Christian choral singing tradition of the Hopevale community, but first and foremost to affect positive change through conducting the Hopevale Community choir and to record this change. To introduce these positive changes I used what Blacking calls a ‘dialectical approach’ (1995: 231). Blacking’s approach held that there are two ways in which knowing about the social meaning of music can be achieved. The first is through verbal communication as music analysts<sup>1</sup> and music users. The second way is through performance and listening. Blacking (1995: 231) writes that

The most complete understanding of music and enrichment by musical experience comes from combinations of the two modes of discourse, and so analyses of musical thought must include both types of information, but always in the context of its social uses and the cultural system of which it is a part.

He goes on to propose that:

The analysis of meaning can be achieved only by a dialectic approach between “informants” and “analysts”, in which there is a confrontation of two kinds of technical knowledge and experience, and “informants” share in the intellectual process of analysis. This has to be done as far as possible in the field, and the process will be rather different from that usually associated with “interviews”. The essential point is that there should not be two separate phases of data collection and “laboratory” analysis. Participation, collection of data, discussion, and primary analysis should all be fused into an ongoing analytical process. The major task of analysis is thereby shifted to the field, where ad hoc experiments...can be combined with dialogue, so as to test each conclusion. (1995: 233-234)<sup>2</sup>

With regards to my work with the Hopevale Community Choir, I did not use the dialectic approach to merely study a musical tradition in existence. Instead my aim was to use dialectics to re-establish and change a musical tradition, that of choral singing. I was more concerned with the “enrichment by musical experience” than

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<sup>1</sup> Here the category “analyst” could include performers, listeners and assessors of music as well as researchers (Blacking, 1995: 231).

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that the terminology employed here by Blacking dates from an earlier period within the ethnomusicological discipline, where it was still quite acceptable to use phrases such as ‘data collection’ or to

achieving an understanding of the music or musical practice itself through analysis alone. As Blacking suggests, I analysed my research outcomes on a daily basis to inform further action to be taken. I did not simply “gather my information” to analyse it once away from ‘the field’. The analysis of findings was ongoing and sometimes instantaneous when performing with the choir. The rehearsals, performances and discussions I had with choir and audience members helped me to decide, for example, what repertoire to (re) introduce, where to rehearse and perform, and how to act and react to socio-musical encounters with other people. “Participation, collection of data, discussion, and primary analysis” were all “fused into an ongoing analytical process”.

My approach also differed to Blacking’s in that he designed dialectics as a means of understanding musical practices already in existence which were to be studied and not necessarily changed. During my research process I deliberately created change and it was the change I studied and effected through the dialectical approach. Putting this applied approach into practice was by no means easy. It required me to train as a choral conductor, work as a PR manager, fundraise and undertake marketing work for the choir. My role also included briefly teaching music at the local Hopevalian primary school. In the process I collaborated with a wide variety of people. Because the applied approach I chose was by no means the easiest option, I will now discuss why I opted for it.

### 1.2 Why applied research? Research ethics and politics in Australia

I opted to conduct applied work because in my view research on Indigenous topics must be ethical and reciprocal in Australia’s contemporary research climate. My concern with the ethical implications of my work grew out of my upbringing and

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‘conduct experiments’. In the Australian context this type of phraseology is considered inappropriate for



education, earlier visits to Australia and contact with other researchers in the field of Aboriginal studies. What was emphasised by other academics working in Aboriginal studies was that research for its own sake was not encouraged as it is not deemed useful to Aboriginal communities. In practical terms, it is also very difficult to gain approval to conduct research or to obtain funding unless research methodologies reflect a willingness to contribute to Indigenous development and wellbeing in a culturally sensitive manner.

Ethical guidelines from specialist funding bodies and institutes such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) reflect the focus on the importance of ethics, diversity and the necessity to acknowledge Indigenous forms of knowledge and contributions to knowledge. AIATSIS also stipulates that a researched community should benefit from, and not be disadvantaged by, the research project. The guidelines also state that a researcher must openly discuss and negotiate with the community, any potential benefits (AIATSIS, 2000: Rule 9).

These ethical guidelines have been strongly enforced due to Aboriginal Australia's troubled relationship with the discipline of anthropology, and by extension ethnomusicology. Early anthropological research in Australia has been critiqued for helping to maintain and justify colonial rule and aiding the oppression of Aborigines (*cf* Nakata, 2007 and Gray, 2007). On an application which I submitted I received the following comment

Personal communication, Peter Toner, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004

...the overall tone of [your] application suggests a rather dated approach to ethnographic research: "evidence" to be collected, reference to Malinowski, etc. I don't have a problem with this, but it may not be so well-received at AIATSIS. Bear in mind that AIATSIS is a public service institution with a high proportion of Aboriginal staff and input. It is not uncommon for people to question why white people should be hanging around "studying" Aboriginal "subjects" anyway. You must consider the cultural politics of

Aboriginal studies, and try and make sure that your proposal doesn't look too much like anthropological research in the bad old days.

Anthropology's links with Darwinism and phrenology have received much criticism. The discipline has been taken to task because the 'data' which it supplied helped to support social Darwinist theories, and as a result 'proved' Aboriginal inferiority:

It is hard to imagine anthropology without Australian Aborigines. They were once regarded by anthropologists as living representatives of primordial hunters and gatherers and as such greatly influenced scholars' beliefs about primitive mentality. They were retrojected ancestors on which theories of evolution, diffusion, functionalism and structuralism were in large measure developed and tested. (McKnight, 1990: 42)

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1965), Lévi-Strauss's theses on kinship and marriage, classification and totemism, and Radcliffe-Brown's work on Aboriginal kinship systems all built their foundations and reputation on the Aboriginal example (McKnight, 1990:42). Ethnomusicology is not blameless either. In Sach's posthumously published *Wellsprings of Music* he refers to the "tumbling strain" of melody with a "wild and violent" character that at its most emotional recalls "nearly inhuman, savage shouts of joy or wails of rage". "The crudest style of this melody" Sachs believed, was preserved in Australia (Sachs, (ed. Kunst), 1962: 51).

There is also a strong link between early anthropological writing and missionary writing. Cooley observes that older paradigms in the anthropological participant-observation model were interrelated with missionary work, colonial administrations and nationalist movements. Missionaries sought to 'change the "savages" among whom they conducted their work.' Their impact was assumed and even desired (Cooley, 2003:5). Observations which missionaries communicated to the colonial government and the church parishes in wider Australia and Europe influenced official and evangelical representations of Aboriginality and impacted on the legislation of Aboriginal and church affairs. Whilst these historical church and government policies informed by anthropological writing were designed to ameliorate the disastrous consequences of colonisation, their long-term effects

were devastating. As a result, anthropology as a discipline is held partially responsible for the current disadvantaged state in which many Aborigines find themselves today.

I am not suggesting that anthropology as a discipline is solely responsible for Indigenous disadvantage. Missionisation, colonialism and Western capitalism, without anthropological 'intervention', must also shoulder the blame. It is also necessary to emphasise that there are several notable scholars in the past who endeavoured to promote Indigenous wellbeing and to highlight their humanity and personal rights. Such scholars include, for example, W.E.H Stanner and E.P. Elkin. W.E.H Stanner (1905 – 1981) remains a highly significant figure in Aboriginal affairs and Australian anthropology. This work contributed to an increased public understanding the Aboriginal religion, *The Dreaming*. Stanner also wrote some exceptionally evocative biographical portraits of Indigenous people whilst his writings on post-colonial development and assimilation policy urged an appreciation of Indigenous people's distinctive world views and aspirations. His writings continue to be relevant in the extremely politicized world of Aboriginal affairs today. A.P. Elkin (1891 – 1979) was appointed the first Professor of Anthropology at Sydney University in 1933 and an activist for the improvement of Australian Aboriginal rights. Until his retirement in 1956, he effectively dominated Australian anthropology, advised governments, and trained administrators in preparation for their work in Papua New Guinea, He was also president of the Association for the Protection of Native Races from 1933 to 1962 and vice-president of the Aborigines Protection Board of New South Wales, (renamed Aborigines Welfare Board in 1940) in his various capacities he endeavored to improve Indigenous wellbeing.

Despite the earlier erudite scholarship of Stanner and Elkin, it is undeniable that anthropology's disciplinary history has led to a greater emphasis being placed on the scrutiny of research ethics, issues of representation and research methodology in the Australian Aboriginal context. Consequently, projects which help encourage a positive image of Aboriginality and Aboriginal culture, or initiatives which develop Indigenous

leadership, fulfil an Indigenously specified need and respect local Indigenous knowledge without generalising it, are more likely to attract funding from bodies such as AIATSIS.<sup>3</sup> Due to the politicised research climate in Australia I chose to design a research question with the help of the Hopevale community to fulfil a locally perceived need. The research methodology was based on a shared belief that the re-introduction of choral singing and musical activities could have a beneficial impact on community wellbeing.

Additionally, my decision to use PAR and to work on a process rather than study a situation already in existence, aimed to avoid another ethical criticism often levelled at anthropological research: its use of ahistorical research approaches which ignore humanitarian crises. Anthropology is critiqued for its earlier fascination with the “traditional and authentic” which has denied Aboriginal communities historicity and diversity. The strong historical focus on ‘salvage anthropology’ led many scholars to overlook contemporary developments, some of which deserved urgent humanitarian attention. By trying to conserve the traditional ceremonies and knowledge of remote Aboriginal communities, little was done to remedy the extreme malnutrition, decimation and oppression of Aborigines living near larger towns. These urban Indigenous groups were deemed unworthy of study and ‘tainted’ by Western influences. Radcliff-Brown, for example, never commented on the dire living conditions on Dorre and Bernier Island to the north-west coast of Western Australia where he conducted much of his fieldwork (McKnight, 1990: 50).<sup>4</sup>

To avoid the critique of being ahistorical I opted to make *a process* the focus of my research. By making a process an integral part of the project’s methodology from the outset, the concept of change is embedded in the methodology. My research very much

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<sup>3</sup> It must be pointed out here that these objectives should be communicated clearly in research proposals from the outset. My project outcomes fulfilled the objectives named above but due to my applied approach I was unable to fully explicate my research methodology or predict the eventual outcomes. Consequently, the proposal I submitted to AIATSIS did not receive funding. Feedback I received read that the proposal sounded “too much like social anthropology”: a revealing comment.

<sup>4</sup> Aborigines lived here in sex segregated communities, banned from living with their own communities because of a variety of contagious diseases. They had been chained and forcibly removed to the islands by colonial authorities. Radcliff-Brown must have been aware of the situation at hand (McKnight, 1990: 50).

focussed on matters in the present. This is not to say, however, that I ignored historical influences on the construction of Hopevalian identities. I have incorporated into this thesis substantial amounts of historical information to contextualise the tradition of choral singing in Hopevale and to ensure that the complex nature of the constructions of Indigenous Australian identities is clarified.

The last criticism of anthropology in the Australian context which I addressed more generally in the introductory chapter is that of over-generalisation. In the Australian context, anthropology has in the past encouraged generalisation and stereotyping by making statements and developing meta-theories which were applied to all Indigenous Australians. Whereas on other continents monographs about specific communities preceded regional generalisations, Australian anthropology does the reverse. McKnight notes that it appeared as if the more clans were mentioned, the more a scholar was considered an expert (1990: 53-54). Many early accounts are also based on correspondence with others 'in the field' rather than actual research activities by the authors. This means that earlier anthropological information "may at best not be wrong, but it is not quite right either." (McKnight, 1990: 53). Both points of critique have been absorbed into the ethical guidelines of AIATSIS (2000: Point 5):

When extrapolating from research, do not generalise from understandings of one Indigenous community to others or to all Indigenous peoples.

Identify diversity within a researched community; for example, on basis of gender, age, religion and community interest.

Do not presume that the view of one group represents the collective view of the community.

Methodologically PAR is ideally suited to complying with these ethical guidelines. It is locally specific in that it focuses on a research question which is formed in collaboration with the community. Its very nature acknowledges that the exact research outcomes will not be replicable, and that generalisations cannot be made. In the context of my work, the research focus also helped to identify community

diversity by looking at how the constituents of individual identities such as gender, age and spirituality for example, were continually being reshaped through performance. Research outcomes indicated that Hopevalians have much in common with one another but that for historical and other reasons there is a lot of diversity in the ways in which individual identities were performed through music within the one community.

Whilst in this thesis I focus on the problematical relationship between anthropology and Indigenous studies and politics in Australia, similar situations can be found when comparing research project contexts in North America, and New Zealand amongst the AmerIndian, Inuit and Maori peoples. In all cases these indigenous groups have suffered enormous historical losses, were placed on reserves and had to endure paternalistic governmental policies introduced by the colonial governments who sought to “protect” them on account of their perceived biological “inferiority” and settler barbarity. In all cases much culture and historical information was lost and today these indigenous people still suffer from social disadvantages and problems such as alcohol misuse, drug and gambling addictions, and community violence.

The research situation in these contexts is different to other locations which have also experienced colonialism, such as Africa and India. In most cases the colonisers left the country and/ or eventually offered self-government. The colonisers did not become the majority of the population in the country’s demographic make-up and/ or a hegemonic power controlling the country’s infrastructure, knowledge production, economy and law. Furthermore, the colonised were not forcibly and systematically detained on reservations and missions, and indigenous people were able to retain most of their linguistic and cultural practices. It is important this is borne in mind when reading scholarship which focuses on Australian Aboriginal research or the other areas mentioned, because it clarifies why ethical, political,

methodological and historical questions need to be addressed with great care and sensitivity, perhaps even more so than in, for example, Indian or African settings.

These are the reasons why I chose work in an applied manner. The section above offers several reasons why, in Australian Aboriginal context, PAR is a suitable ethical methodology. PAR does, however, have its detractors and raises several questions about the processes of seeking informed consent, the extent to which Indigenous research collaborators are actually involved in framing the research questions and in control of the research direction and the effect of the outcomes. Objectors have also pointed out the ‘meddlesome’ nature of applied research and its goals.

### 1.3 Critiques of PAR

My unique working position as ‘choir lady’ in Hopevale posed theoretical dilemmas because it meant I would be re-introducing rather than merely documenting the very thing that I had wanted to study; namely Aboriginal choral singing. PAR accommodates this in that “the conduct of research is embedded in the process of introducing or generating change.” (Trotter and Schensul, 1998: 693). Because PAR actively introduces change the approach has raised several ethical questions which have recently been addressed. These include debates about: the extent to which those involved are truly able to understand the research frameworks; the problems of anticipating research outcomes; and the processes of determining appropriate methodologies prior to the actual research event and thereby complicating the acquisition of full and ethical consent.

In the field of action research in education in the United States, Nolen and Vander Putten comment on some of these issues. The authors firstly point out that seeking informed consent from participants can be controversial and difficult as it might involve explaining complex research methodologies, theories and much

paperwork (2007: 402). In my particular circumstance, I always felt I was not able to completely involve those I worked with on a theoretical level. Further involvement would have required the persons to be familiar with Western ethnographic theory, research methodologies and musicology.

I never felt I could accurately explain and account for my research methods and actions, particularly because my role as that of a researcher was often forgotten. I was first and foremost ‘the choir lady’ or ‘teacher’. PAR relies on constant dialogue between researcher and those (s)he works with to evaluate the evolving research process. Since I was unable to have such discussions with the Hopevale Community Choir with regards to my ethnographic methodology I felt my work was ethically problematical. This particularly became an issue when dealing with the question of representation and Aboriginality in relation to tourist audiences during our tour, described in chapter seven.

Another concern which detractors of PAR have is that, precisely because it is a process, the methodology generates ever-changing research parameters, and these parameters are often based on Western ethnographic theory. This makes assessing the suitability of specific methodologies difficult because they are necessarily broad in scope and cannot be evaluated properly until they are physically put into practice. Seeking informed consent prior to the research event therefore becomes problematical and can be misleading as methodologies agreed upon may have to be altered depending on the research outcomes, or are not fully understood. In my case, however, the main methods of choral conducting, interviewing, participating and observing remained the core constituents of my methodological approach. What varied was the repertoire to be performed and the age group with which I worked. How these methods and my role in the community were perceived however, is another point for reflection. A colleague commented:



...you have not problematized your own role sufficiently. You will set up the choir, conduct, teach, and “be a strong catalyst for musical change”, and then examine the effects on the community. How do you anticipate that your “teacher/director” role will impact on your role as a researcher? To what extent will choir members introduce their own repertoire, singing styles, singing techniques, notational techniques, etc.? What are the community’s goals for you? Would being a “facilitator” instead of a “conductor” be less problematic? (Personal communication, Peter Toner, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2004)

A similar concern raised by Nolen and Vander Putten (2007: 403 - 404) is that of the multiple roles of the researcher in applied work and the ethical implications on a practical level. They point towards the medical professions which make a clear distinction between non-therapeutic and therapeutic practices and the fact that an applied medical researcher is first and foremost a practitioner, who should have the interests of his/ her patient at heart. The welfare of the ‘client’ should supersede the goals of any research programme (Nolen and Vander Putten, 2007: 403 - 404). In the ethnomusicological sense, this meant that I must always keep the interests of the choir at heart and as stated above, not deliberately encourage or enforce any actions for the sake of navigating the research outcome in a specific direction which might be contrary to the choir’s best interests. Reflexively however, determining what was contrary to the choir’s desires and best interests was perhaps less clear cut than in, for example, a medical situation.

These critiques helped me understand that Hopevale community members might see me first and foremost as their choir conductor and musical expert who had come to revive choral singing and to teach them new songs. They were aware of my role as a researcher, but did not always understand why I needed answers to the questions I asked because the questions reflected my Western academic interests which are embedded in ethnographic theory. Whilst I tried to share as much as possible of my research aims and theory with those I filmed and interviewed I am unsure to what extent it was possible to reach a common, shared understanding of the research methodology and my research aims.

The other questions asked by Toner at the time I wrote the proposal, were unanswerable as I had not yet met the choir or researched their musical history. I was

therefore unable to predict what type of music would be appropriate for performance in Hopevale and how my role as music facilitator would develop. Neither could I accurately gauge in advance what the community's goals for me were, other than that they wished me to revive choral singing. This dilemma demonstrates that writing a research proposal for an applied project is difficult because the research outcomes cannot be predicted and are highly context-sensitive. Applied methodologies are variable and cannot accurately be planned in advance because they develop in response to outcomes in the field and some of these outcomes can be unpredictable. Gaining ethical clearing, therefore, poses problems.

In his communication, Toner suggested that I might call myself a facilitator rather than a conductor. This is because in a Westernised context a conductor operates from an aesthetically Westernised musical basis which is linked to certain performative traditions. These performative conventions are considered to be aesthetically pleasing and appropriate in a Western performative context and of a particular artistic merit. A conductor therefore operates within culturally and aesthetically defined performative boundaries where there can be a very clear musically 'right' way as well as a 'wrong' way to perform music. The term facilitator, on the other hand, suggests a role which is less autocratic and less aesthetically and culturally defined. It refers to a position where a choral leader is able to accommodate varying aesthetic approaches to the performance of music which are different to his/ her own rather than reject them outright. As a facilitator, a choral leader might first investigate the local aesthetic approaches to, and conventions in, singing and take these into account during rehearsal and performance processes. Similarly, a facilitator must not only recognise the differences in performance practice, but also acknowledge the similarities, to avoid unnecessarily exoticising the performance practices of the musicians.

The term facilitator for the purposes of this thesis is the more suitable one as it reflects the reflexive research methodology I chose to employ. My observations with regards to Hopevalian singing and other musical practices constantly informed the way in which I chose to conduct and perform with the choir; which performative elements I chose

to change and which to leave as they were. I endeavoured, as much as possible, to refrain from dramatically and autocratically imposing my own performative habits and concepts of aesthetics on the choir unless I had already observed some precedent for it in Hopevalian musical practices. Even then I would only pursue a change if the choir seemed performatively at ease with it once introduced and the change was labelled as positive.

For example, when rehearsing I did try to maintain the ensemble's pitch, as within the Hopevale community the diatonic scale was used and musicians also criticised singers if they sang 'out of tune', meaning what Western musical theory would call either 'flat' or 'sharp'. Both the terms 'flat' and 'sharp' were used by musicians and singers in Hopevale as well. Of good singers it was said that they could 'hold a tune' which I discovered meant that they sang what Western music theory would consider to be 'in tune': keeping to the melody as it was known with little to no improvisation. Hopevalians said that to sing a song well, with confidence and without hesitation was to sing a song 'right through'. I therefore incorporated these local understandings of tonality and aesthetics into my rehearsal technique and will use them here in this thesis.

Aesthetic practices that differed, but which I embraced or only altered slightly, included: performance tempo of older hymns (which always seemed on the slow side to me); vocal timbre (which was what could be described as, without being pejorative but descriptive, nasal or thin); and vocal strength, where vocal strength was praised, even if this meant that a singer did not 'blend' with the choir. These aesthetic differences were linked to the well-liked, Hopevalian tradition of congregational hymn-singing in harmony. I therefore did not wish to alter the practices drastically. Lastly, I did not always insist that the music taken from the various sources was sung exactly as written. Many Hopevalians have learnt to harmonise melodies by ear rather than having learnt them by rote from a facilitator. Thus, I reasoned, as long as the singing was perceived as being pleasant and the notes were in harmony, the exact notes need not always be sung.

Other performative practices I tried to influence if I felt it enhanced the enjoyment of a musical piece or increased its appeal to younger people. I focussed on tempo and rhythm, especially when performing the African Christian songs which relied heavily on lively, syncopated rhythms. Whilst I did not seek to change the tempo of old church favourites, when introducing new repertoire, I tried to encourage the choir to sing at a faster speed and to even consider incorporating bodily movement and hand clapping in their performance to keep time.

Thus, from the outset I aimed to be a facilitator not a conductor or choir mistress. The distinction between the two terms, however, is very much a Western theoretical one. Hopevalians did not make this distinction and called me their 'choir lady', 'choir leader' or 'choir mistress'. When I taught younger children songs by rote in the Hopevale School and in church I was simply called 'Miss Muriel'. I was someone who had come to 'lead' the choir and teach the children new songs in school.

In my role as a facilitator or 'choir lady' I aimed to work with Hopevalians in a positive manner, musically and socially and the Hopevale community's continued support indicated to me that I was offering them something they enjoyed. Nevertheless, some scholars might question why Western-trained scholars should take an interest in Aboriginal affairs. They view research on Indigenous topics of any kind as evidence of a continued hegemony and find it 'meddlesome', invasive and inappropriate.

During applied research circumstances generally, intrusiveness can be problematic. This 'interfering' or 'meddling' may be indirect. The Folk Arts director in 1992, ethnomusicologist Bess Lomax, quite happily announced at a panel: "That's right, we're meddlers" (Titon, 1992: 316), after having been criticised for favouring one project over another by funding it and thereby negatively affecting the future of the unfunded project. I too, was a 'meddler' in Hopevale, which was something I had to bear in mind whilst working there. I had to acknowledge from the outset the possibility that the musical developments and changes might not be viewed as positive by all members of the

community despite my intention to bring about positive change. I had to accept that some community members had not been able to consent to my presence and that I should respect people's willingness or absence thereof to welcome me as a person and to share my personal and working ethos.

Other scholars might argue that this very personal working ethos in combination with an applied approach leads to a circular argument. As a music facilitator in Hoppevale it was expected that I re-established a choir. My research question therefore became: "Does choral singing have a positive influence on the construction of an Australian Aboriginal identity?" For ethical reasons my research 'hypothesis' consequently would be that choral singing does have a positive influence on the construction of identities. This 'hypothesis' I would need to 'prove' using ethnographic 'evidence'.

Science philosopher Karl Popper (1959 [1935]) however, has argued that scientific knowledge increases through falsification. In his *The Logic of Scientific Discoveries* Popper argued that the greatest advances in science occurred when previously held scientific presuppositions on which research paradigms were built were challenged, found to be false and subsequently replaced. By this reasoning, in my applied context, I would need to attempt to *disprove* that choral singing can have a positive influence on the construction of identities in order to *prove* it. This would mean that I would have to deliberately conduct and manage the choir badly by for example choosing music which was too difficult for the choir, resulting in poor performances or insisting on inappropriate performance venues and practices to create performative situations which discouraged an increase in musical competency, enjoyment and pride.

For ethical reasons it is inconceivable however, that I should deliberately wish to *disprove* my 'hypothesis'. Trotter and Schensul (1992: 692) write that "the human, social and ecological consequences of applied research are immediate, potentially significant, and sometimes critical to the life and survival of communities" and that "[s]ome researchers... have said applied social science research can and should be the most creative and rigorous

of all social science research.” This meant, however, that it was possible to suggest that a circular argument was created because I did not aim to disprove my ‘hypothesis’ and that as a result my findings might not be complete. To counter this assertion I have chosen to incorporate a section on the historical uses of hymnody during the processes of missionisation in Hopevale. This section will demonstrate that missionaries used hymnody and congregational singing to not only introduce the Gospel but simultaneously discredit and ridicule non-Christian practices and their practitioners. Thus, the use of hymnody and by extension singing had a negative effect on constructs of identity in the past.

Choral singing impacted in different ways on individual singers and audience members. Its effects were many and varied throughout history depending on personal and shared histories, context, and other associative factors. Because I employed an approach which was not positivist I will also adopt an alternative terminology to reflect this. I posit that I aimed to explore a ‘research question’ rather than ‘test a hypothesis’. The latter phrase is too closely tied to the natural experimental sciences for comfort. The people I worked with were not controllable variables, but acting, thinking and musicking persons.

#### 1.4 PAR in Hopevale: archival research, writing, interviewing, questionnaires, filming and performing

My applied approach also used standardised field research methods alongside choral facilitation. These methods were performance as a member of the Hopevale choir, archival research, writing, interviewing, constructing questionnaires, recording, and filming. Each method offered an alternative way of ‘knowing’ or ‘experiencing’ the research process and influenced its outcomes.

Performance as a way of knowing in ethnomusicology was formally introduced by Mantle Hood (1960) who first suggested that performance was a valuable way of coming to understand the intricacies of a musical culture both kinaesthetically and socially. It has now become common practice to learn how to perform the music of the people worked with to gain further technical and social insights into performativity. More recent developments have acknowledged that musical traditions are also experienced in culturally diverse ways, and that this experiential knowledge, albeit highly personalised, is another valuable way to gain an insight into another musical heritage. I therefore opted to also perform as a member of the choir as well as facilitate it.

In my case, learning another musical tradition from scratch was not necessary as I have been raised in a Western diatonic, musical tradition very similar to the one practiced in Hopevale. When I sang with the Hopevale Community Choir on occasions, rather than conducting it, singers were happy for me to join the ensemble. What I did need to embrace were specific aesthetic approaches to singing Lutheran hymnody, including differences in timbre and time keeping as mentioned earlier. Technically, I did not have to learn how to sing using a different vocal technique. Although it was noted my voice was different in quality due to its vibrato, singers did not find this objectionable, as choral blending was not an aesthetic aim.

What I did have to learn was how to ‘perform’ as a music facilitator as I am a keen and experienced chorister but a novice choral conductor. I was already aware that many physical and social factors influence the way a choir performs and rehearses and that many of these are related to how a music facilitator moves and communicates, but I had never yet had to develop conducting skills or even facilitation skills which were ethnographically informed. My conducting gestures, mood, praise, verbal communication with the singers about music and my decisions on rehearsal length, structure, material to be learnt and other factors, all contributed to the way in which the choir was able to become familiar with its music. This was a complex task and physically and mentally challenging, but also very rewarding.

To prepare myself for the conducting of the choir I also undertook archival research. Before heading to Australia it was suggested to me that entering into ‘the field’ without too many preconceptions might be preferential to commencing work after archival research. In my instance the opposite proved to be the case. Through archival research I was able to increase my knowledge of local musical traditions and history. This helped me prepare musically and mentally for what lay ahead. I felt that archival research was part of my role as music facilitator in that in order to facilitate the choir in an appropriate manner I had to have the required background knowledge to do my job well. As a result of my archival work I also was able to successfully repatriate several archival sources which brought pleasure to community members and helped me establish myself as a music facilitator.

The items repatriated were copies of a 1970s recording by Global Recordings of Indigenous Hopevalian lay preachers rendering the Gospel and singing hymns in Guugu Yimithirr. I obtained numerous copies for distribution and repatriation to Hopevale after discovering references to the recording in old archival sources. Through giving away these recordings of ‘the old people’ at my first ‘rehearsal’ I facilitated opportunities for discussion and some weeks later was given other



materials to listen to, which had been recorded by Hopevalians themselves in the past. Other helpful information I found were descriptions of earlier choral singing in Hopevale history in church newsletters and books (Pohlner, 1986 and Poland 1988) and an old hymnal by founding missionary Schwarz (1946) which contained the first edition of Lutheran hymns translated into the local language Guugu Yimithirr.

Schwarz's hymnal further helped me gain an insight into Hopevale's musical history. I also came to understand the historical evangelical importance of hymnody and its influence on the construction of Indigenous identities through looking at historical sources. Archival sources showed that in Hopevale, choral singing and hymnody had become an integral part to the musical culture of the settlement.

During the research process the writing of fieldtext was also a way of analysing, knowing and experiencing choral performativity in Hopevale. Writing fieldtext aided me in assessing rehearsal outcomes, which would further help develop my approach to choral conducting and research. Initially I worried that this method of analysing was too culturally specific and intrusive. I felt it might not reflect the ways in which Hopevalians experience, analyse or would represent their lives. Writing, however, allowed me to reflexively analyse the research process on almost a daily basis. It became an important way in which I developed new approaches to facilitation. As a result I came to acknowledge that writing was an important way in which I influenced the research process and therefore indirectly the singers.

With regards to the culturally specific way of knowing through writing I soon discovered that members of the Hopevale community also wrote about themselves as a community, their loved ones or visitors to their community (myself included) in their local newsletter the *Hopevale Milbi*. Hopevalian theologian Pastor George Rosendale (in Thompson, 2004) and scholar and politician Noel Pearson (1986, 2008) base their academic texts on personal experiences in Hopevale and Eric Deeral

(no date) wrote his account of the community's forced evacuation to Woorabinda<sup>5</sup> during the Second World War, *Lest we Forget: Home at Last* for the Hopevale Culture Centre. The concept of writing as a way of knowing, therefore, was not entirely alien to Hopevalians. Nevertheless, the preferred ways of knowing were through story-telling at communal song evenings called sing-alongs which were held at people's homes at nights on special occasions.

I did feel, however, that making notes in the presence of people was intrusive and even impolite as I was unable to give them my full attention when writing. My 'note-taking' throughout a day was therefore limited. Instead I wrote the fieldtext described in the introductory chapter after I was alone in my room. This is not to say that Hopevalians were not familiar with the field research methodologies of other Western scholars, which included note-taking. Neither were many people I worked with particularly bothered by my writing. One community elder, Uncle Walter Jack, would sometimes even insist that I should write something down. Walter Jack compared my approach to that of the anthropologist Haviland. Haviland had documented the Guugu Yimithirr language and spent time in Hopevale working closely with Uncle Walter. Walter Jack assumed I would want to write things down too, "so that I would not forget". I therefore believe it was my personal discomfort with the process of writing in the presence of the people that caused me to take notes sparingly.

What did cause some discomfort for some singers was the process of interviewing as a field technique. Some singers were not naturally talkative people or they felt ill at ease speaking in the presence of a microphone. When interviewing, therefore, if the discomfort was obvious I would never make the interview long. I conducted most interviews with the choir members towards the end of my fieldwork

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<sup>5</sup> The Aboriginal community of Woorabinda lies in the state of Queensland, Australia and South of Hopevale, West of Rockhampton. The Cape Bedford community, as Hopevalians were then known, were forcibly evacuated to Woorabinda during World War II because the government suspected German founding

period. My reason for doing so was that I felt it would be difficult to discuss the influence of choral singing on singers if they had not been rehearsing regularly yet.

My preference was to use ‘semi-structured’ interviews. These are described by Davies as being “formally bracketed, and set off in time and space”. It is something different from the usual interaction between ethnographer and interviewee. In semi-structured interviewing the researcher “goes to the interview with some sort of interview schedule: it may be structured as a set of written questions or it may be a very informal list...of topics” (Davies, 1999: 95). My list of topics was derived from a semi-structured questionnaire which I had given the choir to complete after the tour in April 2005. I would read the answers a singer had given me prior to the interview and try to discuss these issues with them and elicit further comments about their lives, interests and background.

The reason I preferred semi-structured interviewing as opposed to merely writing about personal conversations was that my position as a researcher was not always remembered due to my more prominent role in the community as a music facilitator. Davies (1999: 54) references the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) *Ethical Guidelines* which point out that:

It should, however, be recognized that, even where no deception is intended, it is particularly difficult under the conditions of anthropological fieldwork for research participants to remember or even perhaps to realize that they are being studied all or most of the time.

I believe that creating a formalised interview setting was more ethical as the Hopevalians being interviewed could actively decide how they wished to present themselves in the interviews not just to the researcher, but also to others who they thought might listen to the recordings at a later date. The Hopevalians I interviewed were all aware that I might use these recordings for more public presentations as I informed them of this fact. The result was that some felt inhibited.

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missionary Schwarz supported the Japanese and German war effort. This evacuation and its effects will be

I chose not to use structured interviews because these use sets of pre-determined questions and “invariant wording” (Davies, 1999:94). No personal information tends to be volunteered by the interviewer so as not to influence the outcome of the interviewee’s answer. In many cases the interviewer is not known to the interviewee. Conditions such as these were impossible to create in my case. I was part of the interviewing and community context. The answers I received depended on my relationship with interviewee, the surroundings and subject matter discussed. The questions I posed during the interviews reflected my knowledge of the interviewee as musical individuals and my understanding of their personal circumstances.

It has also been suggested that there are further reasons why open ended or semi-structured interviewing is ethically and ethnographically preferable (Davies, 1999: 101-102). This is because highly structured interviews run the risk of asking the ‘wrong’ questions. The significance of a particular issue may not be understood from the perspective of the interviewee if the interviewer only asks questions about what he or she thinks pertinent. These questions may or may not be the same issues which the interviewee finds worthy of discussion. This is particularly the case in contexts where the interviewer comes from a different cultural or social background to the interviewee or has a limited understanding of the interviewee’s social background. Arguably during participatory action research it would therefore be wrong to only use structured interviewing because the researcher is by definition engaged in addressing a locally defined and perceived need and thus must take into account local circumstances and ask locally relevant questions in a culturally appropriate manner. Supposedly ‘objective’, value-free, structured interviewing cannot and should not be used for this reason.

Using interviewing to solve a locally specific, general, ‘problem’ was difficult in Hopevale, however. In Hopevale it is not considered polite to speak on another person’s behalf. Depending on kinship affiliations and political and social relationships, certain

individuals could speak authoritatively on certain matters (Gordon with Bennett, 2007: 4), whereas others could not according to etiquette. I found that therefore during interviews, when I asked interviewees to comment on matters of general concern, they would often start an answer with: “Well, for me...” or “Maybe...”. In some cases they would not be able to give an answer, or did not want to speculate. It was therefore difficult to assess the merit of potential solutions or answers to general questions and ‘problems’ related to, for example, attendance or musical preferences of young men. The outcome of this culturally established etiquette of only speaking for oneself was that I would frequently have to suggest possible answers to my own questions. This could be seen as employing a leading questioning technique, which in some ways then defeats the object of having semi-structured or open ended interviews, because as a researcher I was naturally suggesting answers which I thought were appropriate. Leading questioning in some ways becomes identical to, for example, a multi-choice questionnaire.

Another theoretical question raised was whether the act of interviewing on my part could be seen as advocacy. Most Hopevalian singers seemed less aware of political issues related to the representation of Indigenous people in tourism, the Australian media and scholarship than perhaps many urban Aborigines. Hopevale’s remote locality and the fact it is surrounded by other Indigenous communities perhaps has caused this relative unawareness as well as the singers’ unfamiliarity with the internet. Many singers said that my questioning had caused them to think about issues of representation more and said they had compared themselves more to others during the tour. The act of conducting research and interviewing led the singers to perceive the social circumstances in which they found themselves in different ways. I had never deliberately phrased or structured my questions to raise political awareness, merely to investigate whether there was any, but inadvertently did raise awareness through questionnaires and interviewing. Interviewing and questionnaire completion became a way of knowing for the singers as well as myself.

Making audio recordings and interviewing, lastly, were very helpful reciprocal tools. I was asked to record Chevanne Bowen and her father Uncle Neville Bowen singing, for example, as the family wanted to record Chevanne's materials for personal and commercial usage. It was also requested by Auntie Thelma McIvor that I should record Uncle Lyndsay Nipper. Uncle Lyndsay was the only elder who had some knowledge of pre-contact Aboriginal song. Auntie Thelma wanted to keep these songs for reference purposes in the Hopevale culture centre. Entering into reciprocal arrangements this way, allowed me the opportunity to meet new people who were involved in making music and to document this music.

As with recording, filming was a useful 'reciprocal' tool. I used my field footage to fulfil a funding body's report criteria. Our music tour sponsors, the Queensland Arts Council (QAC), specifically requested copies of all photographic, film and other materials to demonstrate that the Hopevale Community Choir had indeed toured and used the Council's generous grant to perform at the places where the choir had said it would. Copies of my fieldwork documentation were therefore sent to the QAC to support the final tour report.

Film was also very helpful in the assessment of conducting processes and cultural performance traditions. I would film rehearsal sessions and concerts and watch these afterwards to analyse my gestures, posture, demeanour and verbal communication and the choir's subsequent responses to these. Filming performances and rehearsals complemented my audio recordings because it allowed me the opportunity to work reflexively whilst also learning a lot about Hopevalian performativity and audience response.

Practically, filming was intrusive only if I used the hand-held position and moved around a lot. Due to my role as a facilitator, however, I was unable to do this whilst simultaneously conducting the choir. Thus, I would often position the camera on a tripod and continue filming, only occasionally altering the camera's focal point. This

created rather static images, but also allowed the singers to become accustomed to the camera and thereby becoming less intrusive to the rehearsal process. Hopevalians also film themselves and the locally made short documentary *The Woorabinda Story: 7 years in exile* (2002) is an example of this. The documentary shows interviews with community elders who describe the community's forced evacuation to Woorabinda between 1942 - 1949, an aspect of Hopevale history which will be addressed in chapters five and six. People in Hopevale were also comfortable about being filmed. In my field diary I wrote the following text:

*Fieldtext, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2004*

*That evening, when I popped to the front area, old Walter was sitting there with Lindsay Nipper, clapsticks in hand. He asked me whether I had "my television" and if I wanted to record him and Lindsay playing and singing together with Clarence Bowen on the guitar. So off I went to fetch my [digital video] camera. I got another twenty minutes worth of Peter, Walter, Lindsay, Roger and Uncle Clarry making music.*

Reflexively, filming, and its uses in representing specific cultures and their musics, has its limitations:

The [film] images are described as if they were real. But there is a difference between a man playing a drum and pictures of a man playing a drum. The former is a natural event, the latter a mediated symbolic event. The former is once *observed and experienced*. The latter is a *structured selection* for the purposes of communicating something of that observed experience. (Feld, 1976: 298, emphasis added)

Thus, for the purposes of this thesis here, I will use film to provide visual examples of Hopevalian performativity through choral singing and story telling. This acknowledges the importance of story-telling and oral history in Hopevale as an Indigenous way of recording history. It also allows the reader to assess my approach to facilitating the Hopevale Community Choir. I acknowledge, however, that the footage is only a mediated representation of the experiential events. My ethnographically informed approach to facilitation will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Music facilitation as a ‘choir lady’: an ethnographically informed approach**

*Fieldtext, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005*

*Rehearsals Tuesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of March went well. We started off with my arrangement of the Good Friday hymn, requested by Pastor Tom ‘Were you there’ from Together in Song (1999) (TIS), hymn 345. The choir liked my arrangement and it proved not too difficult, despite there being rhythmic challenges when parts did not move in rhythmic unison.*

*The second hymn we sang was 388 from Together in Song (TIS) ‘Easter glory fills the sky’. Here I sang along with the alti mostly. Today I also noted that Auntie Violet is always the one who comes in ‘too early’ when singing. Is this definitely a personal trait or a performative one, like the organist June Pearson, who leads the singing by commencing vocal phrases on the organ just that little bit earlier? I must bear this in mind when analysing my recordings in future and when conducting the choir.*

*Fieldtext, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005*

*Interesting during my session was that the ladies were asking me how to pronounce the words in the Guugu Yimithirr (GY) hymnal as they were having trouble singing the words. I told them I was hardly the person to ask seeing as my knowledge of GY is limited, but they insisted that I should attempt the pronunciation and subsequently agreed with my efforts. The ladies also suggested that I should seek out Uncle Walter Jack for the translations of the hymn titles and make an effort to see Pastor George Rosendale at the beach for further advice. I am mystified as to why the choir should consider me to be so knowledgeable about their own language? Is it because they view me as their ‘expert’ who is all-knowing when it comes to choral performance? I sincerely hope not, but will make every effort to see Pastor George and have a yarn with Uncle Walter to increase my knowledge.*

*Uncle Walter Jack had already said something interesting today, with regards to the GY hymnal, Gunbu Guugu Yimithirri (1986). He mentioned that whilst he had taught John Haviland GY, some of the transliterations were incorrect as used by Haviland and Pastor Rosendale in the hymnal. Uncle Walter said that the three versions of GY: old coastal, old inland and new Hopevalian GY, had been mixed up in the hymnal. Uncle Walter disagrees with this approach and some of the transliterations.*



*Tuesday afternoon I was back in time for rehearsals with the choir at about 17:00. It was a slow start, but people gradually drifted in. We practised the Easter songs from TIS 'Were you there' and 'Easter Glory Fills the Sky' a lot for the benefit of Henry and Gertie, who have not attended rehearsals a lot. We also looked at 'Stay with me' from All Together OK, song 395. Again I noticed the difficulties that the choir has with songs where the harmonies incorporate dissonance, such as major seconds, or where different voice parts use different rhythmic values. The singers instinctively seem to want to harmonise in thirds, fifths and octaves and to want to move homo-rhythmically. Maybe it should not matter whether they sing the exact notes as written. Perhaps harmonising melodiously by ear might be just as 'correct'?*

*I also incorporated the warm-up round 'Jubilate Deo' from Doreen Rao's choir book We will Sing (1993). I initially had resolved to try and not alter the choir's timbre too much. However, according to feedback I have been receiving, the choral timbre has already changed. Seeing as the changes in choral sound observed by audience members was viewed as pleasant I suppose I should stop worrying about it. I have therefore decided to introduce open vowel sounds and warm-up exercises such as singing 'ni – neh – nah – noh – nou' on one note. I have also started pointing out the diphthongs in the choir's singing.*

## 2.1 The relationship between choral singing and identity, and choral facilitation techniques and philosophy

The relationship between choral singing and identity is a subject which as yet has not been explored extensively in ethnomusicological literature. An exception is Barz (2003) who looked at Lutheran choral singing in Tanzania. Barz decides to move away from the dichotomous relationships imposed on the formation of social identities in African cultures. Instead he finds that, for example, the performance and formation of rural and urban *kwaya* [choir] identities are interdependent, coterminous processes, as many urban *kwaya* members in Tanzania come from rural areas, but have moved to Dar es Salaam, where Barz conducted his fieldwork (2003: 191). *Kwaya* groups in Dar es Salaam form a microcosm for an idealised social system. Singers come together for the purpose of fulfilling "communally determined" needs and for activities such as prayer, counsel and advice, sports, finding a

marriage partner and of course singing. A *kwaya* in Dar es Salaam ‘performs’ community (Barz, 2003: 188-189). Barz also sees choir singing in the Tanzanian context as a way in which an emerging postcolonial spiritual identity is being facilitated. During the performance of *kwaya* the “subversion of the form and structure of outside musical traditions occurs”. Barz posits there is a transfer of emphasis to more African qualities, revealing “a complex and subtle disaffection to historical colonial domination” (2003: 189).

Other scholars have also written about choral singing practices, but not necessarily addressed the construction of identities through choral singing specifically. Niles (1996) has edited the writings of missionary Zahn, who worked closely with the Christian Jabêm people of Papua New Guinea. The Jabêm people have a strong tradition of congregational singing and brass ensemble playing. Midian (1999) examines the relationship between Indigenous music and choral singing, in the ministry of the United Church in the Duke of York Islands, but like Zahn, does not specifically explore the constructions of Indigenous identities through choral performance.

In Europe, choral educationalist Durrant (2005) explores the influence of choral singing on the construction of identities from a more Western, musicological perspective. He investigates how choral activity can shape identities in Sweden and Finland. Durrant researched choirs which perform folk songs and Lutheran hymns alongside other repertoire. Durrant discovered that choristers in Sweden and Finland felt that singing traditional folksongs in their own language, commissioning and performing songs by modern national composers and using stylised, culturally specific movement strengthened their identities.

Durrant records how rehearsal techniques and foci varied between Sweden and Finland, and how singers referred to their perceived, specifically national way of rehearsing and performing as helping to create a sense of identity (2005: 93-96). These national identities through choral performance were strengthened and contrasted against

homogenisation and globalisation in many other areas of life. This emphasis on, and strengthening of, a local and national identity through choral singing is seen as being preferable to creating a more globalised choral identity (2005: 94, 96). Durrant also shows how gendered identities can be shaped and performed through choral music-making. He draws on interviews with young Finnish men who asserted that the choral medium was a forum where they could express themselves emotionally. This is in contrast to more everyday social settings in Finland where men do not usually demonstrate overt expressions of emotion (2005: 93).

Gendered identities and gendered differences between attitudes toward choral singing and performance in children in the United States of America are documented by Mizener (1993), who records that several factors are related to attitudes toward music and singing generally. These factors include grade level in school and gender. Positive attitudes toward musical activities were found to decline as children moved to higher grades in school. It was also found that girls tended to have a more positive attitude overall towards singing and music making than boys.

Mizener's study indicated that the participating North American students believed singing was not an activity physically better suited to either gender. Boys, however, were less likely to participate in choral singing, because contemporary North American society encourages boys to become athletes, not singers (1993: 241). Mizener advocates, among other things, the use of male role models in vocal classroom activities and educating young boys about their changing voices in order to help them develop and maintain positive attitudes towards choral singing (1993: 241 – 243).

Music psychology studies have also indicated that group singing can positively influence feelings of trust and willingness to co-operate with others (Anshel and Kipper 1988). Anshel and Kipper discovered that trust was enhanced among people participating in

group singing. Increased co-operation was related to the level of active participation in the singing group rather than to whether the activity involved music per se. The co-operation levels of those groups who were involved in group singing were significantly higher than for those groups who merely listened to music (1988:151). Trust and co-operativeness can build feelings of belonging and wellbeing in an ensemble and community, thus helping in the positive construction of identities.

Durrant and Himonides (1998) look at why people sing together in a choir. They conclude that people do so because choral singing offers sustained enjoyment. In their case study on a choral society in London the authors found that:

Opinion remains highly *unscientific* and answers possibly unconvincing [as to why people want to sing together]. Sometimes it is practically impossible to analyse and describe a process that is so strongly involved with the human psyche, so that the only possible way to reach an answer is to understand the product...most of all the pure fun that all these people [the singers] are having...(1998: 69)

According to Durrant and Himinonides the enjoyment evident from singer-interaction whilst rehearsing and performing “is the ultimate explanation and truth” as to why people sing together (1998: 69). What they are suggesting therefore, is that the answer to their question is one experiential and performative in nature and difficult to measure quantitatively.

The research above indicates that choral singing can play an important part in shaping people’s identities and that singing in a choir can have beneficial effects on a person’s wellbeing. The effect it can have is also influenced by social factors such as nationality, age and gender. Durrant also suggests that the extent to which choral singing has a positive effect is strongly dependent on a conductor’s method of facilitation and that a choral facilitator therefore has a responsibility towards the singers he/ she works with.

As conductors, we have the responsibility to give singers in our choirs the opportunities for personal and collective development rather than concentrating on correcting, admonishing and controlling them. This requires considered professional preparation, for it is through singing that

we shape who we are personally, culturally and nationally. (Durrant, 2005: 97)

Because choral conducting can be an important way in which identities are constructed, I believe that researchers like myself should be held fully accountable for their methodology and that facilitation approaches should be transparent and available for scrutiny. In this chapter therefore, I discuss my personal approach to conducting, using a DVD which presents sections of a rehearsal I undertook with the choir. I analyse these sections which are complemented by the fieldtext at the beginning of this chapter.

The fieldtext describes some of the rehearsal experiences I had with the Hopevale Community Choir. The sections used, address some of the questions I faced when conducting the choir, such as whether to encourage the choir to sing the songs as written in the score, whether to introduce Bel Canto vocal exercises and focus on Italianate vowel-sounds and how to resolve linguistic issues where both the choir and myself were uncertain about the pronunciation of Guugu Yimithirr words.

None of these questions had been addressed in my training as a music facilitator. To prepare myself for the task of facilitating a choir I took a module in choral conducting at Roehampton University and completed the course with excellent results. During my choral conducting course it was suggested that I should reference various sources, such as: Rao's text (1993) which focuses on classroom choral education, beating time, the tonic sol-fa system and pitching; Kaplan's *Choral Conducting* (1985) with sections on conducting patterns, voice, score, warm-up and intonation, diction, discipline, chorus and accompaniment and the series *Voiceworks* (Hunt, 2001 and Stannard, 2003).

All texts assume that the choral conductor is operating in a Western classical setting, or least in an environment where diatonic harmony is the norm and there is a shared set of performance conventions which can be used as the basis to determine what is aesthetically

acceptable and what is not. The texts assume that the singers are readers of music or if not, could be taught the tonic sol-fa system. The books take for granted that what is written in a musical score must be reflected in the choral performance. None of the above texts deal in great depth with the experiential side of conducting by addressing the influence a choral conductor can have on, for example, the flow of a rehearsal, or the potentially musically and socially diverse backgrounds of choir members and the effects this has on the rehearsal structure and experience.

One text which did offer some guidance in these areas was Durrant's work *Choral Conducting: Philosophy and Practice* (2003). Durrant presents his ethos on choral conducting, writing from a community music-making perspective. His text assumes that communities are socially diverse and therefore specific guidelines as to what constitutes 'good practice' are unhelpful. His theoretical model is defined broadly to suit this diversity of community music-making. Durrant also addresses the importance of the conductor in the experiential, physical sense and offers suggestions as to how he/ she might be able to enhance the rehearsal experience. He posits a process of good conducting and its outcomes might follow this path:

- Conductor creates engaging, non-threatening environment
- Singers seek sensory input and,
- Gain mastery over music
- Deep pleasure sensations develop
- Self-esteem is enhanced (2003: 21)

Durrant also writes on the importance of body language, and the necessity of feedback and interactive learning. These are all part of his belief that:

- conducting gestures and patterns are directly related to vocal outcomes and the music's expressive character;
- our whole communication [as conductors], including the language we use in rehearsals can have a profound effect on singers' attitudes and responses to music and to themselves;
- the physical and mental well-being of the conductor plays its part in the well-being of the musical performance or the outcome of a rehearsal (2003: 10)

Durrant (2003: 91-102) further sub-divides his model into several broad areas which can be selectively summarised as:

#### 1. Philosophical principles underpinning the role of conductor/ facilitator:

- A good knowledge of choral repertoire which is appropriate for the level of the singers in respect to age, abilities, vocal needs and musical styles.
- A knowledge of the human voice, including physiology and psychology which are related to vocal health and production.
- An image of the music prior to rehearsal to determine and aim for aesthetic goals.
- An understanding of the conductor's role as a responsible facilitator and promoter of appropriate musical learning.

#### 2. Musical-technical skills:

- Appropriate aural and error detection skills in areas of, for example, rhythm, pitching, language and balance.
- The ability to give clear intentions of tempo, dynamics and phrasing, through appropriate gesture.

- The ability to demonstrate accurately and musically. This may include singing or playing pitches/ rhythms, demonstrating tonal quality and intonation.
- The recognition of the importance of warming up the voices and delivering strategies appropriate for the group.
- Strategies for establishing the character of the music at the earliest opportunity, in order not to put undue emphasis on technical considerations at the expense of the music's expressive quality.

### 3. Interpersonal skills:

- The capacity to create a positive, non-threatening environment incorporating encouragement, praise, realism and high-quality feedback.
- The capacity to communicate clearly and unambiguously.
- The desire to encourage healthy singing.
- The capacity to enable choral and vocal development.
- The ability to make singers feel confident and comfortable.
- The skill to pace rehearsals effectively.
- The expectation of the highest standard possible by setting appropriate goals for the group.

Durrant's model is very useful because it always stipulates that the facilitator should select 'appropriate' models, goals and ways to resolve performative issues. In the context of this thesis I will interpret this to mean that the model need not necessarily be based on Westernised, classically oriented aesthetical and performative approaches and concepts. During my rehearsals with the choir in Hopevale I used the technical skills gained through my choral conducting course in conjunction with Durrant's broader philosophical model. I



combined these with the personal realisation that whilst I had come to facilitate the choir, the singers would also be facilitating my own performative learning, which I would incorporate into my rehearsal strategies. My performative learning did not, as it transpired, result from the choir's deliberate attempts at inducting me into their performative traditions. Instead the singers viewed me as 'an expert' or in their words 'a choir leader'. Nevertheless, I felt that to make the musical experiences more meaningful and enjoyable I had to take on board some of the local performance aesthetics and to come to know and understand the singers as musicking individuals performing as a group.

This chapter continues with a reflexive description of a rehearsal filmed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2005 in St John's church, Hopevale. Sections of this rehearsal accompany this thesis on DVD. The sections are in chronological order, a timeline for which is provided in the table below. I have selected parts of the rehearsal which I feel demonstrate my approach to choral conducting best and are relevant to the outcomes of the applied research undertaken.

