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**SHIFTING SANDS.
THE NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF EARLY
CAREER ABORIGINAL TEACHERS'
PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES AT THE CULTURAL
INTERFACE.**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education and Social Work
University of Sydney

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores issues facing early career Aboriginal teachers as they construct and enact their personal, professional and situated identities when learning to teach. Narrative constructions of identity simultaneously illuminate and challenge dominant discourses about Aboriginal teachers as they take up, resist and/or reject these discourses. The role of Aboriginality is mediated by factors such as lived experience, positioning of and by the teachers and specific school contexts. These issues are explored through the theoretical perspectives of Foucault, Bourdieu, Nakata and Clandinin, and the understandings of various teacher identity researchers. Like shifting sands, identity construction and teaching work can be unstable terrain, requiring complex contextualised understandings, skills and dispositions.

The participants in this research study are pre-service Aboriginal teachers drawn from an away-from-base secondary Aboriginal Studies teacher education program at the University of Sydney. Participants are mature-aged and have varying levels of experience with formal education and living in Aboriginal communities.

Using narrative methodology, eleven in-depth conversational interviews followed by two focus groups revealed emerging storylines and themes and four participants were identified for further interviews to collaboratively construct the final narratives. This approach privileged participant voices and created spaces to articulate the tacit knowledge and understandings that contribute to the development of a professional identity drawn from personal, professional, cultural and contextual sources.

Three themes emerged: discourses of Aboriginality, narratives of belonging, and conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity. The implications of these themes bring focus to pre-service and in-service teacher professional learning based on valuing Aboriginal community engagement, knowledges and values. When nurtured early in a teacher's career, relationships (and relationship building) serve a socio-cultural and political role that significantly contributes to the development of agentic and resilient identities at the cultural interface.

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But the most important acknowledgment is for my family who are the reason I kept the faith in completing this journey. My long suffering husband who drove the children to their many sporting venues while I spent weekends at work, my youngest who wondered why it took longer than a weekend to complete my 'PDHPE', my son who constantly reminded me that it was his turn to get an education and my eldest who pushed me to finish so I could then help her with her Higher School Certificate.

To mum and dad who never had the opportunity for an education in 1950s Australia especially my mum who wanted to be a teacher, I dedicate this work to you both.

List of Tables & Figures

Table 1

Understanding the Matrix of Belonging and Identity. page 205

Figure 1

Framework for locating Aboriginal teacher professional identity. Page 17

Figure 2

Ongoing collaboration with participants. Page 105

Figure 3

Yunkaporta's boomerang matrix of cultural interface knowledge page 236

Figure 4

Conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity page 246

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| AUTHOR'S DECLARATION | i |
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| Acknowledgements..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | v |
| List of Definitions and Abbreviations | xi |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Overview..... | 1 |
| Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and/or Indigenous?..... | 2 |
| The Australian Education Context | 5 |
| Significance of this Study | 7 |
| Research Questions..... | 9 |
| Summary of Chapters | 9 |
| CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 14 |
| Introduction | 14 |
| Locating Aboriginal Teacher Professional Identity. | 15 |
| Aboriginality | 18 |
| Personal Identity..... | 21 |
| Biography | 24 |
| Lived Experience | 25 |
| Relationships..... | 26 |
| Professional Identity | 27 |
| Emotion | 30 |
| Agency..... | 34 |
| Personal practical knowledge..... | 36 |
| Situated Identity..... | 37 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| School Context..... | 39 |
| Community Context..... | 41 |
| External political environment | 44 |
| Conclusion..... | 46 |
| CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 48 |
| Introduction | 48 |
| The Cultural Interface | 51 |
| A Post-Structural Approach | 54 |
| Foucault | 55 |
| Discourse | 56 |
| Power Relations..... | 58 |
| Subjectivity..... | 60 |
| Bourdieu | 62 |
| Habitus | 63 |
| Field..... | 65 |
| Capital..... | 66 |
| Economic capital..... | 67 |
| Cultural capital | 67 |
| Social Capital | 69 |
| Emotional Capital..... | 70 |
| Narrative Inquiry..... | 73 |
| CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY | 77 |
| Introduction | 77 |
| Methodological Considerations | 78 |
| Locating Self..... | 79 |
| Ethical Inquiry..... | 80 |
| Context | 81 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Positioning..... | 82 |
| Voice..... | 83 |
| Ethical Considerations | 84 |
| Indigenous Research | 86 |
| Methodological Decisions | 89 |
| The Informed Researcher | 93 |
| Researcher Reflexivity..... | 94 |
| The Study | 96 |
| Context..... | 96 |
| Data Collection..... | 98 |
| Participants..... | 99 |
| Interviewing in Narrative inquiry..... | 101 |
| Focused Conversational Interviews..... | 102 |
| Focus Groups..... | 104 |
| The Research Journal..... | 104 |
| Data Analysis | 105 |
| Representation | 109 |
| Trustworthiness..... | 110 |
| Concluding Remarks..... | 111 |
| CHAPTER 5 ANNE..... | 113 |
| Background | 113 |
| University and Professional Experience..... | 115 |
| First Teaching Appointment..... | 117 |
| Postscript | 120 |
| In Conversation with Anne’s Narrative | 121 |
| CHAPTER 6 JANAYA | 130 |
| Background | 130 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| University and Professional Experience..... | 132 |
| First Teaching Appointment..... | 133 |
| In Conversation With Janaya’s Narrative | 138 |
| CHAPTER 7 JOHN | 146 |
| Background | 146 |
| Professional Experience | 148 |
| Post Graduation..... | 153 |
| In Conversation with John’s Narrative. | 154 |
| CHAPTER 8 MELISSA..... | 164 |
| Background | 164 |
| University and Professional Experience..... | 165 |
| Post graduation | 166 |
| In Conversation with Melissa’s Narrative..... | 172 |
| CHAPTER 9 DISCOURSES OF ABORIGINALITY | 181 |
| Introduction | 181 |
| Discourses | 182 |
| The over-determination of Aboriginality..... | 184 |
| ‘Think-look-do’ Aboriginality..... | 185 |
| The ‘good’ Aboriginal teacher | 186 |
| Aboriginal teacher as ‘Other’ | 188 |
| A ‘natural’ connection to community..... | 190 |
| Fixing the Aboriginal ‘problem’ | 193 |
| Easy work, not ‘real’ work | 194 |
| Racism – endured and disrupted..... | 195 |
| Taking sides | 196 |
| Deficit and weak..... | 197 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Conclusion..... | 198 |
| CHAPTER 10 NARRATIVES OF BELONGING | 200 |
| Introduction | 200 |
| Belonging..... | 200 |
| Identity..... | 202 |
| Capital..... | 205 |
| Positioning..... | 208 |
| Resilience | 211 |
| Not-Belonging | 215 |
| Identity..... | 215 |
| Positioning..... | 217 |
| Whiteness..... | 219 |
| Speaking Back..... | 222 |
| History..... | 222 |
| Agency, resistance and power..... | 223 |
| Conclusion..... | 225 |
| CHAPTER 11 | 226 |
| CONCEPTUALISING A PEDAGOGICAL CULTURAL IDENTITY | 226 |
| Introduction | 226 |
| Habitus, cultural and social capital..... | 227 |
| Power Relations | 229 |
| The field of Aboriginal Studies..... | 231 |
| Pedagogical relationships | 237 |
| Teacher identity | 239 |
| Context | 243 |
| Conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity | 245 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Conclusion | 247 |
| CHAPTER 12 IMPLICATIONS | 248 |
| Introduction | 248 |
| Critical Understandings | 249 |
| Relationships and “Emotional Rules” | 249 |
| Teacher identity | 251 |
| Power Relations | 253 |
| Professional Learning | 254 |
| Valuing Aboriginal community engagement, knowledges and cultures. | 254 |
| Teacher education | 256 |
| School Contexts | 260 |
| Teacher accreditation and competency discourses..... | 263 |
| Conclusion | 266 |
| CHAPTER 13 CONCLUSION | 267 |
| Limitations of the research | 267 |
| Future Directions..... | 268 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 270 |
| APPENDIX | 298 |

List of Definitions and Abbreviations

| | |
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| ABORIGINAL PERSON | This description is the three part government definition for the purposes of service delivery and census - An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he (she) lives. |
| ABORIGINALITY PAPERS | Confirmation of Aboriginality papers can be acquired through certain local Aboriginal community agencies and require proof under all three categories of the government's definition of Aboriginal. |
| ACER | Australian Council for Education Research. |
| ATAR | ATAR is a mediated mark students receive at their end of their school life through school-based assessment and external examinations. It is used to allocate places in universities. |
| AEO | Aboriginal Education Officer – paraprofessional who supports Aboriginal students in public schools |
| AER | Commonly used acronym for the New South Wales Department of Education and Training & New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (2004) <i>The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education Yanigurra Muya: Ganggurrinyma Yaami guurulaw Yirringin.gurray - Freeing the Spirit: Dreaming an Equal Future</i> Darlinghurst, Sydney, NSW. |
| ARCO | Anti-racism contact officer – every public school in NSW has a teacher with this responsibility. |
| BLUE-COLLAR WORKER | Manual labourer from the working class. |
| COCONUT | Derogatory word for Aboriginal people (as well as Black people, Pacific Islanders) used mainly by Aboriginal people meaning black on the outside, white on the inside. |
| COOPERATING TEACHER | This is the teacher (sometimes more than one) who supervises and supports the pre-service teacher and who will write the final report. |
| DEEWR | Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, established in 2008. |

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|----------------------------|---|
| DEST | Commonwealth Department of Education and Training a federal portfolio until 2008 replaced by DEEWR. |
| DIDGERIDOO | Common term for the musical instrument played by Aboriginal men – also known known as Yidaki – originating in North East Arnhem land Northern Territory Australia. |
| HECS | Higher Education Contributory Scheme – cost of studying at university |
| KOORI | Term for Aboriginal person on the south eastern coast of Australia. |
| KOORI CENTRE | Aboriginal academic and support unit at the University of Sydney up until 2012 |
| LALC | Local Aboriginal Land Council. Controlled by Aboriginal people and in NSW, administer funds and services under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. |
| MCEETYA | Commonwealth Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. |
| NSW AECG | New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group - peak community based advisory group to the NSW Department of Education and Communities on Aboriginal education. |
| NSW BOS | New South Wales Board of Studies, now (2014) BOSTES Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards. |
| NSW DEC | New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (current 2014) |
| NSW DET | New South Wales Department of Education and Training (prior to 2011). |
| NSW IT | New South Wales Institute of Teachers. Teacher accreditation authority in NSW up until 2012. Currently part of BOSTES. |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – global organisation, which among other activities, administers international education assessments for the purpose of comparing students from participating countries |
| PRE-SERVICE TEACHER | Students in undergraduate education programs who are engaging in Professional Experience at a school. |
| PROFESSIONAL | The teaching experience of each pre-service teacher in school. |

EXPERIENCE

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| PROFESSIONAL LEARNING | Ongoing training undertaken by teachers in schools to continue developing their teaching (and other related) skills. |
| QTF | Quality Teaching Framework – NSW DET. |
| SIPA | Systematic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement in NSW public schools. Major research study assessing the implementation of the QTF. |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education in NSW – tertiary level between secondary school and university focusing on trade & employment skills. |
| TERTIARY MENTOR | The university lecturer [or tutor or external casual] who visits the pre-service teacher to observe their lessons. He / She will also writes a Professional Experience Report. |
| TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER | Indigenous Australian from the Torres Strait islands north of Queensland |

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Overview

The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that the teacher and students and subjects can be woven into the fabric of the community that learning and living, require (Palmer, 1998, p. 11)

Palmer's quote captures the essence of many Aboriginal people's decision to become a teacher; Aboriginal teachers articulate a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal students even though they enter a system that has historically excluded, oppressed and failed their people. The participants in this study are passionate, caring and motivated in their endeavour to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Aboriginal students (and often their struggling classmates) and to teach Aboriginal perspectives to all students so as to rebalance the curriculum. In doing so, they aim to build deep and authentic relationships with each student by embodying their identity and lived experiences in a tacit pedagogical style which is often challenged by the structures and complexities present within their school context.

Significantly, when many Aboriginal teachers walk through the door of their newly appointed school they are assigned an historically, culturally and politically constructed identity that, at least in part, will not reflect their history, experience or personal situation. Informed by racialised discourses, this identity focuses on "being Aboriginal" before and above "being a teacher", identified by Reid and Santoro (2006, p. 146) as the "over-determination of Aboriginality". It can presuppose their teaching practice, responses to experiences of learning to teach, and the discursive expression of these responses which allows very little room for the construction of a professional

identity. This constrains the Aboriginal teachers' experiences within the parameters of an assigned position that they either adopt, resist and/or reinterpret to enact agency in their daily teaching practice.

The metaphor of shifting sands articulates the unpredictability of the teaching and learning journeys of the Aboriginal teachers in this study. Within this space, it is not the endpoint that is the focus but rather the journey itself that is the most revealing. Like walking on sand, navigating the emotional terrain of teaching can be a difficult and unstable endeavor as the constant interplay of power and emotion means that conditions can change from one moment to the next, producing feelings of tension, joy, reward or conflict that can change or transform instantly.

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and/or Indigenous?

It is important to acknowledge the significance of terminology when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many of the descriptions applied to Indigenous Australians derive from historical and socio-political contexts that are grounded in racial typology, devastating government policies and casual racism. This not only shapes which words are used but how (NSW AECG, 2011, p. 4) and so, for the purposes of this study, the term Aboriginal will include Torres Strait Islander people and is used for the following reasons:

1. Participants in the study identify themselves as Aboriginal people rather than Indigenous Australians.
2. It reflects NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and NSW government agency policies as follows:

It is the policy of the NSW AECG Inc and the custom of government agencies in New South Wales to use the term "Aboriginal" rather than "Indigenous"

when referring to programs, data collections and activities related to all Indigenous people resident in this state. Commonwealth agencies, however, use the term “Indigenous” in preference to “Aboriginal”. In this report, except where the context or a formal name specifically requires the use of the term “Indigenous”, “Aboriginal” is used to mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (NSW DET & AECG, 2004, p. 11).

This is also the case for Aboriginal Studies syllabi produced by the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (NSW BOS, 2003, 2010).

3. This project is located in the NSW education system, and the university in which the participants study is situated on Gadigal (Aboriginal) land.
4. The word Aboriginal is significant to Aboriginal Australians as it embodies a long and proud socio-cultural political history specific to Aboriginal struggles for land rights, social justice and self-determination and is represented by a nationally and internationally recognised, officially proclaimed flag. The word Indigenous has more generic uses worldwide and its usage became more pervasive under the Howard government (1996-2007), a government generally considered as antipathetic to Aboriginal people and their concerns.
5. Current (2014) key state and national bodies are reinstating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the most accurate term.

When the term Indigenous is used in this study, it is in the context of cited research studies or examples that specifically require the use of this term.

It is crucial to consider the language, discourses and modes through which issues and ideas about Aboriginal people and culture are expressed, as dilemmas can arise when uncomfortable generalisations, assumptions and stereotypes need to be used to express a particular idea or compare conceptual understandings. For instance, applying identity markers about the ‘Other’, in this case Aboriginal people, to highlight or emphasise a particular point can inadvertently reinforce the assumptions and

stereotypes labelling those marked (Ehlers, 2008, p. 333). Regardless of intent, explaining how the person reinforces or deviates from the identity marker invariably positions them in certain ways. Managing the concept of difference in ways that do not imply a deficit or binary position but is nonetheless important for emphasising a point provides another relevant example. Anthias (2002) cautions that “... differences have been hailed to justify inequalities but at the same time uses the same ground to assert equality” (p. 283) and so care must be taken not to suggest that an improvement or a realignment with a perceived superior majority position is the aim. This assumes that the ‘Other’ is a passive recipient of inequality, therefore undermining individual and collective agency.

Further, both as a concept and position, Aboriginality is important as a collective term for cultural identity, political endurance and cohesion when lobbying governments such as the push for constitutional recognition (National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, n.d.). Yet this label can also apply generalised assumptions to an individual based on a collective identity that potentially restricts actions, beliefs and limits individual cultural and social capital (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 148). Aboriginal teachers can also be trapped by these dilemmas as Reid and Santoro (2006) explain:

[T]he tension and contradiction here, of course is that while Indigenous teachers are often positioned as serving the needs of the school, and asked to ameliorate difficult relationships between Indigenous homes and schools, this work is often understood as a necessary peripheral to the real business of teaching children official curriculum. (p. 152).

As a non-Aboriginal researcher in the field of Aboriginal education, I acknowledge the complexities and contradictions inherent in these dynamics, particularly the way in which they operate in discourses, impact on subjectivities and contribute to power relations.

The Australian Education Context

Australian education systems and their schools are embedded within historical, social and cultural contexts initially imported from the British system and localised to create an Australian version (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 148). This system and its institutions represent a monolingual, hegemonic Western-based system (Thomas & Kearney, 2008, p. 7) that shapes perceptions and beliefs, establishes parameters and consequently reproduces norms and standards that are evident in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. This is compounded by the fact that, "... the teaching population is overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian .. (and) .. the majority of teacher education students at Australian universities have attended white, middle-class Anglo-Australian schools ..." (Santoro & Allard, 2005, p. 864).

The legacy of colonisation means that patterns of inclusion and exclusion are predetermined by what is consciously and unconsciously taught in schools (Seddon, 2001, p. 304). This includes not only historical (and continuing) patterns of excluding Aboriginal students but also Indigenous knowledges and worldviews from mainstream, collectively sanctioned curriculums (Hart, Whatman, McLaughlin & Sharmer-Brymer, 2012, p. 707). It is generally agreed that curriculum is a cultural construction involving debates about core beliefs and values and so its role in establishing and maintaining individual and organisational centres of power (Seddon, 2001, p. 310) is of particular concern to Aboriginal people. Hegemonic knowledge is a consequence of socially produced selective traditions and through its educative effects, it contributes to the wider economic and cultural formation of society and culture, its patterns of power and inequality, and its dynamics of conversation and renewal (Seddon, 2001, p. 310).

Critical understanding of the patterns and effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people and on the relationship of Aboriginal people with non-Aboriginal people

(Cavanagh, 2011, p. 110) is necessary to appreciate the complexities and tensions that arise from the field of Aboriginal education and Aboriginal Studies. Often, paternalistic, assimilationist and compensatory approaches to teaching in this area reinforce Eurocentric perceptions of Aboriginal peoples and cultures as deficit and/or exotic (Hart et al., 2012, p. 709). Further, Aboriginal Studies is perceived as a vehicle for teaching about Aboriginal people and culture rather than exploring the more challenging issues of colonisation, racism and social justice engaging with Indigenist standpoints and the project of decolonisation (Phillips, 2011, pp. 13-14).

Reid et al. (2004, p. 306) outline the notion of the ‘impenetrable whiteness of schooling’, identifying the need for a detailed analysis of the complexity of racial hierarchies in the school, playground and classroom and how these sustain and reaffirm the privilege of ‘Whiteness’. Those not definitively included in this group are positioned as ‘Other’ and Reid and Santoro (2006, p. 144) argue that this positions Whiteness as the benchmark upon which all other positions marked as ‘Other’ or less powerful are measured. They further argue that a racial imaginary that depicts the “naturalness of whiteness” informs everyday practices and relations in Australian schools.

The ‘othering’ nature of power relations suggests that the “The Indigenous Teacher” is distinctively positioned as less able within the discursive environment of Australian schooling. This position “...remains marked, and signified as inferior to that of ‘the teacher’, who is understood as ‘normally’ a non-Indigenous person trained in a ‘mainstream’ institution” (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 153). As such, Reid and Santoro (2006) suggest that Indigenous teachers must strive to find their own ways to effectively resist discursive positioning (p. 153) and achieve a clear sense of self as ‘teacher’ that goes beyond this predetermined identity.

Nakata (2002) proposes that the discourse of difference sustains the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples and that through the adoption of an “Indigenous standpoint” (Foley, 2002; Phillips 2011; Yunkaporta, 2009) identities are reaffirmed and the focus shifted to understanding how mainstream knowledges function to position Indigenous peoples in particular ways and in particular contexts (Nakata, 2002, p. 26). He further argues that the Indigenous context is distinctly complex in relation to the dominant mainstream, maintaining that the two domains are not clearly divided, do not have definite boundaries, and consequently, Indigenous people operate at a cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, p. 25) where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges, values and systems converge. Further, Yunkaporta (2009) proposes that the differences between western and Indigenous knowledges occur at a superficial level and that they can be reconciled by exploring synergies between the two knowledge systems at a deeper level.

Significance of this Study

The experiences of early career teachers and the formation of a professional identity have been increasingly well documented in the literature on teaching and teacher education in recent years (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Pearce & Morrison, 2011; Reid & Santoro, 2006; Zembylas, 2005). However there is a dearth of research on the experiences of teachers drawn from ethnic, minority, ‘Other’, or ‘culturally different’ groups, including Aboriginal teachers. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly underrepresented in Australia’s schooling system and Reid et al. (2004, p. 307) argue that there is an established set of factors “produced within the larger discursive practice of education that continue to work to

discourage and disadvantage Indigenous teacher candidates from remaining in the profession” (p. 43).

This study is significant in that it examines the notion of teacher identity through the specific and under-researched area of pre-service and early career Aboriginal teacher’s lived experiences. It uses narrative to explore personal histories, identities and teaching experiences to extrapolate individual accounts and problematise the over-determination of Aboriginality (Reid & Santoro, 2006). It analyses the complex issues that participants encounter as they negotiate the cultural interface and variously take up, resist and/or redefine their positioning in the school context. For Aboriginal teachers working in the field of Aboriginal Studies, socio-cultural background, biography and lived experiences interact with personal habitus and cultural and social capital in ways that might not be evident or significant to non-Aboriginal teachers.

To understand the depth and complexity of these issues, Clandinin’s (1999) approach to narrative inquiry is used to examine the data through the theoretical perspectives of Foucault (1982), Bourdieu (1986), and Nakata (2002). Through the process of constructing and reconstructing teachers’ lived experiences as they negotiate family, school and community landscapes, the issues surrounding the development and enactment of a professional identity are illuminated and challenged. While acknowledging the role of historically and socially mediated discursive practices in shaping both personal and professional identity, this study brings focus to the way in which early career Aboriginal teachers are able and/or willing to draw on their Aboriginality and other aspects of their personal identity, habitus and capital to exercise agency in their life and work.

Research Questions

The research is framed by the following key question: What are the key issues for early career Aboriginal teachers in the construction of their professional identity as a teacher? The issues emerging from this are explored, discussed and analysed through the following secondary questions:

- How are these issues impacted on by personal and situated identities?
- What role does Aboriginality play (if any) in the construction of a professional teaching identity?
- How does the construction of early career Aboriginal teacher's narratives illuminate and/or disrupt binary positioning and dominant discourses of Aboriginal teachers?
- How significant is the role of context in the construction of a professional identity?
- What are the implications for professional learning in teacher education and school contexts?

Summary of Chapters

The following chapters address the research by positioning participant narratives at its centre. The literature review and theoretical framework illuminate emerging issues and themes and the findings are organised into three discrete yet interrelated themes: discourses of Aboriginality, narratives of belonging and conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity. The narratives have been presented both in full and 'in conversation with' the literature and theory. Participant's quotations are italicised to give emphasis to

their voice and to give the reader a sense that they are listening to each of the participants in a close personal environment.

Following the introduction Chapter Two explores current research on teacher identity and the development of professional identities for all early career teachers as well as those from diverse backgrounds such as Aboriginal teachers. From this, I develop a model of personal, professional and situated identities that intersect at Aboriginality to visually represent the interrelatedness of the various aspects of identity that contribute to the whole teaching self. By foregrounding Aboriginal teachers' knowledge and teaching experiences in the literature this review aims to recognise the narratives as individual renderings rather than cultural collectives.

Using Foucault's (1982) discourse, power and subjectivity, Bourdieu's (1986) habitus, field and capital, and Nakata's (2002) cultural interface framework provides opportunities to interrogate the data through a post structural lens in Chapter Three. Largely informed by Jean Clandinin's (1999) work, narrative inquiry uses story as rich data to empower participants and foreground the significance of their lived experience and personal biography. The theoretical positions adopted here are used to analyse individual narratives as well as identify, discuss and analyse common themes that emerge across the narratives.

Chapter Four details how the chosen methodological approach came out of a discussion about the methodologies 'typically' used for research on Aboriginal, Indigenous and minority groups. I decided to work with narrative methodology in order to privilege individual voices as I feel that it is important not to pre-empt or presuppose participant positioning solely within the parameters of an Indigenous framework. As a non-Aboriginal researcher in the field of Aboriginal education, ethical inquiry is critical on a number of levels and so I encouraged participants to talk about the issues and ideas

they were passionate about in education and in general, allowing the data to move in directions they were most comfortable with. Moreover, narrative methodology provides the opportunity to present the data in a readable way that is accessible to a diverse audience, some of whom may well identify with the narratives.

Chapters Five through to Eight comprise Anne, Janaya, John and Melissa's narratives. The first part of each chapter contains a significant portion of the directly transcribed interviews, albeit with explanatory notes to aid the flow and provide enough information to contextualise the participant's stories and perspectives. The second part of the chapter is "in conversation with ..." the narrative and uses theoretical tools drawn from chapters two and three to unpack the narratives in order to understand the participant and their experiences at a deeper level. While not all of the data was referred to in the subsequent analysis and themes, it was retained for its overall value in providing a greater depth and holistic understanding of the participant and the factors surrounding their unique situation.

The theme 'Discourses of Aboriginality' in Chapter Nine interrogates ways in which Aboriginal teachers are talked to and about - which is largely based on their ethnic and cultural background. This often results in the over-determination of Aboriginality and conceptions such as the 'think-look-do' Aboriginality with a 'natural' connection to culture and community, the 'good' Aboriginal teacher who fixes Aboriginal 'problems' for the school, the Aboriginal teacher as 'Other' who has a proclivity for taking sides, and 'Aboriginal work' as easy, not real and peripheral to core business. The ways in which Aboriginal teachers talk about and position themselves in their school contexts are also explored and interrogated. The narratives illustrate how the participants interpret, accept and/or resist these discourses in their efforts to be agentic and self-determine their professional identities.

The theme 'Narratives of belonging' in Chapter Ten identifies the significance of belonging and the key factors important to belonging (and not belonging). Further, through a relationships lens it explores how the concepts of identity, capital and positioning all significantly influence resilience. Importantly, opportunities to speak back to one's positioning occurs through agency, resistance and power, which largely depends on each participant's localised school context and their responses to this context.

Chapter Eleven, 'Conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity' explores and interrogates ways in which the participants embody their cultural background, personal biographies, lived experiences and identity in their pedagogical practice. Participants do this chiefly to build relationships with Aboriginal students and reflects their own understanding of the teaching/learning process. Crucial to a post structural interpretation of the data is the acknowledgement that the notion of a pedagogical cultural identity may inadvertently reinforce cultural determinism, binaries, assumptions and stereotypes as well as facilitate the enactment of power relations. Accordingly, this chapter considers whether a pedagogical cultural identity is real or imagined and notes the limitations as well as the potential for a collective and inclusive shift in power away from the state and into the hands of teachers, students and communities.

Chapter Twelve draws implications and themes from the narratives which are organised into the broad area of professional learning, considered here as a continuum from pre-service teacher education to professional learning in school contexts. Valuing Aboriginal community engagement, knowledges and cultures is an essential element of teacher professional learning that benefits schools, communities, students and the teachers themselves. The importance of deconstructing 'emotional rules' and building

relationships in school contexts, as well as understanding teacher subjectivity, identity and the complexity of power relations at the cultural interface are all revealed as crucial issues that require a stronger focus in teacher education courses and teacher professional learning activities. These aspects are not adequately reflected in current teacher competency accreditation models which highlights a significant gap between what teaching is really about and what those external to the system think it is about. The pre-service and early career Aboriginal teachers in this study often challenge and disrupt normalised versions of the knowledge, understandings and skills that constitute quality teaching and learning. As such, accreditation systems have difficulty applying value to the teacher who occupies a subject position outside of the dominant discourses of schooling - a position that is not limited to Aboriginal teachers.

The final chapter concludes by considering the limitations of this research study as well as future areas of study that could be further explored and challenged so that the conversation about this all important area is continued.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Conceptualising identity can be a challenging and elusive endeavour, not least because it is examined through multiple lenses, across several disciplines, and with diverse focus and perspective (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.176; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004, p.107-108; Hall, 2000, p.15). As identity has been traditionally conceptualised as fixed and constant, deconstructing the concept fundamentally challenges the notion of a primary, unified identity (Hall, 2000, p. 15). It is precisely because of the complex and subjective nature of identity that arriving at a singular definition is fraught with constraints and contradictions. Accordingly, interpretations of identity across the literature are many and varied and range from relatively simple to increasingly more complex.

A complex, fluid and evolving phenomenon, identity conflates the past, present and future and is constantly shaped and reshaped by social, cultural, economic, political and historical forces (Zembylas, 2003, p. 215). Identities are constructed within these discursive contexts and so they are produced and reproduced within specific historical and institutional sites and particular modes of power designed to signify difference and exclusion (Hall, 2000, p. 17). Similarly, Foucault (1982, p. 778) states that where “... the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, they are equally placed in very complex power relations”. Zembylas (2005, p. 938) draws on the work of Foucault to interrogate the discursive spaces from which questions of identity are proposed so as to trace how it is socially and historically shaped through discourses and practices.

The notion of ‘Othering’ as a counterpoint to dominant discourses is inferred in a number of identity theories including those of Castells (1997), Pecheux (1982), Hall (2000), Derrida, (1981) and Laclau (1990). Mockler and Sachs (2006) draw on these theories to articulate the politics of identity as “... the struggles experienced on a broad social level by women, black people, homosexuals and many other minority groups ... [that] ... seek to define them as what they are not (‘not white’, ‘not male’, ‘not straight’) (p. 3).

In this chapter, I develop a conceptual framework for theorising and understanding teacher identity in a general sense and as it can be applied to Aboriginal pre-service and early career teachers. The intersection of personal identity (including biography, lived experience and relationships), professional identity (including emotion, agency and personal practical knowledge), and situated identity (including the school, community and external political context) with Aboriginality provides a framework to analyse how these factors interrelate at the cultural interface where Western and non-Western knowledges meet. The influence of colonial discourses of both Aboriginal people and Aboriginal education further influences this analysis.

Locating Aboriginal Teacher Professional Identity.

A conceptual framework based on the work of Day, Sammons, Kington and Gu (2007) and Day and Kington (2008) and further refined by Mockler (2011) will frame the articulation of various internal and external factors that impact on early career Aboriginal teachers’ professional identity. Three intersecting dimensions of identity: personal, professional and situated, will be explored through fluid, dynamic and complex contexts to provide space for the disruption of hegemonic assumptions about individual and group identities (Britzman, 2003, p. 34). Mockler (2011) notes that, “...

[T]hese three domains work in a reflexive, constantly shifting dynamic, and the impact of each change in significance and strength, dependent upon circumstantial and contextual catalysts” (p. 520).

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the intersecting dimensions of early career Aboriginal teachers’ identities in practice showing Aboriginal identity at the confluence of the personal, professional and situated dimensions of identity. Its presence, whether self asserted or positioned by others, exists if for no other reason than the ongoing and ever present politicisation (Dodson, 2003; Mockler, 2011; Reid & Santoro, 2004) of everything Aboriginal within the colonial context of Australia, as Dodson (2003) states:

Since first contact with colonisers of this country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been the object(s) of a continual flow of commentary and classification. Even a fragment of the representation of and theory about Aboriginality captures the tenor of visions (p. 25).

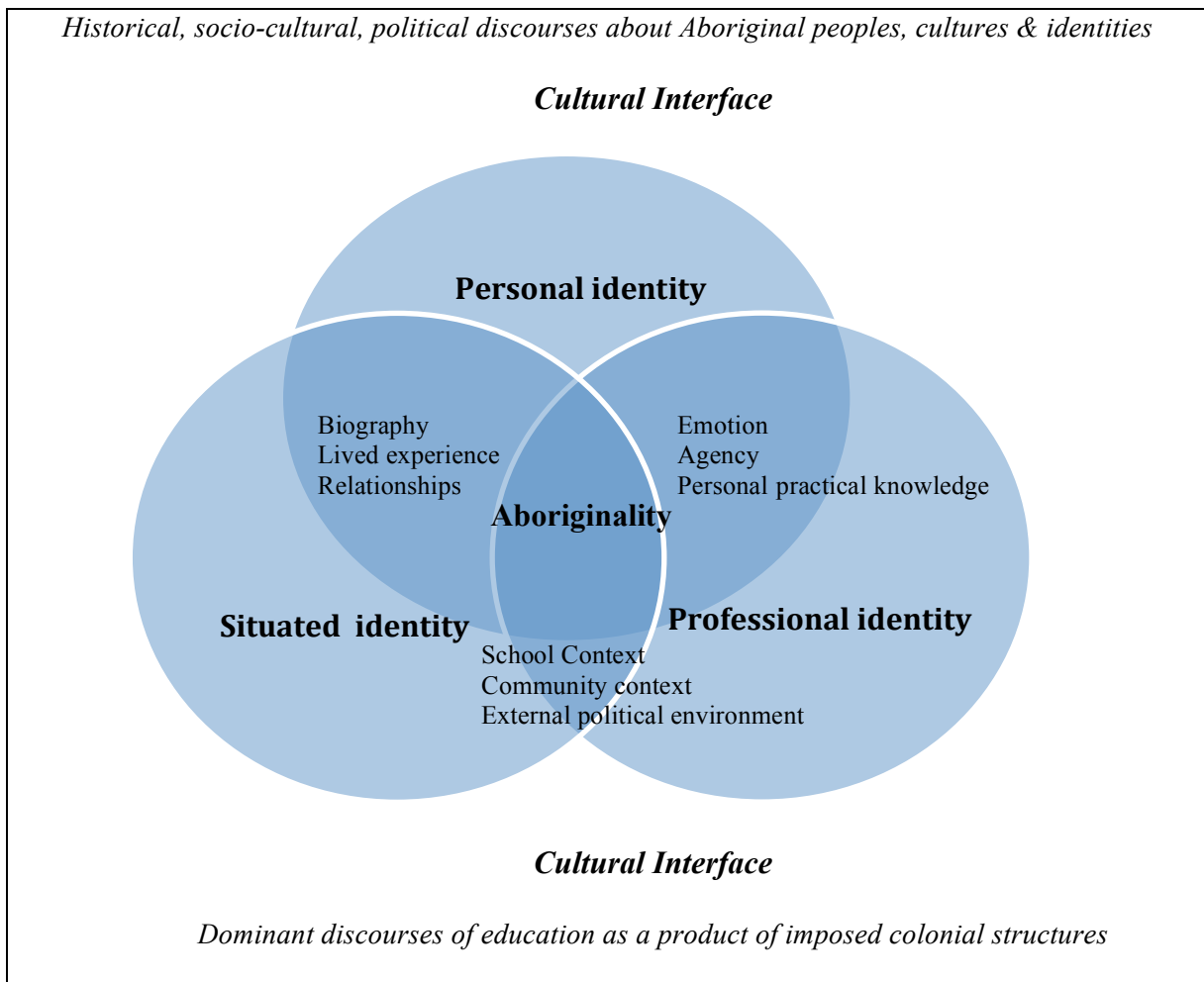


Figure 1. Framework for locating Aboriginal teacher professional identity. Adapted from Day, Sammons, Kington, & Gu, 2007; Day & Kington, 2008; Mockler, 2011.

For Aboriginal teachers, the construct of Aboriginality influences and is impacted on by each of these identities to varying degrees; a reality that is often contingent upon the responses and positioning by others. The role of school context is further contextualised within the wider context of the education system, which is framed by the historical, socio-cultural and political discourses of a colonial based society (Reid & Santoro, 2006; Hart et al., 2012; Keddie, 2012). Accordingly this then provides a unique context for the development and enactment of early career Aboriginal teachers' professional identities in school contexts.

Aboriginality

In a report commissioned by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (2011) on Aboriginality and Identity it was noted that, "... From the earliest days of invasion and colonisation, white people have grappled with the issue and constructed and applied definitions of Aboriginality to primarily serve their own purposes and to marginalise and oppress Aboriginal peoples" (p. 4). As such, Aboriginal identity becomes a significant construct in the development and enactment of a teacher identity.

Traditional theorising represents culture as a fixed and essential entity, and employs binary opposites and cultural reductionism in a 'holidays and heroes' (Keddie, 2012, p. 319) and 'stomp and chomp' interpretation. These "... assumptions of cultural authenticity produce and naturalise the other" (Keddie, 2012, p. 320), silencing, inferiorising and positioning them as deficit by way of their perceived failure in the 'progressive' Australian system that has yielded success for recent immigrants. This deficit positioning of Aboriginal people is reinforced by current government rhetoric such as 'Closing the Gap' (Council of Australian Governments, 2008; Vass, 2012) and numerous reports emphasising disadvantage. This rhetoric speaks to non-Aboriginal discourses of condescension, indifference, antipathy, resentment and blame. This impacts not only on how non-Aboriginal people judge Aboriginal people but also on how Aboriginal people perceive themselves, thereby positioning them in a defensive frame (Reid & Santoro, 2006).

In a general sense, community is immensely important to Aboriginal people and it is this sense of collective identity that constitutes a significant aspect of Aboriginality. Reid and Santoro (2006, p. 148) suggest that the range of identities taken up by Aboriginal people are significantly underpinned by the resilience of a continuous and overarching shared Aboriginal culture. While Dodson (2003, pp. 38-39) maintains that

contiguous to colonial discourses, Aboriginal discourses have continued to create self-representations and to re-create identities which have evaded the policing of sanctioned versions. These identities have given rise to Aboriginalities that are drawn not only from history and past representations, but significantly, from experiences of self and communities.

Aboriginal peoples' lived experiences are, in a general sense, embedded in cultural expressions articulated through high levels of social interaction and community engagement (Ngarritjan-Kessarlis, 1994, p. 117). McKnight, Hoban and Nielson (2011) further advance this understanding:

For individuals, relatedness and relationships are enhanced through the various 'contemporary' life stages and teachings. These teachings are strongly dependent on the stories told by Elders and so it is important for individuals to develop responsibility for living respectful relationships with country and understanding the holistic nature of "relatedness" (p. 42).

This responsibility and understanding includes a range of obligations associated with being part of an extended family and community, which when juxtaposed against a background of collective oppression and disenfranchisement, influences Aboriginal teachers' responses to the school context.

The centrality of land, culture, heritage and kin as contemporarily expressed through family and community is significant for Aboriginal people. Huggins (2001, p. 44) states that although difficult to articulate, Aboriginality is best described as "a feeling of one's own spirituality" that forms the "... core basis of identity". Her explication conflates Aboriginality with personal identity, which she describes as a "... sense of deep, proud cultural identity" (p. 1) which is lived and expressed every day through humour, language, performance, values and beliefs, and family and community relationships. Like Huggins, Dodson (2003) emphasises the intangible subjective quality of Aboriginality, maintaining that it has traditionally been and continues to be,

“... a private source of spiritual sustenance” (p. 39) suggesting the freedom, power and strength that is afforded by self-representations.

Dodson (2003, p. 31) emphasises the importance of taking up an “open definition” of Indigeneity; identity must be ‘self-identity’ and not an imposed definition. He states that the right to self-representation encompasses the right to draw on every facet of an individual’s sense of Aboriginality, be it blood, descent, history, ways of being or any other aspect (p. 40). He argues that the right to control one’s identity constitutes part of a much larger right to self-determination:

It must include the right to inherit the collective identity of one’s people, and to transform that identity creatively according to the self-defined aspirations of one’s people and one’s own generation. It must include the freedom to live outside the cage created by other peoples’ images and projections (p. 31).

Weedon (2004, p. 51) further notes that “... even this question [what it means to be Aboriginal outside traditional tribal communities] ... is over-determined by the assumptions and prejudice of white society which determines how Aboriginal people are viewed and defined”, supporting Dodson’s call for the right to self-identification as a crucial element of self-determination.

The role of Aboriginality in the lived experiences of Aboriginal teachers is complex and diverse; for some, it is central to their life and work, while for others it plays a more peripheral or understated role. Articulating these variations is essential within a post structural framework so that dominant discourses about what constitutes Aboriginality are challenged and opportunities for diverse expressions of identity are enabled. Brough and Bond (2009, p. 254) note that many Aboriginal people acknowledge Aboriginal identity as a significant source of strength and a fundamental social resource and when Aboriginal people talk about social bonds and networks, they are more often speaking about Aboriginal identity which is “... a key strength and integral social resource” (p. 254).

Personal Identity

In his seminal book, *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (1998) states that good teaching comes from a personal identity that is open to making the self vulnerable in the process of learning. He states “... good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infuses their teaching ... and join self and subject and students in the fabric of life” (Palmer, 1998, pp. 10-11).

In traditional conceptualisations of identity (see Mead, 1934), personal identity is articulated as a core self; *I* (reflective) and *ME* (visible social self) where “... [B]oth parts of the self come together during the process of role taking, as the reflective *I* guides the active *ME* with an interaction” (O’Connor & Scanlon, 2005, p. 3). Day and Kington (2008) acknowledge personal identity as it exists outside the realm of the workplace where “... feedback comes from family and friends.” (p. 11) as does Mockler (2011) when she articulates personal identity as relating to personal lives influenced by class, race and gender (p. 520). Wrench (2011) also notes that identity is central to a person’s need to be a ‘knowing subject’ in control of meaning and self-definition in relation to others.

Cote and Levine (2002, p. 121) refer to a core self as *ego identity* which is essentially a nurtured and reinforced identity that continues over a lifetime and links the past to the present while providing direction for the future. The concept of Aboriginality provides a nuanced view of ego identity as it encompasses diverse experiences that range from living within a strong cultural framework to living with a family who deny their identity (for a range of reasons) to having been removed and raised in an institution or non-Aboriginal family. The impact of these experiences cannot be underestimated in identity and teaching particularly when referring to issues in Aboriginal education.

In a relatively straightforward rendering of the term, Gee (2000, p. 99) states that recognition as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context is what constitutes identity. The 'kind of person' that an individual is perceived to be in a particular place and time is often fluid, ambiguous and moderated across contexts (p. 99). Gee's (2000, p. 101) notion of identity exemplifies this contemporary representation and he delineates four distinct ways in which to perceive identity and how it functions. The nature perspective (N-Identity) or 'state' a person is in, is expressed most simply as the biological self. While this identity is recognized as meaningful to self and others as the 'kind of person' one is, it gains its force through the other three identity perspectives. The institutional perspective (I-Identity) assigns the power of identity through authority rather than biology, positioning a person in a certain way ranging on a continuum from powerless to powerful. The discursive identity (D-Identity) allocates power to the dialogue and actions of 'rational individuals' rather than the overt influence of institutions or authority. Unlike an I-Identity that can be ascribed or achieved, the D-identity is talked about and interacted with in ways that articulate an identity or recognisable discursive description of that person. Finally, Gee's (2000, p. 105) fourth perspective the affinity identity (A-Identity) is constructed through a set of common endeavours shared by a distinct group, where participation occurs as a result of allegiance to the group. This identity relies on shared expressions of loyalty rather than institutional influence or subjective discourses, and so is chosen rather than given. It is this notion of identity that is most commonly identified in the research around teacher identity in the sense that an affinity exists between teachers and teaching practice.

Aboriginal identity can also be understood through Gee's (2000, p. 107) four perspectives. As an N-Identity, Aboriginality is rooted in biology and descent and has historically been constructed as a distinctive typology based on physiognomy. In many

ways this has influenced I-identities that have been assigned, D-identities which have been produced and A-identities which have at times been deconstructed and reconstructed to align with specific and distinctive practices to become markers of Aboriginality. This multi-dimensional approach is reflected in the official government (Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1981) ‘working’ definition of an Aboriginal identity.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he (she) lives.

This three-part definition: descent, self-identification and community recognition acknowledges changing historical, political and socio-cultural contexts as well as the pragmatic concern of providing a ‘working definition’ for the allocation of funding and services. This differs from definitions of indigenous people in other countries such as North America where N-Identity is foregrounded:

To be eligible for Bureau of Indian Affairs services, an Indian must (1) be a member of a Tribe recognized by the Federal Government, (2) one-half or more Indian blood of tribes indigenous to the United States (25 USC 479); or (3) must, for some purposes, be of one-fourth or more Indian ancestry (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2001, p. 2).

Since personal identity is embedded in an historical biography that is embodied in and enacted in daily practices, it is aligned with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 49) in which social dispositions (Mockler, 2006, p. 5) respond specifically to their socio-cultural context. Personal identity is in part what Mead (1934) suggests is a core self, but it is more closely recognised in Gee’s (1990) sociocultural notions of discursive and affinity identities. Significantly, Beijaard (2006) states that without a sense of continuity and stability in personal identity, people “... fall into ‘a temporal flux of incoherence’ in the sense that they cannot position themselves in relation to a personal and cultural history and an anticipated future” (p.

313). The notion of self as inseparable from personal biography and life experience (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; McLeod, 2001; van Manen, 1990) is common throughout the literature and closely associated with ideas around the influence of relationships (Dillabough, 1999), socio-cultural context (Day & Kington, 2008; Mockler, 2011) and the “... dialect we speak, the degree of formality we adopt in our speech, the deeds we do, the places we go, the emotions we express, and the clothes we wear” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998, p. 127).

Biography

While there are common factors that characterise the collective experiences of teachers, the journey of each teacher is ultimately unique and specific to them and their contexts. McLeod (2001, p. 2) argues that the journey of a teacher has begun long before the individual starts their teacher education, and it is their lived experiences prior to and during their training and early career that make key contributions to their unique skill set and knowledge base, as well as their emotional, creative and decision-making capacities (p. 7). Armstrong (2004, p. 6) further suggests that pre-service teachers use these skills sets, beliefs and prior knowledge and experiences in an ongoing construction of ideas and learning to teach.

Several researchers identify personal biography as integral to the process of personal and professional identity formation (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; McLeod, 2001). An individual’s biography includes their life histories (Beijaard et al., 2004) which are “... embedded in a socio-historical context” (p. 125) and incorporate experiences, interactions and relationships, and so are integral to professional identity formation. Research by Flores and Day (2006, p. 230) found that personal biography, in conjunction with workplace culture and practice, is constructed over time and it was this mediating influence that largely accounted for the variation in participant responses

to challenging school cultures. Not surprisingly, their findings strongly support the notion that positive beliefs and attitudes about oneself as a person *and* a teacher is critical to acquiring a secure and positive professional identity.

Britzman's influential research (1991, 2003) on learning to teach reveals that a teacher's intimate knowledge of the education process is acquired over many years' of experience as a student, including overfamiliarity with 'good or bad teaching'.

Britzman (2007) maintains that the process of growing up in education pervades an individual's meaning of learning, teaching and education, thus influencing their "... sense of self and [our] sense of the world..." (p. 2). This is what Britzman (1991, 2003) calls "cultural myths" or 'ideal' images and versions of teachers and teaching, which pre-service teachers soon learn are limited when trying to cope with the contradictory realities of teaching. Britzman (2003) also notes that if a teacher's views do not align with the dominant culture of schooling, such as those of many Aboriginal teachers, this in turn can "... repress an identity in the making" (p. 20).

Lived Experience

As teaching is essentially a social act, consideration of lived experience (Chase, 2000; McLeod, 1999; Squire, 2008; van Manen, 1990) illuminates the intersection of relational and contextual factors in the daily world of teaching. McLeod (1999) states that practice reflects societal and personal beliefs, which in turn are shaped by lived experiences, and that this "... becomes nested both within the structural context of teaching as a product of the institution and the socio-cultural context of teaching as an outcome of the self" (p. 21). Understanding people and situations in the context of teaching potentially illuminates fresh ways of thinking about what it means to teach and learn to teach (Britzman, 2003).

van Manen (1997, p. 37) states that when lived experiences are given memory they garner interpretive significance and the “phenomena of lived life” is thus allocated meaning through conscious and interpretive acts such as conversations. Adequately articulating these lived experiences requires that aspects of the collective experience that “...resonate[s] with our sense of lived life” (p. 27) be elucidated. This offers a connection, something that can be recognised as an experience that we ourselves may have had or could possibly have. This type of reflective action affords strong insight into the factors that influence identity formation, as well as the related issues and reactions that emerge from the process.

The narrative construction of identity draws on lived experiences as they are remembered, reflected on and reconstructed. Consequently the teacher’s role in learner construction of knowledge will depend on understanding people and situations based on personal lived experiences, and the more extensive and diverse these are, the more likely it is that the teacher will be able to relate to a greater range of students. In this sense, Aboriginal teachers often articulate an affinity with marginalised and ‘Other’ students (Reid & Santoro, 2006) and describe a strong motivation to advocate for these students.

Relationships

In his articulation of the social nature of learning to teach and its impact on identity, Wenger (1998) notes the importance of relationships through four intrinsic components of learning: experience, practice, belonging and becoming (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010, p. 1565). A key finding from Timostsuk and Ugaste’s (2010) research was the significant influence of interpersonal relationships in pre-service teachers’ in-school experience. Those who felt a sense of belonging as a result of positive relationships within this context reported an encouraging and constructive teaching

experience. Similarly, Reid and Santoro (2006) reported on the significance of relationships to a sense of belonging (or not belonging):

It is through the identification with the social group, that people are able to understand, construct and express an individual identity or a 'self' within the changing social relationships of power, and recognise and perform relationships with others within that field of practice. (p. 146)

In terms of Aboriginal historical, cultural and social life and determining role and place within the immediate family and community, the importance of relationships cannot be understated. Relationships account for a significant investment in cultural life and are reflected in approaches to learning. Reid and Santoro (2006) identify this as the key to many Aboriginal teachers' survival and success in the school context as well as its application as a pedagogical tool to connect with and make a difference for students. Developing relationships in this way enhances trust, engagement in learning, influences curriculum and pedagogy, and provides a range of professional trajectories. In their study of Indigenous pre-service teachers Hart et al. (2012) note that tacit cultural knowledge, identity and experience is embodied in teaching practices that prioritise the teacher-student relationship. This relationship is acknowledged by a number of researchers as crucial to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Indigenous students in various settings (Buckskin et al., 2008; Burgess & Berwick, 2009; Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012; Hawk, Tumama, Cowley, Hill & Sutherland, 2002; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; NSW DET & NSW AECG, 2004; Santoro, Reid, Crawford & Simpson, 2011).

Professional Identity

At the confluence of personal and professional identities are the concepts of emotion, agency and personal practical knowledge; a synthesis which is highlighted by Nias (1989):

Teachers have hearts and bodies, as well as heads and hands, though the deep and unruly nature of their hearts is governed by their heads, by the sense of moral responsibility for students and the integrity of their subject matter which are at the core of their professional identity . . . Teachers are emotionally committed to many different aspects of their jobs. This is not an indulgence; it is a professional necessity. Without feeling, without the freedom to ‘face themselves’, to be whole persons in the classroom, they implode, explode – or walk away (p. 305).

Teacher professional identity, like personal identity, is complex and evolving and as perspectives are shaped and reshaped through the processes of time and experience, it is, “... continuously in a state of becoming” (Gomez & White, 2009, p. 1016). This notion emerges as a common thread in Beijaard et al.’s (2004, p. 113) review of the literature in which they note that professional identity is widely perceived as a continuing process that merges the personal and professional planes of ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ a teacher. Akkerman and Meijer (2011, p. 309) claim that to merely counterpose the more traditional classifications of identity with a postmodern antithesis is fundamentally flawed, as it works against the full exploration of a more holistic definition of professional identity. A dialogical conceptualisation of teacher identity is useful as it “... reflects the struggles of being one and many at the same time” (p. 318) and Akkerman and Meijer (2011, p. 311) argue that as the boundaries between personal and professional contexts are blurred, a dialogical construct of professional identity can be disrupted by numerous I-positions of the self.

Alsop (2006) describes the site in which multiple selves are negotiated as “borderland discourse” and suggests that merging subjectivities through this discourse enables beginning teachers to connect their personal ideologies or worldviews to their emerging professional selves. In Beauchamp and Thomas’s (2011, p. 9) study of early career teachers, participants found that they underwent a critical identity shift upon experiencing their new contexts and importantly, many of them recognised that they would come up against multiple boundaries over the course of their teaching practice,

acknowledging that “... the boundary space of initial teaching practice is a destabilizing time” (p. 12).

