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Negotiating Aboriginal Culture in the Australian Mining Industry:

A Case Study of Cultural Awareness Training.

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Abstract

Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine employees is increasingly being implemented at Australian mining operations. The training aims to foster good relationships between companies and Aboriginal people and increase Aboriginal employment within the industry by educating miners about 'Aboriginal culture'. However, there is very little either academic or practitioner literature available about how the training is constructed, delivered, its content, or efficacy.

A great deal of the broader literature around cultural training focuses on the issue of effectiveness. While there is some evidence that the general awareness of other cultures increases amongst training participants, there is little evidence that the training results in changed attitudes and behaviour. Further, such outcomes are difficult to assess, especially in the long term. Rather than focusing on the issue of effectiveness of cultural awareness training, this thesis takes a different approach. It examines Aboriginal cultural awareness training as a site of engagement between mining company personnel and Aboriginal people. The study looks behind the scenes at contextual issues in terms of agency, interests and motives of the social actors involved.

The primary aims of this research are to investigate how these social actors assign meanings to the training and to explore the implications for using the training as a mechanism to improve relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Literature reviews are used to demonstrate the problematic nature of the cultural awareness training phenomenon. A case study of Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) in the Pilbara region of Western Australia is analysed using a mixed methods approach. Information on training content was obtained through participant observation at three different operations and semi-structured interviews with training presenters and company employees. Training participants were also surveyed to determine their responses to the training on the day.

The findings indicate that the corporate sector's view of cultural difference as a barrier or problem that needs to be managed is highly problematic. I suggest that initiatives such as cultural awareness training are better understood as expressions of the fundamental tensions that exist in the changing relationship between mining company personnel and Aboriginal people. The way that culture is invoked and understood by the actors involved is influenced by politics between company personnel and Aboriginal people and politics internal to the Aboriginal domain. The findings of the research demonstrate a need for a more sophisticated approach to understanding the complex phenomenon of cultural awareness training.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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Publications during candidature

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| ATAL | Aboriginal Training and Liaison |
| BIA | Binding Initial Agreements |
| CCT | Cross-Cultural Training |
| CSRM | Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining |
| DIMIA | Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs |
| DMP | Department of Mines and Petroleum |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| ICMM | International Council of Mining and Metals |
| ILUA | Indigenous Land Use Agreement |
| FIFO | Fly In, Fly Out |
| FMG | Fortescue Metals Group |
| FPIC | Free Prior and Informed Consent |
| FSI | Foreign Service Institute |
| ILO | International Labor Organization |
| LIC | Local Implementation Committee |
| NGO | Non- Government Organisation |
| OH&S | Occupational Health and Safety |
| PNTS | Pilbara Native Title Service |
| PBC | Prescribed Body Corporate |
| PDC | Pilbara Development Commission |
| RTIO | Rio Tinto Iron Ore |
| RT | Rio Tinto |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| TO | Traditional Owner |
| UNDRIP | United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples |
| UQ | The University of Queensland |
| YMAC | Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation |
| WTC | Welcome to Country |

Chapter One: Introduction

Aboriginal presenter to the class:

‘How do you know if it’s going to rain in the Pilbara?’

One of the few Aboriginal training participants in the class:

‘Channel 7?’

1.1 Aboriginal cultural awareness training and the mining industry

Aboriginal¹ cultural awareness training for mine employees is becoming a common feature of workplace inductions within the mining industry. This is particularly true for operations in remote areas of Australia. Some companies have committed to providing this kind of training in negotiated land use agreements with Aboriginal people. The provision of this training is based on the recognition that there is a discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes at mine sites that is, in part, attributable to cultural difference. The implementation of this training is also part of a broader agenda to improve relationships between Traditional Owners² and the resource industry in order to secure ongoing access to land. The relationship between the Australian resource industry and Aboriginal people has improved in recent decades. In the past, the mining industry, at best, inadvertently ignored Aboriginal interests and, at worst, actively campaigned against recognition of Aboriginal rights. However, the industry’s awareness of the need to obtain and maintain its ‘social license’ to operate is increasing (Brereton and Parmenter, 2008; Harvey, 2013; Langton, 2012). At the time of writing there is a growing concern to minimise and mitigate negative impacts on Aboriginal people and negotiate benefit sharing. The impetus for this shift has been growing recognition of Indigenous rights

¹ The terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ are both used in this thesis. The term ‘Indigenous’ is only used when this is the term used in the source.

² “Traditional Owners (TOs) are those who claim, and are recognised by other Traditional Owners to have ‘traditional’, usually descent-based, affiliation to a tract of land or ‘country’ and so are eligible to claim land under the Native Title Act” (Babidge, 2012:7). The term ‘Traditional Owners’ is used interchangeably with ‘native title groups’ in this thesis.

around the world alongside legislative frameworks such as the *Native Title Act (Cwth) 1993* in Australia.

Doohan (2006) summarises two dominant positions that researchers and commentators have taken in relation to mining companies and Aboriginal people: the view that Aboriginal people are victims of powerful corporations, and the alternative that mining is an opportunity to elevate Aboriginal people from poverty (Doohan, 2006:23). Further to this, there are those who argue for a livelihood approach where Indigenous people aspire to live a ‘fundamentally different lifestyle’ (Altman, 2009a:3) to the wider non-Aboriginal population.

The recent change in leading mining companies’ corporate culture provides a rich site for examining how ‘Aboriginal culture’ is being conceptualised and treated. Howitt et al. (1996:21) describe empowerment of Indigenous peoples as involving ‘the decolonisation of Indigenous spaces’. However, while good intentions may be behind initiatives such as cultural awareness training, they may perpetuate or further entrench patterns of unequal power, a process Rose (1999) has labelled ‘deep colonising’.

As I show in the following chapter, the theory informing current cultural awareness training has largely remained dormant, ignoring developments in anthropology that address issues including the essentialising of ‘culture’ and ‘otherness’ (Bjerregaard et al., 2012). There is little research that looks ‘behind the scenes’ of cultural awareness training and how, in the mining context, this training plays out on the ground. This research will begin to fill this gap by examining Aboriginal cultural awareness training at three Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) operations in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, as well as those coordinating the training in the company corporate office in Perth. An examination of Aboriginal cultural awareness training provides an opportunity to look at the ways in which the concept of culture is being used to display aspects of identity by the Aboriginal performers of the training, and the ways in which this is being received by the audience.

1.2 Thesis goals and background

It is appropriate that I explain the impetus for the thesis topic. I have been working as a researcher for the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM) at The University of Queensland (UQ) for almost 10 years. The CSRM is ‘a research centre committed to improving the social performance of the resources industry globally’ (CSRM, 2014:1). In that time, I have worked on various projects in the areas of social impact assessment, Indigenous employment, gender and diversity issues within the workforce, governance and mine closure. This work has required me to engage closely with both industry personnel and community representatives in several locations across Australia, including Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal mine employees.

It was a seemingly contradictory Aboriginal cultural awareness training session I witnessed at another mine site in northern Australia that focused my attention on this issue as an object of interest in this regard. I was visiting the region to undertake a social impact assessment for a local mining company as part of my employment at the CSRM in 2009. I was invited to witness a training session by the presenters, a husband and wife team who lived locally. The training participants were new Fly in Fly out (FIFO) employees to the mine who lived in various regions of Australia. The non-Aboriginal husband largely controlled the session, only referring to his Aboriginal wife to confirm the information. He also deferred to her in answering questions from the training participants. I was surprised by the content, which included statements from the Aboriginal woman such as, ‘we don’t want anything to do with white people’. The presenters were using the cultural awareness training session as an opportunity to voice their opposition to the mine and the subsequent influx of White miners.

The training raised a number of questions in my mind. I had expected the training to be less oppositional, and I wondered if the company knew about the content and what their view would be. Would they support the content on the basis that it was providing agency to Aboriginal people? Or would they be horrified at the negative

impression they were casting on the mine and miners' relationships with local Aboriginal people? Who endorses the view held by these two individual presenters and are these views representative of the majority of local Aboriginal people? And what does it mean to be 'culturally aware' anyway? When speaking to a few participants after the session, not surprisingly, they reported that they felt unwelcome. While the sessions I attended for my case study at RTIO for this thesis were not as pointed in their negative content in relation to mining, many aspects of the training similarly revealed contention between the social actors involved.

It is not my intention to discuss in detail the applicability of anthropological debates about the concept of culture. Rather, I will be focusing on the ways in which Aboriginal presenters are performing and presenting ideas of 'culture', and the way in which this is received by the training participants. This is to focus on culture as 'acted document', (Geertz, 1973:10). Goffman's (1959) notion of the front and back stage of everyday life invites an examination of cultural awareness training as performance. The training is the stage, with diverse actors playing roles. The audience views the performance at the 'front', unaware of what happens 'backstage'.

Cultural identity can be consciously constructed and negotiated for political and economic gain. In the context of cultural awareness training at RTIO, I am interested in understanding what aspects of their life the Aboriginal presenters are choosing to include and discard, and how does providing (or not providing) this information align with views on 'maintaining' or 'reviving' culture. Some core concepts that relate to this analysis are: culture as currency, or the strategic use of culture (Trigger, 1997; Bruner, 2004), culture as a marker of Indigeneity (Merlan, 2006; Cowlishaw, 2012), and Australian attitudes towards Aboriginal culture (Walker, 1994; Pedersen et al. 2000).

Most of the literature on cultural awareness training focuses on whether or not the training is effective in making participants more 'culturally competent' by changing knowledge, behaviour and attitudes. However, as discussed in the following literature review (Chapter Two), there are limitations in determining the efficacy of

such programs, especially in the long term. My research will take a different approach to the bulk of this literature by examining the training as an object of interest in itself, rather than a strict focus on the question of effectiveness. I will be examining how the training was developed and constructed, how it is presented and how it is received by participants (in the sense of how they responded to it on the day). It seeks to make sense of what is happening ‘on the ground’ with respect to a particular engagement activity between Aboriginal people and mining company personnel. The primary aims of my research, therefore, are to: (1) investigate how the different social actors involved experience and assign meanings to Aboriginal cultural awareness training from their different vantage points, and (2) understand the implications of these meanings for Aboriginal cultural training as a mechanism for improving relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The following questions were devised to meet the primary aims of the research. The methods used to answer these questions are described in the following section.

1. How is the training constructed?

- What role did Aboriginal people play? What role did RTIO play?
- Who put together the content and decided on how it was delivered?
- How were the presenters selected?
- How did the different actors work together? Were there any challenges?
- What incentives are there for the Aboriginal presenters to deliver the training?
- What does this mean for the relationship between Aboriginal people and RTIO?

2. What is the content and practice of cultural awareness training?

- How does the training content conceptualise ‘Aboriginal culture’?
- What type of content is included in the training?
- How is the training delivered and by whom? What methods are used?

3. How is the training received by participants?

- What is the demographic profile of training participants?
- What are the positive outcomes of the training from the perspective of training participants?
- Are there any unintended consequences?

1.3 Case study site and limitations

The field work for this research comprised four RTIO mining operations in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and RTIO's corporate office in Perth. The sites are not named in this thesis to maintain the confidentiality of those who participated. RTIO was selected for two reasons. Firstly, the implementation of cultural awareness training is a provision in recent land use agreements between Aboriginal people and RTIO. While this type of training is delivered in other parts of Australia at different mining companies, it is not often required for compliance with a land use agreement. Secondly, the most recent project I worked on as part of my employment at the CSRM prior to undertaking this thesis looked at retention of Aboriginal employees at RTIO operations. This provided me a background to some of the issues surrounding RTIO and local Aboriginal people, and introduced me to key contacts within RTIO and the Aboriginal communities in the region. The sites were selected on the basis of the availability and willingness of presenters to participate during the field work period of May-June 2013. Only one presenter declined to participate. I was unable to ask this presenter why. According to RTIO, it was because this person was 'too shy'.

A case study of one company can limit the generalisations that can be made from the findings to mining companies as a rule. However, the inclusion of five different cultural awareness sessions³ at four different mining operations within the same company has addressed, to some extent, this limitation. It is posited that the issues identified in this thesis will have relevance to other mines and mining companies. Another limitation in this research was the relatively small time spent 'in the field' (a period of 4 weeks in total). Unfortunately, it is very difficult to gain permission to visit mine sites for long periods of time without being a direct employee of the company. The background knowledge I have gained about the case study through my

³ Only three of these were observed. Two of these five training sessions were located at the same operation. One was presented by a back-up trainer and one by the regular presenter. All four operations were included in the survey of training participants and interviews with presenters of the training and RTIO employees.

work at CSRM, coupled with the mixed method approach I have taken to collect data, have reduced this limitation.

1.4 Research methods

This research is primarily about how different actors experience the same event. In order to understand these different vantage points, and within the practical limitations associated with visiting mine sites for long periods of time, I chose a mixed methods approach as the best methodology. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods including: a literature review; participant observation of cultural awareness training sessions; analysis of training materials; a survey of training participants; semi-structured interviews with presenters of the training⁴ and RTIO employees in community relations, training or Human Resources (HR) roles. Table 1 provides a summary of the operations included in this study, which presenters were interviewed and which training participants were surveyed. The names of the presenters have been changed to protect their identity. RTIO funded my flights to the Pilbara region and accommodation and meals while on the mine sites. Ethics approval was prepared, submitted and approved by The University of Queensland's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee⁵. A project information sheet (Appendix Three) and consent form was provided to study participants.

Table 1 Summary of research methods

| Name | Location | Training observed | Presenter interviewed | Training participants surveyed |
|--------|--|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Site A | Major Capital City, (Perth) | Yes | Yes 'Bob' | Yes |
| Site B | Inland FIFO operation, Pilbara | Yes | Yes 'Mark' | Yes |
| Site C | Coastal residential operation Pilbara | Yes | Yes 'Dean' | Yes. Two sessions. One presented by Dean and one presented by a back-up trainer. |
| Site D | Inland residential and FIFO operation, Pilbara | No | Yes 'Sherie' | Yes |

⁴ I also interviewed a presenter who happened to be visiting the same mine site where I was conducting interviews. However, I did not observe their cultural awareness training session.

⁵ Approval Number: 2006000932.

Written sources

The first stage of data collection involved a desktop review of the existing literature. Materials analysed include published and publicly available material such as company reports, speeches, press releases, journal articles, books, and media reports. Training materials from RTIO operations were reviewed and analysed relating to: (1) how the content conceptualises 'Aboriginal culture', and (2) method of delivery.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewees were selected by utilising records held by RTIO, supplemented by advice from RTIO community relations practitioners and the cultural awareness training presenters. Additional interviewees were selected by the researcher using a 'snowballing' technique. A total of 24 interviews were undertaken face to face or by telephone at three operations in the Pilbara and the corporate office in Perth, during the months of May and June 2013. Interviewees were presenters of cultural awareness training (4); RTIO community relations practitioners⁶ (13); RTIO employees in training roles at individual sites (3), HR (3) and one consultant who previously worked in a community relations role. Interviewees were adults between 25-65 years old, with an equal distribution of males and females. Aboriginal people represented 42% (10 people) of the total interviewed. The interviewees' names have been changed in this thesis to maintain the confidentiality of those who participated. Interview prompts are listed in Appendix Two.

Survey of training participants

The survey of training participants was completed by 99 RTIO employees across five training sessions: Four in the Pilbara and one in Perth, during the period of May to July 2013. This data has been combined to build an overall picture of how the training is being received by participants.

⁶ 'Community relations practitioners' include RTIO employees in roles that require engagement with Aboriginal people such as agreement negotiation and relationship management.

Sample

The participants were new and current employees of RTIO who were scheduled to attend a cultural awareness training session between May and July 2013 at the selected sites. Attendance at the training is a mandatory aspect of employment contracts. All new employees are required to attend the training as part of their employment induction and existing employees are required to attend refresher training sessions once every two years. Survey participants were both male and female aged between 18-65 years. A profile of survey participants are presented in Chapter Five.

Instrument

The aim of the survey was to collect data on how the training is received by participants. The questions focus on four main areas: (1) participant demographics; (2) previous experience working and/or knowledge of Aboriginal culture; (3) content and delivery methods; and (4) perceived usefulness of training. Both quantitative and qualitative questions were included. The survey is provided in Appendix One.

Administration

Participants were given a paper-based survey at the end of the training session by a RTIO employee or the researcher (when on site). When the survey was administered by a RTIO employee, a reply paid envelope addressed to the researcher was provided to participants to ensure confidentiality. The survey was administered for a three month period from May 2013 to July 2013. It was not practical nor directly relevant to the objectives of this study to administer a survey prior to the training session to determine a baseline of participant views. Advice from RTIO is that it is difficult to receive feedback forms from participants at the end of training sessions. A pre-training survey of sufficient length to be meaningful would lead participants to be unwilling to complete a post-training survey. Presenting specific questions to the participants prior to the training may also influence their 'natural' perceptions of the training. Further, there were concerns that the Aboriginal presenters of the training would feel uncomfortable with too much 'assessment'. While a pre- and post-training survey would be valuable in an effectiveness study, it is not necessary given that the

objectives of this study are to look at the broader meanings of the training as a site of engagement.

Analysis

Responses to closed questions were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to obtain basic frequencies, compare responses between groups and explore relationships between different variables. All analyses used a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Open-ended responses were entered into NVivo, a qualitative research analysis software.

Participant observation

I observed three different cultural awareness training sessions at two operations in the Pilbara and one in Perth during the period of May/June 2013. During this observation I recorded detailed notes about the content, method of delivery and reactions from participants.

1.5 Thesis overview

Chapter Two reviews the literature regarding the phenomenon of cultural awareness training in a range of settings. The contestation surrounding the concept of culture is briefly introduced, followed by a historical overview of the development of cultural training. A contemporary profile of cultural training in Australia is provided, including Indigenous cultural awareness training. This is followed by a discussion of the problems around determining the efficacy of the training. This chapter provides the reader with an overview of central issues relating to cultural awareness training and the rationale for this thesis taking a different approach by looking at contextual issues surrounding the training.

Chapter Three provides a background to the case study under investigation. The chapter begins with a description of the Pilbara region followed by an historical overview of relations between local Aboriginal people and RTIO. An overview of Aboriginal values in relation to mining and the tension between engagement with the

market and maintaining 'culture' is presented. This enables the reader to understand the impetus for initiatives such as cultural awareness training.

Chapter Four investigates how cultural awareness training at RTIO was constructed and how it is currently delivered, from the early 1990s to its current form. The chapter begins with a historical overview of the training at RTIO, followed by a summary of the current delivery and curriculum. It then outlines how the content of the training and the Aboriginal presenters were selected. Qualitative data from interviews with study participants are used to identify key issues associated with the training among the social actors involved.

Chapter Five identifies the major themes that emerged from the training content. Data from the observation of three different cultural awareness sessions, surveyed training participants and interviews with training presenters and RTIO employees are presented. The chapter highlights how culture is conceptualised by the different social actors involved and raises questions about the implications of content on training outcomes. Key demographics of the training participants surveyed in this study are presented and provide the reader with an understanding of the audience the training is aimed at.

Chapter Six problematises the corporate view of culture as a barrier or problem that needs to be managed by further analysing the data from Chapter Four and Five in relation to the politics of cultural awareness training. The chapter begins by outlining the aims of the training for both company employees and Aboriginal presenters of the training and discusses the changing dynamic between company personnel and Aboriginal people. This is followed by an analysis of how ideas of culture and identity are mobilised by the different social actors involved. The final chapter suggests future directions for cultural awareness training.

Chapter Two: Cultural Awareness Training in the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review introduces the concepts of culture and cultural training by providing a brief overview of the contestation surrounding the culture concept and a historical overview of the development of cultural training. It then provides a contemporary profile of cultural training in Australia and, more specifically, Indigenous cultural training in the Australian mining industry. It also presents a review of the problems associated with determining the effectiveness of cultural training in changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of participants and the rationale for this study in taking a different approach to the bulk of this literature.

2.2 Conceptualising culture and cultural training

The concept of culture is central to cultural training. However, there is no universally accepted definition of the term or consensus on the nature of culture. In some cases, the utility of the concept of culture has even been rejected by anthropologists (Abu-Lughod 1991; Wikan 1999). While a detailed analysis of the applicability of the concept of culture is beyond the scope of this thesis, the contestation around the concept and the different modes of articulation presents an obvious problem for how ‘cultural training’ should be understood, and warrants a brief introduction.

Anthropologist Sir Edward Tylor is cited as providing the first definition of the term ‘culture’ as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws and customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [*sic*] as a member of society’ (1871/1970:1). This understanding of societies as culturally homogenous and static has since been challenged through processes of globalisation or ‘creolization’, a process that refers to the ‘cross-fertilization that takes place between different cultures when they interact’ (Cohen, 2007:817). LeBaron and Pillay (2006:14), writing from a conflict resolution perspective in the US, provide a definition of culture that illustrates the complexity and fluid nature of the concept:

Culture is the shared, often unspoken, understandings in a group. It is the underground rivers of meaning-making, the places where we make choices about what matters and how, that connect us to others in the groups to which we belong. It is the water in which fish swim, unaware of its effect on their vision. It is a series of lenses that shape what we see and don't see, how we perceive and interpret and where we draw boundaries. Often invisible even to us, culture shapes our ideas of what is important, influences our attitudes and values, and animates our behaviours. Operating largely below the surface, cultures are shifting, dynamic set of starting points that orient us in particular ways, pointing toward some things and away from others. Each of us belongs to multiple cultures, and so we are experienced in transitioning cultural boundaries within and between us from an early age.

However, presenting cultures as integrated homogenous entities – outside of space, time and history – occurs in a number of studies. For example, Bruner's (2005) *Culture on Tour* analyses a variety of tourist productions ranging from the Maasai dancers in Kenya to an Abraham Lincoln heritage site in Illinois. These cultural performances are strategically designed for the tourist gaze and aim to present the 'traditional' or 'authentic' rather than the everyday lives of the performers. MacCannell (2011:14) labels this 'staged authenticity' and argues that it is no longer restricted to tourism, and can be seen in many other settings such as governments, workplaces and human relationships.

In an Australian study, Cowlshaw (2012) pointed out the contradictory nature of 'Aboriginal Culture' as treated by the Australian Government. On the one hand, culture is blamed for the dysfunction found in many Aboriginal communities, and on the other, cultural revival programs are supported. This absurdity is kept at bay by the 'cultivation of legible and safe forms of Aboriginal Culture' (Cowlshaw, 2012:413). Cowlshaw (2011) uses the term 'disturbing aboriginality' to refer to the way that culture is produced by urban Aboriginals in response to the desires of outsiders, and the reactions of those who see it as misuse of their culture. According to Cowlshaw, these cultural performances (painting, dancing, and storytelling) are increasingly being viewed as 'an elaborate charade'; as 'state-sponsored culture resting on bogus claims to cultural authority' (2011:172). Cowlshaw (2011:172) states:

...local Aborigines are called upon to play their part in the love affair that other Australians want to have with them, but they cannot determine its form or even its content.

The false, essentialised distinctions of the remote and ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’ Aboriginal people and the urban ‘modern’ Aboriginal people who have lost their culture are now largely rejected by current thought in anthropology. Most anthropologists now accept that Indigenous Australians live in intercultural worlds, comprising a mix of customary and global social norms and values (Merlan, 1998; 2005). However, in public discourses, Aboriginal culture is frequently attached to signs and symbols (such as boomerangs, spears) and never an existing way of life or the everyday activities of Aboriginal people (Cowlshaw, 2011:182).

Smith (1999) argues that the representation of Indigenous culture as static served to suppress Indigenous Peoples or, as Willinsky (1999:97) put it, to the purpose of ‘keeping the barbarian at the gate’. However, Aboriginal people themselves are compelled to utilize what Spivak (1993:5) refers to as ‘strategic use of a positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’. For the people of the Gulf country⁷, culture has increasingly acquired significance as an objectified currency or strategic resource. Trigger (1997:101) explains in relation to land claims:

the way cultural idioms used to express relations to land rest partly upon modified ancestral intellectual traditions ... it has become increasingly important for Gulf communities to find ways of recuperating such traditions, in the process of demonstrating (to the satisfaction of Euro-Australian authorities) traditional rights to the lands they claim ... this process which is driven largely by intense negotiations with powerful interests of the wider society, itself becomes implicated quite directly in the social reproduction of what is now known as ‘culture’.