## 2.2 A rehearsal in context

DVD 1: Hopevale Community Choir Rehearsal 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Performers:

Sopranis: Mrs Daisy Hamlot, Mrs Marie Gibson, Mrs Myrtle Bambie, Mrs Phylomena Naylor,  
Mrs Ella Woibo.

Alti: Mrs Violet Cobus, Mrs Gertie Deeral, Mrs Pamela Kemp, Mrs Maureen Wallace, Mrs  
Mavis Yoren, Mrs Dora Deemal.

Bass: Mr Henry Deeral

Facilitator: Ms Muriel E. Swijghuisen Reigersberg

Music used: *Together in Song* (1999) (TIS), *All Together OK* (1996) (ATOK), *Gunbu Guugu Yimithirri* (1986) (GY). (See appendix A and below for text and music to these songs)

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Time Line (approx)</b>
1	Introduction	0 – 00:05:28
2 (Image)	St John's Church, Hopevale, Northern Queensland, Australia 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2004.	00:05:29 – 00:10: 32
3	Physical warm-ups: upper body stretching; loosening of neck and shoulder massages.	00:10:33 – 03:08:80
4	Vocal warm-ups: humming; sirening; scales and 'Hopevale est bella'.	03:08:81 – 06:11:05
5	Teaching by rote: 'Sit at the Welcome Table'.	06:11:06 – 14:05:30
6	'Nhayun bubu yindu wunana': 'In the sweet by and by' sung in Guugu Yimithirr (GY 88).	14:05:31 – 18:20:08
7	'Ngalan Gadaayga': 'King of Creation' sung in Guugu Yimithirr (GY 75) led by Violet Cobus.	18:20:09 – 24:18:88
8	'Were you there when they crucified my Lord' (TIS 345): breathing exercises; 'We are marching in the light of God' (ATOK 409).	24:18:89 – 32:32:64
9	'We are marching in the light of God' (ATOK 409) with clapping and swaying.	32:32:65 – 33:50:16
10	'Jesus remember me' (ATOK 387) and 'Stay with me' (ATOK 395): a focus on dissonance and	32:50:17 – 42:36:64

	dynamics.	
11	'Halle, halle, halle' (ATOK 319): explanations of conducting gestures and dynamics.	42:36:65 – 45:38:80
12 (Image)	Hopevale and Rapeta Station 5 <sup>th</sup> March 2005	45:38:81 – 45:43:81
13 (Image)	'Coloured Sands' 28 <sup>th</sup> May 2005	45:43:82 – 45:48:82
14 (Image)	'The beach' 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2005	45:48:83 – 45:53:83
15	Credits (see above details)	45:53:84 – 46:38:24

**Figure 2.1: DVD Timeline and details of Hopevale Community Choir Rehearsal, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005.**

The rehearsal context:

When this rehearsal was filmed the choir had been rehearsing for several months, since October 2004. The fieldtext excerpts at the start of the thesis and this chapter therefore pre-date this event. The rehearsal was aimed at offering the singers a run-through of the repertoire which had been learnt until then for their tour through Northern Queensland. The tour was due to start two days later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2005.

By April 2005 the choir had already performed publicly for diverse audiences on several occasions, such as at the Carols by Candlelight service in Cooktown in December 2004, the Cooktown Tsunami fundraising event in February 2005, International Women's Day in March 2005 at the Lion's Den Pub near Wujal Wujal Aboriginal community and during church services and funerals in Hopevale itself. Their singing had been acknowledged and complimented in the local newspaper the *Hopevale Milbi* as well as the *Cooktown Local News*. On the same day of the rehearsal the choir had received Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC, 2005) radio coverage on the Pat Morrish Morning Show. The show had advertised the choir's upcoming tour. Through these performances, frequent rehearsals, the encouragement, media coverage and audience compliments the choir at this stage had become

musically confident and sounded wonderful. As can be seen from the DVD they also greatly enjoyed their singing.

The duration of this rehearsal, an hour and a half, was longer than the choir's normal rehearsals which would typically last about an hour and would take place twice a week in St John's church. Only approximately half of the rehearsal is offered on the DVD. The singers who can be seen to participate in this rehearsal are all those who went on tour and the DVD shows the choir at its largest.

What must be remembered when watching and assessing the excerpts presented here, is that I was trained in the Italianate Bel Canto style, which, if taught well, promotes vocal health. The Bel Canto technique has allowed me to sing semi-professionally in London and I have always been in good vocal health. Performatively and experientially it is the technique I am most familiar with and feel qualified to teach. This is not to say that I discount all other methods of vocal learning or ways of maintaining vocal wellbeing, but as I have no in-depth knowledge of other methods I felt unqualified to teach them. Also, the singers enjoyed the Bel Canto exercises I introduced so I opted to fully incorporate them.

I will now discuss the rehearsal excerpts presented and relate them back to Durrant's model, incorporating my ethnographically informed approach to music facilitation. The first rehearsal item on the DVD is item 3. This is a physical warm-up with the singers where I encourage them to stretch themselves, offer some shoulder massages to each other and to loosen their necks. This is in line with Durrant's belief that a facilitator must be familiar with a singer's physiology and psychology which are related to vocal health. To a singer, the body with its vocal apparatus is the instrument. This instrument's performance is influenced by personal psychology and emotional circumstances as well as general physical wellbeing. Emotional and physical tension can often hamper vocal performance and impede on musical

learning. This consequently decreases wellbeing and promotes a lower perception of self.

Warming up and relaxing the body, the voice and the mind, is therefore very important.

The Bel Canto technique also maintains that posture is very important in facilitating healthy singing. Ideally, the singer should relax the shoulders and neck, stand upright, but not tense, arms loosely by the side of the body, feet a shoulder width apart. The head should be held level, not with the chin on the chest when singing lower notes or straining upwards on higher notes and the shoulders should not be slouched. This posture allows for a maximised breath intake and places little stress on the vocal chords. To promote this posture, during warm-ups singers should be made aware of their physical selves and aim to relax, particularly the shoulders and neck areas. This is why I encouraged the singers to stretch. Due to the average age in choir being mid-60s, I ask the singers to stretch slowly. The choir's average age also meant that I asked them to stand less than I would have done if the singers were younger. The shoulder massage in particular, was a group favourite. On the DVD exclamations can be heard such as 'this is good' and laughter.

The next item, number 4, shows some of the vocal warm-ups the choir did. Singing should be viewed as vocal athletics and like any athlete the singer should start gently, by easing his or her way into the activity. This approach Durrant lists under musical-technical skills where he stipulates that the facilitator must recognise the importance of warming up the voices and delivering strategies appropriate to the group. In the rehearsal I therefore first asked the choir to hum on a note in the middle of their vocal range. This I followed by some sirening, where gradually the voice is able to open up and progressively widen its range going both higher and lower, using both the lower vocal range or 'chest voice' and the upper vocal range or 'head voice'. During the sirening the choir had to watch my hand as it went up and down in an undulating movement, promoting mental alertness and watchfulness. The scales which followed added words to the exercise which encouraged articulation.

The last exercise, 'Hopevale est bella' or 'Hopevale is beautiful' is a variation of this scalar exercise, where more words are added. The warm-up exercise is usually sung to the words 'Roma est bella'. These words encourage singers to roll their letter 'R' whilst singing the scales. The exaggerated rolling of 'R's' in the Bel Canto technique is encouraged because it aids articulation and promotes communication of words to audiences. However, I realised Rome or even Europe were not places with which the singers were familiar, so I opted to change the words to 'Hopevale est bella'. As can be seen from the DVD the singers responded by becoming more engaged with the warm-up. I also added some arm movements, stereotypically associated with Southern Europeans to emphasise the word 'bella' to encourage the choir to articulate the letter 'B' and to move their bodies. This encouraged the singers to remain aware of their physical being as singers. During the exercises I aimed to keep my hand movements fluid and rotating because short, sharp movements would have encouraged the singers to sing staccato or to halt the flow of the breath, which was not desirable for this exercise. Throughout the warm-up I led the choir by singing along with them.

The next item, number 5, further demonstrates my teaching and leading by rote. For this rehearsal I opted to teach the choir a new song: 'Sit at the welcome table', an African American gospel song which I learnt by rote myself. The purpose of teaching the choir a new song was that I now wanted to focus their minds on singing. It was also a song which I wanted to use to encourage audience participation and choir and audience interaction whilst on tour.

To perform the song the choir divides into three groups which each have responsibility for one particular set of words. In a performance, choir members would mix with the audience and teach the audience members the song whilst I facilitated the singing. The song itself is not difficult to learn. The three verses rely on the repetition of nearly the same text four times. The words are:

**Verse one:** I'm gonna sit at the welcome table

I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days hallelujah

I'm gonna sit at the welcome table

Sit at the welcome table one of these days.

**Verse two:** I'm gonna see my lovin' Saviour

**Verse three:** I'm gonna drink that milk and honey (one of these days)

The three verses are first sung individually by all singers. Once this has been accomplished the words after 'I'm gonna' are repeated as the facilitator points to the choir section which has the responsibility for a particular set of words, as demonstrated on the DVD. At the end of the song all singers come together again on the phrase 'one of these days'.

On the DVD it is clear the melody posed no problems for the choir. They learnt it very quickly, some singing along after I had sung the song through just once. More challenging were the syncopated rhythms and the second line in a verse. The second line is best sung in one breath to keep the tempo steady. This is difficult, however, if sung at a slower pace. As can be seen I initially start singing quite fast when demonstrating the song, but when actively engaging in teaching the choir I slow down the pace so that the singers can pick up the words and melody as well as the rhythm. This means, however, the second phrase is more difficult to perform in one breath.

During the rehearsal of this song and others, I also moved to the music by clapping, swaying and when necessary, indicating to the choir when they were required to sing their parts. When I was taught the song previously, clapping and swaying had been encouraged by our conductor because it was in keeping with the Afro-Caribbean performance tradition from which he came. I therefore physically demonstrated this to the choir. At this stage of the

rehearsal I did not insist that they should follow as it is not part of the Hopevale performance tradition and some members felt slightly uncomfortable incorporating too much movement into their performance. Later in the rehearsal I do ask the singers to participate in the movements, but with the aim of re-invigorating the performative energy. As can be seen from the footage, some choir members did sway and clap their hands during the rehearsal, but the choir did not move as a unified group physically.

‘Sit at the welcome table’ was subsequently performed on various occasions and became a choir favourite which they also spontaneously sang at social gatherings and local ‘sing-alongs’. When the choir performed the song during concerts amidst the congregation I found that audience members were more inclined to speak to choir members afterwards and to find out more about the choir members’ social backgrounds and Christian faith. This facilitated cross-cultural education and understanding and allowed performers to express their own views unmitigated by my involvement after the concert had finished. It was an exceptionally effective way of breaking down the socially constructed, performative boundaries of space and time between audience and performer, by moving the choir into the audience. Choir members enjoyed meeting the audience and receiving compliments from them. The singers also welcomed the shared Christian fellowship afforded by the audience and choir interaction. The song and its performance as an audience engagement piece therefore helped promote the positive social construction of an Aboriginal identity in a performative way.

Items six and seven are ‘Nhayun bubu yindu wunana’: ‘In the sweet by and by’ sung in Guugu Yimithirr and ‘Ngalan Gadaayga’: ‘King of Creation’ sung in Guugu Yimithirr led by Violet Cobus. In terms of the dialectic approach to musical facilitation the song ‘King of Creation’ and this rehearsal are particularly significant. The first rendition of the song on the DVD was filmed after the choir had asked me whether they could perform this song, because



it was an old favourite and they enjoyed singing it. They requested that I should listen to them sing the hymn first, which I did that evening. After the rendition of the first verse they stop and I comment that the singing has given me ‘goose bumps’ and that Uncle Henry’s bass line is particularly beautiful. I happily accept ‘King of Creation’ as part of the repertoire and immediately decide that I will use the hymn as a vehicle to promote choral autonomy and leadership, because it was the choir who had suggested the song be performed. Thus the rehearsal’s development and the choir’s positive actions determined future performance strategies and repertoire.

During both Guugu Yimithirr songs I do not actively conduct the choir. By that time I had come to feel that I had to start preparing the singers for my departure and to allow them to introduce their own appropriate ways of leading the ensemble by starting and ending songs themselves and finding ways of harmonising songs without necessarily relying on me. I decided this transition of shared leadership could be done through the performance of songs with which the choir was intimately familiar and had learnt from an early age. On the DVD it is Auntie Violet Cobus who leads the singing by beginning the song. The choir finishes after the last verse has been sung. The harmonies for ‘King of Creation’ were learnt previously and can be heard clearly on the DVD, especially the bass line sung by Uncle Henry Deeral comes through well. During the song the choir seems to almost stop singing towards the end of the second verse of ‘King of Creation’. On the DVD I hear myself saying ‘Too high maybe?’ wondering whether the starting pitch set by Auntie Violet was too high and the singers were struggling to maintain the pitch.

As it transpires, however, the words rather than the pitch were causing the difficulty. The choir was unable to agree on the pronunciation of the text in time with the music. On the DVD the singers ask me what to do about it, but I reply that the song is their suggestion, and that they must collaborate and work it out themselves, not in the least because my Guugu

Yimithirr is not of a standard where I am able to authoritatively comment on the correct pronunciation of words. Auntie Dora Deemal and Auntie Violet Cobus step in to clarify the pronunciation and Auntie Daisy Hamlot (not in the frame, but who can be heard speaking) offers a translation into English of the text's meaning. The choir thus resolves the problem without my intervention.

During the song 'In the sweet by and by' I actively sing along with some of the harmonies and suggest additional phrases, but do not conduct the choir or refer to a musical score. Some singing in harmony can be heard during the rendition of the song. This is not a harmony line which I had taught the singers, but which they added themselves. At the end of the song I comment that the alti need to have courage because they are harmonising the melody beautifully, but are singing softly because they are uncertain. It is Auntie Mavis Yoren, sitting far right, who nods. Auntie Mavis Yoren was particularly good at harmonising melodies by ear without having been taught the harmony and was a leader in her own right, just as Auntie Violet Cobus was the person the choir turned to for the beginning of songs. It was through encouraging the choir to harmonise by ear without emphasising a 'right' way of singing, and by encouraging internal problem resolution, that I hoped the singers would develop the performative confidence which would allow them to lead themselves after my departure, by being able to find locally appropriate ways to rehearse. I thus made the comment at the rehearsal after 'King of Creation' that during the performance of these songs "I might step back", to allow the choir its autonomy.

The DVD shows how the choir, when performing songs in Guugu Yimithirr without my intervention, would use a very slow tempo and use many glissandi. Before every musical phrase the time taken to breathe would be, in Western classical terms, too long, thus gradually slowing down the tempo even further. Both the glissandi and the slow tempo were performative features which I opted not to change for the choir-led Guugu Yimithirr songs,

because they form an intimate part of the Hopevalian performance tradition. Equally, as with other songs, the vocal timbre used by the singers has a very forward, nasal quality which is created through the use of the 'head voice' or upper vocal register, by placing the vocal resonance in the facial mask. This timbre is not considered to be desirable in the Bel Canto style, but again I opted not to interfere as the choir still sounded lovely, something which I tell them during the rehearsal.

As a facilitator my approach involved regularly encouraging singers. This I did not just do during rehearsals, but also in interviews, discussions and during daily life. The encouragement and the compliments were well received by the singers. This positive feedback is also in keeping with Durrant's approach which suggests facilitators should create non-threatening, positive rehearsal environments. Due to my close relationship with the singers and my residence in Hopevale, I offered encouragement and support for unmusical matters as well. As a result, the boundaries between the rehearsal setting and other daily activities became less distinct.

During the rehearsal I used encouragement combined with the Guugu Yimithirr songs and their specific rendition by the choir, to positively influence and facilitate Indigenous choral leadership. This allowed the choir to present audiences outside Hopevale with examples of an Indigenous performance aesthetic. I also tried to promote internal problem resolution in the choir through asking the singers to find a solution to the linguistic challenge themselves rather than turning to me. This I hoped would create confidence, pride and enjoyment through leadership, thereby positively influencing individual constructs of Indigenous identities through performance. Equally, at a later date Indigenously led performances for audiences outside Hopevale would encourage the listeners to view the choir as a confident Aboriginal group which could perform independently and was not dictated by Westernised performative

traditions. The performance of Guugu Yimithirr songs demonstrated that Hopevalians have a different, but equally enjoyable performance aesthetic.

Item eight on the DVD is the rehearsal of 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord', some breathing exercises and the rehearsal of 'We are marching in the light of God'. The first song is a passion hymn sung around Easter and Pentecost. It is based on an African-American spiritual. The melody sung by the choir on the DVD is the one printed in the ecumenical hymnal *Together in Song* (1999) hymn number 345, an arrangement by F.B. Westbrook. The specific alto part for the song as heard on the DVD is an alternative arrangement I made for the choir, because the harmony line offered for this hymn, in TIS used large, unusual intervals which I had found previously, were difficult to pitch for the alti. The tessitura was also awkward using very low notes for both alti and soprani in various sections. It is unusual for alti to regularly sing an 'F' below middle 'C' for example. A reproduction of the TIS version can be seen below, taken from the TIS harmony version, where the hymn is numbered 261.

WERE YOU THERE 10 10.14 10

Negro spiritual melody  
arr. Francis Brotherton Westbrook 1903-75

were you there?

when they cru-ci-fied my

Lord? O some-times it cau-ses me to

trem-ble, trem-ble, trem-ble;

**Figure 2.2: Were you there, arrangement by F. Westbrook (1903-75), reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved**

I re-arranged the hymn for the Hopevale Community Choir using more major thirds, smaller intervals and step-wise progressions which significantly helped the songs' performance, because the singers could harmonise it more comfortably. My arrangement can be seen below:

Were you there.

African-American  
spiritual

$\text{♩} = 44-54$

were you there when they cru ci fied my Lo rd, where you there when they

cru ci fied my Lo rd oh h some times it cau se me to

trem ble trem ble trem ble, where you there when they cru ci fied my word

**Figure 2.3** African-American spiritual ‘Were you there (when they crucified my Lord)’. Text of first verse included. Melody line as printed in *Together in Song* (1999), hymn 345. Alto part arranged by Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg for Hopevale Community Choir, 2005.

This is another example of how I allowed the performers’ musicality to dictate what was being rehearsed and how. Because I wanted the singers to gain confidence through performance, I did not offer them materials which they did not enjoy singing, or use materials which were inappropriate for the skills of the group. As with the song ‘Were you there when they crucified my Lord’ this sometimes meant having to re-arrange harmony parts. Other songs I re-arranged included ‘There’s a Spirit in the air’, hymn 414 in TIS. As Durrant suggests a facilitator must make singers feel comfortable and confident, and must have a good knowledge of choral repertoire which is appropriate for the level of the singers, in respect to age, abilities and vocal needs, because this promotes enjoyment, enhances the learning experience and helps improve self-confidence.

During the rehearsal of ‘Were you there when they crucified my Lord’ I walk around to the camera and towards the back of the church to listen to the choir from a distance, to check the overall ensemble balance and to change the camera angle. Whilst walking I also click my fingers to help the choir keep a steady pulse because the tempo is gradually decreasing. This is because the choir is taking a long time to breathe between phrases. This

long intake of breath is not what the Bel Canto technique calls 'musical breathing'. Musical breathing entails tailoring the time it takes to breathe according to the tempo and character of the music. This means that fast songs require rapid intakes of breath, whereas slower songs allow singers to take more time to breathe between phrases. In this particular instance the choir is not 'breathing musically', causing the tempo to decrease and the vocal pitch to drop. These aesthetic aspects I decide to change and monitor on this occasion, because the slow breathing in the rehearsal is changing the character of the song and the steady drop in pitch could be unpleasant to listen to for audiences. Because the song is one I have newly introduced rather than one which was already frequently performed like the Guugu Yimithirr songs, I opt to emphasise this aesthetic aspect and to do some short breathing exercises at the end of the song to make singers aware of their breathing.

When breathing in, the Bel Canto technique stipulates that singers should not raise their shoulders or lift the head or to take too many shallow breaths using only the upper part of the lungs, as this creates strain on the vocal chords, impedes vocal production and causes singers to run out of breath too quickly. Strain on the vocal chords is not conducive to vocal health and lack of breath can cause singers to sing flat, or to breathe in places which break up the aesthetic flow of a song and make it sound too fragmented. Instead, the Bel Canto school recommends that singers breathe using their full lung capacity, by filling their lungs from the bottom up, using the expansion and contraction of their diaphragms to control breath-intake and release whilst singing. Heads and shoulders should remain level when taking in air. I demonstrate this to the choir at the rehearsal. This is not seen on the DVD, but what can be viewed is the singers replicating my actions and following instructions. I also demonstrate what not to do and allow the singers to copy my actions once, emphasising this is incorrect technique.

The next song we rehearse is 'Marching in the light of God' from the song collection *All Together OK* (1996) (ATOK), number 409, a Christian song from South Africa. I remind the choir of the African words of the song first, as printed in ATOK. The song is performed without music because the words were repetitive and the main interest of the song lies in its melody and rhythm. The choir performed this song singing it both in English and in the African language. After refreshing the words in the minds of the singers I remind the alto of their important rhythmical variation to the soprano, because it is the alto line which creates the musical interest with its driving rhythm (see appendix A for the music). My approach was what Durrant describes as developing strategies for establishing the character of the music at the earliest opportunity. Reminding the choir of the aesthetic character of the music before a song was rehearsed is one way in which I did this. Another was through adding extra movement and aural indicators. The choir, for example, starts by singing at a rather slow pace, which is not steady. I therefore very quickly decide to try and maintain the pulse by clicking my fingers and stamping my foot on the floor. Pamela Kemp responds to my indicators by moving her body forwards when her alto line moves brusquely. Gradually some singers begin to clap like Auntie Ella Woibo and sway, like Auntie Daisy Hamlot. As a result the tempo remains steadier.

During of rehearsal of this particular song I would frequently dance and move to encourage the choir to keep a lively pulse. In the ninth item on the DVD, I introduce some clapping and swaying to the singers in one of our final renditions of this song to liven up the pace of the rehearsal. By this time the choir had been rehearsing for a while and there had been a few yawns. Pamela Kemp had looked at her watch. I had noticed this and decided some physical movement might focus the singers' minds again. Durrant notes that it is important for a facilitator to pace rehearsals effectively.



There are no hard and fast rules as to how a facilitator might achieve an effective rehearsal pace and much depends on singer-feedback. A facilitator should heed physical indicators such as yawns, inattentive facial expressions or similar gestures. These gestures are in effect non-verbal feedback which indicates that the rehearsal focus has to change to ensure that the singers remain interested. A change of rehearsal focus ensures that the best possible outcomes for the ensemble are achieved whilst rehearsal efficacy is maximised. One suggested model for pacing a rehearsal which I used was proposed to me by Therees Hibbard during my choral conducting training:

1. Warming –up and a preview of the rehearsal: This should prepare singers mentally, physically, vocally, emotionally, psychologically, (10% of the rehearsal time).
2. Transition repertoire sung, such as a canon, a round, a newly learnt short song, or a familiar song. This should be aimed at energising the singers and focussing concentration further, (10% of the rehearsal time).
3. Rehearsing repertoire: Taking part and putting back together musical material of difficult material, introducing new music. This is the most demanding and focussed part of the rehearsal, (30% of the rehearsal time).
4. Break/ announcements
5. Contrasting repertoire: Change in focus in tempo, language, historical period, a move away from materials practiced in section before the break, (30% of the rehearsal time).
6. End rehearsal: Sing through what has been accomplished during the course of the rehearsal or a familiar, well-liked song, (20% of the rehearsal time).

I aimed to loosely adhere to this model, because many enjoyable rehearsals which I attended myself as a member of a chorus approximately followed this model. When I put it into

practice it also worked well with the Hopevale choir. As can be seen from the DVD the singers enjoyed the rehearsals and there was much laughter and some joking amongst choir members.

The rehearsal of 'We are marching in the light of God' also provides an example of what Durrant describes as the ability to give clear intentions of tempo, dynamics and phrasing through appropriate gesture. For this song I would use a specific arm movement as a conducting gesture to indicate the soprano's vocal leap of a fifth after a five beat held note. This movement was a great, arch-like sweeping motion with the arm. Mrs Pamela Kemp can be seen to imitate it on the DVD excerpt whilst explaining to Auntie Daisy Hamlet when to change notes after five beats. The conducting gesture, I decided, had to be grand as well as fluid, to encourage a smooth vocal leap in the singing and to help the singers change notes at the right time, because the syncopated rhythms were proving tricky for the soprani. The gesture helped the choir sing the song effectively. As a conducting movement it became widely imitated and a source of great amusement to audiences and choir members alike.

The tenth excerpt on the DVD shows the choir practising 'Jesus remember me' and 'Stay with me' from ATOK 387 and 395 (see appendix A). During these songs there is a focus on the use of dissonance and dynamics. Both songs are very short: 'Jesus remember me' is eight bars in length and 'Stay with me' six bars. Both songs have slow tempo indications of a crotchet at 69 and 72 respectively. The melodic interest of 'Stay with me' lies in the dissonant major seconds in the first and second bars, held for two beats in total on both occasions. Both parts move in rhythmic unison until the final bar. 'Jesus remember me' has a straight forward melodic line with no dissonance. The vocal parts also move in rhythmic unison. The text of both songs is biblical. 'Stay with me' uses words from Matthew 26:38, 41, the words being: 'Stay with me. Remain here with me. Watching and praying.' 'Jesus remember me' uses a text from Luke 23:42: 'Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom'. Due to the

briefness of both tunes, the absence of rhythmic variation and short text, the musical interest of the songs had to be created from the melodic dissonance and dynamic variations. When conducting both songs during the rehearsal, therefore, I focus on varying the dynamics at every repetition.

As can be seen from the DVD the choir found it difficult to sing the dissonant major seconds in 'Stay with me'. They were accustomed to singing in thirds when harmonising. At the start of the song, therefore, it is possible to hear a choir member amongst the alti wanting to sing in thirds. I point this out to them and 'correct' it, because of the aforementioned aesthetic importance of dissonance in creating musical interest. I felt that it would be musically important for the singers to sing the seconds as written. In 'Stay with me' I further try to shape the melody by singing the first occurrence of the phrase 'watching and praying' slightly louder than the second, which the vocal leap in the soprano melody seems to suggest. I demonstrate this through example at the start of the item on the DVD, but do not pursue the matter too doggedly because I feel it is too small a detail and see the singers are becoming tired and restless. I felt that at this stage in the rehearsal the expressiveness of the music was adequately addressed through focussing on the dynamics of one repetition of the song. When on tour, I decided not to perform 'Stay with me' too often as it clearly was not a choir favourite.

Attention is also paid to dynamics in the next item 'Halle, halle, halle' ATOK 319, a Christian song from the Caribbean. The dynamic variation adds to the musical interest of the song because the words are very simple: 'Halle, halle, hallelujah' sung four times. The tempo is faster, with a crotchet at 102. Rhythmically the song allows the alti to drive the soprani towards the repetition of the melody in their last bar, but for the most part the singers move in rhythmic unison. During the rehearsal I ask the choir to stand, clap and sway which they do and seem to enjoy. 'Halle, halle, halle' is an example of how a facilitator can take apart and

piece together, musical items for rehearsal, by isolating musical elements separately and rehearsing these. I first ask the choir to perform the song by only singing the soprano line. The second time the harmony is added after which I add the dynamic variations.

### 2.3 Ethnographically informed music facilitation and 'Five Orientations'

The above rehearsal described and presented is but one of many the choir had. Each session varied depending on who attended and when it was held. At the first rehearsals attendance was low and throughout my period in Hopevale attendance numbers fluctuated, influenced by factors such as family commitments, holiday seasons and fishing opportunities, or activities being organised at the Hopevale Culture Centre. As the choir grew, so did its repertoire.

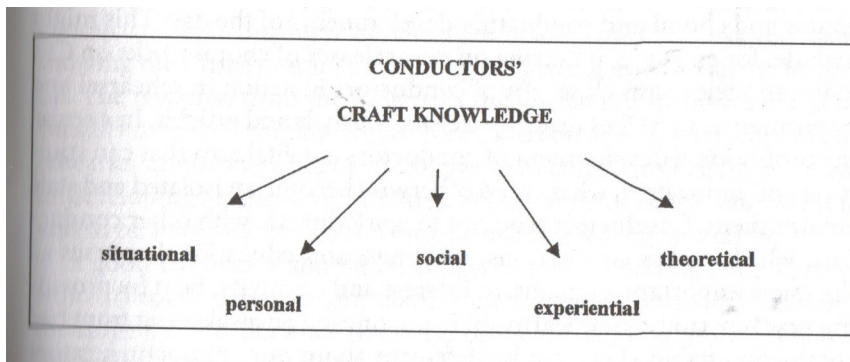
The example included on the DVD is not meant to describe a definitive way of conducting in an ethnographically sensitive manner. The way in which I responded to the singers and they to me was context-sensitive and locally specific, and therefore cannot be replicated. Ethnographically informed musical facilitation is different to Western choral facilitation in that it incorporates and accepts alternative, non-European perceptions about what choral music-making and performance entails. An ethnographically informed approach advocates the use of a methodology which is not necessarily based on Western concepts of aesthetics or performance etiquette, therefore. Like Durrant (2003: 179) I also believe it is unhelpful to provide hard-and-fast rules which should be followed in order to be 'the ideal' facilitator. Rather, I prefer to think of my work and the DVD presented here as an example of a flexible approach to choral facilitation, which incorporates an ethnographic understanding of the local performance practices, history, persons and other factors. This understanding is supported by an ethos which is based in Durrant's model or philosophy which encourages enjoyable, healthy singing at all levels.

The model and ethos proposed by Durrant (2003: 86 – 88) acknowledges that there are several factors which influence the facilitation process and the experiences of the facilitator and the singers. Referencing educationalist Elbaz, Durrant identifies five areas which influence the experience of learning musically, labelling it the five ‘orientations of practical knowledge’ or ‘craft knowledge’. I shall refer to them here in the context of my fieldwork example:

1. **Situational:** Formulated according to location for example. In the accompanying DVD this was in the church, before the Hopevale Community Choir tour, when the choir was at its largest. During other rehearsals or concerts situational factors varied. Learning in the church meant being in surroundings with a good acoustic, the ability to hear oneself and the ensemble and the availability of an electric organ. The church setting also encouraged the learning of religious songs.
2. **Personal:** This includes my orientation and ethos, intellectual beliefs and perceptions, emotions and commitment. All of these have been described previously and include my commitment to promote singing in a healthy way to promote community wellbeing.
3. **Social:** This, Durrant says, would encompass the social constraints and the social reality of the knower; in this case, myself. I acted and facilitated in a way which I deemed socially appropriate at any given time to encourage vocal, personal and inter-personal wellbeing. As I came to know the singers and their families this social reality changed, causing my approach to facilitation to evolve alongside it.
4. **Experiential:** Here, the practical knowledge I possess was shaped by multi-dimensional experiences, which depended on, for example, non-verbal and sensory feedback, musical sounds, and the personal interactions between myself and the singers during rehearsals, when performing in concert and whilst living in Hopevale.

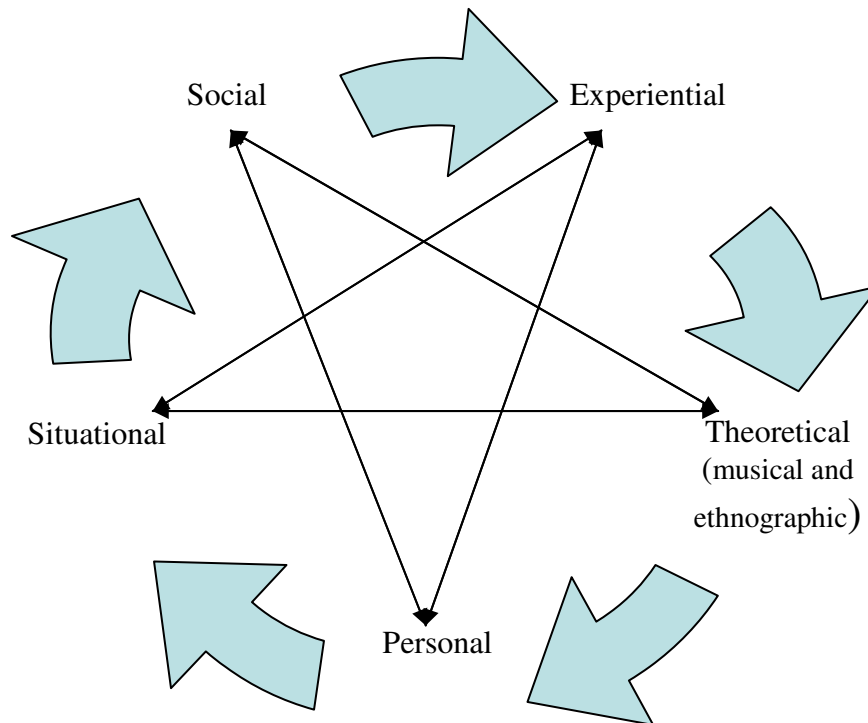
5. Theoretical: Here, Durrant includes the relationship between theory and practice. In my particular case this relationship existed on the level of musical theory and practice, and also on ethnographic theory and its ‘practice’ in participatory action research. My understanding and application of ethnographic theories involved the continual re-assessment and readjustment of the facilitation process. It was an ethnographically informed approach to choral facilitation.

When presenting a diagram of these five areas which influence performative experiences involved in music facilitation, Durrant (2003: 87) separates them visually.



**Figure 2.4: Reproduction of Durrant’s model (2003:87) with permission.**

Durrant does not link one area with another or visually present a model which demonstrates the fluid, interactive process which facilitation is. I therefore present an alternative visual model here.



**Figure 2.5: An ethnographically informed, fluid model of the Five Orientations of a facilitator’s “craft knowledge”**

The above visual model indicates that all five ‘orientations of practical knowledge’ are simultaneously influencing one another at any given time, not that they are separate factors which assert an influence independently of one another during facilitation. The larger size arrows on the periphery of the circle do not indicate that the connections between certain orientations are stronger than others. Equally, the directions of the larger arrows could have been anti-clockwise, as it does not matter in which direction they flow because the shape is circular. All five ‘orientations’ are equally important in the context of music facilitation. I have also incorporated my suggestion that the theoretical orientation should encompass both the musical and ethnographic, which is something Durrant, referencing Elbaz, does not do.

As a facilitator, I tried to keep the above model in mind whenever I interacted with the choir members. Facilitators like myself are in a position where, if they use their skills

appropriately, can be extremely successful in empowering the people they work with. This is especially the case when choristers find singing cathartic, liberating and beneficial in promoting emotional healing or where singing generates pride in personal, ensemble and community achievements. This means that a facilitator is in a position of great responsibility, because if his or her skills are used inappropriately, the act of singing might inhibit rather than promote the potentially beneficial effects of making music. It may even exacerbate personal insecurities, and lead to the eventual withdrawal from the act of making music altogether.

With respect to the interpersonal aspects of music facilitation, which could enhance the potentially beneficial effects of musicking, Durrant recommends that: singers are viewed as “unique, growing, and developing singers”; that all musicking participants are respected and encouraged and that the needs of the individual singers and the needs of the ensemble are balanced to create an effective musical setting (2003: 174). Because of this recommendation and the fact that the Hopevale Community Choir singers are all individuals who contributed to the choral facilitation process in their own way, I now offer further biographical and musical information about the singers who formed part of the ensemble at the time of research.



**“That’s the only thing I am saying”: biographies and the Hopevale**

**Community Choir**

The use of biographical information within ethnomusicological and anthropological writing has become a frequent vehicle for representing specific aspects of cultures, including music. Examples include Blacking’s *Black Background* (1964) on the life of an African school girl; Vander’s work *Songprints* (1988), which documents the musical experiences of five Native American Shoshone women and Berliner’s (1993) documentation of *mbira* music of the Shona people of Zimbabwe through the use of player biographies. Many of these biographies share several interlinked themes, namely: a concern with the telling of history and the relationship between history, biography and music, a concern for “voice” and the representation of others who are not the author of the final text, and finally a need to use biography as a means to develop new critical perspectives relevant to the ethnomusicological discipline as a whole (Stock, 2001: 6).

In this thesis I will also use biographical information to help describe the practice of choral singing in Hopevale at the time of research. This chapter first discusses the benefits offered by the use of biography in ethnomusicological study as well as its limitations. I then briefly explore biography as used in Australian Aboriginal ethnomusicological writing followed by a survey of the biographical information used in the literature pertaining to Hopevale. I thereafter present biographical information on individual members of the Hopevale Community Choir and I discuss the implications of these biographies.

### 3.1 Biography in ethnomusicological writing

Over the past three decades the use of biography in ethnomusicological writing has increased significantly due to changing trends in ethnomusicological thinking and writing. Through biography the commonalities and differences between individuals, their social surroundings and the positions they occupy in a culture are highlighted. Biographical detail helps to emphasise cultural diversity and individual performer agency in a musical community. For the ethical and historical reasons discussed in the first chapter, it is very important to highlight community diversity in the Australian Aboriginal research context. The use of biography here to describe the differences and similarities between the Hopevalian choral singers is therefore highly appropriate. The incorporation of biographical detail also allows the scholar to describe the ‘subject’ of the biography using ‘their own words’. This is particularly the case when the biographical information is derived from lengthy face-to-face contact between the scholar and the ‘subject’ and where transcripts of interviews and audio and audio-visual information are provided.

It has been argued, however, that the use of biographical information has its limitations when trying to rectify the uneven power balance in ethnographical writing. The first argument is that whilst the person whose life is the subject of the writing is represented using his/ her own words, the ways in which these words are presented and used are still the scholar’s. Interviews are transcribed in specific style. Some authors ‘correct’ the spoken language used by their interviewees and the transcribed texts are selectively edited and presented in a fashion which reflects the focus of the scholar’s writing and theorising and not necessarily the concerns of the person whose life is being written about. In this thesis I thus acknowledge that

I use the biographical details of the Hopevale Community Choir selectively for the purposes of writing an academic text.

A second argument which demonstrates the limitations of biographies is that whilst biographical details can provide a vehicle for understanding a musical culture, these details are still open to interpretation. Researchers must try to understand the personalities and values of those they write about and attempt to learn what lies behind their actions and how the personalities developed in the ways they did (Bowers, 2000: 142). The interpretation of the 'facts' is therefore another area where the power balance remains unequal and in favour of the researcher. In this thesis I therefore acknowledge that the interpretation of the choir biographies is my own, as is the construction of this thesis.

The third concern which academics have expressed in relation to the use of written biography in ethnography is that it is a written format, sometimes incorporating translations. This may not be how predominantly oral cultures commonly 'record' their communal and personal histories. Scholars have argued that it is necessary, especially in communities which have a strong oral tradition, to at least complement written biographies with audio and audio-visual documents to ensure that some of the ethnocentric bias towards the written medium as a form of recording information is eliminated. They argue that much culturally specific, relevant and contextual information is lost through the use of writing, translating and transcribing. I have therefore included audio samples of interview excerpts and a DVD to offer examples of the alternative ways in which Hopevalians present their histories and opinions.

In Hopevale, people communicate their social history verbally and in song. These they recount and perform at social gatherings and 'sing-a-longs': events held to celebrate or commemorate occasions and people, involving food, 'funny stories' and many songs. Hopevalians only write 'biographies' for church obituaries, which alongside biographical detail often contain many pictures of the deceased and sometimes information about their

musical preferences and performance habits. Most Westernised biographies of Hopevalians have been written by scholars and white local mission staff for research and church publications. For the purposes of this thesis therefore, I acknowledge that my use of writing to document the lives of Hopevalians is one dictated by the requirements of doctoral research.

The last limitation of the use of biography and in particular the ‘acquisition’ of the details is that in some instances it may be a culturally inappropriate way of soliciting and presenting information about a community’s or person’s history. This might be the case in cultures where there is a strong collective identity. Geertz (1983:59) also comments that:

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.

Ethnomusicologist Stock (2001: 8), however, referencing Cohen, writes that:

[T]here is no reason why a strong sense of collective identity or responsibility should necessarily obviate a sense of self; each of these may rather be present, but weighted distinctly, in the various spheres of social action in which members of a society engage.

In the context of this thesis, I would agree with Stock and Cohen. At the time of research I observed what I interpreted as a uniquely Indigenous Australian and Hopevalian sense of self, which in number of ways differed from my own. This sense of self was manifested in diverse ways including materially and physically. Materially, local kinship affiliations and sense of duty and community meant that Hopevalians would always share and easily give away items of clothing, food and money. Saving money for future activities, the accumulation of personal wealth or the strict separation of personal belongings was rarely practised. It was expected that people would share out whatever they had in surplus with those who needed it, according to the kinship system. The Hopevalian sense of self in relation to community was noticeable in

the more pronounced need to be physically near kin, friends and Country. This was evident through the perpetual arrival and departure of friends and kin in Hopevalian homes, and the ease with which people occupied each other's 'personal space'. A need for privacy seemed non-existent. People rarely expressed a need to be alone. If the express wish to be alone was made evident it was deemed a cause for concern. My own need for privacy, for instance, led to choir members becoming concerned about my emotional and physical wellbeing. The Hopevalian sense of self appeared to be more integrated with a sense of communal identity and not necessarily in direct opposition to it.

Within this collective sense of identity, there was also a strong sense of a personal autonomy and value, however. Every Indigenous Hopevalian has a considerable amount of personal autonomy from birth onwards. I found that personal idiosyncrasies, for example, were met with an unusually high level of tolerance in comparison to Western European culture. These same idiosyncrasies, if deviating from 'the norm' were not then viewed as being 'deviant'. People who were affected by mental ill health were accepted in the community, looked after and tolerated to a much greater extent than would be the case in Western societies. Equally, ill humour or minor misdemeanours on the part of an individual were often shrugged off and explained away as being part of a person's character. They were merely part of the social fabric which made up community life. Individuality was accepted and expected at a communal level. It is a trait of Hopevalian identity which I named and interpreted as 'communal individuality'.

The concept of communal individuality does not imply, however, that Hopevalians are free from social obligations and that all misdemeanours are left unchallenged. Every individual has an important role to play within the community depending on their place within the kinship system. Individual responsibilities for community and kinship wellbeing are allocated according to age, gender, ethnicity, spirituality and personal strengths and

weaknesses. This individual responsibility for certain types of action or knowledge within the Hopevalian community manifests itself in various ways. For example, to speak on behalf of another person in their absence would be considered inappropriate, especially if it involves offering information on a subject in which the other person is considered to be expert. As will become apparent, however, not all community members are able to fulfil these obligations or speak for themselves due to some of the social problems experienced by the Hopevale community.

The theoretical implication of Hopevalian communal individuality is that it justifies the use of choir biographies in this thesis, because of the recognised contribution that individuals are expected to make to communal wellbeing in Hopevale. To focus, however, on the biography of just one choir member would be inappropriate because it neglects to acknowledge the importance of the remaining ‘community’ in relation to the ‘self’ of the individual choir member. This is why I have chosen to offer biographical details on all choir members.

Equally, the nature of singing in a choral ensemble justifies the fact that I should present the biographies of all singers, rather than just one. Singing in a choir is not an activity that can be done by a single person or various persons by merely singing at the same time. A certain amount of unity needs to be maintained for the singing to sound aesthetically acceptable to the performers and its audience. To achieve this unity, individual contributions to a performance are vital. For example, frequent, loud errors by a single performer can dishearten and confuse other choristers. It is important that every singer should take individual responsibility for the musical wellbeing of the ensemble as a whole.

### 3.2 Biographies and autobiographies in Australian Aboriginal scholarship and Hopevale

Biography is widely used in Australian Aboriginal studies and anthropology. Earlier examples include White, Barwick and Meehan's (1985) collection of Aboriginal women's life stories, Vaarzon-Morel's *Warlpiri Women's Voices* (1998) which uses both the local Aboriginal language Warlpiri and English. Individual artists have also become the subject of biographies such as Country and Western singers Archie Roach (Andrew, 1997) and Dougie Young (Beckett, 1993). Aborigines themselves are now also beginning to use biography and autobiography as a means of telling their life stories and those of close relatives such as Lowe (2002) in *The Mish* and Pilkington (1996) in *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*. In the literature on popular music, biographical information is included in Walkers' *Buried Country* (2000) which uses the biographies of Indigenous Country and Western artists. Earlier, Breen's *Our Place, Our Music* (1989) included biographical detail on Indigenous Aboriginal popular musicians.

No specifically ethnomusicological biographies have been written about Hopevalian individuals. Biographical details have, however, been used by scholars such as anthropologist Haviland who worked with community elder Roger Hart, documenting Roger's life story and local Hopevale history in *Old Man Fog* (1998) and in an article (1990). Brad (1994) also recorded biographical information on behalf of Victor and Violet Cobus, who narrated stories about past events and cultural practices. Other, short biographies of community members Magdalena Mulun, George Bowen, Bob Flinders, Leo Rosendale and Nellie Woibo are incorporated in Pohlner's *Gangurru* (1986). In the year 2000, the *Bringing Them Home* oral history project also recorded several life histories of Hopevalians. This project focussed on the removal of children from their Aboriginal parents to the mission settlement at Cape Bedford. The absence of a truly local attempt at creating a written biography in the Western sense, I

believe, is primarily due to the aforementioned, lively culture of Hopevalian story telling and oral history. What Pearson earlier asserted still holds true: “Today Guugu Yimidhirr culture still has a strong oral history tradition that encompasses myth-making and legend and a particular sense of Aboriginality.” (1986:8).

### 3.3 The Hopevale Community Choir biographies

The type and amount of biographical information on choir members presented here varies from person to person and reflects the qualitative nature of the interviews I conducted in which biographical information was not the main focus of the interview, but rather the person’s experiences as a choral singer. The biographical information offered, functioned as a vehicle to put the singer’s experiences into context. As some individuals were more inclined to talk without prompting than others their responses may be used more frequently in this text.

It should be pointed out that choir membership was fluid. During the earlier parts of my stay in Hopevale I had a small group of four or five singers, which by the time the ensemble went on tour had increased to twelve persons. Singers would not always attend rehearsals on a regular basis due to other commitments such as family, art exhibitions, illness or travel. There were also those who joined for just a few sessions, after which they did not come again. Other people joined during informal public concerts or rehearsals given by the choir. They would sing those songs with which they were familiar, but never attended rehearsals before or after the concerts. The information in this chapter is based on the life histories of those persons whom I considered to be part of the group that formed the ‘backbone’ of the choir.

This ‘backbone’ consisted mainly of those people who went on the tour through Northern Queensland. It is only Auntie Mavis Yoren’s account that I am unable to present here. This is



due to the fact that Auntie Mavis had travelled to Mareeba for an extended period of time during which I was conducting my interviews. For all other interviewees I have included at least one quotation at the end of their biographical section pertaining to their musical experiences of singing as a choir member in the past, present or future. Some quotations were chosen to highlight a person's 'special' position within the choir such as that of Uncle Henry Deeral who was the only male singer and Mrs Pamela Kemp, the only white chorister next to myself. Each quotation will serve to demonstrate a certain aspect of the singer's musical identity. I will commence with Auntie Daisy Hamlot's extended biography, as she and I formed a close friendship which was different from the interactions I had with other singers.

Auntie Daisy Hamlot (née Bowen)



**Figure 3.1: Mrs Daisy Hamlot (née Bowen), 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005**

Auntie Daisy Hamlot, over the months that I worked in Hopevale, became a close friend of mine. Her cheerfulness, sense of humour, modesty and unassuming nature meant that she was well-liked by many people in Hopevale. She was also close to Dorothy Rosendale, who

initially had taken the lead in ensuring that I was able to participate in the first rehearsal with the choir for Uncle Roy Dick's funeral in October 2004, described in the introductory chapter.

After Dorothy's husband, Len, passed away, Dorothy resolved to live with her daughter in Normanton, Northern Queensland. It was after her departure during the Christmas period of 2004, that Daisy and I became better acquainted. Daisy was keen to spend time with me to make sure I attended events which incorporated music and we frequently visited other people together to go line dancing or attend sing-alongs. Her sister Dora Gibson (née Bowen) once jokingly called Daisy my 'PR assistant'. I would also sit next to her in church every Sunday and give her lifts into Cooktown if her car had broken down or her family had borrowed her vehicle.

Daisy's living situation was unusual for a woman her age in that she had just one son, Max, and not many grandchildren or great-grandchildren. She therefore had more time at her disposal to spend with me than most of the other choir members. Next to choral singing Daisy was a keen line dancer, enjoyed crocheting and handicrafts and made ice lollies for the young school children to buy after school finished. She also loved soap operas on satellite television.

Daisy's sister, Auntie Marie Gibson was also in the choir, and her brother Uncle Clarry Bowen was the night watchman at the old people's rest home where I stayed. Uncle Clarry is a good guitarist and singer who can also play the mouth organ. Daisy's other brother, Neville Bowen, was one of the main singers of the Corduroy Band of Hopevale, in which Daisy's young niece Chevanne and Uncle Clarry also performed. Her family was very musical and it was through making music and my work with music that I came to know Daisy and her direct family very well.

Daisy's help and friendship ensured that I was emotionally content and comfortable being part of the Hopevale community. Through her contributions and collaboration I was able to answer

my research question effectively. She also taught me how to line dance, ‘chuck a line’ to catch some fish and she made me feel welcome at times when I might have felt lonely and isolated.



**Figure 3.2: Daisy and Muriel fishing near Coloured Sands, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

When our friendship had developed I asked her permission to use her extended biography for the purposes of this thesis. Daisy, slightly mystified, consented. She, with humour, felt her life was unremarkable.

Daisy Hamlot: Singing and dancing. That’s what I said to Marie: “You fella got talent for, you know, painting. I can’t do it, I only got talent for cleaning up my house!! [laughter]

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: [Laughing] Nah, that’s not true, you do other things too!

DH: She [Marie] said: ‘Yeah, you’ve got the best house, clean house on the mission!’<sup>1</sup> [laughter] (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Daisy, did however, also acknowledge her personal strengths and her role as an organiser:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: But you can do other things, look, you’re out there dancing, you’re out there singing! And you’re a great organiser, you know.

Daisy Hamlot: Yah, they come to me, you know, when we go line dancing. I gotta set up things for them [the other dancers] Ask, you know...and after at the party they were singing out<sup>2</sup> for ‘Daisy Hamlot for line dance’! (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

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<sup>1</sup> Hopevalians still refer to the Hopevale town centre as ‘the mission’.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Singing out for’, can mean ‘calling out for’ in Aboriginal English.

For this thesis I will use biographical information which I gathered through interviewing Daisy. I have also included Daisy's own biography as appendix B to this thesis for reflexive purposes. Daisy wrote the biography in anticipation of her own death. This is unusual in that it is uncommon for Hopevalians to write their own biographies, let alone their obituaries. When I questioned Daisy about her act of writing the obituary her revealing remark was:

Daisy Hamlot: Well, I thought ehm, later on you know, in case I'm, I'm not here, not living...living anymore, so they can find out, what I did, you know, and obituary [laughter].

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: You're thinking well-ahead! [laughter]

MSR: Why did you think writing would be a good way to put it down, rather than talking, or putting it on a cassette or something?

DH: Well, I think so, you know, in writing, because I don't like talking in there [gestures to the mini disk and microphone]

MSR: Into the microphone?

DH: Yeah. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Daisy's unexpected comment suggests that being interviewed made her uncomfortable and therefore collecting oral histories through recording and research with her had its limitations. More generally, when being interviewed with a microphone and recording device Daisy and some other interviewees might not reveal as much about themselves as they would in causal conversation. Daisy even felt that writing was preferable to being interviewed, despite the local mode of transmission of history being predominantly oral.

A comparison between Daisy's writing and my own will also demonstrate that my use of select biographical information is relevant to my thesis and academic interest, but not necessarily what Daisy has chosen to document about her own life. Daisy uses her biographical information to inform others about her life and those important to her. What results are two very different styles of writing with different foci.

When reading Daisy's short, written autobiography I noted her fondness of her surroundings in Woorabinda<sup>3</sup> and her friends whom she lists by their first names, individually. She also uses funny stories and makes frequent references to her family members. From her biography it is clear that Daisy considers Hopevale to be her home, despite her early years spent in Woorabinda and her travels through Queensland whilst working as a young woman. Daisy often mentions place names and the type of job she had when she lived in specific areas. There is little mention of the community's earlier hardships. Whilst Daisy mentions activities such as the tidying of the graves of her loved ones in Woorabinda who had passed away in the severe flu epidemic and the bad levels of pay she received as a result of her ethnicity, these appear to be mere references to circumstances as they were rather than a critique of these circumstances.

I will now summarise Daisy's biographical information as found in the appendix. Many of the dates Daisy gave were approximate ones so I use them here as well. As Daisy's biography does not mention her activities after returning to Hopevale with her husband Karl or her involvement with the church and choir and her subsequent love of singing, I have complemented Daisy's writing presented in the appendix with materials from interviews which will help focus this section on my research question related to choral singing.