Sachs (2001) defines professional identity as “...a set of externally ascribed attitudes...imposed upon the teaching profession either by outsiders or members of the teaching fraternity itself ...” (p. 153). She maintains that in the current teaching climate of rapid change and educational restructuring, identity demands more complex theorising in which it is examined as open, consistently negotiated and mediated by aspirations, personal experiences both in and out of the school context and beliefs about one’s own teacher identity. For beginning teachers, the challenge of mediating personal beliefs with cultural and institutional constructions of ‘a teacher’ is considerable (Gomez and White, 2009, p. 1016) and the situation can become problematic when each party’s expectations are dissonant or when a “... culture’s definition of normalcy is inconsistent with the personal beliefs or values of the individual seeking to become a teacher” (Alsup, 2006, p. 64). Mockler and Sachs (2006, p. 6) suggests that this dissonance can be addressed by applying Bourdieu’s (1986) concepts of habitus and field where “... the field structures the habitus ... [and] ... habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world” (Wacquant, 1989, p. 44). This provides opportunities for an activist professional identity (Mockler & Sachs, 2006) as teachers’ augment their habitus by altering the field to transform their professional identity and the profession.

Clandinin and Connolly (1999, 2000) equate professional identity with the ‘stories we live by’, articulated by McGregor (2009) as relational, temporal and continuous. Watson (2010) notes that professional identity is integral to an ongoing performative process and that the relationship to professional knowledge and professional action is not unidirectional or progressive. Similarly, Holstein and

Gubrium (2000, p. 179) note that articulations of professional identity can reflect external expressions of one's positioning within the social and institutional frameworks of their work context. While Gee (2000, p. 120) maintains that more recent global trends of "...networking with others in joint activities, causes, virtual communication, shared consumption, and shared experiences ..." are part of the building of multiple identities that blur the boundaries once considered necessary to separating the professional from the personal self.

Emotion

Professional and personal identities become interwoven and interdependent in the deeply emotional pursuit of teaching (Britzman, 2003; Isenbager & Zembylas, 2006; Reio, 2005; Shapiro, 2010; Zembylas, 2003, 2005) and a teacher's central framework of values, beliefs and truths based on previous life experiences is crucial to informing choices, responses and decisions within this context (Beattie 2000, p. 6). Palmer (1998) believes that emotion, caring and identity are so closely linked that he states "... the things I teach are the things I care about – and what I care about helps define my selfhood" (p. 17). The intensity of relationships in an emotionally charged high responsibility environment challenges personal and professional identities on a daily basis, particularly if there is clash of world views and cultural interpretations about educational discourses.

Examining the role of emotion provides a lens through which to view teacher identity as performative within contextual and relational spaces. When teachers talk, express and experience, they become emotionally engaged in the construction of who they are, and this is grounded in the personal, cultural, political and historical aspects of identity formation and so "... in examining the role of emotion in teaching, one has to explore the use and meaning of emotional rules against the backdrop of school

structures and norms” (Zembylas, 2005, p. 945). O’Connor (2008) suggests that teachers must negotiate “...the path between being emotionally engaged with students as an individual and undertaking emotional labour to meet the demands which their professional role places upon them” (p. 122). Her research illustrates the challenges that teachers experience in expressing themselves and engaging emotionally with their students in their daily teaching lives. While she acknowledges that the constant encouragement and motivation of students can become a physically and emotionally exhausting task, she concedes that, “... there is always going to be one [student] who looks at you, and you know that what you’re saying is important to them. So you keep on at it – because of, I suppose, this very real shared importance” (p. 122).

This is essentially what van Manen (1994) refers to as ‘pedagogical relation’, “... the concept of a caring human vitality that captures the normative and qualitative features of educational processes” (p. 149), which enables a sensitive approach despite the technical imperatives imposed by management. Certainly, the nurturing of true pedagogical relations is intrinsically valuable to a positive classroom atmosphere, and ultimately to student growth (p. 150). For many Aboriginal teachers, a student-teacher relationship premised on emotional engagement and responsibility is instrumental to their work and commitment to teaching (Santoro, 2007; Santoro, 2010; Santoro et al., 2011). Equally, making strong emotional connections with students has been found to constitute a significant source of empowerment for teachers (Zembylas, 2005, p. 944).

Affirmative emotions that are grounded in positive human relationships and connections are a “... significant factor in teacher choice of profession and long term job satisfaction.” (Shapiro, 2010, p. 617). These include caring, affection and even love, often fuelled by passion, excitement and a sense of satisfaction. O’Connor (2008) maintains that ‘caring’ is a prevalent, multifaceted emotion that is central to teacher

professional identity. For many Aboriginal teachers, it is this sense of care for Aboriginal (and often other marginalised) students that fuels the motivation to teach and most often inspires a career in teaching (Santoro et al., 2011). Yet the emotional drain brought on by the intensity of human relations, and the feeling that efforts to make a difference are futile can lead to early career burn out or leaving the profession altogether (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Ewing & Smith, 2003; Le Cornu, 2009; Ramsay, 2000; Santoro, Reid, Simpson & McConaghy, 2004; Shapiro, 2010). These negative emotions are often deeply felt in professions like teaching because “... the very act of caring leaves one open to the possibility of hurt and disappointment” (Shapiro, 2010, p. 617). When negative emotions are left unchecked, stronger, more corrosive emotions such as anger and resentment can often arise.

Intensifying the isolation that many teachers feel within their own classrooms is student ambivalence or misbehaviour, lack of support from institutions, frustration brought on by a sense of powerlessness, and unresolved anger. Shapiro (2010, p. 617) notes that, “[P]hysically, teaching tends to be isolating, even though psychologically, it is highly relational”, while Britzman (2003, p. 3) observes that these feelings of vulnerability and resentment lie somewhere between, “... a dress rehearsal and a daily performance.” Much of the conflicting emotion that teachers experience on a daily basis occurs as a result of structures that are not of one’s own making or indeed within one’s control, yet they need to be interpreted and understood to obtain some sense of personal and professional self. Zembylas’s (2005) post structural theorising highlights this as a discursive practice constituted through language and embedded in socially and culturally specific relationships of power. These are not just private but performative, socially organised and managed, which means that the “... ways in which teachers understand, experience, perform, and talk about emotions” (pp. 936-937) is inherently

connected to their identity. He further contends that where certain emotions are expressed and others disciplined, 'emotional rules' including boundaries are imposed and this establishes the processes of control and domination in the workplace.

Sachs (1997) notes that as the dominant discourses of schools generally value "... headwork over heart work"(p. 62), emotions that are fundamental to human interaction are often ignored and in some instances, invalidated. Shapiro (2010, p. 167) supports this interpretation, identifying what she calls a limited range of 'expressible' emotions including the tacit expectation of what emotions are to be repressed in the workplace. As we live and work in a world where emotional control is seen as important to credibility, discourses about emotion can challenge or reinforce power status and relationships. Bloomfield (2010) too maintains that a teacher's emotional experience is the product of cultural, social and political relations and is often closely controlled by others' expectations as well as institutional sanctions that function to "... legitimise who can be and how one is to be" (p. 59).

Power, agency and resistance are central to exploring the role of emotion in professional identity, and Zembylas (2005, p. 938) suggests that power relations create the conditions for agency and individuals either choose from a range of discourses made available to them or consciously act to resist those discourses. He further maintains that giving focus to power as a concept informs an exploration of teacher emotion by attending to dominant and resistant discourses and the effect of these on teachers. Finding adaptive and effective ways to resist and destabilize these discursive understandings of emotion in teaching is pivotal to creating potential new forms of a teacher-self (p. 939).

Agency

Bandura (2006) advances the notion that individuals are not simply products of their life situations nor mere observers of their own behaviour, but rather are active contributors and that "... to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (p. 164). He identifies four key attributes of human agency: *intentionality* – the formation of intentions through a plan of action with accompanying strategies; *forethought* – goal setting and anticipating possible futures so as to direct efforts; *self-reactiveness* – motivating and regulating the execution of an action plan; and *self-reflectiveness* which requires ongoing thought, action and self-examination about the meaning of one's pursuits, and the impetus to make adjustments. He contends that the latter attribute is the "... most distinctly human core property of agency" (p. 165) and maintains that as an agent, an individual creates identity connections through relationships and work pursuits (p. 170). Accordingly, individuals interpret themselves as a continuing person over different phases of their lifetime, essentially projecting themselves into the future and shaping their life course through goals, aspirations, social exchanges, and action plans. It is this active capacity built on self belief and intention that shapes and influences a teacher's outward expression of their professional identity, and the manner in which they negotiate the 'self' within their communities of practice (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011, p. 7; Wenger, 1998).

Sfard and Prusak's (2005, p. 18) constructs of 'actual' and 'designated' identities can also be used to examine agentic action. Actual identity refers to the current state of identity while designated identity represents the expected preferred future state. Here, agency refers to how individuals narratively construct their identities to fulfil their designated identity and Sfard and Prusak (2005) identify the gap between actual and designated identities as 'critical stories' that, "...would make one feel as if

one's whole identity had changed[and affect the] ... ability to determine, in an immediate, decisive manner, which stories ... were endorsable and which were not" (p. 18). A loss of agency occurs when others construct an individual's designated identity within a particular 'expected' or 'preconceived' socio-cultural framework. This is described by Pearce and Morrison (2011, pp. 53-4) as cognitive dissonance which is the dissention that individuals feel when others perceive them differently to how they perceive themselves. This includes the differences between their teaching values, ideals and expectations and the realities of the teaching context (Raffo & Hall, 2006).

Beauchamp and Thomas (2011, p. 7) argue that the version of professional identity that is more often imposed on teachers, particularly beginning teachers, is derived from wider societal and cultural conceptions that are largely informed by dominant discourses of teacher professionalism (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Mockler, 2011; Moore, 2004; Sachs, 2001). When an individual attempts to resist discursive positioning through the active construction of their professional identity, it produces a dissonance that exhorts the need for agency. According to Ketelaar, Beijgaard, Boshuizen and Den Brok (2012, p. 275), the extent to which a teacher is able to effectively assert their professional identity is chiefly dependent on both the degree of agency and level of control over personal choice experienced in their work situation. This is largely determined by the context and culture of the school and their social location within that context. Klein (2008) reminds us that in a post structuralist sense, "[A]gency is a discursive position available to some persons some of the time" (p. 189) and so the capacity to exercise agency and experience autonomy, self-determination and space for negotiation is influenced by the discursive environment in which one operates. Like identity, agency can be complex and contradictory but "... having a constituted sense of oneself as able to go beyond the given to forge new/innovative

ways of being or acting in a discursive field” (p. 189) is integral to the development of a ‘healthy’ professional identity (Wenger, 2000, p. 240).

Personal practical knowledge

A teacher’s personal practical knowledge is located in their practice, and is derived from their past experience, embodied present and future plans and objectives (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000). McLeod (2001, p. 4) maintains that the practice of an early career teacher is situated in a unique temporal, spatial and social location that signifies the juncture of multiple overlapping contexts. Such an environment requires the beginning teacher to draw upon “multiple ways of knowing” as they start to perform the roles of their profession. van Manen (1990) highlights the experiential nature of practical knowledge, emphasising its phenomenological quality as instrumental to teacher ways of knowing:

My practical knowledge “is” my felt sense of the classroom, my feeling who I am as a teacher, my felt understanding of my students, my felt grasp of the things that I teach, the mood that belongs to my world at school, the hallways, the staffroom, and of course this classroom (p. 11).

Within the contexts of teaching then, it is entirely feasible that the success of a teacher may well be predicated on the knowledge forms inherent in practical actions, in externally expressed traits and qualities, and in thoughtful behaviours and dispositions (van Manen, 1990, p. 13).

In view of the Aboriginal teacher in Reid and Santoro’s (2006) study, academic achievement and Western knowledge systems are intrinsically valued over the practical and experiential learning favoured by Aboriginal teachers and describe mainstream teaching practices in Australian classrooms as essentially at odds with Aboriginal approaches (Santoro et al., 2004, p. 4). West (2000) and Graham (1999) (as cited in Phillips, 2011) describe Indigenous approaches and systems as having collective rather

than individual ownership, complex knowledge systems governed by relationships with culture, land, people and the environment, and contextualised learning within these frameworks as part of everyday life. While important in terms of acknowledging cultural and Indigenous knowledges, Phillips (2011, p. 22) notes that these approaches do not necessarily encompass the diverse and complex perspectives of Indigenous people, including multifaceted experiences of colonialism. Further, since post structural theorising interrogates 'regimes of truth', potential binaries and debilitating comparisons can emerge from a focus on difference which has been identified by Nakata (2007b) and Yunkaporta (2009) in their theorising on the cultural interface.

Teachers' personal practical knowledge can be remarkably fluid and tacit, imbued with personal meaning and characteristically non-sequential. Clandinin and Connelly (1996, 1999, 2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) connect the social contexts in which teachers live and work with their individual personal practical knowledge in a professional knowledge landscape. These aspects, along with the impact of context on teacher identity form the basis of a narrative approach that aims to understand and articulate the complex practice that is teaching (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 141).

Situated Identity

A post-structural approach draws on both context and personal experience to support an exploration of the confluence of professional and situated identities noted here as school context, community context and the external political environment. In a review of the literature, Beijaard et al. (2004, pp. 113-115) found that overwhelmingly, the influence of an individual's social context and their relationships and interactions within these contexts is integral to the formation of their professional identity. Identity does not exist in a vacuum, but rather it is subjective and contextualized and thus very

much socially and culturally defined. Wenger (1998, p. 149) identifies a deep connection between identity and practice; he maintains that the establishment of a community in which members can actively engage with each other and recognise one another as participants is integral to the development of practice.

Wenger (2000) locates these relationships within social learning systems that connect an individual's knowledge and experience to participation. He defines learning as an, "... interplay between social competence and personal experience" (p. 227) and frames different forms of participation within three modes of belonging to provide a framework through which to view the constitutive elements of social learning systems. These three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment, contribute to various aspects of social learning systems and require different types of work (p. 228). Wenger (2000) views belonging as a key element in the enactment of social learning systems such as classrooms, schools and communities; using belonging as a lens provides dynamic examples of how these systems work as well as fail.

Situated identity has a significant influence on the development of a professional identity and the notion of translocational positionality which foregrounds the interplay of gender, ethnicity, class and other positionings (Anthias, 2002; Keddie, 2012). It contributes to an understanding of how various individual and collective positioning is self allocated as well as allocated by others recognising this interplay within specific contexts where "... identity markers (culture, origin, language and physiognomy etc.) may themselves function as resources that are deployed contextually and situationally" (p. 276). This aligns with research that highlights the complex, dynamic and contradictory processes involved in identity formation, foregrounding the situated nature of claims so that there is "... a greater understanding of the specific nature of specific oppressions at specific sites" (Keddie, 2012, p. 319). This opens up space for

early career Aboriginal teachers to speak from subject positions that are not fixed by perceived notions of an authentic Aboriginality that is based on binary constructions and invokes complex power relations. The assumptions and cultural determinism inherent in these constructions are obviated by a situated identity approach that examines issues as processes rather than individual traits within spatial and collective dimensions. What emerges from this are opportunities to enact agency in the development of a preferred identity (Anthias, 2002, p. 277).

School Context

Situated or socially located identity (Day & Kington 2008, p. 11) is specific to the socio-cultural setting of the workplace and refers to, “[T]he situated dimension [that is] located in a specific school and context and is affected by local conditions (i.e. pupil behaviour, level of disadvantage) leadership, support and feedback ... connected to long-term identity” (p. 11). This affects how teachers act and react in a specific environment and in turn, how the setting responds to them. Research by Flores and Day (2006) identified the significance of school context as the critical factor that fostered (or hindered) participants’ professional development and significantly influenced their understandings of teaching and professional identity development (p. 230).

Similar findings by Johnson et al. (2012) report the overwhelming significance of the school cultural context in the formation of a strong self-efficacy or feelings of disempowerment for early career teachers. They found that while school culture, which they define as “... [the] diverse values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, behaviours and relationships that characterise the daily rituals of school life” (p. 40) is largely shaped by all members and their interpersonal relationships, school leadership is a key factor in terms of reinforcing the importance of collaborative and supportive professional learning. They further note the importance of a shared approach where all teachers

model best practice through shared responsibility, decision-making and vision as well as attending to the well-being of their peers. The development of supportive professional learning in a school culture such as this resulted in a sense of belonging, social connectedness, empowerment and resilience for early career teachers in the construction of their professional identity.

Communities of practice (Wenger, 2000) offer a way to conceptualise school contexts. According to Wenger (2000), “[P]articipation in these communities of practice is essential to our learning. It is at the very core of what makes us human beings capable of meaningful knowing” (p. 229). The significance of communities of practice lies in the sense of joint enterprise, the mutuality of relationships and the shared production of resources, skills and styles. These provide opportunities to negotiate competence (rather than being tied to an imposed system) through direct participatory experiences and consequently become important social learning units within larger interrelated communities of practice (p. 229). Wenger’s (2000, p. 239) construct inherently connects identity to social learning systems by conflating competencies and experiences into ways of knowing, fostering engagement in a range of learning communities and internalising communities and boundaries as experience. He articulates identity as “... what we are not as well as what we are,” (p. 239) and in doing so, recognises the fluid, unpredictable and multifarious nature of identity embedded within the socio-cultural context of everyday practice. It is this situated identity that can influence feelings of belonging (or not) and so is a significant factor in pre-service and early career teachers’ attempts to negotiate their way through the daily life of teaching. Wenger (2000) further acknowledges that “... [the] organisational requirements of social learning often run counter to traditional management practices...” (p. 243) and so he emphasises the importance of acknowledging informal learning

systems, the meaningfulness of participation and ensuring the development of links to various communities.

Reid et.al. (2004) note that personal and professional identities are socially and culturally produced in discursive contexts, which highlights the importance of a supportive school cultural context. This is a significant issue for early career Aboriginal teachers given the historical relationship between Aboriginal people and the education system and the tendency to position Aboriginal people as ‘Other’. Santoro et al. (2004) maintain that a “ ... dominant ‘white’ institutional culture in Australia excludes and alienates teachers who are not members of the dominant Anglo-Australian majority” (p. 3) and that “pedagogies of whiteness” (p. 4) restrict and control teaching practices in ways that privilege the dominant culture. This culture values knowledge acquisition over what many Aboriginal teachers believe is the importance of practical and experiential learning. Santoro et.al (2004) believe that it is important to “. explore discourses of whiteness that shape schooling ...[and]... analyse the complex ways in which racial hierarchies are formed and sustained in schools” (p. 6). Aboriginal teachers are often perceived in light of the local Aboriginal community (regardless of whether they are a part of that community or not) and prevailing stereotypes about Aboriginal people. This can have a significant impact on the school culture and how they are positioned within this highlighting the “ ... complexities of the student teachers’ lived experiences, and the complex effects of these experiences on the construction of their different subject positions as Aboriginal teachers” (Reid, Santoro, Crawford & Simpson, 2009, p. 46).

Community Context

Understanding the construct of community is an essential and tacit aspect of many Aboriginal peoples’ lives (Brough & Bond, 2009). Generally speaking, it

provides a sense of belonging and security, articulation of a collective identity and sense of place where family, kin and friends reside. Not always geographical, community can be extended to include other socio-cultural aspects of one's life such as work, sport and/or particular interests. When Aboriginal people travel, connecting to communities along the way is not only a cultural expectation but an avenue through which to move safely and inexpensively. Using social capital in this way (Brough & Bond, 2009) provides distinct advantages not necessarily available to non-Aboriginal people.

For Aboriginal teachers, this sense of community involves obligations, reciprocity and ongoing participation that cannot be set aside once they enter broader communities. As they move into the education community they can find themselves concomitantly in authoritative and disempowering positions. Reid et al. (2009) note that for some, "... [the] widening gulf between the subject positions they could now occupy in their daily practice, their new 'professional' identities and the expectations of family and partners" (p. 49) often causes both inner and outer conflict. Reconciling issues such as renegotiated family responsibilities and criticism from home communities about thinking and acting 'above your station' (or big noting) while maintaining community solidarity and a strong sense of Aboriginality can result in early burn out for Aboriginal teachers attempting to navigate these often contradictory expectations.

Aboriginal teachers are often expected to operate as a conduit between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as well as assume full responsibility for all aspects of Indigenous education (Santoro et al., 2011, p. 72) which can produce a disrupted sense of 'self' as teacher, and result in tensions that force the individual to deal with the situation as a conflict of personal identity (Reid & Santoro, 2006). More often than not, the generic labelling of the "Indigenous teacher" (Reid & Santoro, 2006,

p. 151) can impose a sense of obligation on behalf of the community and an assumption of responsibility for Aboriginal students and the school's cultural events. Reid and Santoro (2006, p. 157) argue that identification as the "Indigenous teacher" can be very limiting, often obscuring the "... individual strengths, passions and concerns that the new teacher brings to the profession". Similar findings by Santoro et al., (2004, p. 5) reveal that discursive "truths" that function to position Indigenous teachers as "... less knowledgeable and less well-trained than their non-Indigenous counterparts" (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 154) pose significant challenges for many Indigenous teachers trying to establish professional credibility.

Reid and Santoro (2004) also identify the pressures placed on Indigenous teachers by their own communities to mediate between the home and school, stating that they are often "... caught within these contradictory constructions of their identity as teachers – they move between, and often must simultaneously take up and operate in positions of authority and servitude in their community and their workplace" (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 152).

Johnson et al. (2012) note that within the education community "... the extent to which schools and communities are able to build a 'culture of belonging' is absolutely essential to helping early career teachers 'feel at home'" (p. 42). This has become increasingly acknowledged in professional learning discourses designed to foster trust and goodwill, minimise isolation and value diverse cultural identities and perspectives (p. 42). Contributing in ways that are socially and culturally worthwhile and meaningful is important to building teacher resilience in all early career teachers, and for Aboriginal teachers, alignment to the tacit engagement they may have in their own communities needs to be acknowledged.

External political environment

In her framework of teacher professional identity, Mockler (2011) includes the broader external political environment which suggests that "... [the] external political environment comprises the discourses, attitudes and understandings surrounding education that exist external to the profession" (p. 521) and has significant impact on teachers. Her theorizing is largely in response to recent neo-liberal instrumentalities of teachers' work that reduce it to a series of measurements, ignoring the crucial role of the 'human' components of emotion, cognition, biography and lived experience that lie at the very heart of what it means to be a teacher (Connell, 2009; McLeod, 1999; Mockler, 2011, Smyth, 2000; Wrench, 2011).

The current climate of economic rationalist educational reform determines what constitutes 'good' schools while at the same time also determining what constitutes 'bad schools'. This has resulted in a growing number of 'bad' schools which are generally located in disadvantaged areas becoming increasingly marginalised by such labelling. Decreasing student numbers, limited curriculum choices and opportunities to participate in 'affluent' school activities such as debating, musical performance, and certain sports all become 'markers' of good schools and further marginalise 'bad' schools. Further, 'good' schools and 'good' teaching have become increasingly prescribed and narrowed often by proxy through student results in standardised tests.

As global recession fuels parental fears about the educational and employment futures of their children, 'good' schools and 'good' teachers have increasingly adopted market approaches to teaching and the language of big business to the everyday work of teachers. Mockler (2011) notes that these "... aspects of teachers' role (i.e. what teachers 'do') are easier to quantify, measure and mandate than professional identity (i.e. who teachers 'are')" (p. 525). This in turn reinforces normative, positivist

approaches to curriculum content and classroom pedagogy leaving little space for creative, critical and experiential practices placing further pressure on the development and enactment of teachers' professional identities.

Mockler (2011) maintains that increasing workloads and responsibilities particularly around addressing the social, emotional and welfare needs of students and the 'moral purpose' or stewardship is being undermined and compromised. Moreover, the act of devaluing the critical intellectual work of teachers (Giroux, 1992) reduces opportunities for the constitution of democratic communities where high levels of social capital (trust) enhance inclusivity, engagement and self efficacy (Smyth, 2000, p. 493).

Parkison (2008) further notes that "... [I]ssues of accountability, high stakes testing, inclusion of children with exceptionalities and standards-driven national or state curricular have impacted the space within which teachers can perform" (p. 51). He states that the relationship between teachers and their educational authority (also their employer) has alienated teachers creating resentment, anxiety and renunciation (p. 54). This in turn has established and normalised unequal political relationships, limiting opportunities for teachers to construct and reflect on an agentic and self-fulfilling professional identity that is vital to survival in the teaching service.

For early career Aboriginal teachers, awareness and understanding of political environments is often inherently linked to their lived experience and experience with external communities. This is embedded in the construction of identity within personal and collective frameworks of culture, family, and community backgrounds and an awareness of associated obligations that positions them as 'Other'. Hesch (1996) highlights the complexity of the issue when he describes the quandary that many Indigenous Canadian teachers face, " [I]ronically, aboriginal pre-service teachers cannot teach unless they can satisfy agents of the state that they can produce the

practices that excluded many of them and that will continue to exclude members of their original category” (p. 271).

Conclusion

This review examined how personal identity intersects with situated identity through biography, lived experience and relationships and with professional identity through emotion agency and personal practical knowledge. This highlights the complex, convergent nature of teacher identity and the way in which professional and situated identities intersect in school, community and external political contexts. At the nexus of personal, professional and situated identity is cultural identity, in this case Aboriginality which is an ongoing and at times contradictory project that is often politicised. Using current theoretical frameworks to articulate the identities of early career Aboriginal teachers positions their knowledge and experiences at the centre of the literature rather than outside of it or on the periphery where it has been traditionally located. As both learners and teachers, Aboriginal people have typically been located on the margins of education and so repositioning Aboriginal voices at the centre of the discussion highlights relevant issues and understandings that resonate not only with Aboriginal teachers but with the wider education community.

The following chapter utilises Foucault’s (1979,1982) notions of discourse, power relations and subjectivity, Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital and Nakata’s (2007b) cultural interface theory in order to examine the discursive production of early career Aboriginal teachers’ professional identities. Clandinin and Connelly (1996, 2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) facilitate this through a narrative inquiry approach that privileges the voices of participants and provides opportunities to question assumptions by and about Aboriginal teachers. The

theoretical approach in the next chapter builds on the key concepts in this chapter, and together they form the basis for data analysis.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This study is about Aboriginal teachers' early teaching experiences and as such it must be relationally and contextually framed within the historical, socio-cultural and political discourses of colonial-built Australia where Aboriginal people and communities have traditionally been disempowered and even dehumanized by various research processes (see for instance Fredericks, 2008; McConaghy, 2000; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Nakata, 2007a; Phillips, 2011; Smith, 1999). It is therefore important to consider the macro social, political and cultural structures that have contributed to oppressive forces and within this, elucidate individual and collective voices that challenge and disrupt the stereotypes and labels that prop it up. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that these voices can conform to as well as resist these stereotypes (Mahrouse, 2005) and so exploration of these phenomena is critical to an understanding of the multifarious experiences of Aboriginal teachers in school contexts.

Theoretical approaches such as critical race theory (see for instance Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai-Smith, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998), post-colonial theory (see for instance Chilisa, 2012; Said, 1978), Indigenous standpoint theory (see for instance Foley, 2002; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Nakata, 2007a) and the 'cultural interface' (see for instance McGloin, 2009; Nakata, 2007b; Yunkaporta, 2009) are typically applied to studies involving Indigenous people. These approaches offer insights and contributions to diverse and empowering research studies

and significantly, opportunities for Indigenous researchers to foreground their knowledge and cultural systems within the academy. These decolonising theoretical frameworks are identified by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers as pivotal to deconstructing colonial motives and assumptions and bringing focus to the limitations of western research paradigms which tend to objectify Indigenous peoples and limit opportunities for nuanced and complex voices of the ‘Other’. Accordingly, minority groups are critical of western representations that position them as objects of the ‘white gaze’ (Keddie, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Decolonising methodologies can be emancipatory and liberating in “... dismantling assumptions foundational to Western epistemological frameworks” (Phillips, 2011, p. 31) and therefore essential in opening up opportunities for alternative or ‘Other’ epistemologies.

However, Nakata, Nakata, Keech and Bolt (2012) caution against the type of theoretical dichotomies that are reductive, steeped in cultural essentialism and promote ‘difference’ by reinforcing ‘us’ and ‘them’ binaries. They note that:

the utilization of simple Indigenous critiques of the Western reinforces the logical sense of simplistic representations of Indigenous knowledge and regenerated practices presented as the path to solving Indigenous contemporary ‘problems’ in different subject areas, such as health, education, and governance. (p. 132)

In terms of contextual power relations, such an approach usually results in deficit stereotyping (Brough & Bond, 2009; Swartz, 1997) by the authoritarian ‘us’. By blaming a particular group’s culture for its issues and problems, McConaghy (2003, p. 17) argues that “... culture has become code for what is difficult in Indigenous education”. The application of binaries often means ‘taking sides’ (Nakata et al., 2012; Yunkaporta, 2009;) and the resultant research or knowledge then becomes a product of colonisation and a mechanism for reinforcing the dominant cultures’ imperative. In the

field of education, Nakata et al. (2012) remind us that this also "... positions non-Indigenous students as objects of the teaching act, not subjects of knowledge who have come from a range of social locations to learn and understand the most complex of knowledge contestations that possibly exist" (p. 134).

In considering various theoretical approaches, it is prudent not to rely on any one approach including one that presupposes an Indigenous or minority approach. Such an approach potentially positions the research on the periphery, limiting it by category, and thereby reducing its significance or rendering it 'Other' by those who fail to see its mainstream relevance. Wrench (2011) suggests that "... individual lives cannot be rendered comprehensible through a single theoretical framework" (p. 3-4) and so, are filtered through a post structural lens utilising four theoretical approaches in order to broaden opportunities and provide nuanced spaces to express and examine Aboriginal teachers' professional identities. It is intended that such an analysis will move Indigenous research beyond ethnicity and socio-cultural and historical background and position it as central to the mainstream academy.

This chapter reveals how post structuralism critiques 'truths' by casting a critical eye over assumptions and revealing potentially unpopular, contrary and competing views and experiences. This approach provides a broad interpretative space within which the researcher and participants consider their experiences and positioning. Foucault's (1979,1982) notions of discourse, power relations and subjectivity, and Bourdieu's (1986) conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital (particularly cultural, social and emotional capital) are used to explore the social space in which participants' enact their contextual and relational positioning and consider how this contributes to a sense of self in the development of their professional identities. Nakata's (2007b) cultural interface theory is significant here as it allows for both tension and

reconciliation (Yunkaporta, 2009) in the participants' localised and contextualised social spaces. These theoretical approaches provide complex layers within which to consider multiple dimensions of analysis that honour and respect the participants' voices and intent. Clandinin and Connelly's (1996, 1999, 2000) and Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) theorising on the narrative construction of identity provides participants with the opportunity to tell their stories and express themselves in ways that they feel best represent their experiences and feelings. It provides opportunities for counter narratives and discourses that avoid cultural determinism, reductionism and assumptions that tend to generate stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people.

The Cultural Interface

The cultural interface is a real and symbolic space (Buckskin, 2012, p. 63) where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges, cultures, values and beliefs intersect (Nakata, 2002). It is a space where similarities and differences and synergies and tensions engage and articulate multiple understandings and perspectives so as to open up cross-cultural dialogue to potentially create new and transformative discourses in education (Yunkaporta, 2009). It is also a space where tensions, contradictions and misunderstandings can limit the creation of new knowledge and reinforce western hegemonic knowledge and practice of learning 'about' Indigenous people and culture (Nakata, 2002, 2007b).

Nakata's cultural interface framework (2002, 2007b, 2011) offers a lens through which to understand Indigenous peoples' struggles and race issues in spaces where everyday life occurs. This creates sites of tensions, frustration and negotiations that are the lived experiences of colonised peoples subjected to dominant systems outside their own frames of reference (McGloin, 2009, p. 39). It is at these sites that discourses,

power relations and subjectivities are challenged and opposing perspectives acknowledged (Nakata, 2007a, p. 210). He suggests that understanding the limitations of agency at these sites (McGloin, 2009, p. 41) offers alternative or counter discourses for Aboriginal teachers' articulations of their lived experience. Nakata identifies three key principles that shape the interface: the locale of the learner which describes what the learner brings to the learning, the agency of the learner at the interface and the tension that arises when Indigenous and Western knowledges intersect (Hart et al., 2012, p. 710). The cultural interface is used to consider the locale and agency of the early career Aboriginal teachers in this study and analyse the tensions that arise within their specific socio-cultural contexts.

The cultural interface is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional space of dynamic relations constituted by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social, economic and political organisation. It is a space of shifting and complex intersections between people with different histories, experience, languages, agendas, aspirations and responses (p. 199).

Nakata's (2007b) cultural interface reinforces the importance of not privileging a particular viewpoint to avert the risk associated with replacing one assumption or stereotype with another. Through Indigenous standpoint theory, Nakata (2007b) analyses various research positions to challenge existing knowledge and power relations (McGloin, 2009, p. 40). Similarly, Freire's pedagogical model emphasises the politicisation of the knowledge/power relationship and how it structures knowledge as hierarchical. McGloin (2009) offers a useful summary of Nakata's framework:

the 'cultural interface' as a contested knowledge space; the continuities and discontinuities of Indigenous agency; and the continual tension that informs and limits what can/cannot be said in the everyday (p. 40)

Yunkaporta (2009) emphasises the balancing and reconciling potential of the cultural interface believing that this is central to many Indigenous worldviews (p. 53) and "... that synergy between diverse systems has always been the cornerstone of Aboriginal thought" (p. 51). In practice, he believes this theorising potentially "... privilege[s] local place-based knowledge in the curriculum and in the organisational culture of the school..." (p. 53) thus paving the way for common ground with non-local knowledge systems if these systems give equal status to local ones. However, while current curriculum models and systems of operation use rhetoric such as "Local Schools – Local decisions" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013), the underlying message is that locality (and the cultures, histories and knowledges that reside there) are irrelevant and rather, curriculum is based on universal 'truths', and pedagogy is controlled by external 'one-size-fits-all' standards. These contradictory positions are what Yunkaporta (2009, p. 54) believes causes conflict and tension at the cultural interface, recognising that binaries placing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal epistemologies as oppositional leads to a superficial rendering of everyone's experiences, a romanticisation of Aboriginal experiences and promotes separatism. Whilst Yunkaporta (2009) is sceptical about the role of post structural theorising which he believes is used to emphasise differences, tensions and inequities (p. 55), drawing together a narrative inquiry approach and Foucauldian principles of discourse, power and subjectivity provides opportunities for the local, personal and relational to emerge as distinct experiences as well as reflections on and challenges to collective experiences.

A Post-Structural Approach

Post structural theoretical approaches reflect a post-modern epistemology in response to modernism which emerged from the Enlightenment era (Ball, 1990; Sarup, 1993). It challenges positivist approaches to historiography and the grand narratives of progress as improvement through state approved projects, hierarchies of knowledge and power, and rational thought reasoned and defended by scientific evidence. A post structural approach deconstructs the normative production of knowledge, power and what it means to be human. A key component of this theory is the development of the construct of subjectivity whereby human reality is conceived as culturally specific, generally subconscious and generative (Mahrouse, 2005; Sarup, 1993). The notion of a ‘discourse-constructed’ subject with a fluid, dynamic and flexible identity who responds to various contextual situations is a significant move away from the modernist version of the fixed and stable self where decisions are based on an unchanging conscious core and position in society.

A post structural framework brings a focus to the heterogeneous, the subjective and the relative, and moves away from the grand narratives to the small stories of localised, contextual sites of struggle (Sarup, 1993, pp. 146-147) in which the narrative constructions of Aboriginal teachers’ professional identities can be considered within their specific, contextualised school environment. This approach provides opportunities to interrogate and problematise fixed and universal constructions explained by Zembylas (2003), “ Post-structuralist understanding of teacher identities as narrative constructions provide[s] an important understanding of how identity can be constructed that gives fruitful analytical tools in the analysis of teacher identity” (p. 220).

Foucault

This study is informed by Foucault's (1975, 1976, 1982) concepts of discourse, power relations and subjectivity. Foucault is a key intellectual in the movement away from modernity and was largely influenced largely by Nietzsche whose conception of genealogy rejects linear versions of past and present and grand narratives as historical fact, instead favouring local memories of site-based struggles that are discontinuous, disparate and complex. This rejection of one 'truth' paved the way for contested knowledge, relational power and the constitution of subjectivity.

Foucault's work (Flaskas & Humphreys, 1993, p. 4) starting with discourses (1954-72) as specific socially constructed patterns or ways of thought was followed by a close focus on the analysis of relational power rejecting the Marxist view of hierarchical power and the ways in which subjects internalise power in response to surveillance, coercion and external disciplinary measures. Lastly, he developed the category of personhood which is described and constructed through various forms of subjectivity and through ways in which people embody and enact technologies of the self.

Relevant to this study, Weedon's (1997, p. 18) application of Foucauldian concepts illuminates how the specific discursive fields of cultural institutions constitute subjectivity through material practices that involve relations of power and identity discourses that shape the minds and bodies of their subject. For instance, the way in which non-whites are 'othered' as racially coded bodies reflects a long history of negative primitive representations that sit in binary opposition to western 'rational' man, and are still recognisable in certain discourses of 'the Aboriginal teacher'. This effect is clearly noted in Reid and Santoro's (2006) study of Indigenous Australian teachers, which notes that, "... the effects of the history and culture of our nation's

relations with Indigenous peoples since colonisation are played out in the struggle for individual teacher identity among Indigenous people who choose to become teachers” (p. 153).

Mahrouse (2005) uses Foucault’s discourse, power and subjectivity to explore ways in which ‘minority’ teachers produce and reproduce themselves on the basis of assumptions and stereotypes that position them as ‘Other’. Her approach offers potential avenues for considering how Aboriginal teachers are positioned as well as how they position themselves and perhaps adopt these stereotyped constructions. These constructions include: assumptions about ethnicity-based ‘special’ skills, attributes and aspirations; possessing a heightened cultural awareness and understanding of racism; and holding qualifications that are based on these special skills rather than academic aptitude. They are often taken on by minority teachers who “... consistently report the expected reasons for their motivations for teaching and attribute these assumed characteristics and skills to themselves.” (p. 28). Mahrouse’s analysis highlights the interrelated complexity of discourse, power and subjectivity and illuminates ways in which contextual and relational systems of power contribute to individual subject positions and how this goes to the heart of who we are, who we want to be and how we are positioned by others.

Discourse

Foucault’s concept of discourse as described by Ball (1990, p. 2), maintains that “... what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships; they constitute both subjectivity and power relations”. Discourses are best understood as practices that methodically form the objects of which they speak (Sarup, 1993, p. 64) and shape understandings about ways of being, acting and living in discursively constructed social

realities (Wrench, 2011, p. 14). Ball (1990, p. 2) maintain that meanings arise from the social and institutional practices embedded in power relations which acknowledges that discourses and discursive practices are constitutive while at the same time recognises that people exercise choice in relation to these practices. Accordingly, a person's subjectivity can only be understood in terms of the availability of discourses at any given time, and that this constitutive force lies within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 47). This then is structured by the assumptions through which the speaker articulates the meaning they wish to convey, which in turn contains possibilities of thought (Ball, 1990, p. 3). Further, when a person speaks from a particular subject position they bring their personal biography, multiple positions and engagement with different forms of discourse as Davies and Harre (1990) suggest

Positioning ... is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself (p. 48).

Building on this notion, Anthias (2000) uses the term 'translocational positionality' to describe a site structured by class, gender, race and ethnicity (among others) that avoids cultural essentialism and reductionism. This locates the subject on the basis of struggles and the formation of solidarity rather than on individual or collective identity. These contextual and relational factors therefore play a significant role in positionality and functions to avoid the 'blame the victim' approach that is commonly found in dialogue about minorities.

Further, positioning is not necessarily intentional and the subject lives as an ongoing production of the self, invoking the principal of discontinuity where discourses can be antagonistic towards each other's meanings and representations. Foucault (1982)

notes that power, in being unstable and complex, can render discourses both an apparatus and a consequence of power. Similarly, Phillips and Nava (2011) refer to positioning through normalising discourses of the ‘good latino/a teacher’ (p. 75) and highlight the counter discourses that emerge to challenge these. Unhelpful binaries, essentialism and reductionism such as “ ... putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially black person” (Hall, 1992, p. 254) undermine decolonising efforts. Like Foucault, Caldous-Coulthard and Alves (2008, p. 121) and Weedon (1997, p. 18) view language as constituting rather than reflecting or expressing meaning and identity thus opening up subjectivities and identities as cultural practices. Language and rational consciousness, they believe, is only one dimension of subjectivity and identity.

Power Relations

While recognizing instrumentalist paradigms that conceive systemic and institutional power as significant, Foucault is more interested in specific localised versions of power and how they operate at the everyday, practical level. For him (1980b), power is not so much about who has it but how it is exercised:

To privilege the question of ‘how’ is not to eliminate the question of ‘what’ or ‘why’. Rather it is to present these questions in a different way, or to know if it is legitimate to imagine power which unites in itself a what, why and a how.

Foucault’s articulation of the relationship between knowledge and power is connected to the modes of surveillance, regulation and disciplinary power which is not necessarily exercised by an authority but rather, as a system of internalized scrutiny where each person is their own overseer. Sarup (1993) elaborates:

... complex differential power relationships extend to every aspect of our social, cultural and political lives, involving all manner of (often contradictory) ‘subject-positions’, and securing our assent not so much by the threat of punitive sanctions as by persuading us to internalize the norms and values that prevail within the social order (p. 74).

Foucault proposes that power is disseminated, unstable, exercised, and evident in discursive practices and that discourses produce power, which in turn persistently produces the self (Weedon, 1997; Zembylas, 2005). The discursive production of the self is at once restrictive and emancipatory, and as a result identity can be understood through the lenses of both resistance and domination. It is not only the recognition of this productive force of discourse, but the capacity of individuals to exercise choice in relation to this force that Davies and Harre (1990, p. 46) suggest is one of the prevailing strengths of a poststructuralist approach.

Foucault (1977, 1982) identified the centrality of education and its discourses to an understanding the power-knowledge relationship (Hoskins, 1990, p. 31). Within these social practices, discipline is exercised to create ‘teachable beings’ and the examination brings together the exercise of power and constitution of knowledge. Foucault’s notion of the examination is not the current application as in the formal assessment of learning, but in the sense of examination of oneself, often referred to as power-knowledge technologies in other fields as well as education. These technologies facilitate constant forms of surveillance and coercive control through the operationalisation of generally accepted values and judgments. Here, disciplinary power is internalised by the subject, manipulating the body in ways that render it valuable and compliant (Foucault, 1976). This normalizing gaze is acted on the individual via comparison, resulting ultimately in “... disciplined teachers who conform to norms and assure the proper transfer of knowledge to students” (Phillips & Nava, 2011, p. 74).

Taking into account the broader historical, political and socio-cultural structures of Australian society is critical to this study as these structures are strongly reflected in the field of education while the research participants are drawn from a group that is not strongly represented within this. Crucial here is the recognition that power is potentially

exercised everywhere, within both the disenfranchised and the vested as Mahrouse (2005) note, “ ... power relations are rooted and circulate in interactions with other, and are made manifest in practices” (p. 36). Accordingly, power builds on itself, reproduces itself and is multifarious rather than one-sided; it is circular and reflexive, and as subjects attempt to assert, retain and reassert power to maintain privilege and authority, it is therefore more complex than the dominated/dominator dichotomy. This idea is crucial to a study on teaching and learning to teach, as power constantly shifts between teacher, student, pre-service teacher and parent and any one group can be powerful or powerless depending on individual interpretation and collective perception, and the prevailing socio-cultural institutional structures at the time.

Subjectivity

While subjectivity and identity can be used interchangeably (Wrench, 2011, p. 9), I will use these specifically when appropriate and always as cognisant of each other (Weedon, 1997). Subjectivity allows for more individualistic, locally contextualised interpretations as in the uniqueness of each person, while identity connotes a sense of collectivity (Wrench, 2011, p. 8) through identifying with a particular group or position. Together these constructs provide a framework for considering collective, personal and professional identities. As Weedon (1997) states:

One of the key ideological roles of identity is to curtail the plural possibilities of subjectivity inherent in the wider discursive field and to give individuals a singular sense of who they are and where they belong. This process involves recruiting subjects to specific meaning and values constituted within a particular discourse and encouraging identification. ... identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not (p. 19).

Moreover, subjectivity and identity can be negotiated through historical, political and cultural practices that exist within social power relations which in turn construct the subject positions and forms of identity available (Weedon, 1997, p. 10).

The fact that the participants in this study are a marginalised minority still resisting oppression and struggling for justice, means that group identity is not only significant to who they are but is crucial to personal, cultural and political survival.

Foucault (1982) initially defined the subject as being constructed as an object of knowledge and that this objectification and classification occurred through language. Later articulations of his theorising by others, centred on creating binaries through the processes of internal and external division. These dividing practices effectively individualised, normalised, categorised, controlled and constructed subjectivities within power relations and codified these through knowledge (Wrench, 2011, pp. 10-11). The productive dimensions of power engage individuals in the construction of the ‘self’ as one comes to understand him/herself as subject. Discourses create subject positions for minority or ‘Other’ teachers to adopt and these are often racialised and normalised in the literature (Mahrouse, 2005). These discursive practices impact on how minority teachers in educational settings are understood and reproduced and “... the labelling in itself is an example of how systems of differentiation are based on discourses of ‘race’, whereby certain bodies are ‘minoritised’” (p. 31). However, in the complex and multilayered fields of discursive power and subjectivity, adopting minority discourses can also elicit respect and value, and function strategically and politically to establish a legitimate presence. As Mahrouse (2005, p. 38) explains, “[E]xamining the dynamic process of how individuals actively become subjects is key to developing an understanding of power that avoids a reductive analysis and enables one which can account for change.”

Foucault’s later works (1987), focussed on ‘technologies of the self’ involving the way in which people act on themselves to resist or comply to their positioning in the process of constituting and transforming themselves. Notions of self-knowledge, self-

mastery and self-governance are embedded in practices drawn from cultural and social institutions that encapsulate how one relates to oneself and experiences one's own subjectivities. This underpins Foucault's (1987) notion of 'care of the self' and the constitution of the ethical subject incorporating obligations to oneself and to others. This conceptualisation is useful in discussions where a sense of ethical and moral obligation is common in the constitution of professional identities in teaching; it takes on a further dimension for many Aboriginal teachers who feel a responsibility towards their community and people in this process.

One of the strengths of using a post structural framework is that conceptions of both subjectivity and identity provide opportunities for disrupting normative discourses, reflecting on counter-discourses and addressing the potential binary positioning when an individual who identifies as an Aboriginal person and is in the process of becoming a teacher. To this end, Phillips and Nava (2011) problematized the subject position of the teacher of 'colour' in order to explore ways in which these teachers negotiated their subjectivities through the production of counter discourses that ironically created new normalising effects, and as such, highlighted the complexity of the process.

Bourdieu

The work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1986) provides conceptual tools for examining the social space in which early career teachers form and enact their professional identities and how they achieve a sense of self as they begin their teaching journey. His research emphasises the significance of participants' knowledge construction and how they enact their lives, including the social and cultural conditions that informs their actions and responses. Relevant to this study are Bourdieu's fundamentally related constructs of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*. These powerful

conceptual tools avoid dichotomies such as subject/object, private/public and agency/structure because these dualisms become meaningless as the embodied subject is shaped by, shapes and reshapes society (Zembylas, 2007, p. 443).

Habitus

Bourdieu (1990) argues that habitus is central to understanding that objects of knowledge are constructed, not given and that this reinforces his theory of practice as practice.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

While constructed by individuals themselves as Habibis & Walter (2009) suggest in their definition "... the set of beliefs, attitudes, skills and practices possessed and employed by individuals in their daily life" (p. 47), habitus is closely bound to the lived experiences that result from an individual engaging with the external world (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 54). This acknowledges the influence of history in producing individual and collective practices as a socially constituted system of dispositions where habitus produces the embodied norms of everyday life (Zembylas, 2007).

Habitus represents Bourdieu's attempt to surmount the agency-structure divide as it conflates structuralist and social psychological analysis (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 47). It rejects the dualism of body and mind and offers a framework for comprehending how social structures function at the level of independent practice. Bourdieu maintains that habitus operates unconsciously through internal beliefs that direct individual action but are nevertheless drawn from external social forces. The role

of past socialisation is strongly emphasised in the habitus, and Bourdieu maintains that an individual's choices stem from practical dispositions that emerge from acting within temporal and spatial conditions. Importantly, terminology such as 'practical knowledge' and 'sense of practice' is used to describe the informal action that is practice. This notion of practice is absent from structuralist versions of human agency, which state that actors are "... strategic improvisers who respond dispositionally ..." (Swartz, 1997, p. 100) to diverse situational opportunities and constraints. A dynamic notion comprised of schemes that not only produce practices, the habitus also enables the perception and acknowledgement of practices through systems of classification.

Notably, habitus tends to shape the action of an individual in such a way that existing opportunity structures are maintained. This means that opportunities for success or failure are internalised and then converted into aspirations, attitudes and outlooks which are then externalised in action that reproduces the objective structure of life opportunities. Bourdieu (2000) later adds that dispositions integrating past experiences are transposable in that they adapt and reproduce as circumstances change. Thus habitus is a generative and dynamic embodied practice influenced significantly by historical and socio-cultural contexts and so not entirely prearranged (Zembylas, 2007, p. 448). The notion of habitus can be readily applied to teaching where;

... habitus serves to mediate their (teachers) experience in schools with their beliefs about education and the nature of teaching, and the relationships they have with others. As such, it then helps them to understand who they are and how to act within schools and classrooms (Mockler & Sachs, 2006, p. 5).

Zembylas (2007) connects habitus to emotions in teaching, arguing that in an affective economy (where habitus is an embodied accrual and effect of dispositions), habitus accumulates and is invested for specific reasons. Sites of transformative emotional practice resulting from a generative approach to habitus, provides space for

new affective connections. These connections are crucial for teachers' management and expression of emotions in school settings.

For Aboriginal teachers, there is a degree of uniqueness and similarity across social spaces that include teaching Aboriginal Studies as an Aboriginal person, Aboriginal Studies teaching, and teaching in general. Each participant's habitus, as a set of embodied values and dispositions gained from their cultural history and constructed over a lifetime are experienced within particular socio-cultural fields. Similar practices, values and beliefs provide a group membership that individually equates to 'coordination of practices' and collectively as 'practices of coordination.' Sustaining styles, tastes and practices that provide individuals with a sense of self in relation to the group is a key function of habitus (Wrench, 2011, p. 24). The social spaces in which habitus occurs are what Bourdieu refers to as fields.

Field

Bourdieu's notion of field refers to the various domains of social life in which struggles for social position and advancement are enacted by individuals. Relations of domination and subordination are inherent in these social spaces (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 50) which Bourdieu (1998) defines as:

... structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (pp. 40-41).

Even though fields exist at the level of institutions, Bourdieu sees them as being actively constructed by actors who employ their habitus to access, accumulate and monopolise the capital that circulates within them (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 50) and

as such, “[F]ields may be thought of as structured spaces that are organised around specific types of capital or combinations of capital” (Swartz, 1997, p. 117).

Accordingly, struggles take place within and between fields on both collective and individual levels and the mechanisms that function within specific fields use different forms of capital as a means of exchange (Habibis & Walter, 2009, pp. 50-51). Fields therefore, are multidimensional spaces of struggle within the broader social and structural domains with variable boundaries. The field of Aboriginal Studies for instance, incorporates a set of structuring relationships between discursive articulations of historically, politically and culturally subjective disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical approaches and the various participants that shape habitus and concurrently determine what counts as valuable capital (Wrench, 2011, p. 25). Where common dispositions and properties are shared, interactions allow individuals to learn subconscious taken-for-granted truths that account for their level of contentment in that field and are congruent with their sense of habitus.

Moreover, the reflexive relationship between field and habitus has implications for both Castell’s (1997) notion of the project identity and Sach’s (2001) conception of the activist professional to transform the negative impact of instrumentalist accreditation and accountability regimes on teachers’ professional identity. This then provides space and opportunity to reposition themselves and alter the field (Mockler & Sachs, 2006), and for Aboriginal teachers the opportunity to harness their habitus for transformative pedagogies with the field of Aboriginal Studies.