Clearly ‘culture’ has a social role in providing a sense of belonging, but it also has political motives, with many ways in which cultural identity can be consciously constructed and negotiated for political and economic gain. Cultural training has been criticised for commoditising the consumer concept of culture (Kahn, 1995), or a ‘packaged way to know others’ (Peacock, 2001:76). It has also been criticised for

⁷ The word ‘country’ is used by Aboriginal people and others to refer to land that is intimately connected to people.

promoting reductive, essentialist, notions of culture (Jack and Lorbiecki, 1999). However, very little research looks at the interplay between agency, process, interests and motives of the actors involved, or how these activities bear on the everyday social life of local Aboriginal people. In the resources industry – given the large corporate investment in such initiatives – these are important questions.

Another layer of complexity in conceptualising cultural training is the variety of terms it is known by, including ‘cultural awareness’, and more recently ‘cultural competence’. In Australia and around the world, the term ‘cultural competence’ has become very popular in workplace training initiatives. The first definition of Cultural Competence has been attributed to Cross et al. (1989:iv):

a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Since then however, much like the concept of ‘culture’, ‘cultural competence’ is also highly contested (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009; Weaver, 2008). Further, training content and delivery is highly contextualised to the setting in which it takes place.

2.3 Cultural training: Historical overview

The development of cultural training has largely been attributed to the work of anthropologist Edward T. Hall⁸ during the early 1950s (Leeds-Hurtwitz, 1990; Moon, 1996). Hall was among several other anthropologists and linguists, employed by the American Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to provide language and cultural training to Foreign Service officials (Leeds-Hurwitz 1990; Rogers et al. 2002). Initially, FSI training reflected anthropological theories of culture at the time. Culture was taught as a system of ‘shared information along with shared methods of coding, storing and retrieving information’ (Hall and Hall, 1989, cited in Moon, 1996:71). Since then, however, as noted above, the discipline of anthropology has produced multiple theories of culture, and the term remains a highly contested concept. The content of the training also included some language training and contextual

⁸ In early publications, Hall credits linguist Trager as a collaborator.

information about host countries (Leeds-Hurtwitz, 1990). However, Hall shifted the focus of the training after receiving negative feedback from the consumers of the training. Trainees complained that the anthropological theory was hard to understand and not practical and insisted they needed more 'specific and concrete information' (Moon, 1996:71). Hall (1956:7) explains that the training has a political nature:

The younger officers ... because of the emphasis on 'political' reporting, often were left with the idea that there was nothing of importance to be learned from the foreigner as a member of his culture, and that if they could just get to the 'right person' in the political sense, the cold dope on any given situation could be obtained.

The training was further complicated by bureaucracy, disrespect for anthropologists and the view that the training was irrelevant (Hall, 1959).

In response to the negative feedback received from the trainees, Hall shifted the focus of the training from an anthropological view of 'culture' to treating 'culture' in a 'pragmatic, goal-orientated manner' (Moon, 1996:72). Smaller cultural units, such as tone of voice, gestures, orientations towards time and spatial relations, became the focus (Leeds-Hurtwitz 1990). The anthropological content was replaced with an approach which focused on the intercultural encounters between individuals (Moon, 1996). The FSI trainees were much more receptive to Hall's revised program. Hall (1956:10) wrote: 'microanalysis, when used, seems to be much more acceptable and more readily handled by the layman'. The method of delivery was an intensive, day-long workshop and included anecdotal accounts of intercultural encounters and role plays (Moon, 1996; Rogers et al., 2002). This shift in focus is critical in explaining the disjunction between how culture is conceptualised by contemporary cross-cultural training and anthropological theories of culture.

Since Hall's work at the FSI, cultural training has emerged as an international industry. The growth has been attributed to the impacts of globalisation, such as corporate internationalisation. During the 1960s and 70s, corporations became increasingly concerned about how to best recruit, retain and manage a diverse workforce (Jack and Lorbiecki 1999). The widely held view was that cultural

difference can cause problems that present a risk to business success, and these problems need to be 'managed'. This view was reinforced by the highly influential work of Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* (1980). This study of IBM employees in 53 different nations differentiated cultures based on national boundaries; the main distinction being individualism versus collectivism. While Hofstede's model has been criticised for its quantitative dimensional approach to culture (McSweeney, 2002), many training resources currently use his theory. The model represents five cultural value variations along a continuum labelled power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculine and feminine and long term/short term time orientation (Hofstede, 1980; 2005). Countries are assigned a numerical score identifying where they lie on this continuum compared to other countries. The majority of intercultural communication research that followed Hofstede has conceptualised 'culture' as a variable in positivist research projects (Moon, 1996), ignoring the fluid nature of culture and contextual factors.

As observed by Jack and Lorbiecki (1999:7), difference was used as a strategic tool for commercial competitiveness, with 'respect and tolerance at work' connected with 'improved business performance and bottom line'. Further, many companies implemented diversity training programs as a way to defend themselves against future discrimination lawsuits (Kalev and Dobbin, 2006). In response to this corporate need for cultural training, several dimensional models of culture and training frameworks were developed. Examples include Hofstede's (1980, 2005) five dimensional model of culture and Trompenaars' and Hampden- Turner's (1997) seven dimensional model. This reflects the method and pragmatic approach of Hall's revised curriculum at the FSI and can be seen in current standard practice of cross-cultural training today (Bezrukova et al., 2012). However, the emphasis of the training and the philosophical underpinnings differs widely within and between countries and is highly contextual (Bean, 2006). There exists a wide range of types and categories of cultural training around the world, and this thesis focuses on just one: Aboriginal cultural awareness training at a mining company in Australia.

2.4 Contemporary cultural awareness training in Australia: A profile

Cultural training in Australia is known by several different names, reflecting the range of perspectives and context of the training. The most common used terms in the Australian context are ‘cross-cultural training’, ‘cultural awareness’, and ‘intercultural training’ (Bean, 2006). This training aims to ‘develop awareness of the cultural dimensions of interactions and effectiveness in situations and environments characterised by cultural diversity’ (Bean, 2006:3). The majority of literature on cultural training in Australia comes from the public sector. The demand for public sector and community organisation cultural training has been primarily driven by customer service imperatives and policy and compliance requirements (Bean, 2006). Indigenous cultural training in Australia is largely confined to the health and education sector. This has been driven by policy makers who recognise the ‘ongoing legacy of colonisation’ (NACCHO and Oxfam Australia, 2007:3 cited in Downing et al., 2011:247). It is also a key aspect of the Australian Government’s ‘Close the Gap’ campaign; an initiative aimed at closing the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The aim of the training is to equip health practitioners and school teachers with knowledge about ‘Indigenous culture’. The assumption underpinning this training is that it will assist workers to become more ‘tolerant’ and adjust their practice with individuals accordingly (Young, 1999, cited in Fredericks, 2008:2).

The social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians and its impact on health, education and welfare of Indigenous people is well documented. Compared to non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous people have low levels of formal education, are more likely to have poor literacy and numeracy skills and poor health outcomes. Further, previous research in Western Australia, the state where the case study for this research is located, indicates that prejudice against Indigenous people is commonplace (Walker, 1994; Pedersen et al., 2000). Predictors of negative attitudes towards Indigenous are collective guilt about past and present wrongs to Indigenous Australians; lack of empathy for Indigenous Australians, and socio-demographics (e.g lack of education) (Pedersen et al., 2004:242).

The most recent review of cross-cultural training in Australia was undertaken in 2006 by the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) (Bean, 2006). This report surveyed 195 representatives of public and community sector organisations to identify 'best practice' instances of cross-cultural training. While the project excluded training provided for the private sector and training in Indigenous cultures for 'reasons of policy delineation and resource limitations' (Bean, 2006:9), it provides a useful profile of cultural training within Australia. The term 'cross-cultural training' (CCT) is used in the report as a broad label incorporating four types of training identified therein. These are: general awareness and communication; ethno- or country specific training; working with translators and interpreters; and specialised programs that are industry specific such as health care, or policing (Bean, 2006:31). The report found that the programs are highly contextual and elements of each broad area can be included in the design. Most training was basic and introductory by nature, and 'general awareness' was the most common type of training delivered. The content of the CCT programs included the nature of culture, verbal and nonverbal elements of communication, cross-cultural comparison such as individualism/collectivism, adaptation, working with translators and interpreters, language skills, working and managing diverse teams, providing services to diverse customers and negotiation and conflict resolution skills (Bean, 2006:32). According to the report, approaches to cross cultural training can be represented as existing on a continuum, ranging 'from the didactic or academic approach to the experiential approach' (Bean, 2006:82). Didactic training comprises lectures, discussions, checklists, tip sheets, and country profiles, and the experiential approach uses interactive exercises, simulations, role plays and field trips. The most common method of delivery is through a one- or two-day workshop. Attendance tends to be voluntary. The training was predominantly provided by Australia-based companies and many sourced trainers within their own organisations.

For the Australian Indigenous health sector, Downing et al. (2011) identified six models through which Indigenous cultural training can be conceptualised. These were: cultural awareness; cultural competence; transcultural care; cultural respect;

cultural security; and cultural safety. These approaches varied in two main ways. First, the emphasis was placed on changing the behaviour of the individual rather than promoting systemic change, and second, the emphasis was 'on training workers to understand their own culture and processes of identity' rather than understanding the culture of others (Downing and Kowal 2011:7). The authors found that most Indigenous cultural training in this sector was shaped by a cultural awareness framework (also called intercultural training or cross-cultural training) (Downing et al., 2011). This framework aims to 'increase participants' awareness of cultural, social and historical factors' applying to Indigenous peoples and 'self-reflection on participants' own culture and their tendency to stereotype' (Thomson, 2005:3 cited in Downing et al., 2011:248).

Many scholars have argued that a 'cultural safety' model is the best option for delivering Indigenous cultural training in the Australian health sector. This model moves away from attempting to teach 'Indigenous culture', towards examining power differentials between the care provider and the patient. It was introduced by the New Zealand Nursing Council into the curriculum for pre-entry nursing education in 1988 (Ramsden, 2002). The cultural safety approach requires the health care provider to create trust with the patient (Downing et al., 2011: Ramsden, 2002). Nurses are required to reflect on sources of repression, class and power. This kind of reflexivity has also been promoted in a recent training approach aimed at fostering 'reflexive anti-racism' amongst White people working in Indigenous affairs in Australia (Kowal et al., 2013; Franklin et al., 2014). The three-day program focuses on 'identity formation, knowledge production and cultural recognition' (Franklin et al., 2014:23), enabling participants to foster reflection and acceptance of the disjunction between their own racialised feelings and internalised anti-racist ideals (Kowal et al., 2013 cited in Franklin et al., 2014). The content of this program is listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Race, Culture, Indigeneity and the Politics of Public Health Training Program

DAY 1

Session 1: Key terms and concepts

- ☐ introduce construction, discourse and critique
- ☐ understand existing perspectives on 'race'.

Session 2: Racialisation and whiteness

- ☐ Explore racialisation and whiteness
- ☐ Critically examine cases of racialisation.

Session 3: Explaining health inequalities

- ☐ understand the distinct explanations for Indigenous health disparities
- ☐ analyse theoretical issues underpinning health inequality discourses

DAY 2

Session 4: Critiquing the burden of history

- ☐ comprehend the key periods of Indigenous health research
- ☐ understand similarities and differences in past and present Indigenous health research practices
- ☐ appreciate the way in which views of history are shaped by, and shape present-day understandings

Session 5: Indigenous health paradigms

- ☐ understand views on the Northern Territory Emergency Intervention
- ☐ Use theoretical terms and concepts to critically analyse various arguments about this intervention.

Computer exercise

Undertake the 10-15 minute Implicit Associations Test (IAT) which assesses strength of associations between ethnic/racial groups and positive/negative concepts

Session 6: White racial identity

- ☐ Understand the diversity of worldviews pertaining to racial difference
- ☐ Analyse the impact of White racial identity theory on Indigenous public health practice

DAY 3

Session 7: 'Culture' as a concept utilised Indigenous public health

- ☐ Describe the various ways that 'culture' is utilised in Indigenous public health discourses.
- ☐ Examine 'culture' as a concept in public health texts and implications for public health practice

Session 8: Indigenous public health as a culture

- ☐ Understand the tensions inherent in Indigenous public health practice

Session 9: Indigenous public health – a debate

- ☐ Formulate and present a key perspectives on the nature of Indigenous health disparities.
- ☐ Articulate the similarities and differences between the major perspectives on Indigenous ill-health

Session 10: Reflecting on Indigenous public health

- ☐ From both a personal and professional perspective, reflect on Indigenous public health practice

Source: Franklin et al. (2014:24).

The content and methods of cultural training in the public sector in Australia are largely reflective of Hall's revised training curriculum at the FSI. The approach is pragmatic and goal orientated and the content focuses on the intercultural encounters between individuals, excluding anthropological theories of culture. However, there are signs that more reflexive programs are increasing, such as the cultural safety and reflexive anti-racism programs.

2.5 Effectiveness of Cultural Training

The research to date on the efficacy of cultural training has been mixed. While some evaluations have found that participants' knowledge about the target group increases, there is little evidence that the programs produce change in attitudes or behaviour, especially in the long term (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Hill and Augoustinos, 2001). Further, due to the wide range of aims, methods and delivery of cultural training, a methodologically sound evaluation is difficult and highly problematic (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). Cultural training makes the assumption that increased understanding of other people's customs will improve cross-cultural interactions, that the complexities of culture can be learned in a short time frame, and that only those who come in direct contact with the group whose customs are taught require the training (Henry and Tator, 2010). Further, some scholars have argued that short training programs focused on general awareness of 'other' cultures will not produce change (Dean, 2001; Fredericks, 2008; Young, 1999). A further criticism has been that the focus of training programs within organisations is on individual change rather than organisational or systemic change (Downing and Kowal, 2011; Weaver, 2008). Research relating to who presents the training indicates that pairs of diversity trainers who differ in race/ethnicity produce better learning outcomes than homogenous trainer pairs (Hayles, 1996 cited in Kowal et al., 2013).

Van de Vijver and Breugelmans (2008) have identified two challenges in determining the efficacy of cultural training within the human services arena: inadequate measures and determining causality. Many of the assessment tools used to measure 'cultural competency' of training consumers have been found to lack both

validity and reliability (Balcazar et al., 2009; Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; van de Vijver and Breugelmans, 2008). A review of 985 research studies on prejudice reduction initiatives (the reduction of negative attitudes towards one group) across a wide range of settings found no evidence to support the effectiveness of these initiatives (Paluck and Green, 2009). The authors argue that: 'one can argue that diversity training workshops succeed because they break down stereotypes and encourage empathy' or 'alternatively, one can argue that such workshops reinforce stereotypes and elicit reactance among the most prejudiced participants' (Paluck and Green 2009:357).

Bean's (2006) study of cross-cultural training in the Australian public sector found improvements in employees' general awareness of customer and workplace interactions between those of different cultural backgrounds and organisational cultural diversity policies and issues. However, the training did not increase their understanding of 'the deeper effects of one's own culture on oneself and in confidence to transfer cross-cultural skills to the workplace and to colleagues' (Bean, 2006:1). The evidence for the effectiveness of Indigenous cultural training in the Australian health sector is also poor (Downing et al., 2011). Further, the training has also been perceived as being tokenistic, a point demonstrated by Aboriginal leader Arnold (Puggy) Hunter who labelled Indigenous cultural training in the health sector as a 'hug a blackie' course (Hunter, 2001 cited in Fredericks, 2008:2).

Some research has even found that cultural training has had a negative impact on consumers of the training, such as increased levels of prejudice (Fredericks, 2008; Paradies et al., 2009; Trenerry, Franklin and Paradies, 2010) and backlash from White male employees who felt that they were being made to feel guilty (Kalev and Dobbin, 2006). This relates to influential and controversial Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson's (2009) analysis of race relations in Australia. Pearson (2009) discusses the strong tradition of denial amongst the Australian population, ranging from the dismissal of poor treatment of Indigenous peoples to those who acknowledge the depredations suffered by Indigenous Peoples but minimise it ('we shouldn't dwell on the past') (Pearson, 2009: 237). If race relations are presented in an accusatory or

unbalanced way, this population become defensive and ‘end up joining the hard-core ideologues’ (Pearson, 2009:237).

It has been argued that diversity training that focuses on one group is somewhat problematic because it focuses on differences, thereby ‘othering’ (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Downing and Kowal, 2011). As Fredericks (2008:11) observed, Indigenous-specific cultural awareness training in the health sector ‘focuses the lens on Indigenous people, as being under serviced, needy and problematic to non-Indigenous people to some degree’. It has also been argued that critical self-reflection, including on the issue of ‘White privilege’, is a necessary component of any training (Dean, 2001; Fredericks, 2008; Young, 1999). Franklin et al. (2014:21) argue that to be effective ‘anti-racists’⁹:

White people need to avoid blanket view of minorities as ‘good’ as well as the converse understanding of white people as ‘bad’. They also require the ability to recognise how white people benefit from unearned privilege without becoming ‘paralysed’ by guilt and anxiety, while at the same time accepting that such privilege is unavoidable in contemporary societies.

The limited effectiveness of cultural training on consumers has also been attributed to how the training conceptualises culture and identity (Downing and Kowal, 2011; McSweeney 2002; Primecz et al., 2011). Dimensional frameworks of culture frequently used as training tools focus on culture at a national level and allow for the quantification of cultural value systems (McSweeney, 2002). This risks creating the false perception that ‘culture’ is a unified entity, and may result in consumers of the training developing stereotypical thinking about particular groups of people, without recognising the diversity within cultural groups. A further risk is that consumers of the training may attribute all misunderstandings to those of a cultural kind. While these frameworks of culture can provide some background to cultural difference at a very general level, they cannot explain what might happen in an encounter between individuals. Further, this perspective ignores political, power and contextual related issues (Prasad, 2003).

⁹ Those who are motivated to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998 cited in Franklin et al, 2014).

In the American context, Jack and Lorbiecki (1999:4) question whether the cross-cultural training industry is a form of Anglo-American imperialism masquerading as an important organisational service in a globalised economy. In their analysis of how the 'Other' is portrayed in cross-cultural training video content, Jack and Lorbiecki found conflation of nation states and cultures, subsequently homogenising otherwise socially and culturally diverse individuals. They argued that these practices are techniques of control: 'Once the other has been pinned down in this way, it then becomes a discrete space whose finer contours can consequently be more easily known' (Jack and Lorbiecki 1999:16).

Drawing on postcolonial theory, Downing and Kowal (2011) explored the limitations of Indigenous cultural training in the health sector in Australia as it is currently conceptualised and argued that issues of essentialising 'Indigenous culture', and 'otherness' have contributed to its failure to contribute to culturally appropriate health services. Downing and Kowal (2011:10) argue:

postcolonial theory suggests that no person's culture can be taught; what can be taught is an understanding of the way in which a person's identity can be shaped, influenced, shifted and the factors that have the potential to contribute to this.

While cultural training has its roots in anthropology and linguistics, the theory informing cultural training has remained more or less stagnant, with newer developments in anthropology being ignored (Bjerregaard et al., 2009). The theory gap between cultural training and anthropology tends to exclude any analysis of power, agency and contextual issues from cultural training – all of which are relevant to understanding how individuals from different cultures communicate (Bjerregaard et al., 2009). A promising development is the reflexive anti-racism model referred to earlier. A recent evaluation found, for example, the participants had a more sophisticated understanding of 'culture' after the program, from 'perceiving culture as something that can be restored to something in a process of continual change' (Franklin et al., 2014:35). However, the authors note that this conceptual framework needs further research to explore its potential (Franklin et al. 2014). Further, there have been very few qualitative evaluations of cross-cultural training and/or studies

that focus on the experience of the minority or ‘outgroup’. This raises questions as to what groups the training aims to benefit.

2.6 Mining and Indigenous cultural training in Australia

There is very limited literature available on Indigenous cultural training in the Australian mining context. While most of the major mining companies in Australia have publicly indicated that they implement Indigenous cultural awareness training, none of them provide significant detail on the content, aims, delivery methods or outcomes. Based on my own observations visiting mine sites as part of my employment at the CSRM, there are range of cultural training programs used by the mining industry tailored for either a company wide audience (often mandatory as part of the induction process for new employees) or for employees with key functions in Indigenous employment (such as supervisors of Indigenous employees or HR staff). The most common method of delivery appears to be through a one- or two-day workshop, with the longer programs including a field trip on Indigenous land. The training is provided by specialist companies, or by Indigenous community relations practitioners. Increasingly, as a result of the provision of this training being included in agreements with Indigenous people, companies are also contracting local Indigenous people from the region to provide this training. Table 3 summarises the current types of training in the Australian mining industry.

Table 3 Types of cultural awareness training in the Australian mining industry

| Participants | Company-wide Induction Training | Supervisors of Indigenous Peoples/Human Resources | Senior Leadership |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| Duration | 1 Day or less | 1-2 days | Typically 2 days, often includes an overnight camp on country with Traditional Owners (TOs) |
| Content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company commitments to Indigenous People and relevance to employees • Overview of local Indigenous People including history, cultural behaviours and landscape, and issues to be aware of such as cultural heritage protection • Basic information on Working with Aboriginal people: issues to expect and how to respond | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed case studies of issues Aboriginal employees face • Company expectations on how to respond to issues that may emerge. • Clear policy and management systems in relation to factors such as cultural leave | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not a structured course but an opportunity for TOs and company senior management to build relationships – camping, fishing hunting and story-telling activities are often included. |
| Follow up | Refresher course every 2 years | Refresher course every year | Refresher course every 2 years |

Source: Barclay et al. (2014:26)

The International Council on Mining and Metals' (ICMM) Good Practice Guide on Indigenous Peoples and Mining recommends that programs should:

- focus not only on giving a historical understanding of the relevant community, but on providing practical advice that can enhance cross-cultural communication and understanding (e.g. advice on body language, initiating and ending conversations, culturally disrespectful actions, etc.)
- involve local Indigenous men and women in delivery and teaching of the program (e.g. in conducting welcoming ceremonies and sharing their experiences)
- be differentiated according to the target audience (e.g. more intensive tailored programs for company personnel who supervise Indigenous employees)
- differentiate between cultural awareness and cultural competence
- include follow-up and refresher sessions, rather than just being delivered as a one-off
- where Indigenous Peoples use a different language, develop the capacity of project supervisors to communicate in that language.

A study of 'ethical practice' at five mining companies in 2003 found that cultural awareness training was completed by 70% of operational mining staff at one company (Crawley and Sinclair, 2003). This training was delivered by Indigenous groups and led to many senior members of mining companies travelling to remote areas of Australia to participate. According to Crawley and Sinclair (2003), the Indigenous groups who provide the training have derived significant income from their involvement. However, it is unknown how many people benefit from this income or what other benefits or negative impacts may exist. It is also unknown how presenters are chosen or self-identify. No research on outcomes for the consumers of cultural training in the mining industry has been undertaken.

The impetus for the training is largely attributed to the recent developments in agreement making between mining companies and Indigenous people. Indigenous employment provisions are now a common feature of agreements and Reconciliation Action Plans between Australian mining companies and local Indigenous people. Within this context, 'culture' has been conceived as a barrier to the effective implementation of employment initiatives. It has been suggested that for some Indigenous people, working in the mining industry may be in direct opposition to the Indigenous worldview where there exists a responsibility to look after country (Trigger 2002). Further factors such as pressure to share income with kin or 'demand sharing' (Peterson, 1993, Trigger, 2005), taking positions of authority over other Indigenous employees and kinship avoidance customs (Brereton and Parmenter, 2008) have been found to influence the desire of Indigenous employees to enter and remain in the workforce.

A study of the relationship between Aboriginal people and miners at Rio Tinto's Argyle Diamond mine in Western Australia undertaken by Kim Doohan in 2006 sheds some light on cultural initiatives aimed at improving relationships. Since 2002, new mine workers at Argyle are required to attend a *manthe* as part of their general induction (Doohan, 2006). The *manthe* is 'a ritual that enacts the host-guest relationship and as such confers safe passage in the landscape and protection from malevolent spirits and beings' (Doohan, 2006:305). The Aboriginal performers of the

manthe are self-selected from the local community and are paid by Argyle to provide this service as part of the overall occupational health and safety (OHandS) induction program (Doohan, 2006). The reactions from miners range from mild curiosity to being ‘genuinely moved (and changed)’ by the experience (Doohan 2008:316). Doohan (2006:302) argues that performances like the *manthe* are ‘ways in which Aboriginal people attempt to engage with outside forces ... in order to effect change’ and ‘at the same time sustain their own worldview and alterity’. She sees these performances as challenging the assumption that large mining companies destroy Aboriginal culture. In fact, Aboriginal people have turned to ceremonies in order to ensure the mine stay open. Rio Tinto has also committed to provide cultural awareness training programs as part of the agreement with Aboriginal groups, however, this training was not a focus of Doohan’s study. It is also unknown what the aspirations of the younger Aboriginal population more broadly might have in regards to participating in these ceremonies in the mine domain. There may be a risk of intergenerational tensions and disagreements on such matters.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature on cultural training, much of which relates to effectiveness and whether consumers of the training become more culturally ‘aware’ or ‘competent’. However, as this overview indicates, there are several conceptual and methodological barriers in making these assessments. What is missing from the literature is research that looks at contextual issues surrounding the construction and delivery of the training. This thesis aims to address this gap. What are the motives and interests of the different actors involved and how does this relate to the messages about ‘culture’ received by the consumers of the training? In case of the mining industry and Aboriginal Australians, the issues are further complicated by their recent antagonistic relationship, as well as the internal politics existing within the Aboriginal domain. These issues are discussed in the following chapter which introduces the case study.