Mrs Daisy Hamlot (née Bowen) was born at Cape Bedford near Hopevale 1937 to Ted and Nancy Bowen. In 1941 when Daisy was five, she and her family were evacuated to Woorabinda together with the rest of the Hopevale community. Woorabinda lies west of Rockhampton. Daisy first went to school in Woorabinda and befriended many children from both Cape Bedford as well as Woorabinda itself. Daisy returned to Hope Valley, as it was then called, when she was 12 or 13 and continued her schooling. She left school at the age of 16 and became a teacher's aid. In 1956 or 1957 she fell pregnant with her son Max and left her

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<sup>3</sup> An Aboriginal community further south in the state of Queensland, Australia. The Hopevale community was evacuated here in 1942 because it was thought founding missionary Schwarz supported the German and Japanese cause.

post. When her son Max was about 6 years old, Daisy started to look for work again and found employment in the local Pastor's house as a domestic servant. She found this job uninteresting and asked whether she could be placed further south in Queensland as part of the assimilation and integration drive which encouraged rural Aborigines to seek employment in and integrate with, white urban society. In 1964 Daisy was placed in Gatton and afterwards went to work at St Peter's, a Lutheran college near Brisbane. At St Peter's Daisy fulfilled domestic duties helping with the cleaning of the dorms, the laundry and sometimes working in the kitchen. During her six years at St Peter's she made many friends and it was here she met her husband Karl Hamlot whom she married in 1971. Daisy and Karl left Brisbane and between the years 1972 – 73 gradually moved further north, living in Cairns, Mareeba and Cooktown. It was in 1982 that they returned to Hopevale and have remained there since.

After Daisy's return to Hopevale she once again became a regular church goer, something she had not been whilst living away from Hopevale. Daisy did not sing in choirs either whilst she lived in Brisbane, although she was a keen singer in the congregation at St Peter's Lutheran College. Choir singing was something Daisy started doing in the 1980s or 90s with choir mistress Margret Scholz. After Margret Scholz left, regular rehearsals ceased and the choir only sang on special occasions when called upon to do so. Daisy started singing regularly again when I arrived. She loves singing a lot and believes the choir has given her confidence, as well as offering enjoyment:

Daisy Hamlot: I love my singing. I only started lately again with you. And I, love singing now, even though my throat getting a bit dry sometimes [laughter].

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg; So, do you think that the choir has been ehm, has helped you, gain confidence?

DH: Yeah.

MSR: Have you enjoyed singing in the choir?

DH: Yeah. I enjoyed my singing. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

It is my belief, however, that whilst choral singing offered Daisy an opportunity to relax and enjoy herself, it was by no means the only activity which offered her these things. In fact many choir singers, like Daisy, participated in activities such as line dancing, art workshops, handicrafts or cookery. During interviews with singers it became clear that any type of artistic endeavour was welcomed and believed to be beneficial.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Dancing to you, is it a little bit like choir singing: An opportunity to meet new people, and to learn something new?

Daisy Hamlot: Learn new things, yeah.

MSR: Something different from sitting around the home all the time?

DH: Yeah, and gossiping! [laughs]. Yeah, line dancing...even that old *gamba*.<sup>4</sup>Ella [Woibo], she love her line dancing.

MSR: She does too, isn't she amazing hey?! So do you think it's important for people to keep busy?

DH: Yes. It is...

DH: Yeah, forget about things, you know, what's in your mind you, go meet some other people, and enjoy yourself. That's what I do, you know? Just keep busy.

MSR: It's also good 'cause you make friends that way do you think?

DH: Yeah (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Daisy also felt that the positive effects of choral singing were more widely experienced:

Daisy Hamlot: People enjoyed our singing you know, even round here too.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So do you think a lot of people in the community are proud of the choir?

DH: Yeah. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

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<sup>4</sup> Senior woman who has had children or an important respected senior woman. See glossary as well.

The above biographical details complemented by interview transcripts inform us about not only Daisy's personal history, but also offer an insight into the social history of the Hopevale community, which includes evacuation to Woorabinda and experience of the government-driven policies of assimilation and integration. It is also possible to learn more about the practice of choral singing in Hopevale through Daisy's biography, which suggests that choral singing as a regular activity was organised by white mission staff and choral leaders or conductors. Choral singing as an irregular activity remained in evidence upon the departure of white staff and the falling ill of the designated choral leader Len Rosendale.

Auntie Ella Woibo (née Wallace)



**Figure 3.3: Mrs Ella Woibo (née Wallace), 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

Auntie Ella Woibo (née Wallace) was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1933 in Cooktown. She and her two brothers were taken away from her parents at the age of eight to the Cape Bedford mission, where she grew up. She is therefore a member of the Stolen Generation and was the choir's oldest member at the time of research.



At the age of nineteen after her return to Hope Valley after the evacuation. Ella was married as well. In the 1950s she left school and went towards Cairns to work on a station. After several years of working further south Ella returned to Hopevale, as she felt that this was her home.

Next to choral singing Ella also line dances and enjoys listening to Country and Western music. Some of her favourite artists include George Jones, Slim Dusty, Buddy Williams and Charlie Pride. About her hobbies, Ella said:

Ella Woibo: In school we sang a lot ...I know we were singing 'Silent night, Holy night' like in part like alto and soprano and the other...a couple of more hymns...

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So how has choir singing affected you in the past few months...I suppose? Have you enjoyed it?

EW: I really enjoyed it yeah. That was good. In the afternoons we used to get together, have our little warm-ups and all that. It's something new that we learnt. Exercise our voice and all that ... I enjoyed every bit of it. (6<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Ella's quotation suggests that to her, rehearsals and performances with the choir offered novel elements which could successfully be mastered and improved her singing technique. Ella's biographical details also inform us that historically hymnody was taught in the community school in various voice parts. This indicates that hymn-singing in harmony is an activity which has been practised for quite some time in Hopevale given Ella's age and it can be considered to be a 'tradition'.

Auntie Maureen Wallace (née Jack) (Deceased)



**Figure 3.4: Mrs Maureen Wallace (née Jack), 30<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

Auntie Maureen was the eldest daughter of Walter and Lizzie Jack. She was born in Woorabinda in 1947 and came to Hopevale at the age of three. Through connections with the Gordon family clan she was a *Nugal*<sup>5</sup> *warra* woman. After leaving school she married Allan Wallace in 1970 and they had six children together. Next to being a full-time mother Auntie Maureen worked as a health worker and domestic cleaner in the past.

Maureen also lived in the Wujal Wujal community south of Hopevale for some years and spoke the Guugu-Yalanji language. She was a Justice of the Peace at Hopevale and at the time of my visit was training at the Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns for a diploma and certificate in Christian theology. She was a devout Lutheran and as well as helping within the church also offered assistance with the religious education in the Hopevale Primary School. Auntie Maureen was also a keen artist at the Hopevale Culture Centre.

Musically, Maureen enjoyed Country and Western music, hymns and Country Gospel the most. Her favourite artists included George Jones, Jimmy Little and various choirs from around Australia. She was, however, open minded and had recently discovered reggae by the

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<sup>5</sup> *Nugal warra* people and Country are part of the Guugu Yimithirr kinship groups and part of the traditional owners of the lands on which Hopevale now lies. See glossary and chapters five and six for more details.

late artist Lucky Dube. As a child she learnt many hymns and choruses at home. Her father Walter Jack (deceased) was an evangelist and family devotions were one way in which her musical heritage was passed on. She officially joined the choir in the 1980s and continued singing after her move to Wujal Wujal with the choir there.

Maureen Wallace: I really thank my Lord for the voice that He has given me, although I am not a great singer, but the choruses that I've learnt from you I can praise Him in that way... Yeah, I sing at home, but nowadays, young people! "Put your voice down mum!" I say: "I am not singing to you, I am singing to the Lord!" (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Auntie Maureen's quotations highlight the spiritual nature of the choir's singing and the enjoyment she achieved by being able to create a feeling of religious fellowship with a Christian God as an individual through song. Maureen's words also indicate that she felt comfortable singing as a member of an ensemble even if she perceived her voice to be ordinary.

Auntie Myrtle Bambie (née Deeral)



**Figure 3.5: Mrs Myrtle Bambie (née Deeral), 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005**

Auntie Myrtle Bambie was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1938. Myrtle has been living in Hopevale since the 1950s. She is married to Herman Bambie and sister to Henry Deeral.

Myrtle is also an in-law of choir member Dora Deemal as her daughter Francine Bombie married Derek Deemal and sister-in-law to Gertie Deeral who married her brother Henry. Myrtle's father and Violet Cobus' father also were cousin-brothers.

Both Herman and Myrtle are devout Lutherans and regular church goers. Myrtle often helps Pastor with the services, and volunteers for extra duties relating to church, such as Religious Education at the Hopevale Primary School. She also works at the youth centre and tuck shop.

Her favourite music genre is Country and Western, and she particularly enjoys George Jones. She also listens to other Aboriginal choirs, such as those near Alice Springs. At her farm Myrtle also listens to the radio and enjoys the Indigenous Townsville Station 4K1G.

As well as singing soprano in the choir, Auntie Myrtle plays the guitar and has an auto-harp on which she is able to strum chords and accompany herself and others at home. She is self-taught on both instruments.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: First of all Myrtle, what inspired you to take up music?

Myrtle Bombie: I love singing...and that's all. I love singing.

MSR: When you sing in the choir, what are your favourite songs? The old hymns, or do you like some of that *All Together OK* [1996] stuff as well that we're doing now?

MB: I really like Sankey hymns and some in the *Lutheran Hymnbook* [1989], the red one.

MSR: Why is it the older ladies are not shy anymore [when it comes to singing] and the young men are?

MB: Just to show them [the young people], you know...the old people. Show them [the young people] that they are not to be afraid to sing...praises to God ... Yeah, set an example. (1<sup>st</sup> March 2005)

Auntie Myrtle's comments refer to the Church of England's musical influence on the church music of Hopevale. During the community's residence in Woorabinda, they were sent Anglican hymnals by Rev George Schwarz's wife Mary Allan – Schwarz who was of Anglican descent. She had taught the community old Sankey hymns which were well-liked. Myrtle was not alone in her liking of the older *Lutheran Hymnal* (1989). The older hymns were those which the majority of the choir members had grown up with and which they had been taught by their elders. Many hymns retained an emotional, historical and spiritual significance for choir members. Myrtle's liking for older hymns, however, did not preclude her from enjoying the newer music such the African Christian songs I taught the choir. Choir singing to Myrtle, is also a means of proselytising and encouraging pride in the Christian faith.

Auntie Violet Cobus (née Gordonvale)



**Figure 3.6: Mrs Violet Cobus (née Gordonvale), 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005**

Auntie Violet Cobus (née Gordonvale) was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1934. Violet is the eldest of three children and was born at the McIvor station near Hopevale (Brad, 1994: 15). As

there were no dormitories at the McIvor station she was able to live with her family, unlike other children who lived on the Hope Valley and Spring Hill stations. Guugu Yimithirr is Violet's mother's language. When she was eight years old Violet was evacuated to Woorabinda together with the Hopevale community during the Second World War.

Auntie Violet married Victor Cobus in 1951. When speaking to Brad, Violet recalls: "We were married in the right way because our families were from different places so we weren't related too closely." (Brad, 1994: 17). When singing with the choir, Auntie Violet has a powerful alto voice, which helps her lead the singing by setting the starting pitch and tempo. Her Guugu Yimithirr language skills are also called upon when the choir is uncertain about the pronunciations of Guugu Yimithirr words. About her involvement with the choir Violet said:

Violet Cobus: We were in the choir with our Pastors. You know, they used to come up here and grab the ladies and gentleman to sing in the choir. Well, I was one of them too.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Was Pastor Wenke the first one?

VC: Yeah. Pastor Wenke...and Pastor Roennfeldt. I think Pastor Kernich too. Well, they left from here.

MSR: Did they all do choir?

VC: Yeah. They were all doing choir and we had to go, you know. Like he never...we were asked to go and a few goes up, well that's how it is, was before.

MSR: What gave you the first incentive to go [to choir when I first arrived]?

VC: I just wanted to go, because I love singing.

MSR: Ah yeah, so you just said: "Alright!" So it wasn't somebody who said: "OK Violet, now you are going to choir!"

VC: No, I just love it because I love singing. I didn't want to stay home when it [choir] started, because it was good. Make you happy...get away from home and do something for ourselves too. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Violet's comments suggest that most Pastors who worked in Hopevale historically were able to conduct and lead a choir and therefore must have had a musical education as part of their training in seminary. It was also the Pastors who requested that both men and women singers join the choir. Violet seems to hint at the fact that historically choral singing was not necessarily an optional activity and that the Pastors would put pressure on community members to sing. Violet, however, has a natural love of singing and was keen to attend rehearsals when they recommenced upon my arrival.

Uncle Henry Deeral and Auntie Gertie Deeral (née Simon)



**Figure 3.7: Mrs Gertie Deeral (née Simon) and Mr Henry Deeral, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

Auntie Gertie Deeral (née Simon) was born at Woorabinda in 1944 and Uncle Henry Deeral was born at Cape Bedford in 1934. He is the brother of Auntie Myrtle Bambie, also a choir member. Henry and Gertie married in 1964 and had six boys whom they refer to fondly as their 'six pack'. After the community's return from Woorabinda the Deerals remained in Hopevale. They did not move south as part of the assimilationist programmes designed by the church and government.

Uncle Henry has had many trades during his working life. Amongst other things he worked fencing, operated machinery, picked peanuts and cut timber at the Hopevale saw mill.

He was also employed at the rest home in Hopevale Health and Community programme and as a yards man until 1992. Auntie Gertie was a full-time mother for her children, but when they were a bit older she decided to work as a personal carer at the rest home. She left her job there in 1992.

Both Henry and Gertie are devout Lutherans and respected community elders. Gertie's father was a church evangelist for the Wujal Wujal community. Activities which the couple enjoy are fishing and telling stories. They tell 'traditional' stories around the camp fire to the local school children when the children go camping. Henry and Gertie also like listening to Country and Western music. Their favourite artists include Jimmy Little, Charlie Pride and Jimmy Swag. Christian hymnody and the 'Words of Life' cassettes (1970) which I presented to them upon my arrival are also great favourites.

Gertie Deeral: And I like to sing, and I like going, singing at choir, going around tours, you know. Going everywhere.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: And when was it that the both [Henry and Gertie Deeral] of you started singing? Did you start out in the 'Pastor Wenke Days' as well?

Henry Deeral: Oh yeah. When old Mr Radke was here we used to sing choir, from that time on, but even Pastor Wenke was here...oh he was a good bass, Pastor Wenke. He sing bass, tenor...

GD: We joined the choir then. We joined the choir here when Mrs Scholz was here...

GD: She was our conductor and she was, we were going for choir, went down there...went to Ingham driving around.

MSR: Did you go anywhere else?

HD: Cairns...

GD: Cairns, Ingham...Ingham...nah, that's all...

MSR: Uncle Henry, you are, you are a very brave man, but you are the only man in my choir.



HD: That's right.

MSR: Tell me a little bit about how that makes you feel because it must sometimes be a little bit awkward, you know, between all these ladies...

HD: No, you know, I wasn't shy, you know because I knew all the ladies. That's why ahhh, I love singing choir, you know. I was bass all my life, singing, choir...(24<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

The quotations from Henry and Gertie's interviews reveal that historically the choir was conducted by mission staff and Pastors rather than Indigenous Hopevalians. They also indicate that the choir travelled to and performed outside of Hopevale. Never before had the choir performed for tourist audiences, however. Uncle Henry's comments about being the only male member of the choir also suggest that choral singing was never a segregated activity and that knowing the ladies helped Uncle Henry feel at ease.

Auntie Dora Deemal (née Wallace)



**Figure 3.8: Mrs Dora Deemal (née Wallace), 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005**

Auntie Dora was born in Woorabinda 1944. Auntie Dora's *warra* [kinship group] from her husband Philip's side is *Dhiidharr*, and from her father's side she is a *Binhdhi warra* like the McIvor and Woibo families. Auntie Dora left school in 1959 and got married in 1960 to Philip Deemal. Philip and Dora have a son, Derek Deemal who married Myrtle and Herman

Bambie's daughter Francine Bambie. After returning to Hopevale, Dora and Philip never left the area as they had Philip's widowed mother and Dora's ageing parents to look after. Dora enjoys Country and Western music and hymns. Her favourite artists include Roger Knox whom she heard in Yarrabah and Charlie Pride. About the differences in denominational background and ethnicity Auntie Dora said:

Dora Deemal: My mother often said: "There's no difference in church. We serve one God" and they grew up with the Church of England. They didn't have a Lutheran hymnbook. So the missionary used the Church of England and they knew a lot of Church of England hymns. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Dora's words indicate the more generally held belief by choir members that all Christians were one under a Christian God, regardless of a Christian's race, colour or creed. Like Myrtle's comment, Dora's quotation above indicates that she was happy to perform, and had a knowledge of Anglican hymnody.

Auntie Marie Gibson (née Bowen) (Deceased)



**Figure 3.9: Mrs Marie Gibson (née Bowen), 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005**

Marie Gibson (née Bowen) was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1942 in Woorabinda to Ted and Nancy Bowen. She had six siblings, one of whom also sings in the choir, Daisy Hamlot. Others are Dora Gibson and Clarence, Lex, Neville and Eddie (deceased) Bowen. Marie was only eight

years of age when her family moved back to Hopevale after the community's evacuation to Woorabinda came to an end. After her return to Hopevale she went to school until the age of thirteen.

In the 1960s Marie and her husband Les Gibson went to work on a farm near Brisbane and continued to live in the Brisbane area for thirteen years, after which they came back up north again to Cooktown. Marie was a devout Lutheran church elder and also an artist. She made sand paintings, oil paintings and she loved line dancing.

Marie and Les were both members of a choir whilst living in Brisbane and both also played the guitar. Marie liked singing, and enjoyed listening to Country and Western and Country Gospel songs. Her favourite artists included Alan Jackson, Vince Gill, George Jones and Warren Williams. She was not fond of reggae however.

About her history as a chorister and her views on the choir repertoire I introduced Auntie Marie said the following:

Marie Gibson: Well, my mother and father used to sing in the choir too ... When we were small, when we were young, every night we used to sing hymns. Choruses and...before we go to sleep, yeah and...we been singing all the time, you know at home, not in concerts or any one thing. Yeah and we love singing.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: When was it you first joined [the choir]?

MG: When, I was still a teenager then. There was a...that was in the 60s. We had a Pastor there that used to run the choir ... Pastor Wenke, yeah and me and the whole of Saint John's used to go to that choir just to sing, everybody.

MG: I enjoyed myself on that trip, and I love singing. Yeah, and thanks to you, for teaching us all those songs ... Well, I liked those Africans [songs], yeah they're nice, those little songs. They weren't long songs, short ones. (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005)

Auntie Marie's comments demonstrate there was a lively tradition of hymn-singing in family homes. She also noted that in the 1960s the whole congregation of St John's used to sing as a choir under the 'baton' of Pastor Wenke. As will be discussed later, it was the practice of

congregational hymn-singing in harmony which led to an amalgamation of the concepts of 'singing as a choir' and 'choir singing' in the Hopevalian context.

Auntie Mavis Yoren



**Figure 3.10: Mrs Mavis Yoren (bottom far right) with top left to right: Pamela Kemp, Violet Cobus, Henry Deeral. Bottom left to right: Dora Deemal and Gertie Deeral.**

Auntie Mavis Yoren was born February the eighth 1947. I was unable to interview her as she was away in Mareeba during the times at which I conducted interviews. I remember Mavis as a quiet lady who sang alto well and had a natural ability to harmonise most hymns performed by the choir, without learning the music first.

Auntie Phylomena Naylor (née McIvor)



**Figure 3.11: Mrs Phylomena Naylor (née McIvor), 7<sup>th</sup> May 2005**

Phylomena was born in Cooktown in 1952 and the youngest singer in the choir. When she was younger she was called south by her uncle to Palm Island where she went to school. She married Cedric Naylor from the *Jyunyju* clan and with him she has three sons and three daughters.

Next to choral singing Phylomena is an artist at the Hopevale Culture Centre and an enthusiastic line dancer. She is keen to pass on traditional knowledge of bush foods and skills through art. Phylomena was also a Scout leader in the past and lived near Brisbane in Mount Cotton for some years. Like other choir members Auntie Phylomena is a devout Lutheran.

Musically Phylomena enjoys many different types of music such as Country and Western, Country Gospel, hymns, Christian choruses as well as reggae. Phylomena sang in a little trio when living near Brisbane, but as she grew older abandoned singing for some time. It was after my arrival and with the continued encouragement of the other ladies in the choir that Phylomena joined the Hopevale Community Choir.

Phylomena Naylor: Well, what made me join the choir...ehm the older ladies, they kept seeing me down the road and saying to me: "You have to come to the choir, join with us." So I said: "I'll think about it." And then they'll, I let it go for a while and then, first...first term. And then ehm, they kept on asking me, and then one day as I was walking down the road, and as they were getting ready to go into the church to do their practising, they said: "Come on, you have to join us now. You walking past." So what I did, I just looked at them and I thought to myself: "Ho well. I'll give it a go." Which I did and now I am very grateful for them asking me, because I enjoy singing with the older ladies. The ladies got everything in common, you know. Well, I don't regret it, because singing is what I like...Singing is what I like. Wherever I go, I am singing. Even on the radio, cassettes, CD I sing along with them. My children sometimes get very...I annoy them. They say: "Come on mum, stop it now, we're listening to that. Not you!" and I said: "But I love it!" So I am very, very grateful for those old girls that gave me that opportunity to come and sing with them and now I like to continue. (5<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Phylomena was the only member of my choir, possibly next to Auntie Mavis, who had not yet been a choir member before I came. In the past Auntie Phylomena had not sung with the mission's Pastors, but rather in other parts of Australia. It was the encouragement she received from the other singers which led her to decide to join. The fact that Phylomena joined, therefore, is an example of local agency and decision-making on the part of a community member to actively engage in musicking for pleasure.

### Mrs Pamela Kemp



**Figure 3.12: Mrs Pamela Kemp, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

Mrs Pamela Kemp (Pam) was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July in 1938 Geelong, in the State of Victoria, Australia where she grew up and went to school at the Morongo Presbyterian Girls College. She completed her Physical Education and Teacher Training degree at Melbourne University and married Mr Brian Kemp in 1962.

Pam is a retired sports teacher and her husband Brian a retired lecturer in pottery and arts. Together they have lived in Japan and Singapore amongst other places, where Brian would teach. Pam and Brian were working at the Hopevale Primary School as part of the Volunteers for Isolated Students Education (VISE). Both were temporary residents in Hopevale and like myself resided at the Hopevale rest home for the duration of their stay.

Pam and Brian are devout Christians. Pam was brought up in the Presbyterian Church, which after its unification with the Methodist denomination, is now largely the Uniting Church of Australia. Pam says though, that she is quite happy to worship at other established churches.

Singing is an important part of Pam's life. She was an active church choir member in Singapore and a member of a semi-professional group called the 'Sweet Adelines' in Australia. Initially Pam attended choir rehearsals at Hopevale to listen. She was invited to join the alto section by the other choir members after the singers had noticed her and Brian quietly sitting at the back of the church during rehearsals.

Pamela Kemp: I wonder if, ehm, because these people [other choir members] are all of an age, similar to mine, whether they're more accepting. I don't see their colour, and I hope that when I'm with them, they ignore the fact that my skin is not the same colour as theirs ... Yeah, I hope that when I'm with the ladies they see me as another woman, and another singer. It'd be nice to think that.

PK: I enjoy the fact that the Hopevale Choir does sing religious music, because I've enjoyed...I like to feel a communion with people who share my belief, and ehm, I think we've been singing with joy to our Lord. It's a bond, as well as the singing. Yes, the common belief is a bond.

PK: Singing can be a powerful way of delivering a message, and I guess the message...one of the messages at both places [Lotus Glenn correctional facility and Douglas House rehabilitation centre where the choir performed during its tour, described in chapter 7] was that "We still love you" and then the greater message that there's a Saviour that also loves you, and even though the family is

not there you can always go directly to Him. I think that message came through in the songs that were being sung. (6<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Pam's comments and the choir's initial invitation for her to join suggest that all singers were very willing and able to join forces and sing to their Christian God. It was their spirituality, and as Pam suggests possibly their age and gender, which helped to unify them despite differences in ethnicity. Pam's interview also highlighted the evangelical nature of the choral singing and the tour, in that the choir actively sought to spread the Christian word through song. They saw themselves as offering an active example of religious fellowship, goodwill and forgiveness through performance. Like most choir members, Pam saw the choir as one which was not only receiving the Christian word as Hopevalians had done in the past, but now in a position to spread this Word as well.

Having provided short biographical sketches of the choir members, I will now discuss the themes which run through these biographies concerning age, race, ethnicity, gender, spirituality, musical preferences, and perceptions of musical ability and how these influenced choir membership and the constructions of identities through choral singing.

#### 3.4 Age, being a role model and musical transmission through choral singing

The choir members were born between 1933 and 1952 and their reasons for joining the choir varied with age. Older choir members such as Auntie Violet, Auntie Marie and Auntie Ella had been encouraged by Lutheran pastors to sing in the congregation, using harmonised versions of hymns. Due to their age many singers felt a strong need to act as role models for the younger generation and those who were suffering from Hopevale's social problems. In Hopevale, like other Aboriginal communities, there is a tradition of respecting one's elders, especially if they are in positions of authority according to the kinship system. Despite a



decline in this tradition at the time of research, the community still looked to elders for authority and dispute resolution. Because of their seniority choir members felt they must set good examples. Singers also felt that ultimately it was up to the youths themselves to decide whether they wished to follow the example of their elders, although it was generally considered a good thing if they did. Phylomena Naylor told me:

Phylomena Naylor: It [choir singing] sort of relaxes me, you know... I could've gone down hill, just like the rest of my family, because they're all drinkers and they don't care about themselves. They still don't...like I told my children: "You never think that way. You don't...what you's doing now, you have to put a stop to it and think, what your kids and their kids gonna do. Follow you." So, it's a big, big thing really, hey?

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So do you think Hopevale as a whole would benefit from being more creative and musical? There's a lot of people out there who have got problems.

PN: There's a lot of talent in our community here today. It's just that, they have to learn and pull up and look and think what they doing to themselves, you know. It's not...we can tell them, but it's up to each and every individual people, to look forward and backward. Because I've seen...I've seen a lot, you know, in front of me as I was growin'...(5<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Aunties Violet Cobus and Dora Deemal commented:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: What do you think we should do for younger people to come and join the choir?

Violet Cobus: I don't know...it's up to the younger people I think.

MSR: How do you think the community feels about our singing?

VC: Well, they're talking about it!

Dora Deemal: They say it was beautiful.

MSR: Do you think they're proud of what you've achieved and what you've been doing?

VC: I should think so.

MSR: And do you feel proud about it too?

VC: I feel proud about myself too [laughter] being an old girl!

DD: Yeah, true!

MSR: So, do you feel in some ways you're also setting an example for younger people?

DD: Younger people, yeah.

VC: Yeah that's true. They should really follow I think, young people! (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

The choir interview transcripts above demonstrate that the singers perceived choral singing to be an enjoyable activity which could be used to create pride. Because of these qualities and choral singing's association with spirituality and healthy living, choir members felt that singing in the choir was a way in which they could lead by setting a good example.

The seniority of the singers did not diminish the demands being made on their time by family in terms of childcare or familial duties. The social problems of excessive alcohol usage and drug addiction as well as domestic violence, mental illness and teenage pregnancies often demanded that the singers looked after (great) grand children or leave early to resolve family quarrels. The singers, however, at times were quite firm in their refusal to bow to the demands of their spouses or offspring. Auntie Maureen Wallace on turning fifty commented:

Maureen Wallace: And I was thinking: "Why me?" [On becoming a Justice of the Peace, an artist as well as a choir singer and health care worker] Because I am older: I'm a grand mother, but then I was thinking: "I'm free." You know? My children are all grown up. My nieces and nephews are gone now. They got their own life, and as well as my children. And, when I turned fifty, I said: "Ok, it's my year!" (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Uncle Henry and Auntie Gertie Deeral felt singing helped them cope with the domestic challenges they faced by offering relaxation and temporary reprieve:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Has it [choir singing] also been a way for you to relax? From your, you know, troubles in life?

Henry Deeral: Yes.

Gertie Deeral: I enjoyed it!

HD: I enjoyed myself.

MSR: Just a little way to forget...

HD: Yeah, forget!

MSR: You enjoyed the travelling as much as the singing?

GD: Singing, liked the singing, but now we're back home [...] I'm getting tired from cooking and cleaning. (24<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Choral singing in this respect was a way in which singers were able to assert their individual identities and rights to personal enjoyment and autonomy, away from the stresses of family life. Through singing in the choir choristers were temporarily able to focus on their own wellbeing rather than that of others.

The singers' roles as primary care givers to the young also meant that they were the transmitters of the Christian musical tradition. When choir members practised in their homes, the choir songs were heard by family members. Both Phylomena Naylor and Maureen Wallace mentioned that they would sing hymns around the house or sing with CDs. Marie Gibson also told me that her grandson Bo heard her practising her choir songs and was able to sing the choir songs she practised by heart (Interview, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005). The songs and their extra-musical associations were being transmitted by choir members, influencing the identities and musical vocabularies of other Hopevalians.

This process of musical transmission in the home also helped me to gain an insight into Hopevalian vocal aesthetics and caused me to reflect on the impact of my methodology. When Daisy's niece visited her at home she overheard Daisy sing and commented on Daisy's vocal timbre:

Daisy Hamlot: Yeah, and the other day [laughs] my niece was saying that I was shaking. “Hey that’s because Muriel was shaking”, you know, your voice you know you shake [laughter]

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So, you sounded like me, did she say?

DH: Yeah, and she think I was putting it on, but it just you know...

MSR: Came out, did it?

DH: Yeah. I notice that my voice shakes a little bit.

MSR: So when niece commented on it, what did she think of it? Did she like it?

DH: Yeah, they liked it, only they think I was, you know, imitating you [laughter]. (4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

The above indicates that the Western, classical voice and vibrato were associated with my identity as a choral facilitator and non-Hopevalian vocalist. A lack of vibrato and the more nasal vocal timbre combined with the use of Aboriginal English tonal inflections and diphthongs were associated with a Hopevalian musical identity. By inadvertently transmitting my vocal timbre to the singers through teaching them by rote, I was modifying the ways in which the singers were being perceived by their community. Like Daisy’s niece, others believed the modification in vocal timbre was a deliberate strategy by choir members to imitate my vocal sound. In fact, the modification of the choir’s overall vocal timbre was more likely the result of the influence my teaching and the introduction of vocal exercises were having on the singers’ technique and vocal production. It was not a conscious strategy on their part to imitate my timbre. Through the choir’s roles as caregivers and musicking individuals I therefore learnt that Hopevalians distinguished between the timbre of my voice and those of other singers in Hopevale and that they did not mind the difference between the two timbres.

### 3.5 Gender, spirituality, choral singing and identity

The impact of childcare on the choir's performativity was particularly noticeable because the ensemble consisted of eleven regularly attending female members and one male member. The gender-imbalance was not an indication, however, that choral singing was an activity historically associated with women, or that most men thought it to be a woman's domain.

Daisy Hamlot: Yeah, we'd love to have more men, you know. Help Henry along. You know, might be mainly young men.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So you don't think that choir singing is only for women, but it's for men too?

DH: Yeah! You know, before when the choir was on when mum and dad's time, husband and wives was in the choir. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

The early decease of senior male choral singers was another factor which influenced the choir's make-up:

Maureen Wallace: He [Henry Deeral] is the only man [singing in the choir now]. Dad [Uncle Walter Jack] can't come. He's old. Although he'd love to sing but, his age...and most of them died now, the old people that you got on that tape [Global Recordings, 'Words of Life' (1970)]. It's only dad left, and Clarry of course [Clarence Bowen, brother to Daisy and Marie]. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Younger men, even if they wished to sing, were not always able to attend rehearsals or performances due to work commitments. Clarence Bowen, for example, could not attend for this reason:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Were you in the choir too?

Clarence Bowen: Yeah! I was in the choir.

MSR: [Surprised] Oh, right!

CB: But now, what happened now is that at night time I am up here working, you know. I've committed myself in here... (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004)

Other choir members also blamed the social problems experienced by young men for the men's absence in the choir:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Why do you think [the young men are] not coming?

Henry Deeral: Well, you know, there's a lot of talented people. Talented men and boys here you know, in this community, but I don't know what's holding them back, you know. Hard to tell.

Gertie Deeral: Might be the drugs, alcohol...holding them back. Worries. (24<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Auntie Daisy also felt that excessive alcohol usage caused the young men to be absent from church:

Daisy Hamlot: Nah. In those days the church was crowded, you know.

MSR: A lot of people there. Now, nowadays it's only the old people in [the church]. Why do you think they stopped coming? Why are they not going to church anymore?

DH: [Makes drinking motion, referring to the high level of alcohol dependency within the community.]

MSR: Oh, this kind?

DH: I think that's what happened, you know... Oh, in those days you know, go to church every Sunday, get ready... Oh yeah, the church was full, in those days, like 60s and 70s. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Auntie Gertie also felt the choir's average age might make choral singing unattractive to younger men.

Gertie Deeral: Yes, the old people yeah. Uncomfortable maybe. They [young people] maybe don't want to come and sing with us. (24<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Daisy Hamlot suggested that in fact it might be the choir's average age rather than its predominantly female membership which discouraged young men from attending.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Why do you think that men are reluctant to join the choir, especially the young ones, because we've only got one man in the choir, Uncle Henry Deeral and that's it.

Daisy Hamlot: Well, I think that same thing. Shy. I don't know really why, that's the only thing I am saying.

MSR: Do you think they are afraid of the ladies?

DH: No, I don't think so. Shouldn't be...

DH: When I say that, I know some people say that, that's [choral singing] only for the *gamba gamba's* [older women] [...laughter] You know, like for the old people. (4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

From these discussions it can be concluded that choral singing was very much an activity that used to be participated in by both genders. The absence of young men is due to a combination of factors therefore: firstly, the social malaises, secondly, the untimely death of earlier male role models and good singers, and thirdly employment obligations. This combination of factors leads to the absence of men from the community and choir activities and causes the younger people to perceive choral singing as a gendered activity. This perception discourages them from joining.

Choral singing's historical affiliations with the church were another reason why some youths stayed away, especially young men. The antipathy towards the church stems from the paternalistic attitudes of the church towards Hopevalians in the past. As interviews suggest, services were not optional historically and I was told those who refused to attend were punished and their personal freedoms restricted as a result. This caused a lot of resentment

towards the church. Singers also felt that low levels of self-esteem amongst youths led to a decrease in church attendance and as a result choral singing and choir membership:

Maureen Wallace: Hmmm, they are [too ashamed to attend]. I think so, because they, what they are thinking, and I know they are thinking this, that only the good people come along and we're [the choir] sinners as well! You know, I go to church because I am a sinner and I keep telling my children Monday to Saturday is our days, you know, but Sunday is an invitation for you all to come [to church]. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Auntie Phylomena expressed the belief that some people in the community felt that going to church and by extension therefore singing in the choir was evidence that Aboriginal Christians exhibited a 'Holier than Thou' attitude, which berates those Hopevalians who suffer from addiction and social problems.

Phylomena Naylor: You don't have to be a certain people to do a certain things! ...That's how I look at it.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: But do you think that the younger ones might say: "Ah, you know, this is not for me, it's churchy..."?

PN: Yeah, yeah that's what they thinking. Because they reckon, just because we singing in church: "That's not for me." I'll go this way, you know, but it's not. It's for them too. ...They don't want to be called: "Ho, you're a church-goer, don't come near us." You know. That's their saying. That's what they say: "Ho, you a Christian." But I say: "No, you don't think that" because we there for our own self. If you wanna go church you just go the way you are. You don't have to put silver sandals, golden clothes ...Come as you are. (5<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Church services are, however, one way in which the body of Christian hymnody known to the Hopevalian community is taught and transmitted from generation to generation. Now that church services are no longer compulsory and the average age of the congregation has increased dramatically, the pool of potential choristers has also dwindled. Combined with a



decrease in the singing of hymns in Hopevalian homes, the music is not being transmitted in the ways it was previously.

### 3.6 Ethnicity, spirituality and choir membership

At the time of research choir singers were well aware that within the community there was a division between those people who had a mixed heritage and those who had an entirely Aboriginal heritage. All singers in the choir agreed, however, that within the choir itself there was no discrimination. Singers viewed the community's division to be the result of historical missionary attitudes:

Maureen Wallace: Well, it started way back when the first missionary came and he sort of put that, in that situation in place. Like he wanted to keep the light skin people one end and he wanted to make only that tribe to increase. They should marry only that race and forget about the dark people.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Within the choir, there doesn't seem to be that situation.

MW: No, we're all together hey [laughter]?

MSR: Do you think that, if people were to make more of an effort to socialise and sing together, they would be able to get to know each other a bit more, and to understand that really...

MW: And young people...some young people, I think, is that way, but...most of them are good. Because they come from a family that grandmother or father or someone is of another colour.

MSR: So do you think religion has given you the strength to continue despite the fact that [there is discrimination]...

MW: Yes, I think trusting in God, you know, you just forget about colours and what people saying about you. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

Other choir members were able to gather strength from their spirituality, which allowed them to deal with potentially awkward or confrontational situations. When discussing discriminatory behaviour in Hopevale Auntie Violet and Auntie Dora commented:

Violet Cobus: I don't care [about discrimination].

Dora Deemal: Not with us [in the choir] hey?

VC: Not with us.

DD: But there are [people who discriminate].

VC: There are few other people in the community that is, but we...

DD: We don't care.

VC: We don't care.

VC: If we want to go sing, we'll sing. It's up to the people who think. Well, that's their problem. We go forward with our singing. Don't have to worry about the others.

MSR: So do you think in a way, sometimes choir singing could be a way to unite, unite people?

DD: Yeah.

VC: Of course, of course that will.

MSR: Because we also have Pam [ela Kemp] in our choir, she's like white

Dora Deemal and Violet Cobus: Yeah!

VC: She enjoying herself.

MSR: She was worried actually, when she first joined. "Ho, I don't know whether the ladies want me there! I think it's only for people from Hopevale." But I said: "Pam, you're living here now too, so..."

VC: You belong to Hopevale now [laughter]!

MSR: So do you think there should be more mixing [of the races]?

DD: Mixing, yeah.

VC: That would be good. That would be great! To have mixing...and young people to join too...

MSR: So do you think there is more or less mixing [of the races] now then there was back then?

DD: Less.

VC: Less now. Before we had the [white] staff ladies.

DD: They were, we were known as a Lutheran church and we had Lutheran workers and that's how, but now anybody, you know...and it's nice to see Pam joining in with us, you know...We serving the one Lord. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

To the singers their identity as choir members was a way of actively living and performing a Christian life. Leading by example they were able to demonstrate the equality of all peoples under one God regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Choir members acknowledged the historical wrongs of the church towards Hopevalians, but believed the Christian faith itself does not promote discrimination. The choir's spirituality and their belief in spiritual and racial equality gave them strength to resolve potentially difficult and hurtful situations and helped them perform their Christianity through song

### 3.7 Musical preferences and choral singing

Other than age, gender and ethnicity differences in musical preferences also determined the ways in which choral singing impacted on the construction of Hopevalian identities. All choir members were familiar with and enjoyed singing older hymns from the *Australian Lutheran Hymnbook* (1950), the *Lutheran Hymnal* (1989), the chorus bundle *Sing to Jesus* (1983) and the hymns translated in Guugu Yimithirr from the hymnal *Gunbu Guugu Yimithirrbi* (1986). Many singers, like Auntie Myrtle also knew and enjoyed Sankey hymns and other songs from the more modern Christian song collections *All Together OK* (Mann, 1996). The older hymns in the Lutheran hymnals the singers had learnt from their elders, in school and in Church

whilst growing up. These hymns as a result carried with them the memories of their personal and shared histories through extra musical associations. Many choir members also enjoyed Country and Western, Country Rock or Country Gospel. With a few exceptions, choir members disliked reggae, hip hop and R & B music:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: What do you think about all that new music that people listen to like Rap or Hip Hop, or...do you like it?

Daisy Hamlot: I don't like that music.

MSR: Why is it that you don't like it?

DH: Because it's only for young people.

MSR: Is it the music you don't like or the words you don't like?

DH: The words too. Some rap music it's, you know, the beat and all that it's good, but the words they saying...

MSR: What is it you don't like about the words?

DH: Well they say 'F' [laughter]

MSR: You mean a lot of swearing?

DH: A lot of swearing, yeah, not 'F' (4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

The choir's knowledge of and liking for older hymnody and their enthusiasm for singing older songs did not preclude them being open to the introduction of newer materials, however.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Now tell me, what did you find interesting and nice about choir?

Dora Deemal: Learning African...

Violet Cobus: ...African songs, yeah

DD: Songs

VC: Different songs hey?

VC: We enjoyed them very much

MSR: What was it about the African ones you liked the best?

DD: All of them.

MSR: Was it because they are lively or...?

VC: Yes, it is...sounds lively.

MSR: Did it make you also feel happy on the inside when you were singing them?

DD: Yes.

VC: Always, we happy.

MSR: But what about the old hymns? You still enjoy singing those as well?

DD and VC: Yes.

MSR: What about those new ones that Pastor wanted us to learn from *Together in Song* what did you think of those?

VC: That was...

DD: Lovely too...something new you know?

MSR: So really it's something new you are after?

VC and DD: Yeah! (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

Younger community members enjoyed reggae, hip hop, R & B, Country Rock, Country and Western and Country Gospel music as well as the Christian Hill Song genre. Many youths said that whilst they might enjoy listening to the older hymns they did not wish to perform them with the choir. The musical reason for this was that young Hopevalians felt that the performance tempo of the hymns and choruses as sung in church or at public gatherings by the choir was too slow. Younger people also preferred the sounds of other accompanying instruments such as the (electric) guitar, drum kit, electric bass and keyboard to the organ which the choir used in church. The differences between the musical preferences between the

older and younger generation and the availability of musicians and instruments thus affected the extent to which choral singing could impact on the wellbeing of younger Hopevalians.

### 3.8 Perceived musical ability and choir membership

The last factor which influenced the ability of choral singing to have a positive effect on Hopevalians was individual self- perceptions of musical ability.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So nobody has ever spoken to you, about this or said: “No, I don’t want to come [to sing in the choir] because...”

Violet Cobus: Some say might be the voice no good, you know.

Dora Deemal: Yeah.

VC: ...I run Carole up, I asked her to join us. “I can’t sing properly” [she said], you know, out of tune? [I said] That choir’ll put you back to tune too!

MSR: Yeah true. If you do the exercises and listen to the others.

DD: Yeah exercise and listen. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Phylomena Naylor said:

Phylomena Naylor: I had a talk with some of, my younger families. I said: “Why don’t you join up?” Singing is good. You don’t have to be a good singer. You just come along. You’ll be taught how to do it and if you listen, you learning, you know. I try and encourage them. I tell them: “You got good voice, come along, join us! I tell all the young fella: “You’ve got a good voice, come!” We don’t want this thing [choir singing] to drop. We want it to be on-going. (5<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

The quotations above demonstrate that choir members believed that regular participation in choral singing would improve their vocal skills and that to possess an exceptionally beautiful voice was not a prerequisite for joining. Choral singers saw their ensemble as one which focussed on combined efforts rather than individual excellence. All community members were seen as having the potential to become competent singers if they were willing to sing, listen and learn.

The above view demonstrates an egalitarian approach to music-making and performance in Hopevale. All Hopevalians were considered to be musicians capable of learning music, although some might be recognised as being better than others at certain things. I never discerned evidence of attitudes which indicated that Hopevalians felt it was possible for a person to be ‘unmusical’ or ‘a bad musician’ and as such all community members carried the identity of ‘musician’ regardless of whether they performed regularly or not. Younger community members, however, pleaded bad singing skills as a reason not to join. Many youngsters were also shy. Whenever I attempted to invite youngsters I would be met with shy laughter and exclamations of: “No! Shame, miss, shame!” which in Aboriginal English meant that the youngsters were too embarrassed to join or perform. At the time of research, however, it was unclear whether the majority of people who said they were vocally unqualified to join the choir were indirectly and politely declining the invitation because they simply did not wish to join or whether they truly believed themselves to be bad singers. As a facilitator I interpreted the comments on competency as being a mixture of both motivations.

### 3.9 Relationships between individuality, choir membership and identity

In the above section I have separated the roles which age, gender, perceived musical ability, religion, ethnicity, race and repertoire play in determining choir membership and identity. This I have done for the sake of clarity. The separation should not be interpreted as an indication that these factors operated independently, however. All aspects impact simultaneously on the daily lives of the singers to a greater or lesser extent. The interrelationships between different social factors also means that choral singing, like all other musical practices, is a dynamic tradition which is continually evolving and responding to contextual factors such as the

presence or absence of choral facilitators, the general state of social wellbeing and the social attitudes to Aboriginal Christianity within the Hopevale community.

Choral singing in Hopevale, therefore, is a potent way in which the identities of choristers are shaped and re-shaped. Choral singers perform their spiritual, gendered, and generational identities through singing in the choir and negotiate and deliberately challenge the community's divisions along ethnic, spiritual and to some extent generational lines. Choir members, through their performances, invitations and singing in the home are directly influencing the lives of others by engaging them in their performance as audiences and sometimes participants. Due to these actions by its participants, choral singing in Hopevale, like many other musical genres, is a dynamic tradition and responsive to contextual factors. These contextual factors include both national and local politics. National Australian politics and social history influence choral singing in Hopevale less directly than local politics, but have an important influence on the ways in which the Hopevale Community Choir is perceived by their own community and wider Australia or visitors to Australia. The choir's identities as Indigenous Christian vocalists and the perception of their identities by others, interacts with the ways in which the Hopevale singers perceive themselves as performers. In this the choir is not unique. In the next chapter I will therefore look at other Indigenous music-making more generally in relation to Aboriginal spirituality, Australian governmental policies, and Australian history to give an insight into how Indigenous identities are still profoundly influenced by Australia's history today.



**The construction of Aboriginal identities through music in relation to  
Aboriginal spirituality and Australian social history**

Australian social and governmental history and politics have had an enormous impact on the perception of how Aboriginal identities are constructed and viewed today and this is reflected in the musical practices of Indigenous people throughout Australia. Aboriginal communities and individuals are still suffering from the long-term repercussions of the social policies implemented in the past which have led to Aboriginal social deprivation, high mortality and suicide rates as well as substance dependency and community violence. This in turn has led to highly politicised ways in which Aboriginality is constructed through musical performance, the media, scholarship and Australian law. It is therefore extremely important to explore the various ways in which Indigenous engagement with music is affected by political, social and historical developments Australia-wide and the ways in which Aboriginal identities are constructed and performed today.

In this chapter I will show, through referencing the work of other scholars, that music is an important tool used to perform and politicise Indigenous identities Australia-wide. Due to the importance of the relationship between spirituality, geography or 'Country', and music I shall commence by outlining the basic concepts of The Dreaming and Country and then explore how popular, Christian and Country and Western music demonstrate the links between performer, Country and politicised constructs of Indigenous identities. Following on I discuss Australian historical, social and political developments in relation to Aboriginal affairs and how these have impacted on performance practices at a national, generalised level. I shall also

discuss theories of Social Darwinism and how it impacted on policies and indirectly on music making.

Because of the context-sensitive nature of my applied work in Hopevale and this thesis' emphasis on Aboriginal diversity, I limit the discussion in this chapter to broader theories. The broader theories and policies in this chapter impacted less directly on every-day rehearsals and music-making when I was based in Hopevale, but became very pertinent when the choir went on tour to perform at tourist resorts, churches and a correctional facility and rehabilitation centre. Similarly, it is with these broader theories of identity construction and politicisation that choir members were least familiar. I have therefore opted to separate the meta-theory here. In chapters five and six I focus on the implications of the meta-theory for Hopevalian choral performance and on how the repercussions of historical events impacted on the ways in which Hopevalian choral identities were constructed at the time of research.

#### 4.1 The Dreaming, Country and Aboriginal identities

It is important for me to effectively communicate my message of visual activism. I aspire to educate a society that is rapidly disconnecting itself from the harsh reality of continued injustice, intolerance, ignorance and social decay....

My spiritual ancestors [have been my greatest heroes], and my blood connection to my homeland. They walk with me, talk with me, sleep beside me and constantly advise me and drive me. (12<sup>th</sup> March 2008, <http://www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/news/ealert/artist-spotlight-featuring-adam-hill.php>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

In the above quotation, Sydney-based Indigenous artist, cartoonist and musician Adam Hill comments on his use of stark, highly politicised, colourful images which reference more traditional Indigenous cultural aspects alongside modern Aboriginal culture. His painting style, colour use and iconography in combination with his musical performance and

presentation style, display challenging political messages about Aboriginal rights and diversity through the arts. Hill's quotation refers to the trend of urban Indigenous people seeking and reaffirming their traditional roots with their geographical landscape or 'Country' and spiritual Ancestors. It is a return to and/or an affirmation of the spiritual relationship that exists between Aborigines, their kin and their land or Country, through the arts. Another example is the Sydney-based Aboriginal dance company *Bangarra*, which has had enormous success with their choreographically unique settings of more traditional imagery and spiritual themes to modern dance and music. The relationship between Country and person is deeply embedded in Aboriginal spirituality and is highly relevant to the construction of both urban and rural Aboriginal identities. Because the relationship between person and Country is so significant in Indigenous Australia and because it is inextricably linked with the arts and performativity, it is necessary to outline the basic concepts of The Dreaming and Country, before discussing different types of musical genres performed by Aborigines Australia-wide and how this ties in with general constructs of identity and Australian political history.

The 'Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime' is a generalised Western term used to describe the non-Christian geographically orientated religion practised by many, but not all, Aborigines. There are many names given to this religion by different Aboriginal groups depending on their linguistic and kinship backgrounds. Words used for this creative period, for example, are *djuguba (tjukubi)* in the Rawlinson Range, *duma* in the Balgo area and *wongar* in north-eastern Arnhem Land (Berndt, 1999: 229). Knowledge of the Dreaming also varies from area to area and from person to person. In some locations such as the Northern Territory the Dreaming is still an integral part of every day living.

The Dreaming refers to the period in which traditionally oriented Aborigines believe Ancestral creative beings travelled the earth and created the geographical landscape, all flora and fauna and humans. The Ancestral beings encountered one other and interacted. These

interactions created further geographical features and set the standards by which humans should live, or the Law. These past events are re-enacted through performance in the present and are conceived to be on-going rather than only historical. Ancestral activity therefore takes place in the present as well. The creative Ancestors are believed to have metamorphic capacities, whereby they change life forms from the inert and geographical to the animal and human whilst travelling. Consequently, all humans are said to be related to nature, both physically and spiritually, since they are conceived through these Ancestral spirits. The spirits embody the natural surroundings in which humans find themselves. An Aboriginal person's identity, therefore, is intimately related to his or her geographical surroundings.

The geographical surroundings are referred to as 'Country'. The concept of Country does not refer to a tradable commodity with definite geographical boundaries which are tied to notions of material ownership, sale and purchase as would be the case under European Australian law. Instead it relies on topographical subtleties that are often unrecognisable to non-Aborigines. Similarly, the spiritual constituents that the word Country embodies are fluid and contested. Aboriginal Country, for example, can refer to a geographical area, but also to the Ancestral spirits and people who inhabit this area, the flora, fauna and natural elements and phenomena that make up this Country, combined with the sacred Dreaming events that took place there.

The Dreaming events are recorded in localised oral histories and in song, dance and painting. During ceremonial activity, when the histories are re-enacted, it is believed the sacred power of the Ancestral past is re-invigorated and positively affirmed. Through the re-enactment of the past it is believed that the Ancestors will continue existing in spirit, human, animal or geographical form for the indefinite future. The past, present and future are therefore inextricably linked and not to be viewed chronologically. They run in parallel and intersect in ceremonies in which music, dance, song, art and the spoken word recall the past in the present

which is believed to help in the creation of a positive future. Spirituality and ceremony are therefore important ways through which an Indigenous person's identity is performed because ceremonies refer to the concept of Country and thereby a person's geographical surroundings and the people and Ancestors who inhabit it.

Although the more traditional Aboriginal ceremonies may place an emphasis on the non-chronological, unchanging, stable nature of the Dreaming religion and life, variations in mythology inevitably are created due to the largely oral and performative transmission of the Dreaming traditions. The creation of variations is stimulated by changing social circumstances and geographical surroundings. Ceremonial activities reflect the present as much as they do the past and can be used to determine what social action is to be taken in the future. This has been highly significant as Aboriginal surroundings have undergone enormous changes due to contact with the dominant society. Nevertheless, the stress is on a need to replicate in the present what happened in the past in all the most essential features to promote a continuity of existence (Berndt, 1999: 228-229).

How these essential features of the mythological past are replicated today to promote continuity in ceremonies of music, dance, song and language is area-specific. In fact, it is necessary to speak of Aboriginal religions in the plural rather than singular. Ancestral beings are responsible for both linguistic and religious pluralism and the different conceptions of the Dreaming. Not only are there differences among Aboriginal religions; differences also exist within particular groups, where age, marital status, motherhood, level of initiation and gender determine how a particular individual's Dreaming shapes that person's Aboriginality. As a result, many Indigenous Australian religious practices can be explicated in very different ways depending on who is consulted within an Aboriginal community (*cf* Charlesworth, 2005).

Urban Aborigines often have little knowledge of their locally specific traditional Dreaming as it may have been in pre-contact times. If Dreaming spirituality is experienced in

urban areas it is based on new interpretations of the Dreamtime. These interpretations are sometimes influenced by scholarship provided by Westernised academia and essentialised, romanticised versions of pre-contact religion. In some cases, urban Aborigines might be influenced by Indigenous spirituality from the more traditional areas such as the Northern Territory. In the Northern Territory the shorter contact period between Aborigines and white colonisers has allowed Indigenous groups to maintain their religious performance practices more successfully.