Capital

Bourdieu’s theorising in the education arena is significant as it represents an area of struggle over access to social resources in which hierarchies are reproduced through access to various forms of capital. This application of the concept is useful for

exploring how participants are positioned and/or struggle for position within a particular field and strive for rule changes when their habitus is incongruent and/or vulnerable. He proposes that the differing levels of educational attainment amongst variant social groups can be directly attributed to the levels of capital that they hold (Habibis & Walter, 2009, p. 131). As all forms of capital are the results of investments and resources that can be transformed into each other, social class fractures can emerge explaining how the inclusion and exclusion of particular cultural groups occurs (Zembylas, 2007). Similarities can thus be drawn to Foucault's notion of relational power which is not possessed by individuals or institutions but becomes " ... coextensive with a complex set of relations between different fields" (McNay, 1999, p. 106). Bourdieu's (1997) notions of cultural, social and emotional capital are germane to this study; however, it is critical to articulate economic capital as a key concept that is foundational to other forms of capital.

Economic capital

Economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital; it is the form of capital from which all the other forms can be derived (Bourdieu, 1997, pp. 53-54) and is, "... immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47). Put simply, it is the wealth, income, inheritance and material assets that can be exchanged with and for other types of capital (Wrench, 2011, p. 28).

Cultural capital

Cultural capital exists in three forms (Bourdieu, 1997, pp. 47-50). In its embodied state, it is in the form of " ... long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (p. 47); in the objectified state, it exists in the shape of cultural goods, particularly,

pictures, books, art or instruments; and in the institutionalised state, it is embodied in academic qualifications that produce a “ ... certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture” (p. 50). It can also include tacit knowledge as a display of cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245), a particularly relevant consideration in terms of the experiences of early career Aboriginal teachers.

Throsby (1999, p. 6) draws on *the United Nations World Commission on Culture and Development's* (1995) claim that two distinct constructions of culture are relevant in relation to cultural capital. These include culture as a set of activities and secondly as a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that evolve over time and are integral to the way in which a society functions (p. 202).

Therefore, the notion of cultural capital as "... an asset that contributes to cultural value. ... [and] the stock of cultural value embodied in an asset" (Throsby, 1999, p. 6) is worth considering in the light of its implications for this study. For Aboriginal teachers, there is an expectation that they will possess the necessary cultural capital for teaching Aboriginal Studies. If however they don't fulfil this expectation, then their habitus may become vulnerable as others' perceptions of them within the field are negatively affected. This can lead to the perception that they are not 'real' Aboriginal people or that there is very little curricular value in Aboriginal cultures and histories. Moreover, Aboriginal teachers are often questioned about their teaching qualifications, which are perceived by some as deficit, or otherwise obtained by some means of deceit or via an 'easy pathway' (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 144). Such beliefs undermine these teacher's opportunities for advancement in the field as well as opportunities to mobilise cultural capital.

Social Capital

When relationships between individuals and group are invoked and Bourdieu's habitus and the cumulative effects of education impact on economic and social outcomes (Throsby, 1999, p. 4), cultural capital becomes entwined with social capital. Where cultural capital equates to various forms of knowledges and skills, social capital refers to mobilising these knowledges and skills through networking.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. The volume of the social capital possessed depends on the size of the network of connections that can be effectively mobilised and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in its own right by each of those to whom one is connected (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 51).

Putnam (1995), who arguably popularized this notion to a broad audience, identifies two types of social capital - bonding and bridging - based largely on white 'middle-American' notions of community which classify social capital into normative 'good' and 'bad' binaries. In an uncritical social space, these binaries support the 'good' capital and remove the 'bad' capital, often perceived to be prevalent in marginalised communities (Brough & Bond, 2009, p. 248). Dominant moral positions of hegemonic communities deem the 'good' capital to be the solution and this ethnocentric, deficit-based approach is often appropriated for accountability measures. The application of bonding capital (in like social networks) and bridging capital (participation in diverse networks) to Indigenous communities invokes the idea that while these communities might have high bonding capital their low bridging capital both causes, and is caused by their relative disadvantage. These ideas are further elaborated in Brough and Bond (2009) who suggest that:

Rather than being transfixed by the good/bad, strong/weak social capital dichotomies, we suggest a more nuanced understanding of the Indigenous cultural context of social capital within social policy goals ... rethinking of identity in which Aboriginality and social order are not mutually exclusive (p. 255).

Stone (2001, as cited in Brough & Bond, 2009, pp. 247-248) offers a post structural rendering of social capital that not only acknowledges the inherent power relationships in the operation of social capital but the nuanced, contextual aspects as well. Here, the notion of structure represents the characteristics and dimensions of the networks, and 'content' represents relations within these networks such as trust, reciprocity and social agency. This conception emphasises relationship quality and more readily accommodates marginalised groups such as Aboriginal communities (Brough & Bond, 2009, p. 253).

Collective experiences of oppression and marginalisation as well as more positive experiences of political/legal acknowledgement provide new opportunities to develop communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) that are augmented by the social and cultural capital that traditionally marginalised groups now bring to educational discourse. Significantly, in the current climate of social inclusion, Aboriginal education priorities and respect for the perceived returns of a diverse society has meant that these knowledges, understandings and skills are now sought by other educational agencies.

Emotional Capital

Emotional capital is viewed as an extension of Bourdieu's framework of capitals (but not one he explicitly refers to) that can be drawn upon " ... to shape and (re)order social positions within a social field ... " (Santoro, 2010, p. 419) as well as be exchanged for and converted into other forms of capital (Zembylas, 2007, p. 444). This includes the management and application of conscious and unconscious emotions in

order to acquire cultural capital and can, according to Manion (2006, p. 95), be viewed as a valuable asset for marginalised groups with lower levels of other forms of capital.

A number of theorists posit various interpretations and applications of emotional capital as an analytical tool for ascertaining the role of emotions in the workplace as well as the gendered and classed aspects of the concept (Gillies, 2006; Manion, 2006; O'Brien, 2008; Reay, 2000; Santoro, 2010; Zembylas, 2007). Initially, emotional capital was considered to be an extension of social capital, where social and cultural resources were mainly generated through affective relations within the domain of the family. It has been perceived as a resource more often possessed and utilised by women rather than men (Nowotny, 1981). Reay (2000) on the other hand, emphasises Bourdieu's analysis that women maintain family and social relationships and so views emotional capital as gendered capital possessed by women and utilised in order to maintain relationships. She highlights the importance of considering emotional capital as an investment in others and suggests that disadvantaged women have little access to other forms of capital and so will have diminished opportunities to obtain and invoke emotional capital. Manion (2006), in her study of marginalised women in The Gambia disagrees with this, believing that living in the margins with little other capital to draw on creates the conditions to generate emotional capital so that it, "... may be their most abundant resource – their main weapon – and therefore must be seen to play a key role in the acquisition of dominant cultural capital through and in the field of education" (pp. 99-100). These women claim that in becoming professionals, their children will gain increased economic, social and cultural capital so as to position themselves as decision makers within the education community.

In a post-structuralist framework, Zembylas (2007) focuses on ways in which emotions are regulated, normalised and controlled by and for the subject, as well as

exchanged for other forms of capital. This contribution to the generation of habitus supports the understanding of students' and teachers' emotional practices as forms of resistance. He suggests that Bourdieu's relational concepts of habitus and field contextualise emotional capital politically and socially, thus evoking a sense of collective identity. As discursive emotional practices are shared by members within a social group, they function as identifiers and so are inherently linked to the formation and perception of the individual and group's habitus. Zembylas's analysis offers insight into the potential applications of the concept of emotional capital in understanding how emotions and the maintenance of 'affective economies' influence educational experiences.

In a study of Indigenous Australian teachers, Santoro (2010) claims that it is the women in their local Aboriginal community such as mothers, grandmothers and aunts, who generate the emotional capital for these teachers to obtain their qualifications in order to become agents of social change within their community and the wider education domain. She notes the influence of their mothers "... as 'political' people, having had long histories of being politically active within their communities and beyond" (p. 425). This is supported by Mirza (2006) who notes:

Our ideas of social change are often about confrontation and clamour, gladiators and heroes, the men that lead the movements, ... not about quiet women's work like my grandmother's ... but it is the women who are the backbone of the everyday struggle (p. 141).

She suggests that these women are proactive and driven by their adverse circumstances, becoming 'post modern warriors' and challenging traditionally held notions and ideals of femininity, mothering and nurturing (Santoro, 2010, pp. 426-427).

In this study, the role of women, particularly the participants' grandmothers, mothers and aunts, is crucial to motivating them and sustaining their efforts to become qualified teachers. They impressed upon their children the importance of education

even when maintaining the high level of commitment needed to achieve this goal caused personal and family stress due to contextual factors such as poverty. These women acknowledged that a better education than they themselves had would provide a better life (increased economic, social and cultural capital) not only for the benefit of their family but for the Aboriginal community as a whole.

Narrative Inquiry

This research applies Clandinin and Connolly's (1996) articulation of narrative inquiry as " ... the study of the stories that people come to experience, live, represent, and tell in the world and the classroom" (p. 1576). It focuses on counter-narratives or the stories that are not commonly available, as narratives provide opportunities for illuminating the reality of teachers' experiences at the cultural interface and within the context of the current neo-liberal political environment (Mockler, 2011). The standardisation, essentialism and reductionism that currently mark teacher's work, potentially renders teachers compliant deliverers of 'best practice' (Sachs, 2001, p. 151; Mockler, 2011, p. 518). In response to accreditation and accountability regimes described by Ball (2003) as performativity, teachers experience success, inner conflict and/or resistance as they struggle to articulate a professional identity they feel comfortable with. For teachers, a narrative approach can reveal their diverse, complex, and often contradictory responses in meaningful and empowering ways.

Further, narrative inquiry is culturally and contextually appropriate as it can " ... displace dominant discourse, allowing marginalised narratives to be positioned more prominently in contemporary conceptualisations of culture" (Guntarik, 2009, p. 306), providing space for the invisible to become visible and the silent to be heard.

‘Storying’ is a culturally appropriate means of expression and communication in Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures, (Barton, 2004, p. 519; Benham, 2007), and so provides opportunities to elucidate authentic and engaging interpretations of the lived experiences and emerging identities of Aboriginal teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Narrative inquiry in this study will be viewed through a post structural lens to consider how Aboriginal pre-service teachers “...construct (them) selves within specific institutional, organisational, discursive and local contexts ... (treating) narratives as lived experience” (Chase, 2000, p. 658). This post modern approach to narrating the self opens up space for the narrator to reject the ‘victim’ label often attached to marginalized groups (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

Weedon (2004) suggests that for marginalised groups historical narratives can articulate collective experiences and personal and social places that are structured by class, gender and ethnicity, so that “ ... a sense of belonging can be variously found in families, communities and groups united by oppression (real or imagined) or marginalisation” (p. 156). This in turn highlights the significance of voice, of having opportunities to be heard, recognised and potentially contribute to the formation of a positive identity. Weedon (2004) continues that the “ ... cultural narratives of minorities - historical and financial - are one place to begin to acquire knowledge needed to dislodge both hegemonic narratives and the binaries they perpetuate” (p. 159) and notes that many writers are “ ... mobilising recent history in support of the post-colonial project of decolonising Black and indigenous identities, producing new forms of identity and reshaping ideas of culture and nature” (p. 158).

Futher, Davies and Harre (1990, p. 52) suggest that narratives draw on a knowledge of social structures and arrangements, and how people are positioned within those arrangements, that is, their ‘social location’. The nature of these structures are

coercive and once an individual has assumed a position as their own, their worldview is inexorably shaped by the outlook of that position:

Stories are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgements made relevant and the subject positions made available within them. In this way, post-structuralism shades into narratology” (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 48).

Clandinin and Roseik, (2007, p. 51-55) suggest that while there can be theoretical tensions between post structural and a narrative approaches, it is possible to find common discursive spaces for inquiry, analysis, and interpretation. These spaces respect the stories of the participants while being deeply concerned about the way in which social structures and political acts impact on them. Certainly, a Foucauldian stance complements a narrative inquiry approach in that it provides opportunities for a nuanced contextual and relational treatment of individual experience within institutions such as schools to examine the discursive ways in which actors position themselves and are positioned by others (Mahrouse, 2005). Nakata’s (2007b) cultural interface further privileges localised spaces and positionings to provide another (Indigenous) lens through which to consider Foucault’s theorising while Clandinin and Roseik (2007) point to the value of viewing narratives through a post structural lens to potentiate the productive power of a transformative intervention that is neither totalising nor essentialising.

The following chapter details the application of narrative methodology in this study in the light of the theoretical positions posited here. An overview of Indigenous research approaches contextualises the theoretical and practical applications of a narrative framework that includes a significant investment in researcher reflexivity and ethical inquiry in order to foreground participant voices. The presentation and analysis

of four narratives elicits emerging themes that reinforce and disrupt the discursive production of the 'Aboriginal teacher'.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Addressing sensitive and complex issues for early career teachers requires a qualitative research approach that provides the opportunity and space to privilege and respect the voices of those who generously share their time and stories of experience. Qualitative research, as distinct from quantitative research, is an ecological approach located in natural, contextualized settings that make sense of particular phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Lincoln and Guba's (1985) seminal text *Naturalistic Inquiry* challenges the positivist world view that emphasises our existence within a single reality, by insisting on contextually dependent, multiple constructed realities that shape our worldview. This not only acknowledges that individuals bring to these settings their own meanings, understandings and positioning but also destabilizes traditional research practices that seek to essentialise and set identities, positions and ideas.

Positivist research paradigms produce and reproduce 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991) and so it is important to push up against their limitations and exclusionary tendencies. Research inquiry is about human beings and as Carger (2005) states, "... [it] is far more than an academic exercise ... [it is] ... the revealing of self, the sharing of self against which most researchers are taught to combat with the mighty arm of objectivity" (p. 240). Clough (2002) makes the point that "... all factual representations of reality, even statistical representations, are narratively constructed" (p. 2) and so rejects statements that narrative description is limited and naïve. Moreover, qualitative approaches provide opportunities to address relationships of power embedded in the research process through researcher critical reflection. As

Josselson (2007) notes, “If we underestimate our power, we may harm; if we overestimate it, we risk paralysis or the cessation of narrative research. Finding the balance is the challenge” (p. 553).

This chapter begins with the type of questions that arise and the decisions that need to be made when conducting research. This includes locating oneself in the research process, and foregrounding the importance of ethical inquiry and ongoing reflexivity. The context of the study is then described and data collection and analysis methods linked to the theoretical underpinnings of the study to illuminate individual as well as collective issues and themes. Finally data representation is discussed to address issues of authenticity and trustworthiness in the research process.

Methodological Considerations

Looking at Mockler’s (2012) ‘methodological story’ about attempting to achieve authenticity of design, process and analysis in qualitative research (p. 159), prompted me to consider the location of ‘self’ as researcher in this study. Considering and reflecting on one’s ontology, epistemology and axiology in choosing a research topic and formulating research questions is central to choosing a particular methodology (p. 160), as Mockler (2012) explains:

One’s epistemology is necessarily formed by the answers to questions relating to ontology and the nature of reality, and the research paradigm within which researchers operate is largely a consequence of their epistemological beliefs ... [which] ... may give rise to the use of more than epistemology, research paradigm or methodology within a single study (pp.160-161).

My beliefs around social justice, the existence of multiple meanings, realities and truths and the right opportunity to express and position oneself in ways that are self fulfilling but not narcissistic, led me to consider a narrative inquiry approach within a post structural framework. This enabled me to foreground and privilege the voices of

those who rarely receive or expect it, and to question and destabilise the structures, power and processes that attempt to silence and deny these voices. Key concerns around the “... socially just and democratic production of knowledge and ideas” (Mockler, 2012, p. 163), meant that the notion of ethics is deeply embedded in such a study.

Locating Self

My positioning as a non-Aboriginal researcher within an Aboriginal context is significant in this research study. My personal identity as a non-Aboriginal person from a working class background is enhanced by my long-term relationship with a Luritja (central Australia) man who was born and raised in Redfern and by our three Aboriginal children. As we continue to live in inner city Sydney, we have long standing ties with the local Aboriginal community through family networks and local sports and have raised our children in ways that embody these connections in their identity as Aboriginal people with diverse heritage. Engagement in the local Aboriginal community as a family combined with my teaching experiences in mainly disadvantaged inner city schools and long-term involvement in Aboriginal education influences my professional identity.

Significantly, my identity as a teacher is paramount in my researcher role in the field of education and role as teacher educator. This role that signified the first opportunity for women in my family to gain a university education and contribute to society outside of the normative roles of housekeeper and mother, and so I continually feel privileged to be able to contribute through education.

With my initial appointment as a special education primary trained teacher to a secondary school with a significant Aboriginal population in the politically contentious world of 1980s Redfern, I embarked on a teaching career characterised by culture shock

and the anger and frustration of not knowing about the Aboriginal history of my country. My determination to gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to make a difference in the lives of the Aboriginal children and the families and community members that I am privileged to be accepted by, has seen Aboriginal education underpin who I am as a teacher. I now carry this into teacher education in Aboriginal Studies and educational theory and practice. Upon reflection, this accidental opportunity fuelled my desire to contribute to the empowering outcomes of equity and justice in education. Tierney and Lincoln's (1997) statement resonates here with my current role as a researcher:

The desire to create change, lessen the oppression, or to assist in the development of a more equitable world sets up a different research dynamic from that of the disengaged academic whose main purpose is to add to the stock of theoretical knowledge (p.viii).

Ethical Inquiry

A key consideration in any research endeavour is conducting the study with integrity, openness and honesty by considering what culturally appropriate research might mean in a specific context. This includes recognising inherent dilemmas in qualitative research such as the dual role of developing an interpersonal relationship with participants including responsibility for their dignity, privacy and well being and the professional responsibility of accurate, scholarly and authentic interpretation of participant's narratives (Josselson, 2007, p. 538). Further, Josselson's (2007) warning that "[T]he researcher must also be aware of the potential to stereotype or subtly denigrate others and the ways in which his/her attitudes have been shaped by his/her social positioning ..." (p. 556) is relevant given the historical and socio-cultural context of this study and the inherent power dynamics of research.

Significant too is the potential to automatically position early career Aboriginal teachers as 'Other' where interpretation and analysis becomes dependent on and/or

contextualised by their Aboriginality. Rather, it is crucial to explore a range of factors that are not contingent upon racialised subjectivities and their accompanying knowledge 'truths'. This means that an awareness of assumptions and stereotypes about cultural traits and responses by and about Aboriginal teachers and is important to illuminate the expression of multiple, diverse and inconsistent identity constructs (Reid & Santoro, 2006).

Aboriginal peoples' tacit understanding of an over-politicised identity construct in historically, socially and culturally contextualised sites provides deep understandings and diverse interpretations of images of self. Illuminating this phenomena, as well as understanding and acknowledging that not all Aboriginal people subscribe to this view, will contribute to theorising and discussion around the construction and enactment of early career teachers' professional identities. Further, there is potential for these early career Aboriginal teachers' experiences to be informative and illuminating for all early career teachers if we are to truly value alternative and shared perspectives. As these narratives reveal and attempt to make sense of processes and experiences in becoming a teacher, they will resonate with and bring relevance to broader contexts and perspectives (Wrench, 2011, p. 42).

Context

An understanding of context - place, space and time - is a further feature of interpretative qualitative research. Context for Aboriginal teachers is complicated by historically and politically produced socio-cultural settings within and beyond the Australian education system. For Aboriginal people, this story is typically one of oppression, exclusion, control and tolerance but it is not everyone's experience and so to explore the diversity of Aboriginal lived experience in complex contexts is meaningful. The contested and often ambiguous space between western and Indigenous

knowledge and modes is acknowledged in Nakata's (2002, 2007b, 2011) cultural interface framework. The socio-cultural intersections of daily life and the power relations in school environments that complicate this space (Hart et al., 2012) are significant factors in understanding expected and unexpected reactions and responses from the early career teachers. Importantly, Nakata recognises that this complexity cannot be reduced to western/Indigenous binaries and that non-Indigenous viewpoints cannot be assumed or stereotyped either. He notes that privileging one viewpoint over another without rigorous reflexivity and analysis also causes tension and so emphasises the importance of listening to diverse voices.

Positioning

Positioning is an important consideration from two key vantage points: how it operates within the power dynamics of a research setting, and how the participants' engage subject positions as a resource to narratively construct their identity (Soriede, 2006, p. 527). Interrogating the practical implications of these considerations aligns with post structural theorising of subjectivity, power and identity. Davies and Harre's (1990) positioning theory suggests that socially constructed phenomena are discursively produced within specific contexts and in relation to particular relationships (including the research relationship).

Critical to empowerment is a method of research inquiry that provides participants with the opportunity to position themselves in a preferred way which may or may not be the same as that which is assigned to them by others. As participants in this study are often positioned as 'Other' foregrounding their lived experiences through narrative provides opportunities to destabilise and decentre assumptions and knowledge 'truths'. How the Aboriginal teachers then identify with and take up certain subject positions while rejecting or distancing themselves from others can be illuminated

through a narrative inquiry space in which to construct, reconstruct and negotiate multiple identities which interrogate essentialist understandings of identity and Aboriginal people (Soreide, 2007). The way in which positioning occurs illuminates its interactive and relational nature and contributes to an understanding of identity, subjectivity and experience including the contradictory, the dissonant and the ambivalent.

Voice

Another key consideration when deciding on a methodology that explores lived experience is the importance of voice. This study aims to illuminate the voice of an historically, culturally and socially positioned ‘Other’ where voice has, at various times and in various contexts been ignored and/or excluded. In their longitudinal study of Aboriginal teachers experiences in schools, Reid et al. (2004, p.309) support this sentiment by stating a clear “... need for detailed first hand accounts of the experience of Indigenous teachers... [and a] reconceptualisation of the issues confronting Indigenous teachers in their initial training and working lives”.

As an emerging identity construct of the 1980s (Britzman, 2003) ‘voice’ sought to privilege the (often) voiceless, such as children, women, and minorities by raising questions of power and empowerment. Britzman (2003) asserts that voice is complex and often struggles within “... institutional imperatives and constraints, curricular pressures, and the social, historical, personal and economic contexts of learning ” (p. 19). Voice enables opportunities for participant representation of lived experience through storying events and emotions.

In her narrative inquiry of cooperating teachers during the professional experience, Goodfellow (1995, p. 41) identifies inner voice and outer voice as crucial to the articulation of personal meaning. Inner voice, she asserts, consists of thoughts

expressed in speech and dialogue and reflects introspection and a ‘consciousness of meaning making’, while outer voice consists of external expressions and actions. Similarly, Beattie (2013) expresses this as three dialogues – the one we have with ourselves, the one we have with others, and the dialogue between these two. From the narrator’s perspective, narrative is crucial to understanding how these dialogues play out in the real world to enable a more holistic understanding of how individuals construct meaning in their lives. Beattie also emphasises the opportunity within a narrative space for researchers and participants to be engaged in the process together. This collaborative narrative space opens up the possibility for applying Freire’s (1970) notion of deep reciprocity where the teacher learns and the learner teaches which can be cathartic, emancipatory and empowering for everyone. Bessarab and Ng’anda (2010) refer to this as therapeutic yarning where “... meaning making emerging in the yarn can empower and support the participant to re-think their understanding of the experience in new and different ways” (p. 41). In thinking about the cross-cultural nature of this research study, a reflective and fluid inquiry that is situated in historicised and contextualised sites “... enables us to explore and portray the shifting, often paradoxical, nature of our cross-cultural lives” (He, 2002, p. 5). Finally, Carger (2005) emphasises that “... story is the most time-honoured way in which cultures preserve the past and shape the future” (p. 237) and so a narrative approach ‘feels right’ in this setting.

Ethical Considerations

Firstly, it is important to state that official university and education department ethics procedures for human research were followed and documents such as Participant Information Sheets and Informed Consent letters were signed by both researcher and

participant and thoroughly explained, including the right to withdraw from the study at anytime (See Appendix). Despite the potential loss of data, it is a crucial element of the ethics process that must be managed according to the protocols of the approving body. These documents protect both the participants and the researcher as they clarify the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in the research process.

Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are key priorities for ethical research. In research methodologies such as narrative and life history in which the pool of potential participants is small and the depth of information obtained is individually revealing (Josselson, 2007; Mockler, 2012), anonymity is crucial and so pseudonyms are used for the participants and for any other ‘characters’ crucial to the narrative. Subsequently, details about each participant, such as their location and aspects of their specific personal background were changed in such a way so as not to alter the integrity of the data. This worked to safeguard narrator identity as much as possible without impacting on significant elements of the narrative. Further, in one of my narratives the pre-service teacher’s cooperating teacher was instrumental to the story and so while the term ‘cooperating teacher’ is often used; a pseudonym for this person was integral to maintaining an authentic human element in the story. This highlights the need for trust in the researcher-participant relationship to ensure as much as can be possible the protection of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity so that participation is meaningful and the potential for rich data can be realised. But as Josselson (2007) acknowledges, “I cannot disguise enough so that those who know them well *and* know they are in the study would not recognise them” (p. 552) and so suggests that informants be careful about disclosing their participation in the study.

Josselson (2007, p. 545) notes that within a narrative approach, the emergent relationship between the researcher and participant cannot be predicted and so ethics

must be constantly considered. The participant-researcher relationship or as Mockler (2012) calls it ‘the relationship bargain’ (p. 163), is embedded in narrative inquiry and the ‘data’ obtained emanates from deeply human experiences that require an empathetic and respectful ear (Josselson, 2007, p. 539). Participant responses to this relationship reflect the researcher’s capacity for appropriate non-judgemental emotional responses which in turn is evidenced by the degree to which the participant demonstrates openness and self-disclosure. As the interview is the primary place in which the relationship develops, it is important to acknowledge that this dynamic is constructed by the researcher to support his/her understanding of the particular phenomenon, and so a direct power play comes into operation (Josselson, 2007).

Josselson (2007) attests to the importance of knowing about the social and cultural worlds of the participants to understand the implications for communication and protocol and ensure that they are appropriately applied. This is significant in this study as the cultural backgrounds of participants differ from that of the researcher which means that they could feel constrained in what they can and cannot say. As Josselson (2007) reminds us:

We can never be smug about our ethics since the ice is always thin, and there is no ethically unassailable position. We must interact with our participants humbly, trying to learn from them. We must protect their privacy. What we think might do harm, we cannot publish” (p. 560).

Indigenous Research

The relationship between Indigenous people and research has long been uncomfortable and often antagonistic. It reflects an extensive history of Eurocentric bias and prejudice and Smith (1991) notes that, “The term “research” is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, “research” is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1).

Misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misinformation have a devastating effect on

and within Aboriginal communities and undermine the value and currency of Indigenous epistemologies and agency. As Fredericks (2008, p. 24) remarks, "... as a group, we are generally regarded as the most researched group in the world" (Aboriginal Research Institute, 1993, p. 2).

Interestingly, Torres Strait Islander researcher Nakata (2007a) perceives research as an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills so that students can "... rediscover the methods of knowledge production and how particular knowledges achieve legitimacy and authority at the expense of other knowledge ... [and] ... anchor down a Torres Strait or Indigenous standpoint in student's analysis of systems of thought and knowledge" (p. 195). His approach is proactive and demonstrates how the inappropriate can be used appropriately but also highlights that many non-Indigenous researchers have conducted Indigenous research inappropriately. This has resulted in recent demands by Indigenous communities for culturally appropriate and respectful consultation and involvement in research projects as well as an increase in Indigenous researchers conducting projects with Indigenous people and communities.

Consequently, a number of reports and documents have emerged regarding appropriate procedures and processes for conducting research with Indigenous people and communities and most university ethics processes call for additional checks and balances for such research projects. In Australia, this is addressed by a number of documents and the most commonly referred to and recommended by the Australian Council for Educational Research (2005) is the *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* published by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2012) and *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* by the National Health and Medical Research Council (2003). These documents focus on research projects with

Indigenous communities and offer a number of guiding principles built on an acknowledgment of the historical research context. These guidelines are embedded in the development of ethical relationships based on trust and an awareness of ‘difference-blindness’ (NHRMC, 2003, p. 3) and cover issues such as respect, rights, responsibility and reciprocity through negotiated collaborations that detail recognition of and benefits for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples.

The following pragmatic ethical approaches to Indigenous research for teachers and schools (NSW BOS, 2008, pp. 10-11, 26-27) are relevant to this study as they reflect my own experience supporting school student research in Aboriginal Studies; articulate tacit practices when interacting with Aboriginal people in formal and informal settings; and are conducive to a narrative research approach. These ethical approaches include but are not limited to:

- acknowledging custodianship of knowledge, culture and importance of locality and social context,
- understanding protocols around relocation, family obligations, death etc.,
- ensuring appropriate contact, time and venue location to develop appropriate relationships in a research context,
- understanding communication techniques such as silence, pauses, talking ‘around’ a topic and yarning about seemingly unrelated topics, and
- understanding communication protocols such as appropriate use of language, avoiding jargon and acronyms unless the participant is familiar with these. Use of Aboriginal English may or may not be appropriate.

Notably, the ethical researcher in the qualitative project, regardless of background or research area, will engage in respectful, reciprocal and negotiated relationships as the research process is a deeply personal and emotional journey for all involved.

Methodological Decisions

As the need to locate self, ethical inquiry, context, positioning and voice are reflected upon, the importance of the humanness of lived experience that permeates the practice of teaching (Goodfellow, 1995, p. 36) also influences the selection of a methodology. A narrative inquiry approach is thus suited to respectfully representing these teachers who have so much to tell. It provides opportunities to speak in ways that are comfortable and reflect who we believe ourselves to be, as Sikes and Gale (2006) clearly articulate:

For narrative is what we do. We use it to make sense of the world as we perceive and experience it and use it to tell other people what we have discovered and about how the world, or more specifically aspects of it, are for us (p. 4).

Polkinghorne (1988) further highlights the connections, coherence and coalescence of ideas and emotions that humans employ to purposefully engage with the world and draw these together into a meaningful narrative of self.

In thinking about the reflexive and subjective relationship between story, experience and identity, the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1996, 1999, 2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) has strongly influenced my attempts to ‘think narratively’ as their focus on the study of experience fundamentally locates us as leading storied lives. This illuminates the role of storying and restorying and constructing and deconstructing lived experiences in order to better understand not only the ‘hows’ but the ‘whys’ of experience. This powerful tool implies that knowledge itself is valuable even when constructed by one person (Chase, 2000, p. 666). ‘Storying’ the experience provides opportunities to interrogate the compelling, surprising and unexpected as well as the mundane and everyday aspects of teaching and learning to teach; it illuminates evolving perceptions of these experiences (Lyons & LaBoskey,

2002, p. 21). Chase (2000, p. 668) believes that storytelling promotes empathy across different social fields through the articulation of marginalised voices:

The stories of many marginalized groups have changed the contemporary narrative landscape...Indeed 'giving voice' to marginalized people and naming silenced lives have been primary goals of narrative research for decades.

Story, in narrative inquiry, is not simply relating sequential events but recounting relational and contextual experiences as they reflect ideas, beliefs, events, emotions, and actions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Roseik, 2007). Story in this study is constructed from accounts and interpretations of early career Aboriginal teachers' responses to their professional experience, the first few years of teaching and experiences of education. Thought, action and emotion are linked through these thematically constructed stories providing greater depth of understanding and through the cyclical nature of storying and restorying, greater clarity and depth. Within this is the role of collective and unique communities and extended families in nurturing individual lived experiences and continuing cultural narratives such as resisting, negotiating and/or engaging with the dominant, often alien society (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 157).

Central to Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) articulation of narrative inquiry is Dewey's (1938) concept of experience which consists of both social and personal meaning, is located at the individual and group level, and emphasizes the notion that no-one exists in isolation (Beattie, 2000, p. 2). Three discursive spaces: temporality, sociality and the centrality of place operate within the Deweyian view of experience, which locates narrative inquiry as a distinct methodology (Clandinin & Roseik, 2007, p. 69).

Temporality refers to the continuity of experience as new experiences build on past ones to create future experiences. In this study, the notion of cyclical and

compounded experience is relevant to the unique positioning and context of oppressed minority groups such as Aboriginal people. This is reflected in culturally recognised approaches of yarning and recounting as central and tacit to the continuity of Aboriginal cultural heritage and identity across time. Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) emphasise the legitimacy of yarning in research where "... [T]o have a yarn is not a one way process but a dialogical process that is reciprocal and mutual ... [in order to] ... obtain a 'holistic understanding' of the participant's experiences" (p38). In a post structural sense, this can also be used to challenge dominant discourses and their translation into assumed power and privilege. In her study on culturally relevant storytelling from an Indigenous perspective, Benham (2007, p. 515) adds that:

... narrative is a part of cumulative moments over time, it is deeply embedded in and emerges from multiple, interrelated and at times contradictory contexts to include the ecological (place based), cultural, political, and historical arenas.

Through simultaneous concern with both personal and social conditions, sociality extends Dewey's notion of interaction (Clandinin & Roseik, 2007, p. 69). Forming individual contexts and shaping responses to it are personal conditions such as feelings, hopes, desires and social conditions including the environment, institutional structures and external factors; an important dimension of this is the relationship between participant and researcher.

The centrality of place is the third discursive space identified by Dewey and refers to the concrete physical and topological spaces where inquiry and events occur. An emphasis on the role of localised and contextualised experience is appropriate to place-orientated lived experiences which are critical to Aboriginal identity and conducive to a narrative approach.

With parallels to Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) three dimensional narrative inquiry space is Bourdieu's (1990) theory of social practice in which he emphasises

time and space dimensions and a heuristic flow that while not random, cannot be routinely planned and controlled (Carger, 2005, p. 239). Nakata's (2007b) cultural interface framework provides another way to think about how Dewey's discursively produced spaces operate both harmoniously and discordantly. This "... rethinking of space ... requires a deeper consideration of the ways in which the specificities of Islander experiences are constituted in that space" (p. 196) and foregrounds the socio-cultural contextual nature of daily interactions and relationships that cannot be ignored or based on generalities and assumptions.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2006, as cited in Clandinin, 2006, p. 46) assert that thinking narratively provides opportunities for exploring the social, cultural and institutional arrangements in which individual experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted. This post structural approach disrupts hegemonic processes that define binary positions of 'normal' and 'different'. Questioning assumed knowledge, power and cultural norms and the oppressive structures that support them is crucial:

This tendency to dichotomise human experience is persistent, powerful, and pernicious. Dualistic categories are such an organising force because they provide a simple classification system that allows even the most complex and elusive qualities to be compared and contrasted in bold, clear terms (Belenkey, Bond & Weinstock, 1997, p. 119).

Foucault's (1982) constructs of discourse, power and subjectivity are meaningful within a narrative approach because possibilities and potentialities emerge to explore, understand and express a range of positions that are not bound by ethnicity, cultural determinism and/or stereotyping. Emphasis on localised and contextualised sites of operation within specific relationships of power creates space for discursively produced narratives and counter narratives. As pre-service teachers' personal, cultural and professional identities intersect and react to the highly emotional, destabilizing and unpredictable nature of teaching (Britzman, 2003, p. 4; Porteus, 2009, p. 9; Rorrison,

2008, p. 318), post structural theorising provides a discursive space for early career teachers to explore, understand (and perhaps reconcile) feelings of vulnerability, alienation and failure.

The opportunity to interrogate knowledge as a social construction (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002) through meaning, situations and contexts articulated by Aboriginal teachers in staffrooms, classrooms and their communities, provides space for prospective new and/or refined and/or alternative visions (Rorrison, 2008, p. 308). Significantly, narrative accounts have the potential to humanise the impact of oppressive and dehumanising structures as Chase (2000) suggests:

... this may mean thinking about how to create public spaces in our local communities where the personal narratives and collective stories of marginalised people can be heard by – and can jolt out of their complacency – those who occupy more powerful subject positions and social locations (p. 671).

The Informed Researcher

It is important to recognise that researcher knowledge, experience and skills are an important factor in resourcing, interpreting and drawing together understandings of the experiences articulated by the early career Aboriginal teachers (Goodfellow, 1995, p. 40). I am known to the early career Aboriginal teachers as their Professional Experience coordinator and lecturer but to avoid a conflict of interest, I was not involved in assessing their academic progress at the time of conducting this study (Wrench, 2011). Further, my relationship with some of the participants extended into the familiar, interconnected Aboriginal education community. All of these factors meant that I was able to establish trust relationships which facilitated the ease with which I was able to organise and conduct the interviews.

Further, as an experienced teacher I was already known to many of the cooperating teachers, and for those that I did not know, the tacit collegiality that often exists between those of us from the small group of Aboriginal Studies teachers meant

that I was able to quickly develop respectful relationships and easily engage in ‘teacher talk’ (Britzman, 2003, p. 66). Having a common professional language as well as appropriate language tools to interact with Aboriginal people facilitated the ease with which the interviews were conducted and the openness to consider multiple interpretations. However, this in itself can produce inconsistencies as Goodfellow (1995, p. 41) acknowledges that:

- participants can say what they think the researcher wants to hear;
- the researcher can hear what she expects to hear rather than what is really said;
- the balance between being detached and ‘objective’ and being too involved for a critical analytical perspective can be difficult to achieve; and
- the researcher’s non-Aboriginal background can impact on an understanding of the lived experiences of participants.

Researcher Reflexivity

To address these issues, I engaged in ongoing reflexivity to acknowledge the inherent power of the research process:

Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228).

Researcher reflexivity which is defined as “... self awareness and agency within self awareness ...” (Rennie, 2004, p.183) is an essential tool for the post-structural theorist who is aware of the “... non-neutral relationship between what is said and how it is interpreted by the listener, as well as how it will be read by others” (Hastings, 2008, p. 500). This involves identifying personal biases and predispositions that may affect the research process and/or conclusions as well as accounting for

ambiguity and multiplicity in meanings. Foucault (1991) is concerned with the need for ethical sensitivity in all forms of representation and with this in mind, Sikes and Gale (2006, p. 24) pose the following questions which are worth applying throughout the research process:

How does the author come to write this narrative? What conditions led to this text being said? Whose views does the text represent? How was the information obtained? Are the research participants represented in fair and accurate ways?

Finlay (2002) identifies five types of reflexivity that are useful for the post structural narrative researcher: introspection, inter-subjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique and discursive deconstruction. While their application is no guarantee that the researcher will be reflexive, they provide a scaffold for considering key ethical concerns. They reflect aspects of the conscious and unconscious relationships between researcher, participant and research process and attend to the power dynamic, positioning and the ambiguous nature of language constructions. By drawing on these aspects, the researcher can focus a critical eye on the overall research construct as well as the finer details. Squire (2008) for instance, suggests that careful listening to participant stories helps guard against zealous interpretation and the drawing of conclusions. Initial conversational interviews and collaborative rereading and restorying of the narratives was designed with this in mind as was researcher collaboration with critical friends, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to provide valuable intercultural dialogue, and expertise and experience from both insider and outsider perspectives (Santoro et al., 2011, p. 67).

Benham (2007, p.519) acknowledges the potential for tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and insider and outsider perspectives but notes that this is a simplistic rendering that ignores diverse and multiple realities. Nakata (2007b) and Yunkaporta (2009) both acknowledge that the space that this tension creates should not

reproduce, reduce or represent essentialised notions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships.

Culturally sensitive research is critical and researchers who commit to this approach are described by Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p. 6) as:

... friendly insiders who wish to deconstruct from within the Western academy and its positivist epistemologies ..(and employ) .. research practices that are reflexively consequential, ethical, critical, respectful and humble .. (requiring) .. that scholars live with the consequences of their research actions.

Finally, to write oneself out of the study is to deny the tacit involvement in the knowledge, experience and practices of teaching as they impact on the stories being told as well as to ignore the affective knowledge embedded in cultural contexts that is best learnt together and may “ ... offer pathways to cultural sensitivity that may sidestep barriers to comprehending the unknown” (Carger, 2005, p. 241).

The Study

Context

This research study draws its participants from pre-service Aboriginal teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) at the University of Sydney. The course is a block-mode, away-from-base, equivalent full-time program where students attend three one week blocks of study per semester plus three to six weeks of Professional Experience per year. Classes consist entirely of Indigenous Australian students while lecturers are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. When attending the blocks, students are located in a space within the university that provides specific support services such as a computer lab, library and kitchen. Pre-service teachers who graduate from this program are qualified to teach Aboriginal Studies and History in New South Wales (NSW) secondary schools.

Most of the pre-service Aboriginal teachers are from outer urban, regional or rural New South Wales; are mature-aged mothers (and sometimes grandmothers); and work part-time or full-time as education and/or community service paraprofessionals. They have diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and varying levels of exposure to cultural understandings and experience with living in Aboriginal communities and/or wider society.

Many have had lengthy service in schools and/or within the education sector and possess a good working knowledge of the system. As teaching assistants, tutors or community liaison officers they also occupy 'spaces' not unlike those of pre-service teachers in that they are generally positioned on the periphery of the core business of education. Within this positioning their educational expertise is generally only validated in the specific field of Aboriginal student support.

For this study, pre-service teachers were followed into their first year of teaching or employment and are therefore referred to as early career teachers unless the clarification of pre-service teacher is required for a specific example, context or theme. My research was guided by the following key research question: What are the key issues for early career Aboriginal teachers in the construction of their professional identity as a teacher? The following secondary research questions further guided the study:

- How are these issues impacted on by personal and situated identities?
- What role does Aboriginality play (if any) in the construction of a professional teaching identity?
- How does the construction of early career Aboriginal teacher's narratives illuminate and/or disrupt binary positioning and dominant discourses of Aboriginal teachers?

- How significant is the role of context in the construction of a professional identity?
- What are the implications for professional learning in teacher education and school contexts?

Data Collection

A researcher journal, semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups were all used to collect data for this study. An initial analysis was undertaken to guide ongoing data collection which was directed by the following ethics process:

- Call for volunteers for initial interviews. Participant information sheets and consent forms explained and signed.
- Interviews with volunteers transcribed verbatim.
- Initial reading of field texts identifies and develops focus group prompts. Notes and reflections entered into research journal.
- Call for volunteers for pre-service teacher focus group and early career teacher focus group. Participant information sheets and consent forms explained and signed.
- Focus groups conducted in an agreed upon location and transcribed verbatim.
- Initial reading of focus group transcripts and rereading of field texts and journal notes. Identification of four participants for further interviewing to develop the narratives.
- Participants agree to second interview and collaborate on the construction of their narrative. Interviews identify and clarify issues emerging from the first interview, focus group findings and attend to the research questions.

Data collection techniques thus accounted for the personal, interpersonal and dynamic aspects of learning to teach in sensitive and culturally appropriate ways. Multiple interviews and focus groups conducted over two years contributed to rich descriptions for construction into narratives.

Participants

Participants are also informants and narrators in this study and as such these terms will be used interchangeably and with reference to specific contexts and processes. Purposeful selection of participants occurred (Nueman, 2006, p. 222) because of the limited and specific group available for this study. I feel that it is important to articulate that due to the limited number of participants and the nature of narrative as a methodological approach, empirical generalisations about Aboriginal teacher experiences in education are neither possible nor desired. Rather, this study only aims to reveal contextualised insights into specific experiences at specific sites in order to consider and explore the complexity of the experience as well as raise possible resonance with other pre-service teachers (Wrench, 2011).

Volunteers were sought from the year three and four cohorts in the Bachelor of Education program for the first round of interviews and eleven volunteers (eight female and three male) participated in initial focused conversational interviews (Goodfellow, 1995). From this, four participants (three female and one male) were asked if they would participate in a second follow-up interview. Of these, two had entered teaching while the others remained in their previous employment. It is important to acknowledge that the researcher exercised power (Daya & Lau, 2007, p. 5) in selecting participants to follow up for the construction of the narratives. Decisions were made as to which field texts provided rich descriptions that reinforced, challenged,

interrogated and/or illuminated diverse perspectives rather than ‘typical’ and ‘generalised’ accounts of the Aboriginal teaching experience. As Rose (1997) suggests:

In contrast to the god-trick of claiming to see the whole world while remaining distanced from it, subjugated and critical knowledges work from their situatedness to produce partial perspectives on the world. They see the world from specific locations, embodied and particular, and never innocent; siting is intimately involved in sighting (p. 308).

Participants were interviewed again to tease out and verify accounts and experiences and gather further data on their current work situation in relation to their decision to teach (or not). Collaboration occurred as often as possible in the ongoing construction of the narratives and the pressures of each participant’s work and family commitments were taken into consideration by the researcher. Flexibility, sensitivity and appreciation of their commitment throughout this process was crucial and email and phone correspondence helped achieve these aims.

Key identifying factors such as name, location, specific family/ background/ community features and age were changed for confidentiality reasons as this is a small group of teachers within a specific community that collectively possess a strong knowledge of family and community networks. Even the wider community of Aboriginal education is closely connected so this too was an important consideration. As such, details elicited from the interviews were modified and integrated into the narratives in ways that ensured both the integrity of the story and the privacy of the informant.

It is important in a post structural application of narrative inquiry to acknowledge that the researcher is also a contributor and through journal writing, locates oneself in the teaching paradigm and turns a ‘critical eye’ to the construction of personal, cultural and professional identities as a teacher and teacher educator, demonstrating that reflexivity is ongoing and central to this process.

Interviewing in Narrative inquiry

The notion of ‘interview’ has connotations of a formal question-answer format controlled by the researcher. However, in a narrative approach interviews are more relaxed; they are two-way conversational exchanges that encourage storytelling, yarnning and the sharing of ideas. Bessarab and Ng’andu (2010) note that this approach can be messy and “... does not always follow convention and can meander all over the place” (p. 39). They suggest that researchers need to think about how to mediate the cultural conventions and expectations of the participants, the academy and Indigenous communities. Chase (2000, p. 662) highlights the paradoxical nature of narrative interviewing:

On the one hand, a researcher needs to be well prepared to ask good questions that will invite the others particular story; on the other hand, the very idea of a particular story is that it cannot be known, predicted, or prepared for in advance.

Significantly, interviewing is not a neutral activity and this is evident in the power dynamics inherent in the differential positioning of academic and participant in a particular context (Wrench, 2011, p. 52). Scheurich (1995) notes that the interviewer has conscious and unconscious motives, feelings and biases and is historically, contextually and politically located, so effort needs to be directed towards empathetic approaches such as revealing personal stories to the informant (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696) as a sign of good faith. Further, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) advise researchers “... to be reflexive not only about *what* the interview accomplishes but also about *how* the interview is accomplished ...” (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 697). With this in mind, I initiated exchanges that centred on swapping humorous and humbling stories about teaching. Notably though, it is the researcher who makes the final decisions about what will and will not be included in the interview, and this invariably impacts on the field texts (Wasserfall, 1993).

Focused Conversational Interviews

Drawing on Joy Goodfellow's (1995) technique of focused conversational interviews with an emphasis on the conversation rather than on the question and projected answer, I began to consider what might be an effective interviewing approach in this research study. From an Aboriginal perspective, the focused conversational interview was appealing because the interactive dialogue provided opportunities for banter, humour and storytelling and created opportunities for an exploration of experience rather than pursuing a particular line of questioning. The language used, non-verbal cues and 'talking around' the topic also contributed to the richness of the data (Goodfellow, 1995, p. 59) and ensured a relaxed, collegial atmosphere that helped draw out meaningful information and deeply held emotions and perceptions. If however a participant was not comfortable with this, interview questions were available to facilitate a more structured approach.

For the Aboriginal teachers, spending time talking about their family, community and their journey into higher education immediately engaged them in the interview by 'inviting stories' (Chase, 2000, p. 661). I was aware that they would also want to express views about issues in Aboriginal education since this comprises a significant element of their daily lives and sparks their passion for the transformative effects of education. This phenomena was also noted in Reid et al. (2004) and Reid and Santoro's (2006) studies of Indigenous teachers, where participants expressed perceptions and interpretations about the big picture of education and its impact on Aboriginal people as part of their discussion of personal experiences within this system (Santoro et al., 2011).

Cooperating teachers were also interviewed to gain a sense of the school context where the pre-service teachers completed their professional experience. They willingly

offered their perception of the pre-service teacher's aptitudes, influences and experiences and the focused conversations became an "... inquiry and discovery of their own tacit knowledge, beliefs and values as they gave narrative accounts or told stories of their experiences" (Goodfellow, 1995, pp. 60-61). The teachers enjoyed the opportunity to discuss issues in Aboriginal education that they felt strongly about as they rarely get an opportunity to do so.

The initial interview questions, listed under organising headings, were constructed in an attempt to reflect the theoretical framework and literature review from similar studies and reports. The difficult task was managing the amount and variety of information and providing opportunities for the participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences while attending to the minimalist nature of questioning in narrative inquiry. Therefore, general headings were identified and questions organized in a way that could be used flexibly as direct questions or as general prompts for ongoing discussion.

The interview schedule was trialled with one pre-service Aboriginal teacher and one cooperating teacher not involved in the study in order to get feedback about the appropriateness and clarity of questions and whether they might elicit the required information. This revealed some key problems with the questions, namely that there were too many; they were too complex; and they distracted the interviewer, causing anxiety if all questions were not answered and only limited data was retrieved. However, this was quickly alleviated when the researcher listened to the recordings and realised that the data was actually there, but revealed itself in different (and sometimes unexpected) ways. Consequently, the interview schedule was redesigned to reduce the questions to prompts only to be referred to if the participant needed clarification or direction and was trialled in the first interview with a pre-service teacher. The prompts

improved the flow and interactivity of the interview as well as overall researcher concentration and focus on participant responses. This approach was then adopted for the remaining interviews.

Focus Groups

To investigate emerging themes and explore and elaborate on the nature of the teaching experience, two focus groups were conducted. One focus group consisted of four early career teachers and the other consisted of six pre-service teachers. The focus groups provided opportunities for the articulation of a diverse range of ideas and experiences through stimulating and rigorous debate and feedback. Discussion triggers from initial reading of interview field texts were identified as prompts for the focus group. As the facilitator of these groups, I was sensitive to group dynamics to ensure respectful interchange of ideas and opinions and so interceded only to clarify a particular point (Wrench, 2011, p. 53). However, each conversation soon developed a life of its own, providing rich data as key themes that emerged from the interview field texts were further explored, reconstructed and challenged.

Focus group data was transcribed verbatim and this contributed to the rich data collected from the interview field texts. The data contributed to the development of themes and were considered in the light of the research questions. Through cross analysis with the interview field texts they reinforced, questioned and identified gaps that were addressed in follow up interviews with participants. Consequently, aspects of this rich data became embedded in the constructed narratives and subsequent themes.

The Research Journal

Due to the iterative nature of narrative inquiry a research journal consisting of observations, thoughts, experiences, and reflections was kept throughout the study to

tease out ideas and cross check research questions. As a documentation of insights, perceptions and interpretations it included written notes, visual representations to indicate causal relationships, interconnected ideas, concept maps and spiralling loops of reflection that demonstrate 'levels of knowing' (Goodfellow, 1995, p. 64). It also contains organisational notes, reminders and other (often 'off the track' and 'out there') ideas that may or may not be helpful to the study, but nonetheless represent a particular thought, choice or decision that may need to be referred to at other times to better understand the interaction between theory and data and the construction of the narratives and themes. It also helped to identify and investigate any assumptions, biases or tacit suppositions that emerged.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the individual nuances of language and conversation crucial to the close analysis and faithful representation of individual responses (Wells, 2011, p. 38). Notes and observations made during the interview were annotated on the transcript text to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the interview itself as well as the data produced. While it cannot be assumed that the participants will use a mode of expression other than Standard Australian English (such as Aboriginal English), it is important that the researcher is open to and listens for a particular vernacular. This was also taken into consideration when interviewing the cooperating teachers.

By thinking narratively I was able to listen closely to what and how something was said in order to extend the narrator-listener relationship into an interactive process (Chase, 2000). Participant and researcher collaboration was ongoing so as to work towards more accurate reflection of participant voices and experiences. In other words, each interview was treated both as an entity and within the context of the other

interviews and focus group transcripts. This ongoing collaboration and exchange of ideas between researcher and early career teachers is represented by figure 2, which highlights the ongoing, relational and interactive process designed to be as true to the data and participant as possible.