Chapter Three: Case Study Background

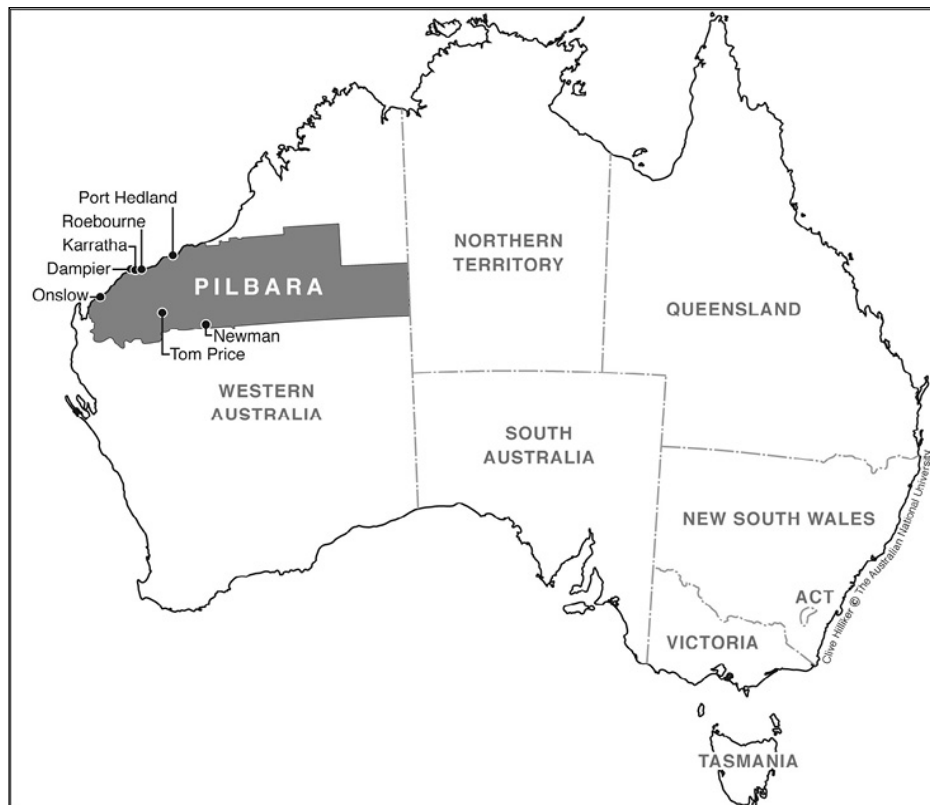
3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the case study site where I undertook the field work for this research. CRA Limited (RTIO's predecessor) has been operating in the Pilbara region since the 1960s, in close proximity to Aboriginal communities. I discuss how the relationship between Aboriginal people and the company, and the resource industry more broadly has evolved over time, from one of little or no engagement to the current trend of making agreements. It is important to understand initial relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the region as a background to why initiatives such as cultural awareness training are currently deemed necessary. I also provide a short overview of Aboriginal values in relation to mining and the tension that exists between engaging with the sector and maintaining cultural identity. There is little publically assessable ethnographic research undertaken in the research area recently. However, insights from a documentary made in the early 1990s are presented along with some more generalised research from other parts of Australia.

3.2 The Pilbara region

The Pilbara region is located in the north-west of the state of Western Australia (Figure 1). It is known for its vast reserves of natural resources, remarkable landscapes and rich cultural heritage. Covering an area of more than 500 000 square kilometres, the region extends from the Indian Ocean to the west and the Northern Territory border to the east. The Pilbara is a semi-arid region characterised by high temperatures (frequently exceeding 32 °C) and summer cyclones. Major attractions in the region include the Karijini and Millstream/Chichester National Parks, the Dampier Archipelago, early European cultural heritage and significant Aboriginal cultural heritage including large amounts of highly significant rock art.

Figure 1 Map of Pilbara region



Source: Edmunds (2013).

The 2011 national census counted just 59,894 people or 2.1% of the state's population usually resident in the region (ABS, 2011). The population is skewed towards males, with men representing 62% of the total population in the region compared to 50% for the state of Western Australia. Indigenous people represent 12% of the total population in the region, compared to 3.1% for the state. The region also hosts an extremely large FIFO workforce servicing the mining industry. FIFO work systems in the Australian mining industry have multiplied rapidly over the last twenty years, and FIFO operations are particularly prevalent in Western Australia (Storey, 2001). In just two of the four local government areas in the region (Ashburton and East Pilbara) the annual FIFO population is estimated at 29,000 (Walker et al., 2012). According to the Pilbara Development Commission, if current plans are realised the Pilbara region will grow from a total of 50,388 beds to 73,669 living in transient worker accommodation between 2012 to 2015, an increase of 46% (PDC, 2012a:6).

Four local government authorities administer the region. These are: the Shires of Ashburton, East Pilbara, Roebourne and the Town of Port Hedland. There are also established ports of Dampier, Cape Lambert, Onslow, and Port Hedland with their own Port Authorities. This area represents the northern jurisdiction of the Pilbara Native Title Service (PNTS) which is the Native Title Representative Body¹⁰ for the Pilbara under the umbrella of the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC).

The two major population centres Karratha and Port Hedland are located on the coast. There are a number of smaller towns in the region and 33 discrete Indigenous communities. A number of these Indigenous communities are close to urban centres, but most are remote small townships and outstations. Some of the smaller towns, in particular Dampier, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Wickham and Pannawonica were initially built by RTIO (then Hamersley and Robe River) when the company had full control and responsibility over all aspects of town management under State Agreements. These towns were considered ‘closed’ towns. Traditional ‘closed’ towns are no longer considered viable in Australia, although some still exist in remote areas (Jabiru, Roxby Downs, Weipa, and Pannawonica). A process of ‘normalisation’ occurred during the 1980s, with state and local government assuming some responsibility (Lea and Zehner, 1986). However, the degree to which the transfer of assets and services to government authorities has occurred varies across towns. The push in the 1980s and 1990s toward normalisation did not consider the development potential of local economies and the implications of mine closure. Consequently, the results have in many cases failed to induce sustainable outcomes for communities with the desired reduction in dependency on mining (Everingham et al., 2013; Horsley, 2013).

In a state and national economy dominated by the production of minerals and petroleum, the Pilbara is of enormous economic significance. The mining sector accounts for 74.6% of economic activity in the Pilbara (PDC, 2012b). Pilbara

¹⁰ “Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) are funded federally to represent the interests of Indigenous people within a geographic area under the terms of the *Native Title Act*” (Scambary, 2007:10).

Region's Gross Regional Product (GRP) is estimated at \$32.548 billion, representing 13.63% of Western Australia's Gross State Product (GSP) of \$238.870 billion (PDC, 2012c). The total value of minerals and petroleum production for the Pilbara region including offshore petroleum was \$75.1 billion in 2012-13, representing 77.2% of the total production value of minerals and petroleum in the state (DMP, 2013). Commonwealth offshore petroleum accounts for \$24.4 billion of this total. In the same year, the state received \$5.1 billion in royalties of which 70% were received from the iron ore sector (DMP, 2013). Just over a half (52%) of employed people in the Pilbara are working in the mining and construction sector, of which 83% are male (ABS, 2011). Other employment is also likely to be linked to the sector providing goods and services. There are several major companies operating in the region including RTIO, BHP Billiton, Fortescue Metals Group (FMG), Chevron and Woodside.

3.3 Historical overview and the advent of mining

Initial relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the region occurred through the pastoral industry in the 1860s. Convict labour was not permitted in the north-west (Wilson, 1980:18) providing an incentive for pastoralists to employ Aboriginal workers (Scambary, 2007). It also gave pastoralists a reason to oppose the development of missions on the grounds that they would compete for land and Aboriginal workers, as well as scrutinise labour practices (McLeod, 1984 cited in Holcombe, 2004). The Land Regulations Act 1864 gave Indigenous people rights to access pastoral lands for the purposes of sustenance (Biskup, 1973:18) and as such the process of colonisation was initially less intrusive than it had been in other areas of Australia (Scambary, 2007). However, there were times of serious conflict between pastoralists and Aboriginal people. Biskup (1973) reports several massacres of Aboriginal people by early pastoralists as retribution for the killing of livestock. Aboriginal people were also negatively impacted by the development of the pearling industry in the 1870s. Competition for labour was such that pearlers engaged in kidnapping and fraud to recruit their workforce (Biskup, 1973). The pearlers did not always return their Indigenous employees from where they had come from, influencing migration and subsequent breakdown of social systems (Dench, 1995

cited in Scambary, 2007:58). Further, while there were no missions in the area until 1945, under the government's protection policies many Indigenous people of mixed descent were removed to missions elsewhere (Costenoble, 2000 cited in Scambary, 2007:60).

Prior to the mid-1960s, Aboriginal people participated effectively in the mining industry and had relative social and economic autonomy (Wilson, 1980). The discovery of gold in 1878 and alluvial tin in 1882 at Nullagine prompted an influx on miners to the region (Biskup, 1973:35). By 1906 approximately 300 Aboriginal men and women were panning in the tin fields (Wilson 1980:152). Until 1967 Aboriginal people held 30 mining tenements in the north west and 28 in the eastern goldfields (Edmunds, 1989:48). However, Aboriginal participation in the mining industry significantly declined after the arrival of large mining companies, including RTIO, in the 1960s and 1970s. The small scale mining activities (yandying¹¹) of Aboriginal people could not compete with these large companies, none of which were interested in employing Aboriginal people at the time (Edmunds, 1989; Holcombe, 2004).

Development of the region was swift from this point on. Many non-Indigenous people moved to the region to take up employment opportunities in the mining industry and reside in the purpose built company towns (Scambary, 2007:75). This caused significant impacts for Pilbara Aboriginal people, who were excluded from the growing economy through lack of employment opportunities and restricted access to the new company run mining towns (Edmunds, 1989; Scambary, 2007). The absence of missions and other advocacy intermediaries (Holcombe, 2005:113) also contributed to the lack of consideration of Indigenous interests or concerns by the state. The Western Australia *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 1972 offered some protection over cultural heritage. However, it was not until the passing of the *Native Title Act* 1993 that Indigenous people, Australia-wide, had an opportunity to assert their rights and voice their concerns over mining developments¹². Despite relatively

¹¹ Yandying refers to a process whereby a winnowing dish and container, known as a yandy, is used to pan for gold. Women were most skilled at yandying (Wilson, 1980:153).

¹² Heritage legislation differs by jurisdiction. The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* 1976 also predates the Native Title Act but only applies in the Northern Territory.

recent legislative developments and rapid economic growth in the region, Aboriginal people in the region remain marginalised and poor (Taylor and Scambary, 2005). According to Altman (2009a:5) the reasons include: the limited capacity of Indigenous organisations to manage the impacts of mining and take advantage of large scale operations; the ambivalent responses from Aboriginal people to increased integration into the market economy, and the attitudes and responses from mining companies and governments that have failed to recognise the level of disadvantage experienced by communities adjacent to remote mines and their capacity to manage funds. In the context of agreements, Scambary (2007:168) argues that ‘complex structures, poor socio-economic status, and the lack of autonomy to use agreement-derived funds in the pursuit of aspirational initiatives, both in a mainstream sense and in the pursuit of alternate livelihood economic activities, restrict the space for Indigenous productive action’. On the issue of autonomy, it is not clear that somehow this would improve outcomes given the limited capacity amongst Indigenous organisations discussed elsewhere (Altman, 2009a; Martin, 2009).

In addition, pressure to reach agreements with resource companies has caused division amongst Aboriginal groups. For example, the recent well publicised example of the conflict amongst the Yindjibarndi people in relation to FMG’s Solomon hub project. Disagreement over this proposal has split the group and divided the Roebourne community (Edmunds, 2012). For anthropologist Mary Edmunds (2012:152), the town of Roebourne has been both ‘a touchstone of the devastation caused to Pilbara Aboriginal communities by resource development and long-term government deficits in the region’, and conversely, of new possibilities for Aboriginal people and a ‘reimagining, as part of a broader regional community, of the relationships between the oldest Pilbara residents and those who arrived in the wake of, and since, the initial mining boom in the 1960s’.

Sources of partial income for Aboriginal people generated through agreements include sitting fees for native title working groups, negotiation and committee meetings; undertaking heritage surveys for resource companies; distribution from trusts; and occasional gratuities (Holcombe, 2009:150). Aboriginal employment in mining, either directly or indirectly by providing services to the sector, provides

further means of economic engagement with the mining sector. Aboriginal employment in the mining industry has increased in both absolute and relative terms (Brereton and Parmenter, 2008). However, Aboriginal people in the Pilbara remain underrepresented relative to their proportion in the region's population. Indigenous people in the Pilbara represent 5.7% of the total mining workforce and 13.7% of the total population¹³ (ABS, 2006). While mining companies in the region have begun to proactively increase Indigenous employment at their operations, some have questioned the long term value for Indigenous people. For example, the industry has been criticised for employing those who are already job experienced, in preference to growing the labour pool (Lenegan, 2005). Further, Taylor observes (2009: 68) that any additional jobs created will only keep pace with the growth in Indigenous working age population. A further criticism is that most Aboriginal people are in entry level positions (such as truck driving), with limited career development opportunities and/or transferable skills to other employment when the mine closes (Brereton and Parmenter, 2008).

If the mining industry is to make a more sustainable contribution to Indigenous people in the region, it may need to take a different approach that includes addressing the historical legacies that have contributed to ongoing socio-economic disadvantage and exclusion of the Indigenous population, as well as look for other avenues to invest in economic engagement for Indigenous people. Both Taylor (2009) and Scambary (2007) argue that any strategies aimed at economic engagement of Indigenous people should accord with the development priorities and aspirations of Indigenous people that often include customary components. This relates to Altman's (2001; 2005a, 2005b; 2009b) work concerning the 'hybrid economy' - involving the state, market and customary components of Indigenous livelihoods. Altman observes that the most productive activity occurs when these components of the hybrid economy intersect. Holcombe (2009) further supports this view by highlighting that mining agreements do not need to be limited to mining-related employment, with many other ways finances from agreements can be utilised to build social, cultural and political capital in the region. Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine

¹³ There are likely to be more recent changes. However, the most recent ABS Census data (2011) does not report industry of employment by Indigenous status.

employees may accord with these arguments. However, only a few individuals from native title groups benefit from the development of a cultural awareness training business.

3.4 RTIO and Aboriginal people

CRA Limited, Rio Tinto's predecessor in Australia, began iron ore mining in the Pilbara region of Western Australia in 1966. RTIO now has a network of 14 mines and three shipping terminals (Figure 2). The company owns and operates a range of major infrastructure in the Pilbara including the largest privately-owned heavy freight rail network in Australia. RTIO also manages six pastoral stations in the region. RTIO Pilbara operations have an annual capacity of 237 million tonnes and plans are well advanced to increase capacity by more than 20 percent (RTIO, 2014). Many of the RTIO operations are located in close proximity to Aboriginal populations. Figure 1 shows the Aboriginal Native Title Groups on land impacted by RTIO operations (including rail networks) and which of these groups have signed land use agreements with the company at the time of writing.

Figure 2 RTIO operations and native title groups in the Pilbara region of Western Australia



Source (RTIO, 2013)

Other Rio Tinto operations in Australia located in close proximity to remote Aboriginal communities include: Argyle Diamond Mine in Western Australia; Energy Resources of Australia Ltd (ERA) Ranger Uranium Mine in the Northern Territory, and Rio Tinto Alcan's bauxite mine and alumina refinery in the Northern Territory and bauxite mine near Weipa, Queensland. All of these mines began operating with little consultation or engagement with Aboriginal people (Harvey, 2002).

The absence of significant land rights legislation or recognition prior to the 1970s meant that resource companies were not legally bound to involve Indigenous people in development decisions. As a result, the relationship between the industry and Indigenous groups has been adversarial, a feeling that remains in many areas. The mine and infrastructure developments in the Pilbara were carried out with no reference to Aboriginal people (Harvey, 2002). This was also the case for other Rio Tinto operations in Australia. For example, the Comalco (now Rio Tinto Alcan) bauxite mine lease near Weipa on western Cape York was allocated in 1958 with little meaningful consultation with local Aboriginal people (Harvey, 2002). In 1968, the Government forcibly removed residents near to the mine in the Mapoon Aboriginal community and relocated them to a new location in Cape York. Police burnt most of the houses and buildings to prevent residents returning (Langton, 2012).

Since then however, there has been a paradigm shift within Rio Tinto, as well as the broader resource industry, towards improving company-community relationships as part of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility agendas. The impetus for this shift within the industry has been the increased global recognition of Indigenous rights, legislative frameworks (particularly native title laws in Australia) and greater industry awareness of the reputational consequences and business case for Indigenous engagement. From the 1970s, new land rights legislation in Australia began to improve the bargaining position of Indigenous groups. In the Northern Territory, the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Commonwealth)* vested Indigenous People with rights that obliged resources

companies to negotiate comprehensive agreements to access traditional lands¹⁴. However, it was not until after 1992, when the High Court of Australia made the Mabo¹⁵ decision culminating in the *Native Title Act 1993*, that significant change began to occur in resource company attitudes to Indigenous communities. Recognition of native title does not give Indigenous People rights in or title to minerals in the land or a right to veto mining. However, it does afford Indigenous people a right to negotiate over mining and has led to agreement making as the preferred method of undertaking business by most companies (Harvey, 2002; Langton, 2012). Cultural heritage legislation in Australia may also require companies to engage with Aboriginal people around the protection of significant sites.

The current trend is for resource companies to negotiate Indigenous land use agreements (ILUAs) with Indigenous groups. These agreements initially had a narrow focus on providing financial benefits to Indigenous people. However, more recently agreements include a range of benefits aimed at delivering more long-term outcomes (Brereton and Parmenter, 2008). The first major mining agreement between a mining company and native title groups in the Pilbara was the 1997 Yandicoogina Land Use Agreement – the Yandi Agreement – between Hamersley Iron (now Rio Tinto) and the combined Nyiyaparli, Bunjima, and Innawonga native title claimants. The financial benefits this agreement provided native title groups is held in charitable trusts, leading one of the group to observe that, ‘we’ve got the richest trusts, and the poorest people’ (Scambary, 2007:165).

Continuing global developments in Indigenous rights have also created expectations, and in some cases, requirements for how company interactions with Indigenous peoples should be handled. A number of International organisations have recognised Indigenous Peoples as having distinct rights and adopted policies concerning Indigenous rights. In 1989, the International Labour Organization adopted ILO 169 (ILO, 1989), a legally binding treaty which becomes part of national law when

¹⁴ There were a few isolated examples of ‘voluntary’ agreements. For example, the Argyle Good Neighbour Agreement at Argyle Diamond mine in Western Australia (Doohan, 2006).

¹⁵ The Merriam people of the Murray Islands were found by the High Court to be entitled to their land. This decision led to what become known as ‘native title’ in Australia.

ratified by individual countries. It recognises a number of Indigenous rights including land access, health, education and employment conditions and is the most significant international treaty on Indigenous rights. A key right, in the context of mining, is the right to prior consultation. The convention also recognises that Indigenous customs differ from the dominant population and advocates for their protection. To date, the ILO 169 has been ratified by over 20 countries, although Australia is not one of them.

Though not legally-binding, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2008) is nevertheless important as it sets out aspirational commitments of signatory states to protect and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is also referenced by many Indigenous groups and their advocates. The UN ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework has been welcomed by the ICMM (ICMM, 2008) and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (United Nations, 2011) are designed to assist the implementation of the framework. While issues around Indigenous Peoples and mining are highly contested, these policies have created more discussion and pressure on companies.

Various international bodies, including the World Bank Group’s International Finance Corporation (IFC) has also adopted policies concerning Indigenous Peoples. While policies adopted by international finance institutions such as the IFC are not international law, they do contain conditions regarding the provision of financial loans for projects, including those that impact on Indigenous Peoples. More importantly, the IFC Performance Standard 7 on Indigenous Peoples (IFC, 2012) is commonly referred to by resource companies when reporting on social performance, even when finance from the IFC has not been sought. Likewise, the ICMM Position Statement on Mining and Indigenous Peoples (ICMM, 2013) sets out a statement of commitments that members make in relation to their engagement with Indigenous peoples. One of these commitments includes a limited commitment to securing free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples for projects developed on their land. Both the ICMM and IFC also place a lot of emphasis on culturally appropriate processes and heritage protection.

The shift in approach within the Rio Tinto Group was first publicly outlined in a speech presented by the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Rio Tinto, Leon Davis to the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 1995. Davis expressed the view that the industry needed to develop competencies in understanding and responding to community concerns including working and sharing with, and compensating Aboriginal people (Davis, 1995). The following year, Rio Tinto developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

For the RTIO business unit, the transition began in 1992, following a dispute with Aboriginal people over the development of the Marandoo mine in the Pilbara. This event caused the company a costly two-year delay as well as significant reputational damage. The Marandoo iron ore deposit is located on Eastern Guruma country in Karijini National Park. This event occurred just prior to the Native Title Act when the only legislative vehicle for the opposition was the Western Australia's Aboriginal Heritage Act. This Act required identification of sites of cultural importance in order to prevent or minimise disturbance or destruction, subject to a final decision by the Minister. Hamersley (now RTIO) asserted that anthropological and archaeological studies conducted since 1974 found no significant Indigenous sites (Darvall, 1991 cited in Trebeck, 2009:136). However, a subsequent study commissioned by the Western Australian Government found four sites of cultural significance, two of which were located on top of the ore body (Trebeck, 2009: 136). Despite strong Aboriginal opposition, the mine proceeded after the Western Australian Government intervened (Harvey, 2002:2). The State Government passed the Aboriginal Heritage (Marandoo) Act 1992, excluding the area from the application of the Aboriginal Heritage Act. This event, coupled with the recognition of native title rights for Indigenous peoples in Australia around the same time, was instrumental in RTIO reconsidering its approach to community relations (Harvey, 2002). In the same year, the company established the Aboriginal Training and Liaison (ATAL) group to increase Aboriginal employment at their operations and improve relations between the company and Aboriginal people. Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine

employees began to be implemented as part of this effort (see Chapter Four for a description of this process).

Delivery of the training is currently part of Rio Tinto's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), developed in 2011 and also included as a provision in recent land use agreements with Indigenous groups. A RAP is 'a business plan that uses an holistic approach to create meaningful relationships and sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians' (Reconciliation Australia, 2013). Rio Tinto's RAP uses terms such as 'partnership' and 'empower' throughout their RAP, with the ultimate aim of 'closing the gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in terms of socio-economic disadvantage (Rio Tinto, 2011).

Indigenous employment and training are currently central to RTIO policy concerning Indigenous people. Employment, training and business development are also important provisions of both local and regional agreements between RTIO and Indigenous people in the Pilbara. A target of 14% has been set for Indigenous participation in the RTIO workforce and RTIO has also committed to 14% of purchase of supplies and contracts from local Aboriginal people. In October 2010¹⁶, RTIO employed 742 Indigenous people, representing 8.6% of their total workforce. Half (50%) of Indigenous employees at RTIO occupy semi-skilled positions such as truck driving, followed by traineeships (20%), trades (12%), administration (7%), and other (11%). There are currently no Indigenous people in management. This data reflects the pattern of Indigenous employment in the mining industry Australia-wide. Indigenous women in RTIO largely occupy semi-skilled positions (29%), administration (29%), and traineeships (28%) and other (14%). Although higher employment targets have been set as part of agreements with Indigenous people, high turnover rates amongst Indigenous employees may hinder efforts to meet these targets.

RTIO's overall turnover rate for Indigenous employees in 2010 was 18.5%, compared with 10.85% for the workforce as a whole. High turnover amongst

¹⁶ More recent data was not accessible at the time of writing.