What remains constant in all areas, both urban and rural, however, is an abiding spiritual and strong emotional connection to Country. Marcia Langton (1981: 21) points out that it may not be the Dreaming as described above that has persisted into urbanised Aboriginal life. Instead, an altered world view which has been derived from the Dreaming still remains, fostering strong ties between Country and person, animal and spirit. This relationship between person and Country is evident in other types of Aboriginal spirituality, including Indigenous interpretations of the Christian Gospel.

Christianity has been incorporated into the Dreaming and Aboriginal world views and spirituality to a greater or lesser extent depending on historical circumstances. Several scholars have now written about Aboriginal Christianity. Magowan discusses the relationship between a more traditional spirituality and Christianity in her articles (1994, 1999, 2001). In one of these, Magowan argues against the notion that Yolngu Christianity is syncretic and suggests that instead it should be viewed as a “subculture of Christianity” (1999: 11). Magowan (2001) further expands on this idea by positing that Yolngu spirituality is experienced through the “sentiments associated with Ancestral places that act as emotive sites for remapping an Ancestral aesthetic as Christian experience”. It is Yolngu Country, therefore, that makes Christianity emotionally meaningful to Yolngu.

Other scholars who have addressed Indigenous Christianity include McDonald (2001), who looks at Christianisation in Halls Creek in the East Kimberley, dealing with experiences of colonialism and post-colonialism. She investigates Aboriginal spirituality and the three denominations in Halls Creek: Catholic, United Aborigines Mission, and Assemblies of God. Grau writes about Catholicism on Melville and Bathurst Island amongst the Tiwi (2001), examining dance and religious systems. Rose and Swain (1988) present a collection of articles focussing on different aspects of Aboriginal Christianity in its social and intellectual contexts. Tonkinson (1974) describes Protestantism in the 1960s in Jigalong, an old Western Desert mission settlement. Aborigines in Jigalong were successfully able to maintain their Dreaming Law which allowed them to keep their “ethnic identity and pride” (1974: foreword) despite missionary efforts to eradicate Dreaming ceremonial practices. Harris (1994) documents 200 years of contact between Aborigines and Christianity and the diversity of ways in which Christianity has developed throughout Australia. Hart (1997) offers a text looking at Aboriginal Christian evangelism and agency and how Aboriginal individuals from various locations have started to evangelise amongst each other. Aboriginal Christian leaders such as Gondarra (1981, 1986, 1988) from the Northern Territory, Rosendale (1986, in Habel 1997) from Hopevale and Thompson (2004) from Cairns have been working towards developing a more integrated Indigenous Christian spirituality which is not conceptualised in opposition to the Dreaming, but in harmony with it.

Aboriginal spirituality, therefore, is an important constituent of an Aboriginal identity. Spirituality defines the social life of individuals and his or her relationship with Country, the colonial and missionary past, the turbulent present as well as the future. Spirituality and Country in Aboriginal Australia strongly influence a person’s performative identity and musical experiences because they are defining factors in how individuals perceive themselves,

how they are perceived by family, friends and colleagues or how they are perceived by audiences in performative circumstances.

#### 4.2 The relationships between music, Aboriginality, performativity and identity

In more traditionally orientated communities the importance of spirituality is reflected in ceremony through the use of song, dance and painting. These are used to perform and reform Aboriginal social structure and identities. There exists a large body of anthropological and ethnomusicological information on the importance of performativity and Country within traditional Aboriginal ceremonies. Dussart (2000) for example, looks at how gender, kinship, song, dance and politics form a “currency” of knowledge and can be used to acquire a higher ceremonial and social status in the community of Yuendumu in the Northern Territory. Barwick (2000) has recorded Dreaming songs by the *Warumungu* women near Tennant Creek in Central Australia who asked for their songs of the *Mungamunga* Ancestors to be recorded. According to the *Warumungu* women these Ancestors want their songs to be sung to ensure the health of Country and kin are maintained (2000: CD notes, no page number). Grau (1983, 1998) looks at how the concepts of song and dance amongst the Tiwi of Melville and Bathurst Island vary to Western ones and how song, dance and spirituality are able to renegotiate kinship affiliations through performance. Toner (2003) investigates the performance of Yolngu melody and demonstrates how each male performer has a distinctive melodic pattern which is related to his kinship group, Country and thus spirituality. Amongst the Yolngu, Magowan writes that women acquire song knowledge by a process of public performance and private teaching (1997: 139). This ritual knowledge is regulated by Yolngu to determine rights over land, marriageable partners and clan and individual identities. “Thus, an understanding of personal identity is intimately associated



with the degree of freedom or limitation on individuals' access to, use and appreciation of mythological knowledge as experienced in ritual." (Magowan, 1997: 145).

Magowan writes that access to and the use of spiritual knowledge about Country in Yolngu ritual is also relevant to constructs of identity in the performance of Yolngu Christian music. In Yolngu Christian worship all are invited to attend and participate without the restrictions which might apply to non-Christian traditional ceremony. Spiritual Christian knowledge and power are therefore available to all. By contrast, those elders whose spiritual powers come from the Ancestors believe that spiritual power and its sacredness lie in the ability to harness and channel these powers. This channelling is accomplished through maintaining ambiguity and restriction of knowledge. The ambiguity of the Ancestral powers lies in the fact that they can be used for both good ends such as ritual healing or for bad purposes such as curses (1999: 14-15).

This same ambiguity is embedded in non-Christian Ancestral songs, which have different levels of meaning. These levels may have positive or negative effects when performed depending on who performs them. In certain forms of Aboriginal theology, those which base themselves on localised Yolngu interpretations of the Scripture using analogies between traditional Yolngu religion and the Gospel, there has been a call for an increase in the creation of new musical expressions which use the power of Ancestral words to mediate between Christian and Ancestral Law. However, whilst these Ancestral words draw parallels with Christian events, it is precisely because of the Ancestral power which is implicit in the words, for those who can recognise and control them, that ambiguity is generated (Magowan, 1999: 13-15). The use of Ancestral words in Yolngu Christian music and the words' ambiguous references result in different Yolngu Christian identities being performed depending on the words used, the performers present and listeners involved, because the Ancestral words have different connotations for different people.

The representation of Aboriginality through performativity in popular music, as opposed to traditional and traditionally-oriented Christian music, has also been addressed by several scholars. Publications on the topic include Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2004) who look at Aboriginal popular music genres and the construction of identity. The authors address the critical need to assess the use of some academic terminology and its relationship to Aboriginal musicality and identity. They write that what is considered as being “contemporary” Aboriginal music, for example, is contested. Aboriginal people have consumed and performed folk music, Gospel, and choral music for at least a century and Country and Western for at least fifty years. At what point these music genres become designated as traditional is unclear as they may already have been considered to be so within Aboriginal communities for quite some time (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004:17).

Toner’s paper (2005) contextualises this discussion when investigating how identities are performed through popular music amongst the Yolngu and how Aboriginal performance presents different constructs of identity depending on who is listening, watching and interpreting a musical performance. Toner uses the community of Gapuwiyak in the Northern Territory as an example. The local school children of Gapuwiyak won a national song competition for best rendition of the theme tune to the television programme *Burke’s Backyard*. The song, ‘Home Among the Gum Trees’ was translated into a Yolngu dialect and sung alternately in the dialect and English. The song was accompanied by a guitar, didgeridoo and clapsticks and incorporated local, traditional, ceremonial knowledge.

Toner suggests that two types of dialogue, internal and external, were being presented during the performance, which constructed multiple Yolngu identities for audiences. The external dialogue was between the Gapuwiyak community and wider Australia and the internal dialogue was amongst the Yolngu themselves. The external dialogue made Yolngu culture accessible to a wider Australian audience through television, the use of a nationally-

known song rendered in Yolngu dialect and the use of the guitar and didgeridoo (Toner, 2005: 42-43). The internal dialogue facilitated through choice of song topic, specific performance attire and particular body paint patterns presented a specific Yolngu identity and could only be understood by other Yolngu (Toner, 2005: 42-43).<sup>1</sup> Multiple levels of identity construction were in operation during the performance of this song.

Toner's example shows how Aborigines modify their musical forms in response to Western culture. Toner suggests this is a form of empowerment which allows Yolngu to present their culture on their own terms (2005: 42). Toner's example demonstrates the difficulties of labelling elements of performances 'traditional' or 'non-traditional' because the Gapuwiyak community were able to present their older, Ancestral ceremonial practices and synthesise these with contemporary Westernised representations of culture in a televised awards ceremony which incorporated a popular song.

Given, then, that it is not always possible to determine accurately which Aboriginal identities are being performed and what constitutes a 'traditional Aboriginal' element in performance and what does not, the question arises: how is Aboriginality performed? Are there particular features which make a performance 'Aboriginal'? Dunbar-Hall and Gibson suggest that much Aboriginal popular and other music relates to the concept of Country. Magowan (1997) demonstrates how Yothu Yindi's songs refer to Country. Yothu Yindi incorporate Yolngu languages and lists of names of clans and Countries into their lyrics. For instance, in the song *Tribal Voice* (1992) from the album of the same name, fourteen of the thirty-two clans of North Eastern Arnhem Land region are named. In the Yothu Yindi's song *Driftwood*, sung entirely in Yolngu language, the band also uses imagery in the text which refers to a mixture of Ancestral identities belonging to different clans and therefore Countries

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<sup>1</sup> The song subject chosen for the performance was taken from an important traditional ceremonial song series that concerns Gängen the local estate. The choice of song subject reflected the demographics of Gapuwiyak in terms of population numbers, kinship affiliations and religiosity. The song was eventually performed for television in a ceremonial setting, where ceremonial dancing and painting were presented alongside the rendition of the winning song (Toner, 2005: 36-39).

(Magowan, 1997: 148-149). The naming, references to ceremonial knowledge and the use of Yolngu languages confirm the importance of Yolngu individuals, land, and spirituality. All these elements make up Yolngu identities.

The significance of the references to ceremonial knowledge, geography and naming may not be apparent to non-Yolngu. Nor do audiences necessarily understand the important relationship which exists between Yolngu and their Country. In Yothu Yindi's case however, the band's music is still enjoyed by non-Yolngu in wider Australia and abroad by audiences unfamiliar with traditional Aboriginal ceremonial knowledge. To non-Yolngu the use of the didgeridoo, a Yolngu dialect, and body paint combined with the deliberate donning of the loin cloth during performances, are the performative features which are interpreted as being Aboriginal. To non-Yolngu the Yothu Yindi band is seen as performing an Indigenous, Australian identity (Magowan, 1997: 151-152).

Another musical genre which refers less to Country, but is significant in the construction of Indigenous identities is Country and Western music. Walker posits that its popularity with Aborigines stems from the fact that Indigenous people in remote areas grew up with it. The genre was brought to rural areas by stockmen and settlers and was adopted by Indigenous people (Walker, 2000: 14). Country and Western songs are able to construct politicised Indigenous identities through lyrics. Many Country and Western songs by Indigenous artists are protest songs and describe the struggles of identity that Aborigines face:

Prison's nothing special, to any Nyoonga<sup>2</sup> I know,  
Because the white man makes it prison, most everywhere we go. (Walker, 2000:  
119 citing Cherie Watkins)

But to be a halfcaste you're an outcast. Why it brings you shame and disgrace.  
The white man laughs out upon you, and you're never welcome in your own  
black race (Dougie Young (1935 – 1991), *Halfcaste* (undated))

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<sup>2</sup> South Australian person of Aboriginal descent

It is through lyrics such as these that Indigenous musicians can make their discontent known and express the difficulties they face when trying to find acceptance in society as Indigenous Australians.

Aboriginality can therefore be performed on different levels using various musical genres. Certain performative approaches are easily understood as signifying Aboriginality such as specific concert-staging and attire as well as the use of Aboriginal languages. On other occasions, overtly politicised lyrics may be used to perform Indigenous identities. The interpretations and constructs of Aboriginality through performance differ between audience members and are dependent on an audience's background and knowledge. In the context of the applied research in Hopevale, these varying modes of interpretation and performance of identity became highly relevant when performing outside of Hopevale whilst on tour. This was particularly the case when performing at tourist resorts where audiences were more likely to be familiar with what they had gleaned from the Australian media and tourist industry. Both industries, for political, social and economical reasons, do not usually reflect Indigenous diversity and modernity as well as they could. The reasons for this lie in Australia's political and social history

#### 4.3 Constructs of Aboriginality, history and Australian politics

[T]he prevailing mode of incorporation [of Aborigines into Australian society] has been governmental for at least a century, and the place of Aborigines in Australian society – that of a minority managed through specialised institutional structures must be termed colonial....Time and again the state has been called upon to take charge of unwanted indigent Aborigines. However it has not only brought the indigent into institutionalised dependency, but at times included those capable of living independently. (1988: 192-193)

Beckett's comment above refers to the hegemonic production of knowledge about Aborigines by wider Australian society and its result: institutionalised structures dealing with Aboriginal

affairs which are managed with too little input from Indigenous people themselves. Historically, much of this same knowledge production could not be contradicted by Indigenous people as they were not permitted access to secondary and higher education, supported the implementation of different eras in Australian governmental policies pertaining to ‘Aboriginal welfare’.

Historically, the ‘governmental incorporation’ of Aborigines into wider Australian society encompassed different political approaches which were called protectionism, assimilation, integration, and self-management or self-determination. These were supported by frequently-changing governmental policies and slogans. A select list of policies and slogans are provided in the table below.

**Figure 4.1. Table listing various Australian political eras and slogans with regards to the treatment of and policy towards Indigenous people<sup>3</sup>.**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Australian Government Policies</b>
1788 - 1992	<b><i>Terra Nullius</i></b> : The legal and philosophical interpretations of this term and subsequent governmental policies have varied. It could mean that Australia had been a land without inhabitants or land which was inhabited by people who were believed to have no system of laws of ownership, or a land which was uncultivated farming land. As such, under European law, this land was available for appropriation and settlement by English colonisers. Justice Blackburn in the Gove land rights case in 1971 ruled that Australia had been <i>terra nullius</i> and that there was no concept of Native Title in Australian law.
1830s -1960s	<b>Protectionism</b> : Aborigines placed under the protection of the colonial state governments on reserves and missions. Policies restricted personal freedom and legally sanctioned the removal of children from Aboriginal parents amongst other things.
1897	<b><i>Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act</i></b> passed in Queensland. Under the act Aborigines could be legally confined on mission stations and reserves as part of their ‘protection’. Children of Aboriginal descent could now be legally removed from the care of their Aboriginal communities.
1930s - 1970s	<b>Assimilation</b> : Aborigines were sent to work for white households and at farms and cattle stations and encouraged to assimilate into white

<sup>3</sup> Some dates are necessarily approximate and will overlap as details and dates of legislative policies were state-dependent. Furthermore, if policies were introduced federally, their implementation was difficult to monitor at a local level and thus exact dates at which policies began or ended cannot be provided in this section which deals with meta theory.

	society through abandonment of their Aboriginal heritage.
1960s – 1970s	<b>Integration:</b> Policies based on assimilation which encouraged Indigenous communities to adopt European modes of living such as settled cultivation of the soil, cattle farming and operating in a cash economy whilst simultaneously retaining some local Aboriginal practices which did not conflict with European ones.
1967	<b>The 1967 Referendum:</b> The Commonwealth government of Australia is given the power to make laws with respect to Aboriginal people. Aborigines could now be included when the government needed to determine electoral representation.
1970s-onwards	<b>Self-determination/ self-management:</b> Aborigines are given the right to take responsibility for setting the course for further change to Indigenous policies, to specify agenda for action and to control policy implementation. Self-determination resulted in the creation of self-managing Indigenous organisations (national and local) and the devolution of administrative power to local communities. However, the slogan was used to advocate the withdrawal of land rights legislation from Aborigines because it was argued by the government that issuing Native Title was divisive and did not promote the concept of ‘One Nation’.
Late 1980s-onwards	<b>‘One Australia’ or ‘Level Playing Field’:</b> Based on the Australian slogan of ‘Giving everyone a fair go’. This policy advocated that all Australians should be treated equally and that there should not be positive discrimination for any one group, particularly for Aborigines.
1990s-onwards	<b>Reconciliation:</b> A slogan devised by Robert Tickner, Aboriginal Affairs Minister between 1990 and 1996. It covered a governmental strategy aimed at improving race relations between Aborigines and wider Australian society, through the cultivation of awareness of Aboriginal and Islander culture and an appreciation of the causes of Aboriginal social disadvantages (Tatz, 2005: 11-12). The term ‘reconciliation’ became inextricably linked with the political drive for a formally issued apology to Aborigines, by the Australian government for the atrocities committed to Indigenous people and the removal of Indigenous children from their parents.
1992	<b>Native Title and Mabo:</b> During an Aboriginal rights case called <i>Mabo</i> , after Koiki (Eddie) Mabo (1937-1992), a Torres Strait Islander man, the High Courts of Australia issued a judgement which overturned the <i>terra nullius</i> ruling of 1971. The Courts found that Native Title did exist under common law and that its source was the traditional connection to or occupation of a geographical area. This has allowed some Aboriginal groups to reclaim land appropriated under the <i>terra nullius</i> doctrine and to have their ceremonial activities and traditional law recognised as a valid, existing system. Problems have occurred, however, in cases where, for example, due to forced relocation during colonisation or removal, Aboriginal people were forcibly disconnected from their traditional areas and therefore cannot demonstrate a connection or physical occupation of the land ceremonially or otherwise. Some Aboriginal communities have become divided due to local struggles for land ownership.
13 <sup>th</sup> February	<b>The Formal Apology, “Sorry”:</b> The Australian national government

2008	under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd formally apologises to “The Stolen Generation”, their descendants and their families on behalf of the Parliament of Australia. This happened after the former Howard government had refused to do so since 1996.
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The above historical governmental policies listed above and their implementation, have impacted on Indigenous communities in varied ways. Factors influencing this impact include geographical location of an Aboriginal group, length and nature of contact with white settlers and state policies in combination with individual Aboriginal agency. I now explore how these policies affected constructions of Aboriginality at a meta-theoretical level.

The first policy, protectionism, and its defining measures, were first set out in a recommendation to the House of Commons in 1837. The state and governmental measures included sending missionaries to evangelise Aborigines, ‘protecting’ Aborigines from settler culture through placing them on reservations, taking away children with an Aboriginal heritage from their parents, implementing a European educational system for the young and devising special laws for the supervision of Aborigines until such a time that they could be integrated into mainstream, white society. Special governmental roles were created to administrate Aboriginal affairs. The official title ‘Protector of Aborigines’, for example, was given to the official governing Aboriginal welfare in Queensland where Hopevale lies. This title remained in use until 1966.

Policies of institutionalisation and segregation were developed following ‘data collection’ from locations where Aborigines resided after frontier contact. This frontier contact often led to many Aborigines dying as a result of violent conflict or perishing more slowly as a result of introduced diseases, such as influenza, to which they had no immunity. Other causes of death were starvation and thirst when Aborigines were denied access to their traditional hunting grounds and water sources, and venereal diseases caused by the rape and prostitution of Aboriginal women and children. The introduction of alcohol and opium also led to



substance dependency amongst Aborigines, particularly where alcohol was given in lieu of payment for services rendered.

Protectionist policies were designed to ‘save’ Aborigines from settler society and actions such as those in Queensland euphemistically labelled ‘dispersion’.<sup>4</sup> During ‘dispersions’ and struggles for land in Queensland, many Aborigines were killed by the white and Aboriginal police.<sup>5</sup> One of the stated aims of the reservations and missions created under protectionist policies was to provide Aborigines reprieve from the onslaught of settler society and to try and reduce the devastating effects of violence, excessive alcohol consumption and venereal disease. The reserves and missions did succeed in this aim and helped save Aboriginal lives. This is recognised by Aboriginal people today, including Hopevalians. Many older residents living on what were missions and reserves are therefore grateful for government and missionary intervention in this respect. Aborigines on former missions acknowledge that they may not have been alive today, had it not been for the safety offered to their ancestors and/or themselves. They also acknowledge, however, the great harm done to their people and culture through institutionalisation. Indigenous views of protectionist policies are therefore nuanced and locally specific and particularised. Equally, many scholars, officials and missionaries in the past acted out of humanitarian concern, compassion and a genuine belief that they were aiding those who required their help. They based their reasoning on the politics and practicable solutions available to them at that time in history. To therefore label all intervention as negative would be incorrect. Viewed retrospectively therefore, the institutionalisation of Aborigines on reservations and missions was not an entirely successful and quite harmful remedy to a social crisis in the long term. At time, however, it provided an

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<sup>4</sup> In the Hopevale area an incident of this ‘dispersion’ technique was recorded by early missionary Poland in his *Loose Leaves* (trans. Roehrs, 1988: 109-111).

<sup>5</sup> The Aboriginal police were employed to track down Indigenous people as they were familiar with bush skills which the white police lacked. The Indigenous police were often more successful at locating other Aborigines because of their tracking skills. Aborigines in the police were often people who did not have family ties with the people in the areas where they worked.

immediate solution to what had become an urgent humanitarian need. It is therefore necessary to view Australian missionary and governmental intervention in a more nuanced way, particularly since it more accurately reflects the views of Aborigines now living on former reservations and missions.

Government and missionary intervention and the physical safety and survival offered, however, came at a price: in many cases it led to the loss of personal freedom and enforced assimilation and institutionalisation. All state governments<sup>6</sup>, for example, at some point introduced legislation akin to that of the 1897 Queensland *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*. The 1897 Act allowed the Queensland state government to manage the wages Aborigines received, to monitor and dictate Aboriginal mobility into and from reserves and missions and to take into care children with an Aboriginal heritage. All this could be done without Aboriginal consent.

The institutionalisation and decimation of Indigenous people had serious consequences for the transmission of musical practices which were included in cultural and ceremonial knowledge. This hindered the maintenance of kinship affiliations and connections with Country and spirituality through performance. Languages, music, song, dance and other aspects of cultural expression could not be transmitted as entire families perished.

Missionaries also forbade knowledgeable elders to communicate their cultural knowledge to the younger generations. Where Aborigines were forcibly placed on missions and reserves, the kinship system was not taken into consideration. This resulted in conflict between disparate Aboriginal groups and meant that much musical information could not be communicated as the fellow residents on reservations and missions might not have the appropriate kinship affiliations or links to Country to be partial to important ceremonial knowledge. In the long term this resulted in a significant loss of musical and other ceremonial

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<sup>6</sup> Policies were created on a state-by-state and/or church-by-church basis, as Australia did not federate until 1901. Many missions were run independently of the government through their various denominations. This later changed when the state governments took control of mission administration.

knowledge which influenced identities through the performance or the non-performance of music.

The second policy, assimilation, was also part of the ‘protection era’. Assimilation policies stipulated that Aborigines had to acquire the skills necessary to work and live effectively in white society. Some Indigenous people were taught how to read and write and became numerate. After rudimentary schooling, men went to become skilled manual labourers and women were trained as domestics. Assimilation also demanded the complete abandonment or rejection of Aboriginal culture by those who wished to assimilate successfully. Assimilationist policies were not based on equality. Basic rights to further education, employment, land ownership and equal wages or managerial positions, for example, remained inaccessible to Aborigines even if they assimilated.

The persisting inequalities caused disillusionment amongst Aborigines. It became apparent to Indigenous Australians that it was their Aboriginal ethnicity and identity which was causing their disadvantage and hopelessness, not their lack of competency and effort. This often led to anger and frustration. Due to the continuing persecution of Aborigines and increased Indigenous social disadvantage and substance dependency, many Aborigines came to feel that their Aboriginality was shameful and undesirable, rather than something of which they could be proud (*cf* Brock, 1994; Phillips, 2003 and Tatz, 2005). Jordan records that exemption certificates were given to specific Aborigines “in light of their character and standard of intelligence and development” (Jordan, 1988: 112). These certificates allowed some Indigenous people exemption from the restrictions normally imposed on other Aboriginal people, because those with certificates were deemed to be more intelligent or ‘developed’ than other Aborigines. In possessing these ‘positive’ attributes, certificate holders could be classified as non-Aboriginal. If people were classified as being non-Aboriginal the usual restrictions such as prohibition imposed on other Aborigines did not apply. Legislation

such as this indicates that Aboriginality was seen as a negative aspect of a personal identity by the dominant society (Jordan, 1988: 112). To deny one's Aboriginality through assimilation became a desirable course of action in the eyes of white society and also in the eyes of some Aborigines.

Aboriginal identities were further fragmented due to the varying extent to which Indigenous people chose to assimilate. Those who assimilated to a high degree became disassociated from their Indigenous familial and cultural background. Assimilation sometimes occurred by choice as Indigenous people wished to disassociate themselves deliberately from their Aboriginal heritage as a result of their training and adopted life-style which made re-integration into Aboriginal society difficult because they were no longer accepted by their own kin. Those who chose not to assimilate, or chose to assimilate to a lesser extent, were marginalised even further by white society. Regardless of the extent to which Indigenous people assimilated, equality with white Australians was not achieved, and often much cultural knowledge and a sense of belonging and identity would be lost. This caused loneliness for many Indigenous Australians and a further loss of identity as customs were not transferred between kin.

Integration followed assimilation and was a phrase adopted by the Fraser government to describe its policies towards Aborigines in the 1970s. It replaced assimilation because of the growing awareness that it was difficult and traumatic for Aboriginal Australians to abandon their Aboriginal heritage wholesale. Assimilation came to be seen by the Australian government as ineffective and too excessive a policy. The integration policies instead aimed to bring 'advancement' to Indigenous communities while allowing them to retain their local Aboriginal identities. Manual training in European labour and house keeping skills and education were further introduced to Aborigines. Many segregated schools, training homes and segregated hospital wards were closed as a result. Integration did not, however, lead to an

automatic acceptance of Aboriginal people in wider Australian society. Aboriginality and its negative associations had been internalised by many white Australians and Indigenous people alike. Discrimination and marginalisation in schools and the workplace were still very much a daily occurrence. This led to many Aborigines becoming further demotivated or angry, because the continued marginalisation led to further unemployment, substance abuse and an increased dependency on the welfare system. Continued marginalisation created a vicious circle which perpetuated negative stereotypes of Aboriginality.

This perpetuation of negative stereotyping and the frequent changes in government approach to Aboriginal Affairs has also created intergenerational conflict. Some older Indigenous people today still have an ingrained tendency to deny their Aboriginality, whereas many members of the younger generation are more militant and disillusioned with their elders' unwillingness or inability to openly discuss and assert their Indigeneity. Indigenous artist Adam Hill in a television programme said:

I don't really recall talking to my parents about Aboriginal issues. It was not something that was discussed at the dinner table. I started to realise the shallowness of understanding that my parents had about Indigenous society, so there was no point ever really raising the discussion and consequently, in years to come, we started to enter quite a few heated debates. (Broadcast Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2008, 13:30, ABC1, transcript: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagstick/stories/s2432918.htm>, accessed 06<sup>th</sup> December 2008)

The above outcomes, however, are not an indication that all state legislation was accepted by Aborigines historically. Neither does it suggest that Indigenous people were incapable of altering circumstances. There are numerous instances of resistance recorded at local level (*cf* Harris, 1994 and Brock, 1993). Mostly, Aborigines in Australia at that time, did not have state or national representatives to express their dissatisfaction through Western, bureaucratic channels. Due to low literacy levels and unfamiliarity with the processes for taking remedial action, Aborigines were unable to make their discontent known to government and church

institutions. Neither were Indigenous people able to vote until the Referendum of 1967. Not until after the Referendum could they influence government legislation. Notable exceptions to this are the 1963 Yolngu Yirrkala bark petition from Northern Arnhem Land. Here the Yolngu protested against the extension of a bauxite mining contract because the local government had not adequately informed the local Aborigines about the potential effects this extension would have on their community. The bark petition was the first step towards self-government and the formation of the Land Rights movement. The Land Rights movement led to the case of Koiko (Eddie) Mabo in 1992 and the introduction of Native Title legislation as mentioned in the table.

In the music of popular, politically aware artists such as Archie Roach, it is possible to locate examples of resistance and survival as well. Archie Roach also comments on contemporary political developments and Indigenous rights in his music and draws parallels between Australian Aboriginal history and African American history. His song melodies could be classified as folk, rock and sometimes Blues. Yet other songs are accompanied by didgeridoo and clapsticks like his track *Jamu Dreaming* (1992), the title track from the album by the same name which uses a more 'traditional' style.

Archie Roach's music and lyrics reflect the personal loss and struggle he experienced as a member of The Stolen Generation. In 1990 the singer recorded his debut album *Charcoal Lane*. The album and its now famous song 'Took the children away' won two Aria Awards and a Human Rights Award (<http://www.myspace.com/archieroach> and <http://www.archieroach.com.au/>, accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2008, 22:32). It was the first time a Human Rights award had been presented to an Indigenous songwriter. 'Took the children away' expresses the hurt and anger which the song writer feels as a result of what happened to him as a child. The last verse, however, also positively emphasises the Aboriginal ability to

survive. Today, Archie Roach and his partner Ruby Hunter remain successful and important musicians who raise political awareness about the plight of Indigenous Australians.

These political and musical successes, however, are few and far between and the promised changes in legislation resulting from the bark petition and Mabo are being implemented at a very slow rate. This is partly the result of the extensive forced relocation of Aboriginal people and the effects of removing children from Aboriginal families. This relocation of people has made it extremely difficult to assess, in Western legal terms, which Indigenous individuals have rights to particularly geographical areas and how these rights can be demonstrated. Hence the effects of colonisation still reverberate strongly in the present.

#### 4.4 The past in the present and concepts of Aboriginality

Past governmental policies have influenced constructions of Aboriginality and the consequences of this can be seen in present day Australia. Many of the negative notions of what it means to be Aboriginal have been internalised by Aborigines themselves. Many Australians are unaware of what has caused the lamentable state of Aboriginal affairs in their own country as it is not sufficiently taught in schools. My discussions with some non-Aboriginal Australians indicate that some non-Indigenous Australians blame Aboriginal poverty, unemployment and violence on Indigenous culture rather than seeing these as the consequences of historical governmental legislation, discrimination and decimation.

Since the early 1970s therefore, when the Whitlam Labour government came to power, there has been an increased governmental drive to place a positive emphasis on Aboriginality. This period was ushered in with the 1967 Referendum when the Commonwealth government assumed responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs. What constitutes being 'Aboriginal' however, is ambiguous. The tourist industry often bases its constructs of Indigeneity on romanticised

notions of Aboriginality, which favour displays of cultural 'authenticity' and antiquity. These constructs neglect the fact that many Aborigines live in urban settings and have adopted cultural practices very similar to those of the wider Australian population, but nevertheless still maintain culturally specific ways of interacting which differentiate them from non-Aboriginal people. Urban Aboriginal life is characterised as lacking in 'authentic' Aboriginal culture.

This characterisation is enforced by a governmental drive towards self-determination which insists that people of Aboriginal descent should identify with their 'own culture', where notions of 'culture' are centred on concepts of 'authenticity' and romanticised images of 'noble savagery'. This imagery has recently been made popular again by New Age aficionados, alternative life-stylers and through the marketing of Aboriginal culture in the tourist industry. 'True' Aboriginality as perceived by governmental and tourist establishments is based on imagery of the remote, pre-colonial past which is fed back to Aborigines through Western education and media. Beckett notes that: "The 'antiquity' of Australian Aboriginal culture, if not its human bearers, has never been absent from constructions of Aboriginality, whether popular or official". He continues:

[W]hereas among westerners the succession of generations is coordinated with history, if not advance in civilisation, that among 'real Aborigines' entails no such progression. Compared with, and at times comparing themselves with, the 'real Aborigines', Aboriginal people are caught between the attribution of unchanging essences (with the implications of an inability to change) and the reproach of inauthenticity. (1988: 194)

This reproach of inauthenticity has led to a denial of modern, urban Aboriginality and seems to suggest that those living in urban areas are not Aboriginal. Musically this has meant that many tourists and non-Indigenous Australians know very little about Aboriginal diversity, and Indigenous Christianity. They only associate Indigenous performances with the didgeridoo,



Dreamtime stories and able other presentations as inauthentic and an aberration of Indigenous culture.

Jordan (1988:127) suggests that: “An emphasis on the remote past acts to obscure the fundamental differences between the worlds of tradition-orientated Aboriginal people and urban Aboriginal people”. Due to the fact that European academics have emphasised the remote past in their scholarship, and tourist and governmental bodies promote this past as if it were the present, urban Aborigines have come to mythologise about the remote past (Jordan, 1988:127). This same remote past, however, cannot be meaningfully incorporated into the daily lives of urban Aborigines as part of their contemporary identities (Jordan, 1988: 127). Consequently, the emphasis of rural, ‘authentic’ Aboriginal imagery has led urban Aborigines to go in search of an identity which they find difficult to incorporate in their day-to-day reality whilst simultaneously finding that they are not accepted as Aborigines by the dominant society because they do not conform to the essentialised notions of what Aboriginality is. The result in many cases has been a crisis of identity or a sense of ‘being in-between’ on the part of Indigenous people.

Indigenous scholar Marcia Langton (1981) has pointed out how Australian anthropologists have reoriented their focus from recording the absence of Aboriginal cultural traits in ‘detrribalised’ communities to asserting that the members of these communities today cannot be differentiated from the hegemonic majority of the Australian population. Langton argues in favour of a historically placed, non-homogenous view of the Aboriginal capacity for adaptation as opposed to Aboriginal passivity and demise within the urban setting, as well as a reconceptualisation of what it means to be Aboriginal. She advocates that urban Aboriginal society and its culture should be seen as a complete as well as integrated and consistent system. This system, she argues, is relevant to its Aboriginal members and should stop being perceived as deficient in some way or as a “truncated (or castrated) version of any other socio-

cultural system”. Langton writes that many scholars have applied Oscar Lewis’ Culture of Poverty Theory to substantiate their claims that Aboriginality in urban areas is ‘impoverished’. Lewis claimed that evidence for his theory could be found amongst an industrialised nation’s poor and ethnic minorities. His characterisation of these ‘cultures of poverty’ takes the form of a list of disabilities. Langton notes that Lewis found ‘evidence’ of:

‘lack of effective participation, minimum of organisation, absence of childhood, high incidence of the abandonment of wives and children and high incidence of maternal deprivation, of orality, of weak ego structure, confusion of sexual identification, a lack of impulse control...little ability to defer gratification and to plan for the future...and a high tolerance of psychological pathology of all sorts’ (Langton, 1981:18 citing Lewis)

Langton (1981:18), however, argues that this list “epitomizes the racist stereotype *par excellence*, and is elevated to the level of scientific observation by the use of sociological jargon and dubious method”. She argues that Aboriginal urban culture should not be made to fit this ‘poverty’ mould because firstly, the Western concept of poverty is a relative one and secondly, because poverty in its Western meaning is not an Aboriginal condition or one for which the concept is shared. The concept of poverty is one foisted upon Aborigines by white society (Langton, 1981: 18). In the context of this thesis, just as urban Indigenous communities are seen to be ‘lacking’ something, so are Indigenous former mission communities. Often tourists assume that Indigenous Christians are suffering from a ‘lack’ of culture, whereas in fact they have their own, specifically Indigenous Christian musical and social culture.

It has been argued that the influence of scholarship such as that of Lewis has had an important role to play in perpetuating perceptions of Aboriginality because Indigenous people rarely have an input in or access to the findings or analyses of research conducted. Neither have Aborigines had a say in the ways in which research is used and presented. Morris (1988: 64) writes:

The politics of identity refers to an aspect of power whereby a subjugated group is turned into an object of knowledge. In effect, they lose the right to speak for themselves as the production of their identity is invested in experts and authorities and mediated by institutions of the state system.

Morris (1988: 76), following Foucault, argues that groups or individuals who have been subjected to the intense gaze of so-called experts and authorities, are dominated not necessarily through restrictions of access to knowledge but are unable to gain access to the production of this knowledge about themselves. They are denied the legitimacy to speak for themselves and define their own identity.

Because the dominant society has created ways in which it classifies Aboriginality as being either 'authentic' or 'inauthentic', in some instances Indigenous people will present a public 'traditional' Aboriginality for land claim tribunals and tourists<sup>7</sup> whilst on other occasions the same people will adopt their more private, daily, less 'traditional' life-style.

Australian Indigenous identities are therefore, sometimes deliberately and quite literally, performed. The deliberate, enforced performance of more 'traditional' identities can be seen as a way in which Aboriginal people have created opportunities to influence governmental politics by deliberately highlighting and emphasising aspects of their Aboriginal identity which they know have become acceptable to external agents as proof of their Aboriginal heritage (Jacobs, 1988: 35).<sup>8</sup> Musically and performatively, this has led to Indigenous people deliberately adopting instruments such as the didgeridoo and corroboree dancing to conform to tourist and visitor expectations.

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<sup>7</sup> The deliberate construction of Aboriginality is particularly pertinent where Australian Aboriginal land claims and financial and social governmental policies are involved. This is because the substantiation of claims to land ownership or financial assistance relies on the use of specific procedures and symbols to demonstrate Aboriginality

<sup>8</sup> Jacobs (1988) presents a case in point where two land rights claims to old Nepabunna and Koonibba missions land in South Australia, by the *Adnjamathanha* and *Kokatha* respectively, had different outcomes due to one group's ability and willingness to present evidence that conformed to the government's criteria for proving Aboriginality. Both groups' historical statuses as mission residents and Christians made it necessary for them to compete with each other as well as against Aboriginal groups such as the *Pitjantjatjara* and *Maralinga* who are overtly traditional, and able to present large amounts of written historical, anthropological detail stating this fact.

Seen less positively, the fact that the criteria by which Aboriginality can be ‘proved’ or ‘disproved’ are determined by those already in power has resulted in Aborigines aligning their public Aboriginality with the dominant perception of their identity. Through this alignment Aborigines consolidate and perpetuate the hegemonic existent views. These differing public and private identities may be conflicting or unacceptable to other Aboriginal individuals or white society depending on the context.

The conflict arises because Aboriginality and culture are “not made *de novo* but from what there is” (Beckett, 1988: 195). Beckett also notes:

[A]n understanding of public Aboriginality in Australia cannot be achieved simply in terms of the particularities of the Aboriginal condition. Nor, however, can it be achieved simply in terms of practical reason or realpolitik. The state also acts within an ideological context, not merely in the sense of manipulating ideas to legitimate what it does in relation to Aboriginal people, but in creating and recreating the society as a whole. The construction of public Aboriginality must be understood in the context of the formation of a British colony of settlement in an age of European Imperialism, and of the building of a small, semi-peripheral nation state in an age of superpower politics, transnational business and mass culture. (1988: 193)

Unlike private ethnicity, which is behavioural, situational and heterogeneous, public ethnicity is symbolic, global in application (to all or specified members of a minority) and uniform in concept. It is generalizing in form, and for the most part either ignores, or is highly selective in its use of private ethnicity. (Beckett, 1988: 4 citing Weaver)

I would go even further to say that the concept of ‘private ethnicity’ is not applicable to an Indigenous kinship group as a whole, but rather to each individual of a group. The perception of this ‘truly private’ ethnicity may even vary according to the circumstances where individuals may choose, for whatever reason, to emphasise certain parts of their personal and by extension musical and performative identities.

Other perceptions of Aboriginality which do not focus on the ‘antiquity’ of Aboriginal culture are being presented through the Australian media or everyday conversation by

Australian society at large. These perceptions are often negative ones which emphasise a culture of state dependency, drunkenness and violence as being part of an Aboriginal identity and customary law. This is particularly so in cases of child abuse and violence against Aboriginal women. Violence and drunkenness, however, are not part of traditional culture. In a speech at the Northern Territory Criminal Lawyers Conference, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward said:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women say that protecting culture does not mean protecting family violence.

After all, Aboriginal family violence is not part of Customary Law

We continually heard that family violence was not part of Aboriginal Customary Law, and that it is unacceptable to women living in urban and rural, traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal communities.

The argument that a man bashing a woman is "Customary Law" is still one that is commonly made by defence lawyers to minimise punishment for Aboriginal men. ([http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/sex\\_discrim/criminal\\_lawyers\\_conference.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/speeches/sex_discrim/criminal_lawyers_conference.html), accessed 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

Indigenous leaders have also spoken out against the notion that violence against women is part of customary law and recognised and were appalled by the fact that some Aboriginal men have internalised the violent stereotypes and used them to justify their behaviour towards women:

The indigenous leader and ALP vice-president, Warren Mundine, has rebuked Aboriginal men for the horrific level of domestic violence in many communities. He said bashing women was not part of traditional Aboriginal culture, and he was tired of the excuses men made for their behaviour, including blaming alcohol, and problems at home.

"I'm tired of hearing Aboriginal men say they bashed their wife because white fellows took our country," he said yesterday. "Now that really [teaches] the white fellows a lesson." (Horin, *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 23, 2005 <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/no-excuse-for-violence-says-aboriginal-leader/2005/11/22/1132421665523.html>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

The above quotation suggests that many Aboriginal people today use events and constructs of the past to justify and normalise their violent behaviour in the present. This behaviour and the subsequent reports of it are then fed back into the mainstream media, perpetuating racist stereotypes and violence which in turn further demoralises Aborigines. Hence, a vicious circle is created. Some of these violent, misogynist stereotypes are touched upon by artist like Archie Roach in his song 'Walking in to Doors', from his album *Jamu Dreaming* (1992). Roach addresses violence against women in this song.

The diverse ways in which Aboriginal identities can be constructed and perpetuated and the interaction between these and historical periods has created what Jordan labels as 'identity diffusion' (1988:126). Jordan suggests that in the formation of Aboriginal identities there are three periods which can be labelled the remote past, the 'past-of-the-middle-range' and recent past. She argues that the remote past as conceptualised in the present by white Australians contains the positive, albeit reified notions of Aboriginality from which the dominant culture draws its elements to construct an 'authentic' Aboriginality. The 'past-of-the-middle-range' can be characterised by negative stereotypes in a wider Australian sedimented 'knowledge'. This 'knowledge' is often racist. My social interaction and conversations with some non-Indigenous Australians indicated that some perceive Aborigines to be lazy, drunken, violent, ignorant, incestuous and unhygienic even though these same people professed to having no Aboriginal acquaintances. Some had never met an Indigenous person, but merely seen them in parks or city centres in states of inebriation. The recent past, by contrast, can be described using theories of self-determination and a more positive Aboriginality. This, however, creates a conflict between "what everyone knows about Aborigines" or the "sedimented knowledge" and the positive outlook which the government is trying to promote. Jordan demonstrated that public tertiary education, for example, whilst championing Aboriginal rights, concentrated too heavily on the 'past-of-the-middle-range'

period and its negative histories. This alienated some mature urban Aboriginal students who felt obligated to respond with feelings of hostility towards the dominant society. The students, however, did not harbour such hostility. The mature, urban Aboriginal students preferred a more positive presentation of Aboriginal history which focuses on the Indigenous ability to resist and survive (Jordan, 1988: 119).

Jordan also discovered that to mature, urbanised Aborigines, the 'past-of-the-middle-range' historical period is rarely seen as inherently racist or oppressive. This period to them is particularised, not generalised, and non-Aborigines featuring in personal histories were judged on their personal merits rather than on their ethnic heritage. Younger, urbanised Aborigines on the other hand have come to see Aboriginal history in a more generalised fashion and as one of oppression and racism. The differences in the conceptualisation of history by different age groups and the resultant varying processes of identity formation have caused intergenerational conflict. Younger generations see the more particularised formation of history as one that has encouraged passive behaviour and some have taken it on board as evidence of the inability of Aborigines to oppose white oppression. In many cases this has led to younger people becoming disillusioned with the past and their people or caused them to become highly sceptical and distrustful of wider Australian society.

Another problematical facet of identity construction in Aboriginal Australia is that identities may be read back to individuals in different ways. A hard working Aboriginal individual may be praised by the dominant society as dependable and honest, for example, but in certain Aboriginal contexts this person may be perceived as displaying a slavish desire to emulate white society and thereby implicitly denying their Aboriginal heritage. Research has also indicated that passive resistance to join the labour market of the dominant society, absenteeism from school, and open drunkenness are seen by some Aborigines, as a means of asserting their civil liberties after years of enforced prohibition and restrictions on personal

freedom by the Church and government (Phillips, 2003: 115-116). Others participate in drinking or remain absent from school to avoid social isolation and peer ridicule (Phillips, 2003: 125). The conflict which arises between government authorities and Aborigines wishing to assert their civil liberties through, for example, excessive alcohol consumption, reinforces the negative 'past-of-the-middle-range' opinions that non-Aborigines have of Indigenous people. This maintains the vicious circle.

The governmental policies of Reconciliation designed to promote a greater understanding of Aboriginal disadvantage and to reduce negative constructs of Indigeneity, have been met with scepticism by Indigenous people. Aborigines are disillusioned with the policies, especially following the Council for Reconciliation's suggestion in 2000 that, after ten years of deliberation on issues of reconciliation, a formal statement or document had to be signed to show that there was a consensus about what needed to be achieved before reconciliation could become a reality. This formal document became known as the 'Treaty'. The Council for Reconciliation had found that whilst Aborigines did not demand an equal voice as a separate nation, they did want to seek the credence and credibility of being able to sit at the negotiating table to discuss issues that concerned them, such as land use and levels of autonomy. This Treaty and its full implementation, however, have yet to materialise and Indigenous disillusionment is reflected in popular music, as we have seen.

The Howard government, in power between 1996 – 2007, refused to contemplate the notion of a 'Treaty' because it was deemed too divisive and seemed to imply that Australia was not one, but two nations (Tatz, 2005: 8-9).<sup>9</sup> The refusal to even contemplate the idea of an agreement was seen by many Aborigines as an indication that they were still not viewed as equals by white society or as being recognised as full citizens of their own country. This has

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<sup>9</sup> Other nations do have such agreements with their indigenous peoples, such as Canada. These other nations formally acknowledge the great harm done to them (Tatz, 2005: 8-9).



had negative implications on the construction of Indigenous identities because it has made many Aborigines feel inferior and it has generated resentment.

Another government policy and ideology which rested on the concept of equality was 'One Australia' or 'Level Playing Field'. 'One Australia' was the ethnic affairs and immigration policy of the Liberal National opposition in Australia, released in 1988. This policy espoused the notion that all Australians were equal and should have equal rights and abide by the same laws. Multiculturalism as a concept was deemed unacceptable. Opposition leader John Howard at the time commented: "To me, multiculturalism suggests that we can't make up our minds who we are or what we believe in" and with regards to ethnic affairs, Aboriginal Land Rights and the Treaty Howard commented: "I abhor the notion of an Aboriginal treaty because it is repugnant to the ideals of One Australia." (Markus, 2001: 85 – 89)

The 'One Australia' policy was used by the opposition government to suggest that positive action benefiting Aborigines, which could help them gain access to resources and become self-sufficient, was promoting positive discrimination instead of "a level playing field". John Howard, as opposition leader in 1989, pledged repeal of the existing land rights legislation pertaining to Aboriginal rights, because no other group had such special rights (Tatz, 2005: 14). However, this argument against Native Title suggests that all Australians have always had equal rights and that the "playing field" was level from the outset. It denies the existence of past and current social inequalities between Aborigines and non-Aborigines (Tatz, 2005: 14-15). Whilst on the surface the National government was preaching equality, below the surface it was putting forward ideologies which were divisive, confusing and would lead to further inequality between Aborigines and wider Australia.

Whilst the above text focuses heavily on Indigenous disadvantage and victimisation it should not be viewed as an indication that all Aborigines have adopted the worst that Western

society has to offer or are all equally discontented. Many Indigenous people lead healthy, happy lives or have been able to overcome family grief and alcohol and drug dependency. Enormous emotional strength exists within Indigenous communities which aids social survival and promotes togetherness. Like Phillips (2003: 168) I believe that every success in overcoming social challenges, however small needs to be celebrated. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I feel it is necessary to highlight the disadvantages which Aborigines face and the historical constructs of Aboriginality which are impeding the way to positive social change. This is because, firstly, it is relevant to the applied research context in Hopevale and secondly, outside of Australia relatively few people are familiar with how complex and fraught with difficulties Australia's Indigenous history and politics are, or how disadvantaged Aboriginal society generally is. Also, it is only when the social challenges are highlighted, that readers of this thesis can appreciate the small success that the choir was and contextualise singers' comments.

Whilst I address the deliberate incorporation of pre-colonial cultural elements into modern day performative events in the arts, this thesis does not aim to critique the strategy of adopting and adapting more traditional cultural elements of the distant Indigenous past as a means of constructing a contemporary Aboriginal identity. This strategy has been used by urban Aborigines in particular and to a certain extent in Hopevale as well, although not in choir singing necessarily. The approach has provided many Indigenous Australians with a new sense of personal and communal belonging. Drawing knowledge from the pre-colonial past without aiming to return to it, has encouraged Indigenous people who previously denied their Aboriginality to instead explore the emotional strength that can be gained from knowing about, positively accepting and living their Indigeneity and their relationship with Country and kin. It has also been suggested that such an approach can be a helpful way to combat excessive alcohol and drug consumption as well as gambling addiction (Phillips, 2003: 167). This

exploration of Indigenous land based spirituality has allowed many Indigenous people less familiar with their spiritual history to discover positive aspects which were previously misunderstood and often condemned by government officials and missionaries who based their reasons for doing so, on the theories Social Darwinism and biblical exegesis.

#### 4.5 Social Darwinism, Biblical exegesis, and Aboriginal identities

Perceptions of Aboriginal identities have not only been extensively influenced by European colonial history, but also by Western European scientific models of thinking and Biblical exegesis. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century Australian colonial governmental policies regarding Aborigines were based on Social Darwinist theories of evolution. These theories gained credibility at the same time that information on Aboriginal cultures became available. 'Scientific evidence' in the form of various anatomical measurements was used to prove Aboriginal inferiority. Compared to Europeans, Aborigines were found to have a smaller skulls, larger pelvises, longer arms, longer vertebral discs, vestigial tails and similar. These measurements were used in support of the argument that Aboriginal society had evolved at a slower rate than European society (Harris, 1994: 27-28).

The same Social Darwinist 'scientific' measurements were also paradoxically used as evidence supporting theological theories of monogenesis and polygenism. Theories of monogenesis were built on Christian Creationism and related to evolutionary theory. Historically theologians believed that because all races were created simultaneously, the supposed 'superiority' of whites must be due to an accelerated development, whilst Aboriginal society remained static, or even experienced a sequence of degeneration (Harris, 1994: 30-31 and Scalon, 1986: 84). Alternatively theories of polygenism were used to explain the differences between the races. Theologians argued that there had been insufficient time since

the Creation to permit such a dramatic divergence between races. (Scalon, 1986: 84).

Therefore it was believed that there had been several creative acts, resulting in separate human races. Extreme polygenists even suggested that the Black race was an entirely separate species, closer to apes than the Caucasians (Scalon, 1986: 84).

Australian theologian and historian Harris (1994: 31) writes that another unwarranted Biblical exegesis included the belief that Aborigines were subject to the 'Curse of Ham' (Genesis 9 and 10) which reads:

9:18 - 27 And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark, were Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Ham is the father of Canaan...And [Noah] said, cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren, and he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem and Canaan shall be his servant.

10: 6 And the sons of Ham; Cush [Ethiopia], and Mizraim [Egypt] and Phut [Libya] and Canaan. (King James version Bible, 1611)

The curse of Noah, leading Ham to be subservient to his brothers, was interpreted to apply to all of Ham's descendants, namely Cush, Mizraim and Phut, whose descendants are said to live in Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya. Because these nations include black people the curse was given a universal extension by evangelical Christians, who applied it to all black people, including Aborigines (Harris, 1994: 31).

This 'scientific evidence' and Biblical exegesis led many scholars, Australian officials and missionaries alike, to believe that Aborigines were doomed to extinction. Aboriginal physiology was deemed redundant and it was believed that with frequent miscegenation Aboriginality could be 'bred out'.

Social Darwinism and Biblical exegesis also led white colonisers to believe that because of their 'evolutionary inferiority' Aborigines were incapable of grasping complex Christian doctrinal concepts of, or functioning in, positions of responsibility and management. This in the past obstructed the devolution of secular and spiritual power to Indigenous

Australians, because Aborigines could not be educated above a certain level and were seldom employed in high managerial positions. Due to this delay in devolving leadership responsibilities to Indigenous people, there has been a lack confidence in the potential leadership skills of Indigenous people. The Hopevale choir formed no exception. Many singers felt that without outside leadership the choir would not continue and when the time came to appoint another Pastor, Auntie Daisy told me the community favoured non-Indigenous Pastors because these were 'better'. The long term delay of the devolution of power has meant that in many communities it has taken a considerable time for Indigenous interpretations of the Christian doctrine to become acceptable in regular worship and musical practices as well, as will be demonstrated in the next chapters.

What this chapter has demonstrated is that a community's social history, and the political, governmental, and church strategies with regards to Aboriginal Affairs, have had an important impact on the ways in which Aboriginality is constructed and that this impact is discernable in the various musical styles engaged in by Aboriginal Australians. What has not been discussed is how Christian hymnody, when it does not reference traditional Ancestral Dreaming Law, can impact on the construction of Aboriginal identities, or how hymnody can be viewed as a medium through which Aboriginality can be performed. To assess this I shall use my field research as an example. Prior to this, however, it is necessary to explore Hopevale's mission history and the constructs of identity that resulted from this history before looking at the implications of localised history for Christian hymnody and choral singing in Hopevale.

**“Well, they put me in the community then”: Hopevale history and identities**

Like every other Australian Aboriginal community Hopevale has its own, unique local history which has impacted on the lives of the Indigenous people residing there. The ways in which history has influenced the transmission of local musical traditions and identities varies between people and family groups and is dependent on age, gender, religion and individual personality. In this chapter I examine Hopevale’s history and discuss how it has shaped local identities. This is relevant because it determines how choral singing and musical performance impact on the construction of individual identities to be discussed in the whole of chapter six.