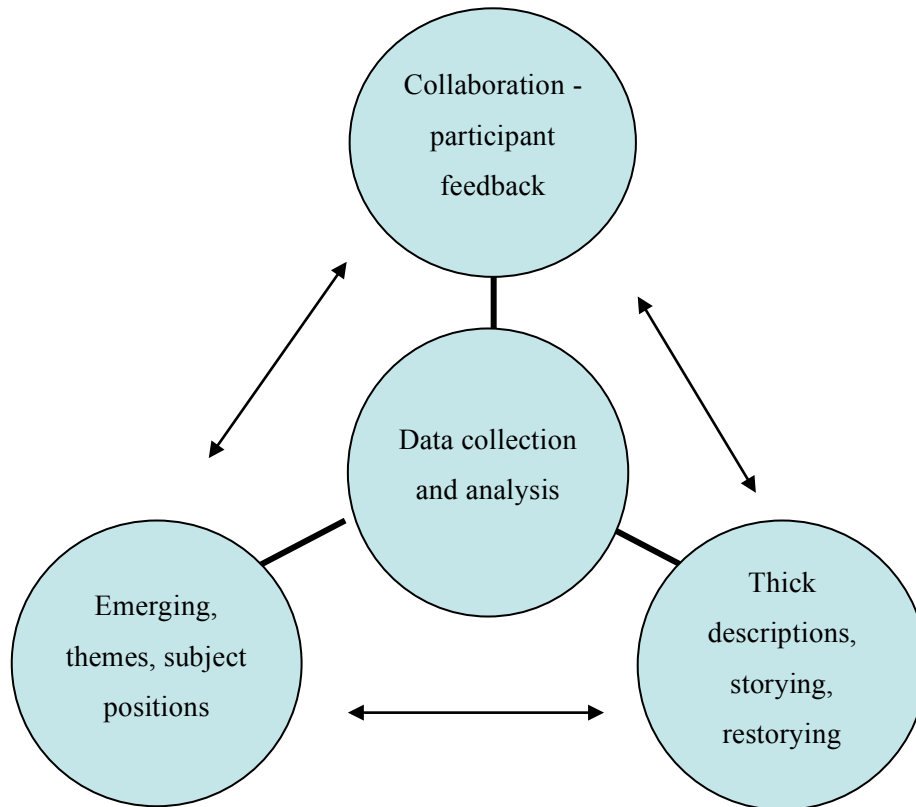


Figure 2. Ongoing collaboration with participants. (based on phenomenographic relationality by Marton, 1994, p. 4428).

Field texts were read vertically (individual texts) and horizontally (across texts) (Goodfellow, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify the key emerging themes and recurring discursive patterns (Santoro, et al., 2011) within and across the narratives. In the vertical analysis of each individual field text, explanations of how and why the narrators describe, remember, relate to others and construct meaning is foregrounded. Growing familiarity with each text provides an overall impression of each participant's teaching experience as well as a general sense of the emerging key issues, possible themes, prevailing concepts, unexpected responses and normative discourses.

Awareness of the strategies employed by the narrator attended to the process and products of storytelling in this context (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). These field texts were then storied into coherent representations of participants' accounts of their lived experiences as pre-service/early career teachers including their prevailing views and attitudes about issues in Aboriginal education. Accordingly, each of the four narratives was constructed from the field texts by the researcher in collaboration with participants where possible.

Through horizontal analysis, connections, commonalities, inconsistencies and contradictions were listened for and explored. This illuminated new themes and ideas as well as reconfirmed and at times challenged those that had emerged from vertical analysis. The implicit identification of patterns supported meaning making and managed the diversity and depth of data which was represented in flexible matrixes to identify key themes and allow for changes.

As the representation of the narrator's lived experiences were entrusted to the researcher, multiple readings of the field texts were undertaken (Rorrison, 2008, pp. 310-311). This involved rigorous interrogation and reflection to draw out new ideas and new views of old ideas. Acknowledging the subjectivity in an interpretative reading of the text, including the 'unsaid assumptions' embedded in the narratives (Fairclough, 2003, as cited in Santoro & Allard, 2005, p. 866), is addressed through researcher reflexivity. Reading, analysis and the development of narratives was guided by the theoretical frameworks identified in the study: Foucault's post structural interpretations of discourse, power and subjectivity; Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, field and capital; and Clandinin's (and others) experienced focussed narrative inquiry space.

Analysis through a Foucauldian lens works to explore how discourses work within power relations to constitute subjectivity (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Wrench,

2011). As participants describe the how, what and why of their experiences, they reveal that the choices they make depend on the discourses and subject positions available to them or created for them in the relational and contextual space they occupy as early career teachers (Wrench, 2011, p. 56). This unstable, ambiguous space significantly influences the relationships of power and the way in which the narrators position themselves and are positioned by others; potentially challenging dominant discourses about Aboriginal teachers. Through a Foucauldian analysis, oppressive social processes enacted through the construction of meta-narratives and regimes of truth were interrogated to reveal the commonalities, differences, fissures, inconsistencies and nuances of each narrative as well as their thematic influence. From this process, the researcher acquires a sense of the cultural stories and discourses that contribute to the construction of the pre-service teachers' personal and professional identities (Hole 2003, p. 266). Moreover, vertical and horizontal analyses render audible the voices that are often silenced, which enables new articulations of old and questionable 'truths' (Daya & Lau, 2007, p. 6).

Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, analysis was also focused on the dispositions, values and beliefs of the narrators (Wrench, 2011, p. 56). This provided opportunities to identify the emergence of each narrator's habitus as they interacted with the various fields that constituted their social worlds, positioned as they are at the cultural interface. The nature and volume of their social and cultural capital and the way in which they were accumulated and transmitted further illuminated enactments of habitus and revealed the mobilisation of agency. These forces contributed to the constitution of subjectivity and revealed how each of the narrators operationalised power relations.

Further, the narrative inquiry approach provided opportunities to consider how the informants narratively constructed their identity and located themselves in their social worlds through the lens of experience. Exploring the subjective relationship between story, experience and identity within and between the narratives supported the development of key connecting themes. How the narrators understood themselves as particular people in the past, the present and their projected future reflects Dewey's notion of temporality and sheds light on the way in which the narrators positioned themselves as teacher, student mentor and community member. Further, applying Dewey's concept of sociality provided opportunities to consider the participant's personal disposition and circumstances within the prevailing social conditions and then compare these with the junctures, consistencies and inconsistencies at the cultural interface. Dewey's centrality of place is particularly relevant in analysing participants' localised and contextualised experiences which are grounded in a strong sense of place and reach beyond 'typical' teacher experience. Articulating identity through land, country and community relationships provided a holistic frame through which to analyse the enactment of their habitus and capital and the mobilisation of agency in response to positioning.

Representation

As qualitative research does not take the positivist approach of testing hypotheses through the analysis of quantifiable data, the validity, credibility and reliability of the research is invariably scrutinised. Not being able to quantifiably measure outcomes invites intense inspection and narrative inquiry attracts a similar level of scepticism because of its deep researcher-participant involvement and the perception of narrative as fiction. Further, as there are no definitive lines drawn

between each of the stages of the research project (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005), but rather a fluid revisiting of data, literature and theory, positivist researchers are troubled by the lack of a distinct structure. This is notably rejected by narrative researchers who argue that there is a sense of science to the methodology, as observations informed by theory employ interpretive concepts to illustrate the study's relevance beyond initial observations (Wells, 2011, p. 113). Moreover, they emphasise that generalisability is not a desired outcome as narrative inquiry is focussed on localised, contextualised accounts of peoples' lives that in themselves are authentic and trustworthy data (Beattie, 2000).

Trustworthiness

Authenticity and trustworthiness (Goodfellow, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Pulkkinen 2003) are constructs increasingly used by qualitative researchers to describe processes and ensure credibility. Hammersley (1992) suggests that trustworthiness should be based on the notion that criteria be tailored to specific research methods. He proposes that standards of trust (validity) and relevance (use) be applied where it is evident that the study represents the phenomenon intended to be described and that relevance can be ascertained through new knowledge about the topic and the contribution of the study to a community of scholars (Wells, 2011, p. 115). The assessment of trust is a complex task that ultimately relies on the correlation between claims and evidence. It encompasses how narrative is defined, the theoretical orientation and central orientating questions, major concepts, methodological procedures, the context of the narrative production, the level of inclusion of the narrative texts and their analysis, and the approach to and role of member checking (Wells, 2011, p. 118). In my study, the theoretical orientation and methodological considerations focused on privileging participant voices while acknowledging the specific and broader context of their

positioning as Aboriginal teachers. However, this also prompted ongoing reflexivity so as to interrogate assumptions and to look and listen for the unexpected and contradictory. Narratively constructed thick descriptions were corroborated with participants throughout the data collection and the prolonged engagement and immersion in the data contributed to the authenticity of the narratives and emerging themes. Themes also resonated with the relevant literature and interrogated some previously held assumptions and ‘truths’ about Aboriginal teachers in schools.

Chase (2000, p. 666) suggests that researchers can address their subjectivity by being aware of the three typologies of voice: the authoritative voice, the supportive voice and the interactive voice. For this study I used the supportive voice in foregrounding the narratives within a readable explanatory structure and the interactive voice when analysing each of the narratives as a ‘conversation’ in order to reflect the ongoing collaboration and sense of humanness in the emerging, living stories. While being careful not to romanticise the narrator’s voice (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005) I attempted to create, “ ... a self reflective and respectful distance between researchers’ and narrators’ voices” (Chase, 2000, p. 665). Through examining my own voice, subject positions, interpretations and personal experiences, I applied the authoritative voice through formal analysis and representation of the data. Informed by the researcher questions and the theoretical perspectives employed in this study, my interpretation influenced the selection of the narrative excerpts in the conversations and themes to establish the plausibility of the key findings in the research.

Concluding Remarks

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) suggest that the process of writing narrative is not linear, as in most thesis approaches, but a recursive process in which ‘back and

forth' writing takes place. As field texts are read and reread, the narratives continually take shape and inform, illuminate and at times contradict emerging themes. This creates a sense of writing at cross purposes which is important to the post structural narrative researcher who is continually and reflexively engaged in the project of making connections between the theory, literature and data while accounting for the inconsistencies, fissures, and contradictions (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It is crucial to resist fitting the data into the neat boxes of theory and literature and to recognise and embrace the messiness that characterises both teaching and research (Britzman, 2003). The methodological approach detailed here attempts to address the diverse and often difficult questions that arise in conducting narrative research from a post structural standpoint.

In the following four chapters, the narratives are first presented as a description of the participant's story with minimal interruption except where needed to preface or explain a particular aspect or issue of the story. The second half of each chapter, 'In conversation with [the participant's] narrative' offers an analysis of the narrative using the theoretical tools and relevant literature outlined previously. Following the individual analysis of the narratives, three themes that emerge from the narratives are closely examined. For readability purposes, the narrator's words are italicised.

CHAPTER 5 ANNE

*I am constantly swimming in a racist goldfish bowl
with all eyes on me and nowhere to go!*

Background

Anne is a grandmother and recent high school teacher graduate who strongly identifies as Aboriginal though her physical appearance does not automatically position her as such. She is the only female of four children brought up in the suburbs of a large city. Her family did not actively immerse or involve themselves in the ‘fragmented’ local Aboriginal community (as she remembers it) so she grew up without the experience of an extended Aboriginal family and community environment.

Currently, Anne lives ‘off-country’ (a term she uses to locate herself in relation to her heritage) in a large regional coastal centre that contains several local Aboriginal communities. She has raised her children in the area and sent them to local schools. Anne has also worked in a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community jobs and recently as a part-time Aboriginal Education Officer while studying at university. For these reasons she believes she is accepted by the local Aboriginal community.

Anne states that her mother did not identify as Aboriginal and so to avoid upsetting the family, Anne did not identify herself. Anne’s mother and uncle had been part of the Stolen Generation and so ...*Mum did not openly acknowledge our Aboriginality for fear of repercussions.* However, Anne remembers that during the 1970s, a period of significant social change in Australia, her mother began to open up to her children in the privacy of their home. *My Mum was the best storyteller, and looking*

back I now realise how painful it must have been for her, because it was all true, and all involved her. Anne recounts her earliest school experiences as being

.... extremely positive, learning and being a quite capable student. Suddenly that all changed and my inclusiveness became isolation. Someone discovered that I was the sister of the 'darkies' as my brothers both had darker skin and were called this derogatory name regularly. Then I was demoted from white to black and my schoolwork went from good to bad. I went from doing everything my friends were doing, to colouring in all day long. Imagine the mentality of those teachers to think that I am a capable student one day, and the next day, like a brain damaged child.

Anne describes her brothers' experiences in school as, ... *they were darker but didn't really identify, explaining it away as another background. They were often in fights and dropped out of school early.* This impacted on her decision to become a teacher, ... *I never wanted to be a teacher growing up and still don't wish to become the stereotypical teacher ... the negative, almost dictatorship like persona which has emerged in school cultures.* When Anne had her own children however, these experiences became motivating factors in her decision to become a teacher.

Another motivating factor for Anne is her concerns about the state of education for Aboriginal students, particularly Aboriginal student disengagement and the ... *school's readiness to show students the door when the going gets tough.* Anne is concerned by the frequent suspension of Aboriginal students.

At least if they're still at school, we have a chance to talk to them, to see what is happening in their lives and if it is affecting their behaviour. At least they are still in the routine of coming to school everyday. For some students, this is crucial if they are to have any chance at getting through.

She believes that a student's background plays a significant role in their educational outcomes.

Aboriginal students who I have worked within an assimilated learning environment learn differently to those who are still directly involved in their traditional culture and constantly walking between two cultures. For students who are part of inter-generational schooling it is easier for them to learn in an environment where they have the support and reinforcement of formal learning

at home. Attitudes to learning are what make it difficult for some to learn and achieve better outcomes.

Anne describes her experiences with schools as a parent.

My son was always in trouble at school. You know how it is for Koori kids, once they get into trouble once, the school always sees them as the trouble maker no matter what has happened – they always believe the other student or teacher first.

She has a deep desire to ensure that every student knows the ‘true’ history of Australia.

I will be an Aboriginal teacher giving me the ability to teach in a manner that people can view an Aboriginal perception of things and issues. I have to consciously work on the ‘I and We’ factor when relating to history, because I am an Aboriginal woman. My passion for telling history how it has been and working towards equality are a natural instinct. Hopefully this will educate everyone I work with.

On the other hand, Anne expresses frustration with Aboriginal students who do not know or respect the struggles that people her age have gone through for Aboriginal rights and notes that ... *students want everything now and when they don’t get it, their parents are up at the school saying ‘Why not?’* She feels that these attitudes directly result in poor life outcomes ... *suddenly their son is on drugs or in gaol and they’re almost surprised because they haven’t taught them the system.*

University and Professional Experience

Anne was a successful student and was awarded a prestigious university academic award. She sees herself as a teacher who relates well and works with students.

I am able to work out what students are good at and build it into their learning so that they are more engaged in school and get better outcomes. For instance, I had a student in my history class who was always in trouble. Then I noticed he was good at art, so I let him use his art to describe what he had learnt in class and he loved it.

I am able to build relationships and make links with students easier than other people. I empathise with the students due to my background and upbringing and they know it. This often means that students are more willing to work with me in class. Aboriginal students relate really well and they are my reason for enduring four long years of university.

Anne cites the following factors as instrumental in shaping her professional identity:

[d]efinitely my Aboriginality, passion against injustice and equality, and life experiences. My age has given me the experience needed to be and act differently to those that have had negative effects on my education ... My teaching identity will be what I create. My upbringing, my Aboriginality, my community, and my education journey have all shaped my identity as a teacher. I hope to find a balance between the professional and the personal, and hope to be strong enough to leave work at work.

Her final professional placement school was a large coastal high school with an Aboriginal Education Officer to support the Aboriginal students. Anne had applied for this position previously and complained that the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) was responsible for her unsuccessful application. Anne spoke to the Principal and the faculty in which she was teaching before and during her Professional Experience, voicing concerns about how unsuitable the school was for Aboriginal students ... *Well, they don't like taking advice from prac students especially Aboriginal ones who know what they're talking about and know how the system works. Maybe they feel threatened by an educated Aboriginal woman.*

Anne felt isolated in the staffroom and believes she had been 'prejudged' before she got there as ... *my reputation for questioning schools on Aboriginal issues meant that they were 'wary' of me but I don't apologise for this – I am who I am!* She also noted that ... *teachers are sometimes cautious when speaking, so as not to offend, or fear of being politically incorrect so sometimes I am unsure of what they expect from me and how I should proceed.* This was exacerbated by her observations that her cooperating teacher and other staff that ... *although they were well organised, they didn't really seem to understand the kids and their lessons were boring.* However, she reported an overall positive experience and coped with this situation by reminding herself that ... *my treatment throughout my life has not only instilled in me a strength to survive, and a silent knowing and power to turn negative into positive.*

Moreover, Anne felt that her mature-aged status led staff to make assumptions about her:

I believe that my age has hindered my teaching and my ability to be a lifelong learner. I have never been considered a student teacher and other staff expect that I should know everything, where to access information, how to operate in a school system, and how to go about tasks.

She believed that this derailed opportunities for her to learn to teach, which were further exacerbated by paperwork demands ... *teachers roles have changed over the years and accountability is over the top, adding to staff workloads.*

One of the key areas for concern for Anne are the assumptions and expectations associated with being the Aboriginal teacher:

As an Aboriginal person I am not the expert on didgeridoos, art in Arnhem Land, nor men's initiation rites. Some people have to learn, understand, accept, and appreciate the individual, and advance their own knowledge and education.

My identity as an Aboriginal person has sometimes created difficulty. I have been paranoid that my teaching perspective only displays one side, and am conscious that teaching to all must show both sides and perception of diversity. I would like to think that my Aboriginality plays a large part in my role as an educator, but am realistic enough to know that it really only matters to other Aboriginal people. Non-Indigenous people really don't give a rats about my identity, unless they can benefit from it by using me to teach their class or sharing information on Aboriginal topics and issues ... having to say everyday you know that I'm not black enough and I'm not white enough and that the whole proving it ... I listen to the talk and think Oh! I'm 15 again, here we go.

Parents and community usually think that you can fix all their problems. They see you as a DET employee and are even a little suspicious of your role and agenda. Students and workers in the school also expect me to be easy going and make exceptions for them.

First Teaching Appointment

Anne was confident in her teaching ability; keen to begin teaching and get started on her career path. However, her first appointment was at least three hours away from home, a decision she believes was due in part to her reputation in both the

education and Aboriginal community as being difficult and uncompromising in her expectations of teachers and schools.

The new Principal can't for the life of him understand why the scholarships section of DET would place an Aboriginal New Scheme Teacher 'off Country', and adds that it is a recipe for disaster, safe in the knowledge that Aboriginal staff are employed specifically for this reason.

Anne was extremely annoyed that she was allocated classes outside her teaching area and reported that it was very difficult to fit into a staff that was resistant to new ideas or change ... *personal philosophical issues and ideas go out the window when entering a school. Prior teaching staff have set the ethos of their faculty and you are asked to follow.*

Anne recounts that the English staff questioned her capability in this subject area:

I have had racial taunts from teaching staff and students, been made to feel inadequate in front of students by staff, been yelled at, had my literacy levels and degree questioned with the justification that Aboriginal people are not as literate as non-Aboriginal people and been informed that my identity does not go hand in hand with the teaching profession. This has not impeded my ability to teach to the six classes of low ability, behavioural problem students I have been offered on my timetable. I refuse to allow anybody to suggest that I am ill equipped to cope with the rigours of teaching, or that the students cannot succeed.

Anne feels that these instances of bullying and negative positioning stem from staff resentment about her capacity to connect with the students:

I do sometimes feel that teaching staff feel awkward that I have made progress with difficult students and that I have the ability of guiding the student to successful outcomes and away from 'N' awards ... My Aboriginality has enabled me to reach out to a minority group within the school, although I have been specifically asked not to divulge my Aboriginality or education level to students. Apparently it could allow students to gain knowledge of issues against the grain ... I have been accused by a non-Indigenous student as 'holding a grudge' when teaching about the Stolen Generations'. I do not apologise for this. This atrocity had a ripple effect on my whole family. ... I am constantly swimming in a racist goldfish bowl with all eyes on me and nowhere to go!

As is standard practice for a New Scheme teacher, a mentor was appointed to work with Anne:

I do have a mentor who is also the Aboriginal Studies teacher and ARCO [anti-racism contact officer] at the school. I did not have a choice; I was told who would be my mentor. This made the teacher in question extremely uncomfortable and he asked if I was ok with the process. He is a very busy man and does not have the time to assist me as he or I would like. I arrive at school at least an hour early every day, he arrives on time. I stay back up to an hour late every day, he leaves on the bell. We have been designated one day of release per term to work together on my New Scheme requirements and our first day was taken up with other pressing issues. We do not share many periods where we are off together.

She believes that the overall treatment of early career teachers by the department is very poor.

It seems to me that university requirements were a waste of time and learning because they are very different. More support needs to be directed toward how new teachers actually fit into the school culture as all schools are different. Also the people at a higher level need to think about how they place new teachers. They may never teach what they have studied for, they may teach subjects they have never heard of before, they may be lied to, they may be coerced into signing false and misleading documents. Yes I am speaking from experience and I was always the type of person who believed wholeheartedly in the institution of public education. My eyes are now wide open, they had no faith in the system and neither do I. A teacher is just a number to the department, everybody gets paid, educates students, but there is little value ever placed on ones person, how they feel, how they are being treated, are they happy.

Anne found the transition from Aboriginal support person working for Aboriginal students and their families to member of the general teaching staff challenging.

I also understand that as a teacher you cross the boundaries of student/teacher respect and comfort zones. This has been the most difficult transitional period for me, from non-teaching to teaching staff. Students I have found, have far more respect for non-teaching staff members who are directly on their side, there to assist them, and act as a conduit between themselves and the establishment. Even Aboriginal teachers don't necessarily get better outcomes for Aboriginal students because all students do not trust teachers and like to stretch the boundaries.

The rules are rigid and unbendable when in a teaching role. As a teacher, behavioural management is a lot stricter because you have a discipline policy to guide you and you must work within its parameters. Students dislike the boundaries and this leads to their dislike of the teacher.

Anne also felt alienated in her new school environment.

The area is a very unwelcoming place for outsiders in a European sense. The local Aboriginal community don't have a lot to do with the school and there is a prominent divide between them. Protocol within the school seems to be an afterthought to tick boxes for funding requirements. He (the new Principal) tries to make his new school welcoming to the Aboriginal community and acknowledges country at every assembly, staff meeting, as a matter of fact, everywhere he speaks. This is frowned upon by many staff members who say they are 'so over it', but this token of respect and education has made me feel a little bit more comfortable at the school.

Anne returned home regularly as ... being 'off Country' and away from family is emotionally draining. I return home each weekend to touch base and recharge my kinship batteries. Shortly after beginning her teaching position, Anne's brother (who cares for her 11 year old son) became terminally ill so she applied for a compassionate transfer. When this was rejected, she took up the fight.

I became like a dog with a bone and challenged their decision on ethical and cultural grounds and after 5 long months of severe stress and plenty of healthy debates via telephone and emails, I armed myself with written evidence and support and won. I challenged the DET policies and strategies in regard to my cultural and kinship obligations and will be placed in a school in my community next year.

Anne was extremely pleased with this outcome and knows what is in store for her ... I realise that I will be watched like a hawk when placed next year and perhaps even labeled a non-conformist or cage rattler ... but I am up for the challenge.

Postscript

Anne's brother passed away and she moved back home.

My brother recently lost his fight against cancer and now I find myself facing further angst over there isn't any vacant teaching positions in my area. I have been asked to take 'Leave Without Pay' for a further two terms which is absolutely ridiculous. How am I supposed to fulfill my New Scheme Teacher commitments without work and NSW Institute of Teachers still insist on their \$100 per year for accreditation? I am so over the whole institution of education.

In Conversation with Anne's Narrative

Life history or biography is embedded in a socio-cultural and historical context (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004) that is integral to the development of personal and professional identity. McLeod (2001) supports this notion stating that social interactions are shaped by biographical context and that this denotes an individual's 'personhood'. This in turn is shaped by social situations which impact significantly on a teacher's professional identity. This dynamic is evident in Anne's narrative as the impact of her early life experiences are reflected in her experiences of and responses to her teaching contexts.

Anne grew up in a family that denied their cultural background for fear of negative attention; she recalls that this occurred during a time when Aboriginality was perceived by many people (including some Aboriginal people) as a liability. She recalls their family living with secrets and anxiety ... *Mum didn't openly acknowledge our Aboriginality for fear of repercussions ... when I was demoted from white to black my school work went from good to bad.* Positioning by others, particularly those in authority shaped Anne's habitus and thus her disposition towards authoritarian bodies such as schools and education systems. For Anne, this is significant because the nature of her interactions with others during her formative years invoked feelings of vulnerability and insecurity, ... *having to say everyday you know that I'm not black enough and I'm not white enough and that the whole proving it ... I listen to the talk and think 'Oh! I'm 15 again, here we go'.*

Anne's habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997), her embodied values and dispositions, are garnered from her cultural history and personal experience. Constructed over a lifetime, her habitus has significantly impacted on the formation of her professional identity. *My upbringing, my Aboriginality, my community, and my education journey*

have all shaped my identity as a teacher. Anne tends to bring strong focus to the negative personal effects of her experiences and emphasises the ongoing role of racism in her educational journey:

I have had racial taunts delivered by teaching staff and students, been made to feel inadequate in front of students by staff ... with the justification that Aboriginal people are not as literate as non-Aboriginal people and been informed that my identity does not go hand in hand with the teaching profession.

Findings by Reid and Santoro (2006) suggest that this type of treatment and positioning is a common experience for Indigenous teachers that impacts significantly on their professional identities. For Anne, these experiences have manifested into a seemingly defensive, sometimes combative stance and a conscious determination to overcome an inherent sense of powerlessness ... *my reputation for questioning schools on Aboriginal issues meant that they were 'wary' of me but I don't apologise for this – I am who I am!* Anne's disposition tends to undermine opportunities for collegiality which then leads to further alienation and isolation. This appears to reinforce her feelings of vulnerability, insecurity and fear of being scrutinised which is evidenced in the language she uses to describe her experiences at the school ... *swimming in a racist goldfish bowl with all eyes on me and nowhere to go ... watched like a hawk ... that the whole proving it ... a little suspicious of your role.*

Mahrouse (2005) observes that the racialised dominant discourses of minority teachers largely determine the subject positions that are available to them (p. 31). Within this context, the power relations and discursive practices that have positioned Anne as deficit have elicited from her a response aimed at reasserting authority and invoking counter discourses that she believes will ensure she is taken seriously. By articulating this subject position and the discourses that support it, Anne actively creates situations whereby those who disagree with or criticise her are labelled racist, or at the very least, are unwilling to engage in further discussion. ... *teachers are sometimes*

cautious when speaking, so as not to offend, or fear of being politically incorrect ...

This shows how the effects of power can modify actions by reversing the dynamic, and that it is "... through discursive positioning and negotiations with power relations, [that] the 'minority teacher' subject is produced" (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 36). Anne consciously creates her own existence through enacting various discursive practices in response to her experiences within particular power relations. In this way, the discourses of power that she adopts and the way in which she constructs herself as the 'Aboriginal teacher' within the socio-cultural context of Australian schools affords her a subject position that is consistent with her preferred professional identity.

Gomez and White (2009, p. 1016) believe that mediating personal beliefs about self and professional identity with cultural and institutional constructions of 'teacher' is especially challenging for early career teachers who experience a dissonance between their values and culture and those of the institution. This notion is supported by Anne's experiences and perceptions of other teachers ... *[I] don't wish to become the stereotypical teacher... the negative, almost dictatorship like persona which has emerged in school cultures*. Relevant here is Britzman's (2007) observation that tensions can quickly emerge for beginning teachers whose world views, lived experiences and individual and collective life histories are not reflected in the structures and stories of the education system. This becomes particularly evident when they realise the inadequacy of their histories and perspectives for making sense of their experiences of learning to teach.

Anne asserts a strong affinity identity (Gee, 2000, p. 105) which is constructed by a set of common practices that she believes are essential elements and markers of Aboriginality, such as her need to ... *recharge my kinship batteries*. She expresses strong allegiance not only to positive expressions of Aboriginality (Bourdieu, 1997) but

to the collective historical and political experiences of her people. Discursively positioning herself within this milieu, Anne's motivations, actions and responses articulate a strong sense of Aboriginality within this cultural field. Anne's discursive identity (Gee, 2000, p. 105) works to ensure that her affinity identity is clearly visible, which place her in difficult, often binary positions, *I have been accused by a non-Indigenous student as 'holding a grudge' when teaching about the Stolen Generations'. I do not apologise for this.*

Anne's lived experience within both personal and larger socio-cultural contexts has impacted on her interactions in school settings and wider education contexts. Her habitus (Bourdieu, 1997) has distinctively influenced her interactions with staff and how relationships with staff have developed ... *Well, they don't like taking advice from prac students especially Aboriginal ones who know what they're talking about and know how the system works. Maybe they feel threatened by an educated Aboriginal woman.* Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) note that positive interrelationships with colleagues or staff members invoke a sense of belonging that is crucial to an assured teaching identity. Anne's difficult interpersonal relationships hamper her opportunities for engaging in communities of practice within the school; communities emphasised by Wenger (1998) as crucial to the development of teacher learning and practice. This sense of belonging is central to what makes us human (Wenger, 2000, p. 228) and so exclusion impacts significantly on Anne's subjectivity and the ongoing development of her teaching practice.

Anne does however build positive relationships with students, particularly Aboriginal and other marginalised students which she sees as a strength that she brings to teaching. Anne states that she is ... *able to build relationships and make links with students easier than other people. I empathise with the students due to my background*

and upbringing and they know it. This often means that students are more willing to work with me in class. Significantly, Anne's experience echoes that of an Aboriginal teacher in Santoro and Reid's (2006) study who was able to build meaningful relationships with students on the basis of a shared discursive positioning as 'Other'. Through her subjectivity embodied in her Aboriginality, Anne is able to build heartfelt relationships with students, which she believes makes her a more effective teacher than others. By engaging in power relationships, Anne effectively invokes a binary (those who can relate to students and those who cannot) stance that places her as authoritative and unique. She believes that the positive outcomes of these relationships is one reason why other teachers may isolate her, ... *I do sometimes feel that teaching staff feel awkward that I have made progress with difficult students ...* and this further reinforces her perceived expertise with these students.

Anne's understanding of power relationships shaped by her experiences in schools has drawn suspicion and a sense of caution from others about her efforts to utilise her Aboriginality in her teaching and in response, Anne has adopted a defensive position. In this case it not only the fact that non-Aboriginal people do not respect the educative value of her Aboriginality (as opposed to her assumption that Aboriginal people do), but that they have asked her to conceal her Aboriginality because of the perceived negative impact on students.

My identity as an Aboriginal person has sometimes created difficulty ... Non-Indigenous people really don't give a rats about my identity, unless they can benefit from it ... I have been specifically asked not to divulge my Aboriginality or education level to students.

Anne's comments further reveal that the binary position she assumes tends to reinforce dominant discourses. Her perception that the learning styles of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners reflect distinct typologies represents a view that if expressed by another, may be labelled by Anne as racist or stereotyped. *Aboriginal students who I*

have worked within an assimilated learning environment learn differently to those who are still directly involved in their traditional culture. Anne prioritises her Aboriginality over other identity positions, discursively validating her authority as an unquestionable expert on all matters ‘Aboriginal’. Enacting this role reinforces dominant discourses of the ‘Aboriginal teacher’, a position she selectively rejects when stereotyped assumptions and expectations are attached to this positioning, ... *[A]s an Aboriginal person I am not the expert on didgeridoos.*

The notion of discursive power posits that one can be simultaneously powerful and powerless. This dynamic is evident in Anne’s conscious harnessing of her Aboriginality to support her teaching, which often positions her in ways that may, rightly or wrongly, evoke certain assumptions and/or stereotypes from others. She embodies the symbols of her Aboriginality and then arbitrarily applies them, potentially limiting her power or credibility beyond that of ‘The Aboriginal Teacher’. This situational power significantly influences Anne’s capacity for enacting agency. Foucault (1980b, p. 98) describes this as the circular ways in which power operates at the local level and in Anne’s situation; this often plays out in a way that positions her as ‘Other’, creating a barrier between herself and her colleagues. A case in point is how she “personalises” her exchange with the principal about the school’s inappropriate treatment of Aboriginal students, ...*my reputation for questioning schools on Aboriginal issues meant that they were ‘wary’ of me but I don’t apologise for this – I am who I am!* Anne’s response underlines the distinct patterns of action that characterised her first year of teaching and highlights the pervasive manner in which individuals act and react in a given situation according their habitus (Hilgers, 2009, p. 731).

Shapiro (2010) argues that positive emotions grounded in constructive human relationships are crucial to long term job satisfaction which means that Anne's aspirations may be limited by her defensiveness and self-justifying approach. Moreover, Sachs (1997) notes that schools generally privilege 'headwork over heartwork' and so emotional responses such as Anne's tend to isolate her within the socio-cultural power relations of both school contexts. This is aggravated by the prevailing institutional structures that are often inimical to personal values, and beyond the power of the individual to control or change (Britzman, 2003); understanding this dynamic is critical to articulating and negotiating a sense of self. As Anne tends to employ a 'blame' approach, her potential to exercise agency and to leverage her positive characteristics to her advantage are ultimately limited. Her lack of reflexivity, essential to the process of enacting agency within the workplace (Bandura, 2006), is limited by her application of binary reasoning and her sense that ... *my treatment throughout my life has not only instilled in me a strength to survive, [but] a silent knowing and power to turn negative into positive.*

Despite this, Anne elected to become a teacher with the intention of making a difference and challenging current practices in Aboriginal education rather than avoiding schools and teachers. Her decision implies an intentional and planned agentic response (Bandura, 2006) which is also evident in her passion to teach Aboriginal Studies and culture through pedagogical approaches that embody social justice and equity principles. She is well aware of the struggles experienced by Aboriginal children at school and the lack of understanding evident in many schools' approaches to these students. Accordingly, she notes with concern the ... *school's readiness to show students the door when the going gets tough ...* and acknowledges that ... *if they're still at school, we have a chance to talk to them, to see what is happening in their lives and*

if it is affecting their behaviour, demonstrating a genuine care and concern for student well being.

Being drawn to teaching out of a sense of social justice or the need to redress difficult personal experiences is identified by Mahrouse (2005) as a normative discourse that positions all ‘Other’ teachers as similar, familiar and predictable. In this sense, their subjectivity and positioning is predetermined, and promoted positively as beneficial to the system. Consequently, this positioning is often adopted by minority teachers as “... they consistently report the expected reasons for their motivations for teaching and attribute these assumed characteristics and skills to themselves” (p. 28).

Balancing the expectations and competing interests of certain people and groups is a key issue for Aboriginal teachers (Reid & Santoro, 2006). While all pre-service teachers are impacted by their own expectations and those of family, peers, cooperating teachers, and lecturers, Aboriginal pre-service teachers carry the additional expectations of extended family and community, as well as a history of exclusion and the sense that the education systems fails to recognise their knowledge, culture and skills. Anne’s statement that *... parents and community usually think that you can fix all their problems ... and are even a little suspicious of your role and agenda ... students and workers ... expect me to be easy going and make exceptions for them ...* highlights the complex issues and expectations of Aboriginal teachers in school settings.

The deeply personal process of learning to teach and the act of teaching itself is inexorably linked to identity, embedded in biography or life history, and reflective of the choices that teachers make (Wrench, 2011). Anne’s habitus plays a significant role in her responses to interactions within particular contexts and she tends to shift to an attitude of blame when feeling threatened or vulnerable. Contextualised in local relationships of power that shift frequently and unevenly, a subject’s disposition elicits

a range of responses, reactions and interventions (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 29). Anne's tendency towards binary thinking facilitates the constant shift from powerful to powerless, expert to deficient, and dominated to dominator. She finds herself precariously and constantly adjusting the balance and in doing so often puts herself at odds with her colleagues (and perhaps students) rather than leveraging discourses about Aboriginal teachers to her advantage. As a result, Anne limits her opportunities to enact her Aboriginality in positive ways that supports all teachers and students. Over-determining her own Aboriginality (Reid & Santoro, 2006) tends to place her in positions that exacerbate her negative emotion, rendering her powerless to change the things that matter to her.

CHAPTER 6 JANAYA

Just because you're Aboriginal doesn't mean you have to do the Aboriginal stuff at school.

Background

Janaya is a recently graduated young Aboriginal high school teacher. She is distinctly Aboriginal in appearance and identifies strongly through her upbringing in an isolated country town in northwestern NSW with a large Aboriginal population. She comes from an extended family and is related to most people within the town and the surrounding areas which for her, is a source of pride, security and belonging.

Everywhere I went as a young person, after an introduction, people would always tell me about my Aunty, Uncles or Grandparents and parents and how wonderful they are. I was always well aware of my position in continuing our family name. But this was normal for most families where I grew up.

Through her childhood experiences and close family and community relationships, Janaya forged a deep knowledge of kinship ties, connection to country, culture and heritage and has a tacit understanding of what this means in terms of her responsibilities and obligations. Her mother is Aboriginal and her father Vietnamese and Janaya states that most people don't discern her Vietnamese background in her looks and are often quite surprised when they find out that her surname is 'Nguyen'. While Janaya has a big family on her Aboriginal side, most of her Vietnamese family is either in Vietnam or in an Australian city for work reasons. She has ties with her father's family through visits to her family in the city and has visited Vietnam to meet her father's people. Janaya's parents encouraged her to be proud and respectful of her

diverse cultural background and she believes that this has contributed significantly to her positive, optimistic outlook.

I had a great time growing up and from what my young memory allowed no negativity was experienced. We sat where we wanted in the movies, had best friends who were non-Aboriginal and enjoyed a fantastic education from teachers who cared. We, who all grew up at that time, and are all different colours are all still great friends.

Janaya emphasizes the important influence of the women in her family on her own love for children and subsequent move into teaching.

My parents had to work so I looked after my sister and brother as well as my cousins. I would take them down to the river for the day and look after them at home. Most of all I think of the woman in my life as well; my mum, nan and aunties. I used to watch them and how they reared up children; make lunch, cook, clean, show children the way of life, teach them things.

Surprisingly, Janaya states that she never had any real role models in terms of education or career when growing up but ... my parents always wanted us kids to do something with our lives because of them having a hard time of being together, as elements of our town are racist and they [parents] never finished school either. Like many teenagers, Janaya talks about distractions in high school ... *a typical teenager I guess*. She recounts becoming more aware of teacher racism towards Aboriginal students as she got older which could be quite overt ... *a career advisor told my friend that she wouldn't amount to anything, that she'd probably end up an alcoholic or have lots of kids like the other Aboriginal girls...* or more subtle, such as teachers having low expectations of Aboriginal students. However, Janaya also remembers a teacher who believed in her and gave her extra attention which she believes was critical to her completing school.

Janaya fondly remembers the regular visits from her Aboriginal aunty who lived in the city that inspired her to move there when she finished school and started working.

When she came up to visit, I used to think, I want to be like her. Get out of here and

make a difference for myself and my community. While she enjoyed her young single life in the city, after working in a number of unfulfilling jobs Janaya decided it was time to pursue her goal of further education. *I realised I wanted more out of life so I moved home and built a deeper relationship with my parents and they guided me to go to university and to a better life for myself.*

University and Professional Experience

While at university, Janaya lived in Sydney and worked part-time as a tutor for Aboriginal scholarship students who were boarding at a non-government school. For her final Professional Experience, Janaya returned to the school that she had attended in her community. She was surprised to see how many of the same teachers were still there and that they ... *welcomed me with open arms ... I then realized that I wanted to make a difference for myself and my people and that teaching was my calling in life.*

Janaya noticed the impact that she had teaching in her community because she was family and community member to many of the children. She found that she could focus more on pedagogy and content and less on classroom management than most teachers because she knew the children and their families.

Because I knew everyone, it gave me an automatic relationship with the students. It also allowed me the luxury to say, 'I'm going to see your Nan later you know' so behave and do your work!' My kids worked so well for me because most were also my relation.

However, Janaya also acknowledged that ... *[M]y experience teaching in my own community has been wonderful and I would like to go back when I am more experienced and can bring fresh ideas and eyes ...* and so decided to teach elsewhere to broaden her experience.

First Teaching Appointment

Janaya was appointed to a low socio-economic multicultural school in the western suburbs of Sydney with a considerable Indigenous population. She makes these observations of the school:

I am now in the second year teaching HSIE [Human Society and its Environment]. The students at our school have a tough social life. This spills into school as is to be expected because kids are who they are. We have a high absenteeism, truancy and dislike for school from students who view it as the last on their list. I was quite upset with seeing a car space allocated to police. It was like they were permanently here and the kids grew angry every time they saw it. The anger came out of nowhere. Even asking lovely Year Seven kids what their responses to police are and hearing them say that they would run shocked me. Not growing up like this was a tough journey I have had to learn from.

Janaya was excited about teaching and decided not take on the responsibility for Aboriginal education in the school even if she was asked, believing that it ... *gave me the opportunity not to be stereotyped by someone else's ideas or assumptions.* To be just another faculty member contributing to the education of all students ... *and learn my craft ...* was Janaya's key goal for her first teaching position.

While she is a qualified Aboriginal Studies teacher, she is also a qualified history teacher and her passion is Ancient History. Credibility as a professional is crucial to Janaya and she explains her personal and professional identity positions as follows:

My Aboriginality now plays little part in my identity as a teacher. I was employed as a teacher and that's what I focused on; teaching and being the best I can be at it. I am at school because I have a degree and can teach certain subjects. My position was totally preconceived. Now however, time has allowed for me to create with my own uniqueness and skill from experience in the school. I have even had the following said to me, 'you're not focused on Aboriginal stuff are you'.. so far I have been given the chance to grow as me and I am very grateful for that.

However, Janaya clarifies this position by reaffirming the pride and strength that she has as an Aboriginal person.

My Aboriginality is everything to me. It is visible in my lessons, my behaviour, my teaching, relationships and that history is forever with me. My footsteps not only carry me but my family: past, present and future, and especially our culture. Because I am strongly aware of this, no one can heap their negativity of their own experiences on to me. I am not marginalized and will never experience adversity because of who I am. I won't allow it.

Janaya's favourite class is also her 'worst' class which she manages by staying calm and not reacting or taking student behavior personally ... *you should treat them [students] as you would want to be treated yourself. They have knowledge we don't, age is irrelevant and respect is two ways.* She also believes it is important to let students start with a 'clean slate' each day.

She uses her own ethnic and cultural background as well as her life experiences to connect with diverse students, some of whom other teachers find difficult. She recalls:

When I began teaching here, I would start each day by saying hello to the trees outside and call them aunty and uncle as a sign of respect to the land. At first the kids laughed but soon they were all saying hello to the aunts and uncles of the land.

Janaya knows that she has a responsibility to get to know the local Aboriginal community and recognises that they too want to get involved in the school.

They want teachers to inform them, teach them how to be involved in schools, teach the other teachers culture and how to build relationships with non-Aboriginal teachers. Let them know when their kids are doing both well and not so well and be their voice because more often than not, they can't.

Janaya reflects that working with the community is also complex and challenging:

They [the Aboriginal community] have been good on the surface... But they look to see how much of my culture I know. And that's the easy part. Getting up at assembly and greeting the community in my own small knowledge of language makes a big impact on my identity and the teaching of culture. I think the most important issue here for me at this stage is, I do it for my students and for our culture. That is a powerful motivation. Working with Aboriginal people is difficult especially if they have problems and will shift blame to anyone else. Luckily because of my background, I can talk and be diplomatic enough to not sound condescending. I hope so any way ... the community also expects me to

teach Aboriginal Studies and are shocked when I say another teacher does this ... It does put extra responsibilities on Aboriginal teachers.

Accordingly, Janaya tries to stay out of school politics. She notes that ... *you can be political but you have to do it in a calm way so that it is more effective ... your professionalism and the reason why you are here is what they are really looking at.*

Janaya manages these challenges because she believes she is a positive, optimistic and calm person; characteristics she believes are grounded in her upbringing.

My life experiences have made a significant contribution to my teaching at this school. I am without the aggression that many Aboriginal people who have been fighting all their lives just for recognition and equality have. I know that this is helped by growing up in a school where there were good relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. For this I am so thankful to my family and friends from my hometown

Janaya is well aware of how Aboriginal people are positioned by themselves and others.

Initially, everyone thinks that because you look Aboriginal that everything that comes out of her mouth is going to be Aboriginal. So what you have to do is take control of that and be judged only by how you speak, act or interact – it is totally up to you – be diplomatic! Mum used to say ‘its not about your colour, but your behaviour.’

Janaya states that the key to her survival and growth at the school has been the opportunity to (self) determine how she wants to approach her teaching and develop her individual uniqueness as a teacher. She believes that this has been achieved through positive relationships in her staffroom.

To work in our school is a gem. Relationships with most teachers are very nice, easy and in many cases loving. The day does not start without a hug and kiss from many staff members both male and female without any negativity. There are power struggles and personality difficulties but I have refused to get involved or even have knowledge of these for the most part ... We all help one another, have great management from the head teacher, all plan together, share resources, knowledge and food. Our programs are excellent and we have a staff meeting every two weeks to let each other know where we should be up to by referring back to the program. We have distinct roles and have the support of one another. Our head teacher also is a great advocate for Aboriginal education, learning, resources and communication and this is mirrored by our principal and deputies. It’s a good school to be at, I feel supported not only by

the students, but the whole school ... Supporting one another is the key ... in saying that I only have relationships with two teachers outside school but others I do not seek. This is because I do not want to be talking about teaching all my life.

Also crucial for Janaya is the support of her partner in finding meaning and balance in her school experiences.

To balance this, I talk to my partner. He is understanding and kind with a great insight into human behaviour. He is without judgment and decision. He has not confronted me with the 'well leave them' response and because of our conversations, I have been able to process most experiences. But the sad thing is, I look every time I turn on the light, expecting something that is not right. Mmmm I wonder ...

Janaya notes that building positive relationships with students needs to be mediated so that students don't take advantage of you. Janaya admits that she did initially tend to overcompensate for the students because of their disadvantaged circumstances but then realised that she was just ... *giving them a crutch.*

What is really annoying is the culture of welfare some members of the school staff create. The kids ask and if they don't get what they want from one staff member, they ask another and usually get things one way or another. They are good at it. For a teacher to work out there, they have to be strong enough to say no, or have a good relationship with the students so that they will take your no and your reason and won't go elsewhere.

Janaya articulates concern about issues that she believes are crucial to the future of education and that significantly impact on the students she teaches.

The curriculum is not engaging and the system of education is based on the Victorian age which does not work today. Today some Year Eight students were asking, 'why do I need to be in a set class that is determined by my birthday?' This is a fair question especially when the ability levels of many students do not match their age. Learning should never be in black and white. Yearly examinations are out-dated, it is the extraction of information that is most important. But what will take their place is hidden in small but frequent tasks throughout the year. And it is very important that these tasks are rewarded on their own merit, not rewarded as one.

My experience so far is that behavior is the key issue in teaching at this school. But also from Year Seven, what starts out as, 'its ok you go and sit outside and calm down, don't worry about it' ends up with a situation where the kids get use to it and get used to playing on teachers sympathies. Then suddenly, it is Year Nine and the kids have missed out on fundamental learning, have become

disengaged and exhibit major behavior problems. They are then 'A Problem Student' and we can't do anything with them so we look at both medicating them and sending them to the PCYC [Police Community Youth Club] ... this makes me so wild and actually I'm getting upset for my students because I've seen what medication does - it turns a normal boy with hormones, questions and actions for life into an angry miserable alcoholic teenager... the system has a major hole in it. If I had my way, there would be no medication, extra teachers, aides, personnel who will stop at nothing to help all our kids succeed. I know most teachers where I am are so dedicated, as you can't be a teacher and not be dedicated, it's too difficult a vocation.

Janaya identifies the importance of e-Learning, seeing it as the key because 'computer talk is kids talk' and as a young person, she relates to this phenomena.

e-Learning is an important key as to how all kinds of students operate today, so a greater focus on getting teachers and the system e-Learning educated should be a priority. There is still too much emphasis on war and exams. With the information age here, kids need to know how to research, filter information, then re-blog in their own language and how to reference it more so on remembering. There is too much to remember now and our kids have it all at the touch of their key hitting fingertips.

For Aboriginal students, Janaya identifies more issues to be addressed.

Aboriginal students have no link between self, family, identity, community, school and especially curriculum. Of course there are exceptions, but there are so many who are within this stereotypical bracket. The problem firstly as I see it is: Aboriginal people still have little instinct for white man ways. Aboriginal ways of learning and non-Aboriginal techniques are so different but the students are measured within general Australian school systems. So if they learn differently how can they write the two thousand word essays expected of them in Year Twelve? ... They need pictures, colour, to find and sort out in their heads information and it needs to make sense to them. They need information that is real to them and connects for them the outcomes to the tasks they are asked to complete. They need a chance to talk not to write though this is problematic. I feel very sad for our kids, they are not interested in education. I hate how our careers advisor tells them that they don't need an ATAR [Australian Tertiary Admission Rank] because they will never go to university or that kids from certain families are not to be trusted because they are all criminals. And I thought teachers were educated !! Also, when Aboriginal teachers speak with a strong Aboriginal dialect, I know the teachers are thinking that they don't know how to teach English.. blah!

When confronted with racism herself, Janaya approaches this as follows:

I ask them (staff) why they are that way, who taught them to be like that, and give them a little history lesson if the moment allows. Otherwise, I let them know

that they are of no consequence in my life and keep on walking. And, I always say 'Hi' the next time that I see them.

Janaya acknowledges the unique role that Aboriginal teachers can potentially play in schools.

It is not always the case that Aboriginal teachers are best suited for Aboriginal students in the classroom, but it is that Aboriginal teachers mentor, support and be a role model for Aboriginal students. Kids like to learn without being focused on, just a gentle tap on the shoulder is recognition enough for many of them. Once you build the relationship with any child especially a Koori child, they try to do better. Also, Aboriginal people best invite Aboriginal people into school. That is also important for our kids. It shows them that we can get together, are friendly towards one another and can be professional, just like other teachers.

The most surprising yet disappointing aspect of teaching for Janaya as a new teacher is the enormous amount of administration and paperwork.

I had no expectations other than I had a job to do and was going to work hard at achieving it but the amount of administration work is astounding, and it took me a long time to accept it without negativity ... the workload from the Institute of Teachers as well as assessments, programming, and teaching with no aides (for instance, for learning difficulties students) just to name a few. The overall expectations from the DET are overwhelming much of the time. To be honest, I thought the wage would have been a lot better to reflect the amount of work you do outside the classroom! This makes you realise that our government doesn't appreciate education.

In Conversation With Janaya's Narrative

Janaya's habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997) is strongly influenced by an upbringing grounded in culture. This includes a supportive extended family with extensive historical ties to Country, kin and community and the external recognition of these ties by others. She is aware of her responsibilities within this context and gives expression to these responsibilities through her daily practice of caring for younger siblings and learning about her family life from the women who feature strongly in her life. These individual and group values and practices influence the forming 'habitus' as they become internalised and converted into goals, attitudes and approaches, and contribute

to opportunities for success or failure (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). For Janaya, this builds a sense of self that is embodied in tacit and explicit values and dispositions (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 54) in her familial cultural field. This provides Janaya with a strong sense of security and belonging, contributing to a positive disposition on which to build her aspirations. She emphasises the importance and ongoing influence of a positive upbringing that can help her ... *make a difference for myself and my community*.

Janaya's early socialisation is evident in her attitude and approach to her teaching career. She simultaneously draws upon her cultural knowledge and background in her teaching practice so as to (self)determine her affinity identity (Gee, 2000, p. 105) as a professional in her own right. She actively resists the discursive positioning of the often over-determined role of the 'Aboriginal' teacher (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 151).

My Aboriginality now plays little part in my identity as a teacher. I was employed as a teacher and that's what I focused on; teaching and being the best I can be at it ... I have even had the following said to me, 'you're not focused on Aboriginal stuff are you'

Bandura's (2001, 2006) four attributes of agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self-reflectiveness, are useful for understanding Janaya's enactment of agency through the expression of her Aboriginality in both her personal and professional lives. Although this is tacitly expressed due to her early socialisation, Janaya is able to effectively and responsively separate her professional and personal identity to establish credibility as an effective 'mainstream' teacher without sacrificing her Aboriginal identity. She purposefully plans, reflects on and regulates the professional identity she wishes to embody in response to the socio-cultural context in which she works.