Indigenous employees has been attributed to a perceived lack of career development, the level of discomfort experienced in taking ‘cultural leave’¹⁷ to attend ceremony due to the perception amongst non-Indigenous workers that this was unfair or unnecessary, and employment opportunities at other resource companies (Parmenter et al., 2011). The rapid expansion of industry in the Pilbara and subsequent labour shortages, coupled with the fact that other major resources companies are also focused on increasing the representation of Indigenous people in their workforce, means that it is relatively easy for skilled Indigenous employees to change employers. This creates competition amongst resource companies for these employees, providing further impetus for RTIO to be seen as the employer of choice for Indigenous people. Cultural awareness training for mine employees is seen by RTIO as having the potential to contribute to this goal. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, there are many problems associated with determining the efficacy of such training.

3.5 Aboriginal values in relation to mining

Aboriginal responses to developments in the Pilbara have been mixed, with an ongoing tension between ‘the imperative to maintain cultural identity and the potential cultural assimilation implied by their increasing integration into a market economy’ (Scambary 2007: iv). As indicated earlier, cultural awareness training for mine employees is implemented by RTIO as part of a strategy to increase Aboriginal employment, improve and maintain good relationships with Traditional Owners, and provide a business opportunity to those involved. However, there is an often polarised debate in Australia on how to address Indigenous disadvantage and the role of mining companies. There is a perceived tension or contradiction between engagement with the market economy and maintaining Aboriginal values and culture. For example, some have observed that mining and associated negative environmental impacts may be in direct opposition with the Indigenous worldview where a responsibility exists for looking after ‘country’ (Trigger and Robinson,

¹⁷ Cultural leave is intended for local Aboriginal people with obligations to attend ceremony. This does not apply to all Aboriginal employees.

2001) and others argue that engagement with the industry, and the economic benefits it provides, does not have to come at a cost of culture (Langton, 2002; Pearson 2000:2009). A brief overview of certain characteristics of local Aboriginal values in relation to engagement with mining are presented here in relation to this debate.

Early research in the Pilbara region includes Withnell's work on the Yinjibarndi people in the Roebourne area (Withnell 1901), Radcliffe-Brown's study which included the Kariyarra (1913), Kingsley Palmer's work (1975, 1977 and 1985) and Bates's survey of coastal and inland Indigenous people 1904-1912 (Bates, 1901; 1947; 1985). However, little publically available ethnographic research has been undertaken in the region more recently. The highly awarded 1993 documentary film 'Exile and the Kingdom' (Rijavec, 1993) provides some insight into how Aboriginal people, in particular those living around Roebourne, view their world. The narrator of the film, Injibarndi elder¹⁸ Roger Solomon, was involved in the very first cultural awareness training session at RTIO in the early 1990s (see Chapter Four for a description of his role). He describes the creation period as 'when the world was soft':

In Injibarndi Law, it is said that before the creation sky was very low. When the creation spirits got up from the earth, they lifted the sky and the world out of the sea. The creation spirits are call Marrga, they still live in this country. In the early morning, the fog that drifts over the water is from their breakfast fires. It is the Marrga who shaped and named the country, and all the bird and animal, and finally the Narrangarr, Aboriginal people, came from the Marrga themselves. In other places they call this the Dreaming, but here we call it Nurratudjukam, when the world was soft, the learning times. Marrga spirits live in the rocky mountains and gullies of the table lands, and are dangerous if you don't approach and speak to them in the proper way.'

Roger Solomon in Rijavec (1993).

For Pilbara Aboriginal people, these creation stories 'establish the relationships between the different groups through whose country they journeyed, creating networks of ownership, responsibility, and reciprocity' (Edmunds, 2012:122).

¹⁸ An 'elder' is a respectful term used Aboriginal people to signify 'age, experience and local standing' (Merlan, 2014:9).

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose (1996) demonstrates the intimate nature of the relationships between Aboriginal people and their country:

People talk to country in the same way they would talk to a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy ... country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness' (1996:7).

Communication with country is two-way, if you are doing the right thing ecologically, the results will be social and spiritual, and vice versa (Rose, 1996; 2002:49). Further, the significance of the land is not fixed but continues to be negotiated through a process of 'reading' the landscape (Trigger and Robinson, 2001:104). Aboriginal people from the west Pilbara comment that the land can be read like a book (Brandenstein, 1970, cited in Trigger and Robinson, 2001:104), and 'their language itself comes from the ground' (Trigger and Robinson, 2001:104). This land can only be read by someone who has been through the relevant rituals and understands the language.

This flexible pattern of interpretation has provided local explanations of the very presence of resources in the Pilbara region. For example, Woodside Petroleum's natural gas project located on the coastline has an onshore emergency flare tower. Light from the permanent gas flame can assume aurora-like characteristics due to reflection off the clouds. This is interpreted by some local Aboriginal people as 'spears in the ground', a sign that 'something' might be there other than a safety device (Trigger and Robinson, 2001:106).

The responsibilities of Indigenous people to their land is similar to the relationship of parents to their children and the ancestors to current living human beings (Wilkins 1988). Pilbara Injibarndi Elder Roger Solomon (in Rijavec, 1993) explains kinship (Galarra) in relation to country:

Galarra relationships apply equally to all things in the world: plants, animals, the sun, rain, wind, and each part of the country, all belong to one of the four Galarra groups, and so are related to us in the same way as an uncle, cousin, or parent.

Kinship relations are complex and not a focus of this thesis, however, the point to make here is that these features have relevance for how we are to understand Aboriginal values in relation to engagement with mining and the economic opportunities it brings. Aboriginal people in the Pilbara align closely with their named language group (of which there are 31) and their associated country (Edmunds, 2012). However, extensive intermarriage provided individuals with a range of potential affiliations that can be invoked depending on the situation (Edmunds, 2012:124). The kinship system across language groups provides a structure for social organisation and also heavily influences modes of governance arrangements in the region. As, Hunt and Smith (2006: 10) observe:

Not all families are born equal; some are demographically and politically more 'equal' than other families. Some families are larger than others, and some senior family members are more influential sources of authority in community life than others. Senior members of traditional land-owner groups ... have particularly powerful rights and interests that permeate all areas of community governance.

Further, 'competitive politics of reputation, especially amongst senior individuals', can operate in tension with shared customary knowledge when establishing meanings of land (Trigger and Robinson, 2001:114).

These relations also provide a structure for certain ethical considerations amongst groups that have relevance for how Aboriginal people potentially engage with the general economy (Austin-Broos and MacDonald, 2005). Of particular relevance are factors such as the strong ethos of egalitarianism (Trigger, 2005) and associated pressure to share with kin or 'demand sharing' (Peterson, 1993) amongst Aboriginal societies that work against individual material accumulation. The tension between communal interests and the rights of individuals is also a limiting and restricting factor discouraging Indigenous enterprise associated with mining in the Pilbara (Holcombe, 2009:152). Issues around taking positions of authority over other Aboriginal employees and kinship avoidance customs also influence employment outcomes for Aboriginal people (Brereton and Parmenter 2008).

However, it is important to note here that, since colonisation, Aboriginal people do not live in bounded entities but in intercultural worlds (Merlan 1998; Hinkson and Smith 2005), and the capacity for Aboriginal people to engage in the mainstream economy is arguably changing all the time. For example, Scambary (2007:173) notes that the skin system in the Pilbara is not adhered to as strictly in contemporary times in relation to marriage. While it will vary between regions, Aboriginal social norms in Australia comprise a mix of customary and western values (Altman, 2009a:7). The assumption that maintaining cultural distinctiveness and increasing integration into a market economy are mutually exclusive is increasingly being challenged. Prominent Aboriginal academic Marcia Langton recently argued in support of engagement between Aboriginal people and mining companies as an opportunity to ‘catapult’ Aboriginal people into the mainstream economy, and is critical of those who oppose this assertion:

... on the left, and among those opinion leaders who hang on to the idea of the new ‘noble savage’, the Aboriginal poverty is invisible, masked by their ‘wilderness’ ideology. They describe the Aboriginal situation through a romantic lens. Their unspoken expectation is that no Aboriginal group should become engaged in an economic development (Langton, 2012:1).

Pearson (2009) goes further to argue that the maintenance of Aboriginal culture requires some form of integration. For example, some Aboriginal employees at Century Mine in Queensland regard their employment as a strategic path to gaining the resources to hunt and live on specific tracts of land (Scambary, 2009:187).

Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine employees is one way in which mining companies can address historical legacies and also may accord, at least to some extent, with Altman’s notion of the hybrid economy. While the economic opportunity that providing cultural awareness training presents are limited to a few individuals (and therefore subject to the same tensions between individual versus communal benefit), there are potential benefits in terms of addressing negative attitudes held by non-Aboriginal people towards Aboriginal mine employees and the broader Aboriginal population. This issue has been identified as a barrier to Aboriginal retention in the mining sector (Parmenter et al., 2011) and also likely to

impact on broader engagement in the mainstream economy and relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people more generally.

3.6 Conclusion

Since the 1960s, the relationship between mining companies and Aboriginal people of the Pilbara has been largely antagonistic. More recently, however, legislative developments within Australia, reinforced by international expectations, have led to a strong focus on agreement making between Aboriginal groups and mining companies. Whether these agreements provide positive outcomes for Aboriginal people is highly contested, with an ongoing tension between market engagement and maintaining 'culture'. Operating in this space is the phenomenon of Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine employees. The following chapter outlines the training at RTIO.

Chapter Four: Cultural Awareness Training at RTIO.

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides a historical overview of how cultural awareness training at RTIO was constructed and describes how it is currently being delivered. Unless otherwise indicated in text, the qualitative data is taken from interviews with Aboriginal presenters of the training and RTIO employees in community relations, training or human resource roles based in the corporate office in Perth as well as FIFO mining operations and residential towns in the Pilbara. All of these employees work in roles that require engagement with Aboriginal people¹⁹. Their names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. This data directly links to issue of culture as difference, as further discussed in subsequent chapters.

4.2 History of cultural awareness training at RTIO

Cultural awareness training at RTIO has existed in some form since the early 1990s. Many of the current RTIO community relations practitioners interviewed were not aware of how, why and when the training first began within the business. However, a former Hamersley Iron Ore (now RTIO) employee who was involved in setting up the first session was interviewed. According to this informant (who I will call ‘Sam’) the very first cultural awareness training to be implemented at Hamersley Iron Ore was around 1992, shortly after the ATAL (Aboriginal Training and Liaison) Department was established. The impetus for the training was a recognition by the company of the business case for developing good relationships with Aboriginal people (Harvey, 2002). The Marandoo conflict in the Pilbara had just caused the project a two-year delay and subsequent reputation damage to the company (RTIO, 2006). Around the same time, the mining industry was experiencing similar conflict on a global scale, the Mabo case had been decided and the Native Title Act in Australia was just about to pass (see previous chapter for a discussion on the Marandoo conflict and the paradigm shift within Rio Tinto).

¹⁹ For more details of the interviewees, see Chapter One.

This informant, Sam, was a non-Aboriginal man living in the Pilbara at the time. Sam worked in the Pilbara region for over 25 years and currently resides in Perth. He is an automotive mechanic by trade, and has also completed a teaching Degree at University. During the 1980s Sam taught Aboriginal students at a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) college and later directed at a regional vocational education institution. The Manager of ATAL, also a non-Aboriginal man who had been working for the company since 1981, offered Sam a job delivering cultural awareness training for the company. Sam declined the offer of employment because he was unsure he could trust that the company had good intentions. Sam had witnessed the Marandoo conflict and was not impressed with how the company treated Aboriginal people. Instead, he asked a friend and respected Aboriginal elder to deliver the training. According to Sam, the elder was very skilled at presenting and wanted the following for the training:

He was fantastic at telling stories how his life had been affected by mining and the unintended impacts of mining, quite a moving experience. He wanted people to better understand why Aboriginal people are the way they are. He had a wonderful capacity to not be adversarial but to be conciliatory. As Hamersley people started to come to these courses they realised it was not going to be a kind of bash you around the ears kind of session that's implicit in the material (Sam, personal communication 24.05.13)

In 1996, Sam decided to join RTIO in a community relations role. He believed the company was changing its attitudes towards Aboriginal people and saw an opportunity to help create better outcomes. By this time, some other Rio Tinto operations were also beginning to implement cultural awareness training. Pilbara elders visited Argyle Diamond Mine in the Kimberley region of Western Australia to witness their two-day program. On return, two Aboriginal groups were formed to present cultural awareness training, one based in Tom Price (inland) and one in Roebourne (closer to the coast). The elders constructed a half-day program and a two-day program. The Roebourne course involved travelling out to sites as well as an intensive training session in the classroom. The first day of training began in the classroom and after lunch the group headed out bush for an overnight camp. The

presenters of the training were selected on the basis that they had authority to speak about certain sites and share cultural information. For one group of presenters there were about eight people involved but only two were the main presenters. The second group included different people at different times, with the younger Aboriginal people joining in as well. Sam commented on the impact of the training at the time:

It matters, it absolutely matters. For so many people, ignorance is the problem. It was massive change for people in their thinking. For some, quite profound change where they themselves became change agents ... they would go out and nullify some of the negativity that was out there about Aboriginal behaviour because they would have an understanding as to why and also the communication differences. Some courses were better than others but it changed people's lives (Sam, personal communication 24.05.13).

Cultural awareness training at RTIO continued on and off in different forms for years but increased significantly from 2011 when the training became a provision of a regional agreement between RTIO and native title groups. The shift from individual mine agreements to regional and/or native title claim group-wide agreements occurred in 2006 when the company signed a number of framework agreements with native title groups called binding initial agreements (BIAs). These framework agreements reduced duplication by allowing RTIO to negotiate on a claim-wide basis as opposed to a mine by mine basis. They have also standardised mining benefits calculation for royalty equivalents for the whole of the Pilbara and set the tone for a number of ways that environmental and other approvals would be dealt with across the region. In addition, the agreements committed RTIO to negotiate further over areas of interest to Traditional Owners, one of which was cultural awareness training for RTIO employees. Further, an internal report commissioned in 2009 to identify best practice in agreement making with Aboriginal people for the mining industry supported the inclusion of cultural awareness training in agreements. The authors of the report or 'wise heads' – as they were known by Rio Tinto employees at the time – comprised two Australian academics and a lawyer.

A RTIO community relations practitioner, 'Grace', who was involved in the negotiations with Aboriginal groups also mentioned Aboriginal employment as a driver for cultural awareness training:

The reason cultural awareness training became part of agreements is that there has also been agreement within the business and by the body of Traditional Owners that if you are seeking Aboriginal employment outcomes you need a competent workforce. Mining is notorious for having people who just don't get it in this area (Grace, personal communication, 23.05.13).

In addition to creating employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within the RTIO workforce, the implementation of the training was seen as creating business opportunities for local Aboriginal groups.

In March 2011, Rio Tinto entered into a number of legally binding agreements (Participation Agreements) with individual Pilbara native title groups. In addition to these local agreements, RTIO entered into a regional agreement with five Pilbara native title groups (Regional Framework Deed). This regional agreement includes seven 'Regional Standards', one of which is cultural awareness training. The other six are: employment and training; business development and contracting; cultural heritage management; land access; environmental management; and, life of mine planning. As noted earlier, Rio Tinto has also committed to provide cultural awareness training to 100% of its workforce in their Reconciliation Action Plan (Rio Tinto, 2013b).

4.3 Current delivery and curriculum

Aboriginal cultural awareness training is currently delivered by seven different Aboriginal groups across all 14 RTIO mines, three ports and rail network in the Pilbara as well as in the capital city of Perth. The frequency with which training sessions are conducted varies by site, and is dependent on the number of employees who require the training. On average, the training occurs once a fortnight at each operation. The relatively high frequency of the training is attributable to the large workforce and high turnover within the industry. Attendance at the training is a

mandatory aspect of employment contracts. All new employees are required to attend the training within the first year of employment and existing employees are required to attend training sessions once every two years. For FIFO sites, the training occurs at the mine site; for residential sites, the training occurs at an assigned training centre. The training is facilitated by one or two Pilbara Traditional Owners. When these presenters are unable to attend, a RTIO Aboriginal employee originally from outside the Pilbara will fill in. However, as discussed in the following section (4.4), allowing others to present has been a contentious issue. Many of the current presenters have no or little experience in facilitating training.

There are a number of internal RTIO documents that define the aims, goals and purpose of cultural awareness training. The ‘Cultural Awareness Training Regional Standard’ states that the aim is to ‘improve awareness of Aboriginal culture with both employees and long term contractors whilst providing Tradition Owner groups with a chance to deliver training on a fee for service basis’ (RTIO 2012a:6). The participant’s workbook provides more detail as to what an ‘awareness of Aboriginal culture’ might entail. The purpose of cultural awareness training is to ‘build the knowledge and skills employees need to work effectively with each other, across cultures’ (RTIO 2012b:3). The cultural awareness training presentation put together by RTIO lists four goals: (1) to develop an understanding of local Aboriginal culture, customs and ways of life; (2) to provide appropriate cultural knowledge and understanding to ensure a better work environment; (3) to enable people to relate to and communicate with Aboriginal people without risk of being considered ‘insensitive’ to cultural protocols, and (4) to provide employees with knowledge of the commitment Rio Tinto has to Aboriginal people and sustainable development (RTIO 2012c:2).

As discussed in Chapter One, I attended three sessions of cultural awareness training: one in Perth, and two in the Pilbara. One of the sessions in the Pilbara was located at a residential site on the coast and the other was located at an inland FIFO mine. In all three sessions I attended the office chairs were set up behind several tables in a horseshoe shape. The sessions ran for approximately 4 hours in length (including two

fifteen minute breaks) with up to 20 participants in each session. The sessions were primarily lecture-based using a PowerPoint presentation. One session included the use of video content, and one session utilised cultural artefacts. There was no role playing or group work. At times, the presenters asked participants questions, but there was little group interaction. One course utilised a quiz, and all three courses used audience participation in Aboriginal language pronunciation.

While the courses exhibited many basic similarities in presentation styles, the content and emphasis on specific content varied across the three locations. Topics covered included: the history of the Pilbara region, government legislation affecting Aboriginal people, native title boundaries and language groups, Rio Tinto agreements with Aboriginal groups and cultural heritage. The cultural awareness training sessions in the Pilbara also included a Welcome to Country²⁰ (WTC), and some, albeit limited, content on kinship relations and content related to working with Aboriginal people. By contrast, Perth training focused on the ‘business case’ for Rio Tinto engagement with Aboriginal people with no content on kinship or working with Aboriginal people. There was no discussion of the concept of culture and its contested nature at any training (see Chapter Two).

The interview data point to a lack of clarity around the aims and intended outcomes of the training across the business and between the different social actors involved. When asked about the aims of training, RTIO community relations practitioners responsible for the implementation of cultural awareness training primarily focused on its function as a human resource management issue. They want to ensure employees are aware of the legal agreements between RTIO and Aboriginal groups and the importance of maintaining good relationships with Aboriginal people. Some comments from community relations practitioners included:

The aim is for them to understand they are on TO [Traditional Owner] land and the company’s position on that, we recognize that, they can’t

²⁰ A Welcome to Country is usually presented by an elder who identifies as being from the local area and is usually a short speech. Sometimes dance, music and smoking ceremonies are included (Merlan, 2014).

just go anywhere and do what they like (Ruth, personal communication, 04.06.2013).

It's really about having that relationship. Yes these are commercial agreements to have land access but also about working through and having relationships so when it comes time to develop a new project it will be easier to negotiate (Zoe, personal communication, 23.05.2013).

For the Aboriginal presenters of the training, the aims varied, but all related to the theme of recognition of past suffering of Aboriginal people in the region and the issue of dispossession. For the city based cultural awareness training presenter, 'Bob', the main aim of the training was to present the 'business case' for Rio Tinto relationships with Traditional Owners, which included content on agreements. However, for the other Aboriginal presenters interviewed, who are based in the Pilbara ('Mark', 'Dean' and 'Sherie'²¹) the importance of agreements was secondary. The main aims for them were to dispel myths about Aboriginal people, educate employees about their country, and inform them about the past mistreatment of Aboriginal people and the issues faced by Aboriginal people today. Comments from presenters included:

I am hoping they take away a lot more awareness of us Aboriginal people and the plight that we have been through from the beginning, get them to understand it. ('Mark', personal communication 07.06.2013.)

Our people really felt that it was needed because Rio Tinto as a company plus contractors, who are working on our sites, don't have any idea about Traditional Owners. And it's important that they learn about how we see country and how it's different to how non-Indigenous people see it ('Sherie', personal communication 05.06.2013).

Traditional Owners want it to help educate broader personnel within Rio, particularly those starting at new mine sites where there is no town. People would just see it as empty land and not understand that that land has a history ('Dean', personal communication 10.06.2013).

²¹ This presenter was interviewed but her training session was not observed. See Chapter One for more detail.

RTIO community relations practitioners who meet with Aboriginal people regularly as part of their job reported that the primary concern for these people is that issues around the protection of cultural heritage is being addressed in the presentation. They are concerned about employees disrespecting sites of significance or not reporting any incidents.

The varied different stated aims in training packages between sites, as well as between RTIO community relations practitioners and presenters indicates that RTIO and Traditional Owners do not have a clear and shared aim for the training. The difference in aims has influenced what content is included or disregarded in the training. This lack of clarity and agreement may have been, in part, a consequence of the shift to compliance-based delivery of the training. As noted, cultural awareness training at RTIO has existed in some form as far back as 1992. However, it is only more recently with the inclusion of the training in agreements that it has significantly increased across all the business units. The Cultural Awareness Training Standard sets out specific targets for RTIO and Pilbara Traditional Owner groups who have opted into this agreement. This element of compliance drives a particular way of thinking for RTIO community relations practitioners with cultural awareness training responsibilities. On the one hand, the provision of cultural awareness training in agreements has driven its delivery, and on the other, the subsequent pressure on these RTIO employees to ensure that agreement commitments are met may have contributed to a shift in focus to meeting targets, rather than on the quality of the course itself and whether or not it is meeting its intended objectives. Interview participants, both presenters and RTIO community relations employees, could not recall a time when all the parties involved sat down and communicated what content was important to the different actors involved and why.

4.4 Selection of presenters and content

Up until the signing of agreements in 2011, the presenters were selected by RTIO on the basis of past experience in the provision of this kind of training. They were primarily Aboriginal people from other parts of Australia with established cultural

awareness training businesses. The incorporation of cultural awareness training into agreements with individual native title groups meant that RTIO would be expected to contract Aboriginal people from that group to present the training. Both Traditional Owners and RTIO were in agreement with this approach, as cultural awareness training was seen as providing a business opportunity for local Aboriginal people. It was also accepted by RTIO that the training should be based on local Aboriginal culture, presented by someone with the cultural authority to do so.

A senior RTIO community relations practitioner interviewed used a ‘rings of the onion’ analogy to describe RTIO’s approach to engagement with Aboriginal groups. The centre of the onion is the native title group or Traditional Owners, followed by the wider Aboriginal community (‘Steve’, personal communication 11.06.2013). The current presenters were selected by RTIO on the basis of their reliability and in some cases, their seniority as people who can and can’t speak for country. RTIO received endorsement of that person through a Local Implementation Committee (LIC). Each LIC is made of six Aboriginal people from the native title group and three RTIO representatives. The Aboriginal members are appointed by their Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC).²².

The transition from using existing cultural awareness training providers to Traditional Owners was not an easy one for RTIO employees to manage. Community relations practitioner Grace explained the lack of capacity amongst Traditional Owners:

... don’t underestimate the fact that there are a lot of people in the Pilbara who have aspirations in this area, but very few who have the capacity to be able to show up every week when we need them and have the resources such as a car. We have been very careful about who we have selected because we know they are reliable and they have the seniority and the endorsement of their group to participate in the process ...

also it is very, very hard to get up in front of fifteen miners who don’t have interfaces with Aboriginal People – let alone very land connected Aboriginal people – and they ask very racist questions. Not

²² PBCs are organisations set up to represent the interests of Traditional Owners under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

because they are being racist but because they don't know any better. There are some presenters who absolutely fall in a heap or they go off their face at that person. Or they just walk out. Very few can tolerate comments about alcohol, domestic abuse and then come out and keep going. (Grace, personal communication, 23.05.2013).

It was also difficult to cease using the existing presenters (who have not been endorsed by the current LIC). 'Ruth', a senior community relations practitioner at RTIO mentioned one case where the existing presenter had been given permission by elders in the past, but the current elders repealed this permission:

We have had an incident where someone presenting cultural awareness training was given permission to do so from elders but the new LIC – which is a different group of elders, kind of 10 years on – have decided they don't want that person to do it anymore. He was given permission to do it but it was taken away as a new generation of people came through. And he was related, it wasn't like he wasn't attached to the area, and from our perspective, quality. He was fantastic. What were quite good set ups have now been ruined by the agreements. (Ruth, personal communication, 04.06.2013)

Ruth told the presenter he was no longer required due to the new regional agreement and was replaced by a new presenter endorsed by the LIC. For the training division at RTIO, this was a frustrating period. The new presenter was often absent without warning causing significant tension between the training division employees who were required to explain the absence to waiting participants (often the same participants several times) and the communities division who advocated for this approach. It also may have caused the unintended consequence of reinforcing negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people being unreliable (see following Chapter Five for a discussion on the how the training is received by mine workers).