In this current chapter, I demonstrate that whilst colonisation and missionisation were instrumental in creating a unified mission identity, these same processes created divisions between Hopevalians and have led to the fragmentation of Aboriginal identities along ethnic, gendered, spiritual and linguistic lines. The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the historical and musical developments presented in chapter six and clarifies the performative responses of the choir described in chapter seven.

Firstly, I present a tabulated summary of Hopevale’s history. I then critically assess the historical sources which document Hopevale’s history as these have to some extent been internalised by Hopevalians and thus are part of how identities are formed. Hereafter I elaborate on the removal of Aboriginal children from their Indigenous communities and the impact this has had on the transmission of musical culture and identity. I then discuss the influence of the historical scientific theory of Social Darwinism, Christian theological approaches to salvation and missionisation, and Australian state and government policies on Hopevalian identities. The chapter elaborates further on gendered constructs which have

resulted from colonisation and missionisation. This angle was not addressed in chapter four, but referred to in chapter three. I also look more closely at the ethnic boundaries along which the community is divided, which were briefly mentioned in chapter three. In contrast to the previous chapter, this one presents a more localised interpretation of general governmental policies.

### 5.1 Hopevale history: a timeline

**Figure 5.1: A chronological time line of Hopevale’s history.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Historical Event</b>
June 1770	James Cook and the <i>Endeavour</i> land at mouth of river <i>Wahalumbaal</i> . Cook and men meet Aborigines and record some of the GuuguYimithirr language.
1788	Australia declared a Colony.
1873	Gold rush in Cooktown and Palmer River areas. Many settlers move to the Cooktown area.
August 1881	Queensland Government sets aside 50,000 acres of land on north shore above Cooktown as a Reserve for Aborigines to remove and protect them from the settlers.
December 1885	Johannes Flierl arrives in Cooktown on his way to Papua New Guinea and successfully buys the reserve land above Cooktown on behalf of the Lutheran church in Neuendettelsau.
January 1886	Flierl travels with lay-worker Briar to Cape Bedford, 18 miles North of Cooktown. Calls the settlement location ‘Elim’.
September 13 <sup>th</sup> 1887	Rev. Schwarz ( <i>Muni</i> ) arrives at Elim. The 13 <sup>th</sup> of September is now called <i>Muni Day</i> and celebrated annually in Hopevale.
June 1888	Missionary Poland arrives. Poland is responsible for the translation of many hymns from German into Guugu Yimithirr. He is musically trained and a teacher.
1897	<i>Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act</i> passed in Queensland. <sup>1</sup>
1901	Federation Australian colonies, but state governments still retain separate control over Aboriginal destinies until 1967.
1902	Lutheran mission at Marie Yamba, near Mackay fails ( <i>cf</i> Evans, 1972). Twenty-three of its residents are transferred to Hope Valley. Hope Valley gradually becomes demographically diverse due to Aboriginal children being taken from differing kinship backgrounds and being placed on the mission as well.
1942	Mission residents ‘evacuated’ to Woorabinda near

<sup>1</sup> See chapter four, Figure 4.1

	Rockhampton due to the Second World War. Rev. Schwarz is interned due to his German ancestry and the fear that he might collaborate with the Japanese.
1949	Mission residents return to Cape Bedford area after much petitioning and intervention from exiled residents and government official Bjelke-Petersen. New settlement erected which is now called 'Hopevale' (or Hope Vale). Schwarz does not return due to old age.
1961	Aboriginal Community Council established as a result of the flogging of a Hopevale man by the local Pastor for abducting a girl. The pastor was asked to leave and Aboriginal police men appointed and a community council created.
December 1964	Move from rations to a cash economy. This was a very late change as Hopevalians had already been working for cash in Woorabinda and whilst there had some measure of freedom in spending their own wages.
1967	Flogging of a youth over 18 years of age by local Pastor for being a peeping Tom. Event received condemnation in the Australian press.
March 1969	First Hopevale Aboriginal Church Council elected
August 1969	Alick Cameron and George Rosendale are ordained as local Aboriginal Pastors. This is again a very late change, as Hopevalian elders had long since demonstrated their capacity for spiritual leadership through becoming evangelists and ministering to their own people in Woorabinda between 1942 and 1949.
1986	Hopevale is awarded 110,000 hectares of land under <i>Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT)</i> to Hopevale Aboriginal Council. The award of land, however, is not determined through traditional concepts of ownership, leading to strife within the community.
1992	MABO decision. <sup>2</sup>
8 <sup>th</sup> December 1997	Under the Native Title Act of 1993 thirteen clans of the Guugu Yimithirr are acknowledged as originating from the area under the DOGIT (1986) agreement, but trusteeship remains with the Hopevale Aboriginal Council. Currently, local tribes are work towards trusteeship being returned to individual clans

The above table is a select group of dates and events pertaining to the history of the Hopevale settlement which are relevant to this thesis as they historically situate Hopevale in a wider Australian and global political sphere. The dates place Hopevale's creation firmly during the period of rapid colonial expansion by the British Empire, and refer to the implications of global war fare during the Second World War.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter four Figure 4.1



The table also demonstrates the length of time it took for Hopevalians to achieve spiritual and secular autonomy. It was not until 1964 that the community was formally introduced to a cash economy and only in 1969 that Hopevale first officially appointed spiritual leaders and established an Aboriginal church council. Secular leadership took even longer to devolve into Indigenous hands. It was only in 1986 that the Aboriginal Community council was awarded land in trust. In 1997 through the Native Title Act in 1993, thirteen clans were formally recognised as originating from the land awarded in trust in 1986.

Lastly, the table shows that whilst the language chosen by missionaries as their modus operandi was Guugu Yimithirr, the mission population was very much a polyglot one and diverse. Mission residents from Marie Yamba moving to Cape Bedford in 1902 and children taken under the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* of 1897 often did not speak Guugu Yimithirr and had to learn it after having moved to the mission (*cf* Haviland, 1985, 1990, 1998). These removed residents often did not have kinship ties with traditional owners of the mission Country. More recently this has caused complications arising during the processes of Indigenisation when claims to Country ownership were assessed during the Deed of Grant in Trust (DOGIT) and Native Title Act claims procedures. Traditional owners of Country felt they had a greater entitlement to land than those whose families were forcibly removed to the mission in the past.

What also needs to be clarified is that Hopevale has always consisted of a larger township or 'the mission', as well as various outposts or 'stations' where agricultural labour was undertaken to sustain the mission. Due to problems with the soil, a cyclone in 1907 and the Woorabinda evacuation of 1942 the mission township moved several times. With every move the name of the township changed. In 1886 the settlement was named Elim. Then it

subsequently moved to Cape Bedford, Hope Valley (1887) and Spring Hill (1939) and finally Hopevale, sometimes spelt Hope Vale. The mission's 'stations' were various and were called Eight Mile and McIvor for example. At the time of research the local residents still referred to the Hopevale township as "the mission". I will therefore do the same in this thesis. Before the evacuation to Woorabinda, Hopevalians referred to themselves as the Cape Bedford people, although by that time they had already settled in Hope Valley and Spring Hill. I maintain this distinction as much as possible throughout this thesis as well. Further details about Hopevalian localised history can be found in Hopevale's extensive historiography, which I discuss next.

## 5.2 The impact of Hopevale's historiography on Hopevalian identities

My investigation into Hopevale's past led me to consider various literary as well as oral sources. Oral sources included interviews conducted by myself and conversations I had whilst in Hopevale. I also located Hopevalian oral history records in Canberra's National Library of Australia. These were part of the *Bringing Them Home* (2000) project<sup>3</sup> and included oral histories by Jack (2000), Rosendale (2000), Bambi (2000) Costello (2000), and Deeral (2000). Other sources included audiovisual documents such as the video *The Woorabinda Story: 7 Years in Exile* (2002) produced in conjunction with Hopevale residents. These local histories offered Indigenous perspectives on Hopevalian history in oral or audio visual format, which local scholar and politician Pearson argues, were lacking in previous accounts of Hopevalian history. The lack of oral history, Pearson argues, has resulted in "the alteration of the structure and form of Aboriginal stories, myths and oral records." (1986: 6). Pearson suggests that nuances of expression, modes of verbal humour and sign-language or spatial

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<sup>3</sup> These Aboriginal oral histories were recorded as part of an attempt to help acknowledge the removal of many Aboriginal children from their parents. The project tried to help reunite children who had been taken from their families with their parents or family. Several of these oral histories were recorded in Hopevale as some Hopevale elders are members of what is known as The Stolen Generation.

relationships are all lost when white historians attempt to make Aboriginal history comprehensible to a white readership (1986: 5-6). Referencing historical audio documents, therefore, was an important way to gain an insight into Hopevalian history.

Further historical information was available through published works written by Christian scholars, clergymen and officials which focus on Hopevale or its residents. These texts include Poland (trans. Roehrs, H. E, 1988), Theile (1938 [1985]), Grope and Roennfeldt (1977), Rose (1978), and Pohlner (1986). The first author, W.H. Poland, wrote a collection of letters which were translated and published as a collection in *Loose Leaves (Löse Blätter)* in 1988. These letters were written to the (Lutheran) Mission Institute of Neuendettelsau, Germany and described Poland's experiences as one of the first missionaries in Hopevale. Other church based documents included snippets of old newsletters such as the *Hope Vale Hotline*, and the Lutheran church newsletters such as *The Lutheran Herald*. The latter occasionally reported on the church's work in Hopevale. Historical Christian sources are valuable in that they offer insights into missionary and evangelical attitudes. They also provide records of choral performances and hymn-singing. The text-based sources are also important because many of them have been referenced by Hopevalians and the information and opinions they contain have been internalised and perpetuated. This process of internalisation has influenced constructions of Hopevalian identities. Poland (trans. Roehrs, 1988) and Pohlner's (1986) books in particular are widely read and often referred to in conversation about historical events.

In contrast to the Lutheran publications, scholarly texts written about Hopevale are not well-known to Hopevalians because they are difficult to access. Equally, the academic language and concepts employed are prohibitive in promoting understanding. The scholarly texts I consulted for the purposes of this thesis were written by Roth (1909), de Zwaan (1966 and 1969), Evans (1972), Loos (1975), Woolston (1970) Haviland (1980, 1985, 1988, 1990

and 1998), Powell (2002) and Pearson (1986). These sources offer different perspectives in that they give a broader, historical outlook compared to the oral and liturgical records.

As the historical sources I referenced are very diverse in terms of authorship and purpose, it is important to contextualise them. With regards to missionary writing, Johnston suggests it is necessary “to maintain a kind of sceptical double-vision about the texts under examination” (2003:32). In missionary writing, evangelical achievements and missionary heroism are often emphasised. Missionary accounts should not be taken to be representative of the entire process of evangelisation throughout Australia. Each account is particular and localised (Johnston, 2003: 1-7).

An uncritical examination of historical sources can lead to unbalanced accounts of Indigenous Australian histories. These often deny Aborigines their roles as actors in shaping their own histories. In the past, historiographies have also portrayed missionaries as undisputed heroes, whereas oral Aboriginal accounts give a more nuanced picture of Christian evangelical endeavours. Local Hopevalian scholar Noel Pearson (1986), for example, critiques Pohlner’s book *Gangurru* (1986). Pearson feels that missionary Schwarz (Muni) was a “fascinating figure who deserves the veneration that legend and the small historiography...has accorded him.” (1986: 3). Pearson also comments, however, that the lack of unedited oral history in Hopevale’s historiography, especially in Pohlner’s book, has caused disappointment for many Hopevalians (1986:5). Pearson records that when Pohlner approached Hopevalians for an oral contribution the respective people held back information for fear of offending. One of Pearson’s interviewees commented: “Everything *nangu* [in his book] polish it down to everything Muni did good.” (1986:16). When this interviewee was asked whether they agreed with this form of representation of Hopevalian history in Pohlner’s book, they said that they did not (Pearson, 1986:16).

Pearson advocates that Hopevalians should be viewed as active creators of history. It would be wrong to interpret Hopevale's historiography as one of missionary activity and Aboriginal passivity only, by disregarding or misrepresenting Indigenous historical oral accounts and uncritically examining missionary histories (Pearson, 1986:6). Comaroff and Comaroff, with reference to English colonialism in Africa, state that it is often possible to discern indigenous agency within missionary texts even though it "might have lain in the shadow of European self-representation" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1989: 7 -8).

This shadow of European self-representation and lack of Indigenous accounts of Hopevalian history is partly responsible for perpetuating specific, local accounts of historical events directly influencing constructs of Aboriginality and identity in Hopevale. Pearson (1986: 15) states that:

Church histories written by missionaries...inherently aim to defend the actions of the missionaries and the role of the church in affecting Aboriginal society. Using religion as a solvent they may perpetuate the paternalist myths and attitudes in these histories that are often unscholarly and rarely objective.

Although the Christian religious inheritance and mission history is of primary concern to Hopevalian people, they also often uncritically support historical accounts or stifle criticism of European representations of the mission's history (Pearson, 1986:15-16). My discussions with Hopevale elders in particular, corroborate this assertion. I was frequently directed to Poland's (trans. Roehrs, 1988) and Pohlner's (1986) books and asked whether I had read them. Local Hopevalian elder Uncle Eric Deeral writes that:

Maybe we each need to read the history of the Guugu Yimithirr nation "Gangurru" and other such important books. Each one of us may need to take time to look at our own personal history and begin sharing it... (no date: 10)

Next to *Gangurru* (Pohlner, 1986), the other text frequently referenced by Hopevalians is missionary Poland's *Löse Blätter* (trans. Roehrs, 1988) in which negative portrayals of Aborigines abound. Poland (trans. Roehrs, 1988: 19) wrote, for example:

Suddenly, however, the opening [of the door] was blocked by the figure of an elderly, stark naked, powerfully-built Aboriginal...He had thick, unsightly scars across his chest and down his arms. His hair was dishevelled and dirty; his yellow, malicious eyes shifty and lowering. In his right hand he carried the inevitable woomera.<sup>4</sup>

After having referred me to Poland (trans. Roehrs, 1988) and Pohlner's (1986) texts Hopevalian elders would often say that without the missionaries they would not be "civilised" now. This suggested that the missionary historiographies had to some extent been internalised, leading some Hopevalians to believe, or at least openly proclaim, that traditional, pre-colonial and non-Christian Indigenous culture and modes of living were synonymous with a lack of civilisation.

What must be remembered, however, is that there is also a diversity of interpretations and opinions of Hopevale's history. What elders have internalised to some measure has been rejected by younger Hopevalians. Younger people in Hopevale are more inclined to see the missionary involvement in history as a negative one. Individuals who come from a mixed heritage background are often more inclined to take a positive view of church history in comparison to those who have no European heritage, as Hopevalians with a European ancestry were favoured by the missionaries.

Despite the diversity of opinions, there is also some agreement on historical interpretations. Hopevalians, scholars and church officials alike, agree that the Hopevale mission, at the time of its creation, provided shelter from settler violence, and decreased starvation and exploitation of Aborigines in the area of Cooktown. Without missionary intervention it is likely Hopevalians would have been even fewer in number today. Local missionaries also recognised the importance of using the local language Guugu Yimithirr in their bid to evangelise the Cape Bedford people. This

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<sup>4</sup> This is a wooden device which is used to facilitate spear throwing. It allows a spear to cover a much larger distance than when thrown by the arm only and is particularly useful when hunting pigs and kangaroo as these animals move quickly.

helped preserve Guugu Yimithirr which might otherwise have become extinct like some other Aboriginal languages. Additionally, traditional skills and knowledge about local geography, flora and fauna have also been preserved because missionaries encouraged activities such as hunting, gathering and fishing due to the scarcity of food on the mission (Pearson, 1986: 16 – 18)<sup>5</sup>.

Given the diversity of historical interpretations, therefore, when assessing the influence of local history on Hopevalian constructions of identity it is important not to conceive of all missionary endeavours in an entirely negative way. This is particularly so when considering the view points held by older Hopevalians, who were members of Hopevale's Stolen Generation or whose parents would fall into that social group.

### 5.3 Hopevale's Stolen Generation and the transmission of cultural practices

Ella Woibo: I was born in Cooktown [28<sup>th</sup> April 1933].

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: In Cooktown, and you then grew up in the mission later on, didn't you?

EW: I grew up at the age of eight...I was taken away of my mother and father. Well, they put me in the community then.

MSR: So, you are a member of the Stolen Generation then, I suppose?

EW: I should think so.

MSR: I remember you saying at Undara [Lava Tube Resort] that you never saw your mum again.

EW: No, I never...I always had her in mind as I was growing up. I hope I would see her one day but...(6<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Auntie Ella did in fact see her mother again after many years:

Ella Woibo: Came past Mareeba. That time my mother was there then. I did visit her there though, that day my brother and I did come up then. It was the first time that we

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<sup>5</sup> See also [www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23196221-28737,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23196221-28737,00.html).

met together, with mum. She just didn't know what to do...just look at me, staring at me, see how big I grew, and into a nice girl and all that. (6<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

The state of Queensland's 1897 *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* made the Queensland government the official guardian of Aboriginal children. Initially the 1897 Act applied to Aboriginal children of mixed parentage only, but later all children of Aboriginal descent came under its jurisdiction (Pohlner 1986: 84). These children became part of what is now known as 'The Stolen Generation'. Hopevale was one of the many missions which accepted children, and in fact favoured admitting children over adults (Pohlner, 1986: 51-53, Haviland, 1980: 131, 138, 139). Choir member, Auntie Ella Woibo is a member of the Stolen Generation. The removal of children from Indigenous families and their placement on missions had a profound influence on the transmission of culture and identity.

At Cape Bedford Muni sanctioned the removal of Aboriginal and mixed race children from their birth communities, accepting boys up to the age of approximately twelve (Pohlner, 1986: 84) and girls until the age of fourteen. The age for boys lay lower as older boys were more likely to have been initiated after the age of twelve. Once initiated, boys were socially required to fulfil their ceremonial responsibilities and therefore less willing to remain on the mission. Girls were generally accepted until their marriageable age of about fourteen, and because they did not have initiation ceremonies, were more likely to remain on the mission.

Not all children were forcibly taken to Cape Bedford mission. Some were left there by their parents in return for rations (Pearson, 1986: 42). Other motivations may have been parental fear for the children's safety in the turbulent and dangerous surroundings where clashes between white settlers and Aborigines led to frequent bloodshed. Oral history indicates that several elders were left at Cape Bedford by their relatives, such as Uncle



Roger Hart (see Haviland, 1990 and 1998) and Hart (2000). Uncle Walter Jack was also taken to the mission accompanied by his parents. His parents then left and Uncle Walter Jack never saw them again (Jack, 2000 and personal interview 25<sup>th</sup> March 2005).

Muni's focus on children strongly influenced the creation of a mission identity. The young children grew up together at Cape Bedford in gender-segregated dormitories which were later managed by Aboriginal 'parents'. The children were educated by the missionaries and later Christian Aboriginal elders and attended church services together. The Stolen Generation lost the love and knowledge of their Aboriginal kinship groups and subsequently were unfamiliar with pre-colonial Aboriginal spiritual beliefs. In some cases they also lost their native Aboriginal languages. Instead they adopted a Christian spirituality and learnt Guugu Yimithirr, which missionaries Schwarz and Poland used to communicate with the mission residents and in their translations of the Gospel and hymnody. Cape Bedford therefore became The Stolen Generation's physical and spiritual home, influencing the construction of their identity. This identity contrasted with those Aborigines still residing in the surrounding bush encampments or on the outskirts of nearby Cooktown. Pearson (1986:24) comments that:

The mission did not offer an alternative to the destruction of their traditional society [other than Christianity and its concomitant way of life], and it was up to the people to define Guugu Yimidhurr society and culture within a system that offered no compromises.

For the Guugu Yimithirr people, 'religious mission' became synonymous with 'community' (Pearson, 1986:38) and home. Choir member Auntie Ella Woibo commented:

EW: ...he [Ella's brother] didn't want to come back up here. He'd rather be an outsider; not in the community. I said: 'No. I still got Cape Bedford and Spring Hill in my mind, that's where I grew up, and I'd rather go back to, with my own people. So I did come up. (6<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

Another effect of taking children away from their Aboriginal families was that cultural practices such as song, dance and non-Christian painting and spirituality acquired a different status in the community. Painting, song and dance were not accorded the same importance as in pre-contact Aboriginal culture. On the subject of cultural loss Uncle Walter Jack commented during a recorded interview about his experiences as a member of The Stolen Generation:

David Woodgate: Did your father, or mother, I mean in the time you knew them, pass on any of the Aboriginal ways to you? The traditional...

Walter Jack: I don't think so, no...don't know..

DW: Did any of that, eh, your ceremonies, or any Aboriginal..., other than Language come through?

WJ: [Enthusiastically] Yes! More of Language!<sup>6</sup> More of Language...not English. Yeah, more of Language. I think I really pick up English when, eh, when we sent away...For the war, Woorabinda, then we...and start picking ehm, mostly Aboriginals talking Language...[hurriedly, as if correcting himself] English...English

DW: What about dancing? Could you dance, being at Cape Bedford, at Cape Bedford?

WJ: [Laughingly]Yeah...[Seriously] No, not a dance...nothing

DW: Because Nipper...

WJ: [Firmly] No, no dance (26<sup>th</sup> October 2000)

The above statements by Walter Jack support local scholar Pearson's (1986: 8) assertion that:

[w]hile painting, song and dance do have a place, because of the lack of strong public traditional beliefs, these do not occupy a significant place in that culture. They essentially exist as "curios" in Hope Vale's culture and they will remain so as long as the culture denies them cultural or religious significance.

By contrast pre-contact practices such as hunting, fishing and gathering were encouraged by missionaries as they supplemented the ever-scarce food supplies on the mission itself:

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<sup>6</sup> The Aboriginal people will often refer to their own Guugu Yimithirr language as just 'Language' or will say someone's 'talking in Language' when this person is speaking in Guugu Yimithirr. In this thesis I shall capitalise the word Language to distinguish between the Indigenous use of the word and its European use.

David Woodgate: What about bush tucker?

Walter Jack: Bush tucker too, we go out fishing, we go out pig hunting, we go out...erhm...kangaroo hunting, and mullet [a type of fish] hunting, and turtle, dugong...<sup>7</sup> (26<sup>th</sup> October 2000)

Pearson (1986: 18) argues that the continued fishing, hunting and gathering helped shape the basis of a Hopevalian mission identity, which is based less on Aboriginal pre-colonial spirituality than on cultural practices such as hunting and gathering. Whilst in some Indigenous communities, a mission identity has been defined by the ways in which local Indigenous people have come to reconcile their traditional, localised spiritual beliefs with Christianity, in Hopevale this reconciliation is less evident. The main reasons being that too little is known about non-Christian ceremonial practices and that many community members in Hopevale have also come to equate missionary intervention with the introduction of 'civilisation'. This has led to the abandonment of pre-contact religious practices as missionary beliefs became internalised. As choir member Phylomena Naylor put it:

Phylomena Naylor: Our ancestors passed away. There was only white man to tell us how to live. That's been passed on and now we've got it. We in the modern world. (5<sup>th</sup> July 2005)

The governmental legislation of the 1897 Act, missionary Muni's focus on children, his use of the local Guugu Yimithirr language in hymnody and church worship and the continued practices of hunting and gathering, helped to foster a sense of unity amongst a diverse mission population, brought together as a result of colonial settlement. The mission at Cape Bedford became well-established and the local men and women became devout Lutherans. Many Stolen children were unfamiliar with their ancestors' traditions and spirituality and as a result adopted Christianity as their new religion, becoming very knowledgeable in the Christian doctrine. Mission residents also learnt European domestic skills, cattle farming and land

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<sup>7</sup> The dugong is a large animal, also known as a sea cow, which feeds on sea grasses along the coastal areas.

cultivation. The missionary emphasis on women and children's wellbeing and the adoption of Western European modes of living stemmed from concepts of Christian duty, evangelisation and 'civilisation'.

#### 5.4 Missionisation: concepts of Christian duty, evangelisation and 'civilisation'

Hopevale's historiography indicates that like elsewhere in Australia, Christianity and the introduction of "civilisation" were conceived of as being synonymous (*cf* Harris, 1994: 77-82 and Johnston, 2003). This led to, among other things, the permanent restriction of Aborigines to reserves such as Cape Bedford, the legally sanctioned removal of Aboriginal children from their Indigenous communities, and the arrangement of marriages between baptised Christian Aboriginal women and non-Christian men by missionaries. These policies aimed to facilitate evangelical activities amongst traditionally nomadic Indigenous kinship groups and the creation of settled agricultural communities based on European models. These policies were predicated on the historical concept of 'Christian duty'.

The perceived moral need for Christian activity was inspired by the notion that, despite their perceived evolutionary inferiority, Aborigines did have a human soul. They therefore required salvation as much, if not more so, than any other humans. Harris (1994: 32) writes on the subject:

The belief that Aborigines indeed possessed immortal souls...was to become the final, non-negotiable tenet of missionary belief about Aborigines. They possessed a soul. They were human and therefore capable of salvation. Beyond this, however, missionaries' views on Aborigines were not clearly distinguishable from those of the rest of the community [other white settlers].

With reference to early Lutheranism in Australia, Theile (1938:102) states that: "In fact all German settlers that came into this country always recognised their duty towards the aborigines of Queensland" and Hopevale missionary Poland writes that "surely...the soul of

an Australian Aboriginal is just as precious in the sight of God as the soul of a Hindu, a Chinese, or a Negro, and that no race may be neglected or given a lower priority than any other.” (trans. Roehrs, 1988: 59). This belief in the immortality of the Aboriginal soul spurred the missionaries on to evangelise the people of Cape Bedford.

When proselytising amongst the Cape Bedford people, missionaries believed that to become truly Christian, Aborigines needed to adopt Westernised forms for settlement and living. This to missionaries entailed cultivating the land, adopting animal husbandry, wearing clothes, abandoning a nomadic existence (*cf* Poland, trans. Roehrs 1988: 124), altering gendered and social relationships, renouncing all pre-colonial traditional ceremonial practices and beliefs, as well as adopting the Christian faith. Writings support the notion that historically missionaries did not distinguish between the introduction of Christianity and the introduction of social constructs of European civilisation:

The word of God has brought about a wonderful change in the lives of the natives. No longer are they [Hope Valley Aborigines] wild, bloodthirsty nomads. They have settled down and try to earn their food and clothing with the labour of their hands. No longer are they thievish, as of yore, when nothing was safe from them: to-day there is no lock on any door on the mission station! (Theile, 1938:121)

Haviland (1980: 129) writing about Cape Bedford records that:

Flierl [Cape Bedford’s founder in 1886] apparently envisaged his task to include: (a) religious instruction with (b) learning the native language as a prerequisite combined with (c) secular and practical education of children and (d) training adults to do productive work, with the aim (e) of cultivating enough food to feed the station, thus (f) making it possible for the Aborigines to abandon their nomadic habits, and (g) insulating them from the corrupting European influence.

The Cape Bedford mission succeeded in growing sweet potatoes, coconuts, pineapples, bananas and the people successfully farmed cattle and engaged in diving for sea slug or sea cucumber, and trochus shells (Poland, trans. Roehrs 1988: 73, 75). A school was established and run by Miss Mary Allen (later to marry missionary Schwarz). Both Poland and Schwarz became competent in the local language of Guugu Yimithirr (*cf* Pohlner:

1986). In the eyes of the missionaries and those of the government the Cape Bedford community was a successful one. The need to “civilise” as well as evangelise Aborigines was inspired not just by the Christian doctrine of salvation and the equality of the Aboriginal soul, but further Biblical exegesis and historical scientific theories of evolution and Social Darwinism, as I discuss in the next section.

### 5.5 Social Darwinism, the Doctrine of Equality, ethnicity and missionisation in Hopevale

The governmental policies based on Social Darwinism which pertained to the management of Aboriginal affairs were also put into practice at Cape Bedford, as Hopevale was then called. At the Cape Bedford mission skull measurements were made to substantiate Social Darwinist theories (Poland, trans. Roehrs 1988: 58) described in chapter four. In his letter to German congregations missionary Poland (trans. Roehrs 1988: 58-59) wrote: “[w]e are dealing here with a race of people which is dying out” and that he was “among the dying remnants of the indigenous people of Australia”.

Another outcome of evolutionary thinking at Cape Bedford was that missionaries came to favour individuals from a mixed race background over those who had no European heritage. Those families and individuals from a mixed race background were given positions of greater responsibility and were generally deemed to be more trustworthy than those Aborigines who did not have European ancestry. Pearson (1986: 68) citing Terwiel-Powell writes:

[A] covert ideology which discriminates between persons according to their racial antecedents prevails both within and outside the mission. Such an ideology is expressed in attitudes and actions which favour one category of people over another.

Pearson found that people with a mixed ethnic heritage monopolised job opportunities for example (1986:69). This has resulted in an antipathy between mixed race and ‘full blood’ Hopevalians.

At the same time mixed race Aborigines are not accepted as being truly Aboriginal by some ‘full blood’ Hopevalians. This is primarily a reaction to the favouritism shown by past missionaries. Pearson writes “that Aborigines [sic] of mixed ancestry are completely and uniquely Aboriginal because it is in the Aboriginal community that they have gained their identity and acceptance.” (1986: 66). Pearson believes that the continued disparity on economic and social grounds between Hopevalians with a mixed ancestry and a full Aboriginal ancestry is perpetuated because there is a general lack of understanding of the missionary favouritism that resulted in these inequalities coming about in the first place (1986:78). My research findings in 2004-5 support his assertions. At the time of research, ethnic heritage was one way in which community members chose to make distinctions between themselves and others.

To summarise the racial lines along which Hopevale is socially divided Pearson uses three models proposed by Terwiel –Powell in 1975. The first model is hierarchical: white people have the power and are seen as superior by white staff and ‘full blood’ Aborigines. Hopevalians with a mixed ethnic heritage are less powerful economically and socially, but are believed to be more advantaged than, and superior to, people from a full Aboriginal background. The last group tends to suffer most in socio-economic terms and often have greater familial problems. I concur with this model, because I found that on the whole, Hopevalians with a full Aboriginal heritage were usually more disadvantaged and less likely to hold positions of responsibility. They also suffered higher incidences of alcohol dependency.

The second model Terwiel-Powell suggests is Christian and philosophical: it extols an ethos of equality among all men and women before one God regardless of their colour. Many Hopevalians adhered to this model as a matter of ethics and Christian morality in Terwiel-Powell's and Pearson's time. Pearson suggests that most people preferred this second model, but were at loss to explain their own internalization of racialised prejudices. At the time of my own research, almost two decades after Terwiel-Powell's work, this last model was still in evidence and operated alongside the first. Certainly choir members and community elders would proclaim equality under one Christian God, but had to acknowledge that there still was a lot of racism within Hopevale.

The third model proposed by Terwiel-Powell is one of racial pride, not dissimilar to the militant civil rights movement in the United States where 'Black is Beautiful'. Pearson, however, notes that this model, at the time of his research, was only adopted by a few individuals, and older residents approached the philosophy with great care (Pearson, 1986: 69-70). During the time of my research I found little evidence of militant views amongst choir members, or a severe dislike of white people generally. Especially amongst choir members, with whom I socialised most, I found that white individuals were judged on their personal merit rather than on their ethnic heritage or skin colour. This is not to say that amongst the younger generation there was no antipathy towards white society. I had relatively fewer opportunities to encounter or work closely with people my own age (late twenties) and thus lack information about their attitudes and opinions. Passing comments made to myself and to some white teaching staff, however, indicate that there was some antipathy amongst this group of people towards white society.

The aforementioned conflict between the model of racial equality based on the Christian doctrine and the internalised racial prejudices has caused confusion and further fragmentation of Hopevalian identities. At the time of research what was particularly



noticeable was the absence of men, especially younger ones. This absence is a result of missionary gendered attitudes in combination with policies that promoted some Hopevalians over others on the basis of their biological race and refused to devolve real power to Indigenous men locally.

#### 5.6 Missionisation and gendered absence

When the Cape Bedford mission was first established, missionary Muni felt it was his Christian duty to protect the most vulnerable Aborigines, namely children and women, from local Aboriginal men as well as settler society. Schwarz's beliefs reflected the contemporary missionary notion of 'muscular Christianity'. The concept evolved in parallel with missionary expansion in the colonies. It encompassed the belief that women were the weaker sex and therefore required protection alongside salvation. 'Muscular Christianity' helped formulate a strategy for incorporating secular notions of male moral and physical prowess into concepts of religious piety and manliness. It was the male answer to the believed innate piety of white Christian women (Johnston, 2003: 40 - 41). The ideal Christian woman, in turn, was seen to embody traditional morality as well as progressive modernity. This gendered evangelical discourse profoundly influenced the nature of missionary intervention and the representation of evangelical gender relations in the colonies, including Australia.

Missionary intervention tried to introduce the social relations characteristic of modern, Christian nations. Missionisation focussed itself on the native woman as a victim suffering at the hands of her male relatives and by implication Indigenous society itself. Evangelical endeavours additionally derived their credibility from their perceived Christian duty to raise awareness in Aboriginal women of their 'oppression' in Indigenous societies. This involved a discourse which aimed to convince Indigenous women that their enlightenment could only

come through adopting the Christian faith, its morals and ways of living (Johnston, 2003: 45, 56).

The perceived need for introducing Christian morals also stemmed from a fear of Indigenous female degradation. Haviland (1980: 137), writing about Hopevale history, quotes the *Annual Report of the Queensland Northern Protector of Aborigines 1902-1903* which stated that:

We can hardly expect the emotions of the savage woman to be under more severe control than those of the white. All aboriginal girls, with a few exceptions, would drift towards one common destination involving their own degradation and additional burdens to the state.

The comment was made in relation to the numerous recorded instances of sexual abuse and maltreatment of Aboriginal women in the area of Cooktown after the white settlers had established themselves. When ‘investigating’ Indigenous non-Christian marriage customs, missionaries also concluded that these were abusive and disadvantageous for women. This, to their minds, justified their efforts at trying to liberate women from traditional customs.

Pohlner (1986: 72) cites a section written by Poland for a church newsletter in Neuendettelsau, Germany:

Two women come into the camp, one hardly more than 16 years of age. Gripping her one hand is an older woman with dull tearful eyes. In the other under her arm she carries a young child in a tree bark. She collected ants<sup>8</sup> for her mother and herself.

“O mother, how my head aches,” she says as she puts down her load. As she stoops a big gaping wound can be seen across her forehead between the locks of brown curly hair. This has been inflicted by a woomera.<sup>9</sup>

“It will not be the last time he hits you, Dodika,” warns the old lady. “Give me the clay you brought along. I will put it on the wound.” As she applies the ointment the tyrant husband stretches out in his gunyah [shelter] looking toward the one where the women are. “Give me the ants,” he snarls, “My stomach aches with hunger.” “I am hungry too,” replies the young women [sic] showing signs of stubbornness. “Give me the ants,” he repeats. “Give them to him,” says the

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<sup>8</sup> These were probably green ants which Hopevalians eat. They are said to be very nutritious and good against colds and coughs.

<sup>9</sup> This is a wooden device which is used to facilitate spear throwing. It allows a spear to cover a much larger distance than when thrown by the arm alone and is particularly useful when hunting pigs and kangaroo as these animals move quickly.

older woman and the young one obeys...Could the missionaries risk such a future for these girls? Would they survive? Would they be strong enough?

It is reports and observations such as these that spurred Muni and Poland on to help 'the women in need'. Equally, this type of writing confirmed to sponsoring white, urban Australian parishes and Lutheran ones in Germany that their continued support for missionary activity amongst the Aborigines was required and justified.

Another reason why Muni and Poland focussed their efforts on young women was that young girls were more likely to remain on the mission after the age of twelve because they did not have lengthy initiation ceremonies.

Since all our attempts to persuade young lads to stay with us permanently resulted in failure, our resident population, for years on end, consisted almost exclusively of the girls who had been entrusted to our care. As time went by, these girls became so accustomed to being with us that no one could have talked them into leaving. (Poland, trans. Roehrs 1988: 29)

After the young women reached marriageable age, young non-Christian men who were unable to find suitable brides within their own kin groups asked to marry the baptised and confirmed Christian women on the mission. Muni agreed provided the men became faithful converts and refrained from seeking contact with their non-Christian relatives in the area. The Christian women themselves also influenced their husbands, leading them to settle on the mission:

She [Manira, an Aboriginal girl] received the Baptism on Pentecost 1898...William-Daku, followed her example after marrying a Christian girl, Elizabeth-Tulo, in January of that year. Previously he had stayed at the station only intermittently, but he had finally decided to take up permanent residence to please his wife. It was also mainly due to her influence that he subsequently became a Christian and was baptized. (Poland, trans. Roehrs 1988:31)

Thus Muni and other Hopevale missionaries were able to establish an isolated Lutheran community with a core of permanent, settled Christian families through manipulating marriage customs and monopolising access to marriageable women,.

In time the Christian men adopted their new faith and aspired to Christian leadership amongst their community as evangelists, laymen and later Pastors. But whilst the missionaries introduced a Christian spirituality, they did not accord Aboriginal men positions of formal spiritual responsibility in Hopevale until the 1960s. This happened despite ample evidence that during the evacuation to Woorabinda, Indigenous men proselytised and upheld the Christian gospel and demonstrated successful leadership skills. Whilst in Woorabinda, Cape Bedford men ministered to their own people in the absence of a permanent ordained Lutheran Pastor,<sup>10</sup> but spiritual leadership and power remained in the hands of white Pastors and officials. It was not until 1969 that Hopevalian Pastors George Rosendale and Alick Cameron were ordained. My research showed that there is oral and written evidence which suggests that many Hopevalians became severely disillusioned with their faith and the church due to its patronising, paternalistic attitudes and unwillingness to devolve spiritual and secular power into the hands of Aboriginal men (*cf* Pearson, 1986). Because the missionaries had been extremely successful in eradicating pre-colonial practices, however, there were few other leadership opportunities open to men, as secular ownership of and responsibility for Country took even longer to be devolved into Indigenous hands.

Despite the assimilation drive of the 1960s and 70s described in the previous chapter which saw Hopevalians move South, many non-Indigenous Australians did not believe Aborigines to be capable of more than domestic or agricultural labour. As a result very few Hopevalians were trained and prepared with the skills and experience to manage Hopevale when it acquired its own Indigenous council in the 1980s. Additionally, when Hopevalians returned home after their work experiences they were unable to find meaningful employment and housing. Local jobs were scarce and very few employers offered positions of responsibility; land ownership and land management were undertaken by white men.

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<sup>10</sup> Lutheran pastors did visit and the one who came most often was Pastor Wenke. Pastor Wenke later was called to Hopevale and taught the choir.

Whilst Hopevale women still fulfilled their roles as domestics, mothers, religious helpers and singers, men increasingly found that their political, social and religious aspirations were being thwarted by the church and government and later from within the Hopevale community itself. With very little to fill the gap created by the loss of significant employment, community support and spirituality, many young men have sought refuge in alcohol and drugs, resulting in community violence and high levels of incarceration as well as suicide. The introduced changes in diet and the diminishing reliance on local, traditional sources of nourishment have also led to more heart disease, obesity, renal failure and early deaths in many people, especially men. These combined factors have led to women becoming heads of households. Auntie Violet Cobus commented:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Do you think that, because hmm, you know, unfortunately a lot of the young men have problems with drugs and alcohol, do you think that a lot of the time it's the women who run the community?

Violet Cobus: [Quietly] I think so. Yeah...[Regretfully] Running the show for the men, you know. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

The absenteeism of men and high levels of teenage pregnancy have also placed a greater burden on older women in the community, the *gamba gamba*. Many of these older women already raised families of their own, but are also responsible for looking after their grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Grandmothers, aunts, and women in traditional roles of support for childbirth and child rearing are frequently left to provide care. This has led in many instances to what is known as the "stressed-out granny", a grandmother caring for many grandchildren when her own children have been unable to respond through outcomes of illness, loss of parenting skills, alcohol abuse, or other problems. As pregnancies occur at a younger age than in the non-Aboriginal population, the giving status of womanhood, and fertility rates are higher, this is a substantial problem. (Raphael, Swan and Martinek, 1996: 335)

This certainly was the case in Hopevale, as shown in chapter three. Alongside these childcare duties, older women in Hopevale also took on the role of arbiter in family disputes. Whilst

women traditionally were able to hold positions of authority within families on the basis of their seniority, this responsibility has now become heavier as many men are incapacitated and unable to share the burden.

As a result older women have also become Christian spiritual leaders and educators. Whilst the Lutheran church of Australia, at the time of research, did not allow women to train as Pastors, many Hopevalian women like choir member Auntie Maureen Wallace trained at the theological college Wontul-Bi-Buya near Cairns, to gain a diploma which allowed them to become officially recognised church helpers. It was also believed that women could be good church leaders if given the opportunity to train and that women could have a strong influence on children because of their role as primary caregivers.

Violet Cobus: But there is a...pastors, *mah* [no equivalent expression in English, but can mean 'yes'], Church of England, ladies preach too...

VC: I think Church of England is a good church. They allow women Pastors...

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Do you guys reckon that women could be good Pastors and preachers?

VC: Yeah, I think so. Might be influence a lot of young kids you know, hey?

MSR: I don't like this whole idea of woman being second to man.

VC: Yeah, you gotta be boss too. Ladies have to be boss. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

In the absence of men wishing to be trained as pastors and the retirement and death of the ordained Hopevalian pastors and evangelists, women also took instruction from Pastor Tom so that they could teach religious education at the local primary school. Additionally the majority of the congregation on an average Sunday morning would primarily consist of older women and some children. Women, particularly older ones, therefore, have become the backbone of the Hopevale community. They are the majority of the care givers and spiritual

leaders of the community, whereas many men are unable to participate in every day life due to alcohol and drugs usage.

I initially wondered if the absence of men was due to cultural, gendered social domains. Scholars such as Magowan (1994), Dussart (2000), Bell ([1983] 1993) and Barwick (2000) have shown that other, more traditionally orientated communities, still operate along gender segregated lines which influence social conduct and the performance of music. In Hopevale at the time of research, by contrast, no daily activities were specifically gender segregated, although historical records and oral history indicate that at the time of early colonisation and missionary involvement, the community operated along gender-segregated lines and during missionisation physical separation of the sexes was enforced by mission staff through a segregated dormitory system.

During my stay in Hopevale, social interactions were not segregated by gender, but a strict set of Christian moral codes was adhered to by the older generation. In the “old people’s home”, for example, it was forbidden to share a room with a partner of the opposite sex unless the individuals were married. It was believed that such sharing was inappropriate and un-Christian. Association in public with members of the opposite sex was not necessarily frowned upon, but if these meetings were held privately it was assumed they were amorous in nature. Amongst the younger generation, the Christian moral codes adhered to by older people have not been adopted to the same extent. The teenage pregnancy rate in Hopevale is high and young unmarried girls often have several children with different partners.

### 5.7 Missionisation and evangelisation: the Dreaming and Christianity in Hopevale

Another reason behind the absence of young men in church, is that it has not yet been possible to develop Indigenous concepts of Christianity as has happened elsewhere in Australia.

Several Indigenous scholars and theologians have contributed to the understanding of Indigenous concepts of Christianity, including Rosendale (in Habel 1997), Thompson (2004), and Gondarra (1981, 1986, 1988). Many of these texts demonstrate that in various parts of Australia an Indigenous understanding of Christianity has been arrived at, which combines the Christian message of salvation and equality with elements of pre-colonial spirituality, making Christianity meaningful to those Aborigines who practice it.

No literature exists which specifically focuses on Indigenous Christianity as it is practised at Hopevale. Although retired Hopevalian Pastor Rosendale does use his personal history to exemplify theological points in Thompson (2004), in personal interviews with him it became clear that his approach to developing an Indigenous understanding of Christianity was not welcomed by many members of the Hopevale community (Interview, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005). This is not to say that there is no evidence of a pre-contact spirituality. Rather, Dreamtime elements have not been incorporated into Christian worship practices in the church and into formalised, generally accepted understandings of the Christian doctrine. Oral archival records and interviews I conducted also indicated that whatever many older mission residents knew about a non-Christian spirituality, they dared not share with each other or their children for fear of ridicule and punishment by missionaries and Christian elders.

It was in the local stories and oral history that references to totemic animals and pre-contact spirituality were more evident at my time of research. Local *milbi* (stories) tell of the travels of Dreaming Ancestors and are documented by Gordon (July 2007), Gordon and Haviland (1980) and Haviland and Hart (1998). With reference to these *milbi* anthropologist Haviland notes that “it must be clear that the stories...really come from the past”. The *milbi* “represent an era of the past...that no longer exists, and, indeed, that survives only as a childhood memory of the oldest people alive”. (Haviland, 1980:57). Haviland notes that the *milbi* he published with their Hopevale teller Tulo Gordon were not mystical, sacred tribal property or



the only true versions of these *milbi*. They were fragmentary, half-remembered, embellished and regularised stories told by Tulo Gordon (Haviland, 1980: 57). Nevertheless, the stories communicated a sense of past where the universe was “divided socially and geographically, peopled by human beings and other creatures. Most of the stories depicted “a time...when...*all* [emphasis original] living creatures were human, to be changed one at a time into animals, birds, spirits, or heavenly bodies, as a result of their deeds and propensities.” (Haviland, 1980: 57). Tulo Gordon’s *milbi* are now being retold and remembered by his son, Indigenous tour guide Wilfred Gordon, who uses these *milbi* to help tourists understand the history of his *Nugal* country in the Hopevale area (Gordon, 2007).

In the *milbi* told by Tulo Gordon, the supernatural creature and totemic figure which appears most often is *Yiirmbal* (or *Yirmbal*). *Yiirmbal*, according to Tulo Gordon, “could be anything”: a giant snake or eel, a huge fish, an enormous shark, or perhaps something more nebulous, a shapeless creature that inhabits and protects a waterhole, a swamp, a mountain or an outcropping of a rock.” (Gordon and Haviland, 1980: 57). It is in Wilfred Gordon’s *milbi*, however, that *Yiirmbal* acquires an even greater significance and comes closer to being a figure in Indigenous understandings of a Christian theology. Wilfred Gordon (July 2007: 14-15) writes:

Aboriginal people wanted to understand where life came from and where it went to. Does the journey end? How does it end? Or is there a time when it comes full circle, and we, as human beings, will remain as a spirit, living in the most wonderful place that we know. This place where our journey started, and which gave us our identity...Aboriginal people believed that there was a Spirit Giver for all living things. And when that life finished, they questioned what happened to that spirit. Where did it go? Did it go back to the Creator? This is why they protected the bones of people in the *dubal* [the cave in which washed, embalmed and wrapped human bones of deceased kin were placed], preparing them for the completion of their life’s circle.

Because life comes to us all from the spirit giver, Aboriginal people believe that we are all created equal. The differences between people only occur with religion, culture and environment, but spiritually we are all the same.

I posit in this thesis that Wilfred Gordon's Indigenous spirituality is similar to the Christian doctrine in that it emphasises the existence of a powerful, life-giving Creator spirit, the equality of all humans under this Creator being as well as the belief that there may be an afterlife which is wonderful, and that in many ways this afterlife leads to a return to where the creation of the human spirit started. Gordon, however, does not suggest that the afterlife is necessarily a heavenly Kingdom. His text suggests that the afterlife may be the place where the human spirit and identity came into being, that is the land on which a person was born. I suggest that this could be interpreted as an exegesis of Genesis 3:19:

By the sweat of your brow  
You will eat your food  
Until you return to the ground  
Since from it you were taken  
For dust you are  
And to dust you will return

I posit that this exegesis combined with Hopevalian spirituality, could be a way in which local Christianity might be Indigenised in the future.

Wilfred Gordon also introduces tourists to the Indigenous concept of *warra* and its links to Country. The word *warra* has no one direct translation into English but does have implications for the Indigenous constructions of a land-based Indigenous Christian theology and identity. The term *warra* is explained by Gordon (July 2007: 14) as follows:

The Birth Place also gives people their spiritual identity, or *warra*. *Warra* means 'I am' or 'I belong to' in a spiritual sense. I describe myself as Nugal-*warra*, meaning 'I am Nugal, I belong to Nugal lands', just as you might describe yourself as Australian or English, or German. We all need *warra*, as it provides us with the strength we need for our journey through life.

To find one's *warra* is to find oneself... *Warra* also means *sense of belonging*. You find yourself through your sense of community – your personal support group. It is they who make you aware of who you are, what your values are. Making someone aware of their values is what empowers them. (Bennett and Gordon, July 2007: 14 [emphasis in original])

Next to Wilfred Gordon, Hopevale church and community elder Pastor George Rosendale has worked on developing local concepts of the Dreaming and integrating them with Christianity (see Habel 1997). He criticises former missionaries for not respecting traditional Aboriginal customs and beliefs. In an interview Pastor Rosendale commented on his religious beliefs in relation to colonialism, racism and Aboriginal traditional beliefs:

George Rosendale: And they have, that burn time ceremony. All the people get together and, they have that ceremony. The old missionary here, *yurra* [they], never looked into these ceremonies, what it's all about. All he did was rubbish everything you know 'No, you can't do that, that's heathenism' and all that. But, there is some good in those ceremonies, you know. And that's what I can't understand, why people so...what his name...against other people about their teaching rules and whatever. Now these people [earlier Aborigines] had some knowledge of the Creator. They never had the knowledge what's in the Bible, but they had the knowledge of this Creator Being and they looked to him too, for everything, support.

GR: And, when we start looking into what, they [the missionaries] just broke everything. And one of the damage I think they done to Aboriginal people...they damage their faith, because these people [Aborigines], they always looked...they always looked to this *Yiirmbal*. They had faith in *Yiirmbal* to do this, this, this, this...But, what I am trying to do is to, to revive some of this for the theologians to look at, but some of them came up...guns...after all that condemnation they put me through...now they looking at how can they improve Christianity among the Aborigines. I told them at the time, I said: "The horse has spoken. Now they are in your paddock"...and I said: "In your paddock you got alcohol, you got drugs...and whatever. Do you prefer that?"...See, the Aboriginal people always spiritual. They never worshipped wood and stone like the China man or worshipped animals like the Indians. No. They worshipped this unseen Creator Being. ...I said to the hierarchies: "How can you say, that God was never in Australia?...And tell us Aborigines that God was in Australia?" Now I said: "That's bullshit."...I said: "God been in Australia since His Creation. If He made the world He was here. He was with our people everywhere." ...None of you white people could ever convert a person, whether they are white or black. No! Only Holy Spirit does that. (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005)

Pastor George then commented on the situation in contemporary Hopevale:

GR: I put out that book [Habel, 1997: *Rainbow Spirit Theology*] for you people [white people, and theologians and pastors in particular], to give you some understanding that we Aborigines are not monkeys, or come from monkeys. I said: "We're people. and we had some knowledge of Creator Being. ...I said: "Right now, they [Aborigines] got nothing. They try to hang on to what the white people brought, message of the Pastor. You'll find it hard, you...they [people in

Hopevale] are between this...and this ... “These people here [in Hopevale], they...I believe they are too white orientated. And, which is sad, because it’s taken away from them, that which really speaks to them. And...the message, message would be more meaningful to them they were...but they in between here and there. (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005)

Pastor George Rosendale was the only advocate I met who openly supported the introduction of an Indigenous theology. Wilfred Gordon, whilst educating visitors about his concepts of Aboriginal spirituality, did not overtly try to encourage the introduction of his concepts into worship practices and local theological understanding of the gospel. Many Hopevalians, especially younger ones, were “in between here and there”. They were often unwilling to fully embrace European Christian interpretations of the Gospel and concomitant worship as these were associated with historically oppressive church policies. Due to their lack of knowledge with regards to traditional spirituality many Hopevalians were also unable to identify fully with this spiritual knowledge which would be the basis for an Indigenous understanding of the Christian doctrine. Others saw the traditional *milbi* which contained spiritual knowledge as being s historical curiosities to be used as entertainment rather than an integral part of Indigenous spirituality:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Did anybody ever talk to you about any traditional religion, like the Dreamtime or stories about spirits or...

Violet Cobus: That used to be told by our older people hey? Older people.

Dora Deemal: Yeah

VC: But ever since they died. It’s been died too....

MSR: Do you remember any of those stories that they used to tell you?

DD: Some of them.

VC: Still here and there, you know. When it come our mind, well, we’ll pass it on tell the kids story...to frighten them to tell them those stories [laughter]. (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005)

Another issue hampering the incorporation of Indigenous *milbi* into a full understanding of Indigenous Christianity is that ownership of *milbi* can be determined by kinship or *warra* affiliations, depending on the stories. Wilfred Gordon (Bennett and Gordon, 2007: 18) writes:

If I was simply a guide employed by a tour company, or even a partner in a joint venture, I would not tell the stories behind the rock art, and I would not take visitors to many sites. It would be a disrespect to my culture – it would be like selling the stories for money. But if I own the story it's different. It's about respecting who you are and all the Elders. My Grandfathers put the stories there for me to carry through. I have to be the conduit. It has to be me.

Many stories, however, as Auntie Violet commented, were buried along with their tellers before they could be passed on. Consequently, opportunities for the younger generation to learn their ancestors' *milbi* and thus about their *warra* or identity were lost. Many young people are therefore nominally Christian through baptism but seldom attend church and have only a minimal knowledge of more traditional spiritual concepts. This negatively affects their *warra* in that they are unable to fully grasp their Indigenous heritage, but cannot fully reconcile themselves with European culture either.