Initially, everyone thinks that because you look Aboriginal that everything that comes out of her mouth is going to be Aboriginal. So what you have to do is take control of that and be judged only by how you speak, act or interact – it is

totally up to you ... [also] ... My Aboriginality is everything to me. It is visible in my lessons, my behaviour, my teaching, relationships and that history is forever with me.

As Janaya articulates and asserts her own identity position, she rejects the discursive positioning of others (Gee, 2000, p. 105), acknowledging that the predetermined positioning of Aboriginal people based on assumptions and stereotypes is problematic. When faced with racism, Janaya distances herself by adopting an intellectual stance:

I ask them [staff] why they are that way, who taught them to be like that, and give them a little history lesson if the moment allows. Otherwise, I let them know that they are of no consequence in my life and keep on walking. And, I always say 'Hi' the next time that I see them.

Here, she renegotiates the power relationship by effectively overturning the situation so that the person making the comment becomes the subject of discussion. This repositions the dynamic and reinstates her authority and disposition as someone who is not impacted on by these attitudes. By greeting them openly in subsequent encounters she maintains a position of authority and distance that is simultaneously disarming and perhaps vexing to the other person. Janaya's approach demonstrates how power relationships operate in complex and multilayered ways and signifies the potentially endless field of responses, reactions and interventions that may emerge (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35).

Janaya's final Professional Experience in her hometown provided her with a discursive space in which to explore her personal, professional and situated identity ... *I then realized that I wanted to make a difference for myself and my people and that teaching was my calling in life.* Flores and Day (2006, p. 230) emphasise the mediating role of personal biography in the development of beginning teachers' identity within the specific socio-cultural context of schools. Developing her pedagogical skills in this

context was for Janaya, enhanced by her unique membership of the local school community ... *my kids worked so well for me because most were also my relations.*

Bourdieu's (1997, p. 47) notions of cultural and social capital are relevant here as they provide a framework through which to understand Janaya's disposition, her daily practice and her desire for success as an educator. Her cultural capital is drawn from the academic qualifications deemed necessary for acceptance within the educational field, the tacit cultural knowledge of her upbringing and is reinforced by social capital developed within the local Aboriginal community and wider school community. Emotional capital can also be converted into or exchanged for social and cultural capital (Santoro, 2010; Zembylas, 2007) and Janaya draws strongly on this capital, largely obtained through her maternal and cultural upbringing. Through these forms of capital she effectively connects with parents, communities and schools in ways that are unique to her positioning as a member of a respected family within that community ... *[I]t also allowed me the luxury to say, 'I'm going to see your Nan later you know' so behave and do your work!'* This shows how the relational concepts of habitus and field contextualise emotional capital to form practices shared by politically and socially located individuals and groups (Zembylas, 2007). This is reflected in Stone's (2001) post-structural conception of social capital as a nuanced, contextually mediated construct characterised by inherent power relationships and in Brough and Bond's (2009, p. 248) assertion that quality relationships within marginalised groups are valuable for augmenting the 'bonding' capital (Putnam, 1995) that strengthens people and communities.

While Janaya doesn't explicitly articulate this notion, her approach to the beginning of her teaching career is evident in her understanding of the need to acquire cultural and social capital to garner respect as a teacher within the discursive spaces of

education ... *I have even had the following said to me, 'you're not focused on Aboriginal stuff are you' ... so far I have been given the chance to grow as me and I am very grateful for that.* Janaya transfers her emotional capital into cultural and social capital to support stronger relationships in the classroom and empowerment within the school community (Zembylas, 2007, p. 453-454) ...*my footsteps not only carry me but my family: past, present and future, and especially our culture.* This is extended to the enactment of her personal practical knowledge ... *I would start each day by saying hello to the trees outside and call them aunty and uncle as a sign of respect to the land.* She realises that she can provide a unique contribution to education through this dynamic but refuses to allow this to be the defining characteristic of her professional identity

Janaya notes that many Aboriginal people lack the cultural and social capital to succeed within the mainstream and laments that ... *Aboriginal people still have little instinct for white man ways. Aboriginal ways of learning and non-Aboriginal techniques are so different but the students are measured within general Australian school systems.* She notes the irrelevance and inflexibility of the curriculum and school contexts and demonstrates an awareness of how this works against student engagement through reflecting on comments such as ... *why do I need to be in a set class that is determined by my birthday.* She recognises the dissonance and tension present in the intersecting fields of education and Aboriginal students' lives and recognises this as a site of competing discourses, relationships of power and the negotiation of subjectivities (Foucault, 1982; Nakata, 2002). In response to this, Janaya chooses to enact her embodied cultural and lived experiences in ways that support agency and self-determination.

Janaya's reflective style is shaped by her lived experiences (van Manen 1990, p. 25) in which intergenerational respect and family values are emphasised. As she holds a

particular understanding and regard for her students and their opinions ... *they have knowledge we don't, age is irrelevant and respect is two ways*. Even if she cannot relate to their life experiences, she acknowledges this and engages with the challenges that it presents ... *[N]ot growing up like this was a tough journey I have had to learn from*. This thinking disrupts the dominant discourse that Aboriginal teachers can relate to and somehow diminish the impact of the wider community dysfunction (where it exists) on Aboriginal students at school. Keddie (2012) notes that, "This [type of] reductionism disregards the complex, dynamic and contingent ways in which cultures are constructed and reconstructed within particular contexts and historical periods and in relation to other identity groups" (p. 320).

Using Wenger's (1998) conceptual framework of learning as experience, practice, belonging and becoming, Timostuk and Ugaste (2010) identify the importance of relationships where the social nature of learning to teach influences personal and professional identity. Janaya utilizes this dynamic by operationalising her biography to mediate and manage relationships that support her teaching; She notes the significance of, ... *growing up in a school where there were good relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. For this I am so thankful to my family and friends from my hometown*. Her perception is filtered through positive memories and experiences rather than through a lens of ethnicity. She identifies strong and supportive relationships with her immediate colleagues, but also recognises that power relationships are fraught with tensions and disappointments and so avoids these where possible ... *[T]here are power struggles and personality difficulties but I have refused to get involved or even have knowledge of these for the most part ... Supporting one another is the key*.

Balancing the often unrealistic and predetermined expectations of the school and community is a complex and challenging endeavor. Reid and Santoro (2006) note the

pressure that is often placed on Indigenous teachers and its potential for “... contradictory constructions of their own identity as teachers” (p. 153) and argue that this involves simultaneous shifts of power and authority within the community and workplace. This dynamic potentially renders Indigenous teachers vulnerable, which underlines Foucault’s (1982) assertion that power is evident in the discursive practices of specific socio-cultural contexts. Further, Mahrouse (2005) notes that the systems of language and classification employed by ‘minority teacher’ discourses are dividing practices that create differences usually expressed through binary oppositions. So, while Janaya acknowledges her responsibility in engaging with the local Aboriginal community when she is teaching outside her hometown, she is also aware of how complex and challenging this is, and the way in which her racialised positioning affects interactions.

They [the community] have been good on the surface... But they look to see how much of my culture I know ... Working with Aboriginal people is difficult ... Luckily because of my background, I can talk and be diplomatic enough to not sound condescending.

Again, Janaya harnesses her cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997) to connect with and support the local community, but also asserts what she will and won’t do ... *the community also expects me to teach Aboriginal Studies and are shocked when I say another teacher does this.*

She does acknowledge though that being Aboriginal means that she can enact power in ways that non-Aboriginal people cannot, and is motivated by the significant positive impact that she believes she has on her students. ... *Also, Aboriginal people best invite Aboriginal people into school. That is also important for our kids. It shows them that we can get together, are friendly towards one another and can be professional, just like other teachers.* What is implied here is Janaya’s recognition of the complex issues around community relationships that can’t be solved

singlehandedly. Of significance here is Brough and Bond's (2009, p. 253) assertion that networks formed as a result of social capital within Aboriginal communities can function concomitantly as valuable resources as well as sources of conflict, division and dysfunction.

Finally, while Janaya is motivated to make a difference in all children's lives, she does so on her own terms, challenging the discursive positioning by others within the school, the local Aboriginal community and the wider education community. By resisting dominant discourses of the 'Aboriginal teacher', Janaya harnesses the tools necessary to manage relationships of power in her school and the community in a way that allows her to establish her subject positioning, and activate her positive and calm disposition in ways that create for her, a preferred professional identity.

CHAPTER 7 JOHN

You are using too much of your personal life to teach.

Background

John is a father in his forties who has recently uncovered his Aboriginal background. He lives in a different location to where he was raised and his extensive involvement in sports and acceptance by the local Aboriginal people constitutes his community. Outside this community, he is often perceived as having a non-Anglo ethnic heritage as his looks do not automatically position him as Aboriginal. John spent many years in blue-collar work and is married with four children, who all attend the local secondary school which is characterised by a high number of disadvantaged and Aboriginal students.

John grew up in Sydney's inner city and attended the same school as his mother, aunts and other family members ... *so we got to see all their old sporting pictures at the school.* The family moved to the western suburbs when John started high school. ... *I think it was more my mother's idea to get me away before I got into too much trouble.* He recalls teachers telling him ... *if I wasn't so good at football, I wouldn't have been allowed to stay in school. I still have a bad taste in my mouth from that and school.*

John had a vague idea about his Aboriginal background when growing up but didn't have any contact with this side of the family. He states that he grew up 'white' and reflects that playing sport and belonging to sporting clubs constituted his 'community', while also giving him contact with Aboriginal people.

So even now, my community is mostly playing and coaching league and touch footy. I also help pick the rep teams, you know like select the best players and then sometimes I coach or do the trainer role; they say I am pretty good with that. This means the Koori lads know someone, feel more like they might have a chance to get picked ... I guess I feel sort of like a mentor or something cause they know I did uni and I guess if someone like me can, then maybe they can.

He explains that it has only in the last ten years that he has tried to find out more about his people, his culture and family history. This journey has not been easy:

... I have found family who don't want to have anything to do with me or my family, and then for other family, we don't really have much to talk about after the first few visits where we are still getting to know each other 'cause we have no childhood memories, no past or stuff.

He is aware of how this impacts on his role as an educator, and the protocols of transmitting cultural knowledge in local schools. *I identify but don't pretend to know my culture in depth so I ask someone who knows it to do this cultural stuff for schools.*

John decided to leave construction and participate in a work ready program at the Local Aboriginal Land Council. He then completed a tertiary preparation course at TAFE, remembering being quite shocked that he could do such a course and that ... *it was largely due to the support that I got from the people at the land council that made me think about how I could contribute as well.* John then applied for and was accepted into a university teacher education course.

Well, truthfully, I thought teaching would be an easy job - just standing in front of the class and giving them information. I never realised how many different aspects of teaching there was and the complex way things are organised to get outcomes for kids.

A desire to 'give back' to the community and provide a role model for Aboriginal kids, particularly boys, is evident in John's motivation to teach.

I wanted to teach in my community just for the fact that the community has got me to where I am today. And there's not really many Aboriginal men where boys can go in and say 'look sir I've got this problem' whereas they might be too ashamed to go and talk to females about it.

Professional Experience

John believes he did reasonably well in his first two Professional Experience placements, though recognises that he had a lot to learn particularly in terms of curriculum content that was not covered in detail in his degree. He states that the teachers encouraged him to use his cultural background and knowledge as well as a variety of teaching and classroom management strategies. John's final Professional Experience however, provided a different experience that he believes undermined his confidence, making him think twice about applying for a teaching job when he graduated.

When he arrived at the school, John remembers feeling nervous, and so listened and observed the teachers in the staffroom to get a feel for how things worked.

I didn't really say anything 'cause I was very nervous, but then she (his cooperating teacher, Karen) started to talk about her school holidays and how she went to Uluru, and I thought this great - she is interested in Aboriginal culture. And one of the teachers asked her 'Did you climb Uluru?' And she looked straight at me and said 'Oh well they don't like you climbing it, but I thought stuff if I'm driving this far I'm climbing it anyway'. So I thought 'Okay this isn't going to be real good'. Then during the prac, she told me that she's worked in Aboriginal communities in isolated areas. But the comments and the way she'd approach me, I always had that doubt in my mind that maybe she copped a hard time in those communities and she may have held a grudge from those experiences. But, at the same time, I think she was trying to be culturally aware.

Karen allocated John a range of classes within the Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) faculty, and John was especially pleased to be allocated senior Aboriginal Studies:

I know I don't want to give them [students] bad information, you know I want to get the truth out there. For years ... since colonisation we've been taught the wrong information when we went to school. I want to stop all that; I want to get the other side out there. So if anything I'm going to go and research my people and Aboriginal culture more than what I'd go and research Gallipoli or World War I because it's something that I'm passionate about.

However, Karen told him that the previous Aboriginal Studies teacher had recently left ... *I haven't taught it before so you're doing it, and I have no idea where they were up to in the syllabus.* After discussions with the students and examining the syllabus, John soon realised that the class hadn't finished important aspects of the course and so proceeded to do this.

Because she never really taught Aboriginal Studies, she was basically learning the subject herself from me in the class ... but then would question what I was teaching and how. She'd say to me 'You are using too much of your personal life to teach. I don't want you to give them too much information about your personal life.' But I felt that the students related to this more and they could see the effect of it.

John recalls that Karen often questioned his knowledge of his people and language group and ... *[I]t made me feel like I was a bit of a burden and that she may have had a hidden agenda towards me.* This was affirmed for John when he asked Karen for resources to teach classes in other subject areas.

She said 'You should be able to research this by now and maybe you should work on your research skills a bit more if you're having trouble with stuff like this' ... and then she was asking me for copies of my Aboriginal Studies resources!

John acknowledged that initially, his preparation was not as thorough as it should have been.

But the good thing was I guess (although at the time I thought that she was picking on me), she never put me in the category of 'Oh well he's Aboriginal so it's a lower level for him'. She made sure that I rose to her standards, so I guess she had high expectations, which I think benefited me. Still, it did add to the pressure at the time, which I felt all the time while working with her, something I didn't feel in previous pracs.

He was especially pleased that he had developed significant relationships with his students, particularly the teenage boys who ...*he could see himself in ...* and was keen to engage them in his lessons. He proudly recounts:

All the kids loved me, and on the last day they gave me presents and everything. I also got a phone call from a parent saying their kid loved my classes. I went to another level after that.

Karen expressed her opposition to his approach as she felt that he shouldn't identify himself as Aboriginal or share personal stories. John recalls her explanation;

... while it is important to have passion for culture and teaching area, it is more important to consider the backgrounds and naivety of teenagers in classrooms who may say the wrong thing ... not been exposed to or remembering any good teachers you had at school, due to age or experiences and good teachers as a child made a big difference to how you perceive your role in the classroom.

John recalls an altercation with Karen over a lesson plan that he submitted late.

The printers weren't available in the staffroom in the morning because other teachers were using them and I didn't want to be a nuisance. Because I didn't have the lesson until late in the day, I thought that I should wait until one is a free. I didn't want to say 'I need to print my lessons this morning so I need you to move out of the way' ... I just thought that I would wait a little bit, and then print. Well she just blew up and didn't ask about why I hadn't printed it out, and that sort of put me off because of her tone and attitude. I wasn't game to try and explain my side of the story because I felt it would just look like I was making excuses.

John remembers other humiliating experiences such as:

... when Karen stepped in and took over the class without any notice ... like the kids weren't out of control in any shape or form ... they were a bit confused about their task but I was going to explain that. I thought 'Hey, you shouldn't do that!' ... on another day after we had talked after my lesson about the things I did wrong, she spoke about my performance in front of other staff, she announced it to everyone. I was a bit shocked, I thought that she really shouldn't have done that, but luckily, most staff just seemed to ignore her.

John felt that he got along well with faculty staff and also spent considerable time in the Koori room getting involved with the boys' didgeridoo group. *I was identified straight away by the AEOs that I was Aboriginal and they took me under their wing ... but Karen told me that ... I spent too much time with them and not enough time in the staffroom. She was very cautious of saying things to me because I got on well with the AEOs and stuff.*

Karen informed John that his lack of content knowledge impeded his ability to teach and that forming good student relationships did not compensate for this. He felt that:

...my Aboriginality was used against me. I think that the teacher (Karen) has a fairly inflexible idea of what makes a good teacher, and while recognising there may be issues or unique circumstances for me as an Aboriginal teacher, she is unable to apply this in a positive way without feeling she has lowered her expectations of pre-service teachers.

He recognises the negative assumptions often associated with being an Aboriginal teacher, and states that:

... my beliefs are that it's not the colour of your skin, but your confidence of who you are and who you relate to and how confident you are in your own community, but it depends on what school you go to I'm assuming. Like here they're aware that you're getting trained in Aboriginal Studies and they're aware of your cultural experience and therefore want to take advantage of that which is ok by me but while I think I'm accepted by most staff, I am not totally embraced by them you know ... I think they think you got through uni the easy way and as with the old stereotypes, you get everything for nothing ... Karen said, 'Oh do you have to pay HECS fees' and I went 'Yeah, I pay the same as everybody else.'

John however identifies that both his extensive life experience and his age are instrumental to his teaching.

I think that my life experiences demonstrate to the kids that yeah I wasn't the best student but just because you're not the best student you can still achieve in life. I felt that 'cause of my life and the way I was at school that I could relate to the students and what they were going through, and especially the less academic students. Also, you can talk to some of the subject matter because of your social and work experiences not just theory and stuff. And sometimes you've lived some of those experiences that you're talking about to kids, so that gives you an advantage.

John began to feel that many of Karen's comments were personal and he recalls her writing little notes on his lessons in red pen,

... a bit like what you would do to students in your class who had difficulty with reading and writing, and I thought that was very degrading. I lost a bit of respect for her for that ... I felt I couldn't trust her anymore.

Karen articulated that she felt his use of Aboriginal English in the classroom was 'lax' and that cultural background should not impact on the pre-service teacher's ability to teach. She *... found it hard to support that Aboriginality played a role in a teachers' teaching style.*

John began to anticipate what Karen might say and do next.

I'd sit there of a night thinking of questions that she'd ask me the next day and I'd have an answer ready for her, so she couldn't pick me up on stuff anymore ... so the next day I had merit awards for every student, I had stamps, I'd marked all the homework, everything, and I would have it all done so when she come in and said oh have you got your lesson plans, I could say yeah, there you go and there's one for tomorrow and the next day, and the next day.

Much to his surprise, John found this to be an effective strategy.

In a way I also turned that into a positive by making it a challenge for me to prove to her that I might be Aboriginal but I can do just as good as what she can do, and it was helped by getting that telephone call from a parent and a lot of the kids would come past and give me a compliment, great lesson, sir, while she was there and that would piss her off I think. That's how I got some of the power back. She sort of laid off a bit for the last couple of weeks and in the last week she'd say 'go in the classroom on your own'.

During John's Professional Experience, Karen also mentored a young, inexperienced pre-service teacher from the same university who was feeling overwhelmed by the school context.

I remember there was another university student up there, a young girl, and Karen was very different with her and looked after her ... personally I think it was because I came from the Koori Centre and she felt that it was a 'micky mouse' course. She thought that I was getting the easy ticket through to teaching and everybody else had to do it the hard way and why should I be able to come through with a degree. I even found out that the university student was Aboriginal herself, she just didn't identify ... and Karen goes 'Oh I didn't know you were Aboriginal'. She didn't want to talk about it; she just pulled back and sort of kept looking at Karen like 'Oh my God, I'm going to get in trouble if they find out' But I sort of put her on the spot and so she came out and said 'Oh yeah I'm from here and that sort of thing'. Once I started talking to her she started coming around 'cause she was starting to ask me for advice. I said 'Look, if you want to talk to somebody about that you need to go and see the AEO ... that's your first point of contact'. She went to see them but even then she wouldn't openly identify. You could tell she was one of them ones who would just rather not say anything and just go under the radar sort of thing... But I still think she got more respect from Karen because she went through the mainstream teaching course at my uni.

John spent considerable time reflecting on his relationship with his cooperating teacher in an attempt to better understand the situation.

It was like she was scared of me, like I was in there to spy on her or take her job or something like that. And I think mainly too 'cause the school's got such a

great Aboriginal awareness, I think also she was very cautious of saying things to me because I got on well with the AEOs and stuff ... maybe she just categorised everything as Aboriginal or not Aboriginal and the Aboriginal thing just blinded her to forming a relationship with me as a student teacher not as an Aboriginal person. I think maybe we also try too hard to prove ourselves to them.

He also acknowledged that the support he received from his university lecturers was crucial to completing his Professional Experience.

If I never had my lecturers as support I wouldn't have been here now, and it was good that I could talk to them and know that I had their support, that they weren't judging me and that they could see my side of the story 'cause it was a bit intimidating since she's the authority figure. Since the head teacher knows a lot more about it than me, I was always asking myself, am I doing the right thing? And without being able to talk to my lecturers about it I would have just quit. I would have said - No I can't do it!

Post Graduation

John notes that one of the unexpected outcomes of obtaining an education is that he is more open-minded, analytical and reflective and while he sees the positive side of this, he laments that it has cost him friendships.

A few of my mates get the shits with me 'cause I keep pulling 'em up when they say something racist or ignorant, and sometimes they say I should run for Prime Minister. But I say I shouldn't have to pick you up all the time.... and yeah I think a lot more about what they said, I can put myself in their perspective too now.

He believes that having an education has helped him to respond more confidently and proactively to negative attitudes. An incident at work illustrates this:

Yeah well I was at the Bathurst 500 and I was working in the pits and one of the commentators came up and made a racial joke in front of me about Aboriginal women. It pissed me off and at first I just walked away from him and stewed on it. But then I thought 'No, I'm bigger than this' so I followed it up through the right channels and saw the union rep who said 'No, something has to be done'. So they dragged him out of the office and I thought if he apologises I'm happy to leave it on the mountain. I explained to the bosses that if he doesn't apologise by tomorrow morning I'll be ringing Channel 9, 10, the Daily Telegraph, the Sydney Morning Herald and telling them that Channel 7 has a racist commentator. They said 'Oh okay', and about five minutes later he came out

and said 'Oh, you overheard'. I said 'Mate, you walked up to me and said the joke' and he goes 'Oh but you know it could be used for anybody'. I said 'Well that joke shouldn't be used for any race and I know you think I'm a dickhead but I've got a bachelors degree in Aboriginal Studies, I'm not stupid mate'! Then he changed his story and thanked me and said that he needed a kick in arse and shook my hand. I said 'Look we'll leave it here.'

John is working intermittently in freelance sports media area but he has not ruled out a career in teaching.

I don't know. I think my last practice teaching scared the shit out of me. I started to doubt myself and whether I was able to do the job and still do have that a bit, but now I'm sort of to the point now where I'm thinking that I'm leaving it too long, and if I don't get into it soon, it may be too late.

In Conversation with John's Narrative.

Foucault's (1980a, p. 101) claim that "... discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" indicates new ways to constitute and describe the 'Other' and illuminates the intrinsic and inextricable link between discourses and power. His concepts of discourse, power and subjectivity provide relevant analytical tools for revealing John's discursive positioning within his final Professional Experience. This includes ways in which he is positioned by others, consciously and unconsciously responds to this positioning, and the efforts he makes to resist it (Davies & Harre, 1990; Mahrouse, 2005). Exposing these power relationships contributes to an understanding of the ways in which John's subjectivity is constituted (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 28) at the cultural interface.

John brings to the teaching domain a subject position grounded in his working class background which encompasses a sense of culturally reproduced disappointment and alienation from his schooling experiences as well as growing knowledge of and pride in his cultural background. John's experience of finding family but not making

lasting or deep connections created a sense of disappointment about developing familial cultural ties. However, this is largely alleviated by the sense of belonging and support he receives from his local Aboriginal and sports community. It also comprises a significant element of his affinity identity (Gee, 2000), his habitus and the social capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1997) that he brings to his teaching. John expresses this as follows ... *my beliefs are that it's not the colour of your skin, but your confidence of who you are and who you relate to and how confident you are in your own community.* His approach of building effective relationships with students by leveraging his social capital which is manifest in his deep understanding of the interrelationships and discursive practices of sportsmanship, loyalty, and fair play is key to his teaching identity. However, as John's lived experience and teaching perspectives are so removed from those of his cooperating teacher (Karen), dissonance is created at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002) which is further complicated by the unequal power relationship.

Not surprisingly, John chose teaching so that he could help Aboriginal students, particularly Aboriginal teenage boys ... *who he could see himself in.* He believes that he can be a role model and mentor for students given that his life and educational experiences invoke an empathetic disposition. As such, he discursively operationalises his lived experiences to build capital (Bourdieu, 1997) with his students and develop his own teaching practices, ... *I felt that 'cause of my life and the way I was at school that I could relate to the students and what they were going through, and especially the less academic students.*

Van Manen's (1994, p. 149) notion of a 'pedagogical relation' connects human caring based on lived experience to pedagogy and the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere. This makes clear the strong emotional component of teaching that is

crucial to engaging Aboriginal students in the educational process as well as being a significant source of empowerment for teachers (Zembylas, 2005, p. 944).

Several studies on Indigenous, minority and ‘Other’ teachers (Hart et al., 2012; Keddie & Williams, 2012; Mahrouse, 2005; Phillips & Nava, 2011; Reid & Santoro, 2006; Santoro, 2007; Santoro & Allard, 2005) highlight the significant role that lived experiences and cultural background plays in influencing teaching subjectivities “... their [Indigenous teachers] pedagogies were strongly influenced by their own experiences as learners and their knowledge about the informal and experiential learning and teaching that occurs between children, parents and elders in Indigenous communities” (Santoro, 2007, p. 91). What emerges from these studies are normalising discourses around the ‘minority teacher’ who chooses teaching to help students like themselves (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 28).

These same discourses influence the subject position that they take up in schools, can over-determine their identity (Reid & Santoro, 2006) and potentially limit other identities that they may wish to evoke, thereby undermining opportunities to pose counter-discourses of the ‘Aboriginal teacher’. Moreover, negative cultural discourses can position Aboriginal teachers as deficit and outsiders. Such discursive positioning ultimately destabilises the place of Aboriginal teachers within the relations of power. For example, John recalls Karen telling him that ... *I spent too much time with them [AEOs] and not enough time in the staffroom [and] she was very cautious of saying things to me because I got on well with the AEOs...* He also states that while ... *they’re aware of your cultural experience and therefore want to take advantage of that which is ok by me but while I think I’m accepted by most staff, I am not totally embraced by them* ... and so is aware of his discursive positioning as both expert and outsider.

Moreover, a deficit discourse was applied to John's teacher training ... *she felt that it was a 'mickey mouse' course. She thought that I was getting the easy ticket through to teaching and everybody else had to do it the hard way.* The familiar stereotype that Aboriginal people get special treatment (Human Rights Commission, 2012) including free education goes hand in hand with Aboriginal discourses and subjectivities that embody particular racialised or ethnic-based modes of behaviour and language. For John, his written and spoken expression were perceived as deficit and he felt that Karen's response was ... *a bit like what you would do to students in your class who had difficulty with reading and writing.* These prevailing discourses impact on power relationships because they classify and construct the Aboriginal teacher in negative ways through labels such as 'lazy' and 'freeloader'. John believes this is the key reason that his cooperating teacher adopted an antipathetic attitude towards him from the beginning.

Making a difference through curriculum, particularly through presenting an Aboriginal perspective of Australia's history, is a high priority for John as he is acutely aware of the negative implications of delivering inaccurate and inadequate content. John states that ... *for years ... since colonisation we've been taught the wrong information when we went to school. I want to stop all that; I want to get the other side out there.* This reflects dominant curriculum discourses of Indigenous peoples, knowledges and cultures that position Aboriginal people as dominant, invisible, trivial, peripheral and/or unnecessarily dissident (Nakata, 2002; Phillips, 2011). These perspectives were reproduced in Karen's language and attitude when recounting her family holiday, ... *and she looked straight at me and said 'Oh well they don't like you climbing it, but I thought stuff it, if I'm driving that far I'm climbing it anyway'.* Disrupting the dominant group's privileged position produces intense reactions and

unnecessary tensions, as evidenced in Karen's reaction to being told what to do by a perceived lesser authority, in this case the Aboriginal owners of the cultural site she was visiting. That she would openly articulate this in front of colleagues despite claims of cultural awareness and indicates her need to maintain a sense of authority and power (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35) as an Australian and as a teacher (Reid et al., 2004). This was further reflected in her apprehensive attitude towards John's interactions with the AEOs and in how she negatively positioned him on the basis of his ethnicity and (non-mainstream) qualifications. The construction of binaries such as superior/inferior and mainstream/non-mainstream positions John's subjectivity within the relationships of power as deficit and sets down parameters for what should and should not occur. This historically-located discourse is based on the familiar social category of the 'second-class citizen' and positions Aboriginal teachers as 'not a real teacher' which significantly marginalises them. It also assumes that their interest and expertise lie exclusively in the specialised area of Aboriginal education which directly links their professional identity to their ethnicity (Mahrouse, 2005) and potentially limits their career opportunities.

Britzman (2007, p. 2) suggests that teacher beliefs about teaching are built on an individual's personal experience as a school student, which creates 'cultural myths' about good and bad teachers and limits the pre-service teacher's access to skills and tools honed through experiential learning. This is evident in John's narrative when he says ... *Well truthfully, I thought teaching would be an easy job ...* and supports Karen's comments about John of ... *not being exposed to or remembering any good teachers he had at school*. It further aligns with John's ambivalent recollection of his school experiences, indicating his disengagement from the educational process.

Further, Britzman suggests that when a person's world view, lived experiences, biography and beliefs around the purposes of education are not reflected in their current teaching experience, they can have difficulty negotiating the discourses and power relationships within the school context. In this respect, John's professional limitations were exposed by his cooperating teacher which had the effect of undermining his confidence and professional identity ... *I think that the teacher (Karen) has a fairly inflexible idea of what makes a good teacher ... [and] ... She'd say to me 'you are using too much of your personal life to teach.* These comments reveal Karen's unwillingness to consider alternative pedagogical approaches despite her expectation that pre-service teachers should ... *show initiative, [and] explore a range of teaching strategies and resources.* By constricting the type of responsive pedagogy that John believes is key to engaging students, his agency was compromised and he felt that ... *she may have had a hidden agenda towards me.*

Enacting power relationships effectively undermines the tacit component of teaching that is so highly valued by John and applied in his own teaching. Karen's attitude reflects the normalising discourse of the deficit Aboriginal or minority teacher who utilises personal and cultural experience in their pedagogy rather than the hegemonic western knowledge and practice paradigms that are reinforced through teacher education and professional teaching standards. Morgan and Slade (1998, cited in Santoro, 2007, p. 91) highlight the binaries in play here:

... [Aboriginal learning] is contextual/interdependent, participatory and that learners are motivated by community commitment and obligation ... [non-Aboriginal] ... learning tends to be fragmented and theoretical. They are motivated by personal ambition, truth is absolute and knowledge is a commodity

John simultaneously adopts and resists Karen's deficit positioning in his efforts to juggle his feelings and understand her mixed messages. She articulates a personal and professional interest in Aboriginal culture yet sees John's Aboriginality and the

school context as mutually exclusive ... *I found it hard to support that Aboriginality played a role in the pre-service teachers' teaching style ... [and] ... while it is important to have passion for culture and teaching area, it is more important to consider the backgrounds and naivety of teenagers in classrooms who may say the wrong thing.* This is juxtaposed with John's subject position as 'Other'; a position that he feels contributes to positive student relationships that empower and reaffirm for him a responsive teaching style. The repudiation of John's pedagogical values and beliefs was demoralising (Zembylas, 2005, p. 944). Feelings of guilt, shame and blame undermined John's sense of agency, rendering his teaching subjectivity vulnerable as evidenced in his reflection ... *I'd sit there of a night thinking of questions that she'd ask me ... and I'd have an answer ready for her, so she couldn't pick me up on stuff anymore.* John's response is pre-emptive, reflecting the emotionality of the teaching experience (Zembylas, 2005; Britzman, 2003; O'Connor, 2008) and demonstrating how power is central to discourse; it establishes, asserts, challenges and reinforces differences in status, and so plays an integral role in constituting his subjectivity (Mahrouse, 2005).

Further, Sach's (1997, p. 62) assertion that schools value 'headwork over heartwork' is reflected in Karen's dismissal of the emotional aspects of teaching, which reinforces dominant discourses that prioritise standards-based approaches and performativity measures (Ball, 2003) and thus disempower those who show or privilege an emotional style (Bloomfield, 2010; Shapiro, 2010). Of further relevance to John's situation is Sfar and Prusak's (2005) conceptualisation of 'critical stories', whereby an unresolved gap emerges between actual and designated identities is also relevant to John's situation. Here, John's actual identity of encompassing internal teaching beliefs and perceptions in his professional identity, is not reflected in the inherent expectations, perceptions and practices in prevailing educational discourses. Thus a cognitive

dissonance (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, pp. 53-54) emerged as John attempted to narratively construct his professional identity to fulfil his designated identity. The subsequent loss of agency undoubtedly contributed to his decision to not apply for a teaching position after graduation.

These productive dimensions of power engage individuals in an active construction of 'self' that creates subject positions and discourses for minority teachers to adopt (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 36). John enacted resistance to recover his sense of agency ... *by making it a challenge for me to prove to her that I might be Aboriginal but I can do just as good as what she can do ...* and upon subsequent consideration of the discourses of power embodied in his response, John added ... *I think maybe we also try too hard to prove ourselves to them.* In an attempt to contest these discourses and regain some sense of control over his Professional Experience, John operationalised power by reinstating himself as an authority in his own classroom buoyed by support from his students and their parents. John consciously embodies Karen's conceptualisation of the 'good teacher' to resist domination and to reposition power relations. As Foucault (1982) suggests, power relations only exist when put into action; action can then be modified by subsequent actions and interactions, which is evident in Karen relenting on her micro-management of John (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35). Opportunities for a range of responses, reactions and interventions can emerge from the relationship of power when the powerless person acts to redress this relationship (Mahrouse, 2005, p34-35). John sought to do this by mobilising his agency and this changed the course of his Professional Experience.

The impact of these discourses on the tensions and insecurities often evident at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002) mobilises power relationships and positions Aboriginal teacher's subjectivities as predetermined by structural and contextual

factors. John's exchange with his fellow pre-service teacher who reluctantly acknowledges her Aboriginality suggests that she recognises that the power relationships operating within this context have automatically positioned John as second rate; ... *she just pulled back and sort of kept looking at the head teacher like 'Oh my God, I'm going to get in trouble if they find out'*. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the potential emotional pressure of explaining her Aboriginality heightened her insecurity and vulnerability within this unfamiliar school context.

Finally, John's education signifies an accumulation of new discourses, knowledge, and cultural capital that in some ways has resulted in feelings of loss and dissonance in a world where he was once felt comfortable ... *A few of my mates get the shits with me 'cause I keep pulling 'em up when they say something racist or ignorant.* At the same time though, he acknowledges that it has repositioned him as an educated person who can enact agency and confidently engage with authority... *and I know you think I'm a dickhead but I've got a bachelor's degree in Aboriginal Studies.* This indicates John's emerging cultural and social capital that he can mobilise to influence the way others view and position Aboriginal people – capital that he effectively applied to his teaching context.

John's narrative reflects dominant discourses that position minority teachers as 'Other', different, deficit, recalcitrant and never really 'one of us'. Relationships of power are evident in how Aboriginal teachers' subjectivities are constituted for them, and their adoption of / or resistance to this positioning. In either case, Aboriginality is over-determined in ways that can construct binaries, and limit both agency and opportunities to express counter-discourses, as John observes ... *maybe she just categorised everything as Aboriginal or not Aboriginal and the Aboriginal thing just blinded her to forming a relationship with me as a student teacher not as an Aboriginal*

person. However, as his experience highlights, the powerful emotions embodied in resistance discourses can create space for leveraging accumulated and specific capital in agentic ways that can reconstitute, reposition and reconfigure relationships of power.

CHAPTER 8 MELISSA

It's not about a career but the survival of our people and culture

Background

Melissa is an Aboriginal mother whose children finished high school at about the same time as she graduated from university. She is distinctly Aboriginal in appearance and lives and works in the outer urban community in which she was raised. This is her mother's land and she articulates strong physical, spiritual, social and emotional connections to this place. Her father is from a large Aboriginal family in a small community in outback NSW which he left to escape what Melissa describes as the racism and poverty of a small country town. He had worked in labouring jobs all his life.

Melissa's family has been impacted by the intergenerational trauma and dysfunction brought about by the Stolen Generations, poverty and oppression. She identifies the strong women in her family as integral to her survival:

Strong females were the most dominant influences: Mum, Aunties, Grandmother on Dad's side, Great-Grandmother on Mum's side. My Grandmother on Mum's side was the sweetest, loving and nurturing person in this world. Family is the most important thing.

She states that it is the women who recognize the value of education and tend to bear the responsibility of family and community issues.

It was the motivation to help our women get out of the poverty and uneducated cycle. Women are the key to the success of our culture I believe. Also watching kids not finishing school meant I wanted to be a role model. My mum is a big role model in the community and she believes that education is everything and so has a good work ethic which she passed onto us kids.

It was also the women who are strong in their identity and taught the children to always be proud of this:

... they know by the way you talk and they soon find out anyway. As long as you are genuine in your Aboriginality, and don't try and hide it, your Aboriginality won't be an issue.

Melissa and her younger siblings attended the local primary school. Her mother then sent them outside the community to a larger Catholic high school as she believed the children would get a better education away from negative influences within the community.

My experience of education was positive due to having passionate teachers who believed in me and I know I want to do this for other Aboriginal students now. I am very passionate about education and children and believe this is the key to breaking the poverty cycle of my people, education has broken the cycle in my family.

University and Professional Experience

During the time that Melissa studied at university she lived in her community working full time as an AEO at her local community high school. Melissa firmly believes that learning in all-Aboriginal classes underpinned her confidence to learn as an older person.

I don't know if I could have made it without our mob all studying together. I felt I could say stuff and not feel stupid in front of the others because well, like we were all in the same boat.

Melissa's husband passed away suddenly during her first year at university and she struggles continually with this loss. She states that her children and studies helped her keep it all together.

It was just an amazing experience for me to actually do that degree, and whether it will be teaching or whether it will be anything else, I am part of the community and my focus is just to see that our kids come out the other side and be protected in the system. Keeping an eye on that by creating a safe place. I think you do have to be strong enough to actually stand up and say 'No! This is not good enough'.

Melissa explains that her success in her Professional Experiences as part of her teacher education course was due many years of experience that she could draw on.

I'm not really that confident at all, and I'm not a big noter or anything like that, and I thought wait a minute – you have done things girl! I think if I start thinking in that way it might build my confidence up to say you can move forward and move further.

Post graduation

After graduating, Melissa decided to remain in her current position as AEO at the local high school rather than take up a teaching position in another area as there were no permanent positions in her area. She did not want to risk losing her permanent employment status and was not prepared to go to a new location at this point of time opting instead for the stability of home.

Well it's not less willing, it's just I can't afford to stuff up my permanency just yet. If I could float around and come back to and from ... because the jobs that I will be having will be casual positions, and I'm the only wage earner ... if I had a male at home with a job I would be right, I could do that, I'd be more flexible. I can't afford to mess things up. I've got to be very careful ... yeah losing permanency is too much of a risk.

And then you've got the whole starting over thing. Do I really want to start over again? I'm a bit hesitant too because I've been through so much, do I really want a new challenge just yet, ... just to settle and stay there in the one spot and think I'm okay... I'm getting better, heaps better, heaps more confident ... I've got to make sure my family will be covered until that time, then I can actually sort of make a decision.

Significantly, Melissa believes that ... *it's not just about a career, but the survival of our people and culture ...* and that she can do more for the students in her AEO role.

I'm more successful teaching with kids being an AEO as I have more power. You know in regards to like the teachers will listen ... like just say if I was a teacher, how am I really going to help that child ... really, at the end of the day. If you've got a group of 28 kids and you're teaching them, how are you going to be able to spend extra time with that kid. I reckon you'd be their worst enemy to a degree because you can't sit down and spend quality time with them. I've got the time, I've got the experience and those full range of things to be able to give the kids, whilst they're at school, every bit of attention and figure out a pathway so these kids can actually be successful.

Different teachers have told me they can't believe how much power I have in the school and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kids get worried if they are reported to me whereas other consequences don't worry them so much.

As the AEO, Melissa was able to set up a specific room to support the Aboriginal students as well as be a contact point for their families and Aboriginal community members.

Yeah well they have a belonging place here within the room. This is where they belong in the school, and that's their connection ... right here. And even from the community, the community actually connects ... they often tell me 'Melissa, you know who we talk about all the time... it's you'. So it's out there in the community too.

... every time I see my kids here at school and a lot of them come out of class to do stuff with me, and I often wondered why that is, and I think I'd like to have a go at teaching in the classroom, but I'm probably not going to like it because for a fairly flexible and relaxed kind of person. I think that structure would drive me crazy and I just feel like is the school system that successful with the way that they teach Aboriginal kid? I'm still not satisfied in that respect ... some teachers think that they've got the answer to Aboriginal kids.... And they questioned how many kids were coming to this room and blah, blah, blah, and I said 'No, what has happened is, those kids should be up in the classroom. They're down here for a reason. I don't want them down here, they're supposed to be up in the classroom, so that's where the problem lies'. And they go 'Oh!'

She represents stability and security to many of the children and tries to alleviate some of the pain and pressure that many students experience.

You should have seen them when I got back from my holiday, they spotted me and they came running out and they cuddled me. They miss you alright. They know that they're safe here. They've got a ton of respect for which I just absolutely love, so I can pretty much get them to do whatever I want them to do. Take them to class, get them to sit down, and try to have a go, you know. And it's ... I don't know ... the most important thing is getting our kids out into the workforce with an education, there's no doubt about it. How we ever do it, I don't know, but at the end of the day that's it.

Melissa articulates a strong connection to her students, families and the community, and is happy that she is in a position to make a positive impact on her students' lives.

And next year we've got a few ... I'll probably have half a dozen year 12s so ... and I'm pretty sure, we've got one that's doing his year 11 he's doing a paramedic traineeship, so he's been doing that all this year with HSC. I get so

worried about them... but if they've got a supportive family, they'll get through. We've had a couple that couldn't do it because the support wasn't there. That scared me.

I think that's why levels are rising now too. The brothers and sisters they've just gone on and it just keeps coming. I don't have any problems, they say go down and see Melissa she'll fix it. Even the kids in Year 6 they sing out – Oh Melissa, and I think that's somebody's little brother or sister, so it's already set in place.

She is confident in her ability to build strong, positive relationships with teachers, students and families in any school community, but acknowledges the gradual and complex nature of this progress, especially if the community is not your own.

Teachers talk about the kids behaviour and I can help with that because I know where the kids are coming from. It is awkward for outsiders and they have to work hard to build trust with the kids even Aboriginal teachers if they are not from this community – they still have to establish themselves ... if you aren't from this community you might not automatically relate to the kids – you have to find out about the local community – listen and learn – not be an expert and try and put your community ways of doing things onto the local people otherwise they won't accept you and it will cause problems – it is more about community than Aboriginality.

Melissa also notes that there are issues for teachers working in schools with Aboriginal students, particularly if they are not from the community.

You'd be under the spotlight. It doesn't matter whether you're black or whatever... there would be certain... a lot of expectations on how you fit in the school, how you fit in the community and the same with the school, so there'd be a lot of pressure. A lot of pressure.

She acknowledges that living and working within your own community involves balancing the expectations of various stakeholders.

Sometimes teachers expect you to solve the 'Aboriginal problem', the kids want you to fix things up for them and then the community want you to fix what they think is wrong with the school. This is a balancing act ... I don't know if I always manage it so well. What I want is for the kids to learn to take responsibility for their actions 'cause that's the reality out there.

In large part, Melissa uses her experience, education and knowledge of the community to deal with difficult issues that arise.

Some of our people would come running down here and into the principal's office ... you don't get that no more. You've got to be tough though and you

have to really seriously be prepared for this. But I'm so glad I learnt it. Stay quiet and just let them go, just let them talk it out. I think it's having grown up here and knowing the community means that I know where they are coming from, but it's also getting the degree that has given me the skills to deal with this kind of thing.

Her concern for Aboriginal students' educational outcomes was a key motivating factor for attaining a higher level of education and improving her AEO skills.

To a certain extent Aboriginal teachers will produce the best outcomes as they have a special cultural connection with the students ... most Aboriginal teachers will be aware of the issues Aboriginal students are dealt with as they have experienced it ... Koori kids feel comfortable talking to an Aboriginal person especially if they need to get something off their chest. But not always – depends on where they are from for instance if they know how to relate if they not are from your community. This is what has happened at this school where an Aboriginal teacher has come from somewhere else and been bossy telling the community how they should do things with the school – she was having trouble here with staff, students and the community. Respect is a two-way thing and you have to learn things. As well, non-Aboriginal teachers can be just as effective if they are aware of all the disadvantages Aboriginal people face. They should also have strong awareness of Aboriginal culture and build positive relationships with the parents and community.

Melissa feels that there are specific pedagogical approaches that are generally more effective with Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal people love telling yarns and this is a major form of communication for both formal and informal information so kids learn best from this way. Visualization also works well but all students learn differently. Many Aboriginal students prefer hands on activities with real life experiences ... Building relationships, trust, respect and not be judgmental. Self-protection skills. Not too much authority – they need structure but not to be put down for being wrong – they feel shame – need to do gender based culture camps to break cycles of poverty traps like teen pregnancy.

One of her ongoing concerns for the Aboriginal students is pressure from home.

And the thing is these boys, they're probably the second or the eldest of the family, so that can give them a big responsibility, it's not like they come in and you can treat them like little kids. The responsibility level they have at home is huge ... Yeah it's a struggle out there ... it's sad ... father's in gaol. And I thought these little kids in year 7 are not just rocking up and being naughty, they're worried about their fathers and are they ever going to get out of gaol. So they're sitting here crying then get all excited, then no, next minute he's not getting out. Even if you told them [teachers] they would just not understand that connection. Understanding and thinking there always has to be an answer, but sometimes there's not an answer.

The inability of teachers and the school system to cope with this reality is something Melissa is very concerned about.

And as I said, you don't want to lose these kids. These are the kids that are really at risk. They're the ones that either make it or break it and really 'At Risk' kids getting expelled and stuff like that where it's not necessary. Just a bit more flexibility in the approach can make a big difference ... they're playing up because they are under stress from home ... That's why they come down here - to get the frustration out.

She feels that strength in culture and identity is key to student resilience and success.

That's why we've got to stay strong and keep teaching our kids what the go is. That's what we have to do. And tell them. They've got to know things. They've got to go back and look at ... talk to their parents about it for god's sake you know. ... [I tell the kids] be strong with your identity. Know who you are and where you are from. Don't pretend to be someone your not. We talk to our kids and they know that they're Aboriginal but they've got to have more. There's more to this ... about their culture. Our ties have got to be stronger.

Melissa believes that the Aboriginal Studies subject provides opportunities for all of her students.

... there's been a lot of positives come out of having Aboriginal Studies being taught ... a lot of the kids have changed their minds about issues and stuff and they can see the difference and I suppose it makes a change ... It has a really positive effect on students that go in there blind. A lot of them too... that's another thing... to realise a lot of those kids they end up going out and getting jobs that to have an understanding of Aboriginal culture, so they end up getting jobs from it and stuff like that.

She identifies racism as an ongoing issue in schools and notes that it often manifests in underhanded ways.

We did have a couple of things ... because it was one of the Science teachers who leaves me this note under my door ... 'It's been very disturbing to me that Aboriginal kids in my class are being disrespectful to me'. That opening sentence I looked at it and thought she was actually classifying some of the other kids as Aboriginal. Anyway, I looked at it ... the opening statement ... there was more to it ... and I thought 'Oh! here we go'. I thought this person knows absolutely nothing. I just thought don't get involved. and showed one of the teachers. She said 'That's no good', and the word got around so they come and got the letter and it went higher, and I think they pulled her in, and that was the last time. There was more to it, just the way she was doing her business. So that just added fuel. That just reinforced other things that were happening.

Melissa is aware of the complexity of Aboriginal identity and how it can be exploited by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

For me I wouldn't have had to question it ... they don't really question because that's where you've been born and you know everyone there, but when you come from another community it's a different story.

You've got white people in there working and doing it that way [in charge of Aboriginality papers]. And I know of other people going in there and being sent away saying you've got to go back and get your papers. People coming back so mad. You've only got to look at us to see that we're black. For god's sake. It is tricky ... I've been here for 10 years and you'd go out into the community and faint to see some kids get Aboriginal jobs even though they didn't identify while they were at school!

She feels that her credibility is a result of her long-term employment and the respect that she has earned in the role.

I don't think they [teachers] would be game enough to go up against me over a student. Because they know how strong... they actually do tell me... they say 'Melissa what would these kids do without you'. So they really respect it. Just ask me what can I do to get this student back on track.

Melissa acknowledges the complexity of workplace relationships and is critical of teachers who only want to get involved in Aboriginal education for personally motivated reasons.

That's where I kind of keep a very straight line about what I believe goes on in here, not them. I've told the [teachers] if you start making rules down here, there's my key. I don't want a boss. I mean the boss is my principal, that's who. I've been working here for so long and who's bothered to come down here really. Yeah they're [some teachers] trying to put together little programmes in place. Haven't done any Aboriginal stuff - better go and tick that box, better go and do something. Then after that you don't see them again.

Melissa expresses concern about Aboriginal student suspensions and views this phenomenon as a genuine obstacle to students' educational progress.

We do get kids that have been suspended and I hate the suspension thing. I thought because they do come down here when it's in-school suspensions, I thought I'd love to be able to have my own little classroom and prepare things for these kids. Get them through their suspensions and stuff so they're not getting behind. I do it now in a sense, but I thought maybe in a more structured but it's not coordinated properly.

She emphasises the importance of parental and community involvement despite the difficulties that this sometimes involves.

Many of the improvements we have now, well they're like they've come from the pain of our people once not being allowed but fighting so we now we say what we need and the department starts to notice. That is why education is so important. So we can say what we think and mean it and get it across. I think it's getting better. I know for a fact a lot of our kids that are coming through now are very smart. They're not shy by any means about their culture these days and they're a part of everything. It's been quite a while since I've had students in here too ashamed or to do this or that.

Melissa hasn't given up on the idea of teaching but is prepared to wait until the time is right for her, her children and the students at the school.

In Conversation with Melissa's Narrative

Melissa's habitus is deeply embedded in her culture and her relationship to her mother's country and both of these elements significantly influence her sense of self. Bourdieu (1990) emphasises the importance of this primary field of enculturation in the development of embodied dispositions, "... the structures characterising a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of habitus, which in their turn are the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (p. 54). The women in her family helped form these early structures through the transmission of culture in the face of adversity. Their commitment to cultural survival has strongly influenced Melissa's habitus, socialisation and disposition (Santoro, 2010). Embedded in her unique socio-cultural context (Beijaard et al., 2004), Melissa's biography significantly influences her personal, professional and situated identity. Her nurturing approach to students reflects Shapiro's (2010) and O'Connor's (2008) research that emphasises caring as a multidimensional emotion that is central to a self-affirming professional identity. In the context of education this is articulated as 'pedagogical

relation' (van Manen, 1994, p. 149) and is enacted by Melissa through the establishment of the Aboriginal room to support students in a place of belonging.