Delivering cultural awareness training can be well paid work, with reports of presenters being paid between \$2500 and \$7000 per four hour session. Because the training is required to be implemented under legal agreements, and the presenter is required to be endorsed by the LIC, RTIO may have little choice but to pay the desired cost when only one presenter is endorsed. RTIO have since reviewed their payment system to be more in line with other professional consultant fees. However, this has met with some resistance from those who were being paid the higher amount. Further, other organisations in the area (such as the local council) who wish

to use cultural awareness training providers to train their employees, are not in a position to match the price paid by RTIO.

The benefits involved in presenting cultural awareness training have caused some competition between those who wish to present. A RTIO senior community relations practitioner commented:

Self-interest comes out in somewhat of a intimidatory regard where 'I'm a big burly bloke with a big cowboy hat and I'm senior in age and so I'm more comfortable than you are and I have to speak for our group. Not you. you're a kid'. That may not necessarily be a widely held view but there's the intimidatory influence that does actually occur ... 'cause this is a commercial opportunity for me and I need to protect that' (Steve, personal communication, 11.06.2013).

Another RTIO senior community relations practitioner reported an instance where a cultural awareness presenter who was endorsed by the LIC, only later to have this endorsement reversed:

... they have said 'yes, we agree that person can present'. But now they're saying 'we could make that money so we want to do it now'. And that's not unusual in Aboriginal or in any business market. We see that a little bit, so it is a tricky one. How much do you pay for cultural information and education and then who rightfully can and can't give it? (Ruth, personal communication, 04.06.2013).

According to community relations practitioner Grace, the politics of Aboriginal groups in the Pilbara is such that, in the absence of many of the elders who have now passed away, some people assert their authority to speak for country through whoever their mother and father is. They assert that they are the keepers of the language and custodians of a large part of that country therefore they simply will not allow anyone else to participate in that process. The competition for presenting cultural awareness training is also likely to relate to politics of reputation amongst Aboriginal people. For example, Trigger (1992:115-118) noted that senior Aboriginal people in the Gulf region of Queensland not only reveal and withhold knowledge strategically amongst themselves, but also to impress non-Aboriginal mining company personnel and the known anthropologist. The requirement of training providers to be Traditional Owners endorsed by the LIC limits the pool of

providers that RTIO can utilise. The risk here is that the benefits of cultural awareness training, both financial and social, will be unevenly distributed within Traditional Owner groups and cause some backlash from those not able to participate, and therefore benefit, financially or otherwise.

The cultural awareness training presenters whose training was observed in this research were primarily chosen by Grace and endorsed by the LIC. Grace is an Aboriginal woman from the Perth region and has been working with Aboriginal groups in the Pilbara in her community relations role at RTIO for many years. All the presenters were already known to Grace. She explained that the first presenter, 'Dean', is a Traditional Owner and former employee of RTIO and was chosen due to his knowledge of the business, and reliability. The second presenter, 'Mark', is a senior Traditional Owner and a highly respected man. He lives nearby to the FIFO mine sites and is very reliable, 'so there was no question that he was the one and only choice for that area' (Grace, personal communication, 23.05.2013). The third presenter, 'Bob' approached Grace and asked for some work. He is a Traditional Owner from the Pilbara area who had recently moved to Perth where he currently presents cultural awareness training. None of the three presenters had experience presenting cultural awareness training, although one did have some experience in the tourism industry as a National Park Ranger.

The content of the training was selected by both RTIO and the presenters, and in some cases, Aboriginal elders of the group. RTIO has an internal 'generic' cultural awareness training PowerPoint presentation. This presentation does not focus on a specific Aboriginal group. Rather, it outlines some 'generic' features of 'Aboriginal culture'. The presenters were given this presentation and asked to input their own local content. The presenters were then given an opportunity to present internally to RTIO who provided feedback. According to those interviewed (the presenters and RTIO community relations practitioners), limited changes were made to the final 'product' after these feedback sessions.

The presenters responded in different ways to this process. Dean wanted RTIO to accept ‘a product’ that was developed solely by the Aboriginal group. Dean explains:

We didn’t want it like that. We wanted them to accept what we developed. Ours was developed in conjunction with our community, so the elders had a lot of input into it ... we had a consultation process where we spoke to community, set up meetings ... because at the time I had a fair amount of knowledge but I was a bit rusty as well so I wanted input from my elders because they’re the ones who know everything and it was good ... I used to get them involved in the welcomes but these days they are very busy. (Dean, personal communication, 10.06.2013).

Mark has also put together his own content in consultation with a former presenter of cultural awareness training at RTIO. Bob uses the presentation put together by RTIO, but only uses some of the original content. The details of the content for each session are discussed in the following chapter.

These presenters have not had any disagreements with RTIO about course content. All of the presenters said that they felt they had ownership of the course content. There were mixed responses from RTIO Perth based employees about how much control over content the company should have. While many were supportive of content selected by presenters, this came with a condition that this content should include information on agreements, and should not be confrontational. Further, one RTIO Perth based training manager commented on the need to link the content with the intended outcome of the training of valuing diversity:

One of the traps is that the course is constructed by TOs [Traditional Owners] and they decide what is in it, so it is all what they feel they need to tell. But when you think about who is this training actually for, the employee who will be engaging with a different culture, if that’s the centre of your design ... unfortunately we bombard the participants with content but it doesn’t get the people to turn the lights on [i.e. realise] that difference is actually a good thing. (Rachel, personal communication, 24.05.2013).

4.5 Conclusion:

This chapter has presented an overview of the construction of Aboriginal cultural awareness training at RTIO, from the early 1990s to current day curriculum and delivery. The interview data indicates no clear, and shared aims for the training amongst the social actors involved. There is a discomfort amongst organisers as to who the appropriate person to present is, and how much control each party should have over content. The financial and social benefits associated with presenting have also created competition amongst Aboriginal people. The next chapter will present analysis on the content of the training and the survey of how training participants responded to it.

Chapter Five: Training Content and Responses From Participants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports some key demographic information about the participants in the training and presents the major themes that emerged from an analysis of the training content, interview and survey data. The analysis revealed three major themes that provide a framework for explaining the training content and how this is being understood and responded to by the different participants of the study. These themes are: (1) Dispossession, colonization and belonging; (2) Conceptualising Aboriginal culture and Identity, and (3) Outcomes of the training. The data is taken from the training participant surveys, individual interviews and observation of three cultural awareness training sessions during May-June 2013.

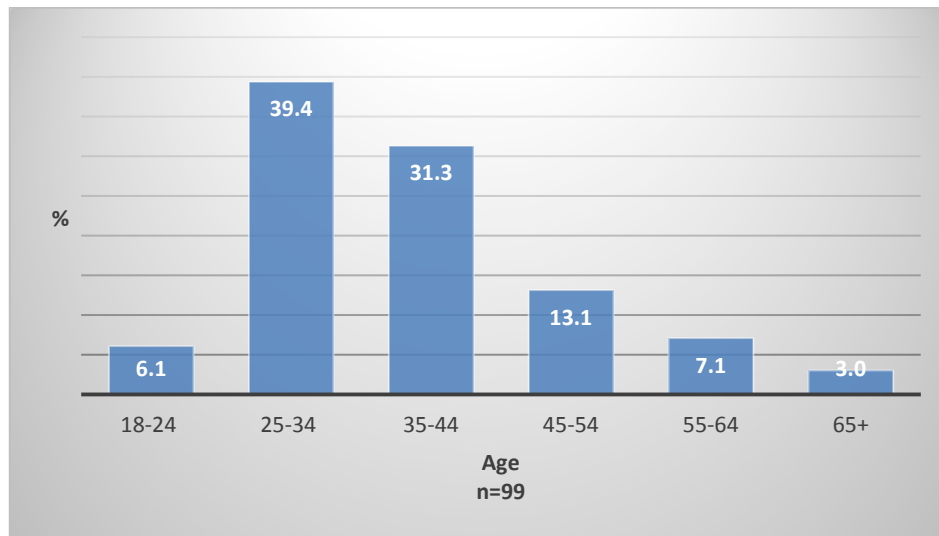
5.2 Profile of survey participants

The mining workforce at RTIO has some distinct characteristics that are important to understand when interpreting how the participants of the training respond to the training. An overview of who attends the training was gained through a participant survey administered to 105 RTIO employees following cultural awareness training sessions across five training sessions: four in the Pilbara and one in Perth during the field work period of May-June 2013 (see Chapter One for details). Ninety-nine participants returned the survey, representing a 94% response rate. Given the relatively small size of the sample, care must be taken in generalising to the organisation as a whole.

The great majority of survey participants were male (91%), which is an over representation of males compared to the total RTIO workforce (80%). This could be due to fact that many of the participants were in male dominated roles such as truck drivers and trades. These roles experience the highest turnover in the mining workforce and employees in these roles are therefore more likely to be attending induction training. Those who identified as Aboriginal represented 12% of participants, and Torres Strait Islander 1.3%. The majority of participants were aged

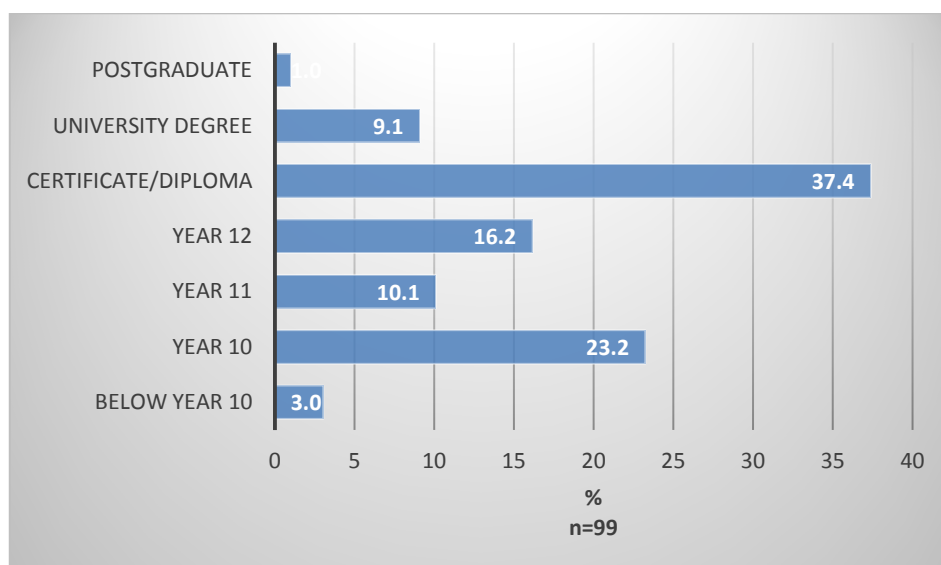
between 25 and 34 (39.4%) and 35 and 44 (31.3%) (see Figure 3). There were very few younger participants aged between 18 and 24 (6.1%) and even fewer older people aged 65 and over (3%).

Figure 3 Age of survey participants



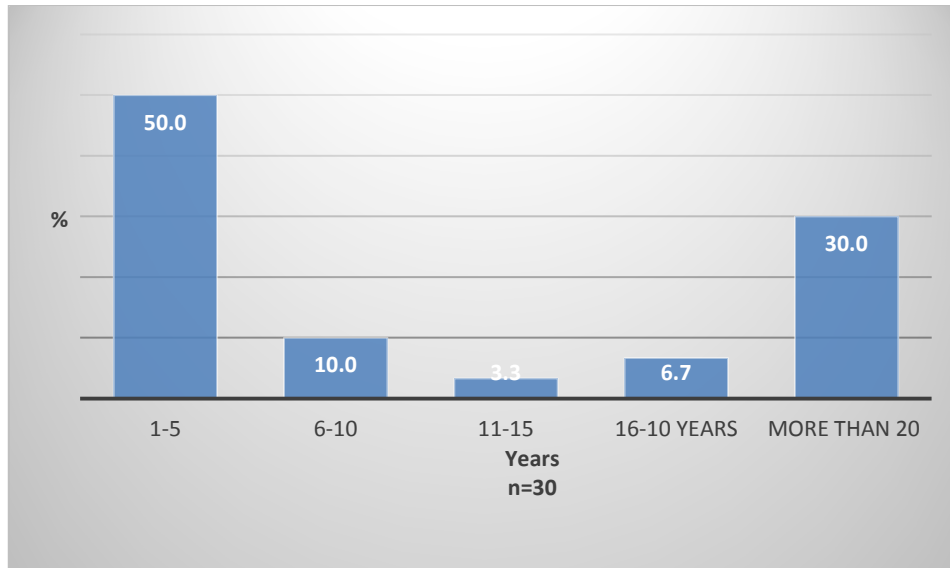
For 36.3 per cent of participants the highest level of education was Year 11 and below (Figure 4). Year 12 was the highest level for 16.2% of participants and 37.4% had completed a Certificate or Diploma. Only 9.1% of participants held a University Degree and 1% a Postgraduate Degree.

Figure 4 Highest level of education



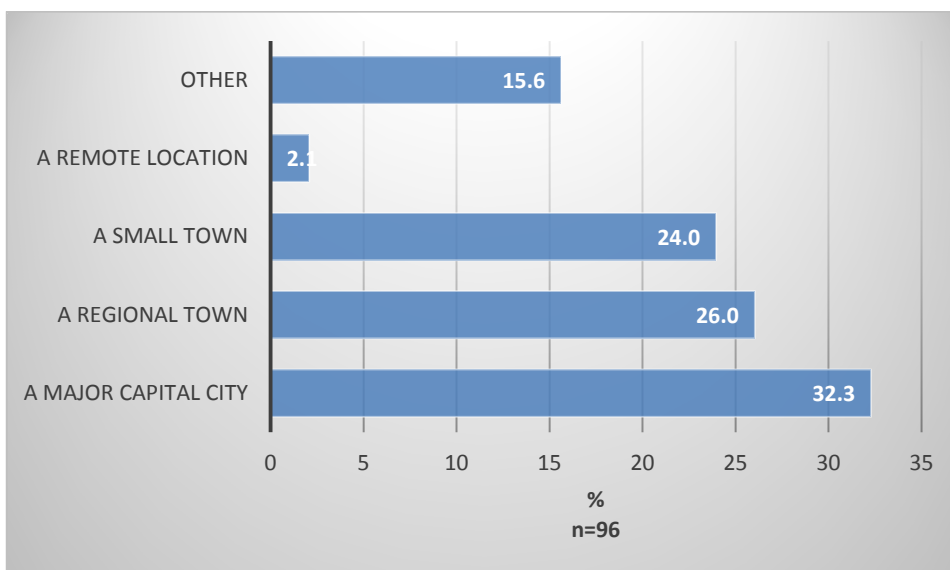
Almost one third (30%) of participants were born outside of Australia. Of these, 50% had been living in Australia for less than 5 years, and 30% for over 20 years (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Time lived in Australia



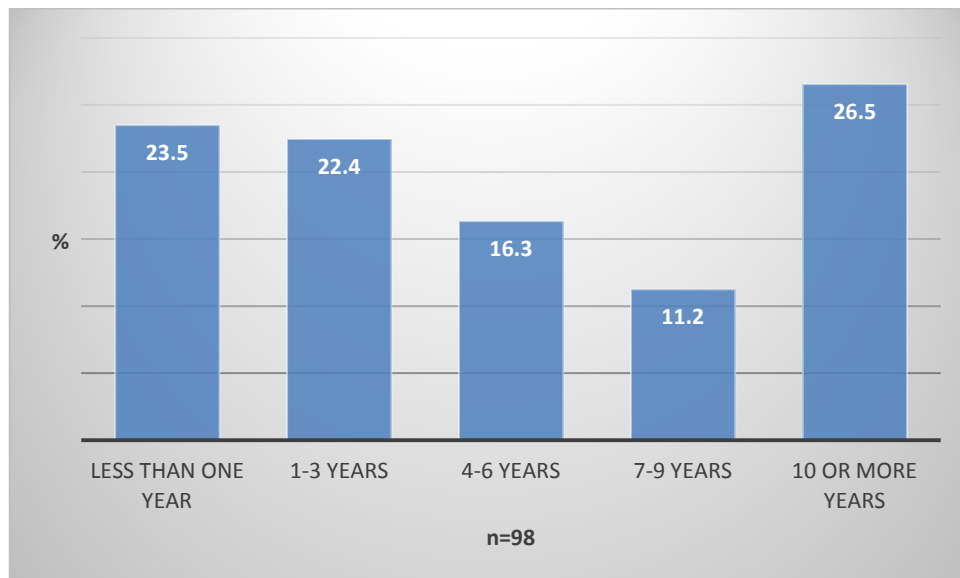
About a third of participants (32.3%) spent most of their youth living in a capital city, 26% a regional town, 24% a small town and 2.1% a remote town and 15.6% 'other' (Figure 6). Around half (47%) lived in Perth, 21% in Karratha and 30% were from other areas of Australia including as far away as the eastern states (FIFO employees).

Figure 6 Region spent youth



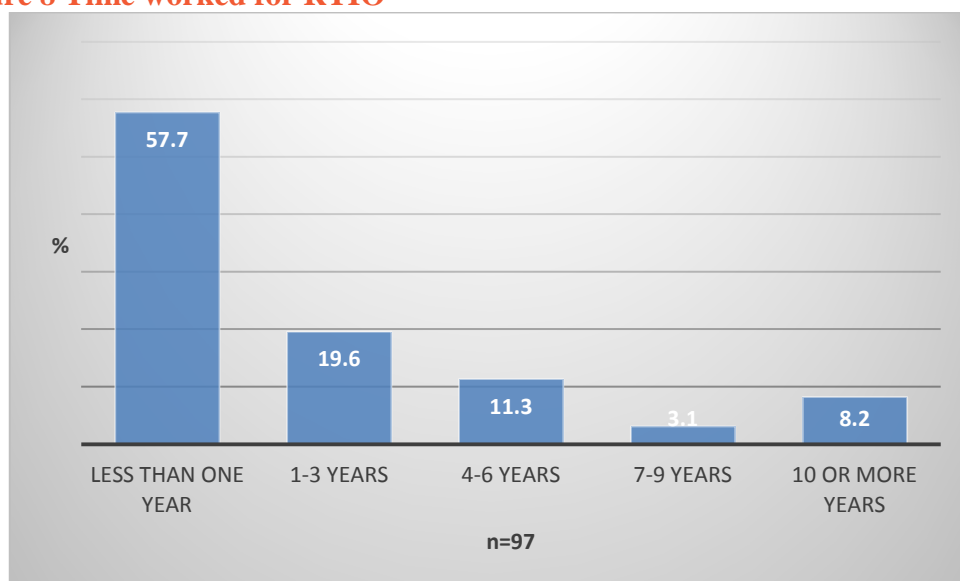
Almost half (45.9%) of the training participants had been in the mining industry for three years or less, and 26.5% had been in the industry for over 10 years (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Time worked for mining industry



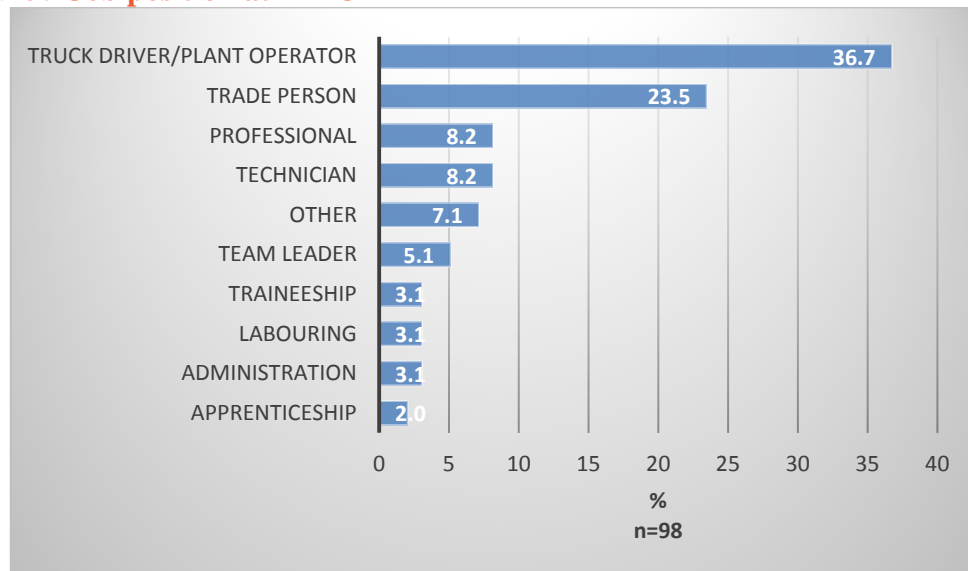
Cultural awareness training is primarily for new employees as part of inductions. Not surprisingly, the bulk (58%) of training participants surveyed had worked for RTIO for less than year, and 11.3% for 7 years or more (Figure 8). Many participants had worked with Aboriginal people prior to joining RTIO (74%), and 70% currently work with Aboriginal employees at RTIO.

Figure 8 Time worked for RTIO



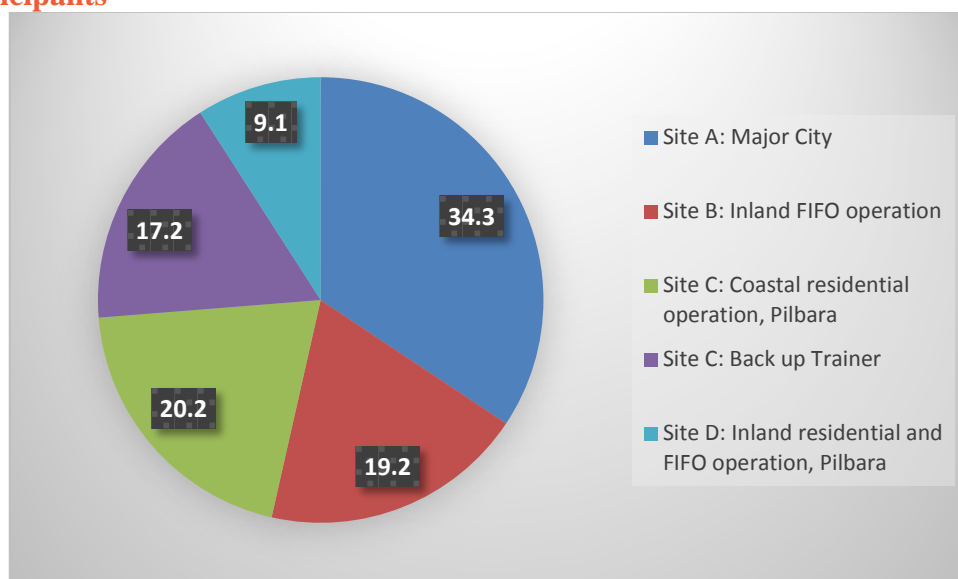
There was a high representation of truck drivers (36.7%) and tradespeople (23.5%) (See Figure 9)

Figure 9 Job position at RTIO



Just over one third of survey participants attended cultural awareness training in Perth (34.3%); 19.2% at the inland FIFO operation; 37.4% at the coastal residential operation (17.2% of these attended training delivered by a back-up presenter) and 9.1% at the inland residential and FIFO operation (Figure 10).

Figure 10 Location of cultural awareness training attended by survey participants



The demographic data presented in this chapter indicates that the great majority of participants are male, not highly educated and do not live locally in the Pilbara where they work. This is important to note when interpreting the responses from training participants and considering if the findings are likely to be relevant to training in other contexts.

5.3 Dispossession, colonisation and belonging

The theme of dispossession, colonisation and belonging is evident throughout the training sessions. At the beginning of the training session, most presenters draw attention to the issue of dispossession by including a WTC, a ceremony that has become common place in many public forums in Australia including public events, conferences and meetings. A WTC is presented by an elder who identifies as being from the local area and is usually a short speech welcoming the audience to the area. For larger events, a dance, music or a smoking ceremony is sometimes also performed (Kowal, n.d). The origin of the WTC is somewhat contested. The actor Ernie Dingo and performer Richard Walley claim to have organised the first contemporary WTC in Perth in 1976, after a request by visiting Maori and Cook Island dancers (Graham, 2010). Some have conceptualised the WTC as a continuous Aboriginal tradition, with examples in the anthropological literature of rituals associated with receiving visitors (Martin, 2009; Sutton, 2003 cited in Kowal, .n.d).