In relation to choral singing, each choir member still belonged to Country and had kinship links which together with Country determined their *warra*. These affiliations to Country and *warra* did not influence their choral singing practices, however. The singers' *warra* had not directly impacted on the ways in which choral singing had been taught and had developed in the past. Neither did *warra* determine specific performative approaches. At the time of research, choral singing was not an activity associated with one particular *warra* and all choir members mixed freely regardless of their differing affiliations. What did affect choral singing, however, were the lack of worship practices which appealed to younger Hopevalians and consequently the ageing of the church congregation, which did not introduce new musical forms of worship. Like other musical practices, congregational and

choral singing, were therefore influenced by Hopevale's history as a mission. The historical dimension of Hopevalian musical practices is therefore what I address in the next chapter.

**“We are Lutherans from Germany”: the construction of Hopevalian identities through history and song**



**Figure 6.1: Hopevale St John's Church, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004.**

Fieldtext, 31<sup>st</sup> October and 01<sup>st</sup> November 2004

*Sunday was officially Reformation Day. This day is significant for Protestantism and Lutherans in particular because it is a celebration of the day when Martin Luther hammered his 95 theses on a Wittenberg (Germany) church door. In these theses he summarised what he believed to be wrong with the Catholic church and its practices, setting in motion what was to become known as The Reformation. The altar cloth was red today, signifying this special day. It had changed from last week's green.*

*The service was structured as follows (Audio sample 2 for beginning of service):*

*Opening sentences*

*Hymn 1: Guugu Yimithirr (GY) 45 Lord ngayu gadaa nhanungal (I do not come because my soul)*

*We confess our sins and are assured of God's forgiveness*

*Hymn 2: Together in Song (TIS) 195, Salvation now to us has come*

*Prayer of the day*

*Readings:*

- *Jeremiah 31: 31-34*
- *Romans 3:20-28 [Read together by congregation]*
- *Luke 19:1-11 [Read by Pastor]*

*Hymn 3: TIS 103, A mighty fortress is our God (Audio sample 3)*

*Sermon: Told us about Jesus who went to dine with Zacchaeus the tax collector.*

*The Nicene Creed*

*Hymn 4: Offering hymn TIS 626, Lord of Creation*

*Liturgy of Holy Communion*

*Hymns 5 and 6: Distribution hymns TIS 538 Feed us now, bread of life and TIS 584, Just as I am, without one plea (Not sung in full).*

*The dismissal:*

- *Thanksgiving*
- *Blessing*
- *Hymn 7: TIS 217, Love divine , all love excelling*

*Today I noted that in hymn 5 the organist June Pearson did not hold the long notes as written, and starts musical phrases early. I wondered why. She plays all phrases in full when performing with the Corduroy band.*

*Not all hymns were printed in the hymnal Together in Song, and some were sung to different tunes from older hymnals. The first hymn in Guugu Yimithirr, I do not come because my soul was an example of this. It was probably learnt orally in its older version and is still being performed today in favour of the newer melodies. I began to understand what Pastor Tom meant when he said that his congregation was quite conservative!*

*During Sunday's service it became clear that some of my own observations were similar to those being made by my neighbours on the church benches. During one of the songs Dora turned to me and asked in a whisper: "Are we dragging?" We were in fact, so I said: "Yes we are, but it does not matter much now." And it did not. This was a church service, not a choir concert, but she was right in observing the songs were getting slower and slower. I have noticed over the past month through church attendance that almost every song is performed very slowly here in Hopevale, no matter what its original tempo indications (if there are any), time signatures or religious topic. Every song feels and sounds like a funeral dirge to me. I suppose I could call these observations on tempo and hymn choice evidence of local performance practice.*





**Figure 6.2: Hopevale St John's Church, interior facing towards altar, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2004**

*After the service I asked Pastor Tom about the paintings of the dove and goose (or maybe it is a duck, I cannot tell) behind the altar. I am told they were painted by the former Tulo Gordon. The dove I can place Biblically, the goose or duck I cannot. The paintings appear very straightforward with little reference to the Indigenous painting styles I have seen elsewhere. There is also a fish hanging above the main entrance which has been painted by local artist Roy McIvor. This fish has a closer resemblance to what I have seen of more traditional painting methods and styles. I can also place it Biblically and assume this fish represents a local species.*



**Figure 6.3: Painting of a fish by artist Roy McIvor, St John's Church, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2004.**

*According to Lynn Jantke, Pastor Tom's wife, it has been Tom's dream to have local artists decorate the church with Indigenous art including paintings and carvings. Lynn and Tom had this happen in Papua New Guinea where they were previously stationed. Pastor Tom felt, however, that the local population in Hopevale knew too little about their pre-colonial spirituality to be able to fully form an Indigenous understanding of the Gospel which would help with the creation of such art. The church is rather barren as a result.*



**Figure 6.4: Hopevale St John's Church, interior facing away from altar, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2004**

The above fieldtext, the accompanying musical examples (Audio samples 2 and 3) and the photographs demonstrate the conservative nature of Christian worship in Hopevale. They also show that Hopevale Lutherans had a specific hymn-singing tradition which was transmitted orally, in part through church attendance. The hymns favoured and performed were the older ones from LH and ALHB, learnt from missionaries and church elders. Before my arrival Pastor Tom had mentioned that his congregation was conservative in their worship practices and after attending a few services such as the one above I was able to see why.

This chapter examines how missionaries influenced Hopevalian identities through their use of hymnody during early evangelical efforts. I also look at Hopevale's choral history and the choir's functions in helping shape a unique mission identity. Additionally I discuss the convergence of emic concepts of choral with congregational singing and how this convergence influenced choral membership and performance practice. I demonstrate that a specifically Hopevalian tradition of performance practice has evolved in hymn and choral singing. The last important aspect which I look at is the use of the Guugu Yimithirr language in hymnody, choral singing and worship and how this has influenced constructions of local identities. I show that hymnody and choral singing as well as the use of Guugu Yimithirr in performance can have both positive and negative influences on the construction

of Indigenous identities and are important in the process of sustaining and altering social memory within the community.

### 6.1 The importance of hymnody and choral singing in Hopevale history

As I demonstrated in chapter four, song, dance and art are an important aspect of Aboriginal identities. In traditionally orientated groups, song, dance and art are instrumental in transmitting spiritual, botanical and geographical information about Country. These art forms establish, re-confirm and change social relationships between related Aboriginal kin groups and their members. In this way Aboriginal identities are performed. The loss of ceremonial knowledge and the music, art and dance involved in ceremonial activity has resulted in the loss of information about individual and communal identities in Aboriginal communities. As a result many Indigenous people are unable to ‘place’ themselves in relation to their Country, kin and spirituality.

With regards to Hopevalian musical and ceremonial history little is known about non-Christian ritual in the Cape Bedford area, apart from research undertaken by Roth. This lack of knowledge has impeded the development of an Indigenous understanding of the Christian gospel in Hopevale. It has also led to the near absence of more traditional song and dance forms in the community. Due to this absence of traditional ceremonial forms it becomes difficult to assess how accurate Roth’s records are as it is not possible to conduct comparative work.

Roth’s work was also influenced by the local missionaries. When Roth conducted his research he was aided by local missionaries Poland and Schwarz who acted as hosts and interpreters, offering translations from Guugu Yimithirr into English. Roth (1909), writing about an initiation ceremony at Cape Bedford which he attended with Schwarz, records that

the dances were about animals and natural phenomena. These phenomena included the dances and song cycles of the native companion (a type of bird), owl, pheasant, body louse, black palm, frog, an unidentified fresh water fish, mosquito, crab, honey, kangaroo, a dog running after a lizard, fresh-water mussel, stone fish, alligator, eel, and flying fox, closing with the snake dance. (1909: 172)

All these animals, insects and water creatures are part of the local flora and fauna at Cape Bedford and therefore likely to have been totemic animals to the Aboriginal people living at Cape Bedford during Roth's visit. It is unclear, however, how much Roth and missionaries understood about these songs and their significance. Roth (1909: 167) accorded little spiritual significance to the initiation ceremonies and their dances, songs and art, writing that:

Beyond being commanded what not to eat, the novice here receives no instructions whatever concerning his sexual or social relationships, no moral or ethical precepts are incalculated, nor is any form of education (in ways of hunting, weapon-making, etc.) imparted; indeed, from what I learnt and saw, I should judge that his education, such as it is, is greatly misguided and retarded by attendance at the ceremony...after every form of enquiry, direct and indirect, I was able to satisfy myself that throughout all these series of performances, not one has any ethical or educational significance – there is not indeed the slightest intention of pointing a moral to adorn a tale.

Poland (1988: 96) arrives at the same conclusion, writing:

From start to finish, the ceremony seemed to lack deeper significance. If deeper meanings had at one time existed, they had obviously been lost completely to the present generation. All our attempts to get to the bottom of what was really going on were in vain, even among the baptized Christians. The latter would certainly not have kept it from us if they had known.

Roth draws this conclusion despite his observation that there was an “essential portion of the ceremony” which the novices had explained to them (1909:171). Similarly Poland writes that at the end of each presentation of dances during initiation ceremonies, the novices were given “a whispered and most profuse explanation of the meaning of the play [dance]” (1988:

96). Poland does not elaborate on what was whispered however, and Roth makes no further mention of the exact details of the information being passed on to the initiates.

If the ceremonies were as meaningless as Roth and Poland assumed, why should the elders offer profuse explanations? My suggestion is that the dances and their accompanying songs were an important way of perpetuating local Aboriginal cultural information and that this information might have included secret and sacred details, as is the case in other traditionally oriented communities such as the Yolgnu communities in Northern Arnhem Land. It is likely that the historical elders at Cape Bedford were unwilling to divulge this secret and sacred information to uninitiated white men. Similarly, the baptized Christian Aborigines might not have been able to describe the ceremonies adequately as they may not have been initiated to begin with. If they had been initiated, their baptism would have required that they abandon their non-Christian ceremonial practices. As a result Christian Aborigines would have been less familiar with the significance and detail of ceremonial knowledge. Thus no significant details were passed on to the missionaries and Roth.

It is also worth critiquing the researcher and missionaries' historical view of what was considered to be 'meaningful'. The historical text suggests that the missionaries and Roth felt no meaning could be accorded to a ceremony if it did not contain a lesson in morality for example. Today's ethnographical concepts pertaining to 'meaning' are different to those of early missionaries. The ways in which meaning is accorded to ceremonies by ethnographers today is no longer solely based on ethnocentric concepts of Western morality or Christianity, but tend to incorporate Indigenous understandings of what is meaningful.

The non-Christian songs which accompanied the dances also received little attention as no aesthetic or didactic merit could be perceived by Roth and the missionaries. It is thus difficult to ascertain much about the role of these songs. From Roth's records we learn that there was no specialised musician or 'chorus master' at Cape Bedford who would lead the

traditional ceremonies and that all arrangements were made by the old men collectively (1909: 170). With regards to the chorus of male singers, Roth writes “the shouting is nearly all “au! au! au!””, hardly any words being spoken, the whole performance being what we should almost call “dumb show” “(1909:172). Poland too, attributes little merit to the traditional singing, referring to it as ‘monotonous’ or ‘irritating’. In mortuary ceremonies the melodies sung were said to have been rendered as a ‘monotonous falsetto singing’ by the men. This singing was accompanied by ‘ear shattering wailing’ from the women (1988:21, 38, 86).

Both Roth (1909) and Poland (1988) frequently note that ceremonial customs confirmed the knowledge and leadership of the gerontocracy. In traditionally orientated communities today, elders who have lived long lives usually possess significant amounts of spiritual, geographical and botanical knowledge and thus also possess large song, dance, painting and story repertoires as much of this knowledge is embedded in ceremonial song, dance, painting and oral history. As Poland records (1988: 98 – 99), with the decline of ceremonies at Cape Bedford, spiritual and ceremonial knowledge became redundant and the male elders lost their social status in the eyes of the young.

A disrespect for elders was also cultivated through missionary preaching and help of young children deliberately sought to increase conversion rates:

You children, I wish that you, too, would tell them about it [the Gospel]; you who have discovered something better since living with us! Tell your parents and relatives that they cannot go on as they are. Your chance of being believed may be greater than ours. Can you bear to see them [parents and relatives] continuing along the path which will, in turn, lead each of them to eternal destruction?...In a letter Missionary Schwarz wrote to me in January 1907, he says: “All the camp Aborigines now come to our services regularly. The reason for this is the encouragement they have received from their Christian children and relatives.”(Poland, 1988: 108 - 109)

With the decline of ceremonial customs and initiations, local Cape Bedford Aborigines came to church and adopted the Lutheran faith and with it its hymnody. For younger children who

had been raised on the mission or those who had not been initiated Christianity became a 'traditional' spirituality as it was the only religion they came to know well. Through preaching and hymnody missionaries sought to instil amongst their flock Christian moral values and spiritual beliefs. Hymnody and congregational singing played an important part in the formation of an Aboriginal Christian mission identity.

## 6.2 Hymnody and its use in the processes of evangelisation at the Cape Bedford mission

Congregational and hymn singing played an important role in the processes of evangelisation at Cape Bedford and the formation of a Christian identity. Choruses and hymns were ways in which the Christian gospel was musically communicated to the Aborigines. Because the Guugu Yimithirr people did not read or write when missionaries arrived, hymnody was a more effective mode of communication as the message was in a format which could be heard, learnt and orally transmitted through song. Hymnody also became more meaningful once missionaries Poland and Schwarz had grasped the local language Guugu Yimithirr and translated the hymns and Gospel.

Records indicate that throughout the mission's history Hopevale residents enjoyed singing. Poland, writing about Cape Bedford comments that: "Scarcely an evening goes by without the sound of open-air singing" (1988: 85). The same author mentions that as part of the daily evening services one of the forty translated hymns was sung to the accompaniment of a reed organ (1988:84). Similarly, Pohlner (1986: 110-111) writing about Hope Valley records:

Singing was traditionally an important means of communication. When Pastor Bartholomaeus came to Hope Valley in 1939 there was an elderly aborigine Toby, camped in the stable. He had come to the Mission as an old man. When the young pastor asked how he had come to know Jesus he replied, "Through listening to the boys singing hymns every night."

Hymnody was also used to counter local non-Christian beliefs and practices. Poland records several translations of hymns into Guugu Yimithirr for the purposes of religious instruction, such as *Abide, O dearest Jesus* and *Ringe recht, wenn Gottes Gnade* (1988: 85, 99). The second hymn is based on a German chorale and was ‘translated’ by Poland to instruct the young boys who were ready to become *ngumbal*, initiated men, against the perceived evils of *ngancha*, their initiation ceremony. Poland (1988: 99) records that his ‘translation’ of the hymn *Ringe recht, wenn Gottes Gnade* was as follows:

(3) When your friends invite you  
To take part in *ngancha*  
Simply say: “That’s impossible,  
For I belong to Christ”

(4) Stay away from places  
Where evil is done  
And falsehoods flourish  
For they are haunts of the devil

(5) The *ngancha* imposes sacrifices  
To pamper the greed of selfish men  
But even now you enjoy superior food  
The heavenly bread

(6) Your face will certainly decay  
When you are in the grave  
But you will arise more beautiful  
Through the power of this food

The Lutheran church archives in Neuendettelsau contain editions of the hymnals that the missionaries Poland and Schwarz were likely to have used at Cape Bedford. The hymnal was probably called *Lobet den Herrn, den mächtigen König der Ehren. Gesangbuch für die evangelische- lutherische Kirche in Bayern*, (U.E. Sebald, Buchdruckereibesitzer in Nürnberg. 1886) The hymn *Ringe recht, wenn Gottes Gnade* appears here as hymn 378 in the section *Kampf der Heiligung*, [Battle of the Sanctification] (See appendix C for details of original hymnal page).



It is almost certain that the hymnal in the archives is the one used by Poland. Whilst the hymn melody for *Ringe Recht* can be found in later Lutheran hymnals such as the *Australian Lutheran Hymn-Book* (ALHB) (1950) hymn 23 and the *Lutheran Hymnal* (LH) (1989) hymns 510 and 542, the hymn text cannot. Only the Neuendettelsau hymnal has more than six verses and is listed as being suitable for 'Christian combat'. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Poland did use this version of the hymnal during his time at Cape Bedford. The hymn text is attributed to a Johannes Joseph Windler (1670 – 1722). The original text and free translation in English are as follows:

*(3) Kämpfe bis aufs Blut und Leben,  
dring hinein in Gottes Reich;  
will der Satan widerstreben,  
  
werde weder matt noch weich.*

Battle to blood and death  
Penetrate into God's Kingdom  
If Satan seeks to subvert/ impair  
you  
Become neither weak nor feeble

*(4) Ringe, dass dein Eiser glühe,  
Und die erste Liebe dich von der ganzen Welt abziehe,  
  
Halbe Liebe hält nich Stich*

Fight so that your sword glows  
And the First Love [God's Love]  
takes you away from the world  
Half a love will not do [i.e. you  
must be totally devoted to your  
faith]

*(5) Ringe mit Gebet und Schreien  
  
Halte damit feurig an  
Lass dich keine Zeit gereuen,  
Wärs auch Tag und Nacht getan*

Fight with Prayer and shouting  
[screaming even]  
Zealously continue doing so  
And waste no time in regretting  
If you do it day and night

(6) *Hast du dann die Perl errungen  
Denke ja nicht, dass du nun alles Böse hast bezwungen  
Das uns Schaden pflegt zu thun.*

If you have gained the Pearl  
Then don't think you have  
mastered/ overcome all evil  
That seeks to do us harm

Poland retains nothing of the original text as printed in the hymnal from Neuendettelsau. The function of the hymn is maintained however. Its aim is to encourage believers to battle against Satan and fight for their Christian faith.

The translated verses refer directly to some of the ceremonial beliefs which missionaries sought to eradicate. A traditionally taboo food, *yangga*, which is a type of yam, was singled out by Poland as an example. He records that it was believed by the Aborigines at Cape Bedford that the initiate's face would rot away if he were to consume this yam before the initiation had been completed (1988: 95-99). Similarly it was held by missionaries that the older men, *direnggur*, were able to maintain for themselves an "inordinate respect...by successfully enshrouding the *ngancha* in mystery, and creating the impression that they alone h[ad] been initiated into the mystery" (1988: 96). Poland calls the initiation ceremonies' secrecy "Satan's strongest defence within the tribal group" and writes that "this defence had to be stormed" (1988:96).

All these missionary beliefs can be traced in the hymn's 'translation'. The words 'evil places' in the fourth verse refer to the initiation grounds. Here the initiates were confined for several weeks to an oval-shaped sand area in the middle of which a north-facing horse-shoe magnet was formed (Roth, 1909: 171). These 'evil places' in the hymn are associated with the devil and 'falsehoods' implying that initiation grounds and their ceremonies were the works of the devil.

The fifth verse alludes to the food taboos imposed on the young men when the word 'sacrifices' is used. The greedy 'selfish men' are the elders who impose these food taboos, but

the young men are encouraged to remember that ‘superior food’ is to be had in the ‘heavenly bread’, namely the Gospel. The sixth verse refers to the belief that an initiate’s face may decay after eating the forbidden yam. The words also imply that this decay will only happen through natural processes in the grave, thereby contesting the belief that it is the eating of the yam that causes the facial decay. The last two lines in verse six also clarify the Christian belief that after death one rises to heaven through the ‘heavenly bread’, in other words the belief in Jesus Christ and the taking of Holy Communion.

According to Poland, missionary attempts at devaluing the initiation ceremonies at Cape Bedford were rewarded. He describes how young boys laughed at a community elder when he came to the mission to collect the boys ready to be initiated. The potential novices said to the elder there no longer were any potential *ngumbal* on the mission, because young men had eaten the taboo yam and their faces had remained in tact. Poland records how he supplemented the ‘translated’ hymn *Ringe recht, wenn Gottes Gnade* with a sermon based on Matthew 4: 1- 11. In it Poland preached about the “gross temptations...they [the potential novices] had just experienced” and how these could be overcome “once they earnestly decided to follow the Lord Jesus” (1988: 99). Poland records that soon afterwards the elder who had been to the mission to collect the novices passed away. Poland writes that the “Guugu Yimithirr tribe probably never celebrated another *ngancha*, apart from a small group, the younger generation had settled down with us for good” (1988: 99).

The role of hymnody at Cape Bedford was therefore to introduce the Gospel whilst devaluing traditional Aboriginal culture. Hymnody and congregational singing were also used to ridicule the elders who practised traditional initiation customs. The eventual loss of the initiation ceremonies had a negative impact on ability of young men to identify with the culture of their ancestors and parents. The traditional initiation ceremonies had helped to impart genealogical, historical, geographical, biological as well as spiritual information. Their

loss at Cape Bedford meant that the Aboriginal people were no longer able to form an understanding of their pre-Christian spiritual, social histories and identities through ceremony that included song.

Instead, the Cape Bedford Aborigines adopted the Christian faith, becoming devout Lutherans. Part of their Christian worship continued to include hymn singing in the home, in school, in church and later in a formalised choral setting. I now look at the emic concepts of choral and congregational singing in Hopevale today and how these concepts became integrated as the result of historical developments.

### 6.3 Hopevale history, concepts of choral singing and identity

*Clarence Bowen: No my parents were singers, but they not ahhh... can't play musics. They could sing but.*

*Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: They could sing, and where would they sing?*

*CB: In church mainly.*

*MSR: In church.*

*CB: Yeah, choir*

*MSR: In choir, so back in the olden days there was a choir?*

*CB: Back in the olden days, they were choir. You couldn't even exchange it for something else, you know.*

*MSR: Aha, yeah. Do you know how often they would rehearse?*

*CB: Oh, every Sunday!*

*MSR: Every Sunday?*

*CB: Yup.*

*MSR: Oh right, OK, and would they perform in church, or?*

*CB: In church.*

*MSR: And elsewhere?*

*CB: Or lately they were, or back in the 70s, I remember, or in the 80s, they used to go to Cairns and other places. If there was a Lutheran conference, taking place, probably in Ingham, Cairns, or they close by, sort of. (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004)*

Historical records such as church and community newsletters and Pohlner's *Gangurru* offer information on the choral history of Hopevale. Sources indicate that the first choir in Hopevale was started in earnest in 1949 by Frank Behrendorf after Hopevalian men returned from Woorabinda following their community's seven-year exile in this reserve. With the help of his violin Pastor Behrendorf encouraged the men in their singing. The women joined the choir later, once the dilapidated mission had been rebuilt by the men. Pastor Vic Wenke relieved Behrendorf and started working with the choir, helped along by Gordon Rose at a later date (Pohlner, 1986: 132, 135). The choir at this stage mainly sang in church and for public occasions such as the arrival of a government delegation where Mr. O'Leary then Director of the Department of Native Affairs visited in December 1949 together with his deputy Mr. Richards and a police sergeant from Cooktown. Mr. O'Leary complimented the singing in three part harmony of the National Anthem and 'Jesus Shall Reign' (Pohlner, 1986: 133).

The choir further sang at other important occasions. The second group of men to arrive in Hope Vale from Woorabinda was given an enthusiastic welcome with guitar music and singing in May 1949 (Pohlner, 1986: 129). Pastor Rohde, who accompanied the last group, "was mightily impressed to see the progress and to hear the whole congregation sing as a choir" (1986:134). The dedication of the newly built church in 1958 also allowed the "glorious melody of the Aboriginal choir" to resound throughout the new building. Hymns that were sung included 'Open now Thy Gates of Beauty' 'Open the Gates of the Temple', 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty' (Pohlner, 1986:138-139).

This last occasion received additional publicity through the church news letters which were disseminated throughout the Lutheran community in Australia. *The Lutheran Herald* records that during the church dedication festivities “the native choir sang with heart and soul”. That same evening “the natives sang some of the hymns and anthems they knew well” (Kernich, 1958: 204-205). The following year more praise was awarded when it is reported that “The choir singing of the natives is a real spiritual treat” (Roennfeldt, 1959: 319). My conversations with people indicated that such praise and the frequent mentions in newsletters generated great pride in the singers and community members. I was told that this praise had increased levels of self-esteem amongst singers.

In the quotation above Uncle Clarry also refers to the choir travelling to Ingham and Cairns. These journeys were important as they were an opportunity for the Hopevale singers to show their vocal prowess. They allowed Hopevalians to demonstrate that their congregation was not merely a mission, but a Christian community in a position to receive, as well as spread the Good News. The following quotation by Lohe (1977: 14-15) in *The Lutheran* demonstrates this:

What an occasion it will be when our choir of 24 packs into the community bus and sets off for Cairns to enrich the services with six items in Guugu and English. We will, through this mission, express our belief that we are not just a ‘mission’ receiving, but that we also have a mission, God-given to pass on what we ourselves have received. This experience will also build our relationship with the Cairns congregation, who are our nearest European neighbours and major centre 400 km away.

The act of singing for, and together with, other Christians confirmed that the Hopevale congregation was equal to any white one under God, and that Christian equality and fellowship could be nourished. The promotion of equality and fellowship further enhanced the self-esteem of singers and generated a sense of pride in the achievements of the choir, for the remainder of the Hope Vale community who were not singers themselves.

This historical information and the interview details also bring to light the differences in what it means to be part of a choir and what choir singing constitutes. Rohde's comment in Pohlner (1986: 134) refers to the congregation as singing 'as a choir'. To sing in a choir, in the Western sense of the term, means to sing in an organised vocal ensemble which contains two or more voice parts. This vocal ensemble can vary in size, ability and the repertoire it sings and will usually meet regularly to rehearse repertoire with the aim of performing it. When performing and rehearsing, choir members usually stand in their specific voice groups in front of an audience or congregation. A church congregation, in the Western sense, can therefore 'sing as a choir' but never 'be a choir'.

In Hopevale, the concept of what it means to be a choir member has historically been an amalgamation of 'singing as a choir' and 'being a choir'. In an interview Marie Gibson said: "...me and the whole of Saint John's used to go to that choir just to sing, everybody." (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005). Oral history and other interviews also informed me about local choral performance practices. I learnt that leading singers would sometimes stand behind the congregation but more often within it, not in front. These singers were not arranged according to voice parts but instead stood with their family members and friends. They would then sing the hymns in harmony as taught by the local pastors and the congregation would follow the strong singers depending on their vocal capacities and register. Choir singers were vocal leaders and helped to transmit the harmonised renditions of hymn melodies to other community members, and hence the Christian Gospel. Often the strong vocal leaders would also be devout members of the Lutheran Church and knowledgeable about the Gospel. They were not just vocal leaders, but also spiritual leaders of the community. This meant that choral singing was intimately tied to the traditions of the church rather than secular performance practice.

At the time of research, the local concept of choral singing still encompassed that of congregational singing 'as a choir'. It did not include harmonised duets at talent quests or secular, ad hoc singing in harmony. Outside the church, choral singing was taken up by a specific group of vocalists as a hobby. These vocalists would meet as an ensemble to practice songs when occasions required it such as funerals, weddings and Easter, Good Friday, Christmas or official celebrations. Whilst historically the choir rehearsed at least once a week on Sunday, before my arrival and after my departure, the choir only rehearsed when asked to perform at events.

The group of vocalists was not an exclusive one. Singers would encourage other members to come and sing along, regardless of whether they usually rehearsed with the specific group of vocalists who sang in the choir or not. I next look at the Hopevale community's 'evacuation' to Woorabinda where congregational singing, hymnody and Indigenous spiritual leadership played an important part in shaping and maintaining local identities in a 'strange land'. It was in Woorabinda where the congregational singing in harmony became an important means of maintaining a Lutheran, Hopevalian spiritual identity.

#### 6.4 The Woorabinda evacuation, spirituality, hymnody and social memory in song

Fieldrecording, 03<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

##### ***Verse 1:***

...  
*Hear my plea  
I can see him on his knees  
Please Lord,  
Look at us  
We had no choice  
But to leave our home land  
We are now in Your hands  
Please take my people back home  
Oh Lord take care of me*



**Refrain:**

*Take my people back home  
To the place where they were born  
Their hearts are broken and torn  
I can hear their spirits singing*

*Rock of ages  
Cleft for me  
Let me hide myself in Thee*

**First verse of composition by Thea and Neville Bowen ‘Take my people back home’  
(Audio sample 4)**

The above song text refers to the removal of the entire Hopevale community to Woorabinda between 1942 and 1949. This occurred as a result of the government’s suspicion that residing missionary Schwarz (Muni) might be a German sympathiser due to his German heritage. It was feared that he might aid Japanese pilots trying to land on the coast of Australia. The government euphemistically called the community’s removal an ‘evacuation’. Hopevalian people today see it as an exile in bondage away from their Promised Land, their home in Northern Queensland (Pearson, 1986: 63). The ‘evacuation’ caused further decimation of the Guugu Yimithirr people and great hardship for all. Local history recounts the evacuation in various media. A video has been made by Hopevalians about the events which took place (Aboriginal Co-Ordinating Council Media Facility, 2002) and Uncle Eric Deeral wrote an account *Lest We Forget. Home at Last* (no date: 6 -7). Old mission newsletters (cf George Bowen in Pohlner, 1974: 6-7) and songs have also been written about the exile. The song above, *Take my People back Home* is one example (Fieldrecording 3 March 2005).

The exile was instrumental in cementing the Cape Bedford Aboriginal Lutheran identity. This positive affirmation of the Cape Bedford identity was encouraged through daily contact with non-Christian Aborigines from a non-Guugu Yimithirr background, other Christian denominations, the introduction of alcohol, dance halls and wages. The Cape Bedford

community's language, Lutheran hymnody and worship practises and social history set them apart from the other Aboriginal Woorabinda residents. It was also at Woorabinda that the community received its first hymnal in Guugu Yimithirr in 1946. The seven years in Woorabinda and the introduction of the hymnal were influential in shaping Hopevalian identities. It is therefore important to examine this part of the community's history. The exile is also another example of Aboriginal strength, tenacity and will to survive. Deeral (undated: 6) writes:

We lost more than a quarter of our people within two months. Whole families died within the same week. However, the Guugu Yimithirr, or Cape Bedford people, were so disciplined that whatever happened, they stood firm. Their enthusiastic spirits were not dampened.

Woorabinda is an Aboriginal reserve now managed by an Aboriginal council. It is situated 2,000 kilometres South of Cape Bedford, and South West of the larger State of Queensland town of Rockhampton on Australia's East Coast. The climate at Woorabinda is substantially colder than that of tropical Cape Bedford. The people of the Cape Bedford mission were taken without warning to Woorabinda from the Spring Hill station on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1942. This journey included a voyage by truck to Cooktown, boat South to Cairns, train to Baralaba and finally a truck to Woorabinda. Not only were the Cape Bedford people not notified of this evacuation, they were also not given the option to oppose the move. They were loaded into trucks and asked to leave all their possessions behind. For the first three days of the journey Southwards the travellers were offered very little food and many people were extremely cold, because they did not have suitable clothes for the harsher climate.

The train to Baralaba stopped several times, including at Townsville, where fifty older people were taken to live on Palm Island Aboriginal reserve off the coast. Due to the lack of suitable clothing for the colder climate many Cape Bedford people died of influenza. Later dengue fever and other illnesses took their toll. Between November 1942 and March 1943

more than one quarter of the community passed away: that is sixty people out of the two hundred and thirty five who had been evacuated less than a year before (Pohlner, 1986: 112-123). As the elders were the main guardians of oral communal history, their removal at Townsville, and further deaths in Woorabinda, led to a significant loss in the community's historical knowledge.

In response to this adversity those still remaining, formed a close-knit community in Woorabinda. Woorabinda's white overseers were less restrictive in their admission and protective policies for Aborigines in comparison to Cape Bedford's Muni. As a result the Cape Bedford people were able to experience regular interaction with other institutionalised Aborigines for the first time. They could now compare their life at Cape Bedford with that in Woorabinda and note the similarities and differences between the two environments. Pohlner (1986:119) records the initial response of community member George Bowen to this less controlled climate and the difference in environment.

“What was the greatest influence Woorabinda had on the Cape Bedford people?” an interested staff member asked George Bowen. Back came his swift, one word reply, “Civilization”

In practical terms, the word ‘civilisation’ meant that the Cape Bedford people were offered jobs for which they received wages in cash rather than rations or clothing and that they were able to personally decide how to spend it. The Cape Bedford Aborigines were also employed in positions of responsibility, becoming police men, like Fred Deeral (Pohlner, 1986: 119). For younger people this created a sense of freedom. Pearson (1986: 95) quotes *mugay*, (senior aunt) Nellie as saying:

Younger people enjoyed every bit of it down there [in Woorabinda]. They sort of got out of like. What you would say? From a prison? You know freedom *gumaani waguurr* (they got freedom outside)...now that they went to Woorabinda they sorta mixed up with the people and then went out and mixed up and working, you know? Sorta found new life, these young boys you know, men.

The Cape Bedford people were therefore able to experience the personal freedom which previously they had been denied by missionaries at Cape Bedford and found that they enjoyed this freedom.

Hopevalian men also became spiritual leaders to their own people in the absence of a permanent Lutheran pastor. Men like Paddy McIvor led the Lutheran worship services in the Woorabinda school building on Sundays and weekdays, twice a day. George Bowen and Alick Cameron were largely responsible for sustaining the morale of the people whilst they were in Woorabinda (Pohlner, 1986: 114). Oral history and archival records indicate that these new positions of leadership, travel in working parties, the freedom to earn a living with monetary rewards and a liberty to decide on how this money was spent, generated pride, self-esteem and a conviction that Aborigines could be spiritual leaders themselves.

In the 1940s Woorabinda counted no less than three churches: a Roman Catholic Church, a Church of England congregation and the Aboriginal Inland Mission (AIM). There had been the suggestion that the Cape Bedford congregation should join the Church of England on account of Mrs Schwarz's Anglican background. Personal communication with choir members Daisy Hamlot and Myrtle Bambie indicated that younger people were especially keen to worship with other churches because they enjoyed the hymns that were being sung there. The Cape Bedford people, however, opted to maintain their Lutheran practices, rather than amalgamate with other churches. Pohlner states that "the Cape Bedford Aborigines were not for experimenting. They suffered enough loss. In this strange land they clung to their Lord. And they continued to worship Him in the way they knew how."

Lutheran hymnody sung in Guugu Yimithirr, was instrumental in maintaining the community's denominational and Northern Aboriginal identity during its exile in Woorabinda. Pohlner records that "[g]lorious singing resounded through the Woorabinda settlement, not only on Sundays, but every morning and evening." (1986: 114) and visiting

Pastor Vic Wenke was of the opinion that “[i]t was most inspiring to hear the [Cape Bedford] natives sing. At times I was hardly able to hear the music of the organ.” (Pohlner, 1986:123)

Singing also helped maintain Hopevalian morale:

June Pearson: Quite a lot of the old fellas they learnt to sing in the churches in Woorabinda, because they sang a lot to stay happy to come back home. (29<sup>th</sup> November 2004)

It was through singing the Lutheran hymns in Guugu Yimithirr that the Cape Bedford people remembered their home in Northern Queensland. This remembrance in song helped to sustain the hope that perhaps one day they might be given permission to return to their homes. It was also at Woorabinda that the Cape Bedford people received their first publication in Guugu Yimithirr: A book of worship which included 27 hymns, translated by Poland and Muni (Schwarz, 1946). Mrs Schwarz additionally sent out a set of twelve Sankey song books and a tune book (Pohlner, 1986: 121-123). It is likely that the frequent singing of the hymns in their own language heightened the people’s sense of unity socially, linguistically, religiously and musically. The rendition of the Lutheran hymns in Guugu Yimithirr contributed to the construction of a regional, Aboriginal Lutheran identity, which was compared and contrasted with that of the other residents from Woorabinda, setting the Cape Bedford people apart from other the Aborigines.

At Woorabinda and throughout Hopevalian history a specific performative tradition in congregational singing also developed, which was unique to the people from Cape Bedford. To accommodate this style of congregational singing, church organist June Pearson adopted a specific way of accompanying hymns in church, which differed from her usual playing style.

June Pearson: You’ll notice in the church on Sunday’s now, I’ll read music, but I don’t play it according to the timing that the notes tell me to because people in church don’t know how to do that, so I play the way they sing, whether it’s fast, slow...or whether...it’s supposed to be sung that way...It’s not according to how the music

setting is, it's according to the tune and what they know. How they know it, but...to us it's lovely. It's nice. Nice to listen to. (29<sup>th</sup> November 2004)

June is referring to her practice of commencing musical phrases slightly earlier on the organ than written, to lead the congregational singing. June's words suggest that the hymns were learnt orally and that the specific performative style used in church has been very much part of the community's performative practice for quite some time. June was also using the organ to replace the elders who used to lead the singing. These elders, like Auntie Violet Cobus, used to commence singing phrases earlier to indicate when singers had to start or what text was to be sung. The congregation would then follow suit. When conducting the choir I called this technique 'follow the leader' as Auntie Violet would employ it when starting off the singers in the Guugu Yimithirr hymns. These elements of performative style alongside vocal timbre and slow tempi are what differentiates the Hopevalian choir from Western ones.

At the time of research, hymn and choral singing also influenced the ways in which Hopevalians remembered their shared past. Barz, writing about changes in social memory in Uganda's AIDS epidemic, positions social memory within an ongoing process of cultural engagement. Musical performance, he argues, can contribute to, as well as enhance, the development of multiple memories. Musical performances facilitate different ways of 'memorying'. Memorying Barz defines as the "purposeful application of giving memory to an idea, thought or message". Changes which are linked to multiple performances of memory can lead to the change in this social memory, a process which Barz terms 're-memorying' (Barz, 2006: 177).

The performance of hymnody has been instrumental in facilitating the 're-memorying' of Hopevalian social history. The song at the beginning of this section quotes the melody as well as the words of the well-known hymn regularly performed in the Hopevale community, *Rock*

*of Ages*. The song's composers, Thea and Neville Bowen, were children at the time of the exile in Woorabinda. When performing the song, Hopevalian musicians like Thea and Neville and their audience reflect on the experiences of the Woorabinda exile as adults. They are 're-memorizing' the experience through music and influencing contemporary listeners' memories of the past through song.

Thea and Neville's direct quotation of the hymn *Rock of Ages* is also significant in that it indicates the importance of hymnody in maintaining a connection with a specific spirituality and musical tradition linked Country, during exile. The direct quotation of hymnody in newly composed songs also allows current Hopevalians to remember the past or youths to learn about this communal past. Through this newly composed, popular genre young Hopevalians become familiar with older hymns and indirectly their community's choral tradition. The process of re-memorizing therefore can also be 'memorying' for those too young to recall the exile, thus constructing a contemporary Hopevalian identity through songs about the past.

Another important element in the Hopevale tradition of hymn singing which helped to define Cape Bedford identities during the evacuation was the use of the local language Guugu Yimithirr. At the time of research, the significance of Guugu Yimithirr was being contested. Perceptions about its appropriate use and meaningfulness are constantly evolving and differ between generations. Perceptions are also context-sensitive and significant in the construction of Hopevalian identities through performance in contemporary settings. I therefore discuss the significance of language and hymnody in the next section.

## 6.5 The importance of language in hymnody and Hopevalian choral singing

Fieldwork Video Footage, Christmas Carols by Candle Light, Hopevale, 19<sup>th</sup> December, 2004 (Thesis DVD 2)

*Pastor George Rosendale:*

*You know, to me, we have lost that pride in ourselves...who we are. We're Lutherans from Germany. We have to sing all English...[correcting himself] no German songs. We have no more pride in ourselves.*

*Praise God in our Language! This very moment, throughout the world, every nation, country, thank God for the Saviour in their Language. Why not we?*

*I think it would be good if we could revive that, especially at times like this, when there's joy in our hearts, to know that we have a Saviour. Why not thank him from our hearts....*

*I think we Aborigines of today need to look at ourselves, and try and find out who we are. We seem to copy white man everywhere. We're just like copy cats. We want to act like them and get drunk and sit in the pub on high stools and cause ourselves suffering and pain, and that's not the way to go...*

*[Sings 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' in Guugu Yimithirr]*

This speech by Pastor George Rosendale at the Carols by Candlelight service in Hopevale was significant because it addresses several issues: the importance of using the Guugu Yimithirr language in Christian worship and especially singing; the links between Guugu Yimithirr and an Aboriginal identity; the strong historical bonds of the community with the Germanic Lutheran tradition; the decline or change of the use of Guugu Yimithirr; and the desire to want to 'copy' white people.

I suggest that when Pastor Rosendale said that the Hopevalians are Lutherans from Germany, he was implying that they are not physically so, but that they herald from a Lutheran tradition. It would appear contradictory to mourn the loss of an Aboriginal identity, whilst stating that a Lutheran Germanic tradition should be upheld. However, I suggest that



what was implied by Pastor Rosendale is that the Lutheran tradition in the past has become such an integral part of the community that it is no longer considered to be 'foreign' today.

Pastor George not only advocated the use of Guugu Yimithirr in hymnody as opposed to English, but also suggested that the German pronunciation of certain words should be used:

George Rosendale: When we singing in Guugu Yimithirr *yurra* [You, plural, addressing his comment to Daisy Hamlot] shouldn't be saying 'Jesus' [pronounced in an English fashion].

Daisy Hamlot: Yeah, yeah...hmmm, Jesus [pronouncing it in a Germanic fashion]

GR: We, when we talk about, in Guugu Yimithirr, when we talk about Jesus [English pronunciation], we say it like the Germans, I think. Jesus [Germanic pronunciation]. Jesus...Jesus, and I had a bit of an argument with what-his-name, because we wanted to spell it that way, Jesus [Germanic pronunciation], Y, I, S, U, S and eh, some of the oldies they didn't like it. But that's the way we...and I always think that way. Like 'God' [English pronunciation], we don't pronounce it 'God' [English pronunciation] either. 'Gott'[Germanic pronunciation]. G,O,T.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Oh, so like the German, Gott.

GR: Well, in the Guugu Yimithirr, when the old people learnt, that's the way they learnt to use His name, 'Gott'. (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005)

From the above interview transcript it is clear that not all people agree with Pastor Rosendale's recommendations about the use of Guugu Yimithirr in worship and the Germanic pronunciation of certain words, even if they are part of the community's historical worship practices. This is due to: the linguistic diversity of the Hopevale community; antipathy towards the Lutheran church; changes in the prevalence of the use of Guugu Yimithirr; changes in the levels of literacy in the community and personal linguistic preferences.

From its inception by Johannes Flierl in 1885, it had been intended that the Cape Bedford Mission should be one where Guugu Yimithirr and English were learnt by the missionaries and mission Aborigines: Guugu Yimithirr to facilitate evangelisation and

English to enable communication with the non-Indigenous settlers (Haviland and Haviland, 1980:129 and Haviland 1985: 172). The use of Guugu Yimithirr provided an Indigenous alternative for Aborigines who had been removed from areas where Guugu Yimithirr was not originally spoken. The use of Guugu Yimithirr also unified those who already spoke it in their common need to preserve an integral element of their culture.<sup>1</sup>

The enforced use of a common languages, however, did not entirely bridge the gap between the traditional owners of Cape Bedford Country and those who did not originally herald from Cape Bedford and spoke different languages. Neither did the use of one type of Guugu Yimithirr entirely unify those who used varying dialects of the language before missionary intervention. Haviland (1985: 171) writes:

It is only in grammars and linguists' imaginations that idealised speaker-hearers possess monolithic linguistic 'competence'; in practice principled variation or haphazard extemporising, and sometimes down-right error, is the rule. Hopevale is an Aboriginal community where the traditional multiplicity of language varieties is overshadowed only by an even greater range of social variation in origins, biography, loyalty and circumstance among speakers.

Due to this linguistic multiplicity Poland and Schwarz initially were not sure how many languages were spoken and which language to use in their Bible and hymn translations. The earlier nomadic habits of the Cape York Aborigines meant that there would be visiting family groups from different linguistic areas. These visitors might have spoken Guugu Yalanji, Guugu Warra, Lama Lama, or the languages spoken on Flinders Island and Barrow Point for example. Haviland (1985: 174) writes that given "the Aboriginal penchant for polyglot skills, there is reason to suspect that *ordinary* [emphasis original] conversation in a 'traditional' context involved considerable language switching". Creating a linguistically unified mission identity at Cape Bedford was therefore a complex undertaking, let alone using this linguistic knowledge in Bible and hymn translation. German missionaries had to

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout Aboriginal Australia many different languages are spoken next to English. Many Aborigines, particularly in the more isolated areas such as Arnhem Land and Western Central Dessert, are at least bi-lingual. Some people know up to seven different languages, many of them mutually unintelligible.

determine the differences between the multiple Indigenous languages being spoken in the area.

Changes in the Cape Bedford's literacy levels and further acquaintance with the settler community also required that English was learnt. Pohlner (1986: 58) quotes a letter from Schwarz written in 1911 to the church inspector:

Sunday Services and the morning and evening devotions are always held in Koko Yimidhir.<sup>2</sup> But the catechizing (teaching) is done in both languages [English and Guugu Yimithirr] and is better understood that way. There are many things which neither we nor the natives can adequately express in our language and we have to make long explanations which even then may not be quite clear. If this is the case even the natives prefer to use the English language. You, dear Inspector, do not seem to be happy about giving the English Bibles to the natives. Several years ago I would have agreed with you. For they had only limited use of the English Bible. But today it is quite different.

The exile in Woorabinda also affected the use of English. Uncle Walter Jack (2000) commented:

Walter Jack: When I grow big, and then...most of the time...We're at Cape Bedford there, no, any other English people to have a talk, you know. Even, err ehm, the Aboriginals, only talk Language all the time, Language [Guugu Yimithirr], you know. But we *learn* [emphatically] English, you know we, learn English. The only time when we pick up English, when we went to Woorabinda, you know, for...the War, you know.

In recent times the introduction of English-based media such as television, radio, internet, and CDs and the government's requirement that Aboriginal children learn English in schools have made the use of Aboriginal English in the community more prevalent.

At the time of research people spoke a combination of Guugu Yimithirr and Aboriginal English. When asked what language people preferred to use in song, answers varied. Many youngsters would say English was their favoured language. Some choir members suggested that to them both English and Guugu Yimithirr are equally meaningful when it came to singing hymns. These facts suggest that whilst Guugu Yimithirr is

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<sup>2</sup> Variant spelling of Guugu Yimithirr. In this thesis I use Guugu Yimithirr if not quoting from another source.

important, the English language has become incorporated to such an extent that it has become as meaningful as Guugu Yimithirr to some Hopevalians.

Interviews I conducted, however, also indicated that this opinion varied according to performance context and the level of knowledge a singer had of the Guugu Yimithirr language. Some translated hymns contained older words which singers did not know how to pronounce. They thus found it easier to sing these songs in English. Interviews also indicated that for public performances, some choir members liked singing in Guugu Yimithirr because it elicited appreciative comments from external audiences:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: We should do a few Guugu ones, actually for the tour.

Daisy Hamlot: Because them people in Cooktown like us singing in Language [in Guugu Yimithirr].

MSR: Well, you should do it more often. Remember what Pastor George said at the Carols by candle light?

DH: What he said now?

MSR: He said we need to sing in Guugu more. What do you think about that? Do you like singing in Guugu?

DH: Yeah...I don't mind.

MSR: Do you prefer it to English? What's easier for you?

DH: I like it in English because, some words I don't know too, in Guugu you know.

MSR: The ones in the yellow book [Pastor Rosendale's translated hymns 1986]?

DH: Yeah.

MSR: Is it old Guugu, or too difficult?

DH: Yeah some words there I can't pronounce it properly see? Most of them I know, [but] the hard ones... (4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

During the same interview Daisy also said:

DH: They [the predominantly white audience at the Carols by Candle Light ceremony] liked that 'Silent Night' we sang, in Guugu!...

MSR: So, on the whole, do you prefer singing in English, would you say?

DH: Yeah. (4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

This particular discussion demonstrates that although there may be some community members such as Pastor George Rosendale who would advocate the use of the local language in speech and song, not all members of the community are equally comfortable with this idea, Daisy being one of them. She prefers singing many of her hymns in English. Nevertheless, Daisy was aware of the appeal that singing in Guugu Yimithirr had to external audiences and therefore felt the language should be used.

Daisy's divided opinion is not unique. Auntie Myrtle Bambie also said that she had been complimented on her use of Guugu Yimithirr by audiences in Cooktown after having performed there for a Carols by Candlelight concert and a Tsunami fundraising event. She herself, however, equally enjoys singing in English and does not prefer singing Guugu Yimithirr over singing in English necessarily (Interview, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005). Auntie Myrtle also commented that the use of Guugu Yimithirr was decreasing and that her grandchildren could not always understand her when she used it to address them. This she thought, was disappointing and suggested the use of hymnody as a means of teaching the younger children the Guugu Yimithirr language. These findings show that singers actively construct their performative identities linguistically through deliberately choosing to sing in either Guugu Yimithirr or English. English may be used due to personal preference or unfamiliarity with some Guugu Yimithirr words. Guugu Yimithirr is used to teach children the language or to please audiences.

Additional social factors which influenced the use of Guugu Yimithirr in daily life and worship at the time of research were: literacy levels; changes in oral modes of musical; changes in linguistic transmission as well as globalisation. Many of the older generation were both literate in English and Guugu Yimithirr, and numerate, having received a basic Western education from missionaries. Missionary also taught an orthography of the local language, which allowed the Cape Bedford people to write in their Indigenous language. In the past, school, church, Sunday school and family environments had been the places where hymns, choruses, language and religion had been transmitted. Auntie Maud and Pastor George Rosendale comment:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Who taught you to sing?

George Rosendale: I learnt, Sunday School...home! Home too.

MSR: So your parents used to sing together as a family a lot?

GR: Yeah

MSR: How about you Maud?

Maud Rosendale: Yeah same. Especially Sunday nights.

MSR: Family devotions or...?

GR: Just the family and the kids...and they used to teach us, hymns too. (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2005)

During my fieldwork period, elders felt the younger generation in Hopevale was becoming less literate in comparison to those Hopevalians educated by mission staff in the past. School attendance was low, with less than 70 per cent of the children attending regularly during my fieldwork period. Nor were structured lessons in Guugu Yimithirr offered to the children at the local primary school. When it came to reading the Guugu Yimithirr hymnal (or the English hymnal for that matter), many youngsters had problems deciphering the words or

understanding them. The Guugu Yimithirr used in the translated hymns was antiquated and difficult to understand for younger people.

Religious education was offered in school by Hopevalian staff, trained by Pastor Tom. The number of religious educators was steadily decreasing, however, as the older Lutheran women and men who taught were retiring and were not being replaced by younger educators. The religious education sessions which included children's choruses were mostly performed in English. The predominantly white teaching staff did not speak Guugu Yimithirr either. Thus Guugu Yimithirr was no longer being taught formally as it had been in the missionary days, and the language's use in hymnody in the school was virtually non-existent. Satellite television, CDs, and radio have taken the place of family music-making. The break down of family units caused by social difficulties has also contributed to the decline in the tradition of hymn-singing in family homes. Youths today often favour listening to, or performing, more popular music styles such as Country and Western, reggae, and hip hop, none of which use Guugu Yimithirr. Even local contemporary songs written by Hopevalians are in English. This led me to conclude that the use of Guugu Yimithirr is largely confined to speech and occasionally church hymnody and choruses. It is no longer used in writing as in Poland's day (*cf* Pohlner, 1986) and the language has changed to the extent where the 1986 Guugu Yimithirr hymnal has become too antiquated for some youths to understand in its entirety. This hampers the transmission of the language and spiritual concepts through language and performativity.

The changes in the frequency, context and significance of the use of Guugu Yimithirr in Christian choruses and songs affected the performative identities of choral singers during the choir tour in April 2005. Singers were consciously choosing to use their native language as a means of distinguishing themselves from their audiences and performing their Hopevalian identity. The use of Guugu Yimithirr was also a way in which the choir sought

to improve audience experiences at tourist resorts and nearby Cooktown because they found that the use of Guugu Yimithirr elicited positive feedback. Through positive audience feedback singers gained confidence and enjoyed their performances more and thus decided to use Guugu Yimithirr more frequently. The strategic use of Guugu Yimithirr in performance by the choir, therefore, became a way to positively enhance perceptions of Aboriginality. In the context of the choir tour, the use of Guugu Yimithirr in song was also believed to promote wellbeing at Lotus Glen correctional facility and Douglas House rehabilitation centre. The next chapter addresses the Hopevale choir tour and its implications for community wellbeing and the constructions of Aboriginality through performance in varying contexts.



**Garrbun Manaya Gunbu Gundala (Be Happy and Rejoice, Sing Songs and Praises): a four-day tour through Northern Queensland**



**Figure 7.1: The Hopevale Community Choir Tour Route (modified section of *A Claremount Road Atlas*, 1989: 58)**

7.1 Lotus Glen Correctional Centre: emotional commonality, ethnicity and the impact of applied research on political awareness



**Figure 7.2: The Hopevale Community Choir at Lotus Glen Correctional Facility. Left to right: Daisy Hamlot, Dora Deemal, Mavis Yoren, Maureen Wallace, Myrtle Bambie, Violet Cobus, Marie Gibson, Phylomena Naylor, Ella Woibo, Pamela Kemp, Gertie Deeral, Henry Deeral, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005**

Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005

*There is a long side road leading up to Lotus Glen, the men's correctional facility near Mareeba. Driving up this road, on the left hand side, fields. I can just about make out what look like trees or cultivated land and agricultural machinery. These are the farms. Here the Hopevale boys together with others learn the tricks of a trade: for rehabilitation purposes, or just to keep them occupied with useful work, if they are 'lifers'<sup>1</sup>.*

*Due to our late departure from Cooktown, the choir arrives at Lotus Glen at a quarter past three: forty five minutes later than promised. Concrete buildings. Enormous roles of barbed wire in front of high fences, with on top... more barbed wire. I wonder what trench warfare might have been like, and whether it bore a resemblance to what I see here. It's intimidating, as are the German shepherd's in a cage right near the entrance as we head*

<sup>1</sup> Prisoners who have received a life sentence.