Melissa rarely refers to her Aboriginality in terms of her professional identity and this is reflected in the tacit and unconscious embodiment of her habitus, reinforced by the fact that she continues to live in the community in which she grew up. Her biography is deeply embedded in the social spaces she occupied as a child and continues to occupy as an adult, parent and employee. *As long as you are genuine in your Aboriginality, and don't try and hide it, your Aboriginality won't be an issue... ..It is more about community than Aboriginality.* For Melissa, identity is important but only powerful when utilised for the greater good, such as supporting the community. She acknowledges that Aboriginal identity is an issue for her students particularly in terms of how they are positioned by others. She notes for instance that fair-skinned Aboriginal students are more likely to be questioned or challenged and is concerned when teachers try to curtail Aboriginal students' open expressions of identity. *Aboriginality shouldn't even be really pointed out ... just come to school like everyone else ... but if that happens then we're losing our identity as Aboriginal people.*

Using discourses of egalitarianism to deny individual and cultural identities disempowers and deprives Aboriginal students. Foucault's dividing practices are described by Ball (1990) as "... modes of classification, control, and containment, often paradoxically linked to humanitarian rhetoric of reform and progress ..." (p. 4); these practices are central to the organisational processes of education. Power-defining discourses and their attendant practices attempt to obscure assimilationist motives that if enacted, control and contain the 'Other', interpreted as difficult, deviant and deficit when applied to Aboriginal students. Dominant educational discourses about Aboriginal student performance often reflects low expectations from teachers and

schools and compounds the dividing practices that become increasingly difficult to disrupt (Santoro, 2007, p. 88). Melissa also notes that an ongoing concern is ... *the racism and that is still there without a doubt. With schools and attitudes ... it will always be there, and I think that's one of the biggest issues still.*

Melissa's description of the practices around issuing 'Confirmation of Aboriginality' papers reflects how the power relations inherent in specific discourses of Aboriginality can potentially undermine and destabilise subjectivities and social relationships. She is aware of her crucial role in attempting to prepare students to deal with issues around Aboriginality ... *[I tell the kids] be strong with your identity. Know who you are and where you are from ... Our ties have got to be stronger ...* and she takes every opportunity to do this.

Bourdieu's (1998) construct of field as a dynamic, fluid space in which there is a constant struggle for resources provides a useful framework for considering two significant spaces in Melissa's narrative - her community and her school as both constitute significant aspects of her lived experience. The cultural significance of place has markedly shaped Melissa's social disposition and comprised significant social spaces for the enactment of her habitus. These structured social spaces (Bourdieu, 1998) consist of unequal relationships and enactments of power in which "... various actors struggle for transformation or preservation of the field ... It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies" (p. 41). These struggles are reflected in Melissa's description of her community and extended family and particularly so in the roles and experiences of the women within these spaces. The conception of fields as multidimensional spaces of struggle within broader social and structural domains is highlighted by the Aboriginal women in this setting who at various times are powerful, vulnerable and disadvantaged (but not necessarily victims)

and hold significant responsibility for the continuation and survival of their people's culture.

Strong females were the most dominant influences.... Women are the key to the success of our culture ... she (mother) believes that education is everything and so has a good work ethic which she passed onto us kids ... My life experiences with my own children taught me to listen and not judge.

Bourdieu's notion that structured disadvantage can be transmitted inter-generationally through unconscious dispositions which form self-defeating behaviour (Schwartz, 1997, p. 104) counteracts arguments that blame the victim, imply a culture of poverty and identify the 'cultural origins' of deviant behaviour. As Melissa is influenced by women with a strong work ethic and belief in the value of education, her response to disadvantage has also become unconsciously embodied in her habitus underlining Bourdieu's assertion that "... aspirations and practices of individuals and groups tend to correspond to the formative conditions of their respective habitus" (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). Post-modern narration of the self provides Melissa with the opportunity to articulate a discourse of disadvantage that doesn't position her as underprivileged or powerless. Melissa's habitus accords her a positive perception of education and regard for cultural capital. This motivates her to reverse this disadvantage and largely defines the passion and motivation she has for her AEO work. ... *I am very passionate about education and children and believe this is the key to breaking the poverty cycle of my people; education has broken the cycle in my family.*

Melissa's narrative reveals that the school and its location within the larger field of education (as well as what this may mean and has meant for Aboriginal people) constitutes a significant social space for her. While the intention of the narrative is to explore Melissa's experiences and enactment of her identity as a teacher, she chooses to position this around her students and issues in Aboriginal education. This flexible narrative space provides Melissa with the opportunity to be direct and reflective about

the issues that matter most to her and these have also become integral to her personal and professional identity. Hooley (2009, p. 182) suggests that democratic and participatory narrative inquiry allows for flexibility within the specific themes that participants wish to focus on, whether they have a general, personal or school curriculum.

Melissa's maternal concern for the students ... *my focus is just to see that our kids come out the other side and be protected in the system* ... also reflects the family and community grounding of her habitus and the significant role of women in breaking the poverty cycle. She utilises the cultural and social capital she has acquired from both the education and community fields, as well as the field of teacher education to confront these issues. Melissa awareness of the discursive nature of power within this setting is evidenced in the way she dealt with the note that was pushed under her door. *I just thought don't get involved. I just showed one of the teachers. There was more to it, just the way she was doing her business.* The note itself and the manner in which it was delivered demonstrates an enactment of power designed to maintain privilege (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35) and reposition the teacher away from feelings of disempowerment and loss of authority. Melissa recognises this as an attempt to undermine the 'Aboriginal presence' in the school and so acts to disrupt this by passing it on to those with sanctioned authority in the school. Relevant here is Foucault's analysis of relational power which "... focus[es] on the concrete practices through which power circulates and is productive in daily life" (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 20). By passing the note on, Melissa avoids a confrontation that would put her in a defensive position and so maintains authority and effectively dissipates in the teacher's actions. Foucault's (1982, p. 220) articulation of the 'action on action' within power relations highlights the "... circular ways power operates in these dynamics" (Mahrouse,

2005, p. 35) by examining how the note impacted on Melissa to provoke a deliberate, conscious response. The inherent nature of power is that it is not one-sided but complex and multi-layered, circulates through interactions and reactions, builds on itself, and is substantiated in practice.

Melissa is cognisant of the relational power in schools and positions herself in order to access and enact her cultural and social capital ... *Different teachers have told me they can't believe how much power I have in the school.* However, she also believes that if she were to take a teaching position (particularly since this would most likely be in another high school) her social capital could be undermined. *I'm more successful teaching with kids being an AEO as I have more power. ... If I was a teacher with a group of 28 kids ... you'd be their worst enemy because you can't spend quality time with them.* More importantly, the role she performs and the compassionate way she approaches it builds capacity in her students, their families and in the community to broaden their life choices.

Melissa's extensive networks in the school and community underline the social capital she already holds within her AEO role and mobilises on behalf of students and families. In Putnam's (1995) rendering of the term social capital, Melissa holds extensive 'bonding capital' as she is able to comfortably move within and between both the school and community fields and has over time, successfully developed bridging capital to participate in the diverse networks across these fields. In some ways, schools and communities exist as similar fields, but the extensive historical, political and cultural complexities involved often position them at odds. Aboriginal people who live and work at these boundaries often struggle with asserting their identity while serving the interests of various power structures and processes.

Melissa is aware of the struggles that take place between the fields of the local Aboriginal community and the schools that serve them. These struggles are embedded in socio-cultural and historical spaces; they continue today and are reflected in the poor educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. Melissa acknowledges these struggles, and her attitude ... *it's not just about a career, but the survival of our people and culture* ... reflects the importance of these issues beyond her own personal needs and aspirations, or as Palmer (1998) would suggest they become embodied in her personal needs and aspirations. The impact of these struggles both on herself and other Aboriginal people in similar positions reflect the complexities of living and working within traditionally complacent, sometimes hostile institutions. Balancing the expectations of people within these fields can be complex and emotionally draining.

A lot of expectations on how you fit in the school, how you fit in the community ... Sometimes teachers expect you to solve the 'Aboriginal problem', the kids want you to fix things up for them and then the community want you to fix what they think is wrong with the school. This is a balancing act.

Discourses about Aboriginal teachers fixing Aboriginal problem(s) in schools can render these expectations as reasonable which means they tend to go unrecognised. This largely invisible aspect of Aboriginal teachers' work often goes unacknowledged or unsupported and further undermines efforts to enact or resist these discourses.

Melissa's narrative further highlights how the reflexive relationship between field and habitus provides opportunities to transform the negative impact of educational instrumentalities on Aboriginal people. By drawing on her emotional capital, Melissa is able to convert it into other forms (cultural and social capital) as necessary to advocate for and protect her students (Zembylas, 2007, p. 457). Her habitus is thus reaffirmed in the valuable work that she does.

Some of our people would come running down here and into the principal's office ... you don't get that no more. You've got to be tough though and you have to really seriously be prepared for this. But I'm so glad I learnt it ... it's

also getting the degree that has given me the skills to deal with this kind of thing.

Here, Melissa's cultural capital, both in its embodied and institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1997) enables her to manage emotionally complex situations in a way that reflects her unique positioning within the school and community. This dynamic is reflected in Stone's (2001) structure and content conception of social capital which acknowledges inherent power relations *and* the nuanced and contextual aspects that exist within them. As Memmott (2005, p. 121) notes, "[S]ocial networks within Aboriginal communities (like those within non-Aboriginal communities) can be both important resources as well as the source of conflict and factionalism".

Teacher education constitutes a further significant field in which Melissa has acquired capital. She articulates the benefits of obtaining this level of education, is sometimes surprised that she managed it, and reflects on how this achievement enhanced her confidence. She notes the importance of learning in a supportive and culturally safe environment and acknowledges the self-assurance that this afforded her *... I don't know if I could have made it without our mob altogether studying*. This sense of belonging supported her educational efforts and continues to underpin her approach to her AEO role in which she applies her personal practical knowledge which is located *"... an embodied thoughtfulness, and in the personal space, mood and relational atmosphere in which teachers find themselves with their students"* (van Manen, 1994, p. 13). It is the narrative understandings of the social and contextual spaces in which teachers live and work (Clandinin & Connolly, 1996, 1999) that are infused with personal, largely tacit meanings that become 'stories to live by'.

Melissa activates her habitus and capital to construct a professional identity that centres on making a difference in the lives of her students. She enacts Bandura's (2006) attributes of agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness and self reflectiveness

in the way that she operates within the school and community, as well as in the consideration of her future career.

Melissa exercises control and choice within her work situation by effectively advocating for her students and the community while maintaining good relationships within the school. Being able to assert a personal identity that reflects this position in the kind of safe, belonging environment she creates for the students is what Ketelaar et. al. (2012) believe is instrumental to enacting agency. However as Klein (2008) notes, agency is discursively positioned and determined by nuanced and complex contextual factors, a dynamic acknowledged by Melissa in considering her future teaching career.

CHAPTER 9 DISCOURSES OF ABORIGINALITY

Introduction

An analysis of the interrelated notions of discourse, power and subjectivity (Foucault, 1979, 1982) provides an effective means through which to interrogate dominant discourses of Aboriginality and Aboriginal teachers at the cultural interface. This localised contextual space, often complicated by intercultural uncertainty and tension (Nakata, 2007b), significantly influences how early career Aboriginal teachers adopt, resist, manipulate and negotiate these discourses prompting the reconfiguration of what is assumed and expected. The reconciling potential of the cultural interface “... situate[s] the subject beyond the confines of binary oppositions” (Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 55), and provides participants with opportunities to form and reform subjectivities in response to ‘the Aboriginal teacher’ discourses. This produces actions that renegotiate ways in which racialised subjectivities such as those of the participants in this study are lived and realised (Ehlers, 2008, p. 333). Unpacking provides critical understandings of how power operates at all levels, thereby avoiding a reductive analysis and enabling one that accounts for change. As discourse transmits, produces and reinforces power it can also counter, disrupt and subvert by undermining and exposing it (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 29). Problematizing the label of ‘The Indigenous Teacher’ (Reid & Santoro, 2006) and decentring the subject (Mahrouse, 2005) by focussing on discourses of Aboriginal teachers (including intra-group power relations), averts responses that imply binary judgements such as good or bad, right or wrong, and/or ‘real’ or ‘imagined’ (Anthias,

2002; McConaghy, 2000). As Elhers (2008) states, "... acceptable and unacceptable discourses of race cannot be claimed, only multiple discursive truths can exist in circulation at any given time or place" (p. 336).

This chapter discusses discourses of and by the Aboriginal teachers in this study that highlight the over-determination of Aboriginality, and the commonly held assumptions and stereotypes about Aboriginal teachers (and cultures) as well as the pervasive positioning of Aboriginal teachers as 'Other'. Strong focus is given to the ways in which the participants in this study conform or adapt to, disrupt and/or resist these discourses and how they negotiate the complex and often uncomfortable subject positions that they find themselves in.

Discourses

Foucault's (1982) concept of discourse as being deeply embedded in power relationships and subjectivity and impacting on positionality by and about the subject, is relevant to this study so as to interrogate cultural essentialism and reductionism as well as the influence of personal biography, multiple positions and different forms of discourse. Gee (1990) suggests that Discourse (he uses a capital D to make this distinction from everyday dialogue) can be thought of as an "identity kit" (p. 142) reflecting the A (affinity) identity. This identity is constructed through particular group memberships, social networks and shared historical stories embedded in social institutions which is useful in considering how explicit and tacit group membership rules maintain behaviour and standards necessary to continue as a member or insider (p. 143). This can illuminate how Aboriginal teachers can simultaneously be insiders and outsiders in socio-cultural contexts such as schools and communities.

Foucault (Zembylas, 2005, p. 937) would argue that Aboriginality is a discursive field produced by language which constitutes actions, ideologies and discursive practices that serve specific purposes in the process of creating and negotiating reality. In producing culturally and historically located meanings of Aboriginality, language functions as a discursive practice that positions individuals as specific persons engaged in complex power relations at the cultural interface. Aboriginality discourses establish, assert, challenge and/or reinforce power and status differences. Consequently, racial identity is conditional upon the subject enacting the very power that marks them, so the production and reproduction of themselves in relation to normalised identity spaces is therefore always an action (Ehlers, 2008, p. 333). This is perhaps most evident in Anne's narrative as she consistently projects highly visible markers of her Aboriginality either to affirm or disprove the perceptions of others. Recounting experiences of racism such as ... *racial taunts from teaching staff and students, ... [my] degree questioned with the justification that Aboriginal people are not as literate ...* discursively positions her as Aboriginal through an identifiable experience of oppression, while at the same time marking her as deficit. Lived experiences such as Anne's are important for grounding theorising about Aboriginality in 'real-life' experience so as to emphasise pragmatic concerns in what Sarra (2011a, pp. 48-49) refers to as 'Critical Realism'.

In uncovering power relationships and understanding how people turn themselves into subjects (Foucault, 1982, p. 209), the roles of habitus, capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986) and lived experience illuminate the discursive practices that early career Aboriginal teachers employ to take up particular positions. Agency and resistance emerge as these teachers negotiate and reconfigure discourses that challenge relationships of power thus creating tensions at the cultural interface. Counter

discourses that employ critical pedagogies, nurture identity and voice, and empower and support family and community (while acknowledging the inherent complexities within this space) destabilise the effects of bio-power and disciplinary power (Phillips & Nava, 2011) and can be perceived as undermining institutional efforts and good will.

The over-determination of Aboriginality

The notion that Aboriginal teachers best understand Aboriginal students because of assumed biographical similarities creates subject positions for minority teachers (Mahrouse, 2005) that become discursive truths. These truths operate in any given contextual and relational site and are embedded in complex and contradictory power relationships that potentially undermine and destabilise subjectivities and social relationships. At the centre of these discourses is the ‘over-determination of Aboriginality’ (Reid & Santoro, 2006) in which Aboriginal teachers are positioned primarily as *Aboriginal* rather than *teacher* as Santoro and Reid (2006) suggest, “... construction of essentialised and overgeneralised notions of Indigenous teacher as marked by their Indigenous identity, rather than by their individual characteristics as teachers” (p. 298). This notion is supported by Mahrouse (2011) in her literature review of ‘teachers of colour’ as role models, “... their identities are invariably tied to their race ...” (p. 32), which creates subjectivities that often have connotations of marginality, inferiority and deficiency.

This generic ethnic labelling and positioning is based on an assumed pan-Aboriginalism that often structures the way in which Aboriginal teachers are spoken to or about in the workplace, ignoring other identity positions that may more accurately reflect their interests, strengths and concerns. This challenges and conflicts with their sense of self in the unfamiliar context of early career teaching, as Reid and Santoro (2006) note in their study, “The ways in which ‘The Indigenous Teacher’ is spoken to

and about in school and teacher education settings constructs discursive truths, expectations and subject positions for those Indigenous men and women who work to become teachers “ (p. 153). The following discourses are various articulations of this over-determination of Aboriginality.

‘Think-look-do’ Aboriginality

Discourses that predetermine Aboriginality based on physical appearance, behaviour and lived experience commonly positions Aboriginal people in static essentialised categories that limit their subjectivity and identity to specific ways of looking, being and acting in which the body is articulated as a racial truth (Elhers, 2008, p. 343). Often expressed as not being a ‘real’ Aboriginal person in the absence of certain preconceived criteria, this discourse can be used by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to secure an expedient position within power relationships. Melissa for instance, notes how this impacts significantly on fair-skinned Aboriginal students at her school who are placed in a position of ‘proving’ their Aboriginality, and then when they do are accused of doing so for perceived benefits (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Similarly, Anne feels under constant scrutiny and pressure to secure a specific positioning for herself such as ... *having to say everyday you know that I’m not black enough and I’m not white enough.*

The discursive nature of power relations in articulating Aboriginality is further highlighted by Melissa when she notes that people trying to get their Aboriginality papers are turned away if they don’t have the correct evidence ... *You’ve only got to look at us and see that we’re black.* She is also disturbed that some students obtain employment in Aboriginal-identified jobs (despite not identifying while at school) as this undermines Aboriginal people and the community, and reinforces many of the stereotypes that she attempts to dispel. She ultimately believes though ... *as long as you*

are genuine in your Aboriginality, and don't try and hide it, your Aboriginality won't be an issue.

John, for instance, emphasises the role of family, community and belonging in identity when he says ... *my beliefs are that it's not the colour of your skin, but your confidence of who you are and who you relate to ... your own community...* as does Janaya when she says ... *my footsteps not only carry me, but my family: past present and future.* The varying and often contradictory notion of what it might mean to be Aboriginal highlights the discursive nature of available subject positions for Aboriginal teachers as well as the limitations of the 'think-look-do' discourse of Aboriginality.

The 'good' Aboriginal teacher

The narratives in this study highlight discourses and counter-discourses offered about and by Aboriginal teachers that both normalise and disrupt notions of the 'good' Aboriginal teacher that are produced and reproduced at the micro-level of education (Phillips & Nava, 2011). The 'good' Aboriginal teacher can enhance the school's cultural diversity, address poor Aboriginal student outcomes, and engage with the local Aboriginal community, thus demonstrating good intent and support for Reconciliation. This teacher chooses teaching to help students like themselves and improve the overall state of Aboriginal education. This is an assumption based on the idea that an Aboriginal teacher can achieve these aims on the basis of a heightened understanding of racism garnered from their personal history and experience (Mahrouse, 2005) as an Aboriginal person in the Australian context. This teacher can therefore understand Aboriginal students' cultural and socio-economic background that in the school (and broader institutional) view, impedes their educational success (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 144). Implicit in this assumption is that this teacher can and *should* solve perceived Aboriginal problems in the school and deal with issues that other staff do not know how

to deal with or have unsuccessfully attempted to rectify in the past. This teacher nurtures student identity in a way that contributes to success at school by providing a positive role model who reflects the benefits of participation and belief in the institution.

These assumptions are evident in this study in that the participants were motivated to become teachers to help Aboriginal students succeed. At various times they took up the subject position of 'the Aboriginal teacher' to mobilise their cultural and social capital to assert their role, power and tacit cultural knowledge and skills to improve education for their students within their particular context. This position challenges mainstream teaching and learning discourses that privilege western knowledge systems in curriculum content by grounding knowledge and pedagogical practice in lived experience. This means that the teachers tend to draw on a style of knowledge and skill transmission influenced by lives often affected by adversity, unpredictability and reciprocity within marginalised socio-cultural contexts. Santoro (2007, p. 86) supports this finding in her research noting the influence of Indigenous teachers' learning experiences such as experiential learning on their pedagogical approach.

Melissa, for instance, augments her cultural capital with tacit knowledge and understandings based on personal experiences of growing up in the local Aboriginal community which affords her a strong measure of discursive power within the school. For instance, she manages tensions between the school and the community, noting that ... *[S]ome of our people would come running down ... into the Principal's office ... you don't get that no more ... I think it's having grown up here ... I know where they are coming from.* Santoro (2007) notes that this 'otherness' enables minority and

Aboriginal teachers “... to claim the right to authority in ways that are not necessarily available to Anglo-Australian teachers” (p. 86).

Significantly, the participants also challenge automatic positioning and the assumptions that underpin it. For instance, Melissa and Janaya both acknowledge that the expectation that Aboriginal teachers can rectify these complex issues by improving Aboriginal student outcomes is unrealistic and that Aboriginal teachers don't necessarily achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal students but rather, fulfil a largely undefined yet essential role as cultural mentor (Basit & Santoro, 2011).

Aboriginal teacher as 'Other'

Discourses that over-determine Aboriginality are the product of what Ehlers (2008) identifies as the power of race to define majority populations as normal, natural and inevitable therefore placing the 'Other' as abnormal, deviant and peripheral. The 'Other' recognised as the successful minority or Aboriginal teacher for example, is often seen as someone who is anomalous rather than typical because they have overcome a potential for deviance deriving from a perceived culturally deficit background. Foucault (1976/1990, 2003) maintains that these discourses represent examples of bio-power whereby attempts are made to regulate a population through controls which function to manage the deviant and abnormal behaviour via means such as standardised testing that establish statistically-driven norms (Phillips & Nava, 2011, p. 73). Successive governments' narrow applications of literacy, numeracy and attendance rates as measures of educational success not only positions Aboriginal students in a restricted space but avoids dealing with the real and unquantifiable issues behind the statistics. These include but are not limited to the ongoing long-term impact of colonisation, the significance of culture and identity to educational achievement

(NSW DET & NSW AECG, 2004, p. 195); and an increasingly disappearing rights agenda for Indigenous Australians (Brough & Bond, 2009).

Ways in which the system undermines Aboriginal people is highlighted in Melissa's comment on her school's predilection toward an assimilationist approach ... *Aboriginality shouldn't even be really pointed out ... just come to school like everyone else.* Santoro et al. (2004) articulate a 'pedagogy of whiteness' where, " ... dominant mainstream classrooms may well marginalise and 'other' those teachers, who, because of their raced and cultural backgrounds, may privilege different knowledges and understand teaching and learning in different ways" (p. 5). This is reflected in John's Professional Experience where his efforts to utilise his lived experience in his teaching (which he felt best served his students) were undermined by his cooperating teacher whose conception of effective teaching has been shaped by a standards-based paradigm (Ball, 2003). John explains ... *I think that the teacher [Karen] has a fairly inflexible idea of what makes a good teacher ... [and] ... she'd say to me 'you are using too much of your personal life to teach' ...* which led him to surmise that ... *she categorised everything as Aboriginal or not Aboriginal and the Aboriginal thing just blinded her.* Gee (1990) maintains that this approach marginalises viewpoints and values central to other discourses and thus legitimates the 'othering' process.

Similarly, Anne believes that the alienation and dissonance she experienced was a result of expressing views that disrupted or challenged the normative views of non-Aboriginal people. She states that ... *... my reputation for questioning schools on Aboriginal issues meant that they were 'wary' of me ... [M]aybe they feel threatened by an educated Aboriginal woman.* This positioning then limits the spaces that Aboriginal teachers can occupy and their opportunities to articulate diverse identities that better represent their teaching subjectivities.

Connecting the impact of this discourse to the persistence of stereotypes and assumptions about Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers and learners (Nicholls, Crowley & Watt, 1996; Stewart, 2002) enables understandings within the context of localised relationships of power and the discursive nature of forming the teaching self. This then provides space for the development of counter or alternative discourses that challenge assumptions and static positionings.

Janaya, for instance, insists on asserting a professional identity not bound by her Aboriginality. Instead, she consciously foregrounds her perceptions of professional credibility, noting that ... *[I]nitially, everyone thinks that because you look Aboriginal that everything that comes out of your mouth is going to be Aboriginal ... you have to do is take control of that ...* and insists that ... *my Aboriginality now plays little part in my identity as a teacher ...* While her subsequent claim that ... *my Aboriginality is visible in my lessons, my behaviour, my teaching, relationships ...* seems contradictory, and does indicate an acknowledgement of her culturally and socially embodied habitus (Bourdieu, 1986), she does not allow this to speak entirely to who she is. Janaya's narrative in particular, highlights the importance of individual narratives in offering opportunities to articulate choices about identity and subjectivity, rather than feeling constrained by normalised expectations and assumptions about Aboriginal teachers.

A 'natural' connection to community

Assumed skills based on ethnicity, experience, an understanding of racism and the particular circumstances of many Aboriginal children's lives, as well as a 'natural' connection to the local Aboriginal community are all highly sought after by schools and potentially secure immediate teaching positions and career opportunities for Aboriginal teachers. This reflects a familiar minority teacher discourse (Mahrouse, 2005) that positions the Aboriginal teacher as a role model and mentor who can nurture a positive

identity and advocate and empower students to succeed in education (Phillips & Nava, 2011). Melissa embodies this discourse because her school values her influential connection with students' families and the local Aboriginal community. She notes ... *I think there's somebody's little brother or sister, so it's already set in place ...* and this validates for her that the influential and significant relationships she has nurtured with students and their families empowers her in this context. This is further reinforced by her colleagues who ... *told me that they can't believe how much power I have in the school ...* demonstrating the discursive nature of power within localised contexts. Similarly, Anne also believes that her connection with students drives her to continue in what she sees as the difficult role of Aboriginal teacher, stating that she ... *build[s] relationships and make links with students easier than other people ... students are more willing to work with me in class.* John too values the relationships he forms with students ... *who he can see himself in ...* and it is largely this skill that contributed to his success in a difficult Professional Experience.

Janaya recognises the limitations of this discourse by noting that when teaching outside her community she holds little more cultural or social capital than her colleagues, as she did not grow up in the particularised space of her students. This view is shared by Melissa who acknowledges that if an Aboriginal teacher is not local, acceptance is not automatically guaranteed ... *where an Aboriginal teacher has come from somewhere else ... she was having trouble here with staff, students and the community. Respect is a two-way thing.* Melissa's explanation disrupts the dominant discourses of the 'expert' Aboriginal teacher on a number of levels. Her comment about respect provides clear insight into the importance of strong interpersonal relationships for establishing trust and connecting with Aboriginal people and their communities. Refocusing attention away from ethnicity to skill creates a discursive space in which the

value of meaningful interactions and authentic relationships can be acknowledged and enacted. This gives rise to a mutuality and understanding that orients attitudes, beliefs and perceptions away from binaries to "... open up a world of possibilities for social action, emancipation and community development" (Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 56).

The counter-discourse that Aboriginality does not automatically connect an Aboriginal teacher to the school's local Aboriginal community is complicated by relationships of power that often position the Aboriginal teacher as the person to solve issues between the school and community. From the community perspective this can include fixing systemic barriers that teachers (including Aboriginal teachers) have few opportunities to address, marginalising Aboriginal teachers in ways that are not readily apparent to non-Aboriginal teachers, (Reid & Santoro, 2006) such as being labeled a 'sell out', a 'coconut' or preferring 'whitefellas' over 'blackfellas'. Anne's comment perhaps best highlights the multidimensional nature of this positioning ... *[P]arents and community usually think that you can fix all their problems. They see you as a DET employee and are even a little suspicious of your role and agenda.*

Similarly, Janaya's comment that ... *[W]orking with Aboriginal people ... put[s]... extra responsibilities on Aboriginal teachers ...* and Melissa's reflection that ... *this is a balancing act ... what I want is for the kids to learn to take responsibility for their actions cause that's the reality out there, ...* acknowledges the pressure placed on Aboriginal teachers as well as the impact on Aboriginal students. Further, the discourse of the Aboriginal teacher as expert in all things Aboriginal (Santoro & Reid, 2006) and therefore obliged to fulfill this duty, is culturally insensitive as Anne explains ... *[A]s an Aboriginal person I am not the expert on didgeridoos, art in Arnhem Land, nor men's initiation rites.* Again, this discursive positioning can put Aboriginal teachers at

odds with the school and their community and attract judgment and derision for not being a “real Aborigine”.

Fixing the Aboriginal ‘problem’

The proclivity of schools and institutions to look to the Aboriginal teacher to fix Aboriginal ‘problems’ by encouraging Aboriginal student conformity to mainstream norms, illustrates the disciplinary power that Foucault (1976, 2003) suggests “ ... centres on the body, produces individualising effects and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile”. This calculated gaze (Phillips & Nava, 2011) attempts to constrain Aboriginal teachers to conform to and reinforce standards ensuring appropriate knowledge transfer and expectations for educational participation and success for their students. Ehlers (2008) suggests that the threat of surveillance is a disembodied form of disciplinary power that produces the very subjects it attempts to control and when this involves racialised subjects, it becomes a political technology of the body (p. 341). Patterns embodied in normative discourses produced by the institution are at once recognisable and contradictory for the minority teacher who may take up the subject position identified for them and/or resist the effects of power embedded in this process.

This is evident in the narratives when participants either take up or resist positioning by others depending on the relationships of power within their socio-cultural context. For example, Melissa sees it as her role to support Aboriginal students even if it means fixing problems for the school ... *[S]ometimes teachers expect you to solve the ‘Aboriginal problem’, the kids want you to fix things up for them and then the community want you to fix what they think is wrong with the school.* While she notes that this is a ... *balancing act* ..., she feels agentic in this role because of the overall strong support she has from staff, students, families and community.

Anne however, has not experienced this level of empowerment and often complains of being positioned as an outsider while under the gaze of others ... *I am constantly swimming in a racist goldfish bowl with all eyes on me and nowhere to go.* Several other instances in Anne's narrative demonstrate how she resists the positioning of others or fulfils it in ways that she feels positions her advantageously within the relationships of power.

Interestingly, John both adopts and resists his cooperating teacher's deficit positioning by acknowledging his shortcomings and attempting to perform to the standards expected of him ... *but the good thing was I guess ... she made sure that I rose to her standards.* At the same time, he continues to mobilise his lived experience to inform his teaching style despite his cooperating teacher's disapproval, recognising the interplay and inherent imbalance in relationships of power when he says, ... *I think maybe we also try too hard to prove ourselves to them.*

Easy work, not 'real' work

Paradoxically, the expectation that Aboriginal teachers will deal with perceived Aboriginal problems in the school is often seen as 'easy' work and peripheral to the 'real' work of teaching and the school's core business. While this discourse serves the school's needs it can limit opportunities for early career Aboriginal teachers to develop and enact a professional identity that may not correlate with the school's vision for them. Moreover, Aboriginal teachers are often perceived as being ineffective and deficient in 'mainstream' teaching duties and two of the early career Aboriginal teachers noted that they were often questioned about the credibility of their teaching degree. John for example, recalls; ... *I think it was because I came from the Koori Centre ... [that] it was a 'mickey mouse' course. She thought that I was getting the easy ticket through to teaching.* The depth of the impact of these attitudes is also evident in

the description John gives about his interaction with a pre-service teacher from the same university who hid her Aboriginal identity for fear of attracting the same negative treatment as he had.

Discourses such as these undermine Aboriginal teachers' subjectivity and enactment of their professional identity, positioning them as 'special' and confined to this area of expertise, which Reid and Santoro (2006, p. 155) articulate as "racialised discourses of 'intelligent' and 'merit'". They further note the effect of absolving non-Aboriginal teachers from participation in and responsibility for Aboriginal education which is supported by Anne's comment ... *[S]ome people [teachers] have to learn, understand, accept, and appreciate the individual, and advance their own knowledge and education.*

Racism – endured and disrupted

Dominant discourses of racism are both endured and disrupted by the early career Aboriginal teachers in this study. Anne's experience of racism for instance, ... *Someone discovered that I was the sister of the 'darkies' ... I was demoted from white to black and my schoolwork went from good to bad ...* is a familiar narrative which has permeated Anne's life and despite being a teacher, her view of schools ... *[Y]ou know how it is for Koori kids, once they get into trouble once, the school ... see[s] them as the trouble maker no matter what has happened.* Melissa also identifies racism as a key ongoing issue for Aboriginal people, and while Janaya acknowledges the issue, she actively repositions herself in control of the negative space created by racist comments ... *I ask them why they are that way, who taught them to be like that, and give them a little history lesson if the moment allows.* In this way, Janaya recognises the power dynamic and addresses it in a way that disrupts an entrenched sense of privilege and superiority. This reflects a proactive approach described by Zembylas (2005) as " ...

attending to the local manifestations of power allows one to track resistances, be critical, and to develop strategies for (re) constituting one's power relations" (p. 938). These experiences highlight Foucault's (1982, p. 217) assertion that power exists only when it is acted upon; can only be understood through these actions; and reveals modifications to actions that are made as a result of the effects of power.

Taking sides

Complex power relations play out at the cultural interface, and intercultural misunderstandings, misconceptions and mistrust give rise to discourses of and by Aboriginal teachers as subjectivities that are negotiated and repositioned to make sense of this space. Localised, contextual issues can result when Aboriginal teachers advocate for students, parents and community members who have an issue with the school. Schools may well perceive this as taking sides and a predictable course of action from someone who is 'not one of us'. This discourse of the untrustworthy or dissident Aboriginal teacher commonly appears in social policy discourses (Brennan & Zipin, 2008; Brough & Bond, 2009) that ultimately blame Aboriginal people and their culture for their disadvantage and negative social positioning. Such discursive positioning destabilises the place of Aboriginal teachers within power relations by implicitly reinforcing 'us and them' binaries and creating unnecessary tension. John for example, recalls Karen telling him that ... *I spent too much time with them [AEOs] and not enough time in the staffroom [and] she was very cautious of saying things to me because I got on well with the AEOs*. He states that he is aware of his concomitant discursive positioning as expert and outsider and notes ... *they're aware of your cultural experience and therefore want to take advantage of that ... [but] I am not totally embraced by them*.

Deficit and weak

The preconceived dissident Aboriginal teacher challenges the stereotypes and assumptions of the school and the staff and can be blamed for creating an uncomfortable atmosphere that questions both hierarchical and racial privilege (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35). This is revealed in John's narrative when he describes his first encounter with Karen ... *And one of the teachers asked her [Karen] 'did you climb Uluru?' ... 'Oh well they [Aboriginal owners] don't like you climbing it, but ... I'm climbing it anyway'*. Karen's subjectivity is embodied in the authority and privilege of the dominant group, including the rejection of what she considers to be a lesser authority and she categorically asserts a perceived entitlement not to be challenged or made to feel uncomfortable by this. This early incident gave John some initial insight into Karen's need to maintain and enact relationships of power (Mahrouse, 2005, p. 35). These power relations impact on how Aboriginal teachers are positioned within their school setting, and work to shape discourses about Aboriginal culture as weak (it does not appear to have prevailed throughout colonisation); deficit (it has not been able to adapt or embrace progress); and peripheral (it contributes little to the nation) (Brennan & Zipin, 2008). Aboriginal teachers (and their cultures) tend to be constructed in negative ways through language such as 'deficit', 'lazy' and 'freeloader' (Reid & Santoro, 2006, p. 144). These discourses variously reflect on and position Aboriginal teachers as victim, potentially invoking attitudes of sympathy, condescension and mistrust.

Anne believes that open dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers is hindered by a climate of 'political correctness' so that the feeling that ... *teachers are sometimes cautious when speaking, so as not to offend ...* positions her in a reactionary position within this context. These examples demonstrate the way in which

power shifts between teachers, students, pre-service teachers and/or parents and how any one group or individual can be powerful and powerless in particular socio-cultural spaces.

Conclusion

As these narratives demonstrate, early career Aboriginal teachers can move between feeling disempowered and being empowered, and often find themselves in unpredictable and unfamiliar places which can be a source of dissonance within themselves, the school and the local Aboriginal community. Discourses such as these emphasise the relationships of power at the cultural interface and how they discursively position teacher subjectivity. Within this milieu, Aboriginal teachers may enact any or all of these discourses, and move between resistance and compliance depending on their habitus, cultural and social capital, the localised socio-cultural context and their positioning within these spaces. The Aboriginal teacher who complies with this normalisation by providing role modelling and mentoring sanctioned by the dominant culture, is conversant with and can apply the dominant discourses of accountability and accreditation. This is reflected in a version of Sach's (2000, 2001) entrepreneurial professional identity and may be rewarded with early promotion and leadership roles. Those who resist these discourses may also have opportunities to enact a professional identity that they are comfortable with or may find themselves alienated from the practice and experience of teaching, becoming vulnerable and insecure in their teaching identity. Enacting agency in this way can challenge the legitimacy of the 'good' Aboriginal teacher discourse fashioned by bio-power and disciplinary power (Phillips & Nava, 2011). This further depends upon how the relationships of power are experienced within the school hierarchy, such as whether or not the school leadership

supports the Aboriginal teacher, recognizes their expertise and limitations, and allows them to expand their desired professional identity to the same extent as other teachers.

Finding the balance between being an Aboriginal person and a professional person remains a significant issue for Aboriginal teachers and one that is strongly influenced by the socio-cultural context of the school and power relations at the cultural interface. As Reid and Santoro (2006) suggest, “... the interplay between culture and identity in the construction of teacher identity in the workplace produces difficulties and tensions for these teachers through the contradictory effect of history, culture and location in the process of forming the teaching self” (p. 155). The narratives represented in this study challenge many of the dominant discourses around Aboriginal teachers, students and education. While the over-determination of Aboriginality lies at the core of these discourses (Reid & Santoro, 2006; Santoro & Reid, 2006), the Aboriginal teachers in this study consciously exercised agency in a way that fulfilled their desire to be effective teachers, rather than a school’s need to have an ‘Aboriginal teacher’.

The following chapter ‘Narratives of belonging’, further develops the effects of these discourses on Aboriginal teachers’ sense of belonging (or not) in their specific context. The impact of positioning highlights the significance of making connections and building relationships to developing resilience in the workplace. Further, opportunities to speak back to negative positioning or ‘othering’ is important to agency, resistance and realignment of power relations.

CHAPTER 10 NARRATIVES OF BELONGING

Introduction

Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your relationships, your complex involvement with other and in the modern world these have become ever more complex and confusing. ... At the centre, however, are the values we share or wish to share with others (Weeks, 1990, p. 88)

As the participants experienced and responded to their specific teaching contexts, the construction and reconstruction of belonging (and not-belonging) emerged as a central theme across the narratives. This chapter applies Wenger's (2000) modes of belonging and dimensions of identity framework to consider the influence of positioning, capital and 'not-belonging' on teacher identity and resilience. Here, Jordan's (2006) model of relational resilience is applied revealing the role of relationships in the capacity for connection in specific contexts. The response of participants in this study illuminates the importance of agency, resistance and power in speaking back to their positioning and the binary limitations often applied to their subjectivity.

Belonging

Belonging is that sense of feeling at home, comfortability, of imagining collective spaces, locations or positions structured by a shared claim and/or attribute (Anthias, 2002, p. 277). The constructs of these imaginings can mask the factious nature of normative socially produced structures, and thus become exclusionary.

Narratives of belonging can create points of reference that form the foundations for certain types of knowing, such as where *one does not belong*. Identity can therefore be framed by difference and inconsistency, as Wenger (1998) states "... we know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, usable, negotiable: we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive" (p. 153). To better understand the roles of belonging and not belonging in identity construction within learning communities, Wenger (2000, p. 240) developed a matrix of three modes of belonging and three dimensions of identity. He offers a framework for understanding the link between identity and belonging within a community of practice such as a school. It provides a useful conceptual tool for analysing the connections between relationships, positioning, and identity, and what this might mean for resilience, power relations and the enactment of agency, and thus the conditions under which belonging or not-belonging occurs.

Examining the role of positioning (self positioning and positioning by others) (Davis & Harre, 1990; Kraus, 2006) provides further insight into the ways in which the participants experience belonging, resistance and/or alienation, and how their subject position is made available through discourse (Davis & Harre, 1990). Crucial to this is the development and construction of relationships; positioning within these relationships (Weedon, 1997) also determines the level of belonging or not-belonging experienced. Further exploring how participants draw on their cultural, social and emotional capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Santoro, 2010) to expediently position themselves within their particular contextual space provides a useful way for thinking about how various representations of self (Santoro, 2007) bring about opportunities to position oneself in a community of belonging.

Non-belonging must be present for belonging to exist in that for every 'in-group' there is an 'out-group' (Merriam et al., 2001). Binaries are applied to sustain these groups and the inherent relationships of power that emanate from them. Dominant discourses of what constitutes acceptable versions of teacher and teaching practice are based on 'common-place assumptions' (Weedon, 2004) often not available to the 'Other'. This 'Other' is not represented in hegemonic discursive practices and so power relations are enacted accordingly (Santoro, 2007). Significantly, this 'otherness' can exist within groups as well as between groups and attending to these relationships raises issues of shifting boundaries and hierarchical differences (Anthias, 2001). Wenger's framework illuminates how non-belonging can not only create and sustain vulnerable and insecure identities but also mobilise resistance and agency to address negative positioning and damaging relationships.

The notion of speaking back (Weedon, 1997, 2004) emerges from 'not-belonging', 'otherness' and binary applications. Narrative inquiry provides a critical conduit for the 'Other' voice to represent, reposition, negotiate and express (Kraus, 2006) a desired positioning through personal and professional stories of experience. It provides space to develop resilience, pursue resistance and enact agency through the ongoing narrative construction of experience and where appropriate, cultural hybridity (Anthias, 2001). Participants in this study all spoke back to their positioning at different times within their specific socio-cultural context, whether it be within the group, isolated from the group or moving back and forth in order to negotiate and balance their lives and the expectations of others.

Identity

Wenger's (2000) modes of belonging and dimensions of identity emerge from Lave & Wenger's (1991) view that learning is socially situated in nature and

communities of practice position identity as inseparable to learning. Wenger (2000) believes that identity is crucial to social learning systems because it combines experience and capability into a way of knowing and can be deferred or applied to deal effectively with the boundaries of the multiple communities in which any one person operates (p. 239). The narratives in this study highlight how lived experience, embedded in the participants' identity as Aboriginal people beyond their teacher identity, can be engaged in learning communities such as the staffroom and the classroom, as well as their community beyond the school gates. Melissa for instance, moves with relative ease between these communities applying her knowledge and experience to deal with difficult situations. When Aboriginal parents come to her school complaining about an issue, Melissa avoids getting drawn into taking sides but rather stands back and ... *just let[s] them talk it out*. She is aware that ... *knowing the community means that I know where they are coming from ...* and this provides her with opportunities to mobilise her social capital and productively traverse boundaries between often conflicted communities.

The three modes of belonging in Wenger's (2000, p. 227-228) framework consist of engagement, imagination and alignment. Engagement describes how we participate in the world through meaningful interaction with others and how this significantly shapes our experiences of who we are; imagination involves constructing and reflecting on images of ourselves, our communities and the world in order to situate ourselves in a familiar 'place'; and alignment emphasises the importance of aligning our activities with other mutually agreed upon interpretations to be productive beyond our own engagement (p. 228). While each of these modes contributes different dimensions to identity formation, they generally co-exist with varying emphases on each mode, in analytical and practical spaces. Analytically, Wenger (2000, p. 228)

perceives that to varying degrees, these modes of belonging influence the formation of relationships and personal identities, leading to a ‘typology of communities’. In a practical sense, each mode requires a different operational approach and Wenger notes that successful communities of practice manage to combine the limitations of one with the strength of another to achieve their aims.

The identity dimensions in Wenger’s framework (2000, pp. 239-240) include:

- Connectedness, emphasising that no-one operates in a vacuum but rather through “ ... lived experiences of belonging (or not belonging)” (p. 239);
- Expansiveness, which highlights an identity consisting of multi-membership and crossing multiple boundaries (p. 240); and
- Effectiveness, whereby identity provides a conduit for participation or non-participation and thus is inclusive or restricting (p. 240).

These relationships connect identity to belonging and enable or restrict the enactment of agency, resistance and power in response to specific contexts.

For participants in this study, the formation, construction and enactment of relationships is the key to articulating a healthy identity (See Table 1) that can “... combine competence and experience into a way of knowing... [and] ... deal productively with boundaries ...” to manage multiple communities and the boundaries inherent in this process (Wenger, 2000, p. 239).

In Table 1, Wenger’s framework is considered through a relationships lens to highlight the significance of relationships to Aboriginal epistemologies (Yunkaporta, 2009). By positioning relationships at the centre of belonging and identity, capital, agency, resilience and power and an understanding of the participant’s multiple positionalities in particular contexts emerges. Here, relationships are framed in the same way as identity: personal, professional and situated. Personal relationships include self,

family, friends, culture; professional relationships include students in the classroom as well as work colleagues; and situated relationships are dependent on the socio-cultural and ecological context and also include relationships beyond the school, such as those with the Aboriginal community.

Table 1.

Understanding the matrix of belonging and identity

| | | Dimensions of Identity | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---|--|--|
| | | 1. Connectedness i.e. relationships, belonging | 2. Expansiveness i.e. agency, capital | 3. Effectiveness i.e. resilience, power |
| Modes of belonging | A. Engagement | How does engagement within a relationship contribute to the forming of deep connections? What role does belonging play? | How does engagement in a relationship contribute to interactions with other relationships and movement across boundaries? What role does agency and capital play here? | How do relationships support engagement in a way that promotes effectiveness? Does this support resilience and potential for empowerment? |
| | B. Imagination | How do one's image of self and the relationship help form deep connections? Does this contribute to a sense of belonging? | How do one's image of self and the relationship help towards creating interactions with other relationships? How can capital be mobilised to support this? Is agency required? | How do relationships reaffirm self-image, encourage resilience and help understand the big picture to support effective action? Does this result in individual and group empowerment? |
| | C. Alignment | How do mutually agreed upon alignments contribute to the forming of deep connections within a relationship? What is the role of commitment to these alignments? | How do mutually agreed upon alignments support expansion beyond immediate relationships to broader contexts? Is the mobilisation of capital helpful here? | How do mutually agreed upon alignments contribute to effective action within a relationship? Can these be mobilised to convince others of the potential effectiveness of a new idea/action? Is this process empowering for all the participants? |

Note: Key questions for understanding the matrix of belonging and identity through a relationships lens (based on Wenger, 2000 and Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2010).

Capital

Social, economic and cultural capital (both personal and institutional) "... can be reciprocally converted into each other, in multiple ways, to access resources" (Pluss, 2013a, p. 14). These forms of capital generate belonging, are representative of its

effects and are therefore crucial to an understanding of how inclusion and exclusion occur and how identity develops (Zembylas, 2007). In this study, the conceptual tools of cultural and social capital persistently emerge as crucial to understanding the participants' multi-layered positionalities through their possession and access (or not) to resources. Cultural capital needs to be signaled to the community of practice (whether institutional, educational, social or a combination of these) to be granted membership to the network and the perceived value of this is judged in relation to the needs of the community. Once accepted, this is converted to social (and at times economic) capital that benefits all members of the community.

The recent involvement of Aboriginal people in school and education networks in supportive, consultative, educative and decision-making roles indicates that the knowledge, understandings and skills brought to the process by Aboriginal people is now generally regarded as cultural capital that is desired by these networks. Previously thought of as inadequate, deficit or non-existent, this cultural capital is converted into social capital as evidenced by the growing Aboriginal networks that impact on education policy and practice.

An enduring example of capital conversion is evident within the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG); its local, regional and state branches are involved in communities of practice within their own organisation as well as with local schools and education providers. The organisation impacts significantly on the sense of belonging and connectedness that Aboriginal people achieve within their local community of practice and affords them confidence in crossing school community network boundaries. This facilitates engagement, imagination and alignment to goals around improving the school experience and outcomes for Aboriginal students and the

development of effective and productive relationships which opens possibilities for the mobilisation of agency.

All participants in this study effectively converted their cultural capital into social capital when they built a community of practice within their classroom by developing significant relationships with students. This sense of belonging, connection and engagement sustains optimistic teaching subjectivities and contributes to an affirming professional identity. Conversely, when cultural capital is not recognised as valuable to network members, exclusion or at best, periphery membership occurs, which then alienates and disengages members creating power relations that simultaneously create and reinforce inequalities (Pluss, 2013b, p. 6). This is not an unusual experience for Aboriginal people, who despite opportunities for more authentic engagement, can still struggle to engage with institutions characterised by the reification of their own cultural capital to preserve and protect privileged access to resources (Pluss, 2013b, p. 7). This becomes evident when the interests and beliefs of the majority are questioned or considered threatened by an Aboriginal network requesting access to an ever-decreasing pool of resources. Lack of access to resources reproduces Aboriginal peoples' historical alienation and disengagement from education, and further essentialises their culture and social positioning.

The attitude of John's cooperating teacher provides a good example of the impact of dismissing the capital that Aboriginal teachers can potentially bring to schools. Not only did she not acknowledge his cultural capital but made it clear that it was inappropriate in the classroom setting. This made it difficult for him to convert his cultural capital to social capital whereas Melissa and Janaya were able to achieve this conversion providing them with membership to collegial networks.

Positioning

Used in a narrative setting, Wenger's framework is conducive to analysing and understanding the ways that people position themselves, or are positioned by others and how this influences subjectivity, identity and power relations (Weedon, 2004). Kraus (2006) makes the significant connection between narrative, positioning and identity when he says "[Q]uestions of when to bring up a story, how to frame it, what to leave out and what to integrate, are all relevant for negotiating position and affiliation" (p. 109). Theorising positioning by analysing personal narratives of participants' lived experiences within specific contexts provides further insight into the interconnected dimensions of Wenger's model. Analysis such as this supports an understanding of how and why participants respond to specific situations as well as how external forces create situations beyond individual control that further impacts on their positioning. As Kraus (2006) states, "[P]eople do not simply choose affiliations, they have to negotiate them with others and are positioned within them by others" (p. 109).

Within a post-structural framework, Davies and Harre (1990) discern positioning as dynamic and interactive. They see the role of positioning as a means by which to understand identity, which they describe as, "... the ambiguity of 'self'" (p. 46). In this location where the subject's position is discursively constituted, notional choice is activated in order to consider the many (including contradictory) discursive practices available. Since "... [o]ne lives one's life in terms of one's ongoing produced self, ..." (p. 48), a position once taken up by the subject is the location from which they see themselves and others within the relationships they are involved in and the sense of belonging they experience. For instance, Anne tends to react from an adversarial position that is seemingly grounded in the expectation that she will be opposed to the other; ... *Non-Indigenous people really don't give a rats about my identity, unless they*

can benefit from it by using me to teach their class. This instantly limits her opportunities to create or contribute to a learning community. In contrast, Melissa responds from an empowered, inclusive position afforded by the deep continual connections with her culture and community that have crossed over into her workplace. The relational nature of positioning becomes evident when subjects draw on their knowledge and experience of social structures and the familiar roles allocated to people within those structures (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 48).

Kraus (2006) also suggests that situational self positioning and positioning by others is central to the negotiation of belonging which must be tested, confirmed or rejected in a reflexive project of critical self examination (p. 108-109). He highlights the discursive role of narrativity and performativity “ ... where the teller him or herself positions the agent with regards to subjective constructions of belonging, the negotiation of borders and the management of different, multi-layered belongings “ (Kraus, 2006, p. 109). John for instance, is a good example of how the dissonance between self-positioning and positioning by others produces tensions that create disconnect and alienation. For John, this significantly impacted on his capacity to engage in productive learning communities during his Professional Experience. A marginalising experience such as this means that he now has little possibility of reaffirming meanings or creating new ones; a process essential to productive engagement, constructive imagination and effective alignment to common practices and goals. While John embarked upon a journey of critical reflexivity, his cooperating teacher did not deviate from her position and so this tension remained unresolved.

Theorising shifting, complex and interlocking positionalities that are inherently relational and contextual provides an understanding of the nature of specific interactions at particular sites (Keddie, 2012, p. 319). Anthias (2002) suggests that

translocational positionality (p. 276) provides a way to account for the complex and contradictory effects of positioning on one's sense of belonging and identity. This dynamic was evident in the underlying tension created by John's cooperating teacher's attitude to his age (he is older), gender and class. She was far more comfortable with and helpful towards the young female pre-service teacher even after finding out about her Aboriginal background, which suggests that a range of positionalities contribute to the development of relationships and a sense of belonging and that this is layered within power relations.