Responses to WTC ceremonies are mixed. Kowal (n.d) argues that for political conservatives they are unsettling and challenge their mode of belonging. For example, conservative commentator Andrew Bolt has said:

Some dignitary ... tells us this country is not really ours – that we, who were born here, are in fact interlopers in the land of some traditional owners we must now acknowledge (Bolt, 2011).

Anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw positions WTCs as a form of ‘state-sponsored culture’ (2010:213) that are ‘White fella rituals’ (2011:174). Cowlishaw discusses WTC’s in the context of urban Sydney, where the presenters of WTCs appear illegitimate in their claims to representativeness and the ceremonies are rarely initiated and controlled by Aboriginal people. For others, WTC’s arouses somber

emotion, particularity when they incorporate Indigenous language (Everett, 2009; Kowal, n.d). For Merlan (2014:305), there is an ‘awkwardness of fit’ between WTC events and ‘norms of host-guest relations’. She questions what the host is hosting, to what is the guest being admitted, and is the guest going to leave? (Merlan, 2014:305). Kowal (n.d:23) suggests that ‘the nature of a WTC as a symbolic statement of Indigenous ownership means non-Indigenous people can enjoy Indigenous culture and presence without feeling threatened by Indigenous sovereignty’. However, both Cowlshaw’s (2010, 2011) and Kowal’s (n.d) discussion centres around WTC in the context of Aboriginal people in urban areas of Australia, where native title claims are highly unlikely to be successful. For the majority of presenters of cultural awareness training in the Pilbara (excluding back- up trainers from other regions who do not include a WTC) native title has been recognised, or is likely to be.

A further criticism of WTC has been that these rituals are ‘an iteration of terra nullius mythology where blackfellas can appear at the beginning of an event (i.e the beginning of history) and then conveniently disappear whilst White fellas do their serious ‘business’’ (Victor Hart cited in Kowal, n.d:24). The presenters of cultural awareness training are not only staying on after the WTC, but controlling the entire session from start to finish with the content they have selected themselves, much of which (native title, history of the Pilbara) relates to the theme of dispossession. In this way, the entire training session could be understood as an affront to White identities and belonging. However, the data taken from this study suggests that participants are largely accepting of Aboriginal assertions of land ownership. The only content that caused some discomfort was the content relating to the past mistreatment of Aboriginal people and this is discussed below. This lack of a negative response can perhaps be explained by the fact that only 20% of training participants reside in the Pilbara, hence their mode of belonging is not being tested.

Two of the three sessions I observed included a WTC. The Site B presenter (Mark) welcomed the participants personally and the Site C presenter (Dean) played a video recording of a senior Traditional Owner presenting a WTC. Both were presented in

Aboriginal language and translated into English. The Site C WTC was presented via video footage and is translated below. The female elder presenting this WTC is physically located at each of the locations she introduces. The names of places have been removed for confidentiality:

Hello, I'd now like to welcome you here on ... country.
Our southern boundary lies here along the foot of the ... Ranges.
Our northern country lies here, alongside the.... Ocean.
From the South you come here, west along the ... River.
This River, heads out to sea.
From the north you come here to east country, this is ... River.
Our traditional lands are ancient and sacred, we must respect it and
look after it at all times and in return the country will look after you.
So please enjoy your stay, whether you live here or are travelling
through our lands and sea (cultural awareness training session
10.06.2013).

Both Mark and Dean explained that the reason for a WTC is to ensure no one gets hurt by the spirits that exist in the area. Mark explains that RTIO should take spirits seriously and report any sightings to their supervisor, who should consult the Traditional Owners - 'a White doctor can't fix but a black doctor can' (Mark, cultural awareness training session 07.06.2013).

All sessions included a section on native title, focusing on what rights it does and does not recognise for Aboriginal people. The key message from all of the presentations was that native title did not give Aboriginal people the right to veto mining developments. Instead, it gave Aboriginal a 'seat at the table'. This inclusion is perhaps to alleviate the commonly but incorrectly held fear that native title can take away freehold property rights. Some presenters commented on the need to clarify these myths. Questions from the audience in this session related to whether or not, and to what extent, certain groups (for example pastoralists) were required to engage with Aboriginal people around land related matters.

The history of the Pilbara region, including the past mistreatment of Aboriginal people by both government and mining companies, was presented in all sessions I attended, for varying levels of time and focus (see Chapter Three for a summary of

the Pilbara history). The theme was consistent throughout the training, with presenters including frequent personal references to government and other control including RTIO. For example, Mark told of how the government sent him to school in Derby, away from his family. Dean complained that RTIO agreement payments go to trust funds, and both Bob and Mark referenced the poor treatment of Aboriginal people by mining companies in the past. The issue of positive attitudes towards mining from Aboriginal people was not broached. The content relating to past injustices was considered of critical importance by Aboriginal presenters. Many of the RTIO community relations practitioners also thought this was critical content. However, some of these employees, as well as some of the surveyed training participants, commented on the way in which this content should be presented:

I think that some people think it's going to be four hours of being berated for being a White Australian (Community relations practitioner, personal communication, 12.06.2013).

We don't want a lecture. We don't want to be told why we are such bad arseholes (surveyed training participant).

This reaction is consistent with Kalev and Dobbin's (2006) assessment of the effectiveness of diversity training which found that the training provoked a hostile response from White male employees who felt they were being made to feel guilty for past discrimination or oppression. The presenters appeared to be aware of the possibility of offending participants with this content. Before speaking about the past injustices experienced by Aboriginal people, all presenters advised the participants that the content was not intended to cast blame. Mark tells me the reason why this content is included:

Get them to understand it and be aware of it, but at the same time I want everybody to move on and not linger in the past. The past is the past. As long as people know about it, then we move on (Personal communication, 07.06.13).

The incorporation of a warning appears to have stemmed from incidents in the past where participants have complained to management about the nature of the content. The response from management was to provide 'coaching' to Aboriginal presenters. As one RTIO Perth-based employee from the Community Division explains:

One of the trainers was using some content that was quite confrontational; the feedback was that they [consumers of the training] did not want to sit through that ever again. For example, the stolen generations, it was being presented in a way like ‘this is your fault’. Presenters get really emotional when talking about it, angry, tearful. Coaching helped them to reflect on that. The presenter did not take it very well at first, and I have had to have similar conversations with a couple of trainers (Personal communication, 23.05.2013).

One of the presenters I observed (Bob) had received complaints in the past from training participants in regards to ‘reverse racism’. Bob was offended by participants’ questions during some sessions and often had verbal altercations with participants, leading, in a few instances, to training participants accusing him of being racist against White Australians. Bob has since adjusted the way he manages insensitive comments but still struggles emotionally with negative feedback from course participants. According to RTIO, Bob became visibly upset when reading the cultural awareness training feedback forms, an example of comments such as ‘wasted half my day of this’ was given as one that upset him.

Another aspect of content that was questioned by both RTIO community relations practitioners and training participants was Bob’s explanation of RTIO’s motives for developing good relationships with Aboriginal people. A key difference between content of the major capital city (Perth) cultural awareness training and the cultural awareness training in the Pilbara was that the focus of the content in the Perth training was not based on local Aboriginal culture. Rather, the focus was on the relationship between Aboriginal people and RTIO over time. Bob had one key message for participants: the ‘business case’ for RTIO agreement making and developing good relationships with Aboriginal people. Bob framed this in a somewhat negative way in terms of RTIO’s motives: ‘it’s all about making money with the least possible resistance’ (cultural awareness training session, 13.06.2013). Bob told the training participants the name ‘Rio Tinto’ translated to ‘Red River’ in Spanish, acquiring its name from environmental damage it caused in Spain. Bob spoke about sovereign risk, claiming it to be low in Australia and high in Africa and Asia. He gave the example of the Bougainville conflict in Papua New Guinea as the impetus for Rio Tinto to change its attitude towards local people. At this stage, one

participant whispered to me ‘he should not be talking about this’. The participant did not expect the content to be negative and was concerned about the message such content sends to new employees about the company. Senior RTIO staff were aware of this issue. However, because Bob is a Traditional Owner of the Pilbara region where RTIO are currently operating, the risk of offending Bob is also a business risk which requires delicate management. Bob is well connected in Aboriginal circles and has a long history of involvement in Aboriginal activism and, more specifically, opposition to mining.

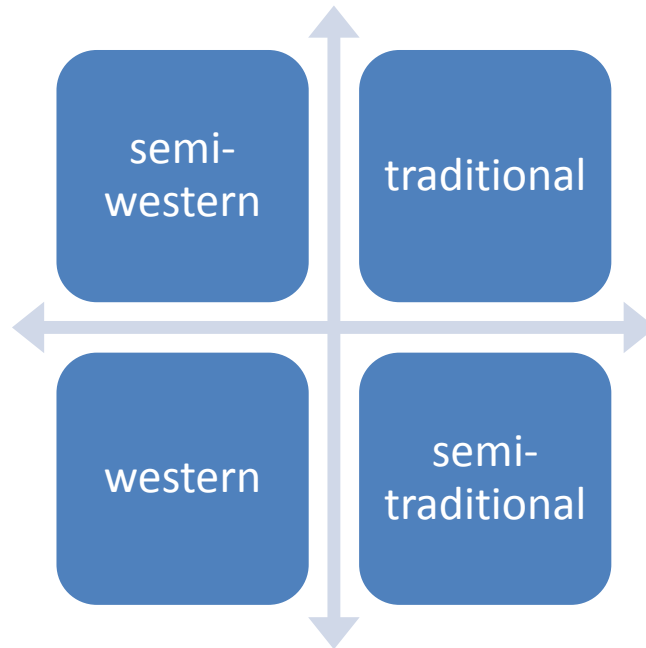
5.4 Conceptualising Aboriginal culture and identity

‘Aboriginal culture’ was presented as including ceremony, language, kinship, hunting, going bush, and camping. A definition of the term ‘culture’ was not made explicit in any of the sessions. At the beginning of Bob’s session, he asked the audience to write down their own definition of the term individually and report back to the group. However, there was subsequently no discussion of these definitions or an alternative provided by the presenter. Definitions provided by participants included: who we are; belief and behaviours; heritage and arts; way we and others are; origins and customs; and background and lifestyle. The sole Aboriginal participant defined culture as ‘language and family’. Bob also asked participants to define ‘Aboriginal’. Responses included: First peoples; original people of land; land, mates and sport; original settlers; gone walkabout; people specific to an area; fun, sometimes angry, need to walk on egg shells. The Aboriginal participant responded ‘not our word, not what we call ourselves’. Again, there was no subsequent discussion or unpacking of training participants responses.

Generally, the courses tended to exemplify cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and between different Aboriginal groups. These cultural differences manifested in the areas of: communication styles (for example: non-verbal sign language; use of eye contact; ways of showing affection; relationships to land, and Aboriginal Law). For Mark, Aboriginal people can be classified into four groups. He displayed a matrix that conceptualised Aboriginal people as either traditional or western (see Figure 11). Mark gave the example of the stolen

generation as being ‘semi western’. While this matrix may simplify the complex matter of identity, it at least acknowledges some diversity amongst Aboriginal people, rather than homogenising the group for which many cultural awareness training sessions have been criticised (Jack and Lorbiecki, 1999).

Figure 11 Conceptualising Aboriginal identity: Site B



The content of the training sessions I attended suggests that culture is being understood as geographically contained and mostly unchanging. Mark was explicit about this. One of his PowerPoint slides identified key differences between Aboriginal and western culture, one of which was that western culture changes all the time, whereas Aboriginal culture stays the same. However, there was recognition that small changes had taken place due to the introduction of technology. For example, Mark explained that honey was sourced using a stone tool, followed by an axe, and more recently a chainsaw. Dean noted that they are ‘getting high tech now’ with the WTC available to be downloaded at the local airport. He also noted that Aboriginal people adapt to the situation in terms of what is available, for example, rifles are more productive than spears when hunting. These examples were presented in a way that was intentionally humorous for participants. There was limited use of

humour throughout the sessions. However, the section on Aboriginal language and swear words as well as sign language were also framed in a humorous way.

Bob had a somewhat different view on how much 'traditional' culture was still being practiced. He thought that some presenters in the Pilbara were romanticising Aboriginal culture in the course content – 'that stuff doesn't happen anymore'. He spoke about this in the context of explaining why he focused on presenting the 'business case' as opposed to 'Aboriginal culture'. This demonstrates that presenters are active agents in the production of what constitutes traditional versus contemporary Aboriginal culture, and this is largely unquestioned by both participants and RTIO.

The significance of the training for presenters can go beyond the transfer of information. For Dean, the training itself is a way to practice and maintain culture:

I know that you can live in a world where you can practice both sides, but sometimes you get to point where work takes up most of the time and culture suffers. You need to have a balance. What I am currently doing is a good balance because I am actually working but still practicing my culture. But there are others in the mining industry just doing mundane work, and at home they are tired and only have weekends to go out camping and bush and stuff (Dean, personal communication, 10.06.2013)

... Luckily for us we have a time of year where we are forced to practice our culture because our boys have to go through initiation in order to become recognized, and the whole community has to be a part of it. That keeps our culture intact because we have to practice it. Otherwise if we don't, and we stop letting our boys become men, everything will just die out (Dean, personal communication, 10.06.2013).

Dean also commented on his ambition to start a new business showing tourists his country and the connection with maintaining culture:

When you are working in tourism you are practicing your culture, you are just showing somebody else (Dean, personal communication 10.06.2013).

The impetus for the presenters in this study to provide the training is based on pride and the view it maintains or revives culture, but making money also plays a role. In

the context of cultural performances in the tourism industry, MacCannell (1973) argued that staged performances for money begin to lose their meaning for the performers. The presenters of cultural awareness training appear to be conflicted by this issue. On the one hand, cultural performances such as cultural awareness training are seen as practising and maintaining culture. On the other, there are concerns about 'commercialising' culture. Dean demonstrated this conflict when discussing WTC:

The Welcome to Country, we are commercialising it. It is a tradition that we practice but now more and more people ask for it for openings. I thought that it's good that they are having it but at the same time it's sort of losing a bit of its meaning, so there is always these constant battling: do we sell our culture, do we make money of it or do we keep it to ourselves and become very good at making money through other means? But then being involved in teaching culture and stuff maintains it so it likes a constant struggle (Personal communication, 10.06.13).

During the training sessions in the Pilbara I observed more interest from participants (leaning forward, looking directly at the presenter, asking questions) in the content that related to male initiation ceremonies, examples of violence within communities and kinship relations. Contemporary issues facing Aboriginal people, particularly negative issues such as high rates of alcoholism within some communities, were absent from the training content. At one point, Dean noted that some people within his community were 'making the most of opportunities' and some were 'still stuck on alcohol', but this was the only mention. Questions from the audience about issues such as alcoholism are considered to be offensive by most presenters and community relations practitioners. An Aboriginal RTIO employee from the training division told me of one occasion where prior to a cultural awareness training session he was asked by a non-Aboriginal participant – 'we gonna learn about how to drink and smoke in the park, hey?' There were a few other examples of attitudes like this from participants although they were generally considered rare. However, it is important to note that employees with negative views of Aboriginal people would be unlikely to voice these views publically. Doing so would risk instant dismissal due to the company's policy on racism in the workplace.

The examples of violence only came from one session and it appeared to be celebrated as traditional custom rather than condemned. Mark explained that the

system of punishment within the community is such that when Aboriginal people go to jail they are still required to be punished when they return to the community. Sometimes, the offenders ask the Magistrate if they can avoid jail by receiving this community punishment as an alternative. Mark displayed the weapon used to punish offenders to participants, and added that spearing the leg is also used²³.

No references to gender dimensions of Aboriginal culture were made. The female presenter who was interviewed, but not observed, 'Sherie', highlighted the need for both a male and female presenter to ensure gender aspects of Aboriginal culture were included relating to roles and responsibilities. This is likely to have relevance for Aboriginal female employees, who may face additional obstacles to entering and remaining in the mining workforce than their male counterparts (Parmenter, 2011).

5.5 Outcomes of the training

While there has been some negative feedback in the recent past (discussed earlier in 5.3), more recently it appears that the training is having a more positive impact on participants. Overall, participants responded positively to the training sessions I observed. Further, there were some who did not want to be there in the beginning of session, but changed their view by the end:

It's a bit like being told to suck eggs, I am from the Pilbara. I was brought up with Aboriginal people (training participant prior to training, 10.06.2013)

However, after the training the same employee commented:

I have lived here 40 years and I never knew that, I should have done this years ago (training participant after training, 10.06.2013).

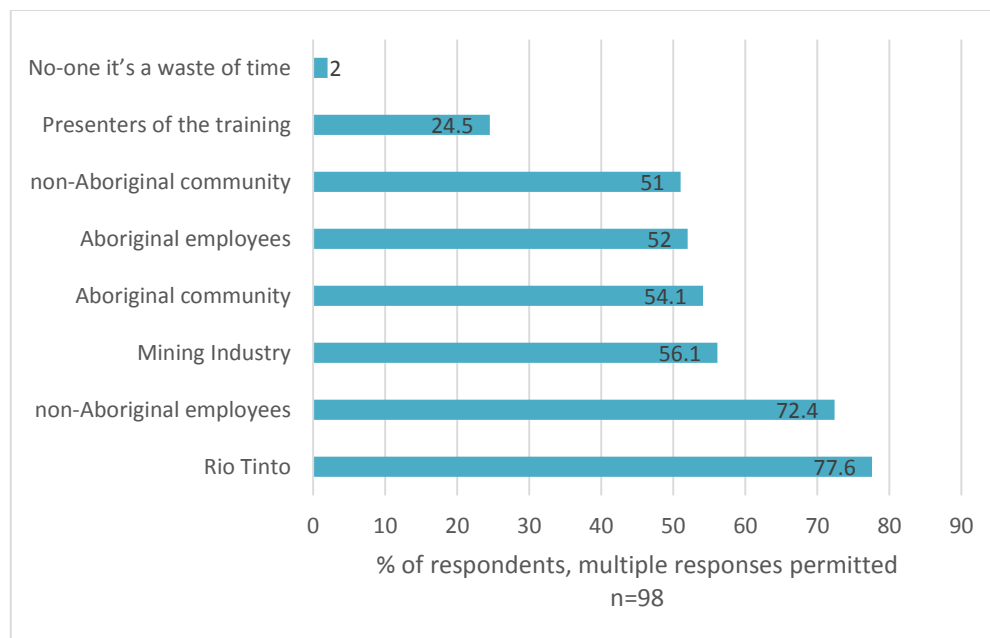
I only witnessed one participant who was overtly displaying his opposition to attending the training. He had his feet up on the table and ate food during the session and returned late from all breaks. The presenter ignored this behaviour, as did the rest of the participants. I was sitting next to this participant and had asked him prior

²³ Spearing in the thigh was, and sometimes still is, a form of restitution, usually undergone voluntarily (Sutton, 2009:102).

to the training if he would attend if it were voluntary, he replied ‘fuck no’. Another participant overheard and added, ‘we have to do it to get our bonuses’. HR subsequently confirmed that there is no link between bonuses and attendance at the training. However, this statement indicated a lack of willingness to attend the training from these two individuals. Only 2% of surveyed training participants (likely to be these two individuals) responded that the training was ‘a waste of time’.

Most survey participants thought Rio Tinto (77.6%), non-Aboriginal employees (72.4%) and the broader mining industry (56.1%) benefitted from the training, followed by the Aboriginal community (54.1%) (multiple responses permitted, Figure 12). Interestingly, only half (52%) of the participants thought Aboriginal employees benefit from the cultural awareness training program. This supports the claim from participants that there is not adequate content on working with Aboriginal people in the current training package (discussed further below).

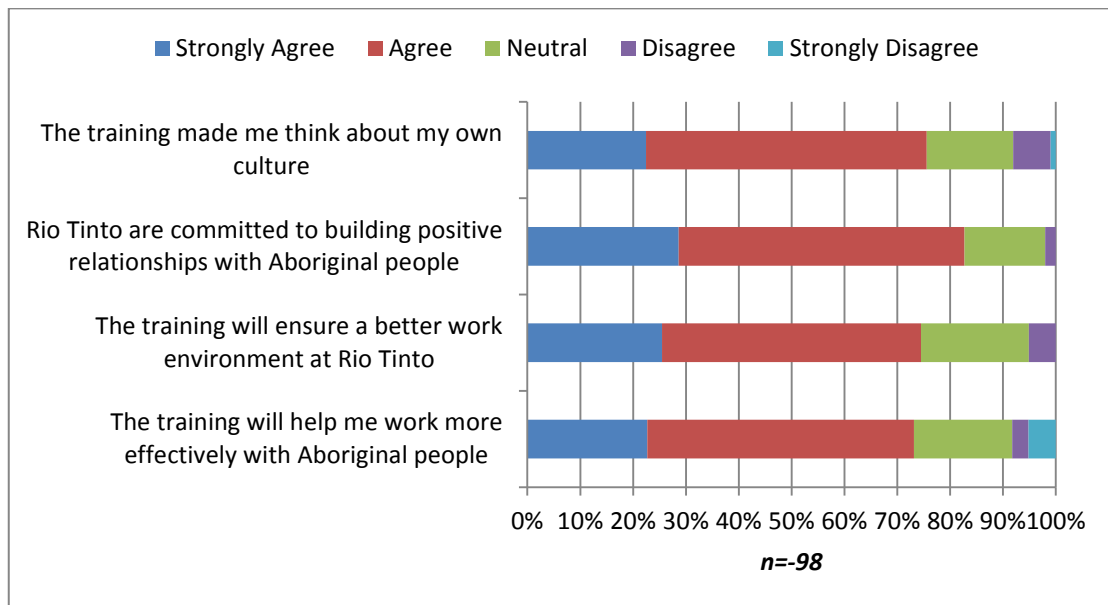
Figure 12 Who benefits from cultural awareness training?



When asked if the training should be voluntary, 27.6% agreed or strongly agreed, 41.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and almost a third (30.6%) were neutral. A greater proportion of employees (25%) from the session presented by a back-up trainer at Site C in the Pilbara, and the Perth session (21%) would not attend the training if it were voluntary, versus 16% for the inland FIFO operation (Site B), and 5% for the coastal residential operation (Site C- main presenter). This may be due to the content in the Perth session and the session presented by a back-up trainer in the Pilbara focusing on agreements and the relationship between Rio Tinto and Aboriginal people, as opposed to *local* 'Aboriginal culture' in the Pilbara. Almost two thirds of participants (65%) strongly disagreed with the statement 'the content of the training was NOT relevant to my work at Rio Tinto', 18.5% were neutral and 16.5% agreed or strongly agreed.

Some senior RTIO community relations practitioners interviewed were not expecting significant outcomes (in terms of major shifts in attitudes toward Aboriginal people) from the current cultural awareness training model. However, from a company perspective at least, the potential for a number of positive impacts should not be underestimated. The chart below (Figure 13) shows that the majority of survey participants (82.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that Rio Tinto are committed to building positive relationships with Aboriginal people. Participants also thought the training would ensure a better work environment at Rio Tinto (74.5%) and help them work more effectively with Aboriginal employees (73.2%). Further, most respondents indicated that the training made them think about their own culture (75.5%), which is a key component of training aimed at reducing prejudice (Downing and Kowal, 2011). While the majority of survey participants were positive about the impacts of the training, there still remains a substantial (over 20% in all but one case) cohort of participants who are unsure or disagree about positive outcomes.

Figure 13 Relevance and impact



When asked if anything they had heard during the training changed the way they viewed Aboriginal people, comments from survey participants included:

Yes, a better understanding of the areas impacted on and that Indigenous communities are different and many. I was previously thinking there were fewer communities.

Yes, given me more of an understanding of the importance of heritage and culture.

Presenters of the training also thought it had a positive impact on participants:

People have been saying that they learned a little bit, they hear a lot of stuff but a lot of it's not true – paints us all with the same brush. That's the hardest bit for us to change (Mark, personal communication, 07.06.2013).

The survey of training participants reveals that the training content and the presenters are generally being well received and the participants are learning something new. When asked about their knowledge of Aboriginal culture before and after the training, training participants indicated an increase (Figure 14).

Figure 14 Perceived knowledge of Aboriginal culture



There were no negative comments about individual presenters from training participants. When asked if they thought the presenters were open and honest, 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed. My own observations were that most training participants expressed genuine interest in the sessions. In two of the three sessions observed, some participants remained behind at the end of sessions to thank the presenter and ask further questions. This suggests that participants are comfortable approaching the presenters, and there is an interest in learning more. When asked if they would like to know more about Aboriginal culture, 74% of training participants agreed or strongly agreed.