*towards it. I have the strange sense of being in a movie. It's scary. Police absolutely everywhere. Why do I expect these wardens and officers to be unfriendly? Too much Hollywood! What is the choir feeling? If I feel this nervous, excited, frightened, sad, what must it be like for them? How will this affect the singing?*

*We are met by extremely polite and friendly prison officers. There is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaisons officer present. Then the security: the signing of a sheet of paper with all our names, dates of birth, driver's licence numbers, blue card numbers; the x rays and removal of shoes; the depositing of all other personal items in a locker, even hair pins and paperclips. Only our music and voices are given permission to go through. Doors, many of them, which only open once others have closed. Then a garden courtyard with lovely flowers and what looks like Indigenous art. It is well-maintained. Maybe that's part of the boys' duties too? Past the flowers to the gym. We have arrived.*

*The boys and men come in. They are all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. Is this a segregated prison system? Is this a compulsory event or optional and if it's optional would the white men have attended?*

*Our audience sits down, towards the back of the gym. Why is it that Indigenous audiences prefer to sit far away from the performers in a large semi-circle I wonder, again. The choir stands beneath the basketball net. A gym? What will the acoustic be like, if not booming. Slow pace will be best, I decide. We sing. The regimented prison schedule and our late arrival mean that we only have twenty minutes to sing, talk to the boys and make our way out of the building. Decisions about repertoire, and what to cut and what to keep.*

*First an easy, jolly song to battle the nerves and the lump in my throat. Leading the singing by rote as I do, knowing all the voice parts makes it necessary for me to ease my own mind and vocal chords. The choir's beginnings are hesitant, quiet. Later things get better, more confident. The choir is finding its communal voice. Nerves give way to more confidence, pride as well as sadness, happiness and excitement. It's an emotional turmoil.*

*I move to the side of the choir during the Guugu Yimithirr hymns to join the alti and become one of the choir myself. I study the audience. I look at their faces. It's hard to fathom that some of these fresh-faced young men are guilty of crimes, some even murder. I am occasionally overcome with empathy, which makes singing neigh impossible: to think I am present voluntarily and free to leave, whereas some will be here until they die. I hear the same emotion in other singers' voices: the lump in the throat is audible. Performance and emotion: is my 'lumpy voice' evidence of a similar emotion to that of my neighbour's? After all, they appear similarly moved. Or is their experience more intense and different to mine?*

*The faces of the young men have unusual expressions: as if far away. They sit silently listening. You can hear a pin drop. There is next to no movement or applause. Do they not like the singing or are they too moved? Then again, at the Hopevale Rodeo Talent Quest in September there was little to no applause.*

*What are these men thinking about when they listen? Are they homesick? Are they contemplating their crimes and feeling regret? Are they happy to know they are thought of, visited and loved? Are they listening to the hymn texts and experiencing religious fellowship and their God's love? I decide not to ask afterwards. It seems inappropriate. Some have tears in their eyes, like the security officers to my left, others smile... a woebegone smile.*

*Our twenty minutes finish all too soon. Auntie Maureen steps forward and addresses the audience. She passes on the love of family members to the boys and names the young men. The boys and men come forward. Embraces, tears, words of comfort and joy. Family members are briefly united. Expressions of sadness and worry: "Where are the other Hopevale boys?"*

*We see the others as we leave the facilities. There they are, behind that wire and the fences. Waving and 'singing out'<sup>2</sup> to us. More greetings are shouted across the fences, but no embraces this time.*

The above narrative describes the first day of the Hopevale Community Choir's four-day tour through Northern Queensland. During this tour the first performance venue was Lotus Glen correctional centre near Mareeba. Here many Hopevalian and other Aboriginal men reside, some having received life sentences. Music making in prisons by or for Indigenous prisoners is not uncommon. Dunbar-Hall and Gibson dedicate a section of their book to these 'Prison Songs' (2004: 108-111). They mention Vic Simms, an Aboriginal Country and Western performer, who recorded his album *The Loner* from Bathurst Prison in 1973 whilst still incarcerated. This same artist later recorded another compilation entitled *Prison Songs* (1988). Simms and other performers such as Roger Knox, the Warumpi Band, Archie Roach and Kev Carmody visit prisons to perform for the inmates. Simms believes these performances provide emotional support and tension relief for inmates:

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<sup>2</sup> Aboriginal English for 'calling out'.

You see them there, the radiance comes out of their faces. They just bop along and you can see the lifting of their hearts, you know. All the tension's gone because when you come in you can feel this tightness, in the atmosphere itself, it's really, really stiff, and you think – we look at each other and we say – we've got to relax these guys, you know. And the next minute we rope it up into some great 12-bar rock 'n' roll blues, and the next minute they're snapping along and then they sort of unwind. Next minute, they're up dancing around. And they'll come up to you and they'll shake your hand say Good on you, brother, you know....The loved ones are out here and they're in there, but we try to alleviate the sadness and the pain, through music, and they appreciate it. We try to deliver a message too, to say, We've been there, we did all that, you know, and there's a better life out there. (Walker, 2000:136 quoting Vic Simms, punctuation original)

A different artist, Kev Carmody, says: “performing is a two-way process of empowerment. It's not just the audience being empowered by the music but also the performer...” Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2004: 111) then note that:

Music has an immediate relevance in such [prison] circumstances – a link to the outside world, and a means of communicating sympathy. It also acts as an indicator to both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal listeners of a widely experienced aspect of Aboriginal life.

Whilst these statements are made by popular music artists, I feel they are largely true for the performances given by the Hopevale Community Choir as well. Many relatives of prison inmates in Mareeba had notified their sons, using a tele-conferencing connection between Hopevale and Lotus Glen prison, that the choir was coming to sing. According to their relatives in Hopevale, the young men in prison had been very happy on receiving this news and were looking forward to the choir's visit. The singers were asked to pass on messages of goodwill and love to the Hopevale men, and after the concert, Maureen Wallace gave a short speech and named many of the young men specifically so that they could hear over the intercom system that their families were thinking of them. It was an opportunity to remind the inmates that they had not been forgotten and above all, were still loved.

The performance context and the singing itself provided an emotional outlet for singers and audience alike. The fact that the singing provided this emotional outlet was seen as a positive performative outcome by the singers. Feedback received from the Lotus Glen inmates via the singers, suggests that they too, benefited from the performance in a similar way. All choir members who completed the questionnaire I handed out after the tour (eleven out of twelve) said that they would like to return and sing at Lotus Glen again. The reasons they listed included that they wished to bring joy to the inmates, to communicate their love to the men, to demonstrate that the young men had not been forgotten, to bring news from family members and to sing about their Christian God's love for the inmates. The choir also generally felt a little scared and uneasy by the prison environment, but the warm and courteous reception by the prison staff and the joy of seeing the young men again helped them to overcome this fear and sing well.

I was initially uncertain about the effect that the singing had on its audience as the men sat very still and far away from the choir, looking at the choir with a far away gaze. Applause was minimal. Afterwards, however, the young men communicated their pleasure at the singing and the choir's visit verbally and many cried. This led me to believe that the audience had appreciated the performance. The initially muted audience response, I concluded, was due to different audience 'etiquette'. At various musical performances, including the Rodeo's Talent Quest, I had observed that audience members preferred to sit far away from the stage in a large semi-circle, many sitting in the dark, rather than in the lighted areas. Clapping or general physical movement was minimal, only when audience members were dancing. Whilst a Westernised ensemble would become discouraged by such a reception, Hopevalian performers do not view such audience responses as an indication that their performance is inadequate. From the tour questionnaire it became apparent that to the singers, the audience's silence and

especially the expressions on the men's faces, were ways of communicating audience attentiveness and emotion. It was, however, difficult to determine the types of emotions that audience members were experiencing. No audience members could be interviewed and at the time I felt it would be inappropriate to ask.

During our performance I also queried the racial make-up of our audience. Apart from the security staff, myself and the choir's other white member Pamela Kemp, there were only Indigenous Australians present at the concert. Most choir members (eight out of eleven) had also noticed that the audience was mainly Indigenous. When asked why they believed no white men attended the concert, the choir's comments were diverse and revealing. A few thought the prison only had Indigenous inmates, others felt it was due to racism and apathy or that if the white men had wanted to attend they would have. Some singers believed that the non-Indigenous men may have thought the concert was only meant for an Indigenous audience rather than the prison population at large. In fact I had never specified to the wardens who I wished to attend the concert when arranging the performance. The subject was never discussed. I later queried it on the telephone with the prison officer:

Fieldtext, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2005

*I asked Michael (Mick) Gleave today why he thought only Aboriginal and Islander men attended our concert. Mick said: "How can I say this without sounding racist? I think the white boys just prefer to leave this sort of thing [performance by an Indigenous community choir] to the Aboriginal guys. Not that there is a tension, but it's just their [Aborigines] thing." Well, so much for integration through choral singing in a prison. It also seems that only about thirty per cent of the jail population is actually white. Peter Costello [an Aboriginal elder at Hopevale] commented on this. He said that he had had an argument with a prison warden once. Peter had asked the warden why there were only black men in the jail and the warden had not replied to Peter's satisfaction. Peter had told the warden it was to do with discrimination.*

When asked whether the lack of a white audience bothered the singers, ten out of eleven said that it did not and that it was enough to know that the Hopevale men were there or listening.

The performance at Lotus Glen, however, did lead me to question how politically aware choir members were. For example, were they aware that Indigenous people are 29 times more likely to be incarcerated than other Australians (Tatz, 2005: 6) and why this is so? Choir comments suggest that my research methodology and interviewing inadvertently raised levels of political awareness, although I had not deliberately chosen my questions with the aim of increasing this awareness.

Towards the end of the tour questionnaire (see appendix E) I therefore queried whether the tour and questionnaire had led to choristers to think differently about themselves in comparison to other Australians. Ten out of eleven members said that the tour had made them more conscious of who they were and where they came from. Seven out of eleven members said that it had led them to compare their lives to other people's more. Marie Gibson also stated that the questionnaire had made her "scratch her head and think" (Interview Marie Gibson 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005).

The only member who felt the tour had no effect in this respect, was Pamela Kemp our white Australian choir member, who commented: "I have never understood questions like this. I cannot remember worrying about such issues." This comment reveals that not only was I concerning myself with questions which were based on Western theorizing, but also that these same queries reflected my very academic focus on choral singing and identity construction. Equally, the answer could be interpreted as a reflection of Pam's ethnicity and personal history, where thinking about her ethnicity and social situation in relation to other people's happens less frequently because she belongs to the more advantaged social group.

The first concert at Lotus Glen already demonstrated that the tour would be a learning experience for both myself and the choir. I had to tread a fine line, constantly re-aligning my own academic agenda and aspirations to suit the needs of the choir and its audiences in different contexts. I had to always operate reflexively, querying whether raising awareness of



Aboriginal diversity and social disadvantage was appropriate and secondly how it should be done performatively. All aspects of a performance from the singing to the choir attire and the language used had the power to influence the ways in which audiences actively constructed and perceived Aboriginality and Aboriginal diversity. Equally, I was fully aware that the types of questions I asked the singers in the questionnaire and during interviews might elicit certain responses, not all of them necessarily positive or beneficial to the wellbeing of the singers because the questions might highlight the social inequalities that Aborigines face. Due to the applied nature of my work I had to remain very aware of the impact that the choir performances could have on the singers and audiences alike. This awareness also meant that I had to carefully decide where to perform and ensure the singers were comfortable with this choice. Before setting off on the tour, therefore, all singers had to agree that they wished to perform at the various locations I had suggested, one of which was the Catholic chapel in Yungaburra.

7.2 Yungaburra, Millaa Millaa and Undara: tourism, advocacy and communal individuality through singing



**Figure 7.3: The Hopevale Community Choir in front of the Yungaburra Catholic Chapel. Front row top to bottom: Marie Gibson, Ella Woibo, Phylomena Naylor, Myrtle Bambi, Daisy Hamlot. Back row, top to bottom: Yungaburra tour guide, Mavis Yoren, Pamela Kemp, Gertie Deeral, Henry Deeral, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005**

Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005

*Day two. A full itinerary performance-wise with two concerts planned and geographically a long distance to cover: five hours driving. After a night in the Cairns YHA hostel (I wonder whether this reminded the ladies of their dormitory days) and an early breakfast we head to Yungaburra in the Atherton Tablelands. Oh, how dreary the weather. Will it affect audience numbers tonight at the camp fire concert?*

*At Yungaburra's Nick's Restaurant and the neighbouring Catholic Chapel (no longer used for worship) Nick and Gina Crameri welcome us in with free teas and coffees. Even the performance venue, the little chapel, will not be charged for. Why am I surprised? What are their motives for being so generous? Do they have motives, or are they just nice people? Am I too sceptical?*

*Fifteen to twenty five people attend the concert. Some had heard it advertised over the ABC radio when I was interviewed by Pat Morrish (ABC Radio Cairns, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005) Others had seen the notice Nick had placed outside the chapel and wandered in. Mainly though, the tourists come in from the rain to see the chapel and find us there by chance. One of the attendees turns out to be the old Anglican Bishop of Carpentaria, now working in New Guinea. He tells us afterwards he had heard the choir many years ago and when told that we would be singing in Yungaburra had rushed in to hear and see us. He had been sitting in his pew, listening to our singing with his eyes shut and told me he had really enjoyed the concert. I wonder later whether this was noticed by the choir and whether the otherwise small turn out affected them in any way.*

*The entire event at Yungaburra lasts about an hour. Personally I feel the chapel concert at Yungaburra went reasonably well, although the choir sang a little flat again at times. Why? Their heads were buried in paper. They did not see me when I gestured to them to adjust their pitch. A common performative problem. Wish I had insisted on learning music by heart. Perhaps the choir already can sing the repertoire from memory and the paper is a 'security blanket'. I know I use that excuse as a singer myself.*

*Another problem. With my voice going (a bout of that blasted laryngitis) I shall not be able to lead the singing soon and will have to rely on the singers' memories. I am confident they can manage, but are they? How do they think the concert went? Did they notice they sang below pitch?*

*After the concert another coffee and tea at Nick's and then onward to Millaa Millaa tea house for pre-booked lunch. Here too, the friendly atmosphere is staggering. Menus with our photographs printed on them and a warm message of welcome. You would never experience such efforts in London. Not if you were paying only a few dollars for lunch.*

*As soon as we enter our hostess requests that we sing a song for her. The choir is keen, so I agree. Besides, after such a welcome... There is also a bus load of backpackers present. We give away two songs: Sweep over my Soul and Amen Siakudumisa. The singing surpasses that offered in Yungaburra. The response is fantastic. There are smiles and applause everywhere, filling the little tea house. The choir beam with pride. One of the backpackers, a Canadian girl, I encounter again on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2005. She says the singing had brought tears to her eyes. So inspired did she feel, she even wrote the choir a little poem. Examining the poem and her 'calling-card' more closely, I discover that she must be very religious (Christian) because her poem seems to be about the love of God and perhaps this might have been in part what moved her to tears: cross-cultural fellowship.*

*From Millaa Millaa we drive via Ravenshoe, Innot Hot Springs, Mount Garnet, Forty Mile Scrub, to the Undara Lava Tubes for a camp fire concert. Mutiny in the choir before the concert. The programme is too strenuous, there is a constant battle against the clock it is felt. A second gripe. Phylomena Naylor speaks up: "Why do you introduce the choir as a group? We are separate people. We should say our names ourselves! All of us." I despair. I had already added hours of*

*extra time in our schedule to allow for more flexibility and what to do about these introductions? I had not anticipated this criticism.*

*I resolve to discuss this openly. I apologise publicly during the warm-up prior to the concert pleading inexperience at planning a choir tour (after all, this is my first) and youthfulness (I am at least two and a half decades younger than the youngest singer and therefore physically fitter). These factors combined have led me to underestimate the time required and the importance of differing levels of physical stamina. My apology is met with acceptance, warmth and understanding.*

*Again I am surprised at the choir's warmth and willingness to forgive. Why do I expect every Aboriginal person to dislike me and never forgive me after the smallest mistake? I do not know. As for the introductions, it is agreed by all that I will give a general introduction and that all singers from now on will state their names individually prior to every performance.*

*Before setting out from Hopevale I had asked the choir to prepare little talks about themselves and to intersperse these with songs. I did not prescribe subject matter, being curious to see what they would mention. At every concert I invite a few singers to talk about themselves a little. By the end of the tour everyone has had their turn. This additional aspect to the choir's performances has two functions: It fills out the time nicely and allows audiences an insight into the performers' lives.*

*Do many white Australians know an Aboriginal person? Tourists, I think, still believe that didgeridoos and boomerangs are all that being Aboriginal is about. How to change this and high- light diversity? Allowing Christian Aboriginal choristers to talk to an audience is one way. At Undara Ella Woibo relates her experiences as a member of the Stolen Generation. Uncle Henry speaks about his family: his 'six pack' of sons. Candles are handed to the audience when we sing This little light of mine. I add a few good camp fire sing-alongs such as Swing low Sweet Chariot to engage the children and parents present.*

*Still, some people leave early. Why? Is it their small children? Are they unimpressed by the singing or do they think we are not 'authentic'? Maybe they have travelled a long way like ourselves and are tired. Were they plain ignorant or perhaps of a different faith or was the concert too long? It is chilly. Maybe it is the cold that has made them leave. Did the choir notice people left and did this worry them? After the concert the choir has the opportunity to meet the remainder of the audience and talk, to sell some of their arts and crafts and to enjoy their surroundings. The audience members I speak to, all seem devout Christians and there even is a Hopevalian in the audience who happened to be holidaying in Undara and by chance was able to attend our concert. With these impressions and questions in my mind I retire, without my voice which has now well and truly left me.*

This section of writing describes the second day of our tour. This day highlighted issues of representation and raised questions about concepts of ‘authenticity’ and how these influence choral performance, audience expectations and therefore constructions of performative identities. The relationship between music, tourism, and Aboriginality has been addressed by authors such as Gibson and Connell (2004) and Dunbar-Hall and Gibson (2004). Gibson and Connell analyse the use of music in tourism and its economic and social impact on performers, local environments and communities as well as on the participating tourists. Of particular relevance to my work are notions of authenticity and how these are linked to perceptions of Aboriginality in tourism from a performative point of view. Gibson and Connell (2004: 137) write:

The notion of ‘authenticity’ permeates most forms of tourism (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999), and is simultaneously a concept that is central to the production and consumption of music, irrespective of the extent to which it might be linked to tourist activities. ‘Authentic’ music is usually seen as that which is deemed credible, central to the genre, original and true to the artist’s intentions

The authors also point out, however, that these notions of authenticity are perceived ones and do not necessarily reflect the social realities of local communal lives and musical practices. Performers and tourist venues often offer what they believe tourists want. Authenticity becomes commodified, preserving a heritage or reproducing a tradition to enhance the appearance of ‘otherness’. The opposite may also occur where tourists are suspicious of an attraction’s ‘authenticity credentials’ whereas in fact the performers or venue are ‘genuine’. Tourism thrives on difference and pleasure. The music and its performers are not expected to be commonplace and thus an expectation of the appearance of Aboriginal didgeridoo players and traditional dancers and singers is created (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004: 139, 166).

Another contentious issue in the relationship between tourism and music has been the dilution and simplification of local cultures by incorporating ‘foreign’

influences. Authorities, locals and academics have objected to this development but encountered opposition from tour operators and performers who feel their livelihoods are threatened and the appropriateness of their work questioned (Gibson and Connell, 2004: 167).

These 'foreign' influences need not necessarily be Western or from outside Australia. Dunbar-Hall and Gibson cite performances at the *Tjapukai* Aboriginal Cultural Park near Cairns in Northern Queensland as an example of the practice of introducing 'foreign' elements. At the Indigenously-managed *Tjapukai* park, the didgeridoo is used to accompany dance performances. Historically, however, the didgeridoo was never made or performed by Djabugay people. The instrument has been introduced to conform to tourist expectations. This raises ideological debates on the nature of the relationship between Djabugay culture, commodification and compromise (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004: 153 - 169).

Some scholars have objected to the change in customs and misrepresentation of local Indigenous Australian culture, whereas others argue that the ability to manage and control the cultural output and means of representation of Indigenous people should be in Indigenous hands and that it is their right to portray themselves in whatever fashion they choose. In response different critics have retorted that this portrayal of commodified, diluted or altered cultural forms is not a matter of Indigenous choice, but rather another instance of Indigenous Australians having to conform to the hegemonic, dominant society's image of them, perpetuated by government policy and essentialised tourist marketing.

Waite, for example, examines and critiques the relationship between Aboriginality and its portrayal by the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC) in publicity materials used to promote Australian tourism and its Indigenous elements. By

analysing international advertisements produced by the ATC, Waitt's (1999: 157) critical reading suggests that the ATC's representation of Aboriginal culture helps to maintain the myths Aborigines being the 'noble savages' and 'eco-angels'.

Adventure, escape and ecotourism are signified by the Anglo-Australian construction of Aboriginality defined upon antiquity. Aborigines are, therefore, stereotyped as stone-aged peoples, clad in loin cloths, decorated with body paints, bearing spears and boomerangs, and located in arid environments of the outback or mythical frontier. Colonial power relations are inherent in these portrayals because they embrace construction of Aboriginality invented by nineteenth century neo-colonial academics, travellers and officials: informed by racism, Social Darwinism's notions of human evolution and without consultation with Aborigines themselves.

Increasingly, however, there are instances where, through tourism and musical performance, diversity and the contemporary issues of Indigenous Australians are being highlighted. The significance of Aboriginal rock songs sung in Language does not escape the policy direction of the Alice Springs based Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) for example. The album notes accompanying the CAAMA's *In Language* demonstrate this.

[O]ur languages are alive and vibrant, our peoples and our cultures are diverse and growing. The 'In Aboriginal' series can help all Australians to understand that we are not all the same but we are all Aboriginal (*In Aboriginal*, album notes). (Dunbar-Hall and Gibson, 2004: 160-161)

Similarly, the Sydney Festival 2008 January 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, which is heavily marketed overseas, opted to include performances by Kev Carmody, Archie Roach, Ruby Hunter and Dan Sultan<sup>3</sup> all well-known Indigenous politically aware musicians. Several of these are members of the Stolen Generation and use their song lyrics to communicate aspects of Aboriginal history which may not be touched upon at theme parks. More locally specific to Hopevale, Bennett and Gordon have written on Indigenous tourist endeavours and their sustainability through using social capital (Bennett and Gordon, 2007). Wilfred Gordon has

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[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/related\\_features/celebrate\\_sydney\\_summer/article2771447.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/related_features/celebrate_sydney_summer/article2771447.ece), accessed 10<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

set up a flourishing Aboriginally owned tour company *Guurbi Tours*, part of which incorporates contemporary, locally interpreted issues such as ‘*gandal*’. *Gandal* refers to the acceptance of children of mixed descent into the Aboriginal community of Hopevale. This acceptance is part of the community’s wish to support reconciliation (Gordon and Bennett, July 2007: 13).

When having discussions with the choir and audience members in Cooktown I kept the academic debates above in mind. They helped inform my decision on how, as an Indigenous Lutheran choral ensemble, the choir and I could present ourselves to an audience. I decided that part of the tour’s aim was to advocate Aboriginal equality and diversity through performances and introductions. These performances and introductions had to be informed by Indigenous action and ideas as well as performer wellbeing. I felt that choir members should choose how to present themselves through their singing, their personal stories and their dress. I never dictated what any of these should be, merely offered suggestions and discarded those which did not find favour with the singers.

The choir for their part did not seem aware of the lack of information on contemporary Aboriginal history and most had never attended Aboriginal performances in *Tjapukai* or other tourist culture centres. Many of the singers seemed uncertain about how Aborigines are represented in tourist environments. Four people believed that tourists knew about the existence of Aboriginal Christians, five felt they did not and two gave no answer. None appeared to be familiar with the debates on cultural ‘authenticity’ and the tourists’ desire to experience it. Nine choir members believed that most white Australians know an Aboriginal person or have an Indigenous friend and the same number of singers said they had friends who were white.

These answers reflect the social situations of the Hopevale choristers in Northern Queensland. Hopevale lies relatively close to the predominantly white town, Cooktown.



Many of the singers were also sent to work in major cities and towns during the 1960s and thus know many white people. Through Christian fellowship many older Hopevalians have also befriended non-Indigenous Australians. From personal conversations I have had with non-Indigenous Australians throughout Australia I discovered that most non-Indigenous Australians I encountered do not have Aboriginal friends or even know an Aboriginal person. Many of my non-Indigenous Australian friends also readily admitted they have a very basic grasp of Aboriginal history and cultural diversity and that it was not an important part of their educational syllabus. If Aboriginal studies or Australian Aboriginal history is taught, it tends to be from a non-Indigenous perspective. Indigenous Torres Strait Islander scholar Nakata writes that when he, as a university student, came to read the historical literature on the Torres Strait Islanders, he read and interpreted this literature from a position of awareness that this same literature endeavoured to represent his and his forbears' historical experience and analyses thereof. Nakata (2007: 3) discovered that what were invariably absent from these teachings were readings which incorporated an Indigenous perspective, brought down through Islander family and collective consciousness.

...[Torres Strait] Islander experience and the analysis derived from that experience – however ignorant of historical fact; or however ignorant of the context of events; or however much it derived from just mere popular memory – are grounded in something that is significant to the ways that we have historically viewed our predicament and our lives. This experience continues to shape our on-going responses and it cannot simply be re-explained or re-interpreted by informed, educated or expert people outside of our communities. To do so is a negation or denial of our experience and our understanding of our own position as we confront alien – and alienating - practices and knowledge. (Nakata, 2007: 8)

When performing with the choir I was therefore keen that Aboriginal diversity was advocated and Aboriginal history presented in appropriate ways. By incorporating the choir's stories I hoped the audience would listen and learn about Aboriginal history through a medium which was familiar to the choir and culturally appropriate, that of story telling.

Choir members were also able to decide the topics they wished to present, thereby offering the audience an Indigenous perspective and interpretation of lived, individual experiences.

This approach, however, raised an ethical concern. On the one hand I did not wish to deliberately and emphatically inform the choir of the essentialised ways in which their fellow Aborigines are sometimes portrayed by the media, tourist boards and scholarship for fear of causing grief or malcontent. Neither did I wish to alienate audiences or choir members by facilitating confrontational, extremely politicised performances or offering similar introductory statements prior to concerts. On the other hand, I felt that I should have explained my reasons for certain performative decisions in more detail to the choir. Giving such an explanation would have been challenging, however, because it would have required that I facilitated a discussion on Western ethnographic theory. I felt facilitating such a discussion would be difficult given the cultural differences between my educational background and the choir's. As a result my discussions about issues of representation with the choir were not as in depth as I would have liked them to be. I posit that had I been able to fully involve the choir in discussions about issues of representation, my research would have been more ethical and I might have been able to avoid Phylomena's criticism.

Auntie Phylomena's criticism was useful one, however. It allowed me to further understand Hopevalian concepts of personhood and aesthetics in a performative context. Her comments further informed my understanding of what, in chapter three, I termed 'communal individuality' in a performative context.

Performatively, communal individuality determined aesthetic approaches to choral singing within the Hopevale Community Choir. Each singer was accorded respect as an individual and given the responsibility to maintain the ensemble's wellbeing and musical competence. Aesthetically, whilst in a Western choir vocal blending is desired and overtly soloistic renditions of choral lines discouraged, Hopevalian choral singers and audiences

valued powerful, distinct voices. Persons with such voices, it was felt, could lead the singing in church, during sing-alongs or when performing the Guugu Yimithirr hymns which I chose not to conduct. It was pointed out that these singers could be heard well and that in choral or other communal singing this was a positive musical trait.

Extreme differences in vocal timbre did not go unnoticed, however, and aesthetically were not always approved of, even in group or choral singing. The same held true for the Country and Western duets sung at sing-alongs or other events. In my field diary I record a discussion I had with local singer Uncle Philip Baru:

Fieldtext, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2004

*He [Philip Baru] said that his voice was high and would always climb, and weave its way upwards, but Lloyd [Bambie] would never get that high. When Philip, Henry [Warren] and I sang [the carol 'Silent Night'] together he said it did not sound right. He felt our voices were different...He also commented on my wobbly voice (vibrato) and the fact that I could sing the notes clearly and make jumps from high to low, whereas he and Henry could not. Philip also suggested that Henry had a good voice (which he does) but that he needed to work on his notes because the little dips at the beginning of phrases did not sound right.*

*It was interesting, this conversation, because it demonstrated that Philip was highly aware of the different sound qualities of everyone's voice. Mine is an operatic, classically trained lyrical mezzo sound with a natural, untaught, vibrato. Philip wanted me to stop singing with 'the wobbly voice' and to sing the carol 'like in the old times' without the opera sound. Philip himself is a tenor and he has a very robust outdoor voice on the Country [and Western] side, but he seems to strain his voice in the upper register. Henry has a good baritone, but needs to work on his intonation. Henry has problems pitching notes sometimes, but once he is on the right one he can hold a tune well. When the three of us sing together it does sound rather odd and acoustically we don't blend well, which is, I think, what Philip was referring to.*

So whilst vocal strength and performer autonomy were seen as desirable aesthetically and socially, extreme differences in timbre were not always accepted as a positive performative trait.

It was also through the performative approach which incorporated communal individuality that audience members were able to learn about individual choir members, their names and their lived histories as Aboriginal Christians, or in Pam's case, as a white Australian singing with an Aboriginal choir. In this way, audiences in Yungaburra and Undara were able to experience, in a non-threatening way, Aboriginal diversity. The choir, in turn was given the opportunity to sing, enjoy fellowship and to travel and meet many new people, all of which they enjoyed.

### 7.3 Ravenshoe Anglican Church: spirituality and performative outcomes



**Figure 7.4: The Hopevale Community Choir in Ravenshoe Anglican Church. Back row left to right: Pastor Bill Woodland, Ella Woibo, Daisy Hamlot, Marie Gibson, Pamela Kemp, Violet Cobus, Henry Deeral, Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg. Front row left to right: Phylomena Naylor, Myrtle Bambie, Dora Deemal, Maureen Wallace, Gertie Deeral, Mavis Yoren, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2005**

Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2005

*After a hearty outdoor 'bush breakfast' with tea from the billy<sup>4</sup>, the choir piles into the mini bus once more for our return to Cairns via Ravenshoe Anglican church where Pastor Bill Woodland agreed to receive us after Sunday worship. From the choir I learn that many of their children attended the Anglican boarding school in Ravenshoe and used to worship in the Anglican church nearby. When deciding where to perform before heading off I choose the Anglican congregation as I reasoned the denomination was closest to the choir's Lutheran one. A suitable arrangement as it turns out.*

*Ravenshoe has several Christian denominations: Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. Quite impressive for a small rural town, but I worry about numbers: how big can this congregation possibly be with such competition for "souls" in the neighbourhood? What will it mean for audience numbers? It would be disappointing for the choir to have only a few congregational members attending,*

*We arrive at ten to eleven, just before the Sunday worship service finishes and are met by the congregation, Pastor Bill Woodland and his wife. The choir is invited for a cup of tea and a stretching of the legs before the concert. The church is small and made almost entirely out of wood. Outside it is picturesque. Much greenery.*

*My laryngitis, which started at the beginning of the tour, has now reduced my voice to a hoarse whisper. I have stopped worrying somewhat about this though. The choir has proved their independence. Undara's concert the previous night went well and required minimal assistance from me. I am pleased and sad about this. Pleased because of the Choir's achievements, sad, because my belief in their abilities and independence is not shared by them. Choral singing is so much more than vocally producing the right notes at the right time.*

*There is a piano in the church to give the starting notes. Once the choir have their first notes they know their music. The smallness of the church is comforting. Acoustically, it is possible to produce a robust sound, which helps the singers, because they can hear themselves well and this in turn generates confidence if the singing goes well. Difficult acoustical settings, I know from my own experience, have the opposite effect because it is a continuous struggle to produce a good, audible sound. The smallness of the church also means that even if the congregation is not big, the church will not seem empty. This will encourage the choir I feel. Then again, is it something which affects them, audience numbers?*

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<sup>4</sup> 'Billy can': a big tin in which tea is brewed on an open log fire

*I should not have worried. The little church is quite full. I notice the congregation is white, save for two ladies. They look like they come from the Torres Strait perhaps. Will the choir notice? What do they think about worshipping with different denominations or people from different ethnic backgrounds? Do they feel they all worship the same Christian God and therefore there is no difference or are some denominations too different in their style of worship to be comfortable. I wonder what they would think if they ever did go to a Black Baptist church in rural America?*

*What about singing styles? Choirs trained in England do not use as much legato or slurring as the Hopevale Community Choir does and the vocal timbre of an Aboriginal choir is quite different to that of a Western choir. Do the singers know and hear this? Do the choir members realise that when they sing in Guugu Yimithirr they use far more slurs than when they sing in English? What about Pam, our only other white Australian member. Has she noticed anything? What are her perceptions about religion and ethnicity in relation to worship and vocal production?*

*The concert commences. All choir members briefly introduce themselves, often stating how many children and/ or grand children they have and whether these attended the Anglican school. Daisy and Auntie Dora are due to be invited to speak about any aspect of their lives. Daisy is very nervous, I can tell. Her voice shakes and she comments that really, there is very little of interest to tell the audience. This makes me sad. Auntie Dora is equally economical with her introduction, but less nervous or self-deprecating.*

*The choir sings. It's in their hands and voices now. Without a voice I cannot sing the vocal parts today, merely beat time. Maybe this was meant to happen, because the choir sings extremely well. I am proud and happy. I can tell they are too. Maybe they will now realise how little they need me?*

*After our musical offerings something happens. I am about to step forward and whisper a few words of thanks to conclude the concert. Instead I am quietly informed by the ladies that Uncle Henry is about to say something, I hold back, waiting expectantly. Uncle Henry concludes the choir's concert by giving his very own thanks to the congregation and church himself! I am grateful, pleased and most of all proud that a choir member should take charge and do what it is I hoped they would do all along.*

*There is yet more singing to be done though. We have a request: would we please join the Ravenshoe congregation in song? The choir happily welcomes the opportunity to worship together and songs are chosen which everyone knows.*

*I am not a religious person. Neither am I prone to waxing lyrical, but that day I had tears in my eyes. It was beautiful to hear the people sing together in harmony in that small church. Now I performatively understand how music might heighten religiosity and feelings of fellowship.*

This description of the choir's Ravenshoe concert I use to elaborate on how the choir tour facilitated inter-cultural and inter-ethnic Christian fellowship and promoted wellbeing. I also discuss how a facilitator's demeanour can influence choral wellbeing and performative outcomes. I currently know of no contemporary scholarship which has focussed on social, everyday attitudes of non-Indigenous Christians toward Indigenous Christians or vice versa. As a result my interviews and musical experiences through performance with the Hopevale Community Choir form the basis of my knowledge with regards to the attitudes of Indigenous Hopevalian Christians towards non-Indigenous Christians. I did not have the opportunity to extensively interview non-Indigenous Christians during my research period to form a comparative basis for this section. From my observations made during the Hopevale Community Choir's tour, however, I can conclude that the experiences the choir had were positive. The Hopevale singers were warmly received by non-Indigenous Christians and enjoyed the singing and fellowship with the Ravenshoe congregation. The choir's religious repertoire may have disappointed some audience members at the tourist locations, but certainly enthralled the Ravenshoe congregation and inspired other Christians to write poetry as happened at Millaa Millaa.

I argue though, that it was the context of the tour which promoted the integration of the Anglican congregation and the Hopevale Community Choir, and led the choir to experience fellowship and wellbeing. The wellbeing was not necessarily enhanced by the fellowship or music alone. Outside the context of the tour, the choir may not have chosen to sing for and with the Ravenshoe congregation, even had they lived in the town itself, due to the differences in worship practices and the congregation's ethnic make-up.

For example, Auntie Daisy Hamlot was very happy to attend the Lutheran services at St Peter's Lutheran secondary school near Brisbane whilst she worked there between 1964 and 1969, because the school had close ties with Hopevale and its form of worship. She was

also keen to attend services with her sister Marie and brother in law Les Gibson who both worked on a farm further North. When Daisy moved away to Mareeba, however, she attended church services in the Assembly of God church. Here she felt uncomfortable due to the differences in worship practices:

Daisy Hamlot: When we come back [from Brisbane], like still out living in Mareeba, I went to...we both [Karl her husband and Daisy Hamlot] to that, all that, that Assembly...what's the name of Assembly? In Mareeba...

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: Same one as Pastor Brendan [minister at the Assembly of God church in Cooktown at the time of research] or...?

DH: Yeah...and they

[claps and sways]

MSR: Clapping and dancing, moving [laughter] and so what did you think of that? People moving in church, and clapping and dancing and...?

DH: I think that was alright, but when they...when they come and, you know you gotta go up in front and they sorta hold you, you know? But I didn't go up for that, 'cause they all singing different...I was thinking about my own church you know?

MSR: So it was too new. Too different.

DH: Hmmm [in agreement]!

MSR: I think it's the 'laying on of hands' isn't it, where you have to...

DH: Yeah...

MSR: Pray and they speak in tongues, did they do that as well?

DH: Yeah...some of them they cry you know. I didn't want to be, you know, in that. I was thinking about my own religion you know. I just went to church because there was nowhere else...(4<sup>th</sup> February 2005)

Daisy's answers suggest she felt at ease during worship if she knew other members of the congregation and was familiar with denominational practices. In her tour questionnaire, Daisy also wrote that it did not matter what denomination a congregation was "[b]ecause we worship one God". This indicates that whilst on tour with the choir, Daisy felt comfortable



performing and worshipping in a foreign setting, because she was in the company of people she knew well. The Ravenshoe Anglican church also had connections with Hopevale in terms of schooling and there were denominational similarities between Anglican worship practices and Lutheran the ones. This meant that Daisy was able to enjoy her performances more.

Daisy's life experiences are not dissimilar to those of the other singers, many of whom also spent some time in predominantly white areas and lived in Woorabinda during their childhood where they encountered different Christian denominations. Other choir members shared Daisy's feelings and opinions about performing for and worshipping with other denominations. Whilst the singers enjoyed the company of fellow Christians, they would prefer to worship and perform for with other Lutherans or denominations similar to their own. The questionnaire indicated that 5 singers would perform for denominations such as Seventh Day Adventists or Jehovah Witnesses. Three singers did not wish to sing for other denominations and some indicated that they would, but only if asked. Seven singers, however, felt that it did not matter what denominational background people had whereas three did. Other singers also offered comments similar to Daisy's earlier one. Auntie Phylomena wrote: "No we all sing the same praises and worshipping the one maker who made us all." And Auntie Ella felt that: "People believe what they want to believe" but that this did not influence her attitude to performance.

In her interview Daisy also indicated that the ethnic make-up of a congregation influenced her decisions on whether to attend church or not. She stated that whilst she lived and worked near Brisbane in the past and travelled with her Norwegian husband Karl, she often did not go to church. She felt she ought to have done, but being the only Aboriginal person in a predominantly white congregation deterred her from attending (Interview, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005). In the context of the tour, however, Daisy was not intimidated by the

largely white congregation. In the questionnaire also I asked the other singers whether they had noticed there were two congregational members who were not white. Ten had noticed and one member gave no answer. Pamela Kemp wrote: "I did [notice] at the time but it is not something that made a lasting impression". Seven singers said it pleased them to see other *bama* [Indigenous person], three were indifferent, and one felt ambivalent.

When asked whether the singers felt there was a difference in the way white people worshipped ten singers thought there was none, one gave no answer. Pamela Kemp commented that there might be a difference in worship practices but that it depended on the person's introduction to the church. Neither did it matter to the choir whether an audience was Indigenous or non-Indigenous during the tour. When asked why this was so, choir members responded that Christians all worshipped the one God and that they were used to interacting with non-Indigenous Christians and non - Christians. Pam Kemp wrote: "People are people" and Auntie Gertie commented: "I think no matter what kind of people. Black or white no difference. We are still worshipping one Lord."

In the context of the tour, therefore, most singers felt Christianity was a unifying factor which gives all Christians equality regardless of their ethnicity or denomination. Singers were willing to acknowledge the validity of other Christian denominations on the basis of this Christian doctrine of equality. However, some singers indicated that, outside of the tour context, worshipping with other denominations was less of a priority if a Lutheran church was near. Like Auntie Daisy, they felt most comfortable worshipping in the manner in which they had done all their lives and amongst people of a similar ethnic and denominational background.

Given this to be the case, it was an appropriate choice to perform in the Anglican church at Ravenshoe as opposed to the other churches available, as it increased the choir's enjoyment in singing and subsequent fellowship which promoted wellbeing. This in turn

resulted in a more relaxed vocal rendition of the songs, led to a good performance and thereby increased self-esteem. The robust and moving congregational singing which followed the performance added to the experience and further enhanced enjoyment, pride and confidence. Uncle Henry's spontaneous speech at the end of the formalised part of the concert was solid performative evidence indicating that the singers felt they had done well and were comfortable in their surroundings. The tour context, singing and the fellowship combined, therefore, had a positive influence on the construction of Aboriginal musical identities.

Another factor which influenced the level at which choral singing was able to create a positive performative atmosphere was individual performer personalities and audience size. Whereas some singers had outgoing personalities like Auntie Maureen, Auntie Phylomena and Uncle Henry, others were more shy, like Auntie Daisy and Auntie Myrtle. This influenced the singers' abilities to perform well or to speak in public. Interviews demonstrated this:

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: So, when you sing in front...do you get really nervous when you sing?

Daisy Hamlot: Ehm, before I was. I was shy, you know? I get, before I was nervous, but now I can just do it, but sometimes I know I am nervy when there's a big crowd...you remember at the church there [in Ravenshoe]? I, my...

MSR: You were shaking! [both laugh] You poor thing! I thought: "Oh, poor Daisy. She's frightened."

DH: Yeah, that's the only time when, you know, crowded. If it's only a few, I'm alright. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

I posit that it was the nature of the activity which determined the level of nervousness the singers experienced. Singing as a group was less challenging to the shyer members of the choir than public speaking. When speaking in public, the attention of an audience is focussed on one performer. Public speaking, therefore, can be more challenging for

individuals who are shy, like Auntie Daisy, particularly in front of larger groups. Singing as a group can provide a positive challenge, where some degree of nervousness can be overcome because the audience focus is on the entire ensemble rather than the one performer. Overcoming shyness can promote future wellbeing and personal confidence.

Next to fellowship and differences in personality other factors influenced wellbeing in performance. Through the tour questionnaire I ascertained that facilitator demeanour had an impact on performer confidence and thus performance outcome. I asked if the choir thought their confidence could be directly related to the choir facilitator's demeanour in performance situations. Eleven out of eleven respondents felt that it was encouraging if a choir facilitator smiled and was enthusiastic and ten out of eleven singers believed that it was necessary for the facilitator to be confident in situations where musically the choir might have erred. Auntie Daisy Hamlet commented on these issues in an interview:

MSR: Alright, and do you think it helps if the person who is organising things and is your choir leader, is...is confident too, and smiles and encourages you?

DH: Yes.

MSR: So it's a two way thing, if I'm happy...

DH: We happy.

MSR: Confident as well...

DH: Yeah. (30<sup>th</sup> May 2005)

In conclusion it was the warm welcome, fellowship and good performance which the choir delivered combined with the positive facilitation which I was able to offer, that encouraged choral members to enjoy their singing and to take responsibility for their own performative choices. Through taking individual responsibility for performative actions and through facing their individual, differentiated performer identities, singers helped to facilitate positive feelings of pride and performative competency. This section has also shown that it

is not merely Christian fellowship alone, which helps to facilitate wellbeing, but that it is the context of the tour and its promotion of fellowship that allows singers to worship together with a congregation of a different ethnic make-up.

#### 7.4 Douglas House Indigenous Rehabilitation Centre: choral singing, Aboriginal wellbeing and identities

Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2005

*From Ravenshoe to Cairns, a buffet in the evening, a rest in the YHA Cairns at night, followed by a very early start for a concert at Douglas House. Why the choir get up at 04:00 am is beyond me as there is no need to time-wise. Was it something they were made to do in the dormitories as youngsters? All I know is that I am absolutely exhausted, and need the sleep, but fail to get it. It affects my mood, but I have to remain patient and friendly so as to be encouraging. It is a Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2005 and ANZAC day. It is also a Bank Holiday. Will people come, or stay away for this reason I wonder?*

*We arrive at Douglas House, Cairns' Indigenous rehabilitation centre, far too early: 09:00 am rather than the agreed 10:00 am. This I realise, after all our battles against the clock, is the first time we arrive anywhere early, and mainly because of the singers' habit to rise before dawn, not because of my very Dutch habit of trying to live by the clock. I also realise again, that although the choir calls me their 'choir lady' and occasionally their 'leader' I am no such thing, thankfully. Ultimately it is they who determine what happens, regardless.*

*Our early arrival turns out to be advantageous. The Indigenous gentleman on duty takes the opportunity to show us around Douglas House, which is managed by Indigenous Australians and non-white staff. It is the sister centre of Rose Collis House, further inland. I am informed that the Rose Collis 'clients', as they are referred to, are also on their way by mini bus to attend our concert. Douglas House has a recreation room, with a pool table, separate bedrooms and a dining area. All is wonderfully new and well-maintained. I am informed that this is a relatively new building into which they recently moved. Our guide tells us about the availability of Indigenous counsellors and the morning sessions and prayers. I also know that my friend Henry Warren, a carer at Douglas House, reads from the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve step programme book every morning when he is on duty. I used to help him with the difficult passages and we would practice the readings together.*

*It seems that the clients either come here on their own accord or are required to be in Douglas House as part of their legal sentence. The legal sentence usually stipulates that an offender should spend a certain duration in the rehabilitation centre after an offence has been committed. It is the alternative to jail for minor first-time offenders, if the offence was drugs or alcohol related. I rejoice at the fact that there is an Indigenous option which seems more culturally appropriate, but question how effective it is: a cure where prevention is forgotten and what happens after the clients return home? I also wonder if the choir have been here before and how many have relatives here, or how it makes them feel to see their acquaintances and family here again. At any rate, most singers appear attentive and curious, asking questions. Some even enquire about enrolment procedures for Douglas House. I know why they ask.*

*After having waited unsuccessfully for the Rose Collis House minibus for some time, the choir decides to commence the concert. There is no mobile phone reception where the mini bus drives so they will arrive when they do, we decide. Many Indigenous people living in Cairns itself have come to see us perform. They heard our concert advertised on the radio and decided to attend out of support and interest.*

*The performance begins with the usual introductions by the choir. Then, somehow, the surroundings, the audience and the context affect the singers, Pamela Kemp especially. This time the lump in our throats is accompanied by tears. Many of us cry. Cry out of empathy and sadness. Sadness at the loss of so many young men to alcohol, suicide and drug addiction. Sadness because of the men's prolonged absence. Sadness, because of the human suffering which clients and their families still have to endure. Sadness, because some elsewhere have given up hope and believe there is no future. I too cannot hold back my tears and need some time to compose myself before we start singing. I am somehow glad that my laryngitis prevents me from singing today.*

*The concert goes well. We have the opportunity to perform all songs which we rehearsed. Some audience members join in the singing and clap and sway. Then again, something lovely happens: after we announce that we are going to sing a song in Guugu Yimithirr a Douglas House resident stands up and places himself next to Uncle Henry in front of the 'audience'. He sings along with in the choir. I am thrilled beyond words.*

*This action moves me. This man, despite his residency at the rehabilitation centre, is able to have enough confidence to stand up with the choir in the knowledge that he will not be rebuked or sent away. Through singing in Guugu Yimithirr, is he remembering home, his own language and his family? Have we brought his family with us in song? Was he religiously inspired? The resident's action also reminds me of Hopevalian choral singing in general: the concept of 'choir' is a lot more flexible in terms of membership than our Western understanding of the word.*

*Many questions and few answers I feel, and where there are answers how close are they to 'the performative truth' if there is but one? Is my interpretation of the performative events any less 'true' than the choir's interpretation? Are there as*

*many interpretations as there are people present? Judging by the smiles, tears and warmth at least some of what I feel is shared by the choir, regardless of whether or not I can 'prove' this statistically or qualitatively. In fact at this point I fervently wish I could stop questioning these things and just 'experience' the moment!*

This last section looks at the relationship between the choir's performance, emotions and Indigenous health issues. Aboriginal health and wellbeing has been a topic of great concern and debate. Scholars such as Tatz in *Aboriginal Suicide is Different* (2005), Trudgen in *Why Warriors Lay down and Die* (2000) and Phillips in *Addictions and Healing in Aboriginal Country* (2003) and many others have written about the issues surrounding Aboriginal health and its decline. Many authors have drawn parallels between the social situations in which AmerIndians and the Maori's of New Zealand find themselves today. In these countries colonialists became the dominant society and many Indigenous people of these nations suffer from excessive alcohol and drug use, community violence, high levels of incarceration, unemployment, mental health issues, high levels of suicide, particularly amongst young men, inter generational trauma and child abuse and neglect.

The life expectancy of an Aboriginal male living today is between 53-58 years (Tatz, 2005: 5) and Aboriginal mortality rates were four times higher in the Northern Territory than non-Aboriginal rates (Trudgen, 2000: 61 citing *Aboriginal Public Health Action Strategy and Implementation Guide, 1997-2002*). Summarising the 1991 report findings of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (RCIADIC)<sup>5</sup> Tatz writes that 37 per cent of the Indigenous deaths in prison were from natural causes; 34 per cent self-inflicted; 15 per cent from injuries (eg fights or falls); 9 per cent related to 'substance abuse'; and 5 per cent from custodians actions. Twenty seven out of 99 deaths in custody were of people aged between 14 and 24 years of age, and 43 people were in custody for alcohol-related matters

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<sup>5</sup> The RCIADIC was a study examining the deaths of 99 Aboriginal men and women who died in Australian police, prison and juvenile detention custody between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989. The report was published in 1991 (Tatz, 2005: 19).

(Tatz, 2005: 29). Aboriginal and Islander people are also the poorest group in Australian society with an unemployment rate measured at 22.7 per cent in the 1996 census (Tatz, 2005: 5). Health wise, Aborigines suffer disproportionately from malnutrition, diabetes, and renal failure. Minor eye, ear and chest infections are often left untreated by Aborigines resulting in these minor ailments becoming seriously harmful if not fatal. Whilst medical treatment is available often mistrust and miscommunication between non-Indigenous medical staff and Indigenous people results in unnecessary fatalities and Indigenous people absconding from treatment (Phillips, 2003: 71, 109-110). Phillips (2003: 109) notes that the lack availability of local medical treatment in rural areas works as a disincentive for Indigenous people to attend medical appointments outside the community. Aborigines needing treatment are often not willing to travel far from their communities for fear of isolation and loneliness in hospitals and other environments with which they are unfamiliar and find patronising.

Phillips (2003: 108 – 109) also records that some Indigenous people near Cairns viewed Douglas House as an ineffective strategy to promote rehabilitation because homesickness led clients to cut their stays short. Clients would also recommence drinking upon their return to the community. Whilst at Douglas House, the clients' social security incomes were directly put towards paying for their meals and accommodation. Many clients therefore felt they had no control over the money which remained, a meagre forty dollars per fortnight

Scholars have also used case studies to advocate ethnographically informed approaches to definitions of mental illnesses and methods of healing.

Regardless of research recommendations for non-Indigenous populations, there has been a tendency to apply wholesale inappropriate intervention models to Indigenous Australians. At issue is the control of programs, and in particular the reluctance or inability of the state to encourage culturally-specific and culturally



safe formulations of public health prevention, intervention and after-care methods and philosophies. (Phillips, 2003: 35)

There is also a perception amongst Indigenous people that intervention methods are based on “...too many tablets...that one make you sick when all that inside” (Phillips, 2003: 110).

Ethnographically informed literature on the subject of Aboriginal health demonstrates that the health problems experienced by Aborigines result from the social problems which affect Indigenous communities. Phillips and other scholars believe these social problems have developed due to past persecution, institutionalisation, and a fragmentation of ‘traditional’ Aboriginal society leading to fractured identities. Other more recent governmental reports and interventions have concurred with this assertion. The publication of the *Little Children are Sacred* report (or the Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse) of 2007, which formed the justification for the Northern Territory National Emergency Response in that same year, reported that:

Much of the violence and sexual abuse occurring in the Territory communities is a reflection of past, current and continuing social problems which have developed over many decades...The combined effects of poor health, alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment, gambling, pornography, poor education and housing, and a general loss of identity and control have contributed to violence and to sexual abuse in many forms.

([http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquirysaac/report\\_summary.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquirysaac/report_summary.html), accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

Health and wellbeing issues were relevant to my research into the relationship between wellbeing and identity construction through choral singing because of the contexts in which the choir sang. Magowan has also demonstrated that traditional Aboriginal performance is strongly linked to emotions and concepts of Country and the wellbeing of Country and

people. Her studies focus on how Yolngu in Northern Arnhem Land embody music in the skill of learning to sing and dance their Country whilst transmitting the rules of social interaction and the performance of emotion about Country (Magowan, 2007: 13). Her study presents a cultural system of music and dance that “differentiates Yolngu ‘musical experiences’ from non-indigenous ones, as the ontological foundation of Yolngu life is based on a sensory relationship within a sentient ancestral landscape” (Magowan, 2007: 9-10). Magowan demonstrates that the ability and freedom to perform and embody Country through song and dance is important to Yolngu emotional wellbeing as it creates physical and emotional bonds between Yolngu persons and their human, animal and geographical surroundings. I posit here that during the tour choral singing provided a performative opportunity during which Hopevalians in Douglas House could perform Country.