Class identity is also relevant here and John's upbringing, blue-collar work history, involvement in rugby league (a traditionally working class sport in NSW), and his low socio-economic address means that he sees himself as definitively working class. While not explicitly articulated, John is determined to embed his values, attitudes and pride he derives from these origins in a culturally embodied pedagogical approach as he sees this as the most effective way to engage the students he is teaching. While this is crucial to his subjectivity and identity, his cooperating teacher positions him as deficit, evidenced in her mind by the way he expresses and presents himself. This fundamental clash of values and attitudes fuels the underlying tension which further reinforces the hierarchical nature of the teacher-student relationship in which John is positioned as inferior and thus disempowered in his efforts to assert his professional identity. As Weedon (2004) so aptly reminds us "... class position is also a crucial determinant of subjectivity and identity "... [it] is firmly grounded in economic and educational relations of difference and inequality ... [and] affects the ways in which individuals interact with one another" (p. 11).

The way in which people respond to power and power relations within discourse communities that articulate and define their positionality is as Santoro (2009, p. 35)

suggests, the factor that determines how they take up or resist their positioning. In John's efforts to manage and pass his Professional Experience, he both accepts and resists his cooperating teacher's positioning in various situations and this has a deep impact on his overall teaching confidence.

Resilience

The level or experience of resilience and how this both impacts on and is impacted by positioning also becomes evident through the application of Wenger's framework on belonging and identity. The conceptual frame of relationships and how these develop in various communities of practice is crucial to understanding why some early career teachers are more resilient than others.

In their study of early career teacher resilience Johnson et al. (2012) found that when schools valued relationships and centred this in early career teachers' experiences these teachers demonstrated greater resilience and experienced higher levels of well being through belonging and connectedness to all aspects of their work. They acknowledged the multi-layered, multi-faceted nature of teacher-teacher, teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships and found that efforts to develop democratic and collaborative relationships resulted in "... mutual trust, respect, care and integrity" (p. 59). They propose that the most important relationship is the student-teacher relationship and emphasise that it requires a daily investment in a range of emotions where early career teachers are both nourished and drained by the relationships they form with students. Where these relationships are difficult or negative, their sense of connectedness with themselves as well as with the workplace damaged their well being and resilience. This is reinforced in my study where the student-teacher relationship is seen as crucial to the point where it sustains the participants through other hardships experienced in teaching.

In a review of literature, Sumison (2004) found the following contributory factors impacting on teacher resilience: personal or internal characteristics, contextual or external factors, and person-context interactional processes which combine the internal and external through reflective processes (Le Cornu, 2009, p. 721). Recent research (Gu & Day, 2007; Jordan, 2006; Le Cornu, 2009) focused on the third contributory factor referred to by Gu and Day (2007) as protective processes. These processes seek to demonstrate how the first two factors contribute to the third in that internal individual assets interact with the external environment to enhance resilience. Jordan's (2006) model of relational resilience sits within this third category and consists of three dimensions - mutuality, empowerment and the development of courage (Le Cornu, 2009, p. 719). It is a useful framework for exploring the resilience of the participants in my study because of the focus on relationships and connections within specific relational and contextual spaces.

Jordan's (2006) model suggests that "... resilience resides not in the individual but in the capacity for connection" (Le Cornu, 2009, p. 718) thus allowing for the incorporation of the post structural concerns of discourse, subjectivity and power relations that permeate the socio-cultural context and impact on the individuals and communities residing within. This resonates with the narratives in this study where each participant experiences varying degrees of resilience within their specific context; how this plays out is closely linked to opportunities for empowerment and the enactment of agency. John's experience in his final Professional Experience highlights the significant impact of context and the relationships and connections he is able and not able to make. His self-positioning, positioning by others and his attempts to incorporate his lived experience in his teaching practice, demonstrates his ongoing determination to be agentic in the enactment of his professional identity.

In Jordan's (2006) framework, the concept of mutuality is closely linked to the notion of reciprocity, where members of a learning community commit to and support their own as well as other's learning, forming deep connections and a sense of belonging to a common experience. For example, the close supportive and reciprocal staff relationships that Janaya experiences contribute considerably to her resilience in a difficult teaching environment. *We ... all plan together, share resources, knowledge and food ... Supporting one another is the key.* Reciprocity is an underlying foundation for the participants who understand this as a cultural imperative as well as one that connects them closely to their peers from their all-Aboriginal university program, as Melissa highlights; *... I don't know if I could have made it without our mob all studying together...* Further, the sense of making a contribution as well as receiving support emerges through the narratives especially with respect to making a difference in the lives of Aboriginal children as John notes *... I wanted to teach in my community just for the fact that the community has got me to where I am today.*

Jordan (2006) suggests that empowerment is a foundation for relational resilience where participants make "growth-fostering connections" (p. 82). Reciprocal relationships that are based on an equal footing and non-judgmental interactions rely on the importance of personal awareness. Relationships built on this awareness are empowering for all and therefore contribute to individual and group resilience. Anne, for example, has difficulty developing reciprocal relationships in her teaching contexts and this stems from a lack of personal awareness, namely the difficulty she has with being non-judgmental and flexible potentially limiting Anne's capacity to remain engaged in the profession.

Emerging from mutuality and empowerment is the third element of Jordan's (2006) framework, the development of courage described by Le Cornu (2009) as "... the

capacity to move into situations when we feel fear or hesitation” (p. 720). This capacity emerges when connections and relationships are encouraged, reinforcing a sense of belonging within a supportive learning environment. This is evident in Melissa’s narrative as she creates a place of belonging for her students in the Aboriginal room where students can seek advice, support and solace. Jordan (2006) also proposes a notion of supported vulnerability, whereby asking for help and admitting to feeling uncertain or insecure are signs of strength rather than weakness, again demonstrating a sense of personal awareness and reflectiveness in practice. For John, the acute insecurity he experienced at the behest of his cooperating teacher led him to contact his university lecturers for support and with this forthcoming he was able to develop the necessary skills and confidence for dealing with difficult situations and building resilience. The development of John’s courage was seen through his persistence in asserting his pedagogical style which he felt was in the best interest of his students, despite disapproval from his cooperating teacher.

Jordan’s (2006) framework can be applied to illuminate why Janaya and Melissa demonstrate the greatest resilience amongst the participants. Both grew up in an extensive family and community network where their cultural identity was central to their lives as well as a source of strength. In this context, the notions of mutuality and reciprocity underpin daily interactions creating secure connections and an enduring sense of belonging. This is ongoing and empowering; it permeates their personal, professional and situated identities and relationships. It provides deep and largely positive lived experience which they can draw upon to be agentic in who they are and what they can do. This reinforces their confidence to move into new situations and cross multiple community boundaries effectively.

While Melissa is adept at crossing boundaries across her personal and professional domains, she is hesitant to cross the boundary from her comfortable role as AEO into a teaching role and potentially into a new community. She acknowledges that she will be able to take this step when the circumstances are right, illustrating how resilient people are able to make reflective and evaluative decisions without undermining their sense of self.

Janaya on the other hand was keen to move from the comfort of her community to a different teaching environment, recognising that the new knowledge, experiences and skills that she will gain from teaching settings beyond her community will make her better teacher when she returns. The development of Janaya's courage stems from a strong sense of personal awareness and ongoing reflexivity about the role that cultural and social identity play in her teaching subjectivity and identity.

Not-Belonging

Identity

Identity is structured by difference, and the assessment of who we are is mediated by who we believe we are not. Accordingly, belonging is contingent upon not belonging. Post structural analysis of self positioning and positioning by others is crucial to making sense of identity in terms of belonging, 'otherness', dislocation and the resultant relationships of power. It is best recognised through the narratives we use to describe ourselves in specific situations as well as how we are represented in others' narratives. Thus difference and otherness are relationally constructed between and within groups. Attending to the contradictions and nuances in this is important so as to

avoid the cultural and moral relativism (Anthias, 2002, p. 277) that positions the 'Other' as deficit and perpetuates inequalities and oppression.

Wenger's (2000) framework can also be applied to illuminate experiences of not belonging. These exist when alignment becomes more about rule following, lack of control and capacity to contribute to practice (Solomon, 2007, p. 10). Within this context, imagination is narrow, limited and without reflection and thus disengagement occurs. Negotiation, a vital aspect of participation, does not occur and thus there is no sense of ownership of meaning or participation in the meaning making (Solomon, 2007, p. 17) which is crucial to the development of identity.

Disengagement from learning communities is a reality for many Aboriginal people especially if the learning communities are value-laden with western cultural knowledge and practices. Moreton Robinson (2004) states that western knowledge and understandings about Aboriginal people has objectified them as subjects to be studied rather than engaging Indigenous perspectives from an insider view (Hart et al., 2012, p. 707). The common-sense discourse (Weedon, 2004) of 'knowing the system' describes an insider context as one that creates and results in connections, networks and opportunities to enact agency and power. By and large however, Aboriginal people have not had access to this network and so disconnection from the system has occurred in a number of ways.

For example, John has little previous experience in the education system compared to Melissa, Janaya and Anne and this made it difficult for him to recognise and harness the available system tools to support his teaching. John's cooperating teacher's narrow view of pedagogy reduced him to a rule follower and limited his opportunities for enacting imagination. For him, the rules were not always clear, sometimes culturally foreign and in contrast to his beliefs about effective teaching. His

attempts to negotiate with his cooperating teacher and seek advice from the Deputy Principal and Aboriginal staff failed to deliver any real change in the power relationship or create opportunities for imagination or alignment. The cooperating teacher summarily dismissed John's knowledge and this lack of alignment in beliefs about what constitutes knowledge, understandings and pedagogical practices in Aboriginal Studies further disconnects John from the type of positive communities of practice that Janaya and Melissa experience in their workplaces.

This framework then, illuminates how disconnection in one aspect of a situated learning community has a flow on effect to other aspects of identity and belonging, resulting in multiple disadvantage, a position not unfamiliar to the 'Other' and/or marginalised. It highlights the importance of relationships and connections to the development of belonging that provide opportunities to grow effective communities of practice. Examining the narratives from this study demonstrate how various elements of the matrix are interdependent and discursively position the participants as Kraus (2006) suggests, "... strategies of dominance consist of the devaluation of the other and the construction of serviceable others to sustain power relationships" (p. 104).

Positioning

Being positioned as 'Other' is a common experience for Indigenous people in the Australian education system. This binary construction limits ways of understanding and analysing difference, by stereotyping and pathologising the very groups it seeks to describe, which further produces "... hegemony whilst effectively creating 'Otherness' within non-European cultures, thus schools are locations of hidden curriculum" (Hart et al., 2012, p. 704). Aboriginal people and cultures have consistently been positioned as 'Other', often interpreted as deficit and delinquent, and translated into compensatory approaches to education underpinned by low expectations of Aboriginal achievement

(Hart et al., 2012, p. 707). This systematic and persistent approach perpetuates ongoing inequalities and unequal power relations and normalises people of British heritage as ‘real’ Australians (Tsolidis, 2001, p. 86).

The portrayal of the ordinariness and naturalness of white Australia underpins the socio-cultural and political power of Australian education (Reid et al., 2004, p. 310) through curriculum knowledge, institutional structures and performance based pedagogical practices. Dominant discourses reinforce these views and can place the other as exotic, deviant, disembodied and ‘not-one-of-us’.

Difference and otherness is relationally constructed by Anthias (2002, p. 278) to warn against the impact of political, moral and cultural relativism that can be used to justify oppression. She suggests that difference be decentred in terms of boundaries and hierarchical difference, both of which are often blurred and fluid, leading to multi-layered positionalities. She notes that “... class, gender and ethnicity/race cannot be seen as constructing permanent fixed groups but involve shifting constellations of social actors, depending on the ways the boundaries of a denoted category are constructed” (p. 278). These positionalities are significantly influenced by specific socio-cultural contexts; a notion that consistently emerges in the narratives.

Wenger’s (2000, pp. 232-237) notion of boundaries as an automatic consequence of social learning systems is important because it offers learning opportunities where “... experience and competence are in close tension” (p. 233). Boundaries require coordination, negotiability, discourses and processes and are a source of new openings as well as divisions that can fracture and disengage. Wenger (2000, pp. 235-236) notes that brokers between communities are those people who succeed in creating connections, exploring new boundaries and acquire relevant information to innovate practice. Melissa and Janaya both demonstrate this as they

move comfortably between their communities, creating relationships of belonging within and between them. By applying reflexivity to boundary brokering, space is provided for them to speak back to their various positionings which means that they can be resilient and agentic in this role. That they also move across cultural and social boundaries steeped in underlying historical and political conflicts suggests that they play a significant role as cultural knowledge-brokers (Stewart, 2005, p. 101), a role generally not considered in the construction of professional identity. The difficulty in mediating the complex and often contradictory subject positions Aboriginal teachers find themselves in, and the boundaries that they navigate can be best demonstrated by the expectations placed on them by the school, students, parents and community, and not least of which, by themselves.

In the school context, Aboriginal teachers are often expected to be role models for Aboriginal students, improve Aboriginal student outcomes (where others have failed) and fix perceived Aboriginal problems in the school. This positions them on racial terms, undermines agency and opportunity to mobilise otherwise valuable capital, and potentially alienates and disengages them from their school and possibly their local community.

Whiteness

The notion of Whiteness provides a lens through which to consider the operation of discourse, subjectivity and power in the process of ‘Othering’. Whiteness, while not prevalent in the Australian research context, has a long history of recognition and research overseas, particularly in the United States (Hooley, 2009). While the concept itself is often difficult to describe, and/or is silent and hidden, it assumed in theorising around difference, hierarchy and power, placing it at the “... intersections of class, race and culture where power, domination, language and identity collide” (Hooley, 2009, p.

35). In the Australian educational context, Reid et al. (2004) point out that "... being white in Australia is still constructed in our curriculum and cultural practices as normal and natural" (p. 306) and label this as "the impenetrable whiteness of schooling" (p. 303). They found that most Indigenous teachers in their study experienced the unquestioned, taken-for-granted privilege of whiteness which positioned them as the powerless, marginalised and deficit 'Other'. In my study, these experiences and positioning also emerge and are mostly mediated by a range of participant responses such as resistance, ambivalence, agency and resolve which are significantly influenced by their sense of belonging and connection (or not) to their specific socio-cultural context.

Haviland's (2008) critical studies of whiteness can contribute further understanding to the construction of professional identities within the narratives. She "... recognise(s), analyse(s), and critique(s) the power and privileges associated with Whiteness" (p. 41), and identifies three characteristics of whiteness as powerful yet power evasive; employing techniques to maintain power; and not monolithic (p. 41-42). The first construct refers to the ways in which whites consciously or unconsciously ignore or deny the power attached to this position and employ strategies such as avoiding words, silence or asserting ignorance (p. 41 & 44) to achieve this. Techniques such as creating a culture of politeness, 'colour-blindness' and avoiding critique are examples of the second construct and the third one suggests that oversimplifying whiteness and not accounting for multifarious positionalities is also unhelpful. Haviland (2008, p. 42) notes that the more ethnically diverse a context is, the more likely it is that a white person working in this context will be attuned to the complexities involved in the enactment of subjectivities and identity construction. This tends to be amplified when the ethnic minority is the majority.

These constructs provide a useful way in which to consider discourses of whiteness and the 'Other' in this study. Examples of the powerful yet power evasive construct can be found in Anne and John's narratives where both refer to efforts by teachers to be 'politically correct' or 'careful' when talking in the presence of Aboriginal people. Whether the teachers do this out of fear of offending or to avoid difficult dialogue, it still has the effect of excluding the Aboriginal teacher from the everyday discourse and familiar interaction that their non-Aboriginal colleagues take for granted, effectively creating a tense and fractal atmosphere of not belonging. The second construct is evident in John's narrative as his cooperative teacher asserts her knowledge of and interest in Aboriginal culture yet is unable to make connections with John as an Aboriginal person as well as a teacher with cultural knowledge. She is also unable to draw on this to consider a pedagogical approach that might better engage Aboriginal students and further criticises John for doing so.

At Melissa's school, the articulation by some teachers that all students should be treated the same highlights how the language of egalitarianism maintains unequal relationships of power, failing to recognise the complexities of discourse and power in particular contexts. This undermines Aboriginal students' identities and denies them access to positionalities based on the effects of a colonial past that continues to oppress today. In terms of the third construct, the narratives reveal a diversity of interactions with non-Aboriginal people, with perhaps more positive examples than negative. A trend emerges where Aboriginal people in educational settings can enact their agency in a supportive climate of belonging as demonstrated by Melissa's comment ... *Different teachers have told me they can't believe how much power I have in the school*, and Janaya's comment ... *so far I have been given the chance to grow as me*. Here,

Whiteness is not immovable but is opening up diversity and multi-positioning in an ethos of belonging and connection.

Speaking Back

The significance of speaking back emerges for the marginalised as an opportunity to reposition and rearticulate personal and collective experiences and identities.

History

Weedon (2004) emphasises the importance of history in discussions about belonging, resistance, agency and power and therefore the significance of “... having a voice that is recognised and heard, and its role in the formations of positive identity” (p. 3). Narratives of the past, in particular the grand narratives of the hegemonic majority, have systematically excluded and ‘Othered’ ethnic minorities and in Australia, most notably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (p. 24). The emergence of counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge dominant narratives of history, racial and ethnic stereotyping and white authority, “ ... have established counter-narratives that demand to be taken seriously among Western as well as Indigenous historians, novelists and filmmakers” (Weedon, 2004, p. 24). Narrative becomes an appropriate vehicle through which the ‘Other’ can speak back to their positioning and past representation as they can “ ... bring[ing] to the particular situation their history as a subjective being, that is the history of one who has been in multiple positions and engaged in different forms of discourse” (Daves & Harre, 1990, p. 48). Narratives of origin and belonging are therefore closely linked to the importance of articulating a voice that is acknowledged in increasingly familiar discourses of the

‘Other’ lived experience (Weedon, 2004, pp. 3-4). This acknowledgement contributes significantly to the discursive production of preferred identities.

Agency, resistance and power

Speaking back to narratives of exclusion and silence provides opportunities for repositioning in complex individual and collective representations that reflect the often-contradictory space of experience. As each member of a relationship brings their subjectivity, lived experience and pressures to a joint enterprise (Kwan & Lopes-Real, 2010, p. 122), Wenger’s (2000) framework recognises that a strong identity has shared histories, experiences, reciprocity, affection and mutual commitment (p. 239). When the three key modes of belonging, engagement, imagination and alignment are inclusive and embrace a range of identities, they can be mobilised to enact connected, expansive and effective practices, reinforcing positive individual and collective identities.

The early career Aboriginal teachers in this study speak back to the undercurrent positioning of Aboriginal people as marginalised ‘Other’ in schools by enacting agency and/or resisting this positioning. This empowers them in explicit and subtle ways and largely accounts for why they have elected to teach in the field of Aboriginal Studies as John explains, ... *since colonisation we’ve been taught the wrong information when we went to school. I want to stop all that; I want to get the other side out there.* Anne also identifies that this as a key factor in her desire to be an effective teacher ... *I will be an Aboriginal teacher giving me the ability to teach in a manner that people can view an Aboriginal perception of things and issues. ... My passion for telling history how it has been.*

The power relations of the context in which they teach and the acceptance of Aboriginal Studies as a legitimate, if not important field of study in the current curriculum creates the conditions for agency (Zembylas, 2005) which enables these

teachers to enact a pedagogical identity embodied in their lived experience and cultural background. Despite Anne and John's difficult experiences in their school context, the opportunity to be agentic in their classroom keeps their hopes for empowerment alive and reveals the nuances of power relations (Garrett & Segall, 2013, p. 297) at the cultural interface.

Understanding resistance contributes to a recognition and understanding of agency and its role in speaking back to specific positionings. In their review of literature on teacher education, Garrett & Segall (2013) noted two ways that resistance is generally articulated; one is as a critical tool that foregrounds emancipation as the key aim (Garrett & Segall, 2013, p. 297); and the other is where someone pushes back against perceived unjust pedagogical practices.

The first conception in which critical pedagogies are applied through an awareness of the structure of injustice (Garrett & Segall, 2013, p. 297) is useful as it illuminates the crucial role that the participants play in teaching Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal students about their histories, cultures and heritage. As this includes controversial, contested and often sensitive understandings that counter dominant colonial narratives, the impact of resistance and agency on the potential for empowerment is revealed in Melissa's observations ... *It [Aboriginal Studies] has a really positive effect on students that go in there blind. A lot of them ... end up going out and getting jobs that ... [require]... an understanding of Aboriginal culture.*

There is also evidence here of the second way in which resistance occurs when learners from the dominant group perceive the knowledge as unfair or simply incorrect and thus resist these understandings (Garrett & Segall, 2013). It is clear that this was the case when students entered the course but by applying critical pedagogical approaches, Melissa notes that they have exited the course empowered by this new knowledge.

Conclusion

Theorising positioning through the lens of relationships assists in understanding how and why belonging (or exclusion) occurs and how resistance and agency influence the creation of resilient and empowered subjectivities. Acknowledging the nuances in power relations (Garrett & Segall, 2013) operating at the cultural interface where latent tensions between the dominant and minority ‘Other’ resides (Nakata, 2007b) creates space for ambivalence and changeability in the process of belonging in social learning systems. This space is important so as not to frame belonging in binary terms, as it is not absolute and movement between the positions of belonging and not belonging can occur regularly.

Emerging from constructs like belonging and not belonging are voices representing diverse responses rejecting binary positionings that limit subjectivity and identity. In response to their specific socio-cultural contexts and the relationships of power in operation, participants in this study variously accepted and resisted their positioning by others, demonstrating agency and resilience in pursuing their desire to become effective Aboriginal Studies teachers.

The following chapter articulates a theme emerging from this chapter as well as from the narratives – the way in which the Aboriginal teachers embodied their lived experience, cultural background and identity into a pedagogical style that invoked significant relationships with students and created a sense of belonging for all. Conceptualising a pedagogical identity involves considering the role of habitus and social and cultural capital within the nuanced power relations of specific contexts. Whether this identity is real or imagined highlights the potential and limitations of such a construct.

CHAPTER 11

CONCEPTUALISING A PEDAGOGICAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

Introduction

Emerging from the narratives is the way in which teachers embed their cultural knowledge and lived experience in their teaching practice. Conflating pedagogy, cultural knowledge, lived experience and identity became critical to an understanding of self as cultural being, teacher, and learner (Hart, personal communication, October 27, 2013). While the term “pedagogical cultural identity” is used by Hart et al. (2012, p. 720) in a collective sense and applied to the teaching profession as a whole, it is a concept that has traction in this study for describing an individual teaching identity. Here, the participants embodied tacit cultural knowledge, understandings and skills creating a personal practical knowledge that they utilised at various times and in specific contexts. In particular, their pedagogical cultural identity was mobilised to connect with Aboriginal students in an effort to engage these students with the intention of improving their educational experiences and outcomes.

van Manen (1994) captures a sense of what a pedagogical cultural identity might look like when he says:

The ultimate success of teaching actually may rely importantly on the “knowledge” forms that inhere in practical actions, in an embodied

thoughtfulness, and in the personal space, mood and relational atmosphere in which teachers find themselves with their students. The curricular thoughtfulness that good teachers learn to display towards children may depend precisely upon the internalized values, embodied qualities, thoughtful habits that constitute virtues of teaching (p. 13).

Conceptualising pedagogical cultural identity as an assumed, fixed identity premised on a specific expertise only attainable by a few “cultural experts” makes false assumptions by failing to capture its fluidity, complexity and relevance to all teachers as cultural beings. Applying a post structural lens to the concept of pedagogical cultural identity reveals the potential for exploitation and cultural determinism. Through Foucault’s notions of discourse, subjectivity and power, the contingent and relational processes through which teachers negotiate their personal, professional and situated identities are highlighted as they attempt to navigate the tensions, complexities and synergies at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002; Yunkaporta, 2009).

This chapter explores the emergence of the concept pedagogical cultural identity through the enactment of participants’ habitus, social and cultural capital, their relationship to the field of Aboriginal Studies, to students and colleagues, and to the development of their professional identity. The issue of power relations at the specific context within which the participants reside, significantly influence the enactment of a pedagogical cultural identity and challenges the legitimacy of an assumed and expected claim to this identity by exploring its potential and limitations.

Habitus, cultural and social capital

Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus refers to a personal disposition consisting of values, beliefs, attitudes, and cognitive and affective elements grounded in culture, lived experiences and an individual and collective historical positioning within dominant constructs (Wacquant, 2006, p. 316). It is structured with varying degrees of coherence, stability, tension and agency where “... critical moments of perplexity and

discrepancy...” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 191) are filtered through experience to become an ongoing project of creating a desirable self. Bourdieu (1984) incorporates the importance of transferability to various domains of practice and variability across time, place and distributions of power, (Wacquant, 2006, p. 316) such as pedagogical practice.

Janaya and Melissa’s lived experiences emerge from a clearly articulated cultural framework characterised by the significant influence of extended family, particularly women. Their subjectivity is constituted by this lived experience and this permeates all aspects of their identity providing opportunities for Janaya and Melissa to develop, articulate and apply their cultural capital, both in the western and Indigenous sense. This creates for them “... a potential of social knowledge, the power of social integration, or cohesion, which reinstates new forms of (non-capitalist) social relationships ...” (Gregorcic, 2009, p. 358). When converted into social capital, cultural capital provides membership to community and professional networks, as Janaya notes *... my kids worked so well for me because most were also my relations*. Thus the development of pedagogical skills in this context is enhanced by unique membership to the local school community which contributes to her pedagogical cultural identity.

Similarly, Santoro et al. (2011) notes that Indigenous teachers’ insight into the ‘out of school’ lives of Indigenous students is incorporated into Indigenous ways of knowing (Santoro et al., 2011) which they describe as an embodied cultural capital that can be converted into social capital. This is also noted in Giampapa’s (2010, p. 409) study of a multi-literacies approach for linguistically and culturally diverse students, where professional identities were built on pedagogies drawn from students’ linguistic and cultural forms of capital as classroom resources thus validating student knowledge and contributing to pedagogical opportunities to engage students (p. 419).

Power Relations

The positioning of early career Aboriginal teachers' (by self and/or others) as "cultural experts" based on ethnicity significantly influence discursively produced power relations and subjectivity. Individuals bring their beliefs, dispositions and ways of thinking and acting (Duesterberg, 1998, p. 498) to their teaching context and this is reflected in how they engage their cultural and social capital to evoke pedagogical relationships that problematise definitions and representations of culture, including how perceived 'culturally endowed' teachers are positioned

Often, cultural difference becomes a "problem to be solved" and cultural knowledge is reduced to a 'fascinating perspective' which diverts the focus from how and why cultural difference and knowledge is represented in particular ways.

Yunkaporta (2009, p. 54) contends that locally based cultural knowledge is mostly seen by schools as irrelevant to student learning rather than recognising the significance of the interrelatedness of locality and knowledge. He believes that, "[T]his arbitrary severing of place is where Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews can become artificially polarised, isolating school communities from creative possibilities that exist at the Cultural Interface" (p. 54).

Further, Duesterberg (1998) states that "... teachers need to be open about how any knowledge they (re) present – about culture especially – will be filtered through their own orientations as raced, classed and gendered individual" (p. 502). She also notes that assumptions about how children understand and identify with a particular cultural group cannot be made, as they are also constrained by power relations including the need to conform to the group (p. 506) and so may not automatically or willingly embrace a pedagogical relationship based on perceived cultural affinities. Significantly, Meerwald (2001, pp. 388-389) notes that it is important for all teachers to

learn about and understand their own culture and to avoid generalising and oversimplifying cultural knowledge. Student worth and contributions are at best marginalised and at worst erased if measured purely by ethnic identity.

Anne provides an interesting focus here as she exhibits a combative disposition that is strongly reflected in her relationships with other staff. Her claims to cultural expertise are largely based on experiences of racism (both real and perceived) rather than on culturally infused lived experience garnered from extended family and community networks. Anne enacts power through an embodied victimhood that underpins her responses to staff, students and the contexts in which she finds herself. Embodied in her habitus, Anne's sense of pedagogical cultural identity may or may not resonate with her students' lived experiences as Aboriginal people and while it may appeal to some students, it could potentially intimidate others. Assumptions made about Anne's pedagogical cultural identity that automatically position her as an expert on Aboriginal culture or on what is best for Aboriginal students reflects the complexity of power and subjectivity in this sense.

John on the other hand, finds his pedagogical cultural identity undermined by his cooperating teacher who dismisses his habitus and the potential of his cultural and social capital in the classroom. She imposes her value system to determine what knowledge and culture is appropriate for the classroom, which includes drawing definitive boundaries between the personal and professional self. The act of distancing self from teacher is an alien concept for John and one which destabilises his teaching and limits his opportunities to mobilise his pedagogical cultural identity to develop meaningful relationships with students.

The field of Aboriginal Studies

The participants in this study are qualified in the field of Aboriginal Studies (as distinct NSW Board of Studies syllabi 2003, 2010). The content of which is largely based on the ongoing socio-political, historical and cultural impacts of colonisation. This subject also privileges place-based local knowledge, culture and history as the basis for understanding diverse Aboriginal communities here and overseas. This means that Aboriginal Studies occupies a unique space in the school curriculum which is highlighted by Yunkaporta's (2009) assertion that "... land and place can be a source of innovative cross-cultural knowledge not just for content, but for pedagogy as well" (p. 54). This statement is significant in its support of Aboriginal teachers employing their habitus and capital to construct, circulate and adopt (Habibis & Walter, 2009) intellectual and cultural knowledge, practices and dispositions. This is important in challenging, interrogating and disrupting 'truths' about Aboriginal people, cultures and histories. These early career Aboriginal teachers clearly perceive Aboriginal Studies as a subject through which they can make a difference not only in the classroom, but at school and systemic levels.

John and Baggott La Velle (2004) suggest that pedagogical styles are inextricably linked to 'subject cultures' which they define as "... well established bodies of knowledge and social practices that carry with them particular assumptions about 'worthwhile knowledge', 'effective teaching', 'the good student' and 'appropriate assessment'" (p. 308). The growing acceptance and sphere of what is locally and globally referred to as Indigenous knowledges (emerging from constructs such as perspectives and world views) confront and question assumptions about what is appropriate content and pedagogy for schools (Hart et al., 2012, p. 704). This recognises that these historical constructs are grounded in structural, collective and

individual biographies and practices that are shaped over time (John & Baggott La Velle, 2004, p. 308). Hart et al. (2011) also stress the need to incorporate, centre, respect and value Indigenous knowledges (just as one would western knowledges) as potential for a transformational pedagogical approach.

In their studies, John and Baggott La Velle (2004, p. 311) note that a strong sense of subject identity interwoven with pedagogical and subjective educational theories and embedded in biographical experience reflects teachers' efforts to devise meaningful learning experiences for their students. This enacts a pedagogic identity that one teacher notes helps children to "... understand the world, understand where we fit in and not being scared of it" (p. 313). The notion of empowering children is articulated in the participants' desire to present curricular content from an Aboriginal perspective and to invoke pedagogical styles that ensure that this knowledge is imparted in culturally appropriate ways. In Aboriginal Studies, this means building strong relationships with Aboriginal families and communities in developing and presenting content, particularly in the mandatory Major Project where students embark on an intimate journey with the Aboriginal people and/or families and communities they need to work with (Wray, 2008, p. 3). In some cases, this has resulted in transformative experiences for Aboriginal students who have uncovered family histories and for many students, it has significantly influenced their career trajectory. Even more powerful is Melissa's claim that ... *it's not just about a career, but the survival of our people and culture* ... which reflects a sense of urgency and determination not often evident in other curriculum areas or pedagogic practices.

In their research about Aboriginal health worker education, Carey and Russell (2011, p. 33) note that curriculum for Aboriginal learners should also attempt to embed the cultural practices and knowledges which include but are not limited to 'caring and

sharing', respect for Elders, significance of oral traditions through storytelling and yarning, and the use of humour to manage emotionally difficult issues and situations. They believe these aspects to be central to learning, shaped by culture, reflective of diversity, and usually invisible in dominant discourses. Their positioning of Aboriginal cultural knowledges at the centre of their pedagogy indicates a strong sense of pedagogical cultural identity that connects theoretical, practical and operational positions in everyday praxis, opening possibilities for learning (p. 34). This pedagogical approach of utilising "... narratively informed community events ... [and the] ... documentation of alternative knowledges" (p. 37) privileges the knowledge and skills that participants bring to the learning and is viewed as a foundation for shared wisdom (p. 38).

Frameworks such as West's (2000, as cited in Phillips, 2011, p. 84) conceptual dimensions of Japanangka and Yunkaporta's (2009) "8 Aboriginal ways of learning" position Indigenous epistemologies at the centre of learning. West's framework (Phillips, 2011, p. 86) is designed to speak back to assumptions about Indigenous knowledges made by the mainstream academy by highlighting complex, multifaceted and interconnecting dimensions that articulate Indigenous lived experiences through the collective and relational production of knowledge. On a more pragmatic level, Yunkaporta's (2009) framework provides a taxonomy of learning that foregrounds Indigenous cultural ways of knowing, being and doing as a pedagogical approach that all teachers can use with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. He emphasises the similarities between western and Indigenous knowledge systems that, when engaged with at a deep level are reconciling opportunities for inclusive learning (p. 50).

Elements of these approaches are evident in Melissa's narrative as she expresses the centrality of cultural approaches and responses of Aboriginal people that impact on the learning and self efficacy of her students:

Aboriginal people love telling yarns and this is a major form of communication for both formal and informal information so kids learn best from this way. Visualization also works well but all students learn differently. Many Aboriginal students prefer hands on activities with real life experiences ... Building relationships, trust, respect and not be judgmental. Self-protection skills. Not too much authority – they need structure but not to be put down for being wrong – they feel shame – need to do gender-based culture camps to break cycles of poverty traps like teen pregnancy.

However, as noted by Nakata (2007a) and Yunkaporta (2009), it is important to avoid binaries that can reinforce cultural determinism, assumptions and stereotypes all of which limit the Aboriginal teachers who deliver the content as well as Aboriginal students who may not relate to this approach. Yunkaporta's (2009) claim that "... there can be no single authentic account or truth of Indigenous experience as the Interface is a ... dynamic and contested space" (pp. 54-55) resonates with the narratives in this study as the participants describe a range of distinct approaches to teaching and learning. This underlines the notion that a pedagogical cultural identity cannot simply represent a particular knowledge or cultural set but rather, an individual teacher's translocational positionalities (Anthias, 2002), biographies and lived experience are embodied in their pedagogical style. Consequently, a pedagogical cultural identity is relevant to all teachers as well as the teaching profession as Hart et al. (2012) contends, "[I]t is significant to discuss the formation and transformation of the pedagogical cultural identity of the teaching profession within which Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers are employed" (p. 703). In doing so the broader implications of this concept are recognised.

Segall (2004) notes that knowledge is not predetermined but created by and for others and therefore pedagogical layers reveal "... content that is always pedagogical

and pedagogies that are always content-full” (p. 492). This approach opens up spaces for diverse interpretations and critical analysis of how textbooks for instance can include or exclude particular meanings, emphasise particular perspectives and provide or limit access to the power that these discourses hold:

Content area texts not only permit but encourage those they engage to feel, value and learn about the world in certain ways ... by providing readers a selectively constructed social reality – social knowledge and social imagery – and establish a position from which viewers are able to perceive the world and their own realities and those of others within that world (p. 496).

In Aboriginal Studies, the complex power relations involved in producing and interrogating discourses about Aboriginal peoples, cultures, knowledges and histories mean that it can be damaging to present an Aboriginal view as ‘truth’ even if to counteract enduring non-Aboriginal deficit accounts. Doing so can unintentionally marginalise Indigenous knowledges further and place these in ongoing conflict with other knowledges as well as create confrontational situations for Aboriginal teachers as demonstrated by Anne’s situation.

Approaches such as shared history and inclusive pedagogies (Cavanagh, 2011; Yunkaporta, 2009) are potentially transformative in that they are more likely to have a long-term impact on the production of privileged knowledges and the issues of power, knowledge and the politics of representation (Segall, 2004, p. 500). Yunkaporta (2009) also suggests that his approach to the Cultural Interface, where synergies can be explored and western and non-western knowledges reconciled, positions it as a “ ... source of innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are relevant for learners of any culture ” (p. 53). Figure 3 (Yunkaporta, 2009, p.20) demonstrates that in moving from shallow to deep knowledge, tokenistic approaches are replaced with authentic and empowering ones and the cultural interface becomes common ground for innovation and reconciliation. Aboriginal Studies provides opportunities to engage with

deep knowledge that critically analyses the multiple perspectives evident in this complex field of study.

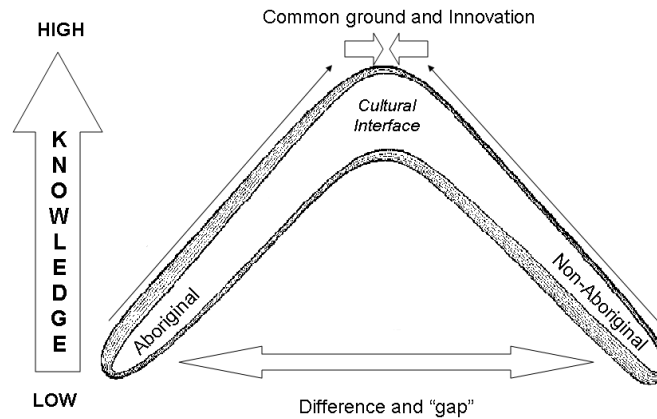


Figure 3. Yunkaporta's Boomerang Matrix of Cultural Interface Knowledge (2009, p. 4)

Of further concern is the impact of centralised curriculum and the application of the open market economy to educational contexts in response to economic imperatives and social climate (John & Baggott La Velle, 2004, p. 309). This tends to commodify knowledge by condensing it into digestible, easily reproduced facts and figures that undermine and marginalise knowledge areas like Aboriginal Studies in a number of ways. Aboriginal Studies is not generally associated with economically rewarding and high status careers, it questions the validity and integrity of Australian society and as such is often represented as subversive and negative; and is uncomfortable and disquieting to many who feel a sense of guilt about the highly publicised statistics of endemic Aboriginal disadvantage and the Stolen Generations. In a general sense, this has resulted in a 'blame the victim' mentality recently highlighted by the Northern Territory intervention (Fieldes, 2010) and more specifically in the 'dumbing down' of the new national History curriculum where the once mandatory topic "Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples, Colonisation and Contact History" (NSW Board of Studies, 2003, 2012) is now offered as an option (Aboriginal Studies Association, 2013). The

perceived threat of a critical history curriculum and its accompanying political backlash illuminates why Aboriginal teachers are passionate about articulating an Aboriginal version of history. Anne in particular expresses an explicit knowledge of this dynamic, ... *I have to consciously work on the 'I and We' factor when relating to history ... I have been specifically asked not to divulge my Aboriginality ... Apparently it could allow students to gain knowledge of issues against the grain.*

Pedagogical relationships

Pedagogy encompasses various definitions including traditional approaches of knowledge transmission via teacher-centred instruction, socially constructed knowledge approaches foregrounding child-centred classrooms, and critical approaches that question, analyse and disrupt knowledge production and its inherent power relations (Cummins, 2006, pp. 37-39). Relevant to this study and the field of Aboriginal Studies, the latter approach is congruent with a post structural view of the education process which emphasises that pedagogy "... organises a view of, and specifies particular versions of what knowledge is of most worth, in what direction we should desire it, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and the world" (Giroux & Simon, 1988, p. 12). Importantly, understanding the process of pedagogy centres the how and why of knowledge production; acknowledges the role of positioning in the pedagogical process; and provides opportunities for transformative education, which is particularly relevant to Aboriginal Studies where content focuses on alternative and, at times, controversial material. As Cummins (2006) notes, "... [P]edagogy oriented toward the development of critical literacy can be termed a *transformative* orientation because its goal is to enable students both to understand how power is exercised within society and to use

their democratic rights to change aspects of their society that they consider unjust or discriminatory” (p. 39).

The interrelatedness of pedagogy and content was conceptualised by Shulman (1987) as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), in which he proposed that knowledge and instruction do not operate in isolation or without agendas. This concept articulated a new way to consider the interrelationship between what and how knowledge is taught. van Manen (1994, p. 142) argues that while Shulman’s approach, particularly his notion of ‘pedagogic reasoning’, holds some value it also has limitations as teachers may lack the affective and moral qualities of teaching which he believes must be understood relationally and critically to challenge pervasive cultural sentiments and account for diverse cultural settings. He draws on Nohl’s (1982) three aspects of the pedagogic relation; the personal and spontaneous nature of the child-teacher relationship; the intentional caring of the child for whom she or he is and may become; and the understanding of the child’s circumstances and moments of development (van Manen, 1994, p. 143). He states that, “ ... [T]he pedagogic relation is not merely a means towards an end, it finds its existence in its own experience, it is a passion with its own pains and pleasures ... for the child, the pedagogic relation is part of life itself...”(p. 143). This notion of privileging the importance of the teacher-student pedagogic relationship also emerges from the narratives and is explained here by Janaya. ... *Kids like to learn without being focused on; just a gentle tap on the shoulder is recognition enough for many of them. Once you build the relationship with any child especially a Koori child, they try to do better.*

It is important to bring focus to the issue of power in the teacher-student relationship which is always present due to the hierarchical nature of the school context (Morgan, 2004, p. 184). Enacting the pedagogical relationship must occur in a

respectful non-threatening environment in ways that invite critical analysis and reinterpretation in order to avoid the potentially harmful aspects of such a relationship. The discursive notion that Aboriginal teachers automatically develop quality pedagogical relationships with Aboriginal students is both reductive and potentially detrimental to the teachers and students alike, particularly when this assumed power is misappropriated as in Anne's case. In an attempt to address power issues, Chang, Anagnostopoulos and Omae (2011, p. 1080) emphasise the mutuality of the pedagogical relationship between teachers and their students, which in a sense, reflects reciprocity within Aboriginal cultures and communities. Melissa for instance, understands this dynamic ... *Respect is a two-way thing and you have to learn things.* Empowering for teachers and students, this approach promotes an understanding and respect for student world-views (Christie, 1985).

Teacher identity

The notion of linking teaching identity and subject specific learning through pedagogical practice opens up spaces for diverse and critical approaches, challenging traditional models of teaching and learning. Morgan (2004) suggests that teacher identity as pedagogy is potentially transformational and explores Simon's (1995) notion of 'image-text' as a performative rendering of teacher identity as well as a pedagogical resource. He states that "... unlike other teaching resources ... its outward appearance and application cannot be formalised in a predetermined way ... [and is] ... co-created, its authorship belonging to both teachers and students" (p. 174). He also utilises Simon's (1995) image-text to move beyond explanations of difference and inequality to examine how these concepts can be repositioned through content and learning, noting that shifting to the notion of identity as pedagogy is a way to integrate the field (Morgan, 2004, p. 178). Identity as pedagogy is conveyed through Janaya's narrative as

she describes her embodied cultural approach ... *When I began teaching here, I would start each day by saying hello to the trees outside and call them aunty and uncle as a sign of respect to the land ...* and highlights the impact on students ... *[A]t first the kids laughed but soon they were all saying hello to the aunties and uncles of the land.*

Through cultural connections, Janaya enacts a pedagogical cultural identity that is grounded in an ecological and place-based space that draws on a life-land connection as a living framework (Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 49).

Carey and Russell (2011) state that their pedagogical approach is "... shaped by Aboriginal cultural knowledge, skills, and ceremony and by the lived experiences of the course participants" (p. 26) and grounded in partnership and accountability with the communities they serve. They identify a narrative pedagogy where learning is an identity project explored through meaning making and active engagement of lived experience (p. 28). By foregrounding participant narratives of survival, resistance and local knowledges, they found that opportunities to respond to the complexities of colonisation arise and so a journey of healing becomes embedded in a journey of learning as "... historically situated systems of oppression" (p. 29) are made visible. This critical pedagogical approach, grounded in Freire's (1970) "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", centres marginalised voices, knowledges and experiences, and questions the hegemony of western pedagogical processes by recognising the process of colonisation in the construction of professional knowledge. Power relations are always in play and Carey and Russell (2011) have attempted to address this through a process they label cultural justice (p. 31), in which cultural practices and cultural safety in a learning environment are privileged and informed by "... principles of cultural accountability in a socio-political context" (p. 39).

This sense of cultural justice is evident in Melissa's narrative as she embodies a nurturing approach by establishing an Aboriginal student room to provide a sense of security for students. She notes that ... *most Aboriginal teachers will be aware of the issues Aboriginal students are dealt with as they have experienced it ...* and because of this they are able to ... *produce the best outcomes as they have a special cultural connection with the students*. Importantly, she acknowledges contextual influences on pedagogical relationships by noting that Aboriginal teachers need develop this relationship, particularly if they are not from or known to the local Aboriginal community.

The narratives in this study underline the significance of passion (Hobbs, 2012) in the participants' teaching, especially in their desire to improve education for Aboriginal students. This foregrounds the affective aspects of pedagogical processes (van Manen, 1994), analysed by Hobbs (2012) as the connection between " ... knowledge of what and how to teach, and the subject-specific nature of teachers identities and passions" (p. 719). She identifies three key areas where passion is expressed: subject matter, student engagement with the subject matter, and teaching in general (p. 725), noting that these areas contribute to intuitive teaching and possibilities for a transformative teaching identity. Anne's comment that her ... *passion for telling history how it has been and working towards equality are a natural instinct ...* clearly highlights the connection between passion, subject matter and identity.

Further opportunities for transformative pedagogy are afforded through a focus on students' backgrounds, experience and prior learning (Carey & Russell, 2011). This idea emerges from the narratives and is articulated by Cummins (2009, p. 264) as academic expertise, whereby the knowledge and capital that students bring to the classroom is embedded in content and pedagogy to create "... an interpersonal space

within which knowledge is generated and identities negotiated ... [leading to] ... cognitive engagement and identity investment” (p. 264). It is what Tanaka et al. (2007, p. 100) refer to as “... weaving real life into the curriculum” in their description of pre-service teachers whose tertiary learning experiences were guided by Indigenous pedagogical approaches. These experiences included taking responsibility for personal learning, patience and reflection, valuing uncertainty and discomfort, and contributing to a communal sense of purpose, and thus offered new ways of thinking about teaching as learning. For John, interweaving the curriculum with his personal experience was a valuable pedagogical tool as he was able to ... *talk to some of the subject matter because of your social and work experiences not just theory and stuff*. He found this to be significant for his students as well as his emerging pedagogical cultural identity.

Cummins (2009, p. 263) also suggests that for marginalised students, engagement with critical literacies can address coercive power relations implemented by the dominant individual or group to create a sense of collective power that strengthens rather than dismisses minority self expression. Significantly, this creates a pedagogic standpoint that constructs the student image as intelligent, creative and talented; what students bring from their cultural background is valued as real learning and individual difference is not associated with less potential (Hewitt, 2000, p. 112). Melissa’s observation that ... *[some teachers believe that] ... Aboriginality shouldn’t even be really pointed out ... just come to school like everyone else ...* highlights the potentially dangerous implications of coercive power relations that undermine student cultural identity. The implications are significant as Melissa notes ... *but if that happens then we’re losing our identity as Aboriginal people*.

Current market economy proclivities and the neo-liberal privileging of accountability and standardisation (Morgan, 2004) which rewards individual

competitiveness and achievement undermine conceptual understandings of teacher identity, teacher quality and pedagogical relationships. As "... discourses constitute rather than determine a teacher's identity..." (p. 173) these conceptual understandings defy quantification and normalisation. Even so, there exists limited space for identifying and negotiating teacher subjectivities as they emerge in relationally and contextually embedded classrooms and schools. Within this context, pedagogical approaches tend to be limited to subject area or discipline knowledge, effectively ignoring the role of lived experiences, cultural identities and socio-cultural contexts in shaping the types of learning that are responsive to student needs and thus, potentially transformative.

Context

In western education systems, school cultures primarily reflect Eurocentric values, beliefs and practices and so the 'Othering' of different knowledges, cultures and peoples emerges through the hidden curriculum (Apple & King, 1983; Dewey, 1938; Giroux & Penna, 1983; Seddon, 2001) and is reinforced by disciplinary power and coercive power structures (Foucault, 1976). Morgan (2004, p. 176) suggests that there are no neutral spaces in education and that schooling can either challenge or reinforce dominant power structures and when enacted as technologies of learning, these power structures can lead to student underachievement and/or social marginalisation. Social justice approaches attempt to address the dichotomy between the educational rhetoric of pluralistic education, and an essentially assimilationist curriculum that Hewitt (2000, p. 112) refers to as "education for domestication". Further, Kostogriz and Peeler (2004, pp. 2-3) note the limited subject positions available to the minority teacher within the pedagogical spaces of the Australian education system as well as the construction of marginality that requires a continual negotiation of the power-knowledge relation.

Recognition of this dynamic is crucial to reconstructing these pedagogical spaces so as to create in these an equitable workplace. The centrality of power relations to all contexts and social practices calls for a re-examination of normative assumptions through a pedagogy of resistance to construct alternative identities (Cummins, 2009, p. 261).

Hart et al. (2011, pp. 717-719) examined how pre-service Aboriginal teachers embedded Aboriginal perspectives in their content and found that while their teachers had an awareness of power relationships during their Professional Experience, they were not adequately prepared to negotiate these. While they attempted to negotiate pedagogical relationships with their supervising teachers, they were often undermined by ambiguities and contradictions as they struggled to find validation of their Indigeneity within their pedagogical identity. Many were troubled by questions of racial and cultural authenticity and struggled to develop equitable and just pedagogical relationships (Hart et al., 2011, p. 719) with their supervising teacher. This experience is reflected in comments made by John's cooperating teacher: ... *You are using too much of your personal life to teach. I don't want you to give them too much information about your personal life*'. This interaction demonstrates how John's pedagogical cultural identity is undermined and inferiorised by a pedagogy of whiteness (Santoro et al., 2004) placing John in a difficult position that pre-empts failure. This also positions him on racial terms, undermines his agency and limits his opportunity to mobilise otherwise valuable capital.

This demonstrates how the specific socio-cultural context in which teachers' work is significant to providing opportunities to enact (or not) a pedagogical cultural identity that is agentic and critical to a fulfilling professional identity. This is discernable in Melissa's and Janaya's narratives; they both reported positive and

supportive school environments that enabled them to enact a pedagogical cultural identity in ways that they felt were beneficial to their students. Their deep cultural knowledge and experience embedded in a supportive family and community environment contributed to their resilience in the face of negative experiences such as racism, as well as providing an understanding of the limitations of claiming cultural expertise through their Aboriginality and the relationships of power that this evokes.

Further, it is important to note that context does not only refer to schools or western institutions but wherever learning occurs, and it is in these sites that a sense of a pedagogical cultural identity becomes more visible. For example, studies by Carey and Russell (2011) and Tanaka et al. (2007) in which learning occurred in an Indigenous educational setting, found that pedagogical practices were built around students' cultural identities as well as the cultural identity of the site. Many researchers and educators involved in Indigenous education have emphasised the importance of situating cultural education away from institutional sites and into communities and 'on country', and have consistently noted deeper, relationship-driven learning as being significant and transformative (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012).

Conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity

In this study, a pedagogical cultural identity (PCI) is conceptualised as one that is in ongoing conversation with one's habitus, pedagogical relationships, professional identity and field of expertise. Manifestations of PCI are impacted by the particularities of the site within which one operates and the relationships of power that influence the discourses available to express and enact identity. Agency occurs when the teacher-learner is able to augment their habitus and capital in such a way that person, subject, knowledge, relationships and learners unify to engage passionately in the project of

critical thinking, transformative learning and socially just action. Figure 4 connects the key aspects of PCI and the influences inherent in enacting these aspects.