From a company perspective, RTIO is hoping the training will ensure employees act respectfully and appropriately towards Aboriginal employees. However, a criticism of all three sessions I attended was that there was no or minimal content on issues relating to working with Aboriginal people. As one training participant said:

People in the room want to know ‘how do we solve the problem without offending people, get to point’. They don’t want to hear the history of the 1905 Act etc. They want to know, ‘what do I need to do when there are issues in the workplace?’

One of the main issues that arose was the need for training directed at supervisors of Aboriginal employees. While a commitment to provide specialised training for mine managers is clearly articulated in the Cultural Awareness Training Regional Standard (5.1(3)), this training is not mandatory and it is up to individual sites to implement and fund an external consultant to deliver it. An RTIO Perth based community relations practitioner comments:

It's not that people don't want to do it but if deciding between safety training and this they will choose the safety training. It is just the culture of the business (Grace, personal communication, 23.05.2013).

Employment barriers for Aboriginal people in the Australian mining industry are sometimes framed in a way that sees 'culture' as a barrier to successful recruitment and retention (Tiplady and Barclay, 2007). In recognition of these barriers, some companies, including Rio Tinto, have developed employment provisions directed at Aboriginal people. For example, RTIO permits Aboriginal employees five days of 'cultural leave' to attend ceremonial obligations. RTIO HR advise that this policy is aimed at local Aboriginal people who are required to attend ceremonies in the Pilbara sometime between October and March each year. RTIO also have Aboriginal employment targets. According to many of the study participants interviewed for this research, there is wide spread perception among the RTIO workforce that Aboriginal people are receiving preferential treatment and in some cases only employed because of their Aboriginal identity, rather than their ability to perform their assigned role. The cultural awareness training has the potential to address this tension between fairness principles and affirmative action. However, the link between these is not made explicit in the training content. One presenter commented:

I find that a lot of non-Aboriginal people want to know but don't know how to ask, how to approach an Aboriginal person because they are too scared that they might offend, and I think that is why there is division. Like, they want to know, well why do Aboriginal people have more opportunities than the non-Aboriginal? They are very interested in family and how we all link. I explain it and they get the bigger picture. For example, cultural leave, why our boys take off every year because culture, law and obligations to attend (Sherie, personal communication, 05.06.2013).

Bob did not include content on working with Aboriginal people in his cultural awareness training session. Mark briefly referred to Aboriginal employees needing time off to attend ceremonies, but it was not a major focus of his presentation. Dean spent the most time on this topic. Dean played a clip from a documentary that included footage of an initiation ceremony, some of which was only audio due to confidentiality. He then explained the need for Aboriginal employees to take time off work to attend ceremonies such as the one he had just presented, as well as funerals. Dean went further to provide a practical example of how to avoid cultural barriers in the workplace. He explained that the roster system can be organised to ensure kinship avoidance rules can be adhered to. Aboriginal employees who are required to avoid certain individuals (such as mothers-in-law) could be assigned to a different crew. This content appeared to receive the most interest from the audience with many questions asked.

Many participants also suggested that cultural awareness training on country would be preferable to the current classroom style. Both participants of the training and Traditional Owners would prefer training was presented outside, on country rather than in a training room. According to RTIO community relations practitioners, resourcing for this kind of training is not possible at this time. However, examples from other mines indicate that training on country would improve outcomes. For example, at Rio Tinto's Argyle Diamond Mine in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, Doohan (2006: 309) observed 'how the balance of power shifts significantly when non-Aboriginal people are in an unfamiliar settings and participating in unfamiliar events', such as during the *Manthe* Welcome ceremony performed by Aboriginal people. Another issue raised by an Aboriginal training participant was whether or not Aboriginal people should attend.

One Aboriginal training participant employee commented:

If it's about White people better understanding Aboriginal culture, why do Aboriginal people have to do the course? I think most Aboriginal people feel uncomfortable sitting in a room full of people that don't understand your culture.

The view from community relations practitioners was that Aboriginal employees (from areas outside the Pilbara) should attend the training to learn about *local* Aboriginal culture.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main themes that emerged during the cultural awareness training sessions I observed, and the responses from surveyed training participants. Analysis of the demographic variables of survey participants showed no statistically significant correlations with opinions. However, they remain usefully descriptive of the overall population of respondents. The data indicates that presenters are using the training as an opportunity to draw attention to the issue of dispossession. The history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in the Pilbara are considered to be important content, providing this content does not challenge the participant's mode of belonging, or induce a feeling of guilt. What constitutes Aboriginal culture is negotiated by the Aboriginal presenters and there is a tension between practising and maintaining culture and commoditising it. These data raise some important questions about how culture is mobilised by the different social actors involved and the implications for how training 'plays out on the ground'. The following chapter discusses this issue.

Chapter Six: Mining ‘Culture’: The Politics of Cultural Awareness Training

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I problematise the commonly held view of the corporate sector that cultural difference is a barrier or problem that needs to be managed in order to realise corporate goals. I suggest that initiatives such as cultural awareness training are better understood as expressions of the fundamental tensions that exist in the changing relationship between mining company personnel and Aboriginal people. I start by offering a brief overview of how the corporate sector has framed cultural awareness training and discuss the implications of my findings for how the initiative plays out on the ground. I discuss how the concept of culture is being invoked by the actors involved, how the politics of the matter are inescapable, and caution for a more sophisticated approach to understanding the phenomenon of cultural awareness training. This type of analysis is currently lacking within the literature on cultural awareness training and this thesis begins to address this gap.

6.2 The cultural awareness training phenomenon

For RTIO, cultural awareness training is implemented with the aim of improving relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees, and between the company and Traditional Owners with whom they have signed land access agreements. RTIO community relations practitioners recognise that some miners ‘just don’t get it in this area’ and require education in order to change negative attitudes and behaviours. RTIO want their employees to be aware of the legal agreements they have with Traditional Owners and the importance of maintaining good relationships with Aboriginal people by being respectful of local customs and cultural heritage. For the Aboriginal presenters, the aim of the training is about recognition. They want miners to know of their presence, their history, and that the Pilbara, their country, is not ‘empty land’. Like Aboriginal people involved in the *manthe* ceremony at Rio Tinto’s Argyle Diamond mine in the Kimberley region

of Western Australia, the presenters appear to be engaging with the wider community (the workforce in this case) in order to effect change while sustaining their own worldview and cultural difference (Doohan, 2006:302). However, while these aims may be well intentioned, the ‘absurdity at the heart of culture’ (Cowlshaw, 2012:397) requires analysis in order to make visible the contesting assumptions behind the cultural awareness training phenomenon.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I explained the impetus for the study. I attended an Aboriginal cultural awareness training session at another northern Australian mine site and was surprised at the divisive content. I questioned what was going on ‘behind the scenes’. The case study of RTIO has raised further questions in this regard. What is behind the discomfort evident amongst the RTIO community relations practitioners who organise the implementation of cultural awareness training? How is ‘Aboriginal Culture’ being used and conceptualised by the company and the Aboriginal presenters at a time of change in the relationship between Aboriginal people and miners in Australia? And what do the participants of the training make of the final ‘product’?

This kind of analysis is currently lacking from the academic literature. Those who have taken an analytic approach to well-intentioned work leave themselves open to accusations of being anti-altruism and offend some persons involved in the work (Mosse, 2006). For Kowal (n.d.) revealing the *backstage*²⁴ of WTC may seem ‘distasteful on the page’ but notes that conversations such as ‘how to be anti-racist’ are acceptable to talk about in meetings planning such rituals (Kowal, n.d.:12). Further, as Trigger (1997:88) questioned: ‘must an honest examination of the ‘politics of culture’ ... necessarily undermine their [Aboriginal people’s] struggle for empowerment?’ For Pearson (2009:27), anthropologists have justified certain contemporary social problems within Aboriginal societies. For example, gambling as some kind of ‘traditional redistribution of wealth’, and alcoholism amongst Aboriginal individuals as ‘passive victims of colonisation’ (Pearson, 2009:27). He

²⁴ Following Erving Goffman (1959), the *backstage* is space where the audience is not permitted and performers can speak freely.

calls for anthropologists to engage in the deconstruction of these ‘myths’ and Aboriginal people to recognise how they themselves are using ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’ and ‘kinship’ to exploit Aboriginal society (Pearson, 2009:28). The way in which the Aboriginal presenters of cultural awareness training are conceptualising these concepts is therefore directly involved in what then becomes known as ‘Aboriginal culture’ amongst training participants.

Much work has been done showing the strategic way in which culture is invoked in cultural performances for tourists (Bruner, 2005; MacCannell, 1973; 2011). Given the problems associated with determining the effectiveness of cultural awareness training (see Chapter Two), it is appropriate to analyse the underlying assumptions and strategic essentialisms involved in such training. Unlike Jack and Lorbiecki (1999:4), I do not see Aboriginal cultural awareness training at RTIO as a ‘form of Anglo-American imperialism masquerading as a socially and economically justifiable corporate provision in a globalised economy’. I do not question the good intentions of the organisers involved and I also acknowledge some positive outcomes. However, my research has highlighted a number of tensions relating to the cultural awareness training phenomenon that warrant consideration. I discuss these tensions below.

6.3 Aboriginal people and RTIO: A changing dynamic?

The changing dynamic between Aboriginal people and mining enterprises in Australia in relation to legal, political and economic issues has been written about extensively in the academic literature (see for example, O’Faircheallaigh 1998, 2010, 2012, 2013; Langton, 2004, 2006, Langton and Longbottom, 2012; Langton and Mazel, 2012, Langton and Palmer, 2003; Altman and Martin, 2009; Taylor, 2012). However, the issue of ‘culture’ itself as a negotiated resource that is ‘transacted’ has not received as much attention. Major legal agreements between Aboriginal people and mining companies have only existed since 1996, and while some attention has been paid to the outcomes of agreements (Scambary, 2007), there is little analysis of the relationships between individuals involved insofar as these relate to the issue of

‘culture’. Cultural awareness training is an initiative under Rio Tinto’s RAP, which implies the training will improve relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. However, as the data presented in previous chapters indicate, clearly there are underlying issues located in the ‘backstage’ that problematise this intended outcome.

Bruce Harvey, Rio Tinto’s former Global Practice Leader in Communities and Social Performance, has argued for ‘limiting social development ‘outreach’ and focusing more on ‘in-reach’, whereby extractive companies prioritise activities aimed at behavioural (and, consequently attitudinal) change across the whole of their organisation’ (Harvey 2014:7). Local induction courses are an example of an ‘in-reach’ program and would include information on how to behave respectfully in the local context, in a safe environment to discuss issues (Harvey, 2014:10). The assumption that a ‘safe’ environment is required assumes the audience will be hostile to the training. It also assumes the lack of or need for ‘safety’, of a cultural kind, exists only with Aboriginal employees. Anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw (2010:216) argues that ‘reconcilers see two types of Whiteness, our concerned and informed kind and that of the majority, who are indifferent or hostile towards Aboriginal people’. Cultural awareness training is seen as a remedy to this majority group (Cowlishaw, 2010). For Harvey (2014:10) those participants who do not respond positively should be dismissed as unsuitable to work in the industry, much like they are if they show the inability to work safely in terms of their everyday practices in the job. The importance of health and safety in the mining industry has increased rapidly in the last couple of decades. Most mining operations in Australia now have very strict rules and measures for health and safety and dedicated roles to implement and enforce them. The changing paradigm in relation to Aboriginal engagement would make for an interesting comparison to safety. While initiatives such as cultural awareness training are becoming more commonplace, it is currently hard to imagine companies including a ‘cultural share’ in the same way they include

‘safety share’²⁵ at the beginning of meetings. One community relations practitioner at RTIO noted that when faced with a decision (due to budget restrictions) to provide safety or cultural awareness training, operations will always choose safety.

Much of the well intentioned work to include Aboriginal related matters is driven by individuals within the community relations area rather than the mining company monolith, as it is often characterized in anthropological accounts (Ballard and Banks, 2003). In my experience of meeting and observing community relations practitioners through my work at the CSRM, individuals are often required to convince management of the ‘business case’ for such matters. Many of the RTIO community relations practitioners in this study could be classified as what Kowal (2006, 2012) refers to as ‘White anti-racists’. Her field work focused on employees working in the Indigenous health sector. The ‘White anti-racists’ were her informants -- a largely White group of educated professionals who had moved to the more remote area from metropolitan cities (Kowal, n.d.:8). For Kowal, ‘anti-racism’ is a culture within educational, academic and bureaucratic settings that ‘White anti-racists’ invest in (Kowal, n.d.:8). White anti-racists behave in ways that aim to manage the stigma of Whiteness and privilege by actively engaging in behaviour that they view as opposite to that of colonisers (Kowal, n.d.:9). An example is denying or diminishing their own contribution to projects and attributing the credit to Indigenous participants (Kowal, n.d.:9)

The RTIO community relations practitioners that I interviewed had professional backgrounds largely in social science related disciplines (social work, anthropology, community development) and joined the mining industry in order to make ‘real change’. One of these practitioners commented:

Sometimes I feel conflicted working in mining but here I feel like I can have more impact because I have more resources. I couldn’t do anything in government or NGOs [Non-Government Organisation] (Rebecca, personal communication, 23.05.13).

²⁵ A safety share typically occurs at the beginning of a work day or meeting and requires workers (usually one employee per meeting) to identify a safety hazard and suggest measures to mitigate the risk of injury in future incidents.

There was also a view that others within the organisation- those not in the community relations area, did not understand issues relating to Aboriginal people. For example, one RTIO community relations practitioner commented:

Explaining to engineers that an objection comes at a cost or a delay, people don't get it. They [engineers] don't get that they [Aboriginal people] can control some aspect of our business planning. Yes, they can actually. And why not have them involved in the front end rather than at the back end as an afterthought? Why not? The recognition of being a partner and not just the last check box on a check list of compliance requirements, or 'oh yeah, that's right, we've got to go talk to the black fellas'. (Steve, personal communication, 11.06.13).

While such employees are very supportive of the implementation of cultural awareness training, there is discomfort evident amongst them in relation to managing the selection and ongoing management of the training (discussed in chapter four). This points to a tension in the current relationship between Aboriginal people, more specifically Traditional Owners, and community relations practitioners at RTIO. There is a tension between supporting the agency of Aboriginal people in the selection of content, and ensuring the content reflects the aims of the training from a company perspective. During the interviews with RTIO community relations practitioners who organise the training, many of them stressed the importance of ensuring local Aboriginal people select the training content. However, there was little demand placed on the nature of the contribution from Aboriginal people. This is perhaps not surprising given many of the presenters had no prior experience in teaching and designing such a course. RTIO provided potential presenters with a generic cultural awareness training presentation with a selection of content, much of which remained in the sessions I attended. However, the role of RTIO individuals and others in advising on this content was largely diminished in their representation of events.

RTIO community relations practitioners also made a point to tell me of the importance of including content on *local* Aboriginal Culture, presented by a local Aboriginal person with the appropriate authority to speak on such matters. This allowed them to demonstrate their knowledge of cultural diversity as well as issues of authority amongst Aboriginal groups. However, RTIO community relations

practitioners have faced significant challenges in recruiting and managing presenters in terms of paying for 'cultural information' and determining 'who rightfully can and can't give it' (see Chapter Four).

While key individuals within RTIO appear to be conscious of the politics of representation and questions of cultural authority amongst Aboriginal people, there is no mechanism for determining if the presenter is appropriate or representative other than the RTIO community relations practitioners' own experience working in the local community and with the Local Implementation Committee. This committee is responsible for managing the implementation of agreements with RTIO and is made up of both Traditional Owners and RTIO representatives. The Aboriginal representatives on the committee are selected by their PBC and have responsibility for endorsing the cultural awareness training presenters. RTIO community relations practitioners do not see it as their business to interfere with the corporations' decision making processes in relation to who sits on these committees, and are therefore in a position where by they have to assume the presenter has been adequately endorsed. This presents an obvious problem given the politics in representation and modes of governance in the region (see Chapter Three). Practitioners are conflicted by the aspiration to ensure Aboriginal agency and at the same time ensure inclusion, for example, of the broader Aboriginal community.

A similar situation is occurring in the coal seam gas industry in Queensland in relation to the management of financial benefits that flow from agreements with Aboriginal people. Trigger et al. (2014:13) report that practitioners are conflicted about how to respond to 'perceived nepotism or other selective control amongst Aboriginal groups'. These practitioners do not want to be accused of being paternalistic but also do not want to be criticised for not ensuring appropriate use of funds (Trigger et al., 2014:13). There have also been several issues where presenters have offended participants, or vice versa, or where presenters have not been reliable in attendance resulting in reinforcing stereotypes of Aboriginal people being late, lazy and/or unreliable.

The RTIO community relations practitioners involved in managing these events appear overly cautious not to offend Aboriginal presenters in this process. During my fieldwork it became apparent that RTIO were planning to replace the training in Perth with an online version. The current presenter would be offered a position training in the Pilbara as a replacement. This presenter, Bob, made it clear to me that he opposed this move and threatened to go to the media to ‘make noise - I have a lot of power’. The content in Bob’s session was also more negative in relation to mining than others and reflects his position as an anti-mining activist in the past (see Chapter Five). What does this awkwardness and avoidance evident in the construction and management of cultural awareness training mean for the relationship between RTIO and Aboriginal people?

The Rio Tinto policy position is to ‘work in active partnership with Aboriginal People’ (Rio Tinto, 2013b:2). However, it is clear from the few examples presented above that the level of maturity in the relationship is far from what would be typically described as a partnership²⁶. A senior RTIO community relations practitioner interviewed commented on the continued expectations of some Traditional Owners, despite the ‘extraordinary’ financial stream of benefits they receive from RTIO:

People still come with demands of the mining company that are informed by their own historical expectations that are very much premised upon ‘you guys are loaded and you have destroyed our country and you need to pay the rent’. A hand out kind of mentality is the form of the relationship that they perceive to be natural and normal.

People will still expect that the Relationship Superintendent that is convening meetings will provide the lunches, and make the tea, and drive the taxis and ‘wake me up actually and make sure I’m at the meeting on time’ and is the point of blame if anything goes wrong in the way that meeting occurs.

These examples tie in with the notion that black entitlement and White obligation have become interlocked (Pearson, 2009 drawing on Steele 2006 writing of the USA). Cowlishaw (2010) argues that the kind of ‘sentimental politics’ (a term coined

²⁶ A partnership would typically involve shared control and common goals.

by Berlant 1999 writing of the USA) I have identified amongst RTIO community relations practitioners ‘allows ordinary well-meaning Whitefellas to participate in relieving Indigenous suffering while avoiding the contemporary political reality of a social and cultural domain that has been virtually destroyed’ (Cowlshaw 2010:212). So what are the Aboriginal responses to these well intentioned initiatives centred on Aboriginal culture? And what are the implications for training outcomes for the consumers of the training?

6.4 Negotiating Aboriginal culture and identity at RTIO

From a company perspective, cultural awareness training at RTIO aims to educate mine employees about the importance of maintaining good relationships with Aboriginal people and for Aboriginal presenters it’s about recognition, protection of cultural heritage and the employment opportunity. However, while the intention of RTIO cultural awareness training may be about reconciliation, the content focuses on difference. Further, there is very little recognition of Aboriginal culture as including the contemporary everyday life activities of Aboriginal people or the aspirations of Aboriginal youth. Much like the cultural performances designed for the tourist gaze (Bruner, 2005), the training sessions strategically select and discard content. This has implications for how Aboriginal culture is conceptualised, with some subsequent unintended consequences.

The literature on cultural awareness training outlined in Chapter Two indicates a gap between the theory informing cultural training and anthropology. The theory informing cultural awareness training has remained stagnant and ignored developments in anthropology. This gap limits the impact of cultural training on consumers by focusing on: individual change rather than organisational or systemic change (Weaver, 2008; Downing and Kowal 2011); difference, thereby creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ situation (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Downing and Kowal 2011); issues about how culture and identity are conceptualised as bounded and unchanging (McSweeney, 2002; Downing and Kowal, 2011; Primecz et al., 2012); and the unintended consequences of inciting anger from White participants who feel they are being made to feel guilty for past discrimination (Kalev and Dobbin, 2006). All of

these criticisms apply to the current RTIO cultural awareness model, to varying degrees.

Cultural awareness training at RTIO is largely reflective of the ‘cultural awareness’ model identified by Downing et al. (2011) for Indigenous cultural training in the Australian health sector²⁷. The content focuses on knowledge and awareness of ‘Aboriginal culture’ and does not take a systematic approach to translating this knowledge into behavioural change or encourage critical self-reflection (Downing et al., 2011). However, most survey participants in this study (75.5%) did indicate that the course made them reflect on their own culture, which has been identified as a necessary key component for initiatives aimed at reducing prejudice (see Chapter Two). The sessions were primarily lecture-based using a PowerPoint presentation and there was little group interaction. This does not reflect the findings of the DIMIA survey on cultural training courses (referred to in Chapter Two), where 80.7% of respondents attended courses that utilised both didactic and experiential methods (Bean, 2006). Using only didactic methods can lead to participants questioning the relevance and practical application of the training (Bennett, 1986). This was the case for survey participants in this study, whose main criticism of the training was that there was no or little content relating to issues around working with Aboriginal people. In particular, a course tailored for supervisors of Aboriginal employees was deemed more necessary. Further, as indicated in the previous chapter, only around half (52%) thought Aboriginal people benefitted from the program, which also brings into question which group the training aims to assist.

The content of the RTIO training has not been put together by a curriculum expert, but has evolved over time with many different RTIO employees and Aboriginal presenters contributing to its current form. This somewhat ad hoc way in which the content is selected has obvious implications for training outcomes (discussed below). Further, the quality of the training is somewhat compromised by the fact that it has become a provision in agreements between RTIO and Aboriginal groups. With the

²⁷ The cultural awareness model is one of six models through which cultural training can be conceptualised in the Australian health sector (see Chapter 2).

development of targets for cultural awareness training, an element of compliance has been introduced which drives a particular way of thinking for RTIO community relations practitioners. While the requirement for cultural awareness training in agreements has driven its delivery, it has also contributed to a shift in focus to meeting targets rather than on the quality of the course itself; and also limited assessment of whether or not it is meeting its intended objectives and having a positive impact on training participants.

The way culture is conceptualised in the training content is in its narrow, popular sense, whereby Aboriginal culture refers to (for example), art, ceremony and spiritual belief, rather than the everyday life activities of Aboriginal people and how these activities might inform the behaviour of Aboriginal employees at RTIO. However, it is these everyday life activities that are likely to inform practices amongst Aboriginal employees that are at the heart of the so called 'barriers' to successful Aboriginal employment outcomes in the industry. Trigger (2005) outlined several features of contemporary life amongst Aboriginal people which may impact on their ability to take up opportunities in large scale mining. Of particular relevance for the mining workforce is the strong ethos of egalitarianism amongst Aboriginal societies that works against material accumulation and the prioritising of family loyalties over the 'common good' (Trigger, 2005:47, drawing on Sutton, 2001:148). The ongoing tension between engaging with the market economy and maintaining Aboriginal values is not discussed in the training content, nor are the contemporary problems facing Aboriginal people or issues specific to Aboriginal women. Two of the three sessions I observed briefly explained the kinship system in terms of how each person is related to another but said little on the responsibilities and demands placed on kin.

The absence of any content on the aspirations of Aboriginal youth, and the presentation of Aboriginal culture as geographically contained and static (see Chapter Five), gives the impression that Aboriginal people are a unified entity, stuck in the past with no desire to be just like their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Further, all RTIO cultural awareness training sessions included content on the history of past mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara. While two of the three presenters

indicated they were not attempting to blame the training participants for past injustices, this ‘past suffering is a defining moment in Indigenous identity’ (Cowlshaw, 2010:215) that the participants of the training must recognise. As discussed in Chapter Two, if past injustices are presented in an accusatory or unbalanced way, the training may have the unintended consequence of causing participants to become defensive and even more prejudiced than beforehand. However, recognition is the Aboriginal presenters’ key aim for the training. This brings into question the issue of Aboriginal identity. How do Aboriginal people want to portray their culture and how do the expectations placed on them by non-Aboriginal Australians influence this portrayal?

Cowlshaw (2010:208) proposes a widespread desire for Aboriginality in the national psyche:

A reified Aboriginal culture is promoted at institutional sites and in reconciliation discourses that evokes the presence of something precious and mysterious that must be re-read into local Aboriginal people, but which assiduously avoids their actual circumstances and subjectivities.