The initial idea to sing at Douglas House had been mine, after having struck up a friendship with Douglas House employee Henry Warren. This idea met with strong approval from the choir. Eleven singers said they had never been Douglas House, but ten singers had heard of it. Ten singers also said that they had a close friend or relative who used drugs often or drank a lot. The decision therefore was an appropriate one, as the singers would be able to visit loved ones or to investigate the facilities on offer at Douglas House. When asked about how they felt when visiting Douglas House five singers said they were curious and Pamela Kemp was interested to learn what efforts were being made to improve the lives of residents. Two singers were scared and nervous or shy and one worried. Despite these feelings, however, nine singers were also “ready to sing well” and eight felt happy, and six confident. Many, again, had mixed emotions.

In the tour questionnaire I also asked the singers how the environment affected their moods using open rather than a multi-choice answer format. Auntie Myrtle was thrilled to see the boys from Hopevale and remarked on their change of appearance. Auntie Phylomena

was pleased to be able to sing in front of her family and friends in Cairns. Auntie Marie Gibson wrote that she was excited and found the concert enjoyable and Auntie Ella felt welcomed by the Douglas House staff and residents, who had, true to Indigenous hospitality, organised a barbecue for the choir after our concert. Auntie Dora again emphasised her pleasure at being able to sing for her Christian God despite the emotional atmosphere. Therefore, whilst all responses varied considerably, they all indicated a pleasure to perform and a positive response to the emotionally challenging environment.

When asked if singers were happy about being able to contribute to the lives of clients in Douglas House, eleven singers responded that they were happy to do so. Unsolicited comments were various. Pamela Kemp felt that the choir's impact may have been slight, but mentioned that a resident had wanted a cassette tape of the choir singing so that he could listen to the songs more often and that his request should be considered. Auntie Phylomena said the concert and her choir membership had made her feel proud and confident. Auntie Gertie emphasised her mixed emotions, stating that she had been both happy and sad, having to leave the Hopevale boys to go home again in the afternoon.

The last section of the tour questionnaire focussed on the choir's perception of choral singing as a therapeutic activity and the answers are quite revealing. Ten singers out of eleven felt that singing could help people overcome their issues with drugs and alcohol. When asked why choir members felt that singing in a choir could be beneficial, singers responded that friendships were formed and that singing increased self-esteem. Pamela Kemp emphasised that there would be a need to commit, a sense of achievement created and that the concentration to learn new words and music would stimulate people in a positive way. Auntie Phylomena wrote that "...they too can get up and do it!".

Singing in the choir also had an effect on the way in which singers perceived themselves. Eleven singers said they felt they had become more confident through singing in

the choir. When discussing the influence of the tour and choir singing with Auntie

Phylomena she said:

Phylomena Naylor: Well that question...me, for myself, joining in with this choir, when you taking us places, it showed me more confidence in myself...and showed me that I can do it! That, before, before I met you and the rest of the ladies, I was nothing...but now I know I'm somebody. I can stand up for myself, and I can show the whole world who I am. Which is very, very...it touches me...I can smile. I can go out and smile. It encourage me now, giving me more confidence in myself, that I can do all these things.

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg: And so you can!

PN: Yes I can and I never can say 'I can't'. (5<sup>th</sup> June 2005, Audio sample 5)

Other singers felt similar to Auntie Phylomena and many said they had become more conscious of who they were and where they came from. The tour stimulated seven singers to think more about their lives in comparison to others.

I posit that the choir's concert at Douglas House, whilst being a one-of event, was still able to demonstrate the potential benefits that more regular performances could have. I believe this to be the case, because the choir's presence was able to ameliorate some of the isolation and loneliness that some clients might feel whilst living away from Hopevale when in rehabilitation at Douglas House: the clients' 'home' came to them. I suggest that if concerts and interaction were to happen on a regular basis, it would promote wellbeing for Indigenous clients as it would lessen the desire to cut the rehabilitation process short. This in turn would allow clients to focus on overcoming their struggle with addiction more effectively.

Equally, through the choir's performance, clients at Douglas House were made aware that they had not been forgotten, were missed and that it was hoped that they would soon overcome their struggles. The attendance of community members from the Cairns area was also significant, in that it demonstrated that clients at Douglas House were not seen as

shameful, social pariahs to be avoided, but that day-to-day interaction with other community members was possible and desired.

The choir's use of Guugu Yimithirr language in this case, also became more meaningful. During their interview choir members Auntie Violet Cobus and Dora Deemal agreed that the level of significance of the use of Guugu Yimithirr in concert was dependant on the circumstances in which the language was used (Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005). When singing songs in Guugu Yimithirr at Lotus Glen Correctional Centre or Douglas House rehabilitation centre, the audience members and singers alike felt the use of the language fostered a sense of Aboriginal and especially Hopevalian identity. This confirmation of an identity and sense of belonging were perceived as being helpful and therapeutic to the inmates and clients by choir members.

To summarise, the tour allowed the choir to improve their repertoire, gain further self esteem and confidence. The singers had the opportunity to visit loved ones in Lotus Glen correctional facility and Douglas House and to enjoy fellowship with other Christians. For the choir it was simultaneously an opportunity temporarily relinquishing their full responsibilities as elders, parents and community church leaders.

On the basis of the tour's outcomes, I suggest that if the overall performative experiences are positive, performers are more likely to want to recreate these experiences. These positive experiences in turn can have a beneficial effect on the construction of Indigenous identities. By frequent engagement in such performative experiences through choral singing, the effect becomes cumulative and self-perpetuating. I believe this beneficial, cumulative effect was evident during the tour, which took place after many months of hard but enjoyable work. However, for this cumulative process to take effect, time was needed. The changes were gradual and required singers to actively take charge of their performativity as Indigenous Australians and to lead their own ensemble in some cases.

Ideally, the choir should also have been involved in applying for their own tour funding, the organisation of events, management of funds and the promotional side of the tour in an appropriate way. In my conclusion I therefore address these issues by assessing the methodology and offer further suggestions for future development.

**“We go forward with our singing”: a concluding project evaluation and suggestions for further research**

Due to the applied nature of the research work, which this thesis documents, this concluding chapter is as much an evaluation of the research project’s methodology as it is a summary of the research outcomes and theoretical approaches. Because of the context-sensitive nature of the participatory action research methodology employed, I am hesitant to call my research project a type of ‘pilot study’. The exact methodology cannot be repeated and the outcomes cannot be duplicated a second time. However, the research outcomes may offer theoretical approaches which could potentially be applied elsewhere in other applied ethnomusicological situations. This fact demonstrates that applied research, whilst informed by theory, is equally capable of generating theory. I suggest here this is an important point to make because it supports the idea that applied, reciprocal research is a valid option which can both benefit the people the researcher works with whilst affording theoretical insights. Because this thesis documents the outcomes of a project which was intended to be reciprocal in nature, this conclusion will also critically evaluate to what extent my applied work was able to achieve local, Hopevalian goals. Hopevalian goals overlapped but were not one hundred percent identical to my own. I aimed to produce a theoretical PhD thesis whilst also improving local wellbeing through music in Hopevale, whilst the singers hoped wellbeing would be promoted through their participation in choral singing. I present this critical project evaluation, thesis summary and further concluding thoughts in this last chapter.

## 8.1 Introductory chapter: its implications for postcolonial writing and scholarship

The introductory chapter presented the research question, which was: “Can choral singing have a positive influence on the construction of Aboriginal identities?” It also outlined the aim of the research methodology, which was to answer the research question through reviving and facilitating choral singing in Hopevale. The revival of choral singing aimed to ameliorate social problems experienced by younger Hopevalians in particular. Secondly, the introductory chapter located my research historically and geographically in Hopevale, Northern Queensland between September 2004 and June 2005. I also provided the definitions of terms to be used in this thesis and its themes. These included ethnicity, spirituality, authenticity, performativity, gender and Aboriginal diversity. All of these themes have been addressed throughout the thesis.

The theoretical contribution of the introductory chapter lies in the discussion of the chosen approach to representing research outcomes. This presentation style is a blend of performative writing as in chapter seven, which described the tour; standard academic prose, as in the first chapter which addressed the research methodology; and chapter four which dealt with Australian history and constructs of Aboriginality. I also employed what I have termed ‘fieldtext’. Fieldtext I defined as edited fieldwork diary entries which I wrote whilst in the field. The concept of fieldtext is based on Barz’s (1997) suggestion that researchers must incorporate their fieldnotes into research analyses and writing. My fieldwork diary did not consist of notes or short entries and observations, but long sections of text. During the fieldwork process I used this text to help reflexively analyse, in writing, performative developments. This analysis allowed me to decide what course of action to take next.



Another way in which this thesis contributes to the development of ethnography is by incorporating questionnaire responses given by the Hopevale Community Choir into the narrative writing about the choir tour in chapter seven. The text used not just my own experiential account of the Choir's four-day tour through Northern Queensland but also some Hopevalian experiential information about the tour. I suggest that in this way, the narrative text comes closer to achieving learning which is located in performances and living where we "share the same narratives" (Kisliuk, 1997: 33). I am not suggesting that this makes my account more "truthful" because I constructed the questionnaire and this thesis. However, the writing approach I used in the text demonstrated that whilst I was interpreting Hopevalian actions and re-actions whilst facilitating the choir, the choir members were equally interpreting my performativity as a facilitator. As their 'choir lady' my approach greatly influenced the singers' performativity. Equally, my learning about Hopevalian performance and my understanding of my own performativity as a facilitator came through learning, teaching and performing choral repertoire. This interactive process is what I aimed to convey through using the questionnaire responses in chapter seven in the construction of a narrative text.

The themes, structure and methodology of this thesis also aimed to contribute to the decolonisation of ethnographic writing. The emphasis on Aboriginal diversity, the use of participatory action research and the writing style were all chosen to accommodate the highly politicised nature of research into Australian Aboriginal topics. However, there is further room for development in this area. For example, 'multi-authored' theses are not suitable as entry for a PhD candidacy. I propose, however, that if we are to take oral history as being an equally valid and worthy method of recording knowledge, then its extensive incorporation into theses should either be disallowed or otherwise in some way acknowledged as being a form of 'co-authorship' although not necessarily 'co-editorship'.

Another postcolonial theoretical problem which the writing of this thesis raises, is its final purpose and means of achieving this purpose. This academic thesis referred to Westernised scholarship and ethnographic theory. This will mean that the theoretical sections of this thesis become opaque and difficult to access for many of the people I worked with. I am therefore inadvertently contributing to the very tradition which I am challenging because I am producing theoretical knowledge about Hopevalians which they may not be able to freely access and therefore comment on. This is therefore one of the primary reasons I opted to employ a reciprocal, applied approach. Through applied work both the Hopevale Choir and I benefited, albeit in different ways. This does not solve the problem of having produced esoteric knowledge, however. I can therefore only hope that in the future Indigenous scholars like Nakata will want to engage with my work. Through this engagement it may be possible to arrive at an informed understanding of both Indigenous constructs of knowledge and Western ones and to assess whether these can be constructively married in applied research theory and methodologies. Such an understanding could result in future research methodologies and ethnographies which are accessible and meaningful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. Such an outcome might facilitate future productive, applied approaches and lead to further ethnographically informed applied research methodologies.

## 8.2 Chapter one: participatory action research and an evaluation of the project outcomes

In chapter one I outlined the theoretical basis of my work and explained my use of an applied methodology. My method was based on Blacking's (1995) dialectical approach which I used to not merely study Hopevalian choral singing, but also to affect choral and social change. I combined Blacking's concept with a participatory action research (PAR) approach as defined by Trotter and Schensul (1998). The reasons I opted for this type of methodology can broadly

be described as reciprocity and advocacy of Aboriginal diversity. These two headings also incorporated a specific concern for research ethics and politics.

The use of PAR was adopted to ameliorate some of the social problems which Hopevale is experiencing amongst its population. It was the community who decided that I should become its 'choir lady'. The quotation by June Pearson at the start of chapter one demonstrates that there existed local, Indigenous beliefs about music's ability to positively affect wellbeing. Because of the methodological emphasis on 'process' the project demonstrated the evolving, fluid nature of identity construction through performance. The approach therefore was an appropriate one, despite the problematical nature of the concept of community and the question as to who initially 'appointed' me and who had consented to my research being undertaken.

There are additional theoretical and practical outcomes which need to be critically assessed in this concluding chapter to evaluate the appropriateness of the applied methodology and its outcomes in more detail. In chapter one I stated that my approach is not identical to PAR in that the research methodology and its outcomes were not synonymous with the aim itself. The 'means was not the end' as it is in PAR. Part of my aim included writing a thesis about the work undertaken, whilst simultaneously facilitating the choir and aiming to ameliorate some of the Hopevalian social problems through providing musical diversion. The community was aware of my aim to write a thesis about my work in Hopevale and agreed to allow me to stay in Hopevale on that basis.

The applied nature of my project and its focus on community wellbeing combined with the community's decision that I should be a choir facilitator meant that I had to complement my research methodology with an in-depth study of Hopevalian musical history. This was due to the fact that for ethical reasons I could not deliberately disprove that choral singing was able to have a negative influence on the construction of Aboriginal identities. Theoretically this

meant a circular argument was created where I could not disprove my theory through falsification. I therefore opted to use historical information instead, to demonstrate that congregational hymn-singing and by extension choral singing had a negative impact on the constructions of Aboriginal identities in the past in chapter six. The in-depth historical research which was required to write chapter six also allowed me to contextualise the research environment. It also helped to inform my practical research methodology when working with the choir. I would therefore suggest that historical contextualisation of the research environment prior to research should always form an integral part of the any applied ethnographically informed research methodology. I believe this will assist in facilitating cross-cultural understanding and help with the design of locally specific approaches to research and the analysis of outcomes during and after the research process.

Another question which needs to be answered is: “How successful was the applied approach in terms of ameliorating social problems and according to whom?” This question has multiple answers. Choral singing clearly provided enjoyment, temporary relief from social burdens, facilitated cross-cultural fellowship and enhanced self-esteem. This was demonstrated through interviews conducted, the performance experienced and the questionnaires which were completed. These positive effects allowed the singers to fulfil their roles as community elders, spiritual leaders, role models and primary care-givers more effectively. As role models the singers were also able to influence outside audiences demonstrating that “more comes out of Hopevale than just drunks” as Auntie Dora Gibson said (personal communication). The benefits, however small, were therefore numerous.

Despite this evidence that choral singing was able to have a positive effect on singers and audiences, it must be pointed out that the initial target group for the applied approach had been youths, not community elders. It had also been envisaged that the choir would be a secular one, not associated with the church. At the end of the research, however, the choir

comprised of community elders, rehearsed in church and performed religious repertoire. The reasons for this were:

- choral singing's historical links with spirituality and the Lutheran church. This deterred some people from joining.
- a change in the way choral singing is perceived by youths, who believe it is an activity only for older people, especially women.
- a lack of male role models due to decreased Aboriginal life spans, excessive alcohol and drug consumption and high levels of incarceration and suicide amongst young men.
- differences in musical tastes where youths preferred hymns to be sung in a faster tempo, electronic musical accompaniment and other genres such as the Christian Hill Song genre and Country Gospel or Country Rock.
- my limitations as a facilitator in not being able to play the guitar or an accompanying instrument which would allow me to provide the desired accompaniment for youths.

The lack of youths by contrast was not due to:

- an opposition to the introduction of new musical materials or accompanying instruments in church. Choir members were happy to learn new musical material as long as the language used was appropriate and not profane.

Whilst the applied approach was therefore able to generate pride indirectly amongst the target group, it was not able to do so directly through involving youths in regular performances and rehearsals as choral singers.

The last practical challenge was that of creating an ‘exit strategy’. Applied research methodologies, if aiming to ameliorate local problems, should endeavour to facilitate Indigenous leadership and capacity building. This strategy takes a considerable amount of time, particularly in circumstances where general community morale is low, like in Hopevale. Thus, I prepared for my departure in various ways. Towards the end of my research period I, with the help of the choir, had appointed two ‘leaders’ or ‘organisers’: Auntie Daisy Hamlot and Auntie Phylomena Naylor. I had given their contact details to Cooktown events organisers so that the women could be called upon if the events organisers wanted the choir to perform. I also arranged for the choir to sing at The Queensland Music Festival (QMF) 2005 where they would represent local Indigenous culture. During the arrangement processes I had been sure to involve Auntie Daisy and Phylomena. Both ladies attended the meeting with the Cooktown events organisers and the artistic director of the QMF. The choir was paid for their performance at the QMF and I encouraged Daisy to open up a bank account for the honorarium paid so that it could go towards future choir activities such as another visit to Lotus Glen or a journey to Townsville to visit the women’s prison there. I also tried to persuade the choir to learn more music by ear through listening to CDs and through leading the singing themselves as they had done during their performance of the Guugu Yimithirr hymns. This last strategy, however, proved to be difficult to implement because historically the choir had always had a ‘leader’ or facilitator such as a local Pastor or myself and therefore was not used to leading itself. Whilst all singers wanted the choir to continue singing after my departure, many believed it would not. The singers felt that like so many other enjoyable things in the past, choral singing too, would fizzle out following my departure, despite its recent revival and the choir’s successes.



**Figure C.1: Jan Aird (Cooktown Events Organiser), Lyndon Terracini (Queensland Music Festival Artistic Director), Phylomena Naylor, Daisy Hamlot, Jacqui Sykes (Cooktown Events Organiser), Bob Sullivan (Mayor Councillor Cooktown), 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005.**

Three years have now passed since I left and I can report that the choir is still performing at local events when called upon to do so. They have received another invitation to perform at the Queensland Music Festival in August 2009 and also contributed to the same Festival in 2007. I was informed by events organiser Jacqui Sykes that composer Damien Barbeler is to compose an emotive choral piece about the Cooktown area which will involve several choirs, including the Hopevale choir. Daisy also told me that a few CDs have been made of the Hopevale Community Choir. I was also informed by Daisy that several more men have joined Uncle Henry in the choir, including Uncle Clarry. I am therefore hopeful that this trend will continue and that choral singing can become an activity which is Indigenously led and managed. This may mean that the singers do not necessarily have regular, organised rehearsals or deliberately seek opportunities to perform outside the community. It may mean they sing and rehearse when Hopevale social activities or religious ceremonies require it. Because choral singing as a genre is so closely related to the Hopevalian Christian spirituality, it may well be that a secular choir is unlikely to ever form. In conclusion to chapter one it is therefore possible to say that whilst the project aim was not met in its entirety at the time of research,

the initial impetus provided was enough to least allow the choir to continue singing without an external facilitator and for more men to start singing again.

### 8.3 Chapter two: ethnographically informed music facilitation in context and its implications for music pedagogy and music therapy

In chapter two I described my methodology on a more practical level after having discussed its theoretical implications in chapter one. I demonstrated that the activity of choral singing is capable of influencing constructs of identity through discussing other scholars' research in the field. I also record my practical approach to music facilitation in Hopevale because as a facilitator my work impacted greatly on how the singers performed their identities.

I then assessed the various sources I used to inform myself about choral conducting whilst training as a facilitator. Most texts discussed were helpful in acquiring knowledge on conducting technique, suitable choral repertoire and warm-up exercises. Most helpful though, was Durrant's (2003) *Choral Conducting: Philosophy and Practice*. This text discusses how a practitioner might philosophically approach conducting by choosing appropriate means which meet the needs of an ensemble. Durrant's text also acknowledges that a facilitator's demeanour has an important influence on performative outcomes.

Whilst in Hopevale I used an ethnographically informed choral facilitation approach. This involved researching Hopevale's musical history to gain an insight into the historical musical practices. This information I combined with observations about contemporary musical practices whilst in the field. Following the first rehearsal described in the introductory chapter, I began incorporating the practical knowledge into



musical facilitation. This ethnographically informed approach entailed making allowances for local performative traditions. It sometimes meant I did not alter performance tempi or the frequent use of legato singing and slurring in old Guugu Yimithirr repertoire. Neither did I always insist that music was sung as written. This approach also varied between songs. When introducing new repertoire I did not make the same allowances for a local performance aesthetic. This ethnographically informed approach to facilitation meant seeking performative and verbal feedback from singers and audiences to ensure that the process remained enjoyable for the singers, their audiences and the facilitator alike. I feel this approach worked well. In interviews the singers said they enjoyed learning new material and thought the newly introduced vocal exercises improved their singing technique. It was felt by the singers and their Hopevalian audiences that choral singing promoted an increase in self-esteem and wellbeing.

At the end of the chapter I assessed Durrant's facilitation model and the "five orientations of craft knowledge" (2003: 87). I expanded on the model by incorporating an ethnographically informed theoretical and musical approach. I also presented a more fluid visual representation of Durrant's five orientations, demonstrating the interactive nature of choral facilitation. The implications of the incorporation of ethnography into facilitation techniques are both pedagogical and related to the relationship between music and wellbeing through therapy. Pedagogically any applied practitioner who aims to educate or promote wellbeing through musical activities in a cultural setting with which they are unfamiliar should operate in an ethnographically informed manner by taking into account local performance aesthetics and social practices related to music. Failure to do so may lead the facilitator to unnecessarily correct 'errors' or excessively focus on changing performative features at the expense of enjoyment and wellbeing. The

lack of enjoyment may lead singers to abandon choral singing and thus learning and wellbeing cannot be promoted. An ethnographically informed approach may be useful in educational establishments which have pupils from diverse backgrounds, such as inner-city schools or where pupils come from a different background from that of the educationalist. In Hopevale at the time of my research, many white teaching staff at the local primary school said they had come to Hopevale without prior knowledge of what they might encounter as this had not been part of their teacher training. Most staff felt they would have benefited from a more thorough induction into the Hopevalian community and Indigenous culture whilst in Hopevale. They felt it would have improved relations with their students and their students' parents.

The relationship between music and wellbeing and music therapy would also benefit from using ethnography to inform practice. Music therapists have discussed using an ethnographically informed approach. My work bears similarities, but is not identical, to what is now called "culture centred community music therapy" of which Stige (2002), Ansdell (2004) and Pavlicevic (2004) are the main exponents. The discipline of music therapy emanates from a Western scientific background which in the past has relied heavily on science-based disciplines such as neurobiology, psychology and psychiatry for its grounding. It is only in the last six years that some ethnographic theory and knowledge from the social sciences is being used to inform music therapy practice. The discipline has come to recognise that musical response is highly context-sensitive and dependant upon musical enculturation as much as acculturation:

There is no choice but to be culture-centered or culture-sensitive as music therapists: our practice, theory, conventions, assumptions and attitudes are all products of a time and a place- they are *cultural constructions*. This relatively recent perceptive in music therapy has been fuelled by...the history of music therapy and anthropological work done on music / healing practices. (Pavlicevic, 2004: 23-24) [emphasis original]

Therapists have also acknowledged the cultural significance and appropriateness of musical performance in creating wellbeing for performers:

It is noticeable that the chief issue around the question about 'is this music therapy' revolve is that of *performance*. The consensus model suggested strongly that musical performance was inappropriate to therapy: patients instead needed confidentiality, privacy, a musical search for emotional authenticity. Modern thinking is challenging this assumption but, of course, with the proviso that performance is an option when appropriate for music therapy, not something that is foisted upon clients. Music therapists such as David Aldridge have long championed the idea that our identity and our health are *performed*...if we work in culture-sensitive ways it follows that we acknowledge that for many clients from non-Western traditions, performing music is natural and a key part to performing their identity. How could it not be part of the possible agenda of music therapy? (Pavlicevic, 2004: 29-30) [emphasis original]

Stige (2002: 198) redefines music therapy as a discipline which is the study and learning of the relationship between music and health. Stige (2002: 198) then lists the various subfields which his definition would incorporate under the heading of the discipline.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Non-professional practices of music healing in cultural contexts, and other everyday health-related uses of music
- Music and health in the perspective of human phylogeny: biological and evolutionary perspectives on the relationship between humans, music, rituals, and health.
- Music and health in the perspective of cultural history: the history of musical healing and music therapy.
- Music and health in the perspective of the human ontogeny: life span development to and through music.

Stige (2002: 277-296) also proposes the use of participatory action research (PAR) in music therapy practices, suggesting it is an effective way of conceptualising the way in which music therapist practitioners study, learn and promote the relationship between health and music. My own methodology and research approach resonate with Stige's redefinitions and I believe that as a result there exists the potential for collaboration, particularly in areas like Aboriginal Australia where the dominant society is still in control of the ways in which Indigenous wellbeing is managed. This may mean that the applied ethnomusicologist/ therapist must also relinquish some of the Westernised medical understandings about wellbeing and ways in which to promote it, and to acknowledge the validity of Aboriginal knowledge about spiritual and physical healing, as Phillips suggests (2003). In this way the approach comes closer to Barz's 'medical ethnomusicology' (2006). What is present in Barz's context in Uganda and not in the Aboriginal one, however, is Indigenous leadership and the devolution of the responsibility for Indigenous wellbeing into Indigenous hands. With regards to this challenge, Indigenous politician and Hopevalian Noel Pearson says:

[Aborigines] have got to take charge. We've got to be given back responsibility....the wasteland of responsibility in Indigenous Australia is the consequence of government and bureaucracies and welfare organisations, including NGOs, who have intervened in Aboriginal affairs and said, "listen [sic], you don't have to take responsibility. You have a whole suite of rights, including the right to welfare, the right to drink, the right to party all night, the right to have the trappings of office without being accountable for any return on your role."

(<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1962844.htm>, accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

An ethnographically informed approach can help to build on Indigenous understandings of the relationship between music and health, show respect for these same Indigenous understandings and consequently be more likely to gain support from Aborigines,

because the methodology shows humility and a willingness to undertake mutual learning. Noel Pearson commented:

The big danger for the Government, I think, is that they can't go marching in like cowboys. They've got to go marching in with humility, with support, not with arrogance, and they've got to enjoin the Aboriginal people of that community. (<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1962844.htm>, accessed 24<sup>th</sup> August 2008)

Pearson's comments were made in response to the Australian government's decision to implement The Northern Territory National Emergency Response in 2007. This response was put into action after the *Little Children are Sacred* report was made public. This report detailed the severity of child abuse and neglect in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Although the comments refer to the government's decision to introduce further police enforcements, curfews and to monitor the uses of welfare pay, the above statements are relevant to the applied ethnomusicologist or music therapist.

#### 8.4 Chapter three: challenging social malaises through choral performance

In chapter three I examined the use of biography in ethnomusicological literature and in Aboriginal Australian studies. I discussed the genre's strengths and its weaknesses in being able to convey ethnomusicological information, after which I demonstrated its appropriateness for documenting the lives of Hopevalian choral singers and singing's impact on the construction of identities. I also introduced the concept of 'communal individuality' in relation to constructs of Hopevalian 'sense of self'. Communal individuality is a concept whereby an individual 'sense of self' is weighted differently in relation to sense of community from that of this same 'sense of self' in European or Western society. In Hopevale the boundary which exists between an individual sense of

self and a communal sense of self is less rigid. This results in greater personal autonomy from an early age and a high tolerance for personal idiosyncrasies amongst people living in the community. Hopevalians are able to be individuals communally. This communal individuality, however, is regulated through the kinship system, spirituality and age, to ensure that misdemeanours are not left unchallenged.

At the time of research, communal individuality generated a specifically Hopevalian performance aesthetic and practice as discussed in chapter seven. Through Auntie Phylomena's criticism, I learnt that each singing individual was as important as the choir in its entirety and that therefore individual introductions were necessary. Equally, powerful, loud voices were appreciated during choral performance because these types of voices could lead the singing well, especially in outdoor environments. This performative approach was regulated by aesthetics based on timbre where the combination of widely disparate timbres was not thought to be desirable. The approach meant that whilst the choir sought to blend in overall timbre, they might not wish to do so in volume. Choral singing generally was therefore a way in which singers were able to perform their Aboriginality through singing in their unique timbre, using Guugu Yimithirr and English in song and combining this with their presentation and introductory approach as an ensemble.

To acknowledge communal individuality and to highlight Aboriginal diversity, short biographies of almost all the choir singers were presented and I interpreted the biographical information. I concluded that choral singers have much in common. Because of their age, singers are the primary care givers in their families due to the social problems experienced by younger Hopevalians. They are also often arbiters in the many family disputes. This causes singers considerable stress from which choir singing offers some reprieve and enjoyment.

The choir also helps its members to fulfil their roles as community elders through providing an opportunity to lead by example. In 2004-2005 this was particularly the case in relation to spirituality, ethnicity and gender. Singers felt that they were leading by example through performing with an ensemble which sang about a Christian God and His love and an ensemble which communicated a Christian message. Choristers believed that due to the ensemble's willingness to incorporate, and associate with, people from various ethnic backgrounds they were demonstrating the equality of all people in the eyes of their Christian God. Singers equally felt that because choral singing was associated with spirituality and a drug, violence and alcohol-free life choice, young people, especially young men, should join them. They therefore actively invited others to join the choir regardless of their faith, age, gender and ethnic background. Lastly, due to the singers' roles as care givers and their frequent singing in family homes whilst practising choir songs, or listening to CDs of Lutheran choir songs, choristers were the transmitters of a Hopevalian musical identity through their choir membership.

Due to Hopevale's problematic social situation at the time of research, choir members were deliberately challenging the wider community's opposition to the church, the discrimination which exists between Hopevalians with different ethnic heritages and the belief that Hopevalians, especially men, could not achieve anything worthwhile. Whilst they realised their role was not always viewed positively, singers were inclined to say: "We don't care" and "We go forward with our singing.". This defiance in the face of challenges shows considerable strength of character on the part of the choral singers.

## 8.5 Chapter four: Aboriginality, meta theory and the choral performance of Hopevalian identities

In the fourth chapter, I examined the meta-theories which influence contemporary constructs of Aboriginality and explored Indigenous spirituality and its links to geography concepts of Country. I related this to various musical genres practised in Indigenous Australia to highlight musical diversity. This I followed with a discussion about the various governmental policies and slogans such as assimilation, integration and reconciliation. Their fast succession and contradictory nature have resulted in the fragmentation of Aboriginal communities and identities and thus negatively influenced Indigenous wellbeing. I described various political policies and government slogans used during the protectionist eras. One of the most significant, and relevant to Hopevale, was the 1897 *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* which allowed for institutionalisation of Aborigines and the removal of Indigenous children. The quick succession of highly contrasting political approaches has led to confusion amongst Aboriginal people and intergenerational strife. I demonstrated that the fragmentation and politicisation of Aboriginal identities is reflected in Aboriginal popular music making. The discussion included a clarification of how past constructs of Aboriginality influence present ones. I also addressed the problem of how past constructs of ‘traditional’ Aboriginality are used by the media and even Aborigines themselves to justify violence in communities and how this perpetuates unjustifiable, negative stereotypes of Aborigines. Lastly, I looked at how Social Darwinist theory and biblical exegesis influenced constructs of Aboriginality. Social Darwinism combined with Biblical exegesis informed Australian social policies related to Aboriginal affairs. Social Darwinist theories led scholars, missionaries and government agencies to believe that Aborigines were a “dying



race” and “less developed” in evolutionary terms. Theologians based their theories on Biblical exegeses which argued for separate creationist events. Governmental policies based on these ‘scientific’ and theological theories were designed to protect Aborigines from themselves and white society by placing Aborigines on reserves and mission to “soothe their dying pillow”.

I also showed that the fragmentation of Aboriginal society is caused by the generalised and essentialised nature of the constructs of Aboriginality being imposed by the government to allow social policies and legislation to be devised which are applicable to all Aboriginal Australians. This has led Aborigines either to search for a lost identity rooted in the remote past which is not compatible with contemporary life, or to deliberately emphasise and perform certain aspects of the generalised, essentialised identity in order to conform with expectations in order to demonstrate Indigenous ‘authenticity’.

More generally, this chapter demonstrated that the incorporation of Aborigines into Australian society has been predominantly governmental. It showed that the ways in which Aboriginality is constructed can vary according to a person’s social history. This Aboriginal diversity, however, is rarely reflected in governmental policies which aim to generalise. As a result, constructs of Aboriginality are still controlled by the dominant society. It is through various popular music genres such as Country and Western, choral, and reggae, which appeal to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, that Aborigines are able to challenge constructs of Aboriginality and social inequality. Often they do so in either a non-confrontational manner, by advocating reconciliation and reciprocity or through highlighting Aboriginal disadvantage. Through musical performance Indigenous Australians are claiming their right to make their own decisions about the part they wish to play in a shared Australian future and raise awareness about their social history.

Theoretically, chapter four demonstrated that it is necessary to fully incorporate an analysis of historical constructs of Aboriginality in order to explicate the current ways in which Indigenous identities are musically performed in relation to wellbeing. Aboriginal diversity makes it necessary to ensure that references to localised histories are incorporated in studies which involve a focus on a single community. It is unhelpful to refer to meta-theory and grand historical narratives alone when interpreting localised constructs of Aboriginal identities precisely because these constructs are so diverse. Meta-theory, however, can be instrumental in facilitating an understanding of why Aboriginal issues are as highly politicised as they are and help to contextualise localised traditions in relation wider Australian politics.

#### 8.6 Chapter five: Hopevalian social history and its influence on identity and spirituality

Because an investigation into a community's social local history is vital when it comes to assessing the relationship between choral singing, identity construction and wellbeing, in chapter five, I focussed on Hopevalian history in relation to the processes of evangelisation and colonisation. I showed that whilst missionisation and colonisation led to the creation of strong mission-based Indigenous identities, these processes also created further fragmentation of Aboriginal identities through intergenerational trauma.

One of the causes of this fragmentation has been the internalisation of the local mission historiography written by for example Poland (trans. Roehrs, 1988) and local mission staff like Pohlner (1986). Both these texts are readily available to Hopevalians. This historiography contains many negative constructs of Aboriginality. Poland's (trans. Roehrs, 1988) text, for example, focussed on missionary heroism, Aboriginal deprivation and the need for Aboriginal salvation through introducing the Gospel and

Western modes of living. Pohlner's (1986) text regularly references archival sources and Poland's writing. Pohlner does not incorporate much oral history and his account was believed to "polish it down to everything Muni did good" (Pearson, 1986: 16). Hopevale's historiography has led many Hopevalians to believe that before the introduction of Christianity their ancestors were depraved and violent and that missionaries brought 'civilisation'.

The chapter also presented Cape Bedford missionary Schwarz's policy to focus on admitting only young women and children to the community and the effects of this on the transmission of musical and other cultural practices. At the time of research, for example, Hopevale had many elders who were members of what is now known as 'The Stolen Generation'. These elders could not recall many non-Christian worship practices, ceremonial or song knowledge. Lutheranism had become their traditional spirituality and the Hopevale mission their home. The sorrow of not having known a family life and not knowing about their Indigenous non-Christian heritage is still apparent in the stories of the Stolen elders. The removal of young children at an early age, the introduction of Lutheranism and of a unifying language Guugu Yimithirr did lead to the creation of a strong mission identity and to Aborigines from diverse backgrounds Cape Bedford became home.

I then demonstrated how the concept of evangelisation was synonymous with the concept of introducing 'civilisation' in Hopevale. Alongside the Gospel missionaries Poland and Schwarz sought to introduce European agricultural and domestic activities and to settle the Cape Bedford Aborigines. The doctrine of salvation was introduced alongside Social Darwinist theories. This led to the development of racial discrimination in Hopevale where missionaries favoured individuals with a European heritage over those who came from a fully Aboriginal background. At the

time of research this contradictory combination of the doctrine of Christian equality and salvation and Social Darwinism led to confusion in Hopevale. Whilst most people preferred to adhere spiritually to the doctrine of racial equality, they could not explain their internalised prejudices. These prejudices manifested themselves socially, economically and musically.

The processes of evangelisation and colonisation also aimed to introduce Western, gendered social constructs into Hopevalian living. Muni monopolised the marriageable women on the mission through encouraging them to stay in their dormitories. Non-Christian men seeking to marry mission-based women had to abandon their non-Christian practices before marriage could take place and their wives often demanded that they then come and live on the mission. Consequently these men lost their positions as spiritual leaders because they were unable to maintain their obligations to kin and Country through regular ceremonial activity. Whilst women were able to maintain their positions of primary care-givers in a family unit as mothers or wives, Aboriginal men lost their positions as the head of a family unit and were unable to achieve high positions of leadership on the mission due to colonial prejudices.

The internalised prejudices combined with historical focus on admitting children also influenced the development of an Indigenous understanding of Christianity as there is little knowledge about the traditional pre-colonial spirituality. My research has indicated, however, that there are Hopevalian understandings of the Christian gospel which focus more on the Indigenous spiritual connection to kin and Country and that this concept in Hopevale is called *warra*. This concept, I suggest, embodies the notion that people belong to Country and that from it they are born and to it they will return. Some Hopevalians also believe that there is the one Spirit Giver *Yiirmbal* who is a life-giver and Creator. I would propose that, for these Hopevalians,

Christianity was in Cape Bedford before ‘people had a knowledge of Christ’ as Pastor George suggests.

According to Pastor George’s definition, it could therefore be potentially incorrect, to refer to traditional spirituality as being ‘non-Christian’. As Pastor George’s comments suggest in chapter five, Christianity was present in a different form and the Creator spirit merely went by a different name. Pastor George also states it was not the missionaries who converted the Aborigines of Cape Bedford, but the Holy Spirit. This theological interpretation accepts Indigenous pre-colonial spiritual practices as fully reconcilable with Christianity, rather than opposed to them. It also justifies their incorporation into formal worship. As I demonstrated in chapter six, however, the concept of *warra* and the acknowledgement of *Yiirmbal* as potentially an Indigenous interpretation of the concept of God have not yet been adapted in regular church worship or through choral singing in Hopevale

#### 8.7 Chapter six: congregational and choral singing as evolving musical traditions

In chapter six I discussed the missionaries’ use of hymnody during the processes of evangelisation in Hopevale. The use of hymnody and congregational singing had a profound influence on the constructions of Hopevalian identities. In the chapter I examined the traits of hymnody which made it an effective tool in communicating the Christian Gospel. These traits included the use of Guugu Yimithirr in hymn translations and the use of music, as music was also used in Indigenous culture to communicate spiritual information. Oral transmission of history through music is still an important way of communicating history and spirituality in Hopevale today.

In the traditional Cape Bedford culture, song dance and painting had also played an important role in communicating spiritual information in for example initiation ceremonies. Through archival research I demonstrated how initiation ceremonies incorporated songs which in all likelihood transmitted important, possibly secret, information about Country to young initiates because the songs and dances referred to local flora and fauna in the area. The subject matter in turn would have instructed the young initiates about their social identities in relation to Country and kin, as demonstrated in chapter four.

From the historical records it is clear that the researcher Roth and missionary Poland believed the traditional ceremonies to be of little spiritual, social or didactic value. Their opinions are reflected in their scholarly texts, historical accounts of Cape Bedford life and official reports. The hymn texts created by missionaries also reflected contemporary attitudes towards Indigenous spirituality. In his ‘translations’ of German hymns Poland actively sought to both introduce the Gospel, whilst simultaneously discrediting and ridiculing the traditional ceremonial practices and their practitioners. This led to initiation ceremonies in the Cape Bedford area being discontinued. Christianity became the traditional spirituality. Through processes of internalisation and the perpetuation of negative historical constructs of traditional Indigenous spirituality Christian Cape Bedford elders, when proselytising amongst their own people, would not condone Indigenous interpretations of the Christian Gospel. Based on interviews with local Aboriginal Pastor, George Rosendale, I suggested that this is one of the reasons why Hopevalian church worship is still very conservative and European in nature.

The use of hymnody and the practice of harmonised congregational singing were also significant in that they led to an amalgamation of the concepts of

congregational singing in harmony and choral singing, or singing ‘as a choir’ and ‘choral singing’. The frequent congregational practice of harmonising hymns in church, led by church elders who were choir members, meant that the term ‘choir’ in the Hopevalian vocabulary is interchangeable with harmonised congregational singing when applied to historical accounts of church musical worship. It is therefore important, when addressing the Hopevalian concept of choral singing to also investigate the importance of congregational singing. Congregational hymn-singing was also an important way of maintaining a specifically Lutheran, Cape Bedford identity during the community’s exile in Woorabinda. Through the performance of Lutheran hymns in Guugu Yimithirr and the spiritual Indigenous leadership of Cape Bedford elders, the Cape Bedford people were able perform and remember Country, local history and their Lutheran tradition in song. Hymn singing was a way of maintaining the community’s wellbeing and helped to keep homesickness at bay.

Particularly significant in the performance of hymnody and congregational singing was the use of Guugu Yimithirr in the translations of the Lutheran hymns. It contrasted Cape Bedford identities with other Christian denominations at Woorabinda not just spiritually, but also linguistically. The use of the Cape Bedford language and the Lutheran origin of the hymns in particular, also strengthened the bonds with Country during the exile.

The historical importance of Lutheranism and the use of Guugu Yimithirr was evident in Pastor George Rosendale’s speech for the Carols by Candlelight ceremony. My research has shown that this importance has evolved and reflects the changes in linguistic use and performative preferences in Hopevale. There has been an increase in the use of Aboriginal English in Hopevale and Guugu Yimithirr is no longer taught in writing in the local primary school as it had been historically. Changes in the language

itself have also meant that community elders and youths are no longer able to fully understand the older forms of the Guugu Yimithirr as used in Pastor Rosendale's (1986) hymn translations. Changes in the levels of literacy have also led to children being unable to read the Guugu Yimithirr translations and only being able to learn hymns by ear. Due to a decrease in congregational singing, music-making in Hopevalian homes and the influence of modern media, Guugu Yimithirr is transmitted through hymn translations less often. This change in language use was also mirrored by choir performance preferences. Many choir members felt that singing in English or Guugu Yimithirr was equally meaningful to them. The singers did, however, agree that hymns sung in Guugu Yimithirr could be useful in transmitting the older forms of the language to young people and to educate them about the Christian faith and concepts. Singing in Guugu Yimithirr during concerts was also believed to promote audience wellbeing and enjoyment, especially at Douglas House and Lotus Glen.

In relation to wellbeing I posit that it is the use of hymnody sung in Guugu Yimithirr that allowed clients at Douglas House and inmates at Lotus Glen to hear and in some cases perform Country when they joined the choir in song. It allowed them to remember their geographical home, spirituality and kin and to recall the events that took place in Hopevale before they had to leave. In this way there is a musical resemblance between the community's exile in Woorabinda and the clients' and inmates' stay at Douglas House and Lotus Glen. Hymnody and Guugu Yimithirr are used to remember and perform Country and thus promote wellbeing through, to borrow Barz's term 're-memorying' identity.

The act of 're-memorying' also occurs in musical compositions which reference Hopevalian history, hymnody and spirituality. In the song discussed in chapter six written by Thea and Neville Bowen, the text references the spiritual importance of the Country through expressing the longing community members felt for their geographical home during their



exile in Woorabinda. In the song's lyrics and melody, a hymn is quoted directly and the song text refers to the act of Christian prayer and its importance in helping to maintain the morale of the Cape Bedford people. This particular song is significant in that when performed, it not only facilitates the re-memorying of history but also recalls the community elders and the geographical locations with which the Hopevale community has ties. The song also uses a melody and text to reference Christian spirituality. This confirms Christianity's legitimacy as a traditional and valid form of spirituality in Hopevale.

Chapter six demonstrated that there is a link between congregational hymn-singing, the performance of hymnody in choral ensembles and traditional concepts of Country. This link can have positive effects in performance in promoting wellbeing because it creates connections with Country and person. I also showed that choral singing and performative preferences are in the process of evolving by examining the change in linguistic preferences during hymn singing and church worship. My findings suggest that Hopevalian musical performance preferences are not necessarily conservative. The choir, as an ensemble, was not averse to learning or performing music in different styles and languages. They were happy to incorporate their newly learnt materials into church services and public performances. It is, however, the conservative nature of spiritual worship within the established church and the lack of Indigenous spiritual and choral leaders and / or song composers which is impacting on the nature of the music performed in church. I suggest that if the choir could generate and facilitate Indigenous leadership and could incorporate newly, locally composed songs into its repertoire which refer to social history, spirituality and Country, then the genre of choral singing could potentially have a significant impact on Hopevalian worship practices. It could make the music used during worship more meaningful to all Hopevalians, but especially younger people, by using the Country Gospel style, a faster performance tempo and electrical instruments. The songs performed would

allow the younger generation to learn about their community's history and its spirituality through song. They would be able to start identifying with an Indigenous identity which is no longer 'in between here and there'.

#### 8.8 Chapter seven: choral singing, Aboriginal representation and wellbeing

Chapter seven documented the events of the Hopevale Community Choir's four-day tour through Northern Queensland. Due to the diversity of performance contexts, a multitude of theoretical questions emerged which were complex and ethically challenging. Many of the theoretical and performative challenges pertained to the relationship between the research methodology, the representation of Aboriginality in the performing arts, the potential of the arts to educate and the role of Indigenous agency in the portrayal of Aboriginality on the concert stage. The tour also raised questions about the effects of choral performance on audiences and about the culturally specific ways in which audiences respond to and experience musical performance emotionally and physically.

For the first and the fourth day of the tour's description I focussed my discussion on the relationship between health, wellbeing and choral singing when the choir performed at Lotus Glen correctional facility and Douglas House rehabilitation centre. I concluded that choral performance was able to promote wellbeing because the inmates and clients at both locations felt appreciated and loved through the choir's performance. The ensemble's use of Guugu Yimithirr in song also helped the singers and audience to perform Country and at Lotus Glen the naming of the boys allowed for the re-assertion of their importance in the Hopevalian kinship structure despite their absences from the community. The choral singers were also proud at being able to fulfil their roles as spiritual elders by spreading the word of Christian love and forgiveness, and through leading by example.

At Lotus Glen, however, it was difficult for me to gauge the audience's engagement with the performance. This was firstly because audience interviewing and sampling by questionnaires was not possible and inappropriate at the time and secondly because audience response was culturally defined and different to Western audience responses. Because audience response is also significant in determining how performative events develop, this could be a direction for future research.

Audience response is partially determined by audience numbers. During our tour, audience numbers played a role in maintaining choir performance satisfaction and confidence. When attending performances in Hopevale and at Lotus Glen, I was struck by the passivity of the audience. In Hopevale during the Rodeo Talent Quest of September 2004, audience members sat far away from the main stage, often in the dark, quietly listening to the music with their families, or chatting away to each other. There was very little clapping to the beat or clapping as a way to demonstrate appreciation after songs had finished. Nor did audience members smile a lot, or sway to the music, although some danced. A Western performer unfamiliar with this type of audience feedback might have interpreted this to mean that the audience was not enjoying the event. When questioned after the Rodeo Talent Quest however, many Hopevalians said they enjoyed the performances.

From a theoretical perspective, it would have been valuable to ascertain what, in the minds of the singers, constitutes to appropriate, appreciative audience behaviour and whether this was context dependent. Equally it would have been useful to interview audience members to investigate how audience appreciation is related to and reflected through audience behaviour. Hagedorn (2001: 73) coins the term 'the rules of engagement' when describing audience etiquette. This term can usefully be employed in future research which focuses on how audiences interpret choral singing by Aboriginal ensembles. Such research could be used to ascertain whether choral singing could form the basis of deliberate

strategies to educate audiences about Aboriginal diversity and activities which aim to promote the wellbeing Indigenous inmates and clients in correctional facilities and rehabilitation centres.

It would be equally valuable to reassess the Western conceptual divide between ‘performers’ and ‘audience’ in an applied setting which aims to promote wellbeing in Indigenous contexts. At Douglas House a client, and therefore ‘member of the audience’, was spontaneously moved to join the choir in a Guugu Yimithirr hymn. This action made the boundaries between ‘performer’ and ‘audience’ more fluid. I suggest that in future performances ‘audience participation’ should be considered in an applied approach if working in a setting with predominantly Indigenous audience members.<sup>1</sup> I posit that audience participation could promote wellbeing. The incorporation of ‘audience members’ in choral performances, where appropriate, could facilitate opportunities for those living away from the community to engage actively in performing and re-establishing links with Country through song whilst experiencing fellowship and wellbeing.

This approach could lead to further theoretical developments in the relationship between emotions and music and the fact that these are culturally specific. Becker (2001: 137) writes:

...modes of *listening* vary according to the kind of music being played, the expectations of the musical situation, and the kind of subjectivity that a particular culture has fostered in relation to musical events. Even more than modes of looking, modes of listening implicate not only structures of knowledge and beliefs, but intimate notions of personhood and identity. Listening addresses interiors; listening provides access to what is hidden from site....Emotional responses to music do not occur spontaneously, nor ‘naturally’, but rather, take place within complex systems of thought and behaviour concerning what music means, what it is for, how it is to be perceived, and what might be appropriate kinds of expressive responses. [Emphasis original]

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<sup>1</sup> Provided Indigenous customs and kinship affiliations allow for this. In Hopevale social interaction between people was less restricted by kinship affiliations than in the more traditional communities elsewhere in Australia.

Becker is referring to the emotional responses to music within a single given 'culture'. My applied research suggests that when one 'cultural group' is performing for another, the interaction between audience and performers becomes another mitigating factor which may influence the emotive responses to musical performativity. This is another reason why audience engagement with a performance would be a valuable area for future investigation, particularly in applied contexts related to wellbeing where performances may elicit heightened emotional responses.

The choir's four-day tour also raised questions about Indigenous representation through an applied methodology. For reasons discussed in chapter one, it was not always possible to fully engage the choir in my decision-making processes due to the different knowledge-bases from which we were operating. This created an ethical dilemma for myself as an applied researcher. During the tour this challenge was made easier to overcome due to the absence of a need to generate income. The choir tour had not been conceived of as a profit-generating undertaking and the choir never performed in return for remuneration. The whole tour was made possible and sponsored by the Queensland Arts Council, the Hopevale Community Council and through the generosity of café owners, the interest of radio presenters and the help and the support of many other Australians. As a result the choir was able to maintain its artistic and financial autonomy when presenting itself on stage.

During the Queensland Music Festival (QMF), however, the choir was asked to perform for a fee. The QMF organisers were also keen to fulfil audience expectations and to generate income. As a result they were very specific in their demands that the choir should sing in Guugu Yimithirr because the QMF organisers believed this to be more 'traditional'. They were not keen to learn that the choir's repertoire by that time also consisted of songs sung in English and an African language. The singers enjoyed

performing these and were keen to sing them as part of their QMF performance, however.

At the time of research I decided that ultimately the decision about the language to be used in performance during the QMF should lie with the performers themselves. However, the situation did raise questions as to what level of awareness-raising and advocacy I, as a facilitator, should engage in. The Hopevalian choir members were largely unaware of the essentialisation of Aboriginal culture in the tourist industry. Unlike many urban Aboriginal ensembles, the politics of representation did not dictate which language should be used in performance for Hopevalian singers. The decision on whether to sing in Guugu Yimithirr, English or even an African language was based on the choir's perception of how best to maximise audience and performance pleasure, because this generated pride and wellbeing.

Eventually the choir was only allocated 5 minutes performance time at the QMF after having been promised multiple performance opportunities, some with the other visiting ensembles. The preceding publicity and the subsequent DVD documenting the QMF, focussed primarily on performances by the 'more traditional' Huli Wigmen from Papua New Guinea and the Narasirato Are Are panpipe ensemble who used body paint and traditional costume, song and dance as part of their performances. On the DVD the names of choir members are spelt incorrectly in the credits and the choir barely mentioned, despite the fact they had been asked to represent the traditional Indigenous owners and culture of the area. From my perspective the Queensland Music Festival 2005, because of its need conform to audience expectations, did not offer significant performative opportunities to the choir and side lined contemporary Indigenous culture in favour of other more 'traditional' and spectacular performances. By contrast, I heard

the choir members themselves were reasonably pleased with their own performance and reception on the day.

I posit that Aboriginal social disadvantage and Indigenous history can be successfully communicated through performance. This in turn can help educate audiences about Aboriginal history and diversity. Indigenous performances need not focus on the remote past or incorporate didgeridoos in order to be educational and pleasurable to tourists and the wider Australian public. Performativity should furnish Indigenous performers with opportunities to present themselves through media with which they feel most comfortable. In the Hopevale choir's case this would be through story telling and song. The Hopevalian sense of humour, ways of narrating stories and their choral performance aesthetics and vocal timbre can help inform tourists and non-Indigenous Australians about the diversity of Aboriginal history and Aboriginality. More generally, Hopevalian history does include the Dreaming, concepts of Country and in some cases the didgeridoo, but it also incorporates colonialism, hardship and diverse forms of spirituality.

This thesis has theorised applied research and has promoted a reciprocal, ethical research methodology. As I have demonstrated, this approach, however successful at a micro-level it may have been, was by no means faultless and numerous ethical challenges arose. The outcomes of this thesis are also recorded in a written format by yet another *wangarr* 'expert' Nevertheless, my research indicated that despite my ethnicity, age and gender the choir valued my contribution to their musical wellbeing. Daisy recently said and Uncle Roy McIvor wrote: "They are still talking about you. We want you to come back." Given that the choir and my role as facilitator seem to have been incorporated positively in Hopevalian oral history, I am hopeful that my written text will be perceived by Hopevalians as my individual way of aiming to positively

contribute to Hopevale's historiography in a way which is culturally appropriate to me as a *wangarr* researcher. I also hope that my research will be viewed as a form of advocacy for Indigenous rights and a further decolonisation of the ethnomusicological discipline and Western pedagogical approaches, especially in the Australian Aboriginal context. I would like to "say", in an individualistic Hopevalian fashion, that this is my point of view which, although different from that of Hopevalians, may contribute in some way towards developing a mutual understanding of the role which performance can play in facilitating the road to reconciliation. Because this is my individual written story of performative learning through mutually shared experiences of choral singing in the Hopevale community I conclude with: "That's the only thing *I am writing*".