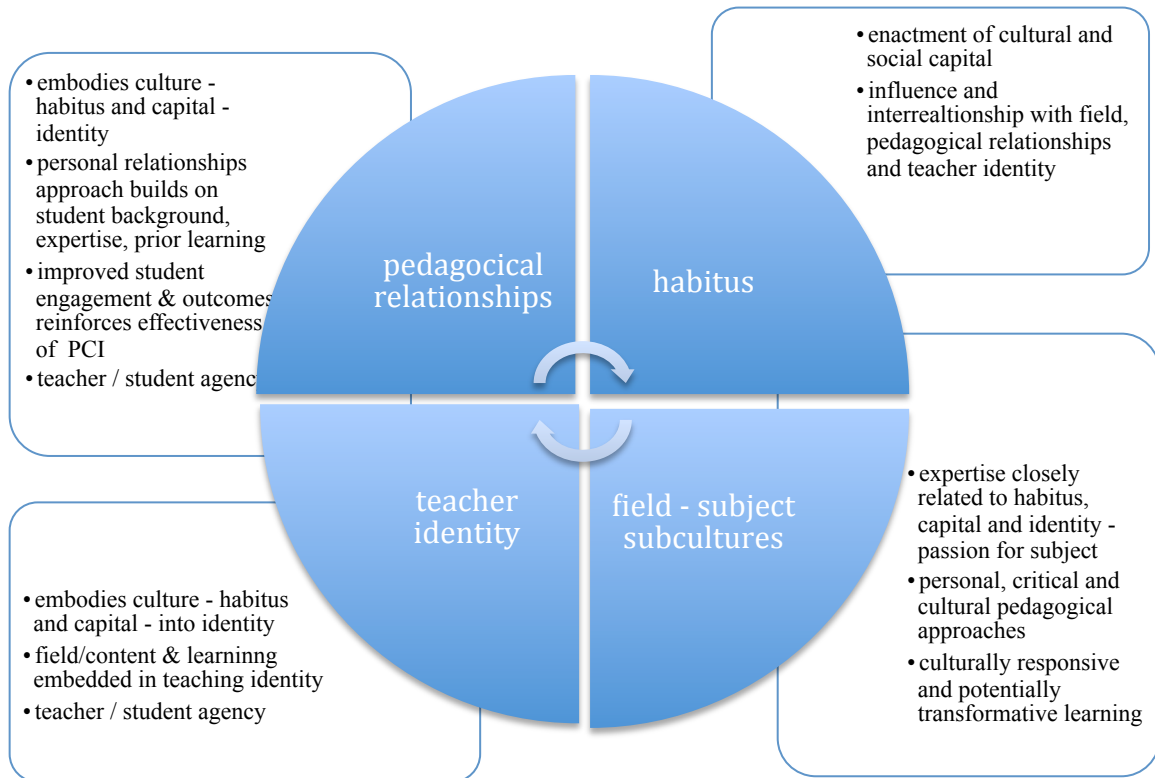


Figure 4. Conceptualising a Pedagogical Cultural Identity

Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers are passionate about the field of Aboriginal Studies and consistently note the transformative nature of the experience for themselves, their students and in some cases, local Aboriginal families and community members. PCI is available to all teachers but emerges in diverse forms for various reasons and is reliant on individual dispositions, biographies, lived experience and teaching subjectivities. In essence, any teacher who becomes a collaborative learner on a journey with their students can cultivate and enact a PCI.

Conclusion

A PCI that incorporates the elements described in this chapter adds a further dimension to the notion of a professional identity as one that incorporates the interconnection between cultural identity, in this case the significant influence of Aboriginality, personal identity and situated identity. Opportunities to develop and enact a PCI as an embodied and reflective approach are critical for opportunities to transform pedagogical practices and education. Hart (personal communication, October 27, 2013) notes that through Freire's (1970) praxis, where action and reflection create opportunities for transformation, power over who controls knowledge can be shifted. Praxis in this sense embodies qualities such as humanness, respect for others and informed, committed action that foregrounds the dual purpose of individual and society and the common good of education (Grootenboer, 2013, p. 323). The significance of a transformative PCI for the teaching profession (Hart et al., 2011, p. 720) opens possibilities for a collective and inclusive shift in power relations away from the state and into the hands of its key players: teachers and students.

Implications of these themes and each narrative for professional learning both in teacher education and school contexts are teased out in the following chapter. These present challenges that require considerable rethinking about current priorities, structures, policies and procedures at all levels of education, not the least of which involves the importance of centring local Aboriginal community engagement in these endeavours.

CHAPTER 12 IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The implications of this study both support and challenge findings from similar studies on all pre-service and early career teachers including Indigenous teachers and teachers from minority and/or marginalised backgrounds. Issues such as the importance of relationships and relationship building, the emotional journey of teaching, professional identity development, the complexity of power relations in localised contexts, and the retention of teachers in the system all emerge from the narratives. Each of the participants articulate a desire to become a teacher to support the educational experiences of Aboriginal students as they most often (but not) always have a strong personal understanding and experience of the ongoing socio-cultural, historical and political barriers to Aboriginal student success. Consequently, a considerable portion of each of the participants' narratives is dedicated to addressing these issues for themselves, their students and their local community.

One of the key implications emerging from this study is that the 'make or break' facets of this dynamic, complex and unpredictable profession go to the heart and soul of teaching and the teaching self. These facets, namely relationships, emotion and identity are largely ignored, misunderstood, or maligned as a 'weakness' or 'unprofessional', or perceived as 'typical' of being Aboriginal. Ongoing reflexivity and a deep understanding of these aspects of teaching subjectivity support the development of cross-cultural understanding, communication and engagement in and out of the classroom. The significance of relationships, emotion and identity is not adequately reflected in current teacher accreditation processes which means that their importance

in professional learning opportunities and teacher competency is not given due accord.[this further addressed in specific section before conclusion]

Relevant here is the pervasiveness of stress and burnout amongst early career teachers in the West that has led to significantly high levels of attrition and a resultant teacher shortage (Pearce & Morrison, 2011, p. 48). Similar research by Hong (2010, p. 1541) points to emotional burn-out as the chief factor influencing teacher attrition. Diminished levels of self-belief, confidence and self-efficacy were also cited as significant factors, as were a lack of support from school administration staff and the absence of positive, collegial teaching communities. Retention rates for Indigenous teachers are generally very poor and Reid et al. (2004, p. 308) suggest that this arises in school contexts. Strategies to attract Indigenous students to teaching programs in Australia have been markedly unsuccessful, while their New Zealand and Canadian counterparts have been far more productive in this area (Santoro et al., 2004, p. 2). The retention of Indigenous teachers in Australia is intricately more complex and nuanced than merely ‘solving’ the issues with greater resourcing or policy support (Reid et al., 2004, p. 307) and Santoro et al. (2004, p. 5) argue that there are “subtle racist discourses” at work in Australian schools that function to marginalise Indigenous teachers by, amongst other things, bringing their professional credibility into question.

Critical Understandings

Relationships and “Emotional Rules”

Relationships and relationship building emerged from the narratives as sites of support and affirmation as well as dissonance and tension. Relationships include those with students, colleagues, supervisors, family and community as well as those with

place-land, culture and subject area. Relationship building is crucial for all teachers in the development of resilience, agency and by turn, a ‘healthy’ professional identity (Wenger, 2000, p. 240). Johnson et al. (2012) note that “... [T]eaching is first and foremost about relationships” (p. 59) and when prioritised in their structures, policies and procedures, schools were more likely to foster a sense of belonging and well-being in staff. This includes recognising the importance of the student-teacher relationship, as Pearce and Morrison (2011) note, “[F]or teachers at the beginning of their career, interactions with colleagues (teaching and non-teaching), students and students’ families are all crucial to construction of self” (p. 56). The teacher-student relationship is extremely important to the Aboriginal teachers in this study as they are emotionally tied to the idea of making a difference in education for Aboriginal people and their communities. This emotive notion has influence beyond their teaching, and goes to the very heart of who they are and why they have chosen teaching, as Melissa reminds us ... *it’s not just about a career, but the survival of our people and culture*. Passion, motivation and caring clearly play a significant role in these teachers’ subjectivities and professional identities and while often empowering, can also result in feelings of alienation, vulnerability and frustration when these emotions are undermined or dismissed as in John and Anne’s experiences.

Through a Foucauldian framework, Zembylas (2005) identifies emotions as discursive practices (p. 935) rather than universal or impulsive reactions, which emerge in socially and culturally influenced domains. In these domains, some emotions are permitted while others are prohibited which produces ‘hidden’ emotional rules that are not articulated but expected in a setting that privileges authority, objectivity and neutrality. A loss of emotional control can bring about a sense of loss of status which can evoke feelings of shame, frustration and vulnerability. This conception of

“emotional rules” (p. 935) invokes power relations whereby “... ones relation to oneself is marked by self-policing of emotional conduct” (p. 946) which means that the social and cultural conditioning throughout one’s biography influences responses to emotionally-charged environments such as teaching. Zembylas (2005) further notes that through an exploration of power relations, responses to these “emotional rules” create the conditions for agency and resistance. This is evident for instance in how Melissa and Janaya respond to their teaching contexts in different (agentic) ways to both John and Anne.

Johnson et al. (2012, p. 23) note that the complexity of teachers’ work, particularly in the current climate of national teaching standards, curriculum renewal and teacher accountability, often leaves early career teachers feeling overwhelmed which can manifest in anxiety, tension and frustration. They acknowledge that beyond the education domain, there is little recognition of the deeply emotional and relational dimensions of teaching. Feelings of personal responsibility need to be avoided as they can impact significantly on teachers’ resilience and in turn, their long-term commitment to teaching. Janaya explicitly articulates the stress of these responsibilities on early career teachers when she says ... *the amount of administration work is astounding, and it took me a long time to accept it without negativity* ... and notes that her partner and the close, positive relationships with her faculty staff help her manage the emotional demands of teaching.

Teacher identity

Articulating identity in the personal, professional and situated domains provides a framework in which to locate and describe Anne, Janaya, John and Melissa’s personal interpretations in ways that reflect their teaching subjectivities. Understanding the interplay between these identity domains, and the influence of Aboriginality led to the

emerging concept of a pedagogical cultural identity as a significant element of a professional identity. How these elements converge at the cultural interface where multiple identities clash and fuse as teachers navigate their way through complex and contradictory experiences of teaching, indicates the significance of subjectivity, discourse and power relations to the struggle of articulating a personally affirming identity.

The complex power relations inherent in enacting a pedagogical cultural identity are to a large extent contingent upon it being potentially perceived as the only identity available to a particular cultural group or individual. The “culture” in pedagogical cultural identity is not necessarily ethnicity-based but rather presents an opportunity to think about how one’s culture, background and lived experience can be embodied within a pedagogical style that enhances the relationship between teacher and student in ways that engage and empower.

Significantly, this concept has the potential to reinvigorate debate about teachers as cultural beings and to critically analyse what this means in terms of the teacher’s role as knowledge and cultural authority in the classroom. Building on work around the hidden curriculum and the significance of school culture in influencing the educational journey of both teachers and students (Seddon, 2001), it enables more reflective and socially just approaches to curriculum development and pedagogical practice that begins with an authentic understanding of self. It provides opportunities to push back against the economic rationalism of standardisation and the conception of teachers as technicians to allow the humanness, emotion and the culture of teaching to find a central legitimate place for teachers to claim back and resume responsibility for the educational process.

Power Relations

At times, the pre-service Aboriginal teachers in this study were in positions of power and influence, which meant that the expression of their identity often disrupted familiar discourses of the ‘disempowered’ and ‘alienated’ minority teacher subject position. Both self-positioning and positioning by others influenced how the participants experienced power relations; their ability to move between these positionings opened up opportunities to operate in ways that they felt best advantaged themselves and their students.

It is significant to note that Anne and Melissa both articulated the changing relationships of power in very specific ways when discussing the transition from AEO to teacher. While it would seem that a teaching position would provide the best platform for supporting Aboriginal students, both participants believed that the rigid structures of classrooms and schools as well as the expectation to adopt a “professional” approach did in fact constrain opportunities to build the type of deep and authentic relationships that they believe are needed to make a difference. As Melissa explains; ... *I’m more successful teaching with kids being an AEO as I have more power ... If you’ve got a group of 28 kids ... you can’t sit down and spend quality time with them.*

Applying a post structural lens to a range of experiences that support or contradict dominant discourses of and by Aboriginal teachers provides discursive spaces in which to question the use of binaries to account for differences. Foucault’s notion of power relations and Nakata’s (2002) cultural interface framework both emphasise the relational and contextual factors at specific sites where the operationalisation of power influences the positioning of Aboriginal teachers.

Keddie (2012, pp. 329-330) suggests that a critical awareness of positionality particularly in the light of disadvantage and oppression can produce a collective

emancipatory practice that privileges Indigenous voices. She maintains that identifying the pedagogical tools needed to move beyond difficult knowledges, such as the factors and experiences that contribute to disadvantage and oppression will create a sense of individual and collective political agency and lead to more culturally inclusive school environments. The creation of such environments is crucial to effecting transformative pedagogical practice.

Professional Learning

Close links between teacher education and professional learning in school contexts is crucial to the ongoing development of professional identities and resilience in the teaching world. Professional learning needs to be an ongoing, reflexive activity from teacher education through to the classroom. The creation of close connections between these key institutions provides opportunities to explore the interconnection between theory and practice and to enhance professional networks and support structures. Strengths and areas of improvement identified in Professional Experiences can be tracked through to early career development in supportive, coherent and proactive ways to address the sometimes difficult issues of relationships, emotions, identity and power relations. This helps build individual and collective cultural and social capital in the teaching profession, providing a solid template upon which to build capital in areas like Aboriginal education.

Valuing Aboriginal community engagement, knowledges and cultures.

Links between institutions must be presupposed by authentic community engagement including the involvement of local Aboriginal communities in the design and delivery of professional learning at all levels. This claim is supported by recent

research (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012) on a three day cultural immersion program run by the NSW AECG, “Being Culturally Aware Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence” (Williams, 2010). Burgess and Cavanagh (2012) note that:

... immediate positive impact on teacher attitudes to Aboriginal people; their motivation to adopt appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management; and on their confidence in community engagement ... 92% indicated that the workshop would change the way they taught about Aboriginal history and culture; [and] 84% ... would change their approach to teaching Aboriginal students (pp. 4, 7).

The significance of programs such as these is that they relocate power and responsibility for professional learning to the local knowledge holders and since they know local area, history, culture and issues their advice can ease tensions between schools, students and communities. Consequently, this has a positive impact on whole school communities as it supports non-Aboriginal teachers as well as Aboriginal teachers. Anne attributes her sense of belonging at school to a supportive environment:

He (the new Principal) tries to make his new school welcoming to the Aboriginal community and acknowledges country ... This is frowned up by many staff members who say they are 'so over it', but this token of respect and education has made me feel a little bit more comfortable at the school.

Understanding and valuing Indigenous knowledges, cultures and standpoints in deep and meaningful ways that inform curriculum content and pedagogical practices (Phillips, 2011, Yunkaporta, 2009) is also crucial for the project of emerging and reconciling synergies at the cultural interface (Yunkaporta, 2009). Significantly, it is important to note that not all Aboriginal people or teachers are experts or in a position to speak for the local Aboriginal community and so institutions need to seek information and advice from a variety of sources.

Teacher education

Britzman (1991) suggests that the cultural myths surrounding ‘good teachers’ pre-suppose a certain level of power, authority and knowledge that function to mask vulnerabilities when they are forced to acknowledge that the teacher they thought they were or would like to be, may not be the teacher that they actually are. She (2007, p. 2, 11) notes that teacher education courses need to make space to explore these vulnerabilities so as to come to terms with the conflicts inherent in and produced by the field of teaching. This includes interrogating issues of identity by opening up spaces for questioning and reflection.

In secondary teacher education, the focus is on the discipline area and the related content that is taught in the classroom, which tends to limit opportunities to address areas such as relationship building, the emotional demands of teaching, developing a professional identity and understanding and navigating complex power relations in schools. Opportunities to incorporate and reflect on lived experiences, biographies and identities in ways that support open, respectful and just relationship growth (Hart et al., 2011, p. 719) need to be built into the discipline area to ensure that these predispositions and processes become integral to pedagogical practices.

In terms of the early career Aboriginal teachers in this study, the skill with which they embrace a relationships-based and embodied cultural approach could inform teacher education theory and practice in ways that also foreground cross-cultural communication as a central point of reference. This is supported by McTaggart (1991) who notes that explicitly examining of relationships from a “both-ways” (p. 304) perspective develops critically informed educational practice that benefits both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers.

Discussion, analysis and reflection about relationships (and what this might mean and entail) as well as practical engagement with relationship building is imperative from the outset for pre-service teachers. This includes interrogating power relationships at the cultural interface from an Aboriginal perspective and reflexively examining ways to engage and action issues that arise from this unpredictable, power-laden space.

Explicitly articulating and acknowledging the emotional demands of teaching, and exploring both sanctioned and unsanctioned workplace emotions should also be incorporated into teacher education. Discussing, analysing and reflecting on the operation of emotions as a construct that is closely aligned to relationships and teacher identity could create a positive and affirming framework applicable to teaching contexts. This needs to begin prior to the first Professional Experience and continue throughout the course to equip pre-service teachers with the tools to address the emotionally charged world of teaching and potentially improve pre-service transition into teaching. Recognition of the time and space required to debrief in a safe environment that acknowledges the range and diversity of teacher values, beliefs and cultural attributes free from assumption and stereotyping is crucial, particularly in the development of a pedagogical cultural identity.

Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996, p.67) suggest that narrating discontinuities in the context of teacher education will give student teachers the opportunity to understand the interrelationships of past and present and forge the beginnings of an inquiry into questions of identity and ‘becoming’. With this in mind, they developed reader response style activities to help their students reconcile their incongruent pre-teacher, fictive and lived selves, as well as the complexities of incorporating teaching practice into their lives. Similarly, Keddie (2012, p. 317) introduced a writing group for

disadvantaged Indigenous women as a healing experience to provide opportunities for understanding and problematising their position as oppressed women. The sense of collective political agency experienced by the women helped reconcile feelings of disempowerment and hopelessness.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, pp. 182-183) maintain that encouraging an awareness of their continuous, evolving identity in beginning teachers is best achieved through teacher education curriculum and Santoro (2009, p. 42) maintains that explicitly teaching reflexive skills will better prepare pre-service teachers for the demands of school and classroom contexts, thus enabling them to understand the integral role of personal beliefs and values in shaping the individual's teaching practices and sense of 'self' as teacher. Santoro (2009) further notes how teaching identities are constituted through ethnicity, and how this is played out in the classroom (p. 42). Examining the construct of Whiteness is also considered crucial by researchers who advocate that a social justice perspective that acknowledges Whiteness as a source of dominance and pedagogy and in turn challenges racial hierarchies in the school and classroom (Reid et al., 2004; Reid & Santoro, 2006).

Reid et al. (2004, p. 304) argue that it is critical for teacher educators to directly address issues surrounding Indigenous teachers and education as current teacher practices provide very little in the way of preparation and ongoing support for Indigenous teachers entering the profession. Cross cultural research reveals similar themes and a study of First Nations teachers in Canada found that participants' experiences with mainstream teacher education programs were largely negative due to what they perceived to be the deficit positioning of Indigenous perspectives and discourses (Stewart, 2005, p. 59). Participants felt that in a general sense, the

curriculum was markedly ‘othering’ in both content and process, and this alienated them by situating them outside of the core business of teaching.

Engaging with Aboriginal communities in the design and delivery of teacher education courses provides opportunities for intercultural understandings that benefit Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal pre-service teachers and the modelling of positive working relationships in cross-cultural settings. Embedding Aboriginal knowledges and perspectives in deep, meaningful and critical ways throughout the teacher education curriculum also contributes significantly to the cultural and social capital that all pre-service teachers take into their school contexts. With an increasingly culturally competent staff, Aboriginal teachers will feel valued and supported and, as research has shown (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012) improvements to all facets of education are possible.

As identity is a significant concept for teachers and for Aboriginal people this means that it constitutes important consideration for teacher professional learning. It is identified by Johnson et al. (2012, p. 77) as a significant factor in teacher resilience and they note that understanding the discursive nature of personal and professional identities, the ability to critically and positively employ reflexivity and develop a strong sense of agency, efficacy and self worth are all key to the development of resilience. They further note the strong link between emotion and identity (Hargreaves, 2001; O’Connor, 2008; Zembylas, 2003, 2005) and recognise that it is difficult to express emotion in the workplace as it is generally constrained and often used to enact power. Thus providing opportunities to develop an awareness of the understandings and skills required to promote resilience constitutes a crucial inclusion for teacher education courses.

School Contexts

Navigating power relations in the school context is difficult and teachers often feel that this detracts from the core business of teaching. However, Johnson et al. (2012) suggests that understanding “... the diverse values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, behaviours and relationships that characterise the daily rituals of school life” (p. 40) is essential to teacher well-being and resilience. They maintain that a school culture that is characterised by disempowering or detrimental practices and/or relationships will impact negatively on an individual’s teaching practice. Understanding the interplay of factors that influence school operations supports teachers in developing educative, democratic and empowering resources with which to navigate this.

Johnson et al. (2012) suggest that some key approaches to managing the emotional demands of teaching for early career teachers are acknowledging the complexity, intensity and unpredictability of the teaching environment; avoiding a ‘blame the victim’ approach as teachers may ‘take things personally’; and negotiating the diverse and complex range of relationships encountered in the school community environment (p. 24). Early career teachers need support and opportunities to develop their curriculum content and pedagogical skills in a culturally supportive environment where their ideas, beliefs and values (which are drawn from their cultural background and lived experience) are respected. Providing models for teachers to create supportive and engaging learning environments leads to a greater focus on learning rather than behaviour management, an area that often overshadows other aspects of teaching (p. 23). Engaging with interplay between theory and practice can support early career teachers by focussing less on the personal, negative feelings and more on practical and intellectual solutions. Being able to access needs-based professional learning which is

perceived as highly relevant and built into the daily bustle of teaching supports teachers developing their “ ... pedagogical beliefs, values and practices” (p. 36).

Understanding the narrative construction of teacher identity through a post structural lens supports an understanding of subject positions (Soreide, 2006) for Aboriginal teachers, in particular how they are positioned by others and how they position themselves. Here, identity is a complex, multilayered concept that nearly always emphasises their ethnicity and cultural background in ways that can both empower and disempower. In Reid and Santoro’s (2006) study of Indigenous teachers, the over-determination of Aboriginality gives rise to complex power relations that account for many of the additional pressures experienced by Aboriginal teachers. It is a paradox that Aboriginal teachers are considered best placed to solve Aboriginal ‘problems’ in the school and yet are often not given credit for both the specific skills that this entails, but rather inferiorised by those who believe their qualifications are not ‘real’. This shows that much work still needs to be done in terms of educating the general teaching population about these issues as well as adequately recognising and rewarding the additional skills and work required to perform this emotional labour. Significantly, schools that positively engage with their local Aboriginal community and embed local Aboriginal knowledges, cultures and histories into their curriculum, find that many of these issues can be worked through equitably with all staff and that this then builds social capital in the school community (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012).

Many Aboriginal teachers, as evidenced in the narratives in this study, possess a range of skills honed by their passion for Aboriginal education that also transfer value to many other areas of education if duly acknowledged and utilised. This includes the value of embodying lived experience, personal biographies and cultural knowledge in

both personal and professional identities that shape and are shaped by their specific teaching context and enacted as a pedagogical cultural identity.

The importance of effective school leadership is critical to providing early career teachers with opportunities to explore and develop fair working relationships that acknowledge the unique perspectives and skills that new and experienced teachers contribute to the school environment (Johnson et al., 2012). Early career teachers are best supported through formal and informal induction processes that include access to mentors, support networks and communities of learning to develop and explore innovative practices and democratic, dialogic decision-making (Johnson et al., 2012, pp. 42-43). For Aboriginal teachers, this may also entail cultural or community mentorship. Specific discussions around relationship building that incorporates the development of cross-cultural understandings and skills encourage culturally inclusive and engaging classrooms.

For Aboriginal teachers it is important to have leadership that recognises but does not impose opportunities for cultural mentorship and allows space to operate according to particular cultural ways if appropriate. Innovative leadership would recognise (though not assume) what Aboriginal teachers may bring to the school context and provide leadership opportunities for these teachers within their area of expertise to model and support other staff in the acquisition of the identified knowledge, understandings and/or skills.

Where this support does not exist, disempowerment and a loss of agency invariably occurs, impeding the teacher's experiential learning. John's narrative offers a particularly good example: even though the lack of support came from only one person, his experience with authoritative structures eclipsed other support that was offered to

him. His narrative highlights that schools are sites of power and hierarchical institutions with limited avenues available to early career (and other) teachers.

Teacher accreditation and competency discourses.

Limitations of current accreditation processes and the teacher competency discourses that accompany these emerged as the early career teachers identified and demonstrated ways of knowing, doing and being that are not accounted for or clear in this process.

Many cooperating teachers interviewed for this study reported that the Aboriginal teacher they supervised developed significant pedagogical practices based on tacit cultural knowledge, intuitive social interactions and extensive lived experiences resulting in deep and authentic relationships with students that underpinned their success in the classroom. They lamented that the content and structure of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers Professional Teaching Standards (now the National Professional Standards for Teaching) upon which the Professional Experience (and teacher competence) reporting system is based, provides limited space for the value and significance of these skills to be fully acknowledged. This points to serious shortcomings in the current accreditation system; and failing to meaningfully identify such critical skills reduces teaching to a technical, managerial role that undermines the heart, soul and goodwill that drives the teaching profession (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002).

O'Connor (2008, p. 119, 124) suggests that the current economic rationalist approach to education invariably positions teachers as "service providers" within an ethos defined by neo-liberal agendas guided by teacher standards that champion "technical competencies" as indicators of good teaching. The inherent risk of this is that pre-service and early career teachers may take these lists as "...externally fixed, 'given'

skills, understandings and areas of knowledge to be acquired and developed – founded on presuppositions about how learning takes place, or what makes a ‘good’ teacher – that themselves must be adopted without question” (Moore, 2004, p. 90). Moore (2004) argues that certain skills or qualities within lists of competences or standards are deemed essential whilst others are marginalised, and that it is critical to disrupt such dominant discourses, and perhaps even consider alternative approaches.

O’Connor (2008) maintains that by their very nature, teacher competencies are highly reductionist, serving to “...prescribe, define and regulate aspects of a professional role in a rationalist manner” (p. 119) rather than acknowledging, affirming or attempting to reconcile the complexity of teachers’ contextual, socio-cultural and negotiated identities. She observes that in particular, the *Framework of Professional Teaching Standards* (NSW Institute of Teachers, n.d) upon which the current NSW version of the national standards are based, is noteworthy for its inherent failure to recognise the considerable contribution of affect and emotional intelligence to good teaching noting that “... [d]iscussions of emotionality in teachers’ work form a counter-discourse to the technical rationalist emphasis on teacher standards” (2008, p. 125).

In terms of the current standards in NSW, only two of the thirty seven standards refer to Aboriginal education which inherently narrows the frame and expectation of what Aboriginal education should look like and by implication this becomes irrelevant to the other standards. Standard one for instance, “Know students and how they learn” (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2011, p. 8) does not identify crucial skills such as critical thinking and critical literacy essential for understanding and engaging with complex areas such as Aboriginal histories, cultures, people and issues. There is no mention of teaching for social justice, dealing with racism in schools or supporting students in

seeking and affirming their unique identities. These issues are crucial for the Aboriginal teachers in this study who at various times articulated all of these as significant reasons for entering teaching as well as crucial areas they intend to focus on when teaching.

These standards are essentially predicated on individual performance and how this performance can be quantifiably measured, focussing on standardising practice rather than on the provision of inclusive, socially just quality education (McLeod, 2001, p. 2). This effectively devalues the socio cultural and relational nature of teaching where teachers feel they must fundamentally align themselves with the dominant discourses of managerialist professionalism – effectively relinquishing a culture of collaboration and active cooperation in favour of one characterised by competition and unrelenting individualism (Moore, 2004; Sachs, 2001).

In order to counteract the limitations and potentially damaging effect of current standards-based competencies, educators at all levels need to be involved in robust discussions about quality teaching and professional learning that supports the development of agentic professional identities based on collective engagement with concepts such as relationships, emotionality, identity and power relations. Contextual professional learning that engages the expertise of local cultural knowledge holders within and external to the school and collaboration in designing appropriate curriculum and pedagogies for all students is essential for positive staff morale. The challenge is to balance this with external accreditation requirements in ways that do not dilute socially just, locally driven initiatives that develop critical thinking and proactive citizenship in students and staff alike.

Conclusion

The implications of this study are largely twofold: the specific issues encountered by pre-service and early career Aboriginal teachers who are at the forefront of the ongoing impact of colonisation in education (whether they want to be or not) as well as issues for all pre-service and early career teachers. Certainly, these narratives highlight similarities and differences in each teacher's approach to teaching and in their professional identity and so the importance of being considered on one's own terms is paramount. The 'Aboriginal teacher' label is variously welcomed and rejected and generally one that is imposed and so, unlike other teachers Aboriginal teachers are often over-determined by their ethnicity, cultural background and socio-political history.

Generic teacher accreditation frameworks that define teacher work, knowledge and practice in technical terms do not account for teaching as a social act contextualised by socio-cultural, historical and biographical factors and unique individual teaching experiences (McLeod, 2001). Individual teacher knowledge and practice that emanates from lived experience and mediated by the factors that arose from this study including identity, socio-cultural expectations and the complex nature of power relationships, challenges the effectiveness and accuracy of accreditation and competency frameworks.

CHAPTER 13 CONCLUSION

This study explored the experiences of four pre-service and early career Aboriginal teachers as they each told their stories of learning to teach. Despite dominant discourses of and by Aboriginal teachers, each participant articulated a unique and compelling story that illuminated the diversity of Aboriginal identity and how it is embodied and enacted in each teaching self. Through the narrative construction of each teacher's experience, three central themes emerged that acknowledged each teacher's individuality even though their collective identity was a significant factor in their desire to teach. These themes: discourses of Aboriginality, narratives of belonging and conceptualising a pedagogical cultural identity provided the structure for a critical discussion of the issues and concerns pivotal to Aboriginal teachers, Aboriginal students and the future of education.

Disrupting dominant discourses of Aboriginal teachers and problematising the label of 'the Aboriginal teacher' was a key endeavour in this research as participants articulated a strong desire to be heard on their own terms and be agentic in the professional identity they wished to project. How they adopted, resisted and/or adapted these discourses in their daily practice reflected their disposition, beliefs and responses to the socio-cultural context in which they found themselves. A sense of belonging and agency within this context was crucial to their sense of self and resilience in the challenging world of teaching.

Limitations of the research

A limitation of this study is that the participants were drawn from a small pool of students studying in the same mode of course delivery at the same university. While

the potential lack of diversity in participant experience may raise initial concerns, they are mediated by the considerable variation across the group in terms of location from all over New South Wales, age, cultural and educational background and, through their mature-age status, diverse experiences beyond the field of education. The use of focus groups functioned to highlight this diversity through robust and passionate exchanges about the teachers' experiences and roles in teaching and education. Significantly, these discussions were not just about Aboriginal students but about education in general and how positioning Aboriginal education as central to these debates illuminates some of the key issues that need addressing for the benefit of all students.

A second limitation is that as a qualitative method, narrative is based on a subjective reinterpretation of the data. Using participant stories which cannot be generalised invites criticism from positivist researchers who are concerned about validity. Certainly, narrative inquiry is highly personal and specific, but by privileging participant voices authenticity is enhanced, participants are empowered and more nuanced accounts are enabled. Further, given the history of insensitive, inaccurate and intrusive research about Aboriginal people (Fredericks, 2008, p. 25), narrative offers greater scope for hearing marginal voices and collaborating on findings to produce a more culturally appropriate result.

Future Directions

Studies in this area are sparse and given the current focus on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children, the potential for further research and engagement with Aboriginal teachers as a source of support and guidance is immense. These teachers dedicated most of their narratives to educational issues rather than themselves and this in itself is an indicator of the passion and care they bring to

education which Palmer articulates as “... a capacity for connectedness ... so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves” (pp. 10-11).

The notion of a pedagogical cultural identity is one that should be explored further through research that acknowledges the practices, perspectives and knowledge of Aboriginal teachers as a touchstone for all teachers developing relationship-based and culturally embedded approaches to teaching.

The continual reference to the complexity and unpredictability of teaching again reminds us that, like shifting sands, teaching is an unstable and at times uncertain endeavour in the fluid, fluctuating climate of educational reform and renewal.

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APPENDIX

Letter of Support – NSW AECG

Participant Information Sheet

Participant Consent Form

Initial Interview Schedule –Pre-Service & Early Career Aboriginal Teachers

Revised Interview Schedule – Pre-Service & Early Career Aboriginal Teachers

Focus Group Prompts

Application of Table 1 to the Narratives: Understanding The Matrix Of Belonging
& Identity.

Course outline and brief overview of the away-from-base program.

Letter of Support – NSW AECG



To Whom It May Concern,

As President of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (NSW AECG), I support the research to be conducted by Ms Catherine Burgess titled "Shifting Sands. Aboriginal Preservice teacher identity formation in becoming the 'Good' Teacher."

Cathie Burgess is a long time associate member of the AECG and has, over many years, contributed to improvements in Aboriginal education at school and systemic levels. She has supported the AECG through advice on a range of issues, reports and government inquiries including the Draft National Curriculum and the Draft National Professional Teaching Standards. Further, Cathie has been invited by the NSW AECG to be a presenter in the new AECG/DET Cultural Immersion program being introduced this year to targeted DET teachers and departmental staff.

Cathie is also a parent of Aboriginal children, and her partner is an Aboriginal community member with long term involvement in Aboriginal Affairs. Both are heavily involved in inner city sports teams supporting Aboriginal players and those from low socio-economic circumstances. Cathie also has a long history of teaching in secondary schools in the inner city area and has always promoted Aboriginal education regardless of the number of Aboriginal students at the school.

Therefore, Cathie is intimately aware of the many issues facing Aboriginal people and Aboriginal students in our school system as well as the boundaries around being a non-Aboriginal person at this level of involvement. Cathie is highly regarded in this community as she practices confidentiality and sensitivity at all times, while passionately advocating for social justice and equity for all people.

Given the difficulty in increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in the secondary system and the increasing attrition rate of early career teachers, research in the area of Preservice teacher education is significant and the NSW AECG will be very interested in the outcomes of the research. The fact that Cathie has chosen narrative inquiry through a critical stance, demonstrates to me that she is genuinely interested in Aboriginal points of view while being aware of the issues of power and oppression that still impact on our communities today.

I therefore have no hesitation in supporting this research project and the researcher.

Yours truly,



Cindy Berwick
President
NSW AECG
18 April 2010



Professor Robyn Ewing

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**SHIFTING SANDS. ABORIGINAL PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY FORMATION
IN BECOMING THE 'GOOD' TEACHER.**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT – Aboriginal Preservice
Teachers**

(1) What is the study about?

This study explores the role of identity formation for Aboriginal Preservice teachers and the impact of this has on their perception of themselves as effective teachers.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by *Cathie Burgess* under the supervision of *Professor Robyn Ewing* and will form the basis for the degree of *Master of Philosophy* at The University of Sydney.

(3) What does the study involve?

This study involves constructing two to three narratives from interviews and conversations with six Aboriginal Preservice teachers about their experiences in the Professional Experience component of their Bachelor of Education degree. It will involve audio taping of interviews and/or focus groups. Informal conversations and/or visual representations will be negotiated between the researcher and participant to form part of the data used to construct the narratives.

(4) How much time will the study take?

This study involves participating in an interview of approximately forty five (45) minutes in duration and includes responding to questions which will be audio taped. There is also a small written component at the end of the interview involving placing oneself on a scale of emotional extremes in response to the Preservice teacher experience. It includes room to make your own comments. Follow up to the interviews will involve opportunities for you to read the interview transcript and make adjustments as you see fit. You will then have further opportunities to consult

on and contribute to the construction of the narratives in a collaborative and interactive way. The researcher will make every effort to fit in with your time constraints and needs.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary, you are not under any obligation to consent. If you do consent, you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney and the researchers.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. The audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

If you take part in a focus group and wish to withdraw, as this is a focus group it will not be possible to exclude individual data once the session has commenced.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report

(7) Will the study benefit me?

Participation in the study gives you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in the Professional Experience both as an Aboriginal person and as a Preservice teacher. It potentially provides you with the opportunity to identify ways in which you can get more from future teaching experiences and address issues that have and will occur for you as an Aboriginal teacher.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

You are free to discuss this study with other people.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, *Cathie Burgess* will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact *Cathie Burgess* on 93517002.

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep



ABN 15 211 513 464

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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I,[PRINT NAME], give consent
to my participation in the research project

**TITLE: SHIFTING SANDS. ABORIGINAL PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY
FORMATION IN BECOMING THE 'GOOD' TEACHER.**

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.
5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

I understand that I can stop my participation in the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue, however as it is a focus group discussion it will not be possible to erase my participation in the discussion to that point.

7. I consent to: –

i) Audio-taping YES NO

Feedback Option

Address: _____

Email: _____

Signed:

Name:

Date:

**INITIAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE –PRE-SERVICE & EARLY CAREER
ABORIGINAL TEACHERS**

Establishing Background and Context

1. Description of personal background – where are you from, family / community connections, influence when growing up etc.
2. Description of educational background – including positive, negative experiences
3. What motivated you to become a teacher?
4. What did you expect teaching to look like, feel like? – is it as you visualized? What is similar, different?
5. Are you currently living / working in your community or in another community? How do you think this might impact on your role as a teacher?

The Preservice / Early Career Teaching Experience

6. Describe your overall preservice/early career teaching experiences?
7. What aspects of teaching do you feel come naturally to you and what do you feel you have to consciously work on?
8. To what extent do you find teaching emotionally demanding and how do you try to balance the emotions?

Identity

9. What factors do you believe have shaped your identity as a teacher? (could include personal background such as age, education, gender, class, ethnicity etc)
10. How have these factors impacted on your teaching i.e made it easier and/or more difficult?
11. What is your perception of your professional identity as a preservice/early career teacher? (i.e. personal / professional identity separate / interconnected)
12. Do you think your identity as an Aboriginal person plays a large or small role in your identity as a teacher? In what ways?

Other's Perceptions

13. Do you feel you are perceived by **staff / students** as the same or different from other preservice teachers? What indicators are there of this?
14. Does this impact on your response to teaching and to staff interrelationships? (how?)
15. Do you feel that other's perception of Aboriginal people and issues results in unique pressures for you as an Aboriginal preservice teacher?

Support

16. Do you feel you have enough support as a preservice teacher – what other/more support do you think would help? (include support from all areas – school, university, home, community, other students)
17. In what ways do you think the university could better support your preservice teaching experience? (consider coursework/theory as well as practical aspects)

**REVISED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – PRE-SERVICE & EARLY CAREER
ABORIGINAL TEACHERS**

Establishing Background and Context

Tell me a bit about

- personal background
- educational background, motivation
- current community location

The Preservice / Early Career Teaching Experience

Stories that you want to tell

- preservice/early career teaching experiences
- factors: age, gender, ethnicity, class - life experiences
- easy/hard
- impact of others perceptions – appearance / culture

Support

- family, peers, university, other

FOCUS GROUP PROMPTS

Connections:

- Personal / education background AND teaching experiences
- Teaching experiences AND Aboriginality / culture / lived experiences
- Perceptions of others AND Aboriginality / culture AND teaching experiences

Role of:

- relationships
- belonging

APPLICATION OF TABLE 1 TO NARRATIVES

Understanding the matrix of belonging and identity.

Melissa - Strong professional relationships– students, colleagues and the seamless link to situated relationship ,

John - Strong relationships students but not CT (focus on this as provides contrast)

| Modes of belonging | Dimensions of Identity | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| | 1. Connectedness <i>ie relationships, belonging</i> | 2. Expansiveness <i>ie agency, capital</i> | 3. Effectiveness <i>ie resilience, power</i> |

A. Engagement

How does engagement within a relationship contribute to the forming of deep connections?

What role does belonging play?

Melissa

Belonging crucial – setting up of Aboriginal room and her sense of belonging in school community helped her get through loss of husband and completing degree- sense of belonging at uni due to Aboriginal only classes – her experience reflected in practice = belonging

John - deep connections with students – source of pride and belonging ; difficulty engaging in relationship with CT and so little connection / antipathy / tension? This affects his feeling of belonging to colleagues – feels disaffected and while ok with other staff the CT relationship prevents real engagement & belonging in collegial sense; disconnect but not disengagement in that continue to try and pass prac

How does engagement in a relationship contribute to interactions with other relationships and movement across boundaries?

What role does agency and capital play here?

Melissa - roles as AEO/ educator (teacher) – and the effective relationships she builds with teachers and students contribute to her ability to interact with and between each relationship and beyond (such as talking to other aeo's uni peers etc)

cultural & social capital enables movement across boundaries ie professional and situated relationships - community members trust her and see her as an educated person 'on their side' and school sees her value as a community member and educator who can help them with the Aboriginal kids – same goal of improved outcomes – students see her as nurturer as well as educator and community member – she is agentic meeting their needs

John - Engagement with students - relationships– doesn't translate to CT because she sees it from a different perspective ie has a different type of relationship with students & doesn't consider Aboriginal views as important as hers (ie uluru) – therefore difficulty moving across boundaries – particularly the student relationship. His capital is useful with students but not with CT who sees them as inferior therefore agentic in first 2 r-ships but not in CT relationship; Looks to lecturers for support and gets it; Limitations to belonging

How do relationships support engagement in a way that promotes effectiveness?

Does this support resilience and potential for empowerment?

Melissa - is extremely effective because she can be agentic in Professional relationships with students and colleagues – this supports her resilience as seen by comments around staying at the school rather than moving on especially during difficult time of losing husband & studying (ie the big & risky jump into tertiary education after not finishing school). She is empowered in her context and even if this is questioned- Ie note under door – she has social/cultural capital to deal with it

John - student relationships key to his effectiveness as a teacher – is what sees him through despite the loss of engagement, connectedness and competence from CT – he feels ineffective in many aspects of his teaching because of this relationship and this negatively impacts on his resilience (nearly gives up and doesn't enter teaching) and empowerment (struggles to overcome a sense of powerlessness and hold onto his prac so he can pass)

limits his effectiveness impacts on engagement because isn't learning anything from CT?

How does one's image of self and the relationship help form deep connections?

Does this contribute to a sense of belonging?

Melissa - sees herself as a key person in forming the relationships because of her motivation and passion to improve things for Aboriginal students and each of these relationships are crucial to that outcome this strongly connects her members of each of the relationships and creates a deep sense of belonging – even when there are issues/tensions

John - Same for John with relationship to students and this is key thing that makes John feel he has a place in teaching – he feels this belonging when with students

Conversely – the poor relationship with the CT means precarious self image in terms of teaching and impacts negatively on his potential relationships with other teachers – undermines his professional identity – makes it harder for him to achieve collegial relationships?

How does one's image of self and the relationship help towards creating interactions with other relationships?

How can capital be mobilised to support this? Is agency required?

Melissa - confidence and reaffirmation from relationships - envision moving beyond immediate context through new teaching position but not ready yet – enhanced cultural capital with degree will allow this to happen and her cultural/ social capital could help in a new teaching role but isn't something she takes for granted – she realises that this has to be rebuilt /modified in a new area but her understanding of the mechanics of capital will support her build this quickly; Also relationships with students & colleagues helps move beyond school context to to envision bigger – holistic picture of Aboriginal education – situated relationships / identity– and offers new/unique ways of operating to enhance this?

John - The difficult CT relationship impacts negatively on self image as teacher - potentially impacts on other staff relationships – still has good relationships with students because passion / motivation to teach and help. Image of one relationship doesn't impact on the other – why? The CT relationship is envisioned differently by John & CT to his vision of other relationships? multi-membership = affirmation from other relationships which sustains him through difficult relationship – this is capital he mobilises to imagine he could be a good teacher in different context?

How do relationships reaffirm self-image, encourage resilience and help understand the big picture to support effective action? Does this result in individual and group empowerment?

Melissa - The strength of the relationships based on positive self image and connectedness/ belonging in relationships is empowering for her – she understands bigger picture beyond school that includes students' home lives etc - ie community – the knowledge/experience of this helps her understand the bigger picture of Aboriginal education – supports effective action because she can help students at one level by being someone to listen and understand them and at another level informing staff of issues so students are better understood – and supporting their hopes beyond school - this empowers all including students

John - CT relationship = poor image of teaching self but has deep understanding of bigger picture of the importance of helping Aboriginal students and disengaged teenage boys and so he has some effectiveness in the classroom – this is limited by CT attitude and approach – ie when she takes over the class – ie connection to situated relationships?

C. Alignment

How do mutually agreed upon alignments contribute to the forming of deep connections within a relationship? What is the role of commitment to these alignments?

Melissa - Activities with students, teachers aligned through mutual goal of improved outcomes for Aboriginal students and this contributes to building deep connections - potential student success in education - relationships are deep and there is trust – commitment to the relationships and the imperatives that underpin them – crossing boundary to situated relationships

John - Clear problem for John as there is little alignment between what he and his CT believe is good teaching – this causes disconnect between them and for John little belonging to ‘teaching as a profession’. John’s commitment is tested but he continues because of his motivation and passion

How do mutually agreed upon alignments support expansion beyond immediate relationships to broader contexts?

Is the mobilisation of capital helpful here?

Melissa - knowledge, experience skill understanding of how these work so can transfer to new context? capital helps as mentioned. the process of mutually agreed alignments helps create interactions with other groups?

John - relationship with CT limits opportunities for relationships with other staff – also CT attempts to limit his opportunities for relationships with Koori staff but he resists this because he develops a strong relationship with them and this supports him more than CT – these relationships don’t interact because basic level of distrust between members – John moves between these. He mobilises his capital to connect with Koori group and use this stuff in classroom – this cultural capital makes CT wary but he isn’t seen to have capital by CT

How do mutually agreed upon alignments contribute to effective action within a relationship?

Can these be mobilised to convince others of the potential effectiveness of a new idea/action?

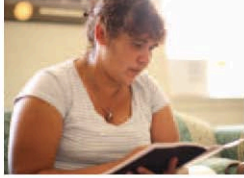
Is this process empowering for all the participants?

Melissa - The process of mutually agreed alignments is crucial for effectiveness – as it includes and empowers all and therefore better chance of effectiveness – Melissa aligned in professional relationships to augment for each and create relationships between the relationships and crossing boundaries to situated relationships – is empowering because same outcome reached ie better outcomes for Aboriginal students

John - little alignment with CT beliefs about good teaching therefore little opportunity for effective action in relationship – also her attitude that his course was second rate created an unequal power relationship as did her general treatment of him ie question knowledge (Aboriginal studies even though this his expertise) and skills (spoken & written English)

CT dominant discourse on performance negatively impacted on John’s efforts at engagement, imagination and alignment thus creating a disconnect that permeated his professional identity

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AWAY-FROM-BASE BLOCK PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY



BLOCK MODE STUDY (AWAY-FROM-BASE)

In block-mode (away-from-base) courses, students attend three week-long sessions each semester (six blocks per year) on campus at the Koori Centre, and the remainder of the course is completed through guided independent work at home (pending any changes to the program).

DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (ABORIGINAL)

Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) is a two year course which offers students intensive education skills training. Subjects in the Diploma include: Academic Literacies, Curriculum Development and Research Skills.

The Diploma in Education articulates directly into the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) i.e. the Diploma counts as the first two years of the four year Bachelor degree.

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY: ABORIGINAL STUDIES)

Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) is a four year degree course giving students a secondary teaching qualification majoring in Aboriginal Studies, History, Society and Culture.

Entry into the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) is by completion of the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent qualifications.

Block-mode study requires students to attend University for 6 x one-week blocks each year (three times each semester).



HOW TO GAIN ENTRY INTO DIPLOMA & BACHELOR OF EDUCATION BLOCK- MODE COURSE

Prospective students may be required to sit an assessment test and interview which will determine your eligibility against the standard of performance required for admission. Assessments are usually held late November or early December – students will be advised of the confirmed date early November.

- Students who live within the Sydney metropolitan area will be asked to sit this test at the Koori Centre, University of Sydney.
- Alternatively, if you live outside the Sydney metropolitan area you will need to arrange for someone from your local community to supervise your assessment, under examination conditions. You will need to choose someone who is qualified to do this. A teacher from your local school or TAFE would be suitable. The duration of the assessment is approximately 1.5 hours and the completed assessment tasks will need to be returned to the Koori Centre, immediately upon completion.

COSTS

Students who are eligible to receive Abstudy and live outside the Sydney metropolitan area and who meet the necessary requirements have their travel, accommodation and a meal allowance provided under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) guidelines.

Students who live more than 1.5 hours travelling time from the University will have their travel, meal and accommodation expenses to attend blocks of teaching in Sydney covered by Commonwealth government funding.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICE

The Koori Centre offers a culturally supportive environment.

To assist students with their studies, learn new skills, seek advice or relax and meet with other students, the Centre provides facilities such as a computer room equipped with PCs, printer and photocopier, study rooms, a common room and an Indigenous studies reference library.

ITAS TUTORING

This is an Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) for Indigenous Australian Students once they are enrolled at the University. Students are entitled to and encouraged to apply for tutors for all subjects studied.

WANT TO ENROL?

If you would like to enrol for next year please call and give us your name, address and phone number. We will add your details to our database and an application form will be mailed to you by the end of October.

T (02) 9351 2046 or
TOLL FREE 1800 622 742
F (02) 9351 6923
E koori.centre@sydney.edu.au OR

Block Student Admin
The Koori Centre
OTC (A22), Manning Rd
University of Sydney NSW 2006

Units of study: DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (ABORIGINAL)

| Unit of study | Credit points | A: Assumed knowledge P: Prerequisites C: Corequisites N: Prohibition | Session |
|---|---------------|---|------------|
| Candidates must complete 96 credit points of units of study comprising: | | | |
| YEAR 1 | | | |
| In the first year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising: - 48 credit points of Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units. | | | |
| Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies Units | | | |
| KCDE1101 Academic Literacies | 6 | Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE1103 Indigenous Education and Society | 6 | Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE1105 Introduction to Geography | 6 | Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE1202 Teaching & Learning: | 6 | Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|------------|
| History Curriculum | | | |
| KCDE1203 Human Development and Learning | 6 | P KCDE1101 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE1205 Teaching and Learning: Quality Learning | 6 | P KCDE1101 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE1206 Junior History: Stages 4 and 5 | 6 | P KCDE1101 and KCDE1202 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE2104 Introduction to Indigenous Australia | 6 | P KCDE1101 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| YEAR 2 | | | |
| In the second year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising: - 48 credit points of Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units. | | | |
| Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies Units | | | |
| KCDE2103 Education Theories | 6 | P KCDE1203 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE2105 Teaching and Learning: Teaching with ICT | 6 | P KCDE1205 C KCDE2106 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE2106 Australian Geography | 6 | P KCDE1105 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE2201 Professional Practices 1 | 6 | P KCDE1205 and KCDE1206 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 1 |
| KCDE2101 Visual Literacy: Cineliteracy | 6 | P KCDE1101 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE2202 Teaching & Learning: Aboriginal Contexts | 6 | P KCDE2104 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE2203 Indigenous Health and Communities | 6 | P KCDE2104 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |
| KCDE2205 Early Modern History: 1500 to 1800 | 6 | P KCDE1206 Available only to students enrolled in the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) | Semester 2 |

Units of Study: BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY: ABORIGINAL STUDIES)

| Unit of study | Credit points | A: Assumed knowledge P: Prerequisites C:Corequisites N: Prohibition | Session |
|---|---------------|--|------------|
| Before starting the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies), the candidate must have completed 96 credit points of Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units from the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal). | | | |
| For the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies), candidates must complete 96 credit points over two years, comprising Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units. | | | |
| YEAR 3 | | | |
| In the first year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising: - 48 credit points of Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units. | | | |
| Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies Units | | | |
| KCSE3101 Evaluation and Assessment in Schools | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE3102 Aboriginal Studies: Stages 4, 5 & 6 | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE3201 Professional Practices 2 | 6 | P KCDE2201 Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE3204 Modern History Senior: Stage 6 | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE3103 Indigenous Land and Culture | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE3104 Australia WW1 to Whitlam | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE3203 Reading Indigenous Writing | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE3205 Teaching and Learning: History | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| YEAR 4 | | | |
| In the second year, candidates must complete 48 credit points of units of study, comprising: - 48 credit points of Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies units. | | | |

| Indigenous Curriculum and Professional Studies Units | | | |
|--|---|--|------------|
| KCSE4102 Issues in Indigenous Rights | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE4103 The Ages of Revolution and Catastrophe | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE4104 Society and Culture | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE4201 Professional Practices 3 | 6 | P KCSE3201 Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 1 |
| KCSE3202 Teaching Aboriginal Languages | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE4101 Special Education: An Introduction | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE4202 Knowledge, Self and Education | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |
| KCSE4205 Teaching & Learning: Literacy Pedagogies | 6 | Available to students who have completed the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) or equivalent. | Semester 2 |