The participants I observed in the training appear to suggest the accuracy of this analysis. They expressed more interest in the content that could be categorized as the more ‘mysterious’ of customs, such as male initiation ceremonies and kinship structure. Those who do acknowledge the cultural loss experienced by Aboriginal people advocate for its revival as a remedy for social problems. For example, a senior Rio Tinto community relations practitioner interviewed expressed a view that the domain of traditional Aboriginal culture should be evoked in order to alleviate social problems amongst Aboriginal youth. One of the presenters of the training (Dean) reported that young men were ‘forced’ to attend initiation ceremonies²⁸ in the Pilbara. When I asked the senior Rio Tinto employee about the aspirations of Aboriginal youth and if they might conflict with traditional Aboriginal culture, they likened the example of ‘forced’ initiation to non-Aboriginal parents who force their children to go to school. This ignores what might otherwise be regarded as human rights issues among most of the Australian population, including Aboriginal people (Sutton, 2009:110).

²⁸ Initiation by circumcision (Sutton, 2009 :102)

It is important to note that attempts to revive Aboriginal culture are located in the broader politicised setting of Australian society and culture (Beckett, 1994; Trigger, 1997). The very existence of cultural awareness training tells the presenters that they hold something valuable, something non-Indigenous Australians want to learn about. Separate from 'culture' as lived habitus, 'culture' has become a strategic resource (Trigger 1997:93), with certain groups embracing essentialist notions of themselves for political gain (Spivak, 1993:5). For the presenters of the training, there are multiple meanings attached to the term 'culture', from practices and beliefs derived from the traditional past that had little relevance to contemporary life, to current practices that require maintenance, rehabilitation or revival. Knowledge about culture is considered a domain of certain senior Aboriginal people by both the Aboriginal presenters and those in wider Australian society whose focus is on reviving culture. One presenter (Dean), lacked confidence in formulating the local content of the training. He felt he was 'a bit rusty' and sought input from his elders 'because they are the ones who know everything'.

There also exists competition amongst Aboriginal people over cultural capital in determining who should present. Separate from the significant financial benefit the training provides presenters, it also assists in confirming their authority to speak on culture within the community. When observing a reconciliation meeting in western Sydney, Cowlshaw (2010:216) was struck by the transformation of elders she knew from a community context in to 'revered, awe-inspiring symbols of Indigeneity'. According to a RTIO Aboriginal employee who was given responsibility for finding back up trainers, the current presenters of the training are very protective of their own session. In one case, a presenter agreed with the RTIO employee that her younger sister could attend the training with the view to present at a later date. However, the younger sister told the RTIO employee that the presenter (her elder sister) would not give her permission to attend. According to the RTIO employee, the younger sister holds more cultural knowledge (bush tucker was given as an example)

and suspects that the presenter might have ‘material in there she shouldn’t’²⁹. This kind of competitiveness for status over traditional knowledge among elders and others has been discussed in the literature (see for example, Hiatt 1984:22-23, Trigger 1992:111-118). As noted by Hiatt (1984:23), traditional knowledge provides the holders with ‘a potential springboard to fame’. However, there are some who do not take it so seriously. One of the RTIO community relations practitioners interviewed recalled a presenter being very unimpressed with a comment from an Aboriginal participant that caused humor and appeared to mock the presenter’s knowledge. The presenter asked the audience: ‘how do you know if it is going to rain in Pilbara?’, to which an Aboriginal participant responded ‘Channel 7?’. After the laughter ceased, the presenter went on to describe the connection with the presence of frogs and rain.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a number of problems and tensions located in the ‘backstage’ of the well-intentioned initiative of Aboriginal cultural awareness training at RTIO. The community relations practitioners in this study face significant challenges implementing the training. These ‘White anti-racists’ are conflicted between providing agency to Aboriginal presenters and ensuring the training meets company goals. Underlying these issues are politics internal to the Aboriginal domain. The practitioners are also faced with challenges associated with communicating these issues to others within the organisation. The training is aimed at improving relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees at RTIO. However, the way in which culture is conceptualised in the training does not allow for content relating to the everyday life of Aboriginal people, and how this might inform the practices of Aboriginal employees. The ‘mining of culture’ for strategic purposes further complicates outcomes. A more sophisticated approach is warranted to avoid unintended negative consequences. I say more on this in the following chapter which summarises the thesis and provides some concluding remarks.

²⁹ This could relate to knowledge that is not typically made known to outsiders, or alternatively, that is incorrect.

Chapter Seven: Thesis Summary and Conclusions

Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine employees in Australia is a relatively new phenomenon. Provisions for such training are increasingly being included in land access agreements between mining companies and Traditional Owners. However, little is known about the motivations behind it and how it ‘plays out on the ground’. Given the problems determining the efficacy of cultural awareness training (discussed in Chapter Two) this study has taken a different approach by examining the training itself as a site of engagement between mining industry personnel and Aboriginal people.

Given the largely antagonistic relationship between Aboriginal people and mining companies in Australia in the past, it was appropriate to analyse the interplay between agency, process and motives of the different actors involved. The primary aims of the research therefore were to investigate how the social actors involved assign meanings to the training and to explore the implications of using the training as a mechanism to improve relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. An analysis of the cultural awareness training phenomenon as an object of interest in itself, rather than a strict focus on the issue of effectiveness, has revealed a number of tensions. These tensions demonstrate the state of play in relationships between Aboriginal people and company personnel involved.

The topic for this thesis was prompted by an Aboriginal cultural awareness training session for mine employees I attended at a northern Australian mine site as part of my employment as a researcher at The University of Queensland. I was surprised by the divisive content and I questioned who supported and endorsed the training and what was going on ‘behind the scenes’. It struck me that the Aboriginal presenters of cultural awareness training at mine sites were performing and presenting ‘Aboriginal culture’ in a very unique context. As discussed in Chapter Two, ‘Aboriginal Culture’ has been produced in response to desires of outsiders (Cowlshaw, 2011:172), used as a strategic resource (Trigger, 1997) and represented in public discourse as signs

and symbols rather than as the everyday life of Aboriginal people (Cowlshaw, 2011:182).

The literature review in Chapter Two introduced the contested nature of the idea of 'culture' and demonstrated a disjunct between how culture is conceptualised by contemporary cultural awareness training and in some anthropological theory. This can, in part, be explained by the development of such training at the American Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in the late 1940s. The initial training was developed by anthropologists and linguists and included anthropological theories of culture at the time. However, this content was subsequently excluded after complaints from training participants who thought it was too hard to understand and not practical (Moon, 1996). Much of the training that has followed has represented societies as culturally homogenous and static, ignoring the complex and fluid nature of culture. The way culture is conceptualised in the training has been attributed to the lack of evidence around the efficacy of the training. Further, the training has been criticised for being tokenistic (Fredericks 2008), focused on individual change rather than organisational or systemic (Downing and Kowal 2011b; Weaver, 2008) and even accused of being a form of Anglo-American imperialism in disguise (Jack and Lorbiecki, 1999). In the Australian public sector, much of the training is reflective of the revised curriculum at the FSI. The approach is pragmatic and excludes anthropological theories of culture. However, there are now a few examples of a more considered approach, such as 'cultural safety' and 'reflective anti-racism' that foster self-reflection, a critical component in training aimed at reducing prejudice.

The field work for this research was undertaken at RTIO operations in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and in RTIO's corporate office in Perth. The study used a mixed methods approach, collating findings of literature reviews, participant observation of cultural awareness training sessions, a survey of training participants and interviews with RTIO community relations practitioners, training and HR practitioners and with presenters of the training (see Chapter One for details on methodology). Chapter Three provided a background for this case study. The Pilbara region's economy is dominated by resource extraction and is of enormous

significance to both the state and the nation. Aboriginal responses to resource development in the Pilbara have been mixed, with pressure to reach agreements with companies causing division amongst some Aboriginal groups. Some view mining as an opportunity to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in the region who remain marginalised and poor, and some reject mining on the basis of maintaining Aboriginal values in relation to the responsibility to look after country.

The relationship between Pilbara Aboriginal people and RTIO, and the resource industry more broadly, has gone from one of little or no engagement to agreement making in a relatively short time frame. The recent paradigm shift within Rio Tinto towards improving company relationships with Indigenous communities (in particular) has been prompted by global recognition of Indigenous rights and the associated expectations of companies as well as legislative changes such as native title laws in Australia. Aboriginal cultural awareness training for mine employees was first implemented at RTIO in the early 1990s as part of efforts to improve relations with Aboriginal people after the Marandoo conflict (discussed in Chapter Three) and increase Aboriginal employment at their operations. Company employees at the time were assigned ‘community relations’ roles to implement these initiatives.

Most RTIO community relations practitioners in this study can be classified as what Kowal (2006, 2012) refers to as ‘White anti-racists’ (discussed in Chapter Six). They manage the stigma of Whiteness by diminishing their own contribution to the construction and implementation of cultural awareness training and attributing credit to Aboriginal people involved. They also respect local issues of cultural authority amongst Aboriginal groups in terms of who can rightfully speak for the group and so on. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, the selection and ongoing management of the Aboriginal presenters of the training has not been easy for these well-intentioned professionals due to politics both internal to the company and internal to the Aboriginal domain. Further, they are conflicted between providing agency to Aboriginal people and ensuring the training content meets company goals.

As a consequence of the inclusion of cultural awareness training in agreements the company is now required to use an Aboriginal person endorsed by the group who are signatories to the agreement (a Traditional Owner). This has significantly reduced the pool of providers that RTIO can utilise and risks the benefits of the training being unevenly distributed amongst those willing- and eligible- to participate as training presenters. A key difference in past and present training is the number of Aboriginal people involved. In the past, there were up to eight people involved, with younger Aboriginal people also joining in. The training observed for this study was presented in most cases by one person only. The benefits for individuals are both financial and reputational, confirming the presenter's authority to speak on culture within the community. These benefits have caused some competition amongst Aboriginal people who wish to present, and the current presenters are very resistant to having 'back-up' trainers. While the presenters are very protective of their 'product', they are also conflicted about receiving payment for training on 'Aboriginal culture', feeling that 'commercialising' Aboriginal culture is connected with 'losing its meaning'.

The requirement for training presenters to be Traditional Owners has caused significant tension between community relations practitioners and existing Aboriginal presenters who were not Traditional Owners. It has also caused tension internally between community relations practitioners and others within the organisation, who do not understand the engagement approach to Aboriginal people that seeks to engage with key senior Traditional Owners as the first 'layer' or priority, followed by the broader Aboriginal population. Further, making cultural awareness training a compliance issue has shifted the focus towards meeting targets and appeasing Traditional Owners and away from the quality of the course and whether or not it is meeting its intended outcomes.

Cultural awareness training sessions were observed at three different locations (with three different presenters) as part of this study. The current delivery of the training is primarily lecture-based using a PowerPoint presentation. Topics covered included: the history of the Pilbara region; government legislation affecting Aboriginal people;

native title boundaries and language groups. The presentation styles across the three sessions were similar but the content and emphasis varied. The Pilbara training sessions included a WTC, content on kinship relations, and issues around working with Aboriginal people such as 'cultural leave' for funerals. The Perth training focused more on the 'business case' for RTIO maintaining good relationships with Aboriginal people.

Responses from training participants in this study were obtained using a survey administered immediately following the end of the session. These survey results, outlined in Chapter Five, indicated that the training content and presenters were generally well received by training participants. The survey results revealed some positive outcomes from the training, with most respondents indicating they learned something new, and suggesting it would help improve the workplace environment. However, the study also reveals that some of the content in the training sessions in this study may have had unintended negative consequences.

All of the sessions I attended included content about the past suffering of Aboriginal people due to past Government policies and lack of positive engagement with mining companies, including RTIOs predecessors. Both the presenters and community relations practitioners were aware that this kind of content can result in counter-productive reactions from training participants but still insisted it was critical to include such content. The very first Aboriginal presenter of the training back in 1992 wanted the training participants to better understand how mining had impacted on Aboriginal people and 'why Aboriginal people are the way they are'. This aim is similar to current day presenters whose aims all related to the theme of recognition. They want the training participants to understand the history of past suffering of Aboriginal people in the region and use the training as an opportunity to draw attention to the issue of dispossession. The findings from this study indicate that the content on Aboriginal history should not be excluded. However, it is important to get the balance right between acknowledging the history of Aboriginal people in the region and how it informs the present, and ensuring this content does not elicit a

negative emotional response from training participants, resulting in an increase of prejudice against Aboriginal people.

Much like the training participants at the FSI in the 1940s, a more pragmatic approach to the training is desired by surveyed training participants at RTIO. One of the main criticisms of the training was that there was limited content relating to the practical issues involved in working with Aboriginal people. According to many of the interviewees in this study, there is widespread perception amongst the RTIO non-Aboriginal workforce that Aboriginal people are receiving preferential treatment due to the company's agenda to increase Aboriginal employment. While the training content could address this perception for new employees, it does little to make a link between the past suffering of Aboriginal people, current disadvantage amongst the Aboriginal population and RTIO Aboriginal employment policies, (for example, the 'cultural leave' policy). 'Aboriginal Culture' was presented in its popular sense (for example, spiritual beliefs) rather than the everyday life activities of Aboriginal people, despite the fact that it is these practices that are likely to inform and influence the behaviour of Aboriginal employees at the mine.

What constitutes Aboriginal culture is negotiated by Aboriginal presenters and this is largely unquestioned by training participants and company employees. Aboriginal culture was conceptualised as geographically contained and mostly unchanging. The concept of culture and its contested nature was not discussed, nor were the aspirations of Aboriginal youth and how these may vary from those of presenters. A reified, narrow view of culture can give the impression that Aboriginal people are fixed in the past with no aspiration to be like their non-Indigenous counterparts. This has implications for those training participants who are working alongside, or managing Aboriginal employees. For example, this could translate to the view that Aboriginal employees do not desire promotions to supervisory roles.

The training affects what becomes known as 'Aboriginal culture' for all actors involved, and for this reason a more sophisticated approach is warranted. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline future directions of the training in detail. However,

I envisage that this approach would include content on culture as the everyday as opposed to the symbols of Aboriginal culture as portrayed in the public's imagination. Examples relevant to the workplace should be the focus, thereby meeting the expectations of training participants for the training to be more pragmatic. In particular, a course tailored for supervisors of Aboriginal employees is warranted.

The mining industry could look to the health sector in Australia for developments that include reflection on one's own identity and power-related issues, such as 'reflexive anti-racism' (see Chapter Two). The reflexive anti-racism approach has been implemented in the health sector in response to 'the dangers of essentialism and the elicitation of counterproductive emotional reactions' (Kowal et al., 2013:316). Participants of this training approach are encouraged to be reflexive about their White anti-racist identities and how it intersects with Indigenous disadvantage. For example, training participants are required to reflect on why certain attitudes are considered to be 'politically incorrect' (Kowal, et al., 2013:327). This would go some way in addressing the issues of effectiveness as well as alleviate the anxiety of those 'anti-racists' charged with organising such training. A more sophisticated discussion is also likely to alleviate the tension experienced by Aboriginal presenters around 'commercialising' culture. Organisers may also consider undertaking the training on country, where the balance of power shifts further towards the Aboriginal presenters (Doohan 2006:309).

A change in approach would require significant changes to the current delivery and content. Given the tensions associated with selecting presenters and content, it may prove practically difficult at this time. The type of content in the reflexive anti-racism approach (see Chapter Two) would most likely require a professional trainer to be involved, and current Traditional Owners are likely to resist this. There is also likely to be resistance from both Traditional Owners and RTIO community relations practitioners to involving a non-Aboriginal person. However, as noted earlier, research indicates that pairs of diversity trainers who differ in race/ethnicity produce better learning outcomes than homogenous trainer pairs (Hayles, 1996 cited in

Kowal et al., 2013). Given the importance of ensuring positive outcomes for the training, this option should be considered. The conversation between the actors about these issues is likely in itself, to improve relationships between the social actors involved. Neither the community relations practitioners nor the Aboriginal people could recall a time when they both met to discuss what content was important to the different actors and why. For Aboriginal cultural awareness training to benefit both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the different actors must first come to a shared understanding about what it is the training aims to achieve.

By revealing the ‘backstage’ of Aboriginal cultural awareness training at RTIO, this thesis has demonstrated that the corporate sector’s view of cultural difference as a barrier or problem that needs to be managed is highly problematic. I have argued that the training is better understood as expressions of fundamental tensions that exist in the rapidly changing relationship between mining company personnel and Aboriginal people. The training content and who is selected to present the training is influenced by politics between company personnel and Aboriginal people as well within internal to the Aboriginal domain, which is typically highly factionalised. This has implications for the effectiveness of the training in changing attitudes or behaviours of training participants in desired ways.

This study has demonstrated a need for a change in approach to current cultural awareness training at RTIO. These findings are also likely to apply to other resource companies and more broadly to other industries operating near Aboriginal communities or on Aboriginal land. The significant corporate investment in such initiatives warrants a change in approach to ensure the training has a positive influence on training participants and does not result in unintended negative consequences, potentially doing more harm than good. Lastly, the study’s findings are presented as a contribution to understanding how cultural awareness training is a complex social field with different identity categories of person bringing different assumptions about the idea of culture and its relevance to their everyday lives.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Survey of training participants



Cultural Awareness Training Participant Survey

- ❖ This survey is for Rio Tinto employees who have completed Cultural Awareness Training in 2013.
- ❖ Your survey responses are confidential and anonymous. Please do not write your name on the survey.
- ❖ Your participation is voluntary, you don't have to answer any or all of the questions, and you can stop at any time.
- ❖ A post graduate student at the University of Queensland, Joni Parmenter, will analyse all responses received.
- ❖ This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland (Approval #2006000932). If you would like to discuss your participation in this survey with one of the researchers, please contact Joni Parmenter on 0401 062 345 or j.parmenter@smi.uq.edu.au. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you can contact the Ethics Office on (07) 3365 4584.

Are you?

Male
Female

How old are you?

18 - 24 years
25 - 34 years
35 - 44 years
45 - 54 years
55 - 64 years
65+ years

What is your highest Level of Education

☐ Below Year 10
☐ Year 10
☐ Year 11
☐ Year 12
☐ Certificate/Diploma/Advanced Diploma
☐ University Degree
☐ Post graduate Degree

Were you born?

In Australia – please go to Q6
Outside of Australia , please specify _____

If you were born outside of Australia, how many years have you lived in Australia?

1-5 years
6-10 years
11-15 years

| | |
|---|--|
| | 16-20 years More than 20 years |
| In what region did you spend most of your youth up to the age of 18 years? | A major capital city (eg Perth, Sydney, Melbourne) A regional town (eg Busselton, Broome, Townsville) A small town (eg Northam, Albany, Tom Price) A remote location (eg. a cattle station) Other, please specify_____ |
| Where do you currently live? | Perth Karratha Dampier Tom Price Other, please specify_____ |
| Do you identify as: | Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Other please specify_____ |
| Do you currently socialise with Aboriginal people outside of the workplace? | Yes No |
| How long have you worked in the mining industry? | Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 years 7-9 years 10 or more years |
| How long have you worked for Rio Tinto? | Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 years 7-9 years 10 or more years |
| What is your current position? | <input type="checkbox"/> Truck driving or other plant operator Utility person (e.g. cleaning, laundry) Hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Heritage <input type="checkbox"/> Community relations <input type="checkbox"/> Labouring <input type="checkbox"/> Technician (e.g. working in laboratory, surveying, environment) <input type="checkbox"/> Team leader Professional (e.g. geology, engineering) Trade person (e.g. electrician, carpenter) <input type="checkbox"/> Traineeship (please specify type) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship (please specify type) _____ _____ Other (please specify) _____ |
| Are there any Aboriginal employees you work with | Yes |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|------|------|-----------|-----------|
| currently? | No I don't know | | | | |
| Have you worked with Aboriginal people prior to working at Rio Tinto? | Yes No | | | | |
| Where did you attend cultural Awareness training? | Karratha Dampier Tom Price Perth Cape Lambert Pannawonica Brockman 4 Brockman 2 Hope Downs 1 Hope Downs 4 Paraburdoo West Angeles Koodaideri Other, please specify_____ | | | | |
| Was your attendance at the cultural awareness training? | At the request of the company My own initiative | | | | |
| Would you attend the training if it was voluntary? | Yes No | | | | |
| Who do you think benefits from cultural awareness training? (tick all that apply) | Rio Tinto The mining industry Aboriginal employees Aboriginal community Non-Aboriginal employees Non-Aboriginal community Presenters of the training No one, it's a waste of time | | | | |
| How would you describe your knowledge of Aboriginal culture? | Poor | Fair | Good | Very good | Excellent |
| | <i>Before</i> the training | | | | |
| | <i>After</i> the training | | | | |

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------------------|
| I feel confident in communicating with Aboriginal people | | | | | |
| I would like to know more about Aboriginal culture | | | | | |
| The content of the training was NOT relevant to my work at Rio Tinto | | | | | |
| The training will help me work more effectively with Aboriginal people | | | | | |
| The training made me think about my own culture | | | | | |
| The presenters were open and honest about all aspects of their culture | | | | | |
| This training should be voluntary | | | | | |
| The training will ensure a better working environment at Rio Tinto | | | | | |
| Rio Tinto are really committed to building positive relationships with Aboriginal people | | | | | |
| The mining industry is a good place for Aboriginal people to work | | | | | |

In your own words:

1. What did you learn today?

2. Has anything you heard today changed the way you view Aboriginal people/culture?

Please explain.

3. How could the training be improved?

END OF SURVEY.

Thank you for your participating and valued input towards the development of cultural awareness training in the resources industry.

Appendix Two : Interview prompts

Interview prompts: Aboriginal presenters of the training

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? (demographics and work history)
2. From your perspective, what is the aim of CAT?
3. How did you come to be the presenter of the training? What was the process?
4. How was the course put together? (training materials, meetings etc)
5. Who decided what content would be in the course?
6. Were you happy with how the course was put together (why, why not)
7. Who has ownership of the course?
8. What do you think of the content in the training materials?
9. Has anything ever gone wrong? Please provide an example
10. Are there only specific Aboriginal people who can provide this training?
11. What kind of impact is the training having ?
12. What kinds of reactions do you receive from participants

Interview prompts: RTIO employees

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Demographics and work/relationship history with Aboriginal people?
2. What are you hoping to achieve by implementing CAT?
3. How were the presenters of the training selected? What was the process?
4. Does RT provide any support to presenters (capacity building/financial support)
5. How was the course put together? (training materials, meetings etc)
6. Who decided what content would be in the course? (process)
7. Were you happy with how the course was put together (why, why not)
8. Who has ownership of the course?
9. What do you think of the content in the training materials?
10. Has anything ever gone wrong? Please provide an example
11. Why have you chosen to use local Aboriginal people to deliver the training?
12. What kind of impact is the training having? (positive and negative -examples please)
13. What do you think participants think of the training?

Appendix Three: Project information sheet



CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING AT RIO TINTO:

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This study looks at how cultural awareness training was developed and put together, how it is delivered and how Rio Tinto employees respond to it. The study will be undertaken by Joni Parmenter, a Masters student at The University of Queensland.

The study will have three components:

- 1) Interviews with presenters of the training and RTIO employees
- 2) Observation of training sessions in the Pilbara and Perth
- 3) A survey of participants of the training. This survey will be undertaken in 2013.

DO YOU HAVE TO DO THIS?

Your participation is voluntary, you don't have to answer any or all of the questions, and you can stop at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THIS INFORMATION?

Your answers will be combined with all other information to build an overall picture of your experience of Cultural Awareness Training. A report will be presented to Rio Tinto and the data will be used in my Masters thesis.

CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS

Your responses are confidential and anonymous. When research findings are reported, your answers and comments made will not be linked to you, or to any details that might identify you, unless you give express permission.

CAN YOU FIND OUT THE RESULTS?

Yes. The researcher will provide a summary of findings and feedback to study participants in a newsletter form and the report will be presented to your Local Implementation Committee as well.

ETHICAL ISSUES?

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of The University of Queensland (Approval #2006000932). If you would like to discuss your participation with the researcher, you are welcome to contact Joni on 0401 062 345. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University *not* involved in the study, you can contact the Ethics Office on (07) 3365 4584.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Joni Parmenter lives in Brisbane and has been working as a researcher for the Centre for Social Responsibility at The University of Queensland for the past 6 years. During that time Joni has had extensive experience working on projects relating to social impact assessment, Aboriginal employment, gender and diversity workforce issues, governance issues and mine closure. Joni has visited a number of operations both in Australia and overseas. Most recently, Joni managed a project funded by RTIO about the retention of Aboriginal employees at their operations. Joni currently holds an honours degree in Anthropology from The University of Queensland.

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