

**RESISTING CONTRADICTIONS: NON-  
INDIGENOUS PRE-SERVICE TEACHER  
RESPONSES TO CRITICAL INDIGENOUS  
STUDIES**

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- Compulsory Indigenous studies
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  - Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy
  - Indigenist Research
  - Critical Indigenist Case Study
  - Indigenous knowledge perspectives
  - Decolonisation
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## Abstract

The study examines non-Indigenous pre-service teacher responses to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in compulsory Indigenous studies with a primary focus on exploring the nature and effects of resistance. It draws on the philosophies of the Japangka teaching and research paradigm (West, 2000), relationship theory (Graham, 1999), Indigenist methodologies and decolonisation approaches to examine this resistance. A Critical Indigenist Study was employed to investigate how non-Indigenous pre-service teachers managed their learning, and how they articulated shifts in resistance as they progressed through their studies. This study explains resistance to compulsory Indigenous and how it can be targeted by Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy. The beginning transformations in pre-service teacher positioning in relation to Australian history, contemporary educational practice, and professional identity was also explored.

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## List of Abbreviations

CAR	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
NAEP	National Aboriginal Education Policy
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

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## Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Prologue

In 1935 a young girl was moved to Woorabinda in central Queensland. As part of the young girl's punishment for becoming pregnant out of wedlock she was forced to report to the mission's barber to have her hair shaved off. The Aboriginal man responsible for escorting her to be disciplined told the authorities that he would marry her instead. Although the young girl lost that baby, this man and this woman went on to have 13 children together. One of those children was my mother.

Through this period, and the decades preceding this time, members of my family were moved around Queensland, all their physical movements controlled by the State. Documents from that era provide a glimpse of how Aboriginal people were perceived by the various "Protectors" across South East Queensland. A letter regarding Cora Hill, my grandfather's brother's daughter, was sent to the Director of Native Affairs from the Queensland Police Inspectors' Office in Mackay making the complaint that:

During the past few months Cora has got out of hand and the Simpson's were unable to exercise any control of her. Cora is getting the type of aboriginal that cannot make a do of it for more than 12 months at the one place. She is a very good worker but occasionally lapses into a sulky fit and when in this condition she becomes very abusive to her employer. (January 1, 1942, see Appendix A)

As a 25 year old woman, Aunty Cora had no control over her life. As a 25 year old woman she was treated like a child. Records also show that my grandmother, Lily Mi Mi, suffering under the same regime, was forced by the Protectorate to move from Gayndah to Cherbourg in 1934. My grandmother was once again removed in 1935 from Gympie to Woorabinda, Queensland. In the 1940s she and my grandfather, Walter Hill, eventually came home to Gayndah where they raised their family. We were Wakka Wakka mob on Wakka Wakka land.

I start this story with my grandparents because it is that generation that I remember most clearly from my childhood – my grandparents, great Aunties and Uncles, my mother and her brothers and sisters. Memories of Granny Simpson, my grandmother's mother are vague but stories from her grandchildren also made her a

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vivid part of my life. My mother's childhood home in Gayndah was a tin shack in Juliette Street with an outdoor area and two internal rooms. It was so small that the bathtub was made into a bed for various visitors and family drop-ins that occurred regularly. My mother told me that:

We always lived outside of town. If one Aboriginal family had a house, the next family to live there would most likely be Aboriginal too ... white people kept black people in their place by not giving Aboriginal people voice in what they defined as 'their' space. (Ruth Ross, 2009, personal communication)

My family eventually moved from the Juliette Street house to a bigger house in which our large, extended family lived for many years.

While travelling between Gayndah and Wondai one day Aunty Ruth, my grandmother's sister, told my mother who was about 20 years old at the time: "See all this land, we belong here too". My mother recalls that she realised then that there were boundaries that authorised our connections to land well beyond those that white people had marked under the pretence that it was theirs.

My family talked a lot about 'our land'. My family also spent a lot of time talking about being Aboriginal and its beauty in the face of systematic contrary views. They theorised a lot to help us deal with these views, but most importantly to make sure we saw ourselves as Aboriginal through their eyes. In dealing with the outside world, a strange look by a shop attendant, a patronising glance from a school teacher or even just chance comments made by non-Aboriginal friends of the family would provide enough 'data' to spur my mother, aunties and uncles into analysis. Strategies for survival were easily summoned from knowledge held to disrupt the colonial storylines which positioned us. While words like epistemology and ontology were never used, and others like 'colonisation' rarely featured, as Aboriginal children my sisters and cousins, along with many others were developing a repository of knowledge to assist us to make sense of our realities in relation to family and in relation to the colonial world. These spaces sometimes intersected, and sometimes they did not.

My first and only experience with 'Aboriginal studies' through school was in Grade 3. In contrast to the ways in which I was experiencing my culture at home, the 'Aborigines' presented to me in that grade three classroom were un-named and

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frozen in time. They held spears and boomerangs and perched on rocks with a foot on one knee scanning a wide, empty horizon. These images seemed as distant to me as what I imagined they would have been for the non-Aboriginal children in my class. However, under the gaze of my peers I began to comprehend how my ‘difference’, driven by these images was marked by them. It was quite benign I suppose, however such events trap those who are ‘different’ within a false system of knowing; not within our own mobs – but by non-Aboriginal people. It also traps non-Aboriginal people into a relation with people whose shape and form are distorted through the lens of objectified images of Aboriginal people and romanticised visions of a settler-past.

My confusion and distress at being marked as different in this way travelled home with my seven-year old self one afternoon. When my family asked what was wrong, I grumbled: “they were talking about Aborigines in class today and everyone looked around at me as if I was one”. In reply, my Mother and Aunty both laughed and said: “Well, you *are* Aboriginal”.

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## Terminology

When referring to myself in this thesis I use the term Aboriginal. More generally, I use the term ‘Indigenous’ to refer to the First Peoples of Australian lands and territories. Within Australia and internationally there are many ways in which Indigenous peoples name themselves, therefore when using references I retain all original naming.

Like most terminology relating to Indigenous people the term “Indigenous” is problematic given that Indigenous peoples in Australia are not one homogenous group. I acknowledge the great cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples in relation to our belonging on the 500-600 Indigenous territories that constitute the country now claimed as Australia. I also recognise that there is diversity in the ways that colonisation has marked these groups. Ultimately, there is no one-form of naming Indigenous peoples that would satisfy all the requirements to acknowledge the connections to land and the heterogeneity of Indigenous groups pre-Invasion and after Invasion. This term ‘Indigenous’ was chosen, in part, for ease of writing, but also because the thrust of this study is to examine the spaces where colonial privilege and disenfranchisement intersect to affect Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Furthermore, I seek to clarify the conditions of dominance in Western spaces to demonstrate the value of Indigenous knowledge perspectives on colonialism for disrupting, interrupting and transforming those spaces. Likewise, I therefore use the term ‘non-Indigenous’ to delineate newcomers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander territories, whether their arrival occurred over 200 years ago or more recently.

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# Chapter 1: Indigenous Studies

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This study investigates how non-Indigenous students respond to compulsory Indigenous studies that authorise Indigenous knowledge perspectives on issues relating to Australian history and cultures. The idea for this investigation arose when I noticed that students in mandated Indigenous studies classes seemed to be additionally challenged by their learning in Indigenous studies as opposed to students in elective studies. Students in the compulsory program appeared to resist both content and process more strongly. A question which interested me was whether there was a link between student resistance, the compulsory nature of the program and the depth of learning made possible by targeting that resistance through a holistic pedagogy.

## 1.1 RATIONALE FOR STUDY

Over a decade ago, when I was new to teaching Indigenous studies in universities, I subscribed to the notion that it's important for everyone to know about Indigenous peoples' experiences across the history of Australia. For two years I focussed solely on providing non-Indigenous students with information that I believed would balance existing views of Indigenous peoples and effect some change in the ways such students related to knowledge about us. In my third year of teaching I felt growing discomfort with this approach and although I realised the value of non-Indigenous peoples knowing about these hidden histories, I felt students made limited connections beyond the usual feelings of guilt, similar to what Reynolds (2001) says in the title of his book about exclamations of "Why wasn't I told?" In some ways, earlier content driven approaches to teaching Indigenous studies drew me back to my grade three classroom, playing out in the disconnection I felt as an Aboriginal teacher trying to fix complex lived realities through historical schemas dictated by Western systems.

There were several reasons for my discomfort with this 'teach-about-the-Aborigines' approach:

- The un-critical consumption of the 'information' by the [mainly] non-Indigenous students;

- The impossibility of representing Indigenous peoples' cultures and histories through such a narrow, descriptive and circumscribed process;
- The distance that non-Indigenous students were able to maintain from knowledge about their own privileged positions, and
- The way that teaching *about* Indigenous peoples made me feel like an apparition, performing a supposedly 'lost' culture (Langton, 1993), yet remaining invisible in the process.

Teaching *about* Aboriginal people in this way and in this context hinged on an assumption that sharing content and information that explained Indigenous victimisation, or that showed 'positive' constructions of Indigenous people to counterbalance prevailing negative views, would, through some miraculous osmosis, counteract social injustice.

Influenced by the writings of Frantz Fanon's (1967) text, "White Skin, Black Mask", emerging texts on Whiteness theory and the writings of bell hooks' (1994) in "Teaching to Transgress", I came to see that teaching and learning in Aboriginal studies must integrate and consider the dimensions beyond this form of 'knowledge' building using content. At its deepest, most transformative level, Indigenous studies programs, specifically those aimed at non-Indigenous students, must provoke a shift that makes a difference to how individuals relate to knowledge about Indigenous issues, and their relationships with Indigenous peoples beyond the classroom. It must also enable students to become critical readers in both public and private domains and across these spaces by drawing distinct connections between abstracted *theory* and the chaotic, yet powerful spheres of our social existence which organise our world.

What occurs in an Indigenous studies classroom can never be divorced from what is occurring in social and political contexts beyond the institution (Anderson, 2009; Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006; Fredericks, 2009; Norman, 2004). Neither can the revisiting and review of history across a range of public and private spaces be overlooked, for these tussles tend to reflect and impact on what occurs in micro settings such as a university classroom. A content-driven approach to teaching Indigenous Studies required me to fix concrete notions of Aboriginality within certain contexts; contexts which are never certain at all. This merely served to add

on to the limited pre-existing ideas that students held about Indigenous people and, in turn, impact on how new information was received and interpreted by them. A pedagogy which recognises this, without becoming overly sentimental, yet that acknowledges the emotiveness of the task is required.

Through this investigation I hope to make a contribution to the evolving field of critical Indigenous studies.

## 1.2 INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Knowledge production in Indigenous studies programs continues to be subject to entrenched ways of relating to Indigenous people through the lenses of a collective national identity formed through colonising paradigms. According to Prasad (2006) these are structural barriers that preclude the incorporation and authorisation of knowledge perspectives of marginalised groups. She argues that:

The space to exert cultural presence [has] to be *constituted* for the masquerade of cultural diversity within a genteel racist institution [will] not suffice ... the point [is] to dismantle inherited structures rather than to simply graft on their story as a footnote of the *real* march of civilization. (p. 163)

The construction of knowledge about Australian culture and history has contributed to the ways in which Indigenous studies is framed within educational institutions. Indigenous peoples have been written into the Australian ‘imaginary’ as powerless in the face of colonial history and our submission to this invasion is part of the common-sense understandings about our places on the land (Pettman, 1988). There is a clear relationship between seizing land territories and the control of knowledge systems inherent to those territories (Nakata, 2007). The careful severing of the past from the present within existing dominant knowledge frameworks (Bird-Rose, 2004) consigns the violence perpetrated on Indigenous peoples to irrelevance or as disconnected from all of our experiences today.

These dominant frameworks reframe knowledge about Indigenous ‘cultures’ according to the socio-economic conditions arising from Australia’s colonial history. In this compartmentalisation, there is a denial of the effects of systemic forces, including institutional racism, on the access, participation and success of Indigenous people in the Australian education system, a system which is also a product of this colonial history. This highlights the need for considering the shape and form of

Indigenous studies in universities which goes beyond this grafting process that Prashad (2006) refers to. Such an idea compels a focus on strategies that work to build the capacity of educational institutions to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and studies without contaminating outcomes with colonial ideals. The need to investigate approaches that critique ‘cultural deficit’ paradigms and that advance practices that empower Indigenous knowledge frameworks is imperative. Indigenous studies, when contextualised by an examination of colonisation, the enduring Western gaze, and relationships subsequently constructed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through Australian history, allows this critique. Interrogating personal positions in relation to the suppression of Indigenous knowledge perspectives through ongoing colonial dominance is key to mobilising the types of understandings required (Pennington, 2007).

The involvement of Aboriginal educators at theory development, policy and curriculum delivery levels troubles previous framings of how Indigenous knowledges are acted upon inside colonial contexts, and by extension, Indigenous studies (Fredericks, 2009). In the Australian context, Grieves (2008) is concerned that while the overt violence of the colonial frontier may have disappeared, this has morphed into more silent attacks on attempts to establish places for Indigenous knowledges within Australian scholarship. Indigenous studies curriculum that frames Indigenous peoples only as oppressed, without deconstructing the reasons for the oppression allow non-Indigenous peoples to be disconnected observers, and confirms a privileged position in relation to Indigenous peoples (Nakata, 2006).

Indigenous studies programs that describe Indigenous experiences are anchored by paradigms of cultural deficit or cultural difference as exotica (Harrison, 2008). The historical focus of Indigenous education around cultural deficit models is reflected in the shape and form of Indigenous studies curricula and its reinforcement of non-Indigenous colonial privilege. Indigenous knowledge perspectives on colonial histories have the potential to take learning in Indigenous studies contexts beyond the regurgitation of historically constituted knowledge about Indigenous difference, with its imperative to ascribe a particular, marginalised space for Indigenous people. Pedagogy conceptualised in this way becomes “predicated on the *possibility of*, and *entitlement to* an accessible and shared terrain of knowledge” (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 481, original emphasis). Curriculum that investigates the standpoints of pre-

service teachers within neo-colonial frameworks has the capacity to attend to broader social justice ambitions by directing attention to how teachers can be complicit in oppressive systems (Phillips, 2005).

It would be a stretch to say that the education of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers will have a direct and immediate effect on the lives of Indigenous children. However, the educational experiences of Indigenous peoples can be advanced through incremental systemic change resulting from individualised shifts in teacher positioning. Obviously, systemic conditions beyond the classroom – health, legal, social, basic service provision in communities – need to also be addressed (Altman, Biddle & Hunter, 2008). These broader provisions impact on what happens in the classroom but they require distinct strategies beyond that which an individual teacher has the capacity to employ. However, individual teachers who adopt critical approaches to teaching Indigenous studies in schools influence the system and individual students toward an evolution of systemic change. I therefore see Indigenous studies as having the potential to be transformative for Indigenous *and* non-Indigenous peoples as individuals who may then effect change institutionally.

Transformative learning refers to establishing the means to resist domination by empowering the individual to identify how colonial and re-colonial relations are reproduced (Dei, 2006). This learning also aims to increase both teacher and student agency in regard to understanding their place in these relations (Comber & Nixon, 2009; Dei, 2000; Hytten, 2006). There exists no methodology for interpreting or knowing Indigenous peoples as Indigenous peoples *really* are (Chalmers, 2005; Smith, 1999). This leads to a dilemma. While the demand for Indigenous theory to be developed is an important one it is still potentially dangerous if the dominant fields through which these voices are interpreted are not interrogated. Indigenous Australian scholar Lester Irabinna Rigney (2001) has developed a theoretical body of work that he refers to as Indigenism, which he sees as:

[A] body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in the interest of Indigenous peoples for the purpose of self-determination. [It] is multi-disciplinary with the essential criteria being the identity and colonising experience of the writer. (p.1)

Indigenism offers a methodological approach which advances the aims of anti-colonial theory. The conceptualisation of Indigenous studies through an Indigenist

lens therefore sees the integration and privileging of Indigenous knowledge perspectives as a path toward its emancipatory goals. For this study Indigenist theory is a conceptual tool that enables me, as an Indigenous scholar, to give primacy to the experiences of Indigenous peoples in research and educational contexts. It is important also to consider the effects of dominating systems on the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Therefore, I employ the Japanangka paradigm (West, 2000) as a tool to conceptualise and empower Indigenous experiences and worldviews in relation to non-Indigenous peoples inside intersected neo-colonial spaces.

Fundamentally, learning spaces in Indigenous studies must seek to re-contextualise the “stories told by former colonists” (Langton, 1993, p. 32) by privileging Indigenous voice and experiences, and acknowledging the social connections which individuals make today on the basis of this history. The Japanangka paradigm enables movements beyond relativising Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures by focussing attention on the multiple dimensions through which knowledge is produced, reinforced, excluded and included. It reinforces knowledge as a living entity, necessarily complicated by vast and complex sets of discursively produced relationships (West, 2000). The repositioning of non-Indigenous students in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives can thus be mobilised to investigate how the production of particular forms of knowledge and its reproduction in contemporary times continues to serve colonial purposes.

I have provided a brief overview on the place of Indigenous studies and some of its traditional tenets to flag the significance of this study for curriculum development in Indigenous studies programs that focus attention on these critical intersubjectivities. The limitations of teaching about Indigenous peoples’ experience to attempt to connect with non-Indigenous students are immense. The aim of this study is to make a contribution to developing alternative approaches for Indigenous studies in pre-service teacher education that advance goals of emancipation for Indigenous peoples.

### **1.3 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH CONTEXT**

I present a brief overview in this section to contextualise this study of pre-service teachers in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject. The study is underpinned by the

philosophy that guiding pre-service teachers to deconstruct non-Indigenous peoples' standpoints in relation to Indigenous people is a necessary precursor for establishing the practicalities of embedding Indigenous perspectives. The groundwork for such deconstruction occurs through positioning Indigenist knowledge perspectives in relation to assumptions of non-Indigenous epistemological sovereignty to elicit shifts in these assumptions.

While a more detailed discussion of the research context is undertaken in Chapter 3, the following explanation aims to show how I developed the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, a critical Indigenous studies subject, in an attempt to shift beyond traditional approaches to Indigenous studies. The critical Indigenous studies subject, *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, aims to provide a foundation for students toward reconsidering approaches to diversity curriculum, planning and teaching philosophies in later stages of a Bachelor degree in education. The program was developed and delivered for the first time in 2003 as part of a larger curriculum endeavour. The main goals of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are to expand pre-service teachers' theoretical, personal and professional knowledge around Indigenous knowledge perspectives to enable them to think more deeply about their role as teachers in Australian schools (Phillips, 2003). *Cultures and Indigenous Education* departs from more familiar methods of investigation in Indigenous studies as it does not aim to provide students with specific knowledge and practical strategies for teaching Indigenous studies or students. Students are introduced instead to a range of relevant concepts and issues in order to establish a more critical foundation for their teaching practice.

The subject is grounded in theoretical assumptions that locate Indigenous knowledge as sovereign and not as an add-on included under an amorphous banner of 'multi-culturalism'. Students are guided through an interrogation and exploration of the various historical, social and psychic filters applied to imagine particular relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The aim is to introduce students to the complex issues relating to the place of Indigenous peoples and cultures in Australia. It attends to the multiple dimensions of meaning-making that reinforce knowledge about Indigenous peoples and Australian history and identity formations. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* allows students to interrogate how formal and informal ways of 'knowing' Indigenous peoples are

filtered through social, cultural and historical lenses that reflect dominant worldviews and imperatives. The main goals of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are therefore:

- To investigate the complex social and historical conditions that impact on individual understandings of the world;
- To facilitate understandings of how these individual ways of knowing sit inside a framework of collective understandings about Australian culture and history;
- To examine how particular forms of cultural constructions are marshalled to imagine ‘cultural difference’ [“them”] and Australians [“us”] in ways that purposefully silence and marginalise Indigenous peoples and knowledge;
- To develop *conceptual frameworks* for embedding Indigenous perspectives in ways that respect and value the concerns of Indigenous peoples, and
- To initiate the development of teaching philosophies that consider social justice issues as central, with particular regard for the significance of Indigenous cultures and experiences. (Phillips, 2003; 2009)

As a response to these overall goals, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was designed to introduce a series of critical thinking tools to enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to engage with each other in the negotiation and creation of new meanings relating to our experiences over history and into the present. This was facilitated through the examination of the complex spaces that influence individual understandings of the social, cultural and historical domains we inhabit, and locating these understandings within a deeper, collective understanding about Australian culture and history.

#### **1.4 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

This study explores how non-Indigenous pre-service teachers explain, analyse and interpret knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures in an existing compulsory Indigenous studies subject, *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, in one university in Queensland. In this instance, the topic emerged from my experiences as an Aboriginal lecturer in Indigenous studies and misgivings I had about the ways in

which these programs often presented Indigenous peoples as objects to interrogate and dissect. My early teaching was in elective Indigenous studies subjects, where students had come to their learning with a pre-existing motivation to study in the area. However, my interest in how non-Indigenous students constructed meaning and re-interpreted their own biases and resistances to Indigenous knowledge perspectives within Australian contexts was piqued when I became involved in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject several years ago. In both circumstances students were engaged in the deconstruction of powerful cultural discourses through critical self-examination and theoretical investigations into the impact of these discourses on their beliefs and attitudes.

Questions around how resistance was linked to ideas about self and relation to collective colonial discourses drove the formulation of the research problem. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* aims to shift away from the common focus on the 'Other' in multicultural education (Ryan & Dixon, 2006), toward interrogations of how positions of cultural power and privilege manipulate ideas about Indigenous peoples. In this context, self-examination is situated as a beginning point for students' identification of their own responsibilities to influence, and eventually toward counteracting socially unjust practices. While there is relative ease with identifying racism, for example, as an interpersonal event from a victim's perspective, there is difficulty and discomfort in exploring one's complicity from the position of privilege inside systems of dominance (Page, 2009). Through observation I began to notice differences in student responses in the elective subjects and the intensity of the challenges emergent in the compulsory subject I wrote, and continue to co-ordinate and teach in as part of a team. My teaching in the area thus provided an opportune space for the investigation of how and why students expressed resistance to Indigenous studies.

The study focuses on the responses of non-Indigenous students with particular attention to how they resist the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in relation to colonial history. Consequently, the study has the following general purposes:

- To identify the discourses which students use to reinforce their position in relation to Indigenous peoples;
- To analyse how students construct knowledge about Indigenous peoples;

- To identify how students make sense of these constructions and discourses as they progress through their studies in the subject;
- To describe the transformations that occur in students as they progress through *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

The methodology employed to investigate the research problem is a Critical Indigenist Case Study which has been developed through a fusion of decolonising and Indigenist approaches and the use of Critical Discourse Analysis. The questions being investigated (1.5) are suited to a Critical Indigenist Case Study (5.1.1) because this methodology allows for the centralisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives and authority in deconstructing colonial knowledge dominance with a view to decolonisation (see 4.3).

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study collected data from students who were enrolled in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* across a number of years and was guided by the following research questions:

- How do pre-service teacher education students respond to Indigenous studies curriculum which authorises Indigenous knowledge perspectives of Australia's colonial history and contemporary cultural frameworks?
- What discourses are used by non-Indigenous students to manage, interpret and resist Indigenous knowledges perspectives when they actively engage and personalise their standpoint in relation to this authorisation?
- What do non-Indigenous students identify as pivotal to their recognition and acknowledgement of their standpoints and how do they articulate and manage these shifts in recognition?

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study addresses important issues relating to the development of curriculum and pedagogical approaches in Indigenous curriculum. It is especially relevant to advancing ideas in relation to curriculum in compulsory Indigenous studies programs given that many students do not choose to undertake these studies. With notable exceptions (Craven, 1996a & 1996b), research into Indigenous studies programs primarily focuses on how to improve Indigenous student participation in non-

Indigenous education contexts (see Brady, 1997; Dockery 2009; Gray & Beresford, 2008; Harris & Malin, 1997; Kronemann, 2007; Malin, 1989; Prout, 2009). This study did not seek to replicate and extend these so it did not investigate Indigenous students' experiences in Indigenous studies or Indigenous education. The aim of the research was to investigate the dimensions of resistance by non-Indigenous students when Indigenist knowledge perspectives are centralised within a compulsory Indigenous studies curriculum. The complexities which emerge within this context are at once social, cultural, political, historical and personal. This critical Indigenist case study was considered useful for two reasons. First, students were cultivating the types of shifts required through their engagements in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Second, given the dearth of spaces where Indigenous perspectives dominate the learning process it was seen as unusual enough to provide new opportunities for learning about the impacts of Indigenous studies curriculum for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers.

This study investigates an approach that conceptualises Indigenous studies in new ways. Furthermore, the study does not seek to prove, or disprove theories about Western dominance or Indigenous peoples' unprivileged positioning inside these domains, although these concepts were relevant to the investigation and are discussed. Critiques of Western science in relation to the validation and domination of Indigenous knowledges have been well-documented (Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Nakata, 2007; Rigney, 2001). Other studies have shown the influence of hegemonic forces inside educational contexts (McConaghy, 2000; Nicoll, 2000). However, there is a lack of empirical data dealing specifically with non-Indigenous student responses to compulsory Indigenous studies. This study has the potential for alternative pathways for liberatory Indigenous studies to create responsibility for non-Indigenous teachers in this often challenging, and always exhausting field of endeavour.

## **1.7 THESIS OUTLINE**

In this thesis, Chapter 2 highlights relevant literature and addresses the development of Indigenous studies within broader social, cultural and historical fields. It gives primacy to Indigenous perspectives however it includes literature from non-Indigenous scholars in order to discuss the complexities of these structural fields. An overview of the research context is provided in Chapter 3 to situate the development

of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* institutionally, and to provide an overview of the pedagogy. The conceptual framework for this study applies the philosophies of Aboriginal theorists Errol West and Mary Graham, and in Chapter 4 these are contextualised in relation to the study and the research design. This chapter also discusses the methodological considerations crucial to research conducted by Indigenous peoples in the interests of achieving the emancipatory goals of Indigenist projects. The research design is outlined in Chapter 5 and includes a reflexive analysis. Descriptions of a critical Indigenist case study are also provided through a discussion of how the conceptual framework has informed the data collection and analysis through Critical Discourse Analysis. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I present an analysis of the data examining non-Indigenous pre-service teacher responses to *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This analysis is organised around three broad themes of *disruption* (Chapter 6), *resistance* (Chapter 7) and *beginning transformations* (Chapter 8). Lastly, Chapter 9 discusses findings in relation to the research questions and suggests recommendations for further research in the area of compulsory pre-service teacher education in Indigenous studies.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

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This review outlines literature relating to the integration of Indigenous knowledge perspectives into non-Indigenous educational spaces. Through this, the chapter aims to construct a discourse around alternative pedagogical approaches to compulsory Indigenous studies curriculum. The voices and scholarship of Indigenous peoples in Australia are given primacy; however, international Indigenous perspectives are also included. I also include relevant non-Indigenous scholars within and outside of Australia as any discussion that focuses on colonial patterns and relationships implicates Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The examination of Indigenous student participation in education is an equally complex investigation that is related to, but ultimately separate from those I deal with in this study. Therefore, scholarly work relating to Indigenous peoples' participation in Indigenous studies programs is only used to advance the argument that non-Indigenous pre-service teachers must interrogate their own knowledge perspectives to establish effective foundations for their teaching practice.

First, I consider literature relating to cultures, knowledges and knowledge perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (2.1). Second, I consider how Indigenous education and Indigenous studies are conceptualised as a consequence (2.2). Third, I discuss literature relating to student responses to critical learning environments to develop ideas for curriculum in compulsory Indigenous studies (2.3).

### **2.1 CULTURES, KNOWLEDGES AND KNOWLEDGE PERSPECTIVES**

In this section, I examine the impact of colonisation on Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and knowledges and the subsequent trajectory into existing epistemological frameworks. A key point expressed in this section is that Indigenous cultures and knowledges have survived the onslaught of colonial thought and hold a privileged place in relation to knowledge perspectives on non-Indigenous domains in this regard. I consider how these constructions of colonial knowledge persist in contemporary times. In this sense, contemporary Australian cultures and knowledge frameworks and colonising processes are intimately linked in terms of how these

frameworks are represented and how they work to position Indigenous peoples today. I suggest that powerful discourses have been established historically and that these discourses continue to function in the present to maintain complex relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The re-integration of Indigenous knowledge perspectives into knowledge contexts dominated by neo-colonialism can serve to disrupt the power of these discourses. The following discussion provides a focal point for the central idea expressed in this section that Indigenous knowledge perspectives in relation to non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives exist in dynamic and intersecting spaces.

There is a distinction that I want to make between knowledges, cultures and knowledge perspectives. While knowledges and cultures are interdependent and strongly connected, the purpose of this review is to look at the representations of cultures and knowledges – of self and otherwise – that impact on how Indigenous peoples are ‘known’ in public domains. I use the term ‘knowledge perspectives’ to distinguish the positions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in relation to each other from the more formal epistemological systems of these groups. I do not seek to describe these systems but instead focus on how individuals mobilise systemically produced knowledge in social contexts, particularly when forming relationships with Indigenous peoples.

### **2.1.1 INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND KNOWLEDGES – IN RELATIONSHIP**

Many anthropological texts published in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century aimed to explain the cultures and identities of Indigenous peoples in Australia (Berndt & Berndt, 1964; Edwards, 1988; Rowley, 1972; Spencer, 1914; Stanner, 1969). These anthropological texts set up descriptions of “the collective habits” of Indigenous peoples (Nakata, 2007, p. 178). However, definitions of tangible, observable characteristics by outsiders cannot define Indigenous cultures (West, 2000). These outsider perspective instead mark Indigenous peoples as undifferentiated (Nakata, 2007) performers of culture, thereby simplifying the complex social and cultural systems that generate multifaceted Indigenous knowledge perspectives.

There is no one all encompassing system to define Indigenous cultures although for all Indigenous groups there is a common experience of colonisation. These commonalities, as explained by Alfred and Corntassel (2005), are particularly marked by

... the struggle to survive as distinct peoples on foundations constituted in their unique heritages, attachments to homelands ... as well as the fact that their existence is in large part lived as determined acts of survival against colonizing states. (p. 597)

The aim of this discussion is therefore to position Indigenous cultures as living, surviving and thriving in contemporary times and to examine relationships to colonising cultures from this basis. I commence with a brief overview of historical thinking through which understandings about Indigenous cultures have evolved in non-Indigenous domains.

Scientific ideas about race that circulated prior to the British invasion of Indigenous territories were imported to justify atrocities committed in the colonisation of Australia (Reynolds, 1986; Russell, 2001). Theories such as the Great Chain of Being, Eugenics and Phrenology were employed to construct Indigenous Australians as inhuman and therefore without rights (Dodson, 1994; Greenop & Memmott, 2007). These theories provided convenient ‘proof’ of the intellectual, moral and social incapacities of Indigenous peoples, which were then used to rationalise colonisation (Dodson, 1994; Haebich, 2008). The need to construct Indigenous peoples as inhuman was motivated, in part, by the doctrines of international law that dictated that settlement could only legally proceed by three means: conquest, cession and *terra nullius* (Chalmers, 2005; McRae, Nettheim, Beacroft & McNamara, 2003). In Australia, biological determinism was exploited to categorise Indigenous peoples in order to support the falsehood that the land was unoccupied, and therefore available to colonise under the legal principle of *terra nullius*. This set the foundation of the justification for the invasion of Indigenous lands (Attwood, 1994) and the detachment of complex social, spiritual and intellectual traditions of Indigenous peoples from the landscapes. This legal doctrine was overturned by the Australian High Court in 1992 in the case of *Mabo and Others versus The State of Queensland* (Chalmers; 2005: Eustace, 2005). However, Gilbert and Lennon (2005) articulate how *terra nullius* continues to be a powerful regulator of contemporary thought in Australia when they say that

White Australians thinking of their history imagine Australia as *terra nullius* prior to British colonisation, an image [which conditions] their relationship

to their land, their past and their future, and crucially their relation to indigenous [sic] people. (p. 53)

Colonisation has been positioned as a physical, psychological, spiritual and economic invasion of Indigenous country and territories (Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Smith, 1999; Bird-Rose, 2004). The violence visited upon Indigenous peoples through colonisation was physical and intellectual with our cultures and knowledge systems derided as non-existent on the one hand; and ‘child-like’, ‘primitive’, ‘savage’ and ‘doomed to extinction’ on the other (Russell, 2001). Watson (2009) succinctly sums up the relation established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples at the point of contact:

At the time of Cook’s coming we had an Aboriginal relationship to this country now called Australia. It was a relationship to land which was shared by hundreds of culturally distinct and different language speaking first nations peoples. Our lands were held collectively. Individual ownership was a very different concept to an Aboriginal relationship to land. However all Aboriginal relationships to land were deemed by British law to be non-existent. (p. 2)

Colonialism therefore did not just dispossess Indigenous peoples of an economic resource but dispossessed Indigenous peoples of the very foundation of culture, knowledge, religion and spiritually (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Broome, 2002; Rowley, 1972). Yet, there is continuity and diversity in Indigenous cultural expressions which have persisted from the time of Invasion; evolving, transforming and adapting (Greenop & Memmott, 2007).

Like all peoples, Indigenous cultures are enacted through collective norms and social values that assist individuals to make sense of the world (Dei, 2000; West, 2000). Cultural identity has been described as the “level of identification and integration that individuals have with a particular set of beliefs, practices, and ways of life” (deSouza & Rymarz, 2007, p. 279). Culture and identity formations thus become significant due to the “complex discursive negotiations and contestation on many different levels both within Indigenous groups and with dominant society in defining Indigeniety” (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006, p. 404). In the context of Indigenous experiences, West (2000) proposes that culture is a “melding of the tangible with the intangible” although representations of Indigenous cultures in the

public sphere have mostly been confined to “the simple status of ‘observable behaviours’” (p. 56). In this complex interaction of invisible and visible aspects of culture, West (2000) defines Indigenous knowledge as “First Knowledge”. He advises that “First Knowledge is the totality of Aboriginal thought, conceptualisation, psyche, morality, behaviour, social order and humanity [that] transcends the ‘socio’ and ‘psycho’ sciences of non-Indigenous societies” (p. 39). Indigenous knowledge perspectives are conditioned within and operate through these spaces of multiple collective and collaborative dimensions of knowledge building to empower individuals to interpret and analyse their social realities (Dei, 2000). Through this lens, Indigenous knowledge perspectives therefore envelop all things that are known by Indigenous peoples, including those things that cannot be known, or that are unnecessary to be known by non-Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous cultural identity formations are dynamic, adaptable and enduring with demonstrated capacity to meet challenges in new environments (Dei, 2000); including colonisation. In contradiction to notions of survival and cultural vitality, Indigenous peoples and cultures are mostly represented in contemporary Australia as “dead or dying” (Guest Lecturer, *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, 2009). The ‘dead and dying’ motif underwrites representations that fix Indigenous peoples in time through conceiving Indigenous cultures as an assortment of relics from the past (Dodson, 1994; Langton, 1993; Russell, 2001). Romantic images of the noble savage, rooted in primitivism and cultivated by the persistence of *terra nullius* imagination, occupy space in the Australian consciousness in ways that “eulogise moments of the past” (Russell, 2001, p. 29). Indigenous peoples and our cultures continue to exist outside of fixed and static definitions of ‘Aboriginality’, even though to an outsider, no marked difference may be visible.

Notions of cultural difference in relation to Indigenous worldviews and cultures as configured through the Western knowledge framework assume the existence of a normative centre through which these differences can be marked (Frankenberg, 1989; Dyer, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). This centre reaffirms colonisation as beneficial to all Australians and as such, constructions of Indigenous ‘difference’ resonate with the science of the past. Indigenous knowledge perspectives are invited into nation-building processes only via the terms established by this meditating centre. The silencing of Indigenous peoples through populist denials of

Indigenous experiences over history and demands for Indigenous peoples to ‘get over it’ are necessary for upholding a glorified sense of colonisation in the present, and protecting this process from contemporary scrutiny. As I have stated elsewhere:

This invitation asks something entirely different of Indigenous peoples than it does of non-Indigenous people. ‘Getting over it’ for Indigenous peoples would mean forsaking our millennial inheritance - our place on our land; it would mean succumbing to the narratives ... that position us as non-existent, inferior and incapable of even developing rudimentary features of civilisation. ‘Getting over it’ for non-Indigenous people generally means that the domination of the past is confirmed in the present. (Phillips, 2005, p. 18)

Indigenous cultures, identities, knowledges and knowledge perspectives are all part of the dynamic interplay between history and the present. To a large extent, socio-economic conditions stemming from colonisation have impacted on Indigenous peoples’ existence in certain areas of the nation to limit our choices for self-determination (West, 2000). However, our distinct worldviews have been maintained despite colonial history and Western texts that validate colonial possession of Indigenous territories. Even though severely impacted in socio-economic terms, the cultural agency of Indigenous peoples continues to be strategic and expressed locally to meet the needs of Indigenous people (Attwood & Magowan, 2001). This is a convincing testament of strength of Indigenous cultures and systems.

Connectedness to land is deemed a “universal truth” (West, 2000) which ties Indigenous groups together even though there is variation to the practice of these systems between groups. Aboriginal philosopher Mary Graham (1999) explains that the most important relationships are those which exist “between land and people [and those] amongst people themselves” (p. 105). There is a contingency between each principle and ultimately all meaning for the template of society and social relations are imbued in and held by the land (Graham, 1999). In this sense, Land is positioned as having powers for the creation, nurturing and explanation for all things (Graham, 1999; Meyer, 2008; West, 2000). Land is therefore a pivotal, living entity. Additionally, because the laws fundamental to First Knowledge dictate that “knowledge should only be shared with the most worthy individuals” (West, 2000, p. 14), there is a form of control that Indigenous peoples have maintained that

demonstrates a sense or freedom to choose which aspects are made public; in itself an exercise in personal sovereignty.

While acknowledging the limitations of prescribing principles to something as complex as Indigenous worldviews, West (2000) provides a brief overview of what he sees as fundamental precepts of Indigenous worldviews. This is not to provide an all-inclusive set of principles but rather, he says, to provide a way of “clearing” the thinking of Western peoples in order to facilitate approaches beyond the limitations which currently exist. These principles are:

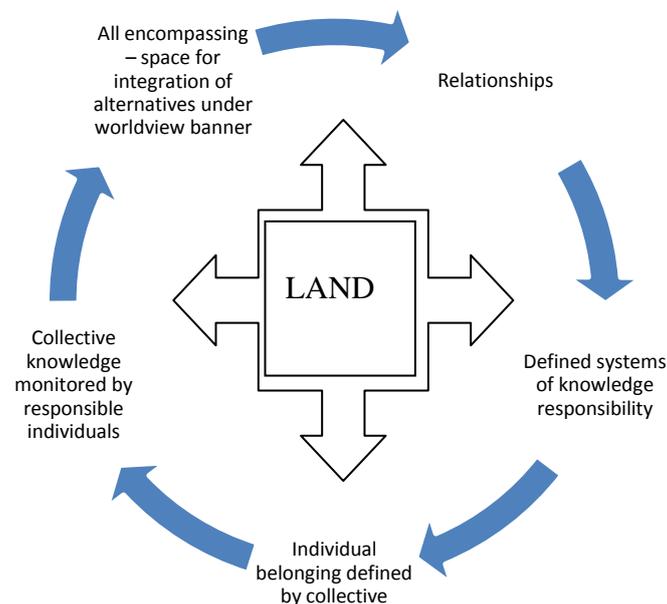
- Aboriginal society is person-oriented, not property-oriented;
- Personal obligations exist and in their many forms are a very powerful protocol of reciprocity;
- Knowledge ownership and honesty are essential to a successful social construct;
- Any breach of the rules regarding the use of knowledge that is secret, limited for public consumption, or of a similar nature is followed by punitive action. (West, 2000, p. 43)

Indigenous knowledge concepts of person-orientation, reciprocity, honesty, and knowledge restrictions contradict the regulatory systems of dominant societies. While Western society may ask “Why is that so?” and direct investigations into explaining causes for Indigenous disadvantage, the fundamental question for Indigenous peoples is “What is it that wants to know?” (Graham, 1999, p. 105). In this relational context, “it” refers to the purposes to which knowledge will be put toward collective meaning-making. In other words, what will be the outcome of the interaction? To behave as a discrete entity by prioritising the needs of the individual under these systems is isolating: you become an “observer in an observed world” (Graham, 1999, p. 106). Knowledge then is a valuable entity, for which individuals must be prepared through complex processes of engagement.

The philosophical conditions for the practice of Indigenous knowledges in Australia, in relation to colonial systems and as distinctly perceived entities as espoused by West (2000) and Graham (1999) can thus be synthesised into the following tenets:

- Indigenous peoples have complex systems of knowledge that govern how we relate inside Indigenous contexts and how we conceptualise and relate to non-Indigenous knowledge systems;
- Knowledge perspectives on colonialism facilitate our cultural survival;
- Intimate connections exist between knowledge, law and land for Indigenous peoples which contradict non-Indigenous systems of knowing;
- Knowledge is expressed and produced inside systems of relationships that take into account notions that ownership of knowledge resides in the collective, not with individuals;
- Relationships inside knowledge contexts advance knowing and vice versa;
- Questions are positioned to prepare and make ready individuals for knowledge and not as a means to ‘discover’ the right answer, and
- Secret knowledge; knowledge of the self is to be kept in context.

Figure 2.1 – Indigenous knowledge perspectives on Indigenous lands and territories



Land is the connective entity between past, present and future and therefore central to all interdiscursive relationships between people and place, over space and time (Bird-Rose, 2004; Graham, 2000). Figure 2.1 illustrates how the connections that West (2000) and Graham (1999) advocate operate. As shown, within Indigenous knowledge systems, information and context are inextricable (Castellano, 2000) and

can only be revealed through relationships (Holmes, 2000). Indigenous knowledge systems and cultures are situated on what Hodge and Mishra (1990) call a “transformational continuum” that is in constant renewal (p. 91). Within this continuum, relationships and responsibilities are interlinked within a collective system of knowledge that revolves around and extend from the land. The Land, a living force, is always positioned in dynamic relation with individuals and collectives.

Indigenous knowledges are a locally produced “knowledge consciousness”; ways of being in, and making sense of the world resulting from the “long-term occupancy of a place” (Dei, 2000, p. 72). Indigenous knowledges are defined by Dei (2000) as

[Ways] of living and making sense of the world which recognize the multiple and collective origins and the collaborative dimensions of knowledge, and underscore[s] that the interpretations or analysis of social reality is subject to different and sometimes oppositional perspectives. (p. 72)

There is a fundamental acknowledgement here by Dei of the power and durability of Indigenous knowledges to adapt in dynamic ways. Once again this contradicts traditional anthropological representations of the fixed and static nature of Indigenous cultures - which continues to be reflected in the minds of members of dominant groups in contemporary societies. The application of the principles of Indigenous knowledge (Figure 2.1) to teaching non-Indigenous students creates new paths for the construction of knowledge about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in neo-colonial contexts. Ultimately this has the potential to lead to collective understandings that re-imagines the absence of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, and positions these as dynamic in sustaining Indigenous cultures since invasion.

### **Summary**

In this section (2.1.1) I have provided an overview of cultural and knowledge principles that informed the development of curriculum in the research context. Indigenous knowledges and cultural systems have been impacted by colonisation, the sole purpose of which was to find ways to justify dispossession of Indigenous peoples through simplification and scientific racism. It is impossible to represent the

diverse and complex epistemological systems of Indigenous peoples, and the multifaceted and varied responses to colonialism. Instead, I have focussed discussion on those aspects which rationalise the authority of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in colonial spaces. This is particularly relevant to the study of resistance by non-Indigenous students to the reinstatement of this authority in the research site. The next section examines how Australian cultures and knowledges are positioned to manage the presumed acquiescence of Indigenous peoples to colonisation.

### **2.1.2 AUSTRALIAN CULTURES AND KNOWLEDGES – INTERSECTING TERRITORIES**

Sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 foreground the intersections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and histories as central considerations in theorising alternative pedagogies for non-Indigenous students. In this section I consider these intersections to provide a context for the conditions impacting on learning spaces established in the research site; a critical Indigenous studies classroom.

Just as there are commonalities in the experience of colonialism for Indigenous peoples, there is a common thread of colonial privilege running through ideas relating to Australian national identity. Theoretically, when Western knowledge systems are considered in the context of colonialism these systems are analysed in terms of their dominance over Indigenous peoples. For the purposes of this study, I position cultural dominance as a structural process, produced and secured by institutions, but which non-Indigenous individuals reinforce daily in the stories they tell, the memories they sustain about their families, and the values they uphold as ‘Australian’ through these discourses. I do not consider that there is one overarching definition of Australian culture but explore how this social and historical knowledge is reproduced in relation to Indigenous peoples.

Colonisation hinged on the construction of Indigenous peoples as ‘Other’ for the purposes of establishing and then upholding the epistemological conditions that serve to invisibly sustain domination across generations (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Battiste, 2004; Little Bear, 2000; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Feldman (1998) describes this as the practice of “inferiorization and vilification of indigenous peoples in order to justify Anglo-European conquest” (p. 2). Historically, a particular kind of text-making was mobilised that was reliant on reinforcing a range of binaries to justify colonisation (Briggs & Bauman, 1999). These binaries located an inherent social opposition between ‘primitive’ and ‘modern’ cultures that is maintained and

authenticated by “modernist discursive practices and interests” (Briggs & Bauman, 1999, p. 504). Contemporary ideas which coalesce around assumptions of the non-existence of Indigenous peoples are deployed through terms such as “discovery and settlement” to tame the more “disturbing notions of invasion and conquest” (Lloyd, 2000, p. 32). Stories are framed through these mythologies of “frontier achievement, initiative and pioneer adventure [and] largely ignore the contributions of Indigenous peoples” (Davis, 2005, pp. 131-132). The invention of the Australian nation then, always a work in progress, proceeds through selecting images through time, with which individuals in the present can identify (or deny) to fortify a largely untroubled sense of ‘being Australian’ (Elder, 2007).

The selective collection of stories through time is also positioned to reinforce the morality of Australian culture today. Official stories about ‘our’ national heroes and settler legends are inculcated into the hearts and minds of young and old to secure a comforting relation to, and unity within the collective (Eng, 2001). These symbolic boundaries of national Australian community, as put forward by Clark (2007), are reinforced through “traditions, texts, discourses and collective memories” (p. 306). The inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ experiences inside these historical and contemporary domains, if centralised, would contradict or neutralise the reification of symbolised Australian values such as ‘a fair go for all’, ‘multi-culturalism’, and the ‘great Aussie battler’. Representations of the ‘primitive’ further immobilise Indigenous peoples within a resolved and static past in the context of the Australian imaginary. Western knowledge perspectives circumscribe and naturalise assumptions that reduce the diverse systems of Indigenous knowledge into forms that validate these colonial myths and the very nature of the knowledge itself (Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999). The colonial imperative continues to keep out Indigeniety, not through physical annihilation but by erasing the histories that are foundational to Indigenous cultural identities (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Bird-Rose, 2004).

*Terra nullius* (2.1) persists in the ways that particular ideas about the past are used to reassure non-Indigenous Australians that ‘our’ history was about “discovery, [non-Indigenous] endurance and the creation of something new” (Lloyd, 2000, p. 32) out of a vast emptiness. Western concepts of time reflexively instigate a perception of discontinuity between history and the present (Bird-Rose, 2004). The past is used to label things that have already occurred to create a differentiation that “absolves

[settler-descendants] from responsibility” for historical “regimes of violence” (Bird-Rose, 2004, p. 18). This “time monologue” (p. 18) rationalises this history today by closing the gap between the past and the present; the absolution of settler responsibility today is therefore reliant on contemporised ideas about Indigenous peoples’ absence in Australia’s past. Framing colonial history in this way is, by Levinas’ (1988) characterisation, the definition of violence because “acting as if one were alone denies relationship, denies responsibility” (p. 165) and ultimately denies justice to those violated. These dominating systems of organisation naturalise certain forms of cultural difference by silencing those who are culturally different from speaking for themselves. Thus, the effect of this history as both explanation and perception colours the ‘knowing’ of history through contemporary lenses, leading Muecke (2005) to ask “How much does the way [history] looks at things constitute those things as objects?” (p. 53).

Essentialising Indigenous cultures occurs through the reduction of complex systems into easily digested symbols. As West (2000) notes:

Western knowledge ... recasts the concepts, the spirit of First Knowledge by demanding that any such knowledge offered or explored in their space and time be drawn under [these conditions] ... The problem in this demand resides in the additional requirement to find simplistic, explicit symbols that are familiar to the Western mind. (p. 41)

Contemporary constructions draw new forms from old ideas of the (non-Indigenous) conquerors and the vanquished (Indigenous peoples) to maintain and valorise colonisation. These codifications establish powerful binary oppositions that still hold sway in contemporary Australian discourse. Constructions of the nomadic, childlike, noble savage reinforce ideas of the battling white settler who tamed a vast, empty country. The perpetuation of these ideas around colonisation thus continues to mark Indigenous people as victims of their own intransigence and biological predisposition to extinction. They become naturalised into what Tuhiwai Smith (1999) names as a “psychological and moral space within the individual” (p. 45). The naturalisation of these systemic and moral spaces is dynamic, rather than concrete, and is maintained by “repression, denial and disciplinary restraint” (Smith, 1999, p. 45). This repression is secured in the present through what Giroux (1997) refers to as the “unspeakable racist unconscious of the dominant White culture” (p. 287). This

“racist unconscious” to which Giroux refers is enclosed by ideologies that secure these historical representations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within social and institutional systems that embed these representations as ‘common-sense’ or ‘truth’.

Existing epistemological territories continue to advance false ideas about the complete disempowerment of Indigenous peoples, not just in relation to the physical dispossession through colonisation. These ideas mobilise contemporary myths that our culture and lives are governed only by our marginalisation and responses to colonisation. Narratives that situate Indigenous peoples through the lens of colonialism are limiting because they propose that Indigenous worldviews only exist as outcomes or perspectives of those colonial events (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). These narratives also serve to distance non-Indigenous peoples from the privilege accrued through colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples; they reinforce colonial views of a static culture of Indigenous peoples on one hand, and the vibrant ever-evolving Western culture on the other. They also shield from contemporary view the unpalatable events of colonial settlement to secure a moral position with respect to relationships with Indigenous peoples in the present (Phillips, 2005). Interrogating these relational standpoints of “contemporary settlers” (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) and Indigenous peoples is therefore key to denaturalising approaches that assume scrutiny of Indigenous peoples will mitigate these effects of neo-colonialism.

This discussion has considered how the formulation of knowledge about Australian history via colonialism has constituted a national identity devoid of substantial Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Myths of the past are used to reinforce and empower common-sense truths through which individuals can valorise their sense of being Australian. In this conditioned space, images of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can be called up to defend accusations (or perceptions of) against the individuals comforted by national narratives. However the failure of the colonial process to assimilate Indigenous peoples means that this contemporary space continues to be subject to contradiction by our continued existence and our contrary voices.

## Summary

So far in this chapter, I have examined some of the forces that condition ideas within Australian cultural contexts about non-Indigenous cultures and knowledges and Australian culture and knowledges. I considered how particular understandings translate, or not, in broader cultural spheres at grassroots levels to selectively reproduce history to maintain dominance. The discussion undertaken in 2.1 and 2.2 is significant to explorations around Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous peoples for it is these social understandings that most empower or delimit attempts to process new knowledge perspectives within teaching and learning spaces. In the next section I explore how these ideas are translated institutionally through processes of racialisation to foreground the discussions of Indigenous education (2.3).

### 2.1.3 RACIALISATION, RACISMS AND REALIGNMENTS – INSTITUTIONAL FORCES

As discussed there are powerful forms of acculturation and historicising that continue to be advanced through colonial thought. Constructs around race and biology were central to the justification of dispossession. Within colonising spheres, Indigenous peoples' identities become subject to, and are conditioned by contemporary racial thought (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Race is not a scientifically valid construct but a classificatory system characterised by artificial biological hierarchies that fuse “the concrete and the abstract, the animal and the human, the somatic and the semiotic” (Wolfe, 2002, p. 52). Racialisation is the attribution of meanings stemming from these unnatural racial categorisations. In particular, the racialisation of Indigenous peoples in Australia has occurred through colonial expressions of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and identities (2.1). Colonialism has become institutionalised in systemic discourses that function to affirm the social knowledge of non-Indigenous peoples. This is performative in that the racialisation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples supports or limits the ways in which collectives or individuals act in the world. The following discussion provides an overview of the social power of race. These issues are relevant for this study as they provide a theoretical foundation for conceptualising pedagogy and the analysis of student responses to curriculum that acts to critique the social power affirmed through racialising processes.

Far from being neutral sites of knowledge production, schools and institutions “serve as sites for locating students in subject positions that do not contest the

discursive assumptions, dispositions, and dimensions of the dominant culture” (McLaren, 1995, p. 47). These subject positions are reinforced in social spaces and result in seemingly benign and well practiced forms of racialisation at individual levels. These spaces condition teacher perceptions of cultural difference and therefore pre-service teachers’ deconstruction of their own personal beliefs and attitudes in relation to dominance is important. Furthermore, situating the act of teaching as an endeavour that is not “politically or ideologically neutral” is best achieved when individuals understand their “ideological orientations” in respect of cultural difference (Bartolome, 2004, p. 99).

As discussed earlier, dominant constructions of race and culture today have evolved through colonial processes in Australia. Koenpul scholar Moreton-Robinson (2004) suggests that processes of Othering, central to the justification of *terra nullius* and therefore colonisation, is embodied in everyday practice which continues to manifest historical motivations in the present. Through objectification of Indigenous peoples, invisibility of the white subject is maintained through “whiteness” evolving into an invisible and normalised common-sense; a foundation for hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). To explain the non-racialised white subject’s objectification of Indigenous peoples, Moreton-Robinson (2004) suggests that notions of “epistemological *a priori*” establishes “the limits of what can be known about the other through itself [yet] disappearing beyond the limits of this knowledge it creates in the other’s name” (p. 75). In this relation, “whiteness” also presumes a universal and universalising assumption of “humanness” which does not question its embedded assumptions of superiority (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, pp. 75-76).

Racialised ideologies about Indigenous peoples in relation to a universal (invisibly white) human standard thus frame the social systems through which non-Indigenous people can reinforce ideas about self and Other. A consequence of this, according to Pavlides (2009) is that encounters with the Other are never unmediated. All that is possible is the creation of an “internal contrast to our own social framework, using our own language” (p. 5). In her art installation, *The White Room*’ (2009), Mayrah Dreise has collated many of the mundane statements made about Indigenous peoples into wall paper (Figures 2.2a and 2.2b).

Figure 2.2a: The White Room I (Dreise, 2009)



Indigenous self-representations are disempowered in public social and institutional spheres as a consequence of racialising practices where the objectification of Indigenous peoples is used to fortify non-Indigenous superiority. This means that Indigenous peoples who approach these contexts to give voice to Indigenous concerns and struggles have to “contend with ... principles and practices inherently antithetical to their liberation and well-being” (Feldman, 1998, p. 2). West (2000) confirms this when he notes that “First Knowledge” cannot be fully explained or revealed through Western knowledge systems given the natural progression toward

reduction through racialisation. As can be seen in Dreise's work (Figure 2.2a), phrases such as "They all look the same"; "I will not tolerate political correctness", "We should all tolerate other cultures" are placed as a rolling text to show the intensity and volume of these expressions of hegemony. They powerfully depict the barrage of daily messages which reinforce both Indigenous invisibility and non-Indigenous assumptions of dominance. 'The White Room' effectively demonstrates how the all consuming hegemonic, racialising space works at an individual level. Such statements are used to silence Indigenous peoples while staking out the moral high ground on issues that Indigenous peoples may seek to deconstruct and problematise within racialising contexts.

The words are used to not only manipulate a comfortable speaking position for the white subject, but to also mediate all relational possibilities between the speaker and Indigenous peoples as a consequence. Race and racialisation therefore are not abstract concepts which have no relevance to the day-to-day lives of Indigenous peoples. These concepts are not abstracted from the lives of non-Indigenous peoples either. Thus, the critiques and displacement of epistemological frameworks which serve to deny the agency of Indigenous peoples' voices in the academy take on a more significant role than just a reaction against oppression or the frameworks themselves. In particular, in Figure 2.2b statements that point to an exertion of power over Indigenous peoples can be seen in the individual statements: "We need balance, no more pandering to sectional interests", "why can't you all just be Australian?", "lazy coon", "I don't see colour", "but I really like the darkies" (Dreise, 2009).

Figure 2.2b: The White Room II (Dreise, 2009)



Altogether, these statements of authority and morality are animated primarily through the racialised constructions of Indigenous peoples. Given development of the Australian nation, Carter (2006) suggests that it may be more useful to consider that “Australia itself is a racialised idea” rather than seeing “Australians as racist” (p. 312). In this sense, ‘racism’ and ‘racialisation’ can be seen as distinct terms in order to locate the latter as a powerful social mechanism of control and reinforcement of privilege by individuals as well as collectives. The interrogation of how privileged subject positions are mobilised in social life through supporting institutional

racialisation is important to this study and developing ideas around Indigenous studies curriculum.

Critical theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT) engages ways of thinking that target dominant discourses about culture, history, race and knowledge and allow for some clarification of the impact of this on the ways Indigenous peoples become known (Writer, 2008; Vaught & Castagano, 2008). These theories provide avenues for noticing the forms of hegemony and how Indigenous peoples are disempowered in these contexts. There has been criticism by Moore (2007) of the alignment of critical theory and social constructionism to show the links between relations of power and the concealment of hegemonic interests within educational structures. Other authors suggest that Indigenous peoples' concerns should revolve around collaboration and collective harmony and that being 'critical' is, in some ways, oppositional to this overall goal (Martin, 2007). This ignores the value of critical approaches to the deconstruction of individual positions in relation to colonial power.

While critical theory does not offer a resolution for specific strategies to reinscribe Indigenous knowledges into the centre, it is of significant benefit for dismantling assumptions foundational to Western epistemological frameworks (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). Consequently, Jones and Jenkins (2008) propose that

A critical position is not as negative, or impotent, as it might appear. [critical dialogue] in the name of liberatory practice and coming to know ... our location as coloniser scholars leads to a deep understanding of our own settler culture, society, history as deeply embedded in a relationship with the culture, history and society of Indigenous peoples. (p. 482)

Critical approaches in pedagogy then are not concerned with the formulation of 'truth', nor do they have the postmodern intent to trouble everyone's truth. Instead as Jones and Jenkins (2008) suggest, the adoption of a critical position on Self and Other within dominating knowledge contexts provides space for understandings about the *relationship* between Self and Other to emerge. As Bourke (2001) notes, "[i]n academic discussions, culture, oppression and racism are simply concepts; in the context of Aboriginal Studies they are issues at the heart of relationships between Indigenous Australians and other Australians" (p. 10). One of the major aims of critical engagement in Indigenous studies therefore is the examination of conditions

experienced as a consequence of these dominating systems. The use of *critical* in the context of Indigenous studies implies that there exists a commitment to interrogating the historical specificity of these contemporary social and political conditions and positioning (Parameswaran, 2008; Grande, 2008; McLaren, 2007).

The idea that the *grounds* for certain knowledge are contestable and evolve under complex conditions is important to any liberatory practice. Inside a critical framework, existing ideas about Indigenous cultural difference can be deconstructed through the investigation of the epistemological conditions under which this difference is ‘known’ and apprehended by dominant others. The transformation of the white subject, and the white subject position, is part of the broader goals of new approaches to introducing absent knowledge and revealing the power dimensions of existing knowledge. In terms of this study, the positioning of Indigenous cultures and knowledge perspectives as resilient and vital (2.1.1) must be considered in relation to the systems that contradict these ideas (2.1.2) as they contribute to resistance and therefore inform the questions guiding this research (1.5).

### **Summary**

There is a powerful impact of historical colonial constructions and the racialising practices of institutions and individuals today. The above discussion has linked the motivations of colonial history for constructing positions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples today. In the Australian context, the colonial gaze has constituted and reconstituted (false) perceptions of Indigenous cultures and identities which continue to underpin contemporary educational practice in Indigenous education. These issues are important to consider in the development of Indigenous studies. The discussion in this section underscores the need for Indigenous studies to consider approaches that place non-Indigenous peoples in critical relational subject positions that interrogate cultural privilege. In the next section I turn my attention to the specific issues relating to the impact of social, cultural and historical factors on the conceptualisation of Indigenous education and Indigenous studies.

## **2.2 INDIGENOUS STUDIES, DECOLONISATION AND STANDPOINT**

Indigenous Education, inclusive of Indigenous studies, is a complex field. In a concrete sense it encompasses diverse approaches to redressing the socio-economic disadvantage that Indigenous peoples experience in Australian society through

education. It also incorporates specific programs of studies in which students are invited to learn about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and Australian history, the latter frequently referred to as ‘Aboriginal history’. Indigenous studies is a relatively new field in Australian education and is successor to earlier iterations of the studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In 1961 the first conference on Aboriginal Studies was held in Canberra and discussions focussed around recording a “dying culture” (Bourke, Bourke & Edwards, 2001). Aboriginal Studies is sometimes included within a broader framework of multi-cultural education which aims to familiarise pre-service teachers with the perspectives of others in order to facilitate a shift in the way they think about cultural difference (Ryan & Dixon, 2006).

Ascriptions of Indigenous peoples’ powerlessness inform objectives for Indigenous studies that focus attention on describing Indigenous peoples’ experiences in relation to a monolithic colonial machine. While increasing knowledge about Indigenous disenfranchisement is important, these approaches also risk decontextualising knowledge and disconnecting individuals from viewing systemic colonising conditions as relevant to all Australians. In the next section I provide a more detailed analysis of neo-colonial motivations in education and Indigenous studies.

### **2.2.1 AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW**

The following discussion examines literature in relation to Australian history, Australian identity constructions and the limiting constructions of Indigenous peoples in Indigenous education. I consider why these constructions often contaminate Indigenous studies curriculum and interrogate assumptions of Indigenous cultural deficit, or cultural difference as exotica that occur inside education practice. Through the literature, I also address the effects of the assimilation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives into dominating epistemological conditions as a preamble to an examination of issues related to pedagogy in the final section of this chapter (2.3). Three key points are made through this examination. First, Indigenous education and Indigenous studies largely pivot around constructions of Indigenous cultures as deficit and/or exotica. Second, Indigenous studies is mainly positioned as a medium for teaching non-Indigenous people about

Indigenous experiences while minimising attention to relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Third, barriers to the development of Indigenous studies curriculum can be diminished by considering Indigenist standpoint, anti-colonial and decolonisation theories in its development.

Not only are educational structures deemed to be neutral, but they are also situated by an historical context that marginalised Indigenous peoples, while privileging the dominant group (2.1). Australian identity formations arising from and through historical conquest have been scrutinised and critiqued nationally and internationally in consideration of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, but also in the absence of these (Davis, 2005). In the Western academy “this discourse of neutrality combines with universities’ serial obstruction or evasion of Aboriginal knowledge and its producers so as to shelter and sanitize a destructively colonial Eurocentric legacy” (Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002, p. 83). In this sense, Western universities can be considered a servant of colonialism mobilising their own text-making processes to conceal these intents.

There is a historical legacy of systemic bias manifesting in the alienation and exclusion of Indigenous peoples that continues to mar Indigenous participation in education (Schwab & Sutherland, 2001; Whatman & Duncan, 2005). Indigenous education policy has evolved in Australia more or less reflecting government agendas at the time each policy was instituted. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, policy was driven by the goal to assimilate Indigenous peoples by ‘civilising’ and ‘Christianising’ (Maynard, 2007). Beliefs in the futility of such endeavours and pathological beliefs in Indigenous peoples’ inferiority and inability to be ‘civilised’ drove education endeavours in the Protectionist era (late 1800s to early 1900s). As a consequence there was no formal provision of education to Indigenous peoples at that time (McConnochie & Russell, 1982). Cultural deficit approaches emerged through the 1940s to 1960s, followed by “bicultural” approaches from the 1990s (Parbury, 1999; Whatman & Duncan, 2005). It is possible to see from this rapid review of historical approaches that conceptualisations of Indigenous disadvantage were central to the ways in which they were framed – often necessarily. However, in addition to the socio-economic consequences of dispossession, Grieves (2008) asserts that “explanations of Aboriginal disadvantage [also] relied on racist assumptions of Aboriginal inability to rise to the challenge of modernity” (p. 287). In this sense,

Indigenous education is described by McConaghy (2000) as “a social institution of colonial governance” (p. 1) and a form of “pastoral welfarism” (p. 127).

Research in the 1980s and 1990s typically characterised Indigenous learners as lacking the necessary capital to ‘succeed’ in Western education, setting the groundwork for how Indigenous education is conceptualised today (see Brennan, 1998; Christie, 1985; Curriculum Corporation, 1993; DEET, 1989, Keeffe, 1992; Malin, 1997; Malin, 1998; Harris, 1990; Partington, 1992). Many of these studies linked Indigenous cultural difference to educational disadvantage and schools were urged to cater for ‘difference’ as conceptualised through this lens (Bodkin-Andrews, Craven & Marsh, 2005). Today, Indigenous education continues to be seen as a means to overcome disadvantage for Indigenous peoples (Boon, 2008; Gray & Beresford, 2008). Consequently, a major focus in Indigenous education research continues to focus on how to provide the necessary tools for Indigenous students to ‘succeed’ in education. Examples include approaches such as developing culturally appropriate assessment tools (Klenowski, 2009), providing additional tuition for Indigenous students (DEEWR, 2008), transforming teacher expectations of Indigenous students (Sarra, 2003) and fostering positive self-identity (Purdie, Tripcony, Boulton-Lewis, Fanshawe & Gunstone, 2000). Indigenous disadvantage is positioned here as being solely connected to the students’ academic deficiencies, or teacher perception of Indigenous student deficiency.

The conceptualisation of Indigenous social and education disadvantage in isolation from broader considerations of Australian history and structural and policy issues places the responsibility of change on Indigenous peoples and communities. Socio-economic statistics and the extent of Indigenous peoples’ participation through many sectors of education reflect little improvement in the past 40 years (Altman, Biddell & Hunter, 2008). Thus, unquestionably, commitments to equity focussed social justice concerns in Indigenous education are valid and still relevant today. However, while it is common for the damaging effects of colonisation to be articulated in relation to Indigenous peoples for the purposes of rationalising equity driven initiatives, the privilege which such damage conferred to “settler descendents” (Bird-Rose, 2004) is rarely made visible. Australian educators are beginning to acknowledge the limitations of responding only to the Aboriginal-as-deficit paradigm in education and how it constructs understandings in non-Indigenous peoples as a

consequence. For instance, Harrison (2007) says that these paradigms of thinking “model a power relation that secretly governs how students either link or separate themselves from Indigenous peoples” (p. 42).

As shown in the overview of policy approaches above, redressing Indigenous disadvantage through education has been on the policy agenda in Australian institutions for many decades. A comparison of goals in Indigenous education between 1960 and 2010 confirms how little shift there has been toward achieving Indigenous educational success. For example, a national scheme called the Aboriginal Advancement Department of the Union was established in 1961 under the auspices of the National Union of Australian University Students. This scheme aimed to

- Promote and aid education for Australian Aborigines;
- Provide funds for university and secondary scholarships;
- Research Aboriginal advancement;
- Stimulate interest among European Australians in the special problems faced by Aboriginal people;
- Play an active role in supporting Aborigines in their struggle for equal opportunity. (Roper, 1969)

There are remarkable similarities between these 1961 goals and those developed from 1990-2000, with various reports recommending that:

- Indigenous studies must be made compulsory in primary and secondary schools (HREOC, 1997; Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR), 2000);
- Australian education systems have a responsibility to meet the specific social and cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (RCIADIC, 1991), and
- A deep understanding of Australia’s history, acknowledging achievements and taking responsibility for the future is crucial in education (CAR, 2000).

The themes common in these documents revolve around educating non-Indigenous peoples, understanding history, and resolving the socio-economic conditions stemming from history. For the 2009-2012 quadrennium, there are similar foci with MCEETYA (2009) committing Australian education institutions to “improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 16). Research by Hughes and Hughes (2010) suggests that in addition to the significant issues of poverty, lack of resources, remoteness and availability of basic community services, the commitment of school staff is also important. These authors stress that “some education provider bureaucracies, some principals, and some teachers still believe that Indigenous students are not capable of the same level of achievement as non-Indigenous Australians” (p. 16). As shown in the review so far, these interlocking dimensions influence the attitudes towards the supposed deficiencies of Indigenous students. In particular, there is confluence between historical ideas, institutional strategies and the social reinforcement of racialised knowledge about Indigenous peoples in relation to these attitudes. Overall, the structure of Indigenous studies programs has varied in some ways, yet in many ways reflects little change since the 1970s. These issues are of major concern to this study given its objective to consider how non-Indigenous pre-service teachers consider the influence of these ideas on their own standpoints through critical self-enquiry in compulsory Indigenous studies.

The National Aboriginal Education Policy (NAEP), which directs initiatives for Indigenous studies in all levels of education from pre-school to universities, defines Indigenous studies as “studies about the histories, cultures, values, beliefs, languages and roles of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people both before European invasion and up to the present day” (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 2003, p. 3). The NAEP recommends that these programs be studied in contexts which:

- Provide a sound background to lived culture within Aboriginal societies and Torres Strait Islander societies;
- Present Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal people within an accurate and culturally inclusive history of Australia;
- Acknowledge the complexity of Aboriginal kinships and social structures;

- Promote respect for the integrity of all people;
- Emphasise an understanding of spiritual, political, economic and environmental issues and,
- Affirm the diversity of cultures within Aboriginal Societies and Torres Strait Islander societies. (DEET, 2003, p. 3)

These objectives continue to correspond with ideas that teaching about Indigenous peoples' cultures, knowledges and history will contribute to shifts in non-Indigenous attitudes, values and beliefs towards Indigenous peoples.

In the early 1970s the Commonwealth government recommended that Aboriginal history be incorporated into school curricula (Craven, Halse, Marsh, Mooney & Wilson-Miller, 2005). Reflective of earlier models, the inclusion of "Aboriginal history and heritage" was deemed key to the achievement of equity for Aboriginal Australians (Craven, 1999, p. 17). This directive to incorporate 'Aboriginal history' was not enacted immediately, with states and territories committing themselves to the initiative almost 30 years later through the 1989 ratification of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling, more commonly known as the Hobart Declaration (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 2009). This declaration was followed by the Adelaide Declaration in 1999 and the Melbourne Declaration in 2008. The Melbourne Declaration includes an acknowledgement of the significance of Indigenous cultures to "building a democratic, equitable and just society" (MCEETYA, 2008 p. 4), however, it continues to mobilise these goals for developing "active and informed citizens" toward "improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socio economic backgrounds" (p. 15).

While national policy in universities for almost 30 years, the provision of Indigenous studies in these institutions is ad hoc and the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council identifies the "poor recognition given to Indigenous studies and the lack of visibility of Indigenous culture and knowledge on campus" as an "ongoing problem" (IHEAC, 2007, p. 3). Since the inception of the *Teaching the Teachers: Indigenous Australian Studies* project in the early 1990s led by the research of Rhonda Craven (1996a, 1996b), many universities have taken up the call

to make Indigenous studies compulsory. However, research shows that there is still a large proportion of universities in Australia which have not done so (Craven, 2005; Dunkin, 2002). A study commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) in 2005 to evaluate the impact and inclusion of compulsory Indigenous studies in primary pre-service teacher education programs confirms this, concluding that “timing, funding and an overcrowded pre-service teacher education curriculum” were influential in whether the decision to mandate these studies was made (Craven, Halse, Marsh et al., 2005, p. xv). After 50 years of formal educational policy to redress Indigenous education disadvantage, supplemented by two centuries of social policy, the recent National Report on Indigenous Education (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008) concludes that even though enrolment and retention rates are improving, educational outcomes for Indigenous students still continue to fall.

Exclusion of Indigenous studies continues to be justified by logistics (Craven, Halse, Marsh, et al., 2005). If there is no space for Indigenous studies in Australian school and university curriculum, regardless of how flimsy the reasons, it is left out, even though the majority of Indigenous education policy since 1960 has emphasised the significance of this inclusion. This shows that Indigenous education and Indigenous studies, even when supported by policy continue to be configured through discursively bound frameworks organised around non-Indigenous interests (Nakata, 2007). Therefore, new approaches are required to investigate Indigenous studies which address the impact of power relations from the perspective of Western dominance rather than Indigenous disadvantage.

### **Summary**

Indigenous education and Indigenous studies continue to be influenced by historical ideas regarding Indigenous cultures and identity. The resolution of how Australian history has evolved approaches which tend to prioritise ideas relating to Indigenous deficit was discussed to contextualise why approaches to Indigenous curriculum need to move beyond teaching non-Indigenous students through this deficit lens. Culture-as-deficit paradigms need to be challenged, as do ideas that educational inequality for Indigenous peoples can be resolved by perpetuating approaches that deal only with explaining Indigenous peoples’ experiences. Indigenous studies that take a more critical approach, and which centralise interrogation of non-Indigenous people’s

historical, social and institutional power is also important. Furthermore, new ways of thinking about Indigenous cultures and peoples that recognise their knowledge systems as vital, dynamic and evolving is also crucial. In the next section I discuss alternatives for conceptualising Indigenous studies as one way of empowering Indigenous peoples and interrogating non-Indigenous standpoints in education contexts.

## **2.3 THEORISING ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGIES**

In previous sections of the literature review, it has been argued that Indigenous studies curriculum continues to be circumscribed by contexts which have evolved through specific historical processes. These contexts continue to limit possibilities for reducing the objectification of Indigenous people, and also tend toward minimising attention to the deconstruction of non-Indigenous privilege. Indigenous education, compulsory Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous people in particular, has the capacity to reach into multiple ideological and actual spaces to benefit both.

The following discussion re-situates key points addressed earlier around the development of understandings about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations as extending from colonial history and contemporary education, into specific approaches to pedagogy. In particular, I examine why the introduction of critical perspectives by Indigenous peoples would support and advance new ways of theorising spaces of enquiry in Indigenous studies. In this section, three key points are made. First, prioritising the concept of relationship (2.3.1) can shift pedagogical approaches from the objectification of Indigenous peoples. Second, pedagogy which mobilises the key tenets of standpoint, decolonisation and privileging the voices of those marginalised is a possible way to address the complexities of teaching in contested spaces (2.3.2). Third, given the investments that non-Indigenous students may have in maintaining social and cultural positions, resistance must be considered a pedagogical tool, rather than a barrier to be overcome before real learning can take place (2.3.3).

### **2.3.1 CONCEPTUALISING NEW APPROACHES TO INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

The centralisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives is crucial to disrupting the colonial frameworks that continue to influence the development and incorporation of Indigenous studies. Drawing attention to the ways in which colonialism has

privileged non-Indigenous people focuses analysis on the psychology of the “oppressor”, but it is also important to analyse the experiences of those ‘oppressed’ to create new discursive spaces for knowledge construction (Wilson, 2004). This process involves “reconceptualising, rewriting, rethinking” how Indigenous cultures are expressed and deciding who has the right to make determinations in this regard (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006, p. 404). The following discussion considers the complex and layered dimensions impacting on centralising Indigenous knowledge perspectives in Indigenous studies. I discuss decolonisation as a way to move forward with new ways of thinking about curriculum in compulsory Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous students.

The domestication of Indigenous peoples’ knowledges through colonisation is described by Dodson (1994) as a result of the obsessive practices of the “intrusive Western gaze [through] observing, analysing, studying, classifying and labelling Aborigines and Aboriginality” (p. 3). This is mirrored in the focus on Indigenous peoples’ experiences of victimisation and disadvantage in the discourses apprehended within traditional approaches to Indigenous studies. These practices of objectifying Indigenous peoples serve to minimise concepts of relationship, which are key to resolving the tensions in spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples interact, including classrooms (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008). Programs developed by Indigenous peoples provide opportunities to disrupt, rather than prolong these objectifications (Pino-Robles, 2000).

There have been several related theoretical movements which seek to engage the question of colonialism in contemporary educational structures. For example, postcolonial theory has been taken up by scholars in a range of disciplines – history, sociology, anthropology and education – to re-centre history and colonialism to explain the exercise of European power over much of the world’s population (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006). Postcolonialism motivates the examination of contemporary political, cultural and economic practices to identify the residual effects of colonialism to offer ways of resisting this and moving toward the development of more socially just practices, although it has been criticised for politicising the academy (Rizvi et al., 2006). Decolonising theory also focussed attention on resisting and restructuring institutional practices of exclusion by “critically [engaging], at all levels, imperialism, colonialism, and postolonality” (Smith, 1999,

p. 20). This reversal of the colonial project can't be considered as a linear process because history is a conceptual and structural field rather than an actual experience being lived by participants (Grande, 2008; Muecke, 2005; Nakata, 2007).

Indigenous studies programs that seek to decolonise must understand and reconcile the historical dimensions of colonial systems (which have privileged non-Indigenous peoples and marginalised Indigenous peoples) as a path to the disruption and transformation of these relationships (Battiste, 2004). The recognition of the universal human rights of colonised peoples for “freedom, equality and legal recognition” must be centred in this goal of transformation (Holland, 2008, p. 258). There is a pressing need then for deconstruction, which Houle (2009) sees as “an intervention in the present [to] bring about something other than this present” (p. 183). Given that hegemonic knowledge relies on colonial discourses that situate Indigenous peoples as “dead or dying” (Guest Lecturer, *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, 2009), the goals of self-determination and liberation which underpin both Indigenist (2.3) and decolonising approaches is important. The critical Indigenous discursive framework developed by Dei (2007) acknowledges the impact of colonialism and works in concert with decolonisation strategies to re-centre Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Significantly, according to Dei (2008), there is a difference between decolonising and the challenge to “Indigenize our thought processes and institutions” (p. 3), which Dei sees as both a consequence of decolonisation, and grounds *for* its success. The resultant knowledge consciousness can lead to spiritual strengthening and concrete political action rather nebulising knowledge around equity driven goals (Dei, 2008).

The imperative for Indigenous peoples to self-represent and challenge colonial structures in their various guises is described by Dudgeon and Fielder (2006) as “anti-colonial”. Anti-colonial approaches prioritise Indigenous struggles for equality. They aim to “critically interpret the field, challenging dominant beliefs and the institutions and discourses that reproduce them, framing relations within the structures of political and cultural oppression” (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006, p. 398). Anti-colonial political strategies work together with decolonisation to create and enforce the agency of Indigenous peoples in holding dominant communities accountable, and to resist domination and oppression through empowerment (Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002; Dei, 2007; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Rigney, 1997;

Walker, 2003; Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Together, anti-colonial political strategies and decolonisation lead to pedagogies that focus attention on “disruption, intervention, collectivity, hope and possibility”, and which “reveal the history of indigenous peoples as one of dispossession and not simply oppression” (Grande, 2008, p. 238).

Developing alternative ways of constructing knowledge about non-Indigenous epistemological and ontological positions in Indigenous studies is therefore important to the goal of decolonisation. The limitations of Indigenous knowledge agency in Western spaces requires that we do more than resist and subvert these systems of oppression; we must also “specify the conditions under which it occurs” (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 222). Given these dominating conditions, non-Indigenous people are rarely exposed to the ways in which they are seen by those on the margins (Fredericks, 2007). As a consequence, knowledge about the dimensions of how non-Indigenous privilege is perpetuated inside systemic and historical dominance is also protected. From her perspective as a naturalised White Australian, Bird-Rose (2004) suggests that decolonising projects must be founded on a “search to understand how we [as non-Indigenous people] may inscribe back into the world a moral presence for ourselves” (p. 6). Thus, solutions do not merely revolve around finding the right content to explain the conditions of colonial dominance to students in an Indigenous studies classroom because transformation will be dependent on how they “engage” with this content (Nakata, 2007, p. 224). This includes the ways in which students engage, or disengage with revelations of complicity as well as the resistance that may emerge from exposure to, and recognition of certain forms of privilege.

Education that is concerned with social change, as Indigenous studies must be, should generate a disruption of the hegemonic practices through which dominance is embodied (Srivastava & Francis, 2006). Yet, as Srivastava and Frances (2006) further argue, strategies employed to create this disruption tend to “allow white [people] to be passive or un-implicated while people of color ... are objects of interrogation and display” (p. 276). Indigenous scholars have borrowed from Feminist Standpoint Theory to articulate how certain struggles, and positions inside those struggles privilege certain knowers (Harding, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory espouses that the position of the knower on the margins reveals more to the knower than one who is trapped in the dominant centre, and that knowledge can be

advanced on the basis of certain social locations and ensuing political struggles (Harding, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory can best be described according to Houle (2009), as a political and epistemic tool which forces us

To try to begin to speak, on behalf of whatever actively refuses to be spoken for, so that whoever they are, they might even have a later in which to speak, though possibly not to us. (p. 183)

In essence, Houle (2009) is suggesting that the unspoken privileges of certain groups be amplified in order to create a space for the silenced to participate in the dialogue, even though this may result in the disappearance of privilege. Distinctions are made here between cultural privilege which tends to obscure knowledge that may complicate its existence, and the privilege that ensues from the constructed visibility afforded to marginalised groups on the basis of victimisation rather than epistemological authority. This is reminiscent of the challenge articulated by Srivastava and Frances (2006) earlier, which advocates for those privileged by inherited relations of power to be implicated in any process which aims to mitigate the effects of that power on marginalised groups.

Decolonising Education for pre-service teachers therefore consists of drawing attention to matters of culture, history and personal, social and professional implications and negotiating the contradictions that emerge. New examinations of colonial relationships must reposition Indigenous sovereignty from the margins to the centre: to “re-cite the sovereign source” (Little, 2005, p. 101); positioning Indigenous knowledge sovereignty and connections to Land in central relation to the dominating knowledge systems that currently govern the delivery of Indigenous studies in universities. This process of decolonising pre-service teacher curriculum requires that, in the first instance, it attends to the reform of those colonising spaces (Phillips, Whatman & Winslett, 2005). In this way, decolonisation can be applied within pedagogy as a vehicle for critiquing and revealing colonial relations and their ongoing purposes, as well as creating spaces for Indigenous autonomy.

## **Summary**

The discussion in Section 2.3.1 integrated analysis of the historical oppression of Indigenous peoples and centred this in the present to conceptualise alternative directions for Indigenous education and Indigenous studies. I have suggested that the

authorisation of Indigenous standpoints and knowledge perspectives are central to subverting neo-colonial systems of domination. Pedagogy designed within a decolonising framework enables the deconstruction of dominant individual and collective investments in particular forms of knowledge and social practice. In the next section (2.3.2) I examine how these principles can be applied to theorising alternative pedagogies in Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous students.

### **2.3.2 INDIGENIST STANDPOINT PEDAGOGY**

Previously, I examined how history, culture and policy have influenced how, and if, Indigenous studies is integrated into Western contexts (2.1). I considered the impact of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in the context of decolonisation and the structural dominance of education institutions. These issues are integral to considerations of alternative approaches to curriculum design in compulsory Indigenous studies that seeks to educate non-Indigenous students. The following discussion describes approaches which may enable non-Indigenous students to deconstruct their subject positions, whatever these may be, as a fluid practical extension of the concepts examined previously.

Teaching and learning in Indigenous studies is a humanistic endeavour and in relation to any humanistic investigations, Said (1978) stated that they “must formulate the nature ... of connections in the specific context of the study, the subject matter and its historical circumstances” (p. 15). This idea partially informs the nature of the research questions for this study, which aim to examine what occurs in a space where there is tension and conflict in relation to the connections and the history underpinning Indigenous studies. When it comes to compulsory studies, where most students have not chosen to engage in this conflicted space, one of the primary concerns of pedagogy is to engender a willingness to disconnect from any commitment to the status quo. Indigenous educator, Townsend-Cross, situates the principles of “identity and relatedness, couched in contextual values of reciprocity, inclusiveness, nurturance and respect” (personal reflection in Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008, p. 150) as central to achieving the re-integration of Indigenous methodologies in education. This in itself will cause conflict. Selby (2004) emphasises this when she says that

Understanding people, including self-understanding, becomes an achievement of epistemological complexity, not something for which we

have a procedure that might affect a painless reading. It involves losses and demands born of managing this rupture or gap between needs or desires and the contexts for satisfying them. (p. 145)

Understandings around colonial privilege require non-Indigenous peoples to know themselves as much as it requires them to know Indigenous peoples. Learning in the context of Indigenous studies where non-Indigenous peoples are the subject of the enquiry thus becomes a “psychical [and] epistemological event which creates all kinds of connections, disjunctions, and ruptures” (Todd, 2003, p. 43).

The prioritisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in any context offers new opportunities for questioning dominating practices of knowledge construction. Traditionally, Indigenous studies programs most frequently positioned Indigenous peoples as the objects of study. By definition, objects do not have power in the past, or in the present. Objects are acted upon, they do not act. Objects do not speak, resist, judge, hear, remember but rather they are spoken of, judged by, silenced and remembered in particular ways for particular purposes (Malik, 2002; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Authenticating ourselves through bounded Western constructs (e.g. corroboree, spears, boomerangs) feeds the objectification and prevents Indigenous peoples from establishing dynamic expressions of who ‘we’ are in dominating spaces. Also, simplistic conceptualisations of Indigenous knowledges as merely alternative or oppositional to Western epistemology ignore the complex ways in which these knowledges exist outside these frames of reference (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Nakata, 2007).

Non-Indigenous teachers impose Western individualistic frames of reference on motivations for teaching. It can be presumed that these frames of reference would also motivate the ways in which they teach. Questions relevant to this study revolve around the consideration of how such a focus interacts with the collectivised cultural notions of Indigenous communities. And, how do these perspectives influence the ways non-Indigenous students manage the contradictions which may emerge through the re-interpretation of their own experiences as non-Indigenous people in a learning space which authorises alternative views?

The extent to which any Indigenous studies curriculum can achieve goals of transforming understandings and creating new ways of knowing is dependent then on the willingness of students to engage in the process. The need to provide

opportunities to create, explain and manage the conflict emerging from re-authorising Indigenous knowledge perspectives provides the basis for Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP). Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy is inherently political, reformative, relational and a deeply personal approach located in this chaos of colonial interfaces (Phillips, Whatman & Winslett, 2005). Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy creates new spaces for the integration of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in systems of knowing that authorise dominant views. As such ISP is a multi-faceted process that privileges the voice of Indigenous peoples in contexts where this voice has been strategically made absent to reinforce colonial ideals. It is substantially but not solely concerned with Indigenous perspectives in education, and is not just a product, such as a single subject (Phillips et al., 2005). The reform of other spaces (2.1; 2.2) is inextricably linked with ISP and is considered an essential part of the process of decolonisation.

Indigenous knowledge perspectives need to be integrated and considered relevant, particularly as Indigenous peoples' experiences form the foundation for Western knowledge systems whether recognised or not. If knowledge is fundamentally historically and culturally constructed through Western schemas, the inclusion of knowledge historically and culturally constructed by Indigenous peoples is also crucial to their disruption. The centring of our own perspectives, as Indigenous peoples, also allows us to work to avoid the disappearance achieved through our objectification (Asante, 1993). In a less tangible sense, this mutuality also supports a key principle of ISP: that non-Indigenous people are implicated in both problem and solution. This implication translates to a responsibility for breaking down those dangerous assertions that perpetuate an almost singular focus in Indigenous studies on describing Indigenous peoples' experiences, history and cultures in order to overcome disadvantage in education (2.2).

By creating critical subject positions for non-Indigenous students in Indigenous studies these students can become what Nakata (2007) calls "interested knowers" (p. 216). Nakata applies standpoint theory to explain the engagement of Indigenous peoples, Torres Strait Islanders in particular, in the cultural interface between community and Western spaces. However, the application of ISP creates a different type of 'cultural interface' that is context specific: Indigenous studies classrooms where Indigenous voices are privileged and where non-Indigenous students'

standpoints are positioned in relation to this privilege. This context creates opportunities for non-Indigenous students to ask “how I came to understand – to know the complexities at the interface where our experience is constituted and constitutive of the corpus” (Nakata, 2007, p. 216). Therefore questions which motivate the principles of ISP are:

- How do the epistemological underpinnings of a person’s views compel them to act in particular ways and what is the influence of absent knowledge in reinforcing these actions and processes for knowing the world?
- How does existing knowledge influence student choices about what constitutes relevant knowledge, or even information, that is to be considered and integrated into their personal repertoire and professional practice?

For Indigenous peoples, the centring of our knowledge perspectives, particularly toward the deconstruction of colonialism – motivates alternative ways of responding to these questions. We are not only positioned as authoritative on the subject of our own historical experiences, occurring as they are, and continue to be within colonial traditions, but we also allow/invite non-Indigenous peoples to become subjects in relation to these authorised knowledge perspectives.

One reason for dominant cultures being able to compartmentalise the effects of colonisation as discrete events, unrelated and disconnected, is that records of Australian history exclude Indigenous voices (Kessar, 2006). Individuals privileged by these histories are not inspired to look beyond this compartmentalisation because first, their cultural position is reliant on the absence, and second, Western knowledge systems reinforce their stories as true and beyond question for them (Lampert, 2003). These dominating histories are not only socially sanctioned due to the absence of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. They are fortified because, generally, non-Indigenous people rarely get an opportunity to think about the quality of their own experiences inside a critical relational context in terms of colonisation. That is, to consider how their own cultural location and privilege is reliant to a large extent on the experiences of Indigenous peoples, and relate to colonisation – in all its brutality – as the foundation of their own privilege. The teaching of ‘content’ or information to students in an Indigenous studies program is considered the final stage of a

lengthy process of preparation. This preparation of students is undertaken through various techniques reflective of those discursive strategies employed by Indigenous groups for learning how to relate to, and manage the contradictions, chaos and destabilising frameworks inherent to colonialism, past and present.

Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy provides multiple paths for exposing the gaps and absences in knowledge construction in Western contexts. This includes the deconstruction of non-Indigenous standpoints that consign knowledge production as an abstraction separate to real-life in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives (2.1.3). “First Knowledge” (2.1) is all encompassing. Centralising Indigenous knowledge perspectives through ISP in compulsory Indigenous studies allows for a broader focus which acknowledges this. Instead of relying on regurgitating knowledge about specific events, such as racism, and analysing them outside of the context, non-Indigenous students are brought into a subjective and critical relationship with these concepts. Although, as Gordon (1990) has suggested this is complex and emotionally fraught work because it’s difficult “critiquing your own assumptions about the world especially if you believe the world works for you” (p. 88).

### **Summary**

The above discussion suggests that alternative approaches to Indigenous studies curriculum must mobilise strategies for problematising the positions through which non-Indigenous students perceive knowledge and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. A conceptual framework has been provided to foreground specific discussions around pedagogy that respond to the need decolonising those practices which reinforce certain subject positions that perpetuate disadvantage and privilege. I discussed how these conceptual ideas act as foundation for a proposed approach named here as Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP), which responds to the broader impacts of social, historical and institutional spheres within colonialism. Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy aims to release and target existing resistance to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in decolonising education contexts. In the next section I consider the role of resistance in Indigenous studies and general literature relating to the role of emotions in learning, particularly how personal investments of privilege are disrupted and revealed.

### 2.3.3 PRIVILEGE, GUILT AND RESISTANCE

The concern of this study is to investigate how non-Indigenous students express and manage their resistance while participating in compulsory Indigenous studies in pre-service teacher education. This analytical direction presupposes that some resistance will be expressed in an Indigenous studies program in which non-Indigenous students are guided to interrogate their standpoints in relation to Indigenous peoples and colonial history. So far in this review I have discussed Indigenous studies which privileges Indigenous knowledge perspectives as a multidimensional and decolonising field of enquiry. In the context of neo-colonialism these dimensions contain motives which are political, historical, social and personal. There are particular significances for learning where Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (2.3.2) is mobilised, potentially provoking highly charged responses. This is a common response in classrooms that seek to personalise 'race' and privilege in the interests of transforming understandings about self (Wright, 2006). In this section I discuss literature relating to the emotional nature of learning in critical social enquiry. I consider issues concerning the workings of 'guilt' in this context, and how it might link to resistance. In particular, I discuss learning in critical Indigenous studies to explore the nature and underlying meanings associated with resistance in these settings.

Previous discussions have emphasised how institutional mechanisms collectively act to sanitise Australia's history. Therefore individuals exposed only to the official record of this history through media, social spaces and schooling may not routinely make conscious, daily choices to ignore Indigenous knowledge perspectives. However, it is still crucial to consider the connections between lack of knowledge and its influence on privilege, as inherited ignorance of Indigenous knowledge perspectives is not the oppositional equivalent to the privilege which accrues from it. In all these spheres of knowledge production, particular objectifications of Indigenous peoples (2.1.2) allow collective (non-Indigenous) memories of the past to be celebrated and untroubled by Indigenous voices. The knowledge non-Indigenous individuals require to comprehend the privilege accumulating from dispossession is not readily available and neither are the tools to deal with the conflict arising from the revelation of hidden histories (Kessar, 2006), although the tools to maintain the status quo are.

Those privileged by certain types of remembering (or forgetting), battle to maintain what Frankham (2001) describes as an “open secret” (p. 457). There is a dialectal relationship between understandings about individual identity and belonging in collective culture within which efforts are exerted not just “to conceal knowledge, but to conceal knowledge of the knowledge” (Frankham, 2001, p. 460). The position that a student inhabits in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives may affect the types of critical engagement students develop in Indigenous studies and the expression of resistance. For example, Indigenous perceptions of colonialism may result in a destabilisation of collective dominating knowledge perspectives which act to secure the status quo as ways of defining what is ordinary or normal emanate from taken-for-granted notions of our national identity. Knowledge such as the violence visited on Indigenous peoples is tamed into an irrelevant ‘footnote’, ‘misremembered’ or left out altogether. Celebrations of Australian history thus rely on arranging and reinforcing only those memories which serve a purpose in the present. Attwood (2005) speaks of silences in the “public memory of nations” (p. 1) which secures connections between the way a nation commemorates history and the construction of ideas about national identity itself. The “public memory” is reinforced through resistance to aspects of history, or memories that pose a threat (2.1.2). Concealing knowledge about the interconnectedness of the violence of Indigenous dispossession and the privileged position of non-Indigenous Australians today as a result, forms the basis of the “open secret” (Frankham, 2001). From this perspective, taken-for-granted knowledge doesn’t merely support dominating notions of culture and identity. When this form of knowing is mobilised by individuals it has the power to halt explorations into the deeper undercurrents of non-Indigenous colonial meaning making and the attachments of individuals to these processes (Dion, 2007; Haviland, 2008; Phillips, 2005).

The examination of assumptions articulated through behaviour, attitudes and the language of students is therefore important to this study and identifying individual responses through privileging Indigenous knowledge perspectives allows for revelations about the form and purpose of resistance. Indigenous studies that uses resistance as a pedagogical tool to provoke responses to new/old knowledge allows for this investigation. Noting responses to the curriculum enables revelations about whether taken-for-granted knowledge is mobilised to protect cultural privilege

deliberately, or through ignorance. Resistance may assist non-Indigenous students to maintain control over the space of enquiry by opposing knowledge perspectives that do not fit with their understandings of the world. In this way, the re-authorisation of dominating knowledge using ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions acts to sanction and justify resistance. An important question to ask therefore is: Do students articulate taken-for-granted knowledge as a way of resisting knowledge about Indigenous peoples because this knowledge about Indigenous peoples contradicts understandings about self in relation to non-Indigenous collective culture and history? Subject positions in relation to history in Australia have to a large extent been cemented within colonial paradigms (Atalay, 2006). At its core, colonialism secures the absence of Indigenous experiences, especially those events which dilute the myths supporting notions of Australia’s national identity. This legitimates non-Indigenous individuals in the navigation of their cultural identities through a number of interlocking, mutually reinforcing levels (Harrison, 2008; Hatchell, 2004). Racialising practices of institutions support the marginalisation of Indigenous voices in the national story (Fee & Russell, 2007).

Public resistance to reinscribing Indigenous presence can be validated by racialising practices (Wolfe, 2002). This relation between individual and collective validation upholds paths of resistance that Wilson and Stapleton (2007) argue operate across many dimensions; suggesting also that resistance is “particularly highlighted ... in places of social conflict” (p. 395). The level of different forms of resistance rises particularly when Indigenous knowledge perspectives have been authorised in spaces where they have been previously silenced, with social conflict occurring at the point where an individual’s knowledge is called into question (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001). Foucault (1997) states that “resistance by definition can only exist in the strategic field of power relations” (p. 169). As these fields exert their power to oppress and privilege, resistance is not just a response by the oppressed, but also a response by the privileged if that privilege is called into view and scrutinised. Denial, dissonance and appropriation as particular forms of resistance may be supported by Western layers of knowledge production, socially and institutionally, that act to resolve such conflicts. This was discussed previously in relation to the most fundamental institutional resistance to making Indigenous studies compulsory (2.2.1).

Resistance can be a problematic term for it conjures up images of aggressive apathy and argumentativeness. Non-Indigenous students have inherited a power to selectively engage, or disengage with the Indigenous knowledge perspectives on ‘their’ histories. These layers of resistance can be presented one-dimensionally in statements about the perceived value of Indigenous perspectives to the lives of non-Indigenous peoples (Williams, 2000). These surface dimensions are bound by a more complex, multidimensional epistemological framework which not only makes such resistance possible, but can also reinforce taken-for-granted ‘truth’. The resistance of students in critical Indigenous studies can be viewed through a number of lenses. In this study, resistance is defined as any barrier constructed by individuals to avoid exploration into the reasons for their internal conflict. These forms of resistance may not always be demonstrated in a ‘negative’ fashion. In their study of non-Indigenous students engaging with critical Indigenous studies in a psychology course, Green and Sonn (2006) concluded that passive resistance can be masked by “good intentions”, which they say “cannot be relied upon as independent, objective guides to decent behaviour” (p. 382). Resistance can therefore seem to be natural and normal, presented as national pride due to the aforementioned processes where some knowledge is reinforced and other knowledge made invisible because it has passed through a “dense web of apparatuses and institutions” (Foucault, 1997, p. 169). Thus, resistance is not only enacted in overt ways. It may be felt even when a well-intended desire to learn is expressed by students particularly when contradictions are experienced if previous ways of viewing the ‘world’ are disrupted: when things no longer make sense in the way they used to (Sikes, 2006).

Non-Indigenous cultures/peoples have an investment in maintaining illusions of the irrelevance of particular histories. Memories of the past in the context of colonial Australia, for most non-Indigenous peoples, serve to reproduce information that is vital to maintaining secure connections inside social, cultural and institutional spaces. For many Australians, this history is fact, not interpretation (Breen, 1996). The repositioning of individuals in relation to these misunderstandings establishes new subject positions to allow a reflexive reconstruction through this relatedness. This relatedness should be negotiated to deconstruct existing perceptions, followed by a reconstruction of ways of knowing others on the basis of this. The purpose is not necessarily to change minds, but rather to alter “the institutionalized modes of

determining truth” (Huckaby, 2007, p. 514). Reconstruction in this sense implies transformation that according to Harris (2003), can only occur when there is distance between the “subject” and its “own socially constructed discourse” (p. 672). This requires subjects to divest old patterns of thinking and to withdraw from ideas in which they have a great deal of investment (Harris, 2003). This can be costly, particularly if these investments maintain particular, often invisible privileges secured by colonisation.

There is comfort in acquiescing to particular worldviews, or framings of history, especially if they generate feelings of support and group belonging (Apple 2004). Given the reward of safety for the dominant groups in protecting these systems, non-conforming knowledge is something which can be resisted. However, “disclosure and painful recognition” is a necessary precursor to transformation (Harris, 2003, p. 672). These recognitions are inextricably tied to what individuals believe of their ‘reality’ and by the provocation they experience in response to pedagogy such as ISP (2.3.2). Semetsky (2006) asserts that “in semiotic terms, memory is the capacity to preserve and reproduce information” (p. 96). In this sense, subconscious ideas are marshalled and ‘signed’ daily to construct memories of the past that reinforce present beliefs about self as a way of constructing “memories of the future” (Semetsky, 2006, p. 97). When these beliefs and ideas are mediated through an Indigenist lens, and when students critique their standpoints, there is disruption not just to ideas about self in the present, but across many spaces and time. This study is concerned with investigating how students begin to think about themselves differently, and what provokes resistance and why. These provocations are not just in terms of their intellectual, rational understandings about their world but in relation to the multiple and connected affective dimensions which maintain equilibrium for them.

The discovery of not knowing and the discoveries of complicity can lead to a range of emotional reactions. Responses of “guilt” are common to learning in Indigenous studies (Williams, 2000) and learning about the “suffering” of Others (Todd, 2003). Guilt has been linked to domination (McConnochie, 1998; Sikes, 2006), and in classrooms which guide students to focus critically on their relationship to colonialism, the relationship between ‘guilt’ and complicity to ‘domination’ is significant. Todd (2003) explains that guilt is often provoked by recognition

... that something wrongful has occurred, even as [as an individual might] underscore their own personal distance from it ... [It] is precisely the need to declare distance that indicates ... that there is a far deeper, tacit, realisation that there is something from which they need to distance themselves ... What such responses suggest about guilt is that it signals to the self that one is implicated in a wrong committed against an other. (p. 94)

The disconnections supported by colonial knowledge dominance works to create a filter so that choices can be made regarding the appeal and reassurance of certain objects and objectifications over others within public memory of history and its relevance today. Salber Phillips (2006) maintains that selective remembrance is because “we are strongly attracted to objects and stories that display the intimate texture of our ordinary experience” (p. 88). Furthermore, as Todd (2003) alludes, we can also be repelled by objects or understandings that do not.

It is worth quoting at length Sikes’ (2006) analysis of guilt in the context of Western tradition, colonisation and treatment of Indigenous peoples:

Guilt is, perhaps, a particularly western concept ... At one time, and not so very long ago, converting and saving the heathen from eternal damnation was used as (at least) some justification for colonial endeavour and the subjugation of indigenous peoples. Nowadays, however, the guilt in this context is more likely to be associated ... with the imposition of western beliefs, and the myriad ways in which colonization marginalized, othered, objectified, oppressed, exoticized, pillaged, plundered, sequestered, brutalized and even annihilated indigenous peoples, their ways of life, their lands, belongings, cultures, languages, religions, knowledges and so on, and so on. And, in some ways, domination can be seen to be carried on via the very guilt itself, or, more specifically, through some contemporary expressions and discussions of ‘post-colonial issues’. (p. 350)

In Australia, the denial of the events described by Sikes (2006), and its emotional partner, defensiveness, is common in Australian responses to reminders of historical injustice (Pearson, 2007). In this context, guilt may result from the experience of discord between the tenuous moral authority accorded to non-Indigenous people by the record of this history, and the contradictions exposed by the re-narration of silenced knowledge perspectives.

Beliefs that the colonisation of Australia was for the good of Indigenous peoples are powerful axes for subsequent beliefs that the sole responsibility for Indigenous peoples' socio-economic disadvantage rests with them, not non-Indigenous peoples. There is a powerful form of mourning that occurs when a particular belief is 'killed off' (Harris, 2003; Todd, 2003), and with it comes a particular vulnerability in recognising the loss of this myth of 'moral authority' (Pearson, 2007) over Indigenous peoples. The re-assertion of this privilege can be achieved through application of "dominant logic" (Hoagland, 2007, p. 105) which

Doesn't only work to obscure interdependent relation, it is a practice of conceptual coercion; in significant ways it forecloses the possibility of a destabilizing critical response, recognising only those responses that reinforce its own status. (p. 105)

Resistance, guilt and defensiveness in Indigenous studies is therefore an intellectual endeavour and not solely concerned with the emotional fall-out of non-Indigenous students' responses to considering their own standpoints in relation to Australian history, cultural dominance and Indigenous peoples. While these reactions must be seen as a result of the destabilisation of comforting positions of dominance, more importantly they need to be addressed through critical self-enquiry that enables students to explore their complicity to the 'coercion' and, consequently, to dominance itself.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have examined the impact of colonisation and the writing and perception of Australian history on Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives (2.1). The effects of this on the shape of Indigenous studies programs were then discussed in relation to the value of decolonising approaches in pedagogy (2.2). Lastly, I explained how alternative approaches that deconstructed the colonising influences on curriculum in Indigenous studies could be conceived through ISP (2.3.2). Through this, I argued that useful alternative approaches to curriculum in Indigenous studies would combine the perspectives of decolonisation and Indigenist Standpoint. Resistance, particularly in compulsory Indigenous studies was positioned as a valuable pedagogical tool that could be used to shift the conceptual fields through which non-Indigenous students constructed knowledge about self in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives (2.3.3). In the next

chapter I describe the research context in which ISP was enacted and provide an overview of the research context giving pedagogical examples from *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, which employed ISP to elicit the shifts required for this study.

## Chapter 3: The Research Context

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As examined in the literature review, the environment in which Indigenous studies programs are delivered is conditioned by institutional, social and historical factors. The value of Indigenous knowledge perspectives for reworking that context was discussed to highlight the need for Indigenous studies to move beyond approaches that place non-Indigenous students in the role of uncritical observers of Indigenous experiences. I described ISP as one approach to facilitate the centralisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives and to instigate connections for non-Indigenous students. Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy is grounded in the combined conceptual and theoretical approaches of Indigenism and decolonisation. I argued that rethinking Indigenous studies pedagogy for non-Indigenous students in compulsory programs must attend to the relational, political and interpersonal aspects of teaching and learning.

In this chapter I provide an overview of the research context where critical approaches to pedagogy were employed in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject in one pre-service teacher education program at a Queensland university. I examine the institutional and curriculum dynamics associated with the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and its promise as a step toward broader curriculum initiatives. I provide a pedagogical map of the program including how the ideas around student resistance were integrated into the subject in view of its role as a compulsory foundation subject.

### 3.1 DEVELOPING THE SUBJECT

The development of Indigenous studies programs is influenced by many factors. The context within which this development occurs can be narrowed to two complex and interconnected spaces: institutional and social. These do not sit within a vacuum however. The examination of the impact of colonisation and associated dynamics discussed in Chapter 2, demonstrates that particular ways of relating to Indigenous peoples and cultures have been established over Australia's history. Discussions about Indigenous education in the present day are still informed by these historical ideas (see 1.3).

*Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a subject designed to challenge the foundations of non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives in relation to Indigenous peoples. The development of the subject was supported by non-Indigenous academic staff as an initial stage in the progressive integration of Indigenous perspectives across other units in the degree program. Strategies to integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within university curricula were also endorsed through the adoption of a university-wide Reconciliation Statement in 2001. The ratification of policy statements and support from individual teaching staff however has not proven to be a magic potion for redressing the system's failure to achieve this integration. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was developed on the understanding that it would be a first step in a much lengthier process of curriculum reform which has yet to be realised.

In this section I consider the conditions surrounding the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and the impact of broader contexts on the development of Indigenous Studies curriculum for pre-service teachers in universities. I also discuss how curriculum meets the challenges presented when Indigenous knowledge sovereignty is granted central space in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject.

### **3.1.1 BROADER CONTEXTS**

In the lead up to the 10 year anniversary of the 1990 establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) a range of national measures were initiated with a goal to achieve reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by the centenary of Federation in 2001. In 1999, a draft National Action Plan to Address Indigenous Disadvantage was presented to a reference group which comprised Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians from many sectors, including academia (CAR, 2000). Following extensive consultations, stakeholders emphasised the need for institutions to form partnerships with Indigenous Australians, which was later endorsed in the Australian Declaration toward Reconciliation (2000). This declaration included the pledge to “stop injustice, overcome disadvantage, and respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination within the life of the nation” (CAR, 2000).

The recommendations of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation also encouraged non-Indigenous Australians to ‘share’ colonial history. Increasing

understanding of how past injustices against Indigenous Australians contributed to contemporary disadvantage were seen as pivotal to recognising the responsibility of all Australians for what the Council described as a “healing journey” (CAR, 2000). This wider agenda was to be achieved by recognising historical injustices against Indigenous peoples, taking ‘ownership’ of these histories as non-Indigenous Australians and moving toward a shared future on this basis (Attwood, 2005).

The development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* emerged from this national focus as educational institutions around Australia sought to adopt local agreements with Indigenous groups in response to the Council’s recommendations. The university in which the subject was developed endorsed a number of strategies which sought to advance national initiatives to acknowledge and respect Indigenous knowledges. In 2000, the university’s Reconciliation Statement was ratified. This statement identified the university’s obligation to ‘redressing disadvantage’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through addressing inequality in research, community service, access and participation and curriculum initiatives. Consequently, in an institutional memo from the Indigenous Studies Working Group (2001) to the University Academic Committee (UAC), the following recommendations were endorsed:

1. Integrate Indigenous perspectives and cultural inclusiveness as a priority area for Teaching and Learning in 2002;
2. Reflect the priority of cultural inclusiveness including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the awarding of Teaching and Learning Grants for 2002;
3. Provide faculty based and university wide staff development initiatives through the Teaching and Learning Development Program to support the integration of indigenous perspectives in the curriculum;
4. Note cultural inclusiveness issues in the review of course reports.

The university acknowledged that legitimising Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and practices would require the participation of Indigenous Australians in planning and decision making processes (University Reconciliation Statement, 2001). The energy and enthusiasm of the institution in acknowledging Indigenous peoples and knowledge was evident in this initial goal setting.

Projected outcomes were subsequently devised to enhance graduate attributes which revolved around the ‘good citizens’ model. This led to identifying long range overall approaches to:

1. Incorporate Indigenous perspectives in each course where such knowledge/skills are a professional competency;
2. Make available a general introductory module on Indigenous Issues/Reconciliation, which any student can access, regardless of their course of study, and
3. Develop major and minor sequences of Indigenous Studies units in certain Faculties [and departments] ... (Indigenous Studies Working Group, 2001)

A university research scheme was initiated in 2002 to capitalise on these initiatives. Projects that emphasised Indigenous related themes were encouraged to provide a catalyst for innovative practice in teaching and learning. Successful project applications were subsequently approved for research teams from three Faculties.

Faculty 1 undertook an extensive audit of its current achievements in embedding Indigenous perspectives across their degree programs. In addition to the audit, the project was concerned with facilitating greater commitments from teaching staff in relation to improving current practices and progressing curriculum reform measures (Anonymous 1, 2007). These aims were not specifically concerned with the reform itself, but rather to establish the foundation for future curriculum initiatives that would be informed by findings of the project. Faculty 1 was disbanded five years after the implementation of this project, with many units, including those offered as part of the Indigenous studies major, being filtered into other faculties of the university. In 2010, the majority of the specific Indigenous studies units are now offered through another Faculty.

In contrast, Department A’s project was conceived as part of a broader initiative in Faculty 2 that aimed to advance quality assurance in assessment and in generic practitioner attributes. Faculty 2 had identified four factors relating to the development of generic attributes and Department A focused specifically on one of them: assessment practices related to embedding Indigenous content and perspectives (Anonymous 2, 2002). Department A’s project was designed to benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by prioritising two issues: “The

development of an Indigenous perspective through the cultural construction of whiteness, and consultation with Indigenous people with regard to contemporary and relevant content” (Anonymous 2, 2002, p. 2). The problematising of the racially biased construction of knowledge in Western academia (Moreton-Robinson, 2003a) was linked to increasing academic success of Indigenous students. Curriculum reform, specifically the content of the curriculum, was slated. Through consultation with Indigenous stakeholders, achievement of this goal was intended through a focus on Indigenous student participation in university.

The main focus of Faculty 3’s project was to embed Indigenous perspectives to enhance cultural competencies in health and nursing graduates. It aimed to prepare students to “practice with evidence-based transcultural nursing knowledge based on culture care values, beliefs and traditional lifeways” (Anonymous 3, 2006, p. 296). The preparation of graduates to deliver health care in ways which acknowledged the role of history to Indigenous disadvantage was an underlying theme. The importance of culturally relevant practices to overcoming the debilitating health conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia was also emphasised. Accentuating the convergence between academic concerns and strategic directions that consider the legacies of the past for Indigenous peoples is identified as integral to the development of Indigenous studies (Nakata, 2004). The project undertaken by Faculty 3 attempted to make bridges between these two spaces.

As a response to questions raised by these research activities, a working party was established which comprised staff from each of the faculties involved in project work. The working group emerged organically and provided an informal, but effective collaborative support mechanism for the research teams. The university’s Indigenous Education Centre (IEC) played a central role in guiding, advising and providing intellectual leadership and troubleshooting in relation to the Indigenous perspectives component of the program brief. However, academics from the IEC were restricted to acting in an advisory capacity only as university policy stipulates that only faculty staff could lead these research projects. As Butler-McIlwraith (2006) states, this is common treatment for Indigenous support units which provide an important function in “student support and [educating] non-Indigenous staff and students. But [institutions] also frequently marginalize their Indigenous staff from mainstream academia *and* the institution” (p. 373, original emphasis). Academics in

the IEC had been developing, delivering and co-ordinating Indigenous studies subjects but were marginalised from playing any major role in academic projects such as these.

Two distinct definitions of ‘embedding Indigenous perspectives’ became evident in the framing of these projects: curriculum reform which would assist non-Indigenous students to develop culturally sound graduate capabilities, and curriculum adaptations to cater for cultural differences of Indigenous students. Teaching non-Indigenous students about the past to explain the causes of Indigenous disadvantage in the present also informed these approaches (Tripcony, 2002). Common to each project direction was the relationship drawn between Indigenous perspectives in curriculum for non-Indigenous students on the one hand and ‘cultural relevance’ in curriculum for Indigenous students on the other. This is reflective of traditional approaches in Indigenous education and Indigenous studies (2.2). These types of awareness raising approaches have been criticised as they often produce inconsistent outcomes (Fredericks, 2008). Teaching students how to communicate more effectively in cross-cultural settings may influence transformation of long-held attitudes and beliefs through teaching students how to understand Indigenous peoples better, or it may not have any influence at all (Fredericks, 2008). The intention of the university to incorporate Indigenous perspectives with a view to developing professional competencies, and making Indigenous studies compulsory, is a start to conceptualising new ways to approach Indigenous studies in universities that goes beyond cultural awareness.

The mandate provided by the Reconciliation Statement (3.1.1) indicated the university’s commitment to a broad, institutional adoption of its tenets as a long range strategy. However, by 2005 visible institutional commitment to these processes and the original reconciliation goals had all but disappeared from the agenda, except for pockets of committed individuals dispersed across the institution. In a report into Teaching Quality and Support at the University, which aimed to provide “a [broad] assessment of [the University’s] approaches to supporting and sustaining quality of teaching and learning” (Anonymous 4, 2005, p. 2), no mention is made of ‘Indigenous perspectives’ or the legitimation of Indigenous knowledges. This indicates three important issues which continue to haunt initiatives in Indigenous education: lack of ongoing commitment; the inability to conceive Indigenous issues

as fundamental to the institution's operation, and the naturalised ability of Western systems to tame critical approaches to Indigenous education. Seasonal commitments to reconciliation and associated initiatives are only useful for momentary shifts in the terrain. This is not conducive to achieving long-term goals of centralising Indigenous knowledges within institutions (Nakata, 2007). The development of Indigenous studies, and its success, relies on broader institutional support for reform as part of a sustainable long-term strategy.

### **Summary**

The above discussion has provided a broad overview of the insitutional context for the development and delivery of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. It shows that there was a high level of initial institutional support for curriculum reform which would facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. While goodwill and commitments to pursuing new and critical agendas in Indigenous studies was vitalised by the availability of funding, it is the commitments that thrive beyond these short-lived dedications to social and institutional change that are most important. The development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* which provides the context for this research must be considered in light of these broader events. In the next section I discuss the conceptual foundation of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, which is followed by a discussion of its approach to curriculum in Section 3.2.

#### **3.1.2 CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION**

This study of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers' responses to a critically framed Indigenous studies program seeks to highlight the social, cultural and systemic issues that militate against sustained commitments for future research. The development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* emerged within an institutional context where commitment to Indigenous studies was energised by national reconciliation activities. Consequently, as described in 3.1.1, research projects were completed by three faculties in response to the institution's commitments to centre and legitimise Indigenous knowledge in the work of the university. Explorations into how student understandings about the nature of problems, solutions, goals and management reflect systemic cultural imperatives were targeted in the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. These ideas are also significant for the aims of this study, which examines the impact on student participation in these critical learning

environments, and in particular, the foundation subject: *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. The following discussion provides an overview of the conceptual framework of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

In a separate initiative to those described in the previous section, Faculty 4 (Education) had embarked on a major process of curriculum reform to reconceptualise the undergraduate education degree. This process, amongst other things, sought to affect a greater focus on social justice in the pre-service teacher education curriculum and graduate outcomes. Once again, the refinement of graduate capabilities was the pivot for the work of this curriculum reform project. This work was pursued through strategies that would cultivate high level thinking which included developing the capacity of graduates to develop ‘culturally responsive’ learning environments that enhanced opportunities for diverse groups (Anonymous 5, 2001).

The development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* transpired as part of this reform and was developed as a consultative project between Faculty 4 and the University’s Indigenous Education Centre (IEC), Indigenous community stakeholders and other stakeholders within the university. As part of this consultation process, an intra-faculty working group considered ways to enhance the curriculum of an undergraduate degree to support the work of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Consequently, several significant factors were prioritised:

- The historical absence of any concerted pedagogical approach to the integration of Indigenous perspectives in the existing degree program;
- The implications of this absence on students and staff of the faculty and the willingness to engage at a critical level with potentially discomfoting issues;
- The potential for links between a core Indigenous studies subject and other areas of the degree, and
- The possibilities for instigating sustainable student centred engagement with the issues across the remainder of the degree.

This work was of direct significance to the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. However, as already suggested, establishing long-term advancements in curriculum reform in institutions is often stalled by institutional policy which

precludes Indigenous staff from taking the lead (Nakata, 2007; Butler-McIlwraith, 2006). Nevertheless, the knowledge and experience of IEC academics was again sought in conceptualising and developing *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. As an IEC academic staff member at the time, I was charged with the responsibility to lead the team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics in the consultation, development and eventual delivery of the subject. I continue to co-ordinate and teach in the subject.

The development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was conceptualised through the idea that the subject would act as a foundation unit that would be supported by changes across the whole degree program (Anonymous 4, 2005). It was envisaged that a foundation subject would provide pre-service teachers with opportunities for focussed critical but introductory engagement with issues relevant to Indigenous educational issues that could then be applied to other studies in the degree program (Anonymous 5, 2001). The idea for a compulsory subject in Indigenous studies for all pre-service teacher students was thus conceived as the first stage in a lengthier process of reform regarding the embedding of Indigenous perspectives.

As Nakata (2007) suggests, the extent to which Indigenous studies curriculum can achieve its goal of transforming understandings and creating new ways of knowing is always subject to how this content is taken up and internalised by students. Indigenous studies programs must therefore perform a range of functions to accomplish shifts in non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives. A pedagogical approach that focuses on transforming the understandings of non-Indigenous students not just in terms of Indigenous peoples, but also in terms of non-Indigenous knowledge production is thus necessary (Nakata, 2004b). Additionally, the destruction of normalised assumptions about Indigenous peoples as victim or culturally deficient must be addressed by targeting non-Indigenous knowledge construction about Indigenous peoples in critical ways (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008). In the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* significant issues addressed in this regard were:

- The content of the curriculum;
- The structure of curriculum, including the institutional context;

- The links implied or specified between Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and other knowledge pre-service teachers are exposed to;
- The particularities of foundational knowledge which locates a particular relation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous history and peoples. This can be evident through both what is included and what is left, or forced out. (Phillips, 2003)

Given the compulsory nature of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, the majority of students undertaking the program have not of their own volition chosen to explore issues which specifically address Indigenous perspectives. One of the initial questions raised therefore is whether engagement is affected by the perceived lack of choice over whether they participate in the program. This generated questions in the initial planning stages around how to engage students who may be initially resistant to undertaking the program. A workable starting point from which to conceptualise and address the difficulties of student resistance was to see ‘resistance’ as a potentially valuable pedagogical tool in transforming knowledge about Self and others. This approach is supported by education theorists who see that in difficult communities of enquiry “behaviours which are commonly interpreted as obstacles to dialogue or reflective enquiry could provide opportunities for growth” (Burgh & Yorshansky, 2007, p. 1).

The prioritisation of Indigenous perspectives in any context offers new opportunities for questioning dominating practices of knowledge construction and the empowerment of Indigenous peoples within these frameworks (Hinkson & Smith, 2005). A dilemma resulting from this critical approach is, if we position all knowledge as being challengeable, and if non-Indigenous students are being encouraged to realise the limitations of particular positions through this challenge, to which positions does this refer? Is it only the positions of non-Indigenous knowledge systems that are to be challenged or is it much broader than that? For example, should we encourage students to critique Indigenous perspectives on the world? There is, by contrast, a lack of knowledge that non-Indigenous students bring to studies about so-called Indigenous issues (see Chapter 2). Given this, it is imperative to firstly establish a context for critical thinking that motivates learners to see beyond current frames of reference that position Indigenous peoples and cultures as static objects (2.1.3). A critical thinker must be “self-motivated” and “independent”

(Harrison, 2004, p. 376) and in the sense of decolonisation, independent thinking is complicated by inherited ideas about Indigenous peoples, and Australian history in the national imagination (2.2). Therefore, taking a critical stance on Indigenous knowledge perspectives in the absence of understandings about the complex social, political and historical frames of knowledge that currently limit these understandings (2.3.1) is counter-intuitive.

Pre-existing social, cultural and political conventions taint what is known in public spaces. As mentioned previously, preconceptions will affect the engagement of students within Indigenous studies. Any content offered at this early juncture can be subject to the domination of inherited *terra nullius* thinking without conscious knowledge by the students (Behrendt, 2003). Therefore, breaking down mythologies must run in advance of any critiques of Indigenous peoples given the constraints of dominating systems to interpret knowledge about Indigenous issues.

The complexities associated with this process are captured by Hall (1989) in his early discussion of the impact of pre-conceptions of 'Blackness' on dominant ways of thinking and relating:

In order to know [Indigenous peoples] in a new way, we have to fight against everything else that [Indigenous] has always meant – all its connotations, all its negative and positive configurations, the entire metaphorical structure of ... Western imperial thought is condensed in the struggle to dislocate what [Indigenous] used to mean. (p. 20)

The pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was designed to target pre-existing discourses that students used to construct meaning around terms frequently used to label and define Indigenous peoples. Questions however, were directed toward non-Indigenous discursive systems, rather than appealing to students to specifically deconstruct knowledge about Indigenous peoples (see 3.2). This presented a context to elicit responses to assist in the investigation of students' attachments to certain ideas about Indigenous peoples through the dislocation that Hall (1989) refers to. In the later stages of the program, students have an opportunity to reflect on how these might be reflective of dominant, colonial paradigms in a theoretical sense, but the initial focus was on student interrogation of existing standpoints.

Presenting content in the form of popular anthropological constructions (culture as exotica) and social constructions (culture as deficit) serve more to rearrange primary beliefs than provide means for sustainable transformation in the individual (Gere, Buehler, Dallavis & Haviland, 2009). *Cultures and Indigenous Education* problematises and raises for sustained critique those archetypal categories that masquerade as immutable positions through which to ‘know’ Indigenous peoples. The (re)production of social and historical understandings serves different purposes for different people. Given this, it becomes especially important to advance meaningful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians about these. Approaches which interrogate the dominance of structured rules for social participation and relationships with ‘Others’ are supported by critical theory, critical race theory in particular, that suggests that “interpretation always begins with ... lived dimensions (Leonardo, 2004, p. 132). Therefore, students are invited to think critically and holistically about culture and race, and their lived relationship to ideas that circulate in the popular imagination in this regard. The ‘un-learning’ of particular ways of reading and interpreting ‘colonial stories’ under these conditions is crucial for sustaining dialogue beyond the classroom. This foregrounds the development of teaching practices relating to Indigenous perspectives and the teaching of Indigenous children that are reflective of Indigenous concerns rather than colonial imperatives.

### **Summary**

This discussion has provided an overview of the conceptual issues relevant to the rationale of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. I described how the idea for *Cultures and Indigenous Education* emerged from a wider faculty project and subsequent faculty wide curriculum reform to support the foundational thinking it aimed to facilitate in non-Indigenous pre-service teachers. I considered general issues relating to transformative pedagogy and how these informed the framework of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. In the next section I describe the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* more specifically and discuss how these ideas were applied in the development of learning activities within the subject. These considerations are important to this study for it provides the environment from which resistance emerges and therefore acts to frame the goals of this study.

## 3.2 CURRICULUM DESIGN

Of most concern to this study are the responses of non-Indigenous students to their engagement in a compulsory Indigenous studies program which aims to generate alternative ways of knowing. The privileging of Indigenous knowledge perspectives on colonial history is foundational to the critique of non-Indigenous colonial privilege and, consequently, is critical to establishing these alternatives. From the first day of their studies, students are exposed to alternative ways of knowing – through a lens of Indigenous knowledge perspectives – to clarify and disrupt normalised ways of relating to Indigenous peoples. These standpoints are interrogated through critical questioning and dialogic processes that act as a model for students who are developing teacher practices. The subject is designed to also empower students to recognise epistemological gaps in other areas of their degree studies. Therefore the design aims to also prepare students to take responsibility for sustaining alternative practices beyond the semester in which the subject is delivered.

In the previous section I have suggested that Indigenous studies curriculum for non-Indigenous students in compulsory studies must adopt critical approaches. Theories in decolonisation have also been suggested as useful to engendering the critical engagement required (2.3). In this section I explain how *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is structured and describe the strategies and objectives of the program in meeting the overall objective to produce critically aware teachers who understand their situatedness in relation to Indigenous peoples and collective systems of non-Indigenous knowledge production.

### 3.2.1 CULTURES AND INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The main concern of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is to guide students to tease out internal, external and relational dimensions of their standpoints. These clarifications around standpoint must take into account the social, cultural, historical, political and institutional dimensions of students' lived experiences. Generally, the goal is to enable students to discern how their participation across these dimensions controls, manipulates, sways or persuades them to interpret and respond to the world in particular ways. This type of transformative pedagogy was developed in recognition of the multi-dimensional, multi-directional processes of learning outside of colonising frameworks that confirm Indigenous peoples as objects (2.3). The subject deliberately extends the traditional focus that aims to educate non-Indigenous

peoples about Indigenous history (2.3). Deep level engagement by non-Indigenous students is directed through pedagogy that establishes that the experiences of Indigenous peoples are equally foundational to non-Indigenous privilege as they are to Indigenous disadvantage.

The idea that non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples (knowledges, structures and histories) operate in multidimensional and intersecting spaces is a key element of “Cultural Interface” theory (Nakata, 2007). The Culture Interface, as explained by Nakata (2007) is more usefully understood as “constituted by points of intersecting trajectories” (p. 199). These intersections are characterised and generated by discourses which are spatial, temporal, psychological, systemic, distant, competing and contested (Nakata, 2007). The overall objective of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is to facilitate an interrogation of these complex, dynamic intersecting spaces that Nakata (2007) describes. The pedagogy is thus designed to elicit conceptual understandings rather than provide students with practical frameworks for ‘doing’ Indigenous studies in the classroom. However, as Watson (2006) points out, teaching is always an “*act* behind which the *real* person lurks” (p. 510). While an individual makes certain choices in the performance of teaching, decisions about what knowledge to prioritise and reproduce through curriculum, is socially, historically and systemically constructed.

When the subject was being developed in 2003, the questions of significance to the curriculum were:

- How do the epistemological underpinnings of a person’s views drive them to be in the world in a particular way?
- How does it influence their choices about what constitutes relevant knowledge, or even information, that is to be considered and integrated into their personal repertoire and professional practice?
- How do the constructions of knowledge about Indigenous peoples that are trapped within hegemonic frameworks impact on personal knowledge choices and responses?
- What is the effect of targeted self-examination on shifting the forms and functions of these constructions for non-Indigenous students?

From the outset then, the conceptual organisation recognised that a critical framework would allow students to be self-directed within a more broadly conceived theoretical approach. This theoretical approach is informed by understandings of the dynamism of cultural interfaces, but more significantly processes of decolonisation underpinned by Indigenist approaches. The pedagogical dimensions are best represented through a multi-level consideration of what Indigenous knowledge perspectives mean in the context of Indigenist decolonisation approaches in Indigenous studies:

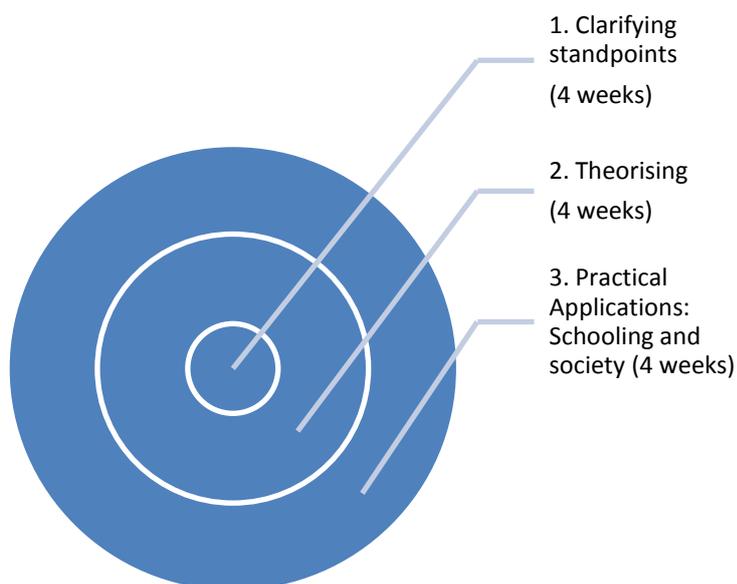
- Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous issues/events/perspectives
  - For teaching that requires knowledge to be vetted for non-Indigenous contexts, or when knowledge is such that only Indigenous peoples have expertise;
- Indigenous perspectives on non-Indigenous issues/events/perspectives
  - Critical perspectives on Australian history, culture, institutions;
- Non-Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous issues/events/perspectives
  - This is problematic because most non-Indigenous people do not associate with Indigenous peoples on a daily basis. Most information is out of context. Therefore, these perspectives have limited application in any Indigenous studies classroom;
- Non-Indigenous perspectives on non-Indigenous issues / events / perspectives
  - Self-critique, very important in Indigenous studies programs for non-Indigenous students.

The assumption that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples always relate from distinct domains is problematic for it tends to emphasise “cultural distance” (Hinkson & Smith, 2008, p. 162). However, structurally, there is a consistency in the ways in which non-Indigenous systems have embedded ideas about Indigenous peoples (Chapter 2). These structural conditions exert a powerful influence on individual knowledge construction (Vaught & Castagano, 2008). Particularly powerful are the social ideas around race that are circulated and reproduced daily, as illustrated by Dreise (2009) in ‘The White Room’ (Figure 2.2).

### 3.2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE MODULES

Teachers in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are provided with an in-depth tutor guide (Phillips, 2003; Phillips, 2009) explaining the philosophical dimensions of the subject and weekly strategies. As shown in Figure 3.1, Module 1 is concerned with clarifying the standpoints of students; Module 2 with theorising these explorations, and Module 3 with examining how these impact on teacher identity, schooling and curriculum development.

Figure 3.1 Overview of modular approach – Modules 1 - 3



As students move through each module they are urged to continually reflect on previous understandings; examples of how the curriculum achieves this is shown later in this section. Reflective activities are embedded at all levels of the curriculum through online journals, weekly written reflections (in-class or in a private written journal) and the inclusion of an Affective Criterion for each assessment item, where students provide reasons for any shift – or no shift - in their attitudes as a consequence of completing the tasks. Given that non-Indigenous knowledge about Indigenous peoples is often left unexplored, students are encouraged to question ‘why they know, what they know’. These processes of deconstruction are significant to students being able to identify and understand the impact of uncritical engagement with knowledge constructions about others (King, 2004).

As shown in Figure 3.1, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is arranged into three modules:

### *Module 1 – Clarifying Standpoints*

In Module 1, students are guided to explore existing worldview assumptions using a range of triggers. The first question students are required to consider is how ‘race’ and ‘culture’ explicitly figure in their worldviews. This activity, developed from an idea from bell hooks (1994), aims to highlight the visibility or invisibility of ‘race’ and ‘culture’, in particular to:

- Expose the students’ levels of ‘racial awareness’;
- Allow assumptions about ‘normal’ and ‘different’ to emerge;
- Enable students to discover their socialised notions of what they position as ‘normal’ and ‘different’ in terms of culture. (Phillips, 2009, p. 22)

Critical questions are posed throughout the semester to support understandings in relation to the concepts of standpoint, history, collective culture, belonging and institutionalised (and marginalised) cultures. To contextualise understandings about culture as ‘lived experiences’, students undertake guided textual analysis of a range of resources, including cartoons (Figure 3.2) to explore how social understandings about their cultural location is supported or contradicted by the texts they are exposed to on a daily basis. The idea is to externalise the unspoken, particularly in regard to Australian culture, by asking what the visual and written texts say about ‘us’ or ‘them’. It is important for students in establishing positions from which to speak, for as Panelli (2008) says, “notions of place, home and country provide key points of dialogue with wider social geographies” (p. 803). As a consequence of this initial activity, a more critical starting point is created for students’ navigation through multiple dimensions of knowledge construction about Self in relation to place and Other.

Figure 3.2 Connecting to Collective Culture (from Phillips, 2009). Cartoon (Nicholson, 2001).

Questions: What is the nature of your 'cultural reality'? What are the links between 'social' and the 'cultural'?

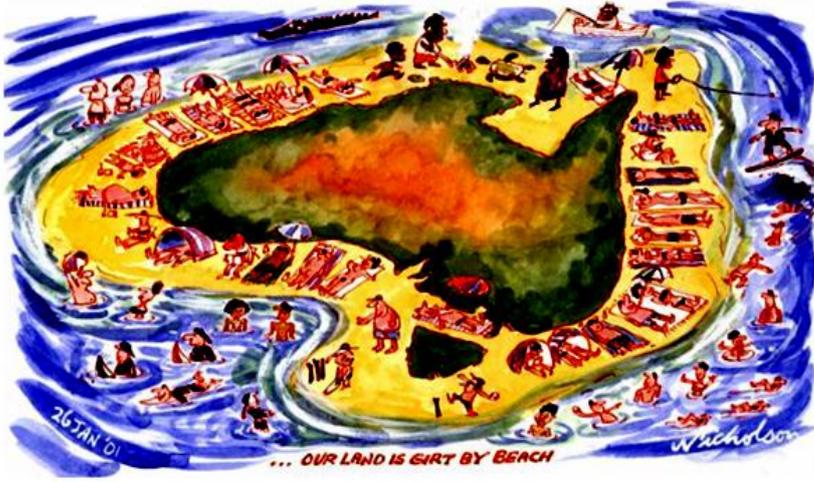
The purpose of Week 2 is for students to consider the connections between a collective knowledge framework from which their individual standpoints might be derived by exploring their beliefs about their own culture and their understandings of how this influences them in taken-for-granted and sometimes invisible ways.

**Activity 1: Weekly reading activity/Lecture Discussion**

Students are required to demonstrate their understandings of the key ideas emerging from their reading of Chapter 2 & 5.

Discuss readings for Weeks 1 & 2 making conceptual links using the study questions for each as a guide.

**Activity 2: Cartoon Critique**



**Guiding Questions:**

1. What does the cartoon say about Australian culture?
2. What elements of your own individual values, beliefs and understandings did you use to interpret the message?
3. How would someone without those beliefs interpret the cartoon?
4. What does this say about the power of subtext?

In a follow-up activity, students are required to consider the impact of history using a timeline developed for the subject that re-positions the experiences Indigenous peoples as events occurring over *Australian* history. They are required to critically deconstruct the effects of events, most popularly labelled as 'Aboriginal history', on their social and cultural location today (Figure 3.3). The notion of a 'shared history' (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 2000) is explored through these examinations, in particular to highlight the role they played in the construction of cultural privilege.

Figure 3.3 History and social and cultural locations: Indigenist perspectives (from Phillips, 2003)

Place this timeline excerpt on board. Insert which historical 'events' you prefer for this activity:

1788 (Invasion) \_\_\_\_\_ 1910 (Federation) \_\_\_\_\_ 1939 (WW II) \_\_\_\_\_  
 1967 (Referendum) \_\_\_\_\_ 1988 (Bicentennial) \_\_\_\_\_ 2007 (NT Intervention)

Questions to be asked of the junctures chosen:

- What experiences were you or your family having at this time?
- How has it affected subsequent experiences?

**Activity 2: Re-defining 'difference'**

The aim of this activity is to explore the impact of perspectives on the taken-for-granted social, historical and/or cultural objects. Students will choose (2) historical moments to explore through the following process indicated below. These 'moments' should link directly to those that were explored in the previous activity. Any 'content' could be used for this process.

INVASION (Aboriginal Perspective) ----- SETTLEMENT (Non-Aboriginal perspective)

Consequences for Indigenous peoples?

- Are there tensions?
- What are they?
- Why do they exist?
- How are they managed?

Consequences for non-Indigenous people?

To give form to multiple dimensions of dialogue across the wider spheres that Panelli (2008) refers to, the effects of hidden histories are also addressed. Students are encouraged to reflexively explore six key questions for the duration of the semester. The ongoing reflexive cycle is aligned with other elements of the pedagogy, and provides a focal point for considering shifts in their thinking over the semester. These questions are:

- How does history - in all its forms - inform your *social* reality?
- How does history - in all its forms - inform your *cultural* reality?
- How do the cultural and social interactions of your ancestors impact on the ways in which you engage with others today?
  - For example, if you have an Irish convict heritage in this country is there anything significant about the way you interact today with descendants of the British settlers as a consequence of this historical

relationship? Think about the question specifically in the context of your own cultural heritage in Australia.

- How do the institutional forms of your cultural and social identity impact on the way you act in the world as an individual?
- What gives you a sense of *belonging* collectively and individually? What is the relationship between the two?
- What gives you a sense of *not belonging* collectively and individually? What is the relationship between the two? (Phillips, 2003)

These investigations prepare students for deeper explorations of structural influences on the positions they take in relation to knowledge constructed about Australian cultures and the place of Indigenous peoples' knowledge perspectives within those structures.

The issue of how to respond to passive resistance articulated through statements that reinforce particular moral stances is addressed throughout *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. The questioning strategies outlined in Table 3.1 give an example of how this deconstruction usually occurs in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Table 3.1 'Phrases of Resistance' are designed to reduce the power of these statements to initiate a shut-down on in-depth enquiry (see 2.3.3). This table is a modified excerpt from the Tutor Guide for the subject. The excerpt is presented to show examples of resistance and some ways in which teachers are instructed to deal with these in the learning situation. Phrases such as "we are all equal" and "I tolerate other cultures" were seen as entry points to dialogue, rather than an intended outcome. That is, it's not considered important for students to become more moral – 'good citizens' - but rather for them to deconstruct why such ideas are statements are rarely identified for the platitudes they are. Students' critical examination of their standpoints was achieved through inviting them to reason through these cliché statements. In critically engaging with phrases such as "we are all human", "I treat everyone equally" and so on, the social power of these texts can be interrogated. While students are engaged in deconstructing their own standpoints in the classroom, they are also completing the first assessment task which requires them to identify the discourses used to construct knowledge about Indigenous *and* non-Indigenous cultures in the media, as one example, through both textual and sub-textual levels.

Table 3.1 Dealing with “Phrases of Resistance” (Phillips, 2003, excerpt)

Phrase of Passive Resistance	Reflexive Questioning Techniques
“We are all equal”	<i>Aim:</i> To expose underlying ideologies
“We are all human”	<p><i>Questions:</i></p> <p>What do you mean by ‘we’?</p> <p>What do you mean by ‘equal’?</p> <p>What does equality ‘look’ like in your perception of everyday life?</p> <p>How do you see equality in institutions?</p> <p>Where might inequality exist?</p> <p>Why does inequality exist – historical reasons?</p> <p>Contemporary reasons?</p>
“We are all the same”	<p><i>Aim:</i> Provide opportunities for students to explore these concepts.</p>
“I wasn’t there – I didn’t do it”	<p><i>Questions:</i></p> <p>What do you mean by ‘the same’?</p> <p>How are Indigenous peoples the same as you?</p> <p>What would being ‘the same as you’ mean for Indigenous people?</p>
“It’s ancient history, let’s get over it and move on”	<p>What would believing Indigenous people are the same as ‘us’ mean for non-Indigenous people?</p> <p>What are ‘the same’ experiences experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australian history?</p> <p>What are ‘the same’ experiences that are still occurring?</p>
“I’m not racist but ...”	<p><i>Understandings to uncover:</i></p> <p>Why is it necessary to claim a non-racist standpoint?</p> <p>What is the relationship between the standpoint and the statement which follows?</p>
“We should be tolerant”	<i>Questions:</i>
“I value cultural inclusion”	<p>What is to be tolerated?</p> <p>What criteria do you apply to decide which groups of people require tolerance?</p>
“I accept people who are different to me. Some of my best friends are .....”	<p>Do you think there is a relationship between ‘power’ and the ability to state an individual tolerance for difference?</p> <p>Does this statement presume anything about the ‘power’ of those groups that are ‘tolerated’, included or accepted?</p>

## *Module 2 – Theorising*

In Module 1, students are provided with opportunities to identify and clarify their standpoint positions in relation to collective knowledge about Australian culture and constructions of Indigenous peoples. These investigations become more in-depth and are enhanced through theoretical investigations in Module 2. Given that students have varied and historically diverse connections within the Australian nation and with Indigenous peoples, opportunities to theorise about cultural dominance is positioned after some clarification on standpoints is achieved. The independent research that students undertake is scaffolded by the continued reflection in tutorial activities where they are guided to consider the connections between the individual and collective knowledge production. Students are encouraged to explore the impact of structural forces on their knowledge about self in relation to Indigenous peoples.

Understandings about the relationships between students' individual standpoints and collective Australian culture in Module 1 provide a focal point for their theorising in Module 2. To bring more depth to their thinking in relation to the connections between history and the present, guide questions are designed to expose the relationships that students draw between constructs such as the 'ordinary Australian' and the 'us/them' binary. For example:

- What does history mean for “us” today? Who is “us”?
- How has history positioned Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians? Why is it still important?
- How does history act on ‘us’ today? Reasons for difference? (Phillips, 2003)

In the transition between inter-subjective enquiry (Module 1) and theory (Module 2) students begin also to consider questions related to the assumptions that might ensue from their subject position. Questions which focus on the effects and consequences of cultural assumptions on personal and professional relationships with Indigenous peoples, or other cultural groups (Phillips, 2009) are targeted. Additionally, students also begin to problem-solve when asked, “What strategies would you suggest for increasing their benefits and reducing the disadvantages?” (Phillips, 2009, p. 32). Role play activities support this process and position students to take on other points of view to explore issues relating to the inclusion of Indigenous studies in the

syllabus (see example, Appendix B). Topics that students investigate through these activities relate to notions of equality, the place of compulsory Indigenous studies, resistance to this inclusion and the place of history in our lives today. In their formal assessment, students are required to research and write a reasoned, theoretical argument which analyses and explains the constructions of knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples which they identified in their first task.

### *Module 3 – Application*

The modules of study in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are not positioned as a sequential movement from one stage to their next. In Module 3, assumptions are made about the knowledge that students bring to reflections on their teaching practice, curriculum development and professional identities as a result of their earlier learning and research in the subject. As *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a compulsory foundation subject only, it is not designed to specifically engage students in the specifics of curriculum development for the teaching of Indigenous students or Indigenous studies. However, in the final module students begin to translate their social and theoretical perceptions to classroom practice, exploring questions such as:

- How as teachers might we participate in reinforcing a particular worldview?
- What can we do about it?
- What *would* we do about it if we had to ‘think on our feet’ in response to an unexpected student response to our teaching?
- What relationship is there between your response and your standpoint?

(Phillips, 2009, p. 34)

Students are required to make explicit links between their reflections across each of the modules to develop an overall perspective on the shifts that have occurred. The assessment in Module 3 is directly aligned with the learning activities and requires students to experiment with the development of culturally sound learning activities that demonstrate the depth of their learning in Modules 1 and 2. In light of this, students review the themes and concepts from previous learning and begin to apply them to a developing personal and professional teaching framework (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 “Building Teacher Identities” – (Phillips, 2003, excerpt)

Objective 3	Integration and Critique
<p>An understanding of theories of the construction of cultural identities, of your own cultural identity and of schools as a site of social construction.</p>	<p>The ways that you locate and describe the concerns of diverse groups are influenced by your implicit and explicit beliefs/knowledge about your own cultural framework. Critical reflection and analysis of the broader nature of culture construction and its impact on you will assist you to be more aware of these impacts. These understandings are directly implicated in your perceptions of diverse groups within the classroom and the structure of your curriculum and your teaching practice.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Do terms such as <i>problem-solving</i>, <i>learning</i>, <i>learning styles</i>, <i>classroom management</i> and <i>goal-oriented</i> have particular cultural biases that impact on students and teachers and therefore the organisation of classroom environments?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How do you define these terms? What cultural bias might be present in your definitions? How will this affect your teaching practice?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> Consider how the relationship between your individual culture and the collective cultural systems to which you belong can positively and negatively impact on the learning needs of Indigenous students.</p> <p><b>Questions for you to review your own philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>How do the ways you perceive your culture (or not) impact on the ways you judge the value of the approaches you use to foster learning for all students?</p> <p>Are you connected to collective (normative) understandings about learning in ways that create gaps when it comes to engaging with difference? How do you know? Why is it important to know?</p> <p>How might your understandings about the nature of problems, solutions, goals and management influence pedagogy that may not reflect the specific needs of Indigenous students?</p>

In Table 3.2, an excerpt is provided from the *Cultures and Indigenous Education Tutor Guide* (Phillips, 2003; 2009) which shows how students bring depth to their understandings about their developing professional practice, linking back to the knowledge developed in earlier exploratory analyses of critical issues relating to the construction of knowledge. Processes of critique, evaluation and review – as exemplified in the excerpt in Table 3.2 – needs to be applied to all levels of teaching practice (see Appendix C for complete table). Ultimately, this will require an ongoing process of critical thinking and continual reflection by the students on what they know, how they know what they know and the influence of this on the choices they make inside and outside their classrooms.

## Summary

In this chapter, I provided a brief overview of the curriculum design of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. In this subject, students are guided to consider the dimensions of their social, historical, and cultural locations in relation to the evolution of Australian cultural knowledges. The modules are not discrete explorations but are circulatory and allow students to return to concepts as they engage in learning across the semester. A selection of activities was provided (3.2.1) to demonstrate the how the course materials stimulate student responses to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in relation to all activities, theories and questions modelled across the subject. The holistic nature of this study is evident in the specific connections between the research design used to examine the nature of pre-service teacher responses to this compulsory Indigenous studies program, the conceptual framework and the pedagogy employed in the research site. In the next chapter I explain the conceptual framework governing the development of the curriculum and present this framework as an important transition between the theory and the research design.

## Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework

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Through my review of the literature (Chapter 2), I provided the background to this study. I examined theories relating to the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges through colonial action and considered how history frames relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples today. I discussed ideas in relation to dominance, the objectification of Indigenous peoples in Indigenous studies, resistance, and the role of decolonisation and Indigenist standpoint theory in developing alternative curriculum approaches. In Chapter 3, I described the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and discussed the broader context in which the subject was developed. The discussion of theory and practice is important to the research design because it provides a map of the experiences of participants which I analyse in the final chapters of this thesis.

In this chapter, I describe the concepts that drive the framework for this investigation of non-Indigenous pre-service teacher responses to compulsory Indigenous studies. This study aims to identify the discourses that students employ to manage and interpret the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives on Australian colonial history. The students are enrolled in a first year foundation unit of the education degree called *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. There is correspondence between the concepts framing this study and Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (2.3.2) employed in the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (3.2.1).

This study draws on alternative conceptual traditions to examine how non-Indigenous students position themselves in a critical Indigenous studies subject that is designed to provoke not just intellectual, rational understanding but the affective dimensions also (See Section 2.3.2). In particular, these conceptual tools will assist to identify the discourses students use to reinforce their position in relation to Indigenous peoples and how knowledge is constructed to this end.

This chapter therefore outlines the major tenets and conceptual tools which resonate with the design of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and the design of this study. Namely:

1. The Japanangka teaching and research paradigm (West, 2000), Indigenism and critical Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous students;
2. Influence of colonisation on non-Indigenous Australians;
3. Decolonisation and resistance.

In general terms, this framework enables an analysis of the interdiscursive foundations of the production of knowledge and social understandings about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Australia. It also targets the power of these foundations to construct and authorise individual standpoints of non-Indigenous students in relation to Indigenous peoples and connections to Australian culture. Evidence of student responses has been taken from student interviews, student journals, online student reflections, teacher and researcher teaching evaluations and online teacher communications. Analysis of these multiple forms of data provides a way to identify the complex associations and relations expressed and interpreted by students as they engaged with *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

First, I provide an overview of the conceptual tools which were applied to this study (4.1). Second, I use these concepts to discuss the influence of colonisation on non-Indigenous Australians in terms of identity construction (4.2). Third, I discuss the connections between decolonisation and resistance to learning in contexts where Indigenous knowledge perspectives are authorised (4.3).

#### **4.1 JAPANANGKA, INDIGENISM AND CRITICAL APPROACHES IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES**

The authority of Indigenous peoples over place is explained by Lucashenko (2006) in the following way:

Regardless of their origins, Aboriginal peoples share a common devotion to their countries. No matter how stony, cold, barren, dry, hot or harsh their country might appear to others, to the indigenes their country is the only place that truly matters. It is where they or their parents were born, where their ancestors are buried, where the generations before them have lived and died. It is indisputably where they belong. It is where a correct life is possible; your true country is the Good Life incarnate. (p. 27)

There is not only eloquence in Lucashenko's words; they also empower Aboriginal peoples' connections to Land and place and position Aboriginal belonging as eternal

and existing beyond loss stemming from colonisation. As discussed earlier (2.1), the philosophies of Graham (1999) and West (2000) provide a foundation for considering complex arrangements of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives through a colonial lens, which includes authorised knowledge in relation to Self and in relation to dominating Others.

To meet the theoretical and analytical purposes of this study, identification of the multiple dimensions of knowledge production about self and Indigenous others is important. A synthesis of the general philosophical principles of West (2000) and Graham (2000) which are of particular significance to this study was presented in the literature (2.1.1 and Figure 2.1). According to West (2000), Indigenous worldviews are all encompassing and allow “distant history and distant future [to] coexist along the same powerful continuum” (p. 66). West’s eight dimensions for teaching and research that are described below “establish a common locus in the general thinking of Aborigines in any contemporary situation” (p. 66). These principles focus on connection, relation, questioning, survival, knowledge-in-context, knowledge protection, survival and the knowledge privileges accrued to Indigenous peoples on the basis of our daily relationships to non-Indigenous systems of dominance.

It is important to note that the philosophies of Errol West are drawn from a draft of his PhD thesis that he was unable to complete before his passing in April, 2001. This makes my application of the ideas in his thesis to this research context problematic. First, my interpretation of his work requires me to overlay my own, possibly incorrect interpretation onto his complex and evolving written work. Second, there are many assumptions that I need to make in order to re-contextualise his philosophical ideas in this study, some of which may not be consistent with West’s intentions. Third, as the manuscript was published after his passing, there is no way to know if West authorises for public consumption the version of his written work to which I refer. My discussion of the Japanangka paradigm must therefore be interpreted in light of these significant conditions surrounding its publication.

The Japanangka paradigm for teaching and research (West, 2000) was developed to counteract insidious assumptions about Indigenous peoples in the academy that influenced systemic approaches to resolving Indigenous ‘disadvantage’, particularly in education. The paradigm especially speaks about the complexities of Indigenous knowledge systems and cultures in contemporary

settings. Japanangka (West, 2000) is multi-faceted and incorporates eight crucial, interlocking dimensions which are shown in Table 4.1. These dimensions establish Indigenous epistemologies as complex systems concerned with the collective and relational production of knowledge by Indigenous peoples in relation to non-Indigenous systems, and for their own sakes. Japanangka (West, 2000) was developed to theorise the specific dimensions of Indigenous peoples' experiences. I have re-contextualised each dimension as it might apply to non-Indigenous people's experiences in order to provide a conceptual map (Table 4.1) more distinctly connected to this study of resistance in non-Indigenous pre-service teachers.

Table 4.1 Conceptual Dimensions of Japanangka (West, 2000) and possible application to non-Indigenous people.

- **Cultural dimension** – Defines and articulates behaviour and responses in relation to engagements with non-Indigenous domains. For Indigenous peoples cultural responses have been inherited over time and allow for recognition of colonial intents (West, 2000).
  - *Non-Indigenous peoples*: Articulated behaviour and responses to the world rationalised and honoured through non-engagement with strongly expressed Indigenous knowledge perspectives.
- **Spiritual dimension** – “the spiritual, cognitive schema of explanation of all things, that relates to the above timeframes and Indigenous ontology” (p. 109).
  - *Non-Indigenous* – The effects of colonial history on non-Indigenous systems for knowing Indigenous peoples are managed and secured by controlling the conditions under which we are known in the present (see Chapter 2).
- **Secular (quality of life) dimension** – “constructed around an Indigenous person's personal and public domain experiences and circumstances, often including conflict” (p. 109)
  - *Non-Indigenous* – non-Indigenous peoples' experiences within private and public domains reinforced inter-discursively. Conflict rarely experienced due in part to silencing Indigenous knowledge

perspectives. National celebrations of sacrifice and celebration of the nation proceed relatively smoothly as a consequence.

- **Intellectual dimension** – “necessary [to] continually heal the ‘tears in the fabric of life’ of Aborigines’ individual and collective humanity, irrespective of the origin of the source of, or the implement causing, the tear” (p. 109-110).
  - *Non-Indigenous* – Invisible complicity to knowledge construction and historically secures privilege through *terra nullius* psychology (Behrendt, 2003) in the present. Western systems of knowledge construction further reinforce this privilege.
- **Political dimension** – “manifest in the principle and fact of the pursuit of the good for Indigenous collectives regardless of individual idiosyncrasies” (p. 110).
  - *Non-Indigenous* – Making a place for Indigenous peoples in ways that politicise actions, rather than authorise Indigenous knowledge perspectives when defining social justice and equality.
- **Practical dimension** – considers for Indigenous peoples the point of information, the reasons for learning, and gaining awareness of Western knowledge (West, 2000).
  - *Non-Indigenous* – congruent but considers the point of learning for themselves from their standpoints.
- **Personal dimension** – maintaining ‘life essence’, survival and growth (West, 2000).
  - *Non-Indigenous* – the reinforcement of an untroubled sense of being Australian is reliant on the silencing of Indigenous peoples with respect to history and impacts on collective Australian culture in the present.
- **Public dimension** – considers the construction of artefacts and notions of cultural pluralism that motivate values of other dimensions (West, 2000).

- *Non-Indigenous* – participate in the process of writing (or re-writing) public spaces in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are represented including curriculum.

Education is a primary target for resolutions, which the Japanangka teaching and research paradigm developed by West (2000) has been designed to redress. These eight conceptual dimensions (Table 4.1) provide a framework for investigating the de-marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges and peoples within broader society, particularly in education contexts. West’s paradigm stresses that the ongoing focus on issues of Indigenous disadvantage “in a singular and often unrelated way [results] in frantic activity in essentially non-achievement-orientated endeavours” (West, 2000, p. 66). These endeavours often ignore the responsibilities of non-Indigenous people for transforming the structural fields through which such ideas about Indigenous cultural deficit are cultivated. As shown in Table 4.1, relationships exist across multiple dimensions which can serve to reify old ideas about Indigenous peoples in the present.

The philosophies of West (2000) and Mary Graham (1999) are linked to other Indigenous philosophies that see relationships as key to knowledge production by empowering Indigenous cultures in their own rights, and in relation to colonialism. There is a strong link between knowers and the knowledge that is produced as a consequence in private and public domains. Indigenous cultures and knowledges continue to be animated in contemporary spaces. The authors position preparation and questioning as fundamental, rather than a path to arriving at an answer. The story which West (2000) relates from an individual he names as “Leader” demonstrates why there is no satisfaction in seeking one, all inclusive answer: “In our ways there are many answers to a single question and I will tell you not the answers, but the question, in time, when you are ready my son” (West, 2000, p. 24). The interrogation of these relationships in an Indigenous studies curriculum can be purposefully placed to create *and* re-settle the learning chaos emerging through decolonisation as discussed in Chapter 2, and conceptualised below (4.3).

In the learning space established in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* it is necessary for students to build an “awareness of the stories we hold about ourselves and the identities of others in particular contexts, why they are created and what purposes they may serve” (Anonymous 6, 2003, p. 19). Therefore the context for the

questioning that takes place in Module 1 (Figure 3.1) is significant. In exploring how cultures-in-relation are constructed, known and enacted, the concept of “storytelling” is important to decolonisation (2.2). As discussions about the Cultural Interface in Section 3.2.1 reveal, there are multiple sets of relations which “shape the personal and interpersonal, the textual and inter-textual, the discursive, the inter- and intra-discursive, the theoretical and the structural” (Nakata, 2007, p. 199). This multi-dimensionality however is always discursively bound by a dominant Western framework (Nakata, 2007). The nature of cultural dominance and how Whiteness is perpetuated is therefore significant to this analysis, however, “whiteness, like other social interrelations, works both through and against binary framings” (McDonald, 2009, p. 16). A focus on binaries excludes the possibility for deeper levels of understandings in relation to intercultural connectivity in spaces complicated by colonial history and colonial practices. Such framings could be reinforced by elements of Whiteness theory and reduce the complex dimensions framed by West (2000) in the Japanangka teaching and research paradigm (Table 4.1).

The complex and multiple dimensions through which we all operate can be more readily observed through seeing these systems as always in a state of flux and driven to some degree by the position which an individual, or collective, takes in making sense of the ensuing chaos. Pohlhaus (2002) notes that through standpoint theory it is possible to reveal how

the social position of the knower is epistemically significant; where the knower is socially positioned will both make possible and delimit knowledge. [O]bjective knowledge is not a product of mere observation or a disinterested perspective on the world, but is achieved through struggling to understand one’s experience through a critical stand on the social order within which knowledge is produced. (p. 285)

Indigenist Standpoint Theory (IST) underpins the approaches employed in the research context to assist in the deconstruction of social formations of colonial understandings that continue to shape knowledge production (Rigney, 2001).

In this subject, IST was used to design pedagogical tools for establishing a lens for non-Indigenous peoples to reflect more deeply on their place in Australia. Indigenist approaches allow two fundamental principles to be enacted through pedagogy that involves:

- The centring of Indigenous peoples' knowledge and experiences as the focal point for all investigations into Indigenous cultures and history, and
- Most importantly, the creation of a space for the acknowledgement and action of this focus on investigations into non-Indigenous Australian knowledge production.

Consequently, the expression of strong, unwavering Indigenous standpoints around non-Indigenous colonial epistemologies, past and present, forces a disruption that those comforted by the status quo rarely get to experience due to the silencing of Indigenous voices. Students in a critical Indigenous studies classroom, given opportunities to express and deconstruct their standpoints, are exposed to knowledge that exists beyond existing frameworks. Widening the lens applied to 'knowing' non-Indigenous self in relation enables students to explore how individual standpoints are impacted on by collective culture making processes. By extension, the influence of standpoint on ways of seeing and knowing Indigenous peoples can also be deconstructed. In the Western domain, there is a separation of Australian history into black/white. As a result, Indigenous peoples' experiences are disconnected from the experiences of non-Indigenous peoples in Australia (2.1). In the context of IST (and this research) our 'stories' are positioned as being intertwined and ensuing from one history.

Through IST, students are guided to consider issues that are usually trapped in the status quo by the very people and perspectives that are marginalised by this entrapment. On the basis of this starting point students are compelled to unpack and re-frame their constructions of knowledge about Indigenous peoples through focussing on *their* standpoints and understandings about cultures generally, and to consider how these constructions apply to them personally. The complexities of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, in particular the relational foundations provided by Errol West (2000) and Mary Graham (1999), allow for the examination of relationships between individuals and collectives in colonial spaces.

#### **4.2 NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AS COLONISED**

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and history in Australia have rarely existed in separate spaces. Just as 'Aboriginality' arises out of a history of multiple inter-subjective exchanges with dominating others, so too has

‘non-Aboriginality’ emerged on the basis of interrelations with Indigenous peoples. Moreton-Robinson (2003) explains that “the premise of colonization that Australia *belonged to no one* informed the relationship between Indigenous people and the nation state from its very inception and continues to do so” (p. 30). In contemporary times, knowledge perspectives on Aboriginality and non-Aboriginality emerge through a process where understandings are “remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, imagination, representation and interpretation” (Langton, 1993, p. 119). This not only refers to direct exchanges between people but most importantly to the knowledge relationships that thrive due to the absence of authentic Indigenous input into the collective cultural and knowledge frameworks of Australia. Many writers maintain that echoes of *terra nullius* are sustained by constructions of Indigenous peoples through narratives of loss, impoverishment, culture-as-exotica and culture-as-deficit (Attwood, 2001; Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008; Nakata, 2007; Russell, 2001). In this, there is a silencing of Indigenous knowledge perspectives through these constructed illusions of Indigenous contemporary cultural identities.

There are many significant texts devoted to the important analysis of the influence of colonisation on Indigenous peoples in Australia in terms of health, disrupted economies and ongoing psychological effects (Atkinson, 2002; Kerwin, 2010; Ranzijn, McConnochie & Nolan, 2009; Trudgen, 2000). For Indigenous peoples, stories of colonisation are littered with reference to massacres, dispossession, disempowerment and helplessness in the face of these systems (see Elder, 2003; Evans, Saunders & Cronin, 1975). The most powerful indicators of how colonisation has influenced non-Indigenous Australians can be found in the things that Australia celebrates on national days. The stories that are retold around Australia Day and in commemorative events to celebrate the ‘birth of a nation’ reify myths that this continent had “no history before 1788” (Castles, Cope, Kalantzis & Morrissey, 1988, p. 56). This myth is central to the reproduction of ideas about Australian culture and identity, especially when culture is positioned, not as a distinct ‘way of life’, but rather a regulatory system for “personal self-management, political affiliation, and national identity” (McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood & Park, 2003, p. 452). The social reproduction of ‘being Australian’ on the strength of this myth is achieved by a process, as argued by Elder (2007), which consists of

decades of storytelling, myth-making, news reporting, academic pontificating, cinema production and watching become a recognisable shorthand way of expressing a certain conglomerate of desirable characteristics that are seen as unique to Australians. (p. 3)

Individual Australians therefore are not firmly attached to colonisation through memories of abstract historical events that are firmly set in the past. Individual connections in the present are marked by private discourses that hinge on complex, day to day discursive events that justify colonial history. This justification occurs through keeping certain knowledge perspectives out, continually calibrating the value of colonisation (Elder, 2009) through defence, resistance, and a form of national image control. Stories are passed down through generations about the heroic gestures of Australians in wars and battles on the frontier taming a hostile land, and suturing over the forced domestication of Indigenous Australians (Reynolds, 2001). Symbols also hold power in the present to re-assert ideas about the comforting power relation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This process of “culture making” (Meyer, 2006) guides individuals in their quest to make sense of the world and their relationships to others within these spaces. Colonial narratives serve to mediate knowledge that is about “self as much as the other [and] knowledge about self in the other” (Magowan, 2001, p. 47).

All of the systems involved in socialising constructions of ‘being Australian’ reinforce and publicly affirm what counts as valid knowledge. As Bernstein (1975) notes, “How a society selects, distributes, transmits and evaluates the education knowledge it considers public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control” (p. 85). In classrooms, this role is performed by the institutions of schooling, the teacher and pedagogy that teachers develop to redistribute this previously validated knowledge. Decolonising in the classroom must therefore actively focus on how knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has been validated by colonialism.

### **4.3 DECOLONISATION**

In this section I consider how the unsettling of knowledge frameworks in Indigenous studies must, as a matter of priority, attend to dismantling the systems which perpetuate colonial constructions of Indigenous peoples *and* non-Indigenous peoples. I draw on West’s (2000) teaching and research paradigm to conceptualise how

repositioning Indigenous peoples from objects and non-Indigenous peoples from invisible subjects can effect such changes. I argue that decolonisation grounded by the principles of the Japanangka paradigm through Indigenist standpoint is crucial to minimising the disempowerment of Indigenous knowledge perspectives under dominating epistemological conditions. The merging of these complementary theories enables this study to reveal how non-Indigenous subject positions are expressed individually, but aligned systemically with collective ideas that empower and authorise individual standpoints.

To decolonise the minds of non-Indigenous Australians necessitates the disruption of what Behrendt (2003) calls “*terra nullius* psychology” (p. 20). *Terra nullius* thinking establishes a privileged place wherein non-Indigenous peoples are able to form attachments to their stories from the past without being troubled by the presence or experiences of Indigenous peoples over history or in the present. Learning spaces which seek to reinsert Indigenous belonging into the minds and social understandings of non-Indigenous peoples disrupt incrementally and exponentially. Decolonisation informed by the principles of the Japanangka paradigm assists to disrupt neo-colonialism in academic communities, including Indigenous studies classrooms. Nakata’s (2007) cultural interface theory (3.2.1) explains that the compromise and negotiation required by Indigenous peoples is due to the systemic control and power that is held by Western epistemologies (2.2). Furthermore, as Smith (1999) notes, it is vital to recognise that in describing our ‘dilemmas’ in spaces that promote our assimilation and disappearance we need to be clear about how these spaces operate on and through us. Therefore, students in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are guided to learn about and understand the impact of these systems of knowledge control and construction on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenist Standpoint Theory (IST) provides a framework for such investigations and the attendant discoveries of the conditions under which Indigenous peoples are known in Western spaces (2.3.2).

These analytical foci though need to be set in relation to each other, and most importantly acknowledge the capacity of Indigenous knowledge systems for explaining the conditions of neo-colonialism to non-Indigenous peoples. This is not possible if Indigenous peoples are uni-linearly constructed as disempowered, which

is a central idea underpinning all theories which seek to explain dominance in absence of a respect for the power of Indigenous peoples inside colonial systems.

#### **4.4 INDIGENIST RESEARCH DESIGN**

My qualitative enquiry seeks to employ a decolonising Indigenist research framework informed by anti-colonial theory to create a critical Indigenist case study. In Chapter 2, the significance of the concept of relationship was highlighted as a central feature of Indigenous epistemologies: relationship between people; relationship between people and place, and relationship between place and knowledge (Castellano, 2000; Graham, 1999; Smith, 1999). In the research site this complex concept of *relationship* is framed as central rather than as phenomena peripheral to data collection, analysis and interpretation. This is contravened by the absence of the concept of relationship in knowledge produced within Western contexts (Dei, 1994; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Therefore to counteract the naturalisation of particular beliefs within Western educational spaces that marginalise Indigenous knowledges, Rigney (2001) urges Indigenous people to create “theoretically sophisticated and robust” Indigenist frameworks that do not reproduce this “hegemonic motivation” (p. 9). The use of alternative research methodologies was therefore necessary to mitigate the hegemonic forces impacting on the research. Thus the research design for this thesis explicitly acknowledges the dangers inherent to intercultural research in colonial contexts by framing the methodology through two distinct yet overlapping approaches: Indigenist research methodologies and decolonising methodologies.

The persistence of colonialism makes the question of whether to “employ Western research methods in the processes of defining indigenous methodologies” a moot one, because the negotiation of these forces requires that we “converse in the grammar of the empire as well as develop skills to contest it” (Grande, 2008, p. 234). Additionally, there are complexities arising from Indigenous peoples’ assertion of our scholarship in the academy that Dei (2008) argues gives rise to unintended or unavoidable lapses into “the form, logic and implicit assumptions of the very things we are contesting” (p. 12). Anti-colonial approaches create a transparency around how colonial discourses (re)construct Indigenous knowledge perspectives, creating space for resistance against this encroachment (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006; Wane, 2008). Decolonising approaches invite a critical awareness of the colonising effects

of Western research on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). Indigenist methodology prioritises the place of Indigenous peoples before, during and after colonisation.

The development of a decolonising Indigenist research design was crucial for several reasons. First, Indigenous people continue to be subject to the controlling and patrolling forces that shape an expectation of our absence from the landscape, or alternatively if we are named, a presumption of our acquiescence to colonial rule. As an Aboriginal researcher I sought a research design that corresponded more readily with my worldviews and experiences as an academic in Western institutions. Second, colonial research on Indigenous peoples most frequently casts Indigenous peoples as “victims, needy, helpless ... effectively disempowering and silencing our voices” (Matua & Swadener, 2004, p. 13-14). The recognition of the colonising tendency of Western research methods allows me to speak from, and into a space that does not recast the voices of Indigenous peoples as fundamentally disempowered. Third, decolonising Indigenist approaches allow for consistency between the pedagogy employed in the research site and the investigation being undertaken.

The methodological work of Indigenous scholars in Australia and internationally was particularly influential in the research design to ensure that the colonising effects of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations were made transparent. International Indigenous perspectives are used to exemplify the strength and commonalities between Indigenous responses to colonial intrusions and not to establish a form of international pan-Aboriginality. In the following section I justify these approaches and explain their significance to the research design.

#### **4.4.1 INDIGENIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES/JAPANANGKA PARADIGM**

Through his Indigenist research framework, Rigney (1997) sees that Indigenous peoples’ goals in research are to carry out an “Indigenous methodological revolution” (p. 18) and provide alternatives to methodologies currently available to the conduct of research implicating Indigenous peoples. The Indigenist approaches that Rigney advocates therefore focus on the “lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations and struggles of Indigenous Australians” (p. 18). This “revolution” must ideally interrupt and disrupt the existing bodies of knowledge and methods. Rigney suggests that this multidimensional focus on Indigenous concerns offers “counter narratives” (p. 9) fundamental to achieving

these shifts. The use of counter narratives implies that for Indigenous peoples the struggle goes well beyond a straightforward (re)production of knowledge about ‘us’ in the larger enterprise of achieving self-determination in research domains. Indigenist theory was developed to counteract the impact of research on Indigenous communities and therefore does not fully apply to this context. However, this research is still focussed on liberation for Indigenous peoples and researching non-Indigenous peoples makes a contribution to this. Research design that includes analysis and critique of prevailing epistemologies in higher education (Rigney, 1997) makes space for the achievement of Indigenous community defined and controlled aspirations aimed at liberation.

The damage of Western research on Indigenous communities where Indigenous peoples are the subjects has been well documented (Fredericks, 2008; Martin, 2008; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 1999). Most Indigenous centred research paradigms have been developed in response to these excessive research interventions into the lives and communities of Indigenous peoples. Historically, these approaches have naturalised a research relationship in which Indigenous peoples are usually situated as the subjects of distanced Western enquiry, reinforcing our marginalisation (Blanchard, McKnight, Lui-Chivizhe, Wray, French, et al., 2000). As a result, research between culturally different groups is usually labelled as ‘cross-cultural’. Cross-cultural researchers are often urged to be mindful of their lack of knowledge regarding those who are culturally different. However, this is usually premised on assumptions of researcher cultural privilege and limited experience with cultural outsiders. When Indigenous peoples research non-Indigenous peoples the additional question of how colonial power relations frame the assumed position of the researcher in relation to his/her participants is more complex.

Subjectivity, or inter-subjectivity, is central to cross-cultural research because it asks questions about the world that cannot be resolved through the application of scientific formulae or models (Ivanitz, 1999). Although Indigenous peoples are beginning to take on roles as scientific investigators instead of the objects of research (Morgan, 2003), Western discourse continues to reconceptualise Indigenous knowledge while validating what knowledge counts as ‘real’ (Nakata, 2007; Morgan, 2003). Typically, research approaches designed to subvert this tendency still characterise Indigenous peoples as powerless with Indigenous peoples rarely seen as

researchers in Western approaches designed to counteract this power relation (Moreton-Robinson, 2003b). Given the damaging impact of colonial research on the lives of Indigenous peoples and subsequent ideas that circulate in Western knowledge contexts, it is not surprising that as an Aboriginal person I feel a discomfort in deploying those tools which continue to be used to exploit us. In speaking about this effect on the validation of knowledge as well as the affect of such systems on Indigenous researchers, Fredericks (2008) says:

My survival within the higher education system and the research academy depends on my knowing how the Western academy is structured and operates. That is, I need to know who the relevant scholars are, who controls the processes within the research academy, and ways of ‘doing business’ ... What I do not think is understood by the research academy is that my survival as an Aboriginal woman in the Aboriginal community, in broader society, and within higher education, also relies on my continuing to develop as an Aboriginal woman. (p. 115)

As Frederick indicates, our priorities as Indigenous people in the academy have additional dimensions to that which may be experienced by non-Indigenous researchers. Foremost amongst these are the ultimate responsibilities we hold to our communities – however these may be defined – and includes our cultural survival. Research processes that reflect our concerns and aspirations and that lead to action within or for our communities is crucial (Fredericks, 2008; Weber-Pillwax, 2001) are crucial because they respond to our requirements as Indigenous peoples in addition to our needs as researchers.

From her perspective as a native Hawaiian researcher, Meyer (2008) adds that because our early spaces influence the topic we choose, the questions we ask and the data we collect and analyse, Indigenous researchers must exercise “meta-consciousness” (p. 222) in relation to the way we are positioned inside and by neo-colonial contexts. This notion is an important precept for the design of this study especially as the divergent understandings of collective Australian spaces – historical, contemporary, educational, social, institutional, and personal - have shaped certain ways of perceiving knowledge which privilege Western constructs. However, Western concepts and discourses are simply steps along the way in our analysis because “as Indigenous scholars, we want to end up and stay in synthesis”

(Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 169). Therefore my identity as an Aboriginal woman is relevant not just in terms of how others in the research relationship might perceive and respond to me, but also to what I bring to bear on the process. This leads to the significance of Indigenous methodologies in generating a focus on what Wilson (2001) calls “relational accountability” which enables the navigation of these complex questions:

As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability ... Instead you are fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity and reliability, you are asking, “Am I fulfilling my role in this relationship?” That axiology or morals needs to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfil my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

Therefore Indigenous research methodologies are centred on what Weber-Pillwax (2001) describes as the active engagement of “participants in research processes that create new knowledge and transform who they are and where they are” (p. 174). Indigenous methodologies reject the use of “positivistic, reductionist, and objectivist” rationales that for most of the time serve a colonialist agenda (Evans, Hole, Berg, Hutchinson & Sookraj, 2009, p. 894). The frameworks offered by Indigenous scholars foreground Indigenous knowledges and acknowledge its capacity to not only aid the survival of Indigenous peoples, but to also provide the tools to contest colonialism. In particular, Indigenous/Indigenist approaches emphasise that resolutions to the dilemmas of colonialist discourse lie in foregrounding Indigenous concerns in research for and by Indigenous peoples (Martin, 2003; Rigney, 1997; Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). The Indigenist research framework by Martin (2003, p. 205), based on that developed by Rigney, identifies the following as core principles:

- Recognition of our (Indigenous) worldviews, our knowledges and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival, must underpin the research framework;

- Honouring Aboriginal social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
- Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
- Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands;
- Identifying and redressing issues of importance for us.

To date much attention is still focussed on research conducted on Indigenous people rather than *by* Indigenous people. While Indigenist methodology serves to empower the voice of Indigenous peoples in research conducted in and for our communities, it also assumes that the primary subjects of Indigenist research are Indigenous Australians (Rigney, 1997, p. 118). This being the case, how specifically are Indigenous/Indigenist methodologies framed and used in the conduct of this study where the Indigenous researcher is investigating non-Indigenous peoples?

Most Indigenous peoples live in the Australian community. This may seem like a trite statement but the long-term relationships we have developed with non-Indigenous peoples and systems bring with them knowledge about managing, interacting and surviving these systems. We associate with non-Indigenous people on a daily basis. We move through school systems, read media, have discussions with our non-Indigenous friends and colleagues. In all these spaces we hear how public and private stories circulate to reinforce a sense of national community which, for the most part, excludes our perspectives and our diverse experiences. These experiences over history have enabled Indigenous peoples to “instantly analyse the implications of language, deeds and the spirituality of any given situation and to truly ‘hear’ the many agendas of ... antagonists to Aboriginal advancement” (West, 2000, p. 113). On this philosophical basis, a range of dimensions have been identified by Errol West in his formulation of the teaching and research model which he deems as essential to comprehensive research activity with and by Indigenous peoples (4.1). To recall, these dimensions are classified into multiple, interconnected spatial spheres: “cultural, spiritual, secular, intellectual, political, practical, personal and public” (p. 106). The timeframes employed by Indigenous people are also delineated

as working across many temporal dimensions: “the distant past, the immediate past, the present, and the immediate and distant future” (p. 107).

West (2000) provides a solid foundation for considering the myriad holistic approaches possible within Indigenist methodologies because it takes as given the strength and vitality of Indigenous communities in contradiction to popular assumptions of our victim-status. The model developed by West (2000) also supplements Indigenist methodological approaches as it comprehends Indigenous experiences within our communities *and* in trans-generational relation with non-Indigenous communities. Consequently, it is possible for Indigenous researchers to counteract the assumptions embedded in Western research paradigms which ignore the experience that Indigenous peoples have in negotiating Western structures at personal, social, political and institutional levels. Researchers, Indigenous or non-Indigenous are encouraged to see inter-relatedness in terms of discursive systems which are sometimes measurable and which at other times may not be (West, 2000). Indigenist research methodologies and the Japanangka paradigm are therefore complementary and particularly important for Indigenous researchers of non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenist research is emancipatory, politically honourable and privileges the voices of Indigenous Australians (Rigney, 1997). Through the Japanangka paradigm, research action for and by Indigenous peoples is compelled through the connection of “non-white methodologies and frames of reference” (West, 2000, p. 113) to expand the Western research space, as opposed to grafting Indigenous approaches onto what already exists.

The above discussion has described how Western spaces condition Indigenous research. It also provided an overview of the main tenets of Indigenist methodologies to authorise and foreground Indigenous knowledges, experiences and perspectives in research designed to benefit Indigenous peoples and communities. The colonial compulsion to narrow the complexities of Indigenous knowledges into easily identifiable and manageable components is subverted by the authority that the Japanangka paradigm enforces. Japanangka situates Indigenous knowledge perspectives as significant to Indigenous peoples’ lives independently, *and* in relation to Western contexts. The merging of Indigenist and Japanangka paradigms enables the circumvention of existing power relations impacting on research of Indigenous peoples and communities by giving primacy to, and authorising Indigenous voices in

research. However these methodological approaches are focussed on Indigenous voice and do not fully account for deconstructing the effects of Western research spaces from the perspective of that space. The use of the decolonising methodologies is thus positioned as a means of breaking apart those spaces which are identified within Indigenist research frameworks as being barriers to the achievement of its principles. The following section (5.1.2) discusses the advantages of aligning Indigenist approaches, informed by Japanangka philosophies, with decolonising frameworks.

#### **4.4.2 DECOLONISING APPROACHES AND INDIGENIST/JAPANANGKA PARADIGM**

Indigenist methodologies in concert with the principles espoused within Japanangka (West, 2000) readily acknowledge the authority of Indigenous peoples and the complex ways of knowing that facilitate the cultural survival of Indigenous peoples. Notwithstanding the severity of socio-economic disadvantage across many communities in Australia, Indigenous peoples are also positioned as having access to systems of knowing that enable a thorough critique of neo-colonialism and its impact on our day-to-day worlds. In this section I discuss how decolonising methodologies support Indigenist approaches by deconstructing the spaces that delimit the ways in which Indigenous knowledge sovereignty can be integrated within Western research frameworks.

The engagement of Western epistemology to ground teaching and research by Indigenous peoples has been described by many Indigenous scholars as perpetuating a form of ‘colonial violence’ (Grande, 2008; Rigney, 2007; Smith, 1999; Walker, 2003). An assumption inherent in Western research is that adequate explanations can be given for phenomena experienced from one worldview through another (Smith, 1999). The expectation of Indigenous peoples to speak within these colonial frameworks without interrogating those frameworks is referred to by Duran and Duran (in Walker, 2003) as the “essence of psychological and philosophical imperialism” (p. 37). These frameworks have also been positioned as “machinery” which consolidates colonial privilege (Memmi, 2000, p. 38). As this apparatus does not cease to function because an Indigenous person is ‘allowed’ voice inside these neo-colonial contexts it is important to ensure that dominant research orientations are “deprivileged” (Adair, 2008, p. 189).

This de-privileging of neo-colonial spaces occurs through moving beyond the formulation of ‘Indigenous perspectives on research’ toward establishing a research model fully grounded by Indigenous epistemologies and ontology (Martin, 2003; Wilson, 2001, p. 175). One step in this process is to privilege the social, political, cultural and historical standpoints of Indigenous peoples, which Indigenist approaches enable. However, the destructive historical colonial project against Indigenous peoples is ongoing and is reshaped to take new forms in the present (Smith, 1999). How then do we consider the involvement of Indigenous scholars in pursuits, like research, which perpetuate the colonial project? On one hand Indigenous involvement could signify submission, or on the other, highlight the need for Indigenous scholars to play a central role in the decolonisation of those systems to reclaim sovereign intellectual space (Grande, 2008). While Indigenous peoples are skilled in Western discourses as a necessity for facilitating negotiation, there are differences between this and prioritising Indigenous knowledge authority in research in spaces which continue to engage in the destructive project that Smith (1999) describes. Grande (2008) wonders whether it is possible for Indigenous peoples participating in Western settings “to engage the grammar of the empire without replicating its effects” (p. 234). To negotiate this, Indigenous scholars need to move between the adoption of Western theory and the maintenance of community centred approaches, a practice which Warrior (1995) refers to as the “death dance of independence” (p.108).

Decolonisation then requires Indigenous peoples to occupy a dynamic space where threats and possibilities are managed by knowledge of culture and identity outside the Western space, and inside it. Consequently, as Matua and Swadener (2004) suggest, there needs to be a recognition of the

colonizing tendency of the act of research itself ... particularly when it is carried out in contexts in which the individuals have been stripped of their power for self-definition and self-expression by being cast in the role of the marginalized Other. (p. 12)

The transformation of Western views of Indigenous peoples’ histories and contemporary experiences requires the examination of that history “site by site” with a “theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history” (Smith, 1999, p. 34). This engagement is required of non-Indigenous

peoples and decolonising methodologies provide for this. How does one achieve this without setting up dualistic frameworks which position Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on either side of a colonial abyss which marks one side as disempowered and the other as privileged?

There are two related strands of critique to this question that Smith (1999) suggests as an impact on the design of decolonisation methodology. This critique considers the reductionist qualities that influence the positions from which decolonisation strategies extend. Smith contends that

one [strand] draws upon the notion of authenticity, of a time before colonialism in which we were intact as indigenous peoples. We had absolute authority over our lives; we were born into and lived in a universe of our own making ... The second strand of the language of critique demands that we have an analysis of how we were colonized, of what that has meant in terms of our immediate past and what it means for our present and future. The two strands intersect but what is particularly significant is that solutions are posed from a combination of the times before, *colonized time*, and the time before that, *pre-colonized time*. (pp. 23-24)

Knowing who you are in relation to another person and in *relation to place* is one of cornerstones of Indigenous cultural practices (Castellano, 2000; Graham, 1999). Authenticity of Indigenous knowledges in the first critical strand is attributed to this time before invasion where Indigenous peoples held sovereignty not just in economic terms, but over the territories which gave life to all systems.

The second strand also speaks of an all-encompassing epistemological base, except in this sense it refers to the knowledge Indigenous peoples hold in relation to place and people because of our experiences of colonisation. Solutions that are decolonising therefore must be informed by the combination of “colonized [and] pre-colonized time” (Smith, 1999, p. 24). These ideas correspond with Indigenist demands to privilege the experiences of Indigenous peoples as most central to our worldviews, with the added dimension of privileging Indigenous peoples’ knowledge of colonisation inside decolonising spheres. Thus, decolonisation cannot occur without the centralisation of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. This echoes the Japanangka (West, 2000) philosophy which affirms that the skills for analysing

our colonial experience inside colonising spaces already exist within Indigenous contexts. Veracini (2007) cautions that:

Imagining the decolonisation of settler colonial forms can be challenging. If settler colonialism is an ambivalent circumstance where the settler is colonised and colonising at once, decolonisation requires at least two moments: the moment of settler independence and the moment of Indigenous self-determination. (e-journal, online)

Therefore, non-Indigenous peoples must also play a central role because they have been privileged in place and relation to peoples on the basis of colonisation. However significant Indigenous peoples are to the goals of decolonisation, all peoples and places are implicated.

### **Summary**

In this Chapter I have provided an overview of the significance of Indigenist methodology (Rigney, 1997) and the philosophy of Japanangka (West, 2000) to decolonising research conducted for Indigenous peoples. The critical goals of these approaches implicate Western systems of research, as well as non-Indigenous peoples inside these contexts. This investigation of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers in compulsory Indigenous studies is grounded by these methodological considerations and resonates with the conditions of the learning environment. These issues are also important to ensuring that the research approach does not replicate colonising privilege by mitigating the freedoms of Indigenous peoples to regulate and guard against Western methods, which may limit and reconstruct knowledge produced under such circumstances. In Chapter 5, I discuss how these ideas have been fused with Western methods to ensure these systems to do not continue the ‘colonising project’ (Smith, 1999).

## Chapter 5: Research Design

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This qualitative study seeks to examine the ways that first year non-Indigenous pre-service teacher education students explain, analyse and interpret knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject (*Cultures and Indigenous Education*). It investigates how pre-service teachers position themselves in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives on non-Indigenous neo-colonial discourses and examines how they articulate their shifting viewpoints as they progress through the program. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do pre-service teacher education students respond to Indigenous studies curriculum which authorises Indigenous knowledge perspectives of Australia's colonial history and contemporary cultural frameworks?
2. What discourses are used by non-Indigenous students to manage, interpret and resist Indigenous knowledges perspectives when they actively engage and personalise their standpoint in relation to this authorisation?
3. What do non-Indigenous students identify as pivotal to their recognition and acknowledgement of their standpoints and how do they articulate and manage these shifts in recognition?

I am primarily concerned with non-Indigenous pre-service teachers' understandings about their social, cultural and professional standpoints and how these are affected by Indigenist knowledge perspectives in compulsory Indigenous studies. Chapter 2 discussed how Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP) was conceptualised in the development of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (2.3.2). Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy creates an unfamiliar context for non-Indigenous students in Indigenous studies through challenging traditional approaches that position Indigenous people as the objects of enquiry. In the context of ISP, resistance is not construed as a problem to be resolved. The engagement of non-Indigenous students as subjects of enquiries in Indigenous studies provides opportunities for mobilising resistance as a tool to expand opportunities for learning.

This chapter discusses the methodology, research design, case study, methods, data collection and analysis. I also discuss the limitations of the research given the conflicts and tensions arising within the study site itself. Included is a reflexive analysis of the implications of my interconnecting roles as curriculum writer, teacher, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* unit co-ordinator and researcher. The tensions of any project set within contexts and structures dominated by colonial values and beliefs is also highlighted for the purposes of clarifying the reasons for, and benefits of the research design used.

## 5.1 INDIGENIST METHODS

The value of critical Indigenist approaches to research conducted by Indigenous peoples with a view to decolonisation as discussed in Section 4.4 demonstrates the importance of adopting a critical position in relation to the neo-colonial intents of Western research methodologies. I have suggested that Indigenous peoples' participation in Western academic domains has three broad aims:

- To interrupt dominance by positioning Indigenous knowledge as authority in research for Indigenous peoples, whether this research is conducted with Indigenous or non-Indigenous peoples;
- To disrupt Western systems by actively engaging the knowledges Indigenous peoples have accrued about dominance from long-term engagements with colonial systems across generations, and
- To transform relationships which rely on assumptions of Indigenous disempowerment by applying decolonising strategies to reform ideas about how these spaces operate on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In this section I explain how these methodological considerations have been regarded in the selection of a critical Indigenist case study approach and critical discourse analysis (CDA) and provide an overview of the fusion of these approaches.

Following this, I detail the research site and explain research timelines, data collection techniques, ethics and limitations, and provide a reflexive analysis of my position inside and outside the context of this research.

The key components of the conceptual framework described in Chapter 4 that govern the study, research context and methodological approach are:

- Relationship;
- Knowledge privilege of Indigenous peoples in relation to colonisation;
- Historical privilege of Western epistemologies in creating the conditions for interactions in social, cultural, knowledge and systemic spaces;
- Pedagogy that is designed to disrupt these spaces and re-authorise Indigenous knowledge perspectives must firstly deal with existing belief structures that motivate the individual inside collective historical and cultural frameworks;
- Dominance is played out in mundane ways and is a day to day experience that is only invisible to those privileged by it.

### 5.1.1 CRITICAL INDIGENIST CASE STUDY

The criteria for the selection of a case for study hinges on the assessment of whether the conditions exhibited by the case allow for revelations to be made with regard to theory (Yin, 2003a). The identification of critical cases is difficult to determine as no universal methodological principles currently exist (Flyvberg, 2004). Even so, the strategies which Flyvberg (2004) suggests as useful in determining the critical nature of a case is to assess whether it will “achieve information that permits logical deductions of the type, ‘if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) other cases’” (p. 426). Some authors also see case study as a way to “learn something” rather than to “prove a theory” (Eysenck, 1976; Flyvberg, 2004). Case study is a useful method for advancing understanding and theory about a topic emerging from locations that the researcher either is familiar with, or has easy access to (Yin, 2003b).

The case for this study was selected particularly to learn ‘something new’ about how non-Indigenous students respond to the authorisation of Indigenist perspectives on knowledge central to their worldviews. The conditions for extracting these revelations, particularly in relation to non-Indigenous resistance to Indigenous knowledge sovereignty were established within the case site. In applying Flyvberg’s (2004) ideas to this case, I propose that: if the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in Indigenous studies causes disruption and transformation then it could apply to other Indigenous studies programs that exploit the inter-subjective relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as a pedagogical point of departure.

This study draws on the principles of case study (Yin, 2004) to create a critical Indigenist case study which applies the principles of Indigenist and decolonising methodologies and uses this as a foundation for Critical Discourse Analysis (5.1.2).

Case study is a qualitative research approach conducted within a “bounded integrated system” (Glesne, 2006, p. 13). Case study was seen as appropriate due to the possibilities presented for data collection from multiple sources (Glesne, 2006). Although findings within the case may be applicable across similar cases that weren’t studied, it is assumed that no generalisations will be made more broadly beyond the case under study (Creswell, 1998). As case study research is the study of a specific phenomenon, it is important to clearly define the boundaries for the investigation (Creswell, 2003). These boundaries refer to matters of times, space and qualities of the case itself (Creswell, 1994; Ragin, 2004). The boundaries of this critical Indigenist case study are clearly defined by the following factors:

### **Logistical**

- *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a one semester subject with specific start and end-dates;
- Participants are students enrolled in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* as a compulsory subject in the Bachelor of Education degree and are therefore required to attend classes;
- Data can be collected from within the case site without the need for additional commitments by the participants;
- Given the large number of students enrolled in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, participant anonymity is further protected.

### **Activity inside the case**

- The curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* provides the conditions necessary for investigating the research problem however the case does not aim to critically evaluate the subject;
- *Cultures and Indigenous Education* uses Indigenist pedagogical approaches which align with the methodology of this study;
- *Cultures and Indigenous Education* course materials provide multiple opportunities for data collection from a variety of sources; including

interviews, journal reflections and class evaluations by students and teachers.

The main advantages of using a critical Indigenist case study are that it allows participants to provide their own interpretations of events, providing substantive qualitative data about deeply personal issues in complex ways (Marelli, 2007). The conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 4 has shown how complex and contested the field is. Therefore such an approach is useful for regarding the multiple dimensions emerging at the intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge relationships. The disadvantages that may come from the ultimate reliance on the philosophical and value judgements of the researcher in data collection and analysis (Marelli, 2007) can be mitigated by stringent ethical procedures (see 5.3) and the flexibility of a critical Indigenist case study approach. The view that case study is “unscientific” and therefore inclined to subjective bias has been refuted by case study proponents. In particular, Flyvberg (2004) argues that this tendency toward bias or “verification” is a human condition and case studies are very beneficial to “[closing] in on real-life situations [to] test views directly in relation to a phenomena as they unfold in practice” (p. 428). Case study informed by Indigenous theory and methodology extends this benefit to provide opportunities for investigating effects ensuing from the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives given that they do not naturally present in Western spaces. Responses in the ‘natural’ setting – in this case the setting of the university classroom – contributed to eliciting the specific, and not so specific dynamics of the broader contextual inter-subjective relationships of the students, teaching staff and researcher.

### **5.1.2 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

As Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not aimed at the production of any specific theory and is diverse in its application, it can be used within and across a range of different methodological approaches (Wodak, 2004). In this section, I show how I draw on aspects of CDA to enhance the analytical focus made possible through Indigenist methodologies and Japanangka (West, 2000). In section 5.1.3, I discuss the fusion of CDA into Indigenist approaches. It is important to note that I foreground Indigenist methodology in this study with a view to subverting discourses by privileging Indigenous voices, experiences. As in CDA, discourse in this sense

does not refer to the material form of texts, particularly those which continue to disempower Indigenous peoples, but more importantly to the set of relationships between discursive events (Fairclough, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is based on a theoretical assumption that culture acts as a foundation for the establishment and maintenance of power relations (Jenner, 2002). Critical Discourse Analysis positions these relations within an historical, political and inter-textual framework, which suggests that language is both “constitutive” and “socially determined” (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000, p. 149). The analysis of discourses used by individuals within social and cultural domains can therefore be used to ascertain the foundations of conflict and power struggles experienced within these contexts (Titscher et al., 2002). Sparks (2002) argues that it is important to question the assumptions of universality which serve to mask difference as “all cultural voices are multisubjective, contingent, power-laden, incongruent, and offer political solutions to everyday negotiated realities”; and that these are derived from the particularities of our historical experiences (p. 116). The inheritance of ideas that reify the morality of colonial conquest has resulted in the marginalisation of knowledge of Indigenous sovereignty in public spheres. In this evolution of knowledge the dominance of the colonisers is now expressed in control over the validation of knowledge.

The disempowerment and silencing of Indigenous knowledge authority has been achieved in large part by hegemonic colonial research which casts Indigenous peoples into the role of ‘needy, helpless victims’ (Matua & Swadener, 2004). As Nakata (2004b) suggests, inquiries inside these spaces are challenging because in relations of unequal systemic power, as in the context of this study, there is a need to “engage in such a way that changes the relationship or the nature of the dialogue. In that process we cannot just be recognised as ‘different’ and accorded a space on that basis” (p. 2) because ideas about ‘difference’ continue to influence the nature and direction of research on, for and about Indigenous peoples. According to Furniss (2005):

[this] frontier myth conveys historical truths not so much through explicit, argumentative forms of discourse, but indirectly through narratives rich in symbolism and metaphor ... these ideas are offered in a form that disarms critical analysis by its appeal to the structures and traditions of storytelling

and the clichés of historical memory ... The symbol of the ‘pioneer’, the ‘empty wilderness’, and even ‘the frontier’ are classic examples of mythic icons. Their power, thus, lies in their ability to convey certain myths of history intuitively and indirectly in such a subtle manner that often lies beyond our critical awareness. (p. 30)

When grounded by Indigenist methodologies, CDA makes theoretical assumptions of Indigenous knowledge authority and sovereignty transparent. The inherited discourses of the frontier and the positioning of Indigenous difference inside these spaces in ways that militate against the validation of Indigenous knowledge authority are also made explicit. Cross-analysis of discursive artefacts such as texts and language therefore enables the clarification of how constructions of Indigenous difference become an exercise of privilege to establish the terms for engaging with this ‘difference’.

The dimensions beyond the dualistic framework of empowered/disempowered are endorsed by Indigenist frameworks that circumvent these reductive categorisations of Indigenous cultures/knowledges. The adoption of Indigenist methodologies and CDA permitted revelations about the discursive formations of text and social practices of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers within a decolonising pedagogy. The connections between private and public discourse are analysed through the motivation for students to externalise how they managed the ruptures and re-interpreted knowledges by exploring their standpoints through an Indigenist lens. The relationship between this management against collective pressures to conform to public knowledges or that confirms initial misapprehensions and expectations of Indigenous studies are also significant. There is a relationship drawn between the knowledge that research participants hold about Indigenous peoples’ difference and how this knowledge directs their actions in the world. This is referred to by Grande (2008) in terms of a relationship that distinguishes knowledge as a “nested idea that deepened information” and knowing that is developed through “direct experience” (p. 221). Subsequently, knowledge production in this sense becomes a “by-product of slow and deliberate dialogue with an idea, with others’ knowing, or with one’s own experiences with the world” (Grande, 2008, p. 221). Therefore, the need to engage in non-Indigenous research contexts “on its own terms” (Nakata, 2004b) is not a simple process of using Western methods to

conduct research, particularly that which is designed to disrupt the power relations maintained by those paradigms.

To show how CDA and Indigenous methodologies can work together to dismantle assumptions inherent to Western methods I explain CDA then show how Indigenous methodologies enhance its qualities to deal with the issues of most relevance to this study. Firstly, the specific principles of CDA as outlined by Wodak (2004, pp. 199-200) are:

- It is interdisciplinary;
- It is problem oriented; not focussed on linguistic terms but applied to the study of social problems;
- It allows for the integration of other theories and methods most appropriate for understanding and explaining the problem under investigation;
- It allows theory to emerge from data, rather than data being manipulated to fit existing theory;
- It requires a continual movement between theory and empirical evidence;
- It attacks the complexities of multiple space and shifting social notions about complex issues concerning ‘identity’, ‘time’ and ‘space’;
- It ensures that gaps between structure/context and linguistic interpretations are diminished by allowing the deployment of alternative theories;
- Is concerned with transformation and therefore applied with the aim of changing certain discursive and social practices.

According to Fairclough (1995), there are three dimensions to every discursive event which provides the analytical framework for the operationalisation of theory within CDA: “text, discursive practice and social practice” (p. 76). Text refers to the content of the event and discursive practice exposes the connections between text and social practice through analysis of participants’ interpretation of discourses within a social or cultural space (Titscher et al., 2000). Language in this sense is not just an analytical tool, but is also critical to determining the connections an individual may make between other elements of their social lives, specifically:

- How language figures within social relations of power and domination;

- How language works ideologically;
- The negotiation of personal and social identities, and
- Its fundamental commitment to progressive social change. (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001, p. 230)

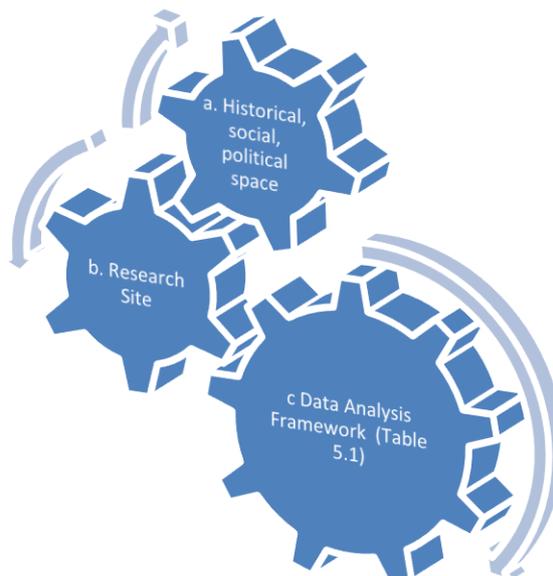
The context for this study concerns the history of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, popular contemporary social and political discourses which have evolved from and because of this history, and informants' situatedness in relation to these contexts. Critical Discourse Analysis is particularly useful given the concern of this study to examine how the shape and form of language use shifts when social and ideological changes are provoked within a critical Indigenous studies classroom. The re-positioning of participants in relation to particular discourses of power and domination occurs through the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. This authorisation disrupts social practices that compound dominating relations to Indigenous peoples and knowledges given that such practices rely in large part on the silencing of Indigenous narratives. In resonance with the relation Grande (2008) draws between "knowledge" and "knowing", CDA assists in revealing and accounting for the multiple ways that language – between and within – particular cultural communities, functions to maintain positions developed across history.

For Wodak (2002), there are important implications when discourse is described as a social practice, for this assumes a "dialectical relationship between particular discursive practices and the specific fields of action (including situations, institutional frames and social structures) in which they are embedded" (p. 500). The application of Indigenist/Japanangka theories allows for the exposure of these analytical dimensions by placing Indigenous knowledges and peoples in a subjective empowered relation, rather than as an object to be acted on inside Western frameworks. The foregrounding of Indigenist methodologies thus creates a necessary rupture in the idea that Western research methods have the capacity to privilege Indigenous voices. As a result, analysis is directed toward the relationship between historical ideas relating to Indigenous knowledge sovereignty and the critique of contemporary discursive practices that naturalise and decentre this sovereignty. Critical Discourse Analysis supports this through prompting analysis that will reveal how "situational, institutional and social settings shape and affect discourses [and

show] how discourses influence discursive [and] non-discursive social and political processes and actions” (Wodak, 2002, p. 500).

In the context of CDA, Indigenist/Japanangka theory would be conceived as a Grand Theory because it provides the “broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Wodak, 2002, p. 500). In concert with the goals of CDA to expose how the complexities of identity, time and space coalesce across multiple dimensions of a social problem, Indigenist methodologies target the specific complexities inherent to the problems stemming from Indigenous/non-Indigenous colonial relations through history to the present. These processes are demonstrated in Figure 5.1(a) to illustrate the effects of the broader fields of knowledge production that position Indigenous peoples to see both cause and effect of power relations buttressed by colonial and neo-colonial domination (West, 2000). This complex and multi-dimensional standpoint of Indigenous authority (Graham, 1999) in relation to knowledge perspectives on domination, interlocks with the nature of enquiry in the research site as positioned in Figure 5.1(b). In turn, these two elements of the research cycle (5.1a and 5.1b) provide a foundation for the types of data emerging from the case site, and subsequently data analysis is executed in consideration of the effects of the primary place given to Indigenous knowledge authority around the concepts under study, Figure 5.1(c).

Figure 5.1 Cycles of relation: Research site, research design and data



Indigenist approaches place the individual in a different relation to the collective sociality of contemporary and historical interpretation and meaning making. As this study investigates individual expressions of collective viewpoints, these particular forms of relationality are important. The fusion of approaches acknowledges that while the historical, social and political spaces operate to reinforce perceptions of Western dominance, Indigenous knowledge authority is reinforced by our residence inside *and* outside these complex fields. In contrast, strategies for non-Indigenous peoples to consider their relations to dominance are not embedded in Western systems of knowledge production (see 2.1.2 and 4.2). Although individual social experiences may allow non-Indigenous peoples to consider these ideas, self-reflexivity in relation to colonisation to reveal how individuals mobilise discourses of power needs to be created, Figure 5.1 (b), and then applied to analysis of the data, Figure 5.1 (c).

Furthermore, to disregard the complex, collective spaces through which supposedly individual ideas are formed contradicts principles foundational to Indigenous research paradigms. As Wilson (2001) notes:

One major difference between [Western] paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominance paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity ... An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational ... It goes beyond

the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge.  
(p.177)

As such, the individual is not positioned in this study as a disconnected conduit for the expression of ideas linked to a collective social problem, rather it issues from the theory that a given social problem can be revealed through investigating how the individual mobilises collective knowledges to reinforce notions of individuality. In short, individual knowledge is product and causative of collective knowledges. The analysis of non-Indigenous discourses in an Indigenist framed learning environment therefore allows for these distinctions to be revealed because the point of analytical departure is in terms of “relational knowledge” and not individual knowledge: How does the individual represent the collective; not how is the individual represented by the collective? The ways in which individual discourses are representative of participants’ perceptions of their relationship to Indigenous knowledge perspectives *and* non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives is thus critical. The gaps in CDA that are breached by Indigenist theory are therefore fundamental to the analysis of data and the subsequent emergence of theory about resistance, disruption and the value of ISP to decolonisation of non-Indigenous spaces of enquiry. In the next section, I provide an overview of the approach to data analysis in this study, which was achieved through synthesising Western approaches (CDA) with the philosophies of Japanangka within this Critical Indigenist case study.

### **5.1.3 DATA ANALYSIS IN A CRITICAL INDIGENIST CASE STUDY**

The assumption that culture sits in critical relation to the maintenance and expression of power and authority is an important factor weighing on the analysis of data in this study. Additionally, the flexibility of CDA in allowing for theory to emerge from the data in the context of how resistance, and thus power, is exercised in response to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives is integral to data analysis. In this section I provide an overview of how Indigenist approaches are capable of enclosing the methodological gaps in CDA to meet the goal of this study to explore the responses of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers in compulsory Indigenous studies. As previously discussed (5.1.1), the limitations of CDA in acknowledging alternative relations of power can thus be exposed through applying the lenses of Indigenist approaches.

It is important to note that my position as Aboriginal researcher in relation to the participants in the study is informed by factors that exist outside the case (see 5.1.6). These factors motivated the development of the curriculum in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* which applies Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy to engage students in a process of self-reflective and reflexive enquiry (2.3 and 3.2). These enquiries aim to provide students with opportunities to deconstruct their standpoints in relation to collective knowledge systems in order to examine the connections between individual locations and collectively reinforced relations of power (2.1 and 4.2). Preliminary analysis of the data was therefore undertaken by reading through the filter provided by Indigenist methodologies, Japanangka (West, 2000) and philosophies regarding Indigenous knowledge authority (4.1 and 4.4). Table 5.1 outlines the ways in which CDA and Indigenist approaches can be deployed to facilitate access to the meanings contained within the dimensions explained by Japanangka (Table 4.1).

As indicated in Table 5.1, the gaps in CDA – which are acknowledged by its flexibility to integrate other methodological approaches – enable the assumption of Indigenous intellectual privilege in relation to colonisation and decolonisation. This standpoint advantage was exercised when selecting and analysing data in the initial phases of the research to examine the discourses that students mobilised to reinforce social power, for example, those which exist due to the silencing of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Discourses which contradict Indigenous sovereignty (West, 2000) exist inside the status quo. Japanangka allows for the consideration of any shifts in these contradictions without changing the truth of the matter (West, 2000). This understanding was foundational to identifying the form of disruption experienced by students, when Indigenous knowledge perspectives were re-centred.

Table 5.1 Correspondence and enhancement - Japanangka/Indigenist Research and CDA

CDA	Japanangka/Indigenist Theoretical filter	Analytical Focus
Interdisciplinary and flexible to other methodological approaches	Cross-disciplinary and necessarily encompassing of colonial dominance	Assumes Indigenous intellectual privilege with regard to socio-historical relationships inside colonial history; Language of dominance motivated and secured by invisibility of Indigenous sovereignty;  Assumptions about privilege and dominance highlighted by Indigenist/Japanangka theory; Distinguishes between institutional, historical, social and culture privilege inside Western systems and forms beyond these systems.
Context shapes knowledge and knowledge can be re-shaped by new contexts.	“New knowledge and new information does not change the truth of the matter” (West, 2000, p. 42).	Participants sit in line with a pre-determined truth which gives primacy to “Indigenous reality” in research. Sovereignty of Indigenous peoples before invasion beyond question. Indigenous peoples’ experiences within personal & public domains: literal and symbolic, concrete and abstract provide analytical lens. Views of these experiences are timeless.
Seeks progressive social change	Social change occurs through contemporizing history	Participants’ language indicates distance from history. History focused as a lived experience for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the past, present and future. Shifts in particular social and cultural discursive practices must be aligned with the “everywhen” (Stanner, 1987, p. 225) of Aboriginal perceptions of time.
Continual movement between theory and empirical data	Replaces cultural specificity/humanity	Indigenous cultural knowledge has pre-existing relation to non-Indigenous knowledge, “does not isolate data relating to Indigenous cultures into a frame of useless knowledge, or as a curiosity” (West, 2000, p. 53).
Problem oriented	Recognition of difference does not indicate understanding. Holistic analysis.	Point of blocks of Western knowledge unclear without a research context that authorises Indigenous knowledge perspectives in colonial domains. New perceptions of the “social patterns” that exist prior to the application of “new or alternative views or ‘knowledge’” (West, 2000, p. 43) inform reflexive processes following its consideration.
Time, identity and space considered through multiple, shifting dimensions	Protection of researcher from damage of colonial dominance.	Indigenous worldviews are timeless, there exists space for regular shifts, new knowledge does not change the truth of the matter (West, 2000). Maintaining life essence within damaging spaces.
	Participants’ colonial positioning supported by Western paradigms.	Rights to knowledge are determined by a “network of inherited relationship rights of the individual” (West, 2000, p. 46); shifts in non-Indigenous peoples’ ‘rights to know’ occur when understandings about colonial relationships are transformed and earned.
Encourages use of alternative theories to bridge gaps between context, theory and research	Social practice	Cultures of Indigenous peoples constructed in the public domain by series of artifacts of cultural pluralism. Ideas around cultural pluralism limited by binary constructions placing Indigenous peoples as powerless is circumvented by the privileged positions from which Indigenous peoples develop knowledge perspectives on colonialism through social practice that recognise our places inside and outside dominating social practices.

The first Research Question focussed on students' initial expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and subsequent responses to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. In the first stage of data analysis it was particularly important to locate the direction of student interrogations – whether they relied on discourses *about* Indigenous peoples, or whether their focus was turned toward themselves. I was particularly interested in whether racialising and historicising practices (2.1.3) outside the classroom had established a framework that influenced student reactions, and therefore framed their initial resistance to the subject. Discourses which positioned Indigenous peoples as ‘objects’ to be consumed (exotica), assisted (culture-as-deficit paradigms) or feared (Aboriginality-as-politics) were considered significant, given the main discussions of the literature review (Chapter 2). A critical question to explore in this context was how do these discourses act to maintain the invisibility of Indigenous peoples and the invisibility of colonial privilege as exercised by non-Indigenous students? I looked for the positions that non-Indigenous peoples were able to take in relation to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. For example, whether students objectified Indigenous peoples; the attachments they had to particular discourses as demonstrated by the level of disruption experienced, and the persistence of resistance in maintaining the objectifications.

Second, examining connections between the discourses emerging from the original disruption were an important analytical focus for investigating student resistance to compulsory Indigenous studies. Research Question 2 sought to examine the influence of existing discourses in managing, interpreting and resisting the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, specifically when students were required to interrogate their own standpoints. To address this question, it was helpful to observe how the knowledge students hold about themselves and Indigenous peoples interact to simultaneously frame resistance to Indigenous knowledge perspectives, and reinforce the ‘social patterns’ that previously served to sustain the status quo (2.1.2). I looked for evidence of the relationships between students’ attachments to discourses of objectification of Indigenous peoples, and whether this assisted to mask the privileged knowledge perspectives. Through the data, I paid attention to the knowledge and understandings that students prioritised to sustain and justify resistance. For example, did resistance originate from a pre-existing position

or was resistance a reaction to existing patterns of understandings not being sanctioned? Resistance in this context was signified by students' apparent unwillingness to critique their own positions, thereby establishing a barrier to deeper interrogations of their relationships to knowledge about self and Indigenous peoples. As an extension of the data collected to respond to Research Question 1, I noted the positions that students took in relation to their resistance: were they speaking *about* Indigenous peoples, and was resistance compounded if they avoided self-interrogation. Finally, in investigating the second research question, I explored where there were contradictions in the logic students used to rationalise their resistance, and whether these contradictions were affected by students' emotional reactions, for example fear and insecurity.

Research Question 3 guided the data collection toward evidence of student shifts in resistance. In particular, I directed analysis to what students identified as pivotal to them acknowledging the power of their standpoints to reinforce and rationalise resistance. I observed any relationships between the direction of students' enquiries – into self or about Indigenous people. I sought evidence of a correlation between critical self-enquiry and students' ability to transform their resistance, how they managed new contradictions and the discourses they employed to articulate their shifts.

#### **5.1.4 PARTICIPANTS**

Participants in this project were students and teachers involved in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* over the course of one semester. Student participation in the research was voluntary and in the initial approaches the anonymity of prospective participants was maintained until they made contact with the researcher. In the first two weeks of the subject, teachers extended a general invitation to students in their tutorial groups to participate in the research. Students made direct contact with their teachers in the first instance, and were advised to make contact with me (the researcher) if they wished to be involved. The invitation process reduced the possibility of researcher assumptions about the informants skewing the data and permitted multifaceted and diverse positions of the participants to be expressed from their own perspectives. Teachers distributed an information sheet to potential participants that I had provided (Appendix D). Students then privately approached their tutors to express an interest and were invited to make contact with me by email

if they wished to be part of the study. Direct contact between the participant and the researcher was possible from this point only after the students volunteered their details and formal agreement was then secured. I was not advised of which students declined to be involved. Each participant was provided with a consent form which outlined the ethical procedures designed to protect their anonymity. They were reassured that their involvement with the project would not compromise their participation in the subject, for example with regard to grading. To further minimise possible effects on their study in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, no participants were directly connected to me in my role as teacher and co-ordinator of the subject. To complement this, a neutral staff member was nominated to be the contact for the participants in course related matters throughout their studies in the subject.

A total of ten participants initially indicated their willingness to participate in this study, however two participants withdrew because of changes in their course of study, and one participant did not participate due to withdrawal from the degree. Individual interviews were conducted at the completion of Modules 1 and 2 of the program and only seven participants from the initial group were involved in the individual interview phase of the study from start to finish. A Group interview was also undertaken in 2005 after the completion of Module 3 of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*; this group comprised four participants from the total of seven who were interviewed individually.

Processes were established to ensure that the participants were not harmed, either physically, psychologically or emotionally by the research and informed consent was gained once they contacted me. In my experience of teaching in this area the discussions which take place in the classroom can become highly emotionally charged. Given this unpredictability of emotional reactions participants were advised of the availability of counselling services on-campus and it was also suggested that they speak with their tutor if there was an issue that was affecting them.

There were no stipulations set around cultural background, gender or age to avoid exerting control over the emerging data. Pre-identification of what these standpoints might reveal in this study was considered problematic. Assumptions could not be made regarding the knowledge, beliefs or attitudes of individuals on their basis of their gender, ethnicity or cultural group. For example, Indigenous students may not necessarily align their identity with the Indigenous collective for a

number of reasons: they may have been raised in a non-Indigenous family; they may not articulate their Indigenous identity as a primary standpoint; they may have been subject to the multiple forces impacting on them to conform to Western systems and ideologies (see Chapter 2). Conversely, it cannot be assumed that non-Indigenous students commence *Cultures and Indigenous Education* without knowledge about the effects of colonisation. For example, non-Indigenous students who have been raised with a strong social justice ethic may have broader understandings about the links between individuals and collectives and about the nature of colonial oppression and dominance in general.

The group from which the teacher participants were selected was small therefore all those working in the subject (14) were invited to participate on an individual basis. Ethnicity/culture, academic discipline, family background, gender, experience teaching in the program and age of the teachers was diverse. The cultural backgrounds of these teacher participants included Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and white Australian teachers. This diversity provided an opportunity to address the question of how they saw their social, culture and gender location impacting on how students respond (or don't) across these multiple spaces. It is important to note that I developed an extensive Tutor Guide for *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (Phillips, 2003; 2009) therefore activities across all classes were consistent.

### 5.1.5 DATA COLLECTION

The use of multiple methods of data collection is common in qualitative research due to the complex nature of research questions being investigated (Glesne, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Cresswell, 1998). Methods used in this study were individual and Group interviews, participant and researcher journals, and teacher informant feedback in both written and verbal form. The use of multiple methods enabled the iteration, and reiteration of the lived experience of the informants to be shared and examined across a range of spheres. Data were collected across 2005-2009 with the main collection period occurring in 2005. Data comprised:

- Semi-structured interviews which took place at the end of each learning module (2005);

- Student journals containing self-selected reflections which they saw as representative of the progression of their thinking across the semester;
- Weekly reflections uploaded by students to the subject's online teaching sites when particularly powerful events occurred;
- Weekly class evaluation sheets (Appendix E) from tutors, teaching team emails, and data from an online group discussion board over the semester, and
- Researcher journal.

All interviews were conducted in 2005 with students who had volunteered at the start of their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, with one exception. One week after the end of the semester, I was approached by two students who were preparing to complete a practicum in a remote area school with a high percentage of Indigenous students. They had completed *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in that year, 2005, and asked if they could participate in the research. A Group interview was conducted and at their request, this conversation was recorded. These students were initially very resistant to their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* so their approach to me was significant given this context. Individual interviews and participant journals were the main methods used as they yielded data from students' immediate engagement with the ideas being investigated in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

Interviews are useful in studies designed to understand why people act as they do and how they articulate the reasons for and the significance of their actions (Jones, 2004). They are a complex and shifting process in which individuals are socially engaged (Jones, 2004) and as such language is the "major cultural resource that participants draw on to jointly create reality" (Riessman, 2004, p. 371). Interviewers follow three essential phases in interviewing: "sampling, obtaining accurate information and recording" (Hyman, Cobb, Feldman, Hart & Stember, 2004, p. 89). Throughout each of these phases interviewers are making choices. These choices must be made self-consciously with an awareness of how they affect the research relationship and whether theoretical biases of the researcher will distract them from the meaning the respondents are trying to impart with their words (Jones, 2004, p. 259). Even within the same language there are multiple portrayals possible

for the one event and no relationship between what is spoken and what is represented can be privileged (Gergen, 1999, p. 34).

In interviews participants mediate their responses but this effect can be minimised through posing open-ended questions. Complications are presented by the mediating influences of the case study site itself. For example, within *Cultures and Indigenous Education* students' belief systems are being interrogated and mediated by very specific and purposeful questioning techniques designed to manipulate the lenses through which they see themselves in relation to others. Data collection occurred at critical points in the students' studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, coinciding with the progression of the modules (see 3.2.2). As such their responses were immediate and context-relevant, providing a rich source of data for the focus of this study. The interviews were positioned to take advantage of these effects and influences by tapping into the confusions which arise to investigate how students make sense of this chaos. In particular, attention was paid to aspects students resisted and whether they had the capacity to notice this resistance.

In the case study site the pedagogy allows for students to share reflections and responses when they choose. Interviews were conducted progressively over the semester, coinciding with the participants' completion of each module in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This timing served two primary functions: to enable responses which are as unmediated as possible and to allow data to be collected from participants' as they reflected on previous responses in light of new information and new learning in the subject. Similarly, in the interviews, open-ended questions left space for participants to choose their responses according to how comfortable they were in sharing personal responses. Additionally, research questions were open ended not just to allow participants to decide which parts of Self they were comfortable with making public, but to also give them a framework for interpreting the focus of the questions.

Relationships imagined or actual between researcher and the researched are influenced by a range of identity factors and related assumptions. In interview situations individuals arbitrate their disclosures, making choices about what is shared and what is not shared (Vincent & Warren, 2001). It was therefore important to reflect on how ethnicity, gender, class and perceptions of relational status may impinge on the meanings that participants construct in the interview context (Vincent

& Warren, 2001, p. 41). These general conditions underlying the interview process reflect the social, cultural and political frameworks that Indigenous peoples negotiate in the course of their everyday and academic life. Unstructured interviews, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics, create a different “risk profile” as it allows participants to take some control over the direction of the discussion (Corbin & Morse, 2003, p. 385). Unstructured interviews also provided an opportunity to minimise my framing of the discussion according to my own biases, developed as a consequence of my personal and professional experiences in negotiating cultural difference and managing cultural identity in interactive situations with non-Indigenous people.

It was important to collect data from a range of sources because “people are often unable to discern the ways that their environment shapes their perceptions” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 10). Therefore, additional methods were employed to supplement the data retrieved in the interviewing phase, namely:

- Researcher journal maintained over the course of the semester to document my perceptions - and the perceptions of my position by others - as co-ordinator and teacher in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*;
- Observations by teachers in the ‘natural setting’ of the program through completion of Weekly Teacher Evaluation (Appendix E);
- Document analysis of student and researcher journals;
- Teacher’s email diaries and submissions to online discussion board;
- Online and written journal of participants not involved in the interviewing phase from 2005-2009. These students were nominated by teaching staff and students were invited to forward their journal after signing the necessary consent forms, and
- End of semester self-evaluation questionnaires (Appendix F) distributed as part of the subject evaluation, but which students consented to provide for this study.

Initially, I had invited teachers to submit a working diary written throughout the semester, however none were received. Additional data was sought, and permission was granted, to use teachers’ records of existing course documents including a

Weekly Teacher Evaluation, email communications between members of the teaching team and submission to an online team teaching site. The Weekly Evaluation Questionnaires were brief but targeted evaluations that were designed to highlight issues for consideration (e.g., problematic terminology, difficult concepts and issues requiring further consideration or follow-up in subsequent classes). Data were collected within a varied timeframe. Dates and purposes for collection are indicated in Table 5.1.

#### **5.1.6 RESEARCH TIMELINE**

This research was undertaken from 2005-2009 with the primary data collection through interviews occurring over a period of six months in 2005, which was equivalent to the duration of a semester. A researcher diary was maintained within that time, however given my involvement as teacher and co-ordinator there were also times in the years between 2005 and 2009 where I committed journal entries that I believed were significant to this study. In particular, additional reflections on how my position in relation to students and the pedagogy shifted, or did not shift, over this time were considered useful. This is an important element of the study due to the constant evaluation and review I have engaged in with the teaching of this subject. A reflexive analysis explaining this in more detail can be found in 5.1.6. Student journal entries were also submitted beyond the interviewing semester across this same time period. Furthermore, informal emails and follow up from participants interviewed in 2005 were also included as data as these provided a rich source for how their understandings were applied beyond the research setting. Consent was given by these participants for the inclusion of this additional data.

Table 5.2 shows the types of data that were collected for the duration of this study, including participant numbers in parenthesis.

Table 5.2 Data Collection Timeline

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data</b>
2005	Weekly Teaching Evaluation (9)	Teachers	Responses to pre-defined questions (see Appendix E)
2005	Final in-class reflection (20) – (Appendix F)	Students	Identification of knowledge shifts
2005	Individual Student Interviews (7) Group interviews (2)	Students Researcher	In-depth articulation of views
2009	Student Journals (online) (12)	Students	Weekly informal reactions to participation in program
2005-2009	Researcher Journal (1)	Researcher	Observations Reflections
2005-2008	Student Journals (written) (8)	Students	Reflections on participation in program
2005-2009	Teacher emails (7) Teacher online discussion board (5)	Teachers Researcher	Collaborative discussions on pedagogy and student responses, team support Observations

### 5.1.7 RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

The meaningfulness of a study is enhanced when the reader is aware of the how the researcher's personal stance influences their findings (Lincoln & Gonzalez, 2008). Researcher reflexivity is therefore important in qualitative research because it allows a response to traditional assumptions regarding researcher objectivity and knowledge and power relationships between the researcher and the researched (Young, 2000). In particular, reflexivity refers to

... self-reflection on one's research process and findings, self-awareness of one's social positionality, values, and perspectives and self-critique of the effects of one's words and actions upon the individuals and groups being studied. (Young, 2000, p. 642)

My connection with the research site is multi-faceted as I developed the curriculum and co-ordinate and teach in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. My discomfort

with traditional forms of enquiry in Indigenous studies, as explained in Section 1.2, discouraged approaches which situated Indigenous peoples as ‘objects’ of study in Indigenous studies curriculum. Consequently, ideas around inter-subjectivity in colonising spaces are also central to this study and specifically affect my orientation to the research.

More significantly, my personal and professional situations have influenced the topic of study, the knowledge that I bring to bear on the relationships with the participants, and assumptions stemming from my connections within the research site. Additionally, the knowledge that participants bring to the research and the understandings which influence their perceptions of my standpoint in relation to them is also worth consideration. In this respect, participants’ ideological orientations do not just refer to their relation to me as researcher or co-ordinator, but their ideas about Aboriginality and cultural difference. Therefore, the understanding of my positionality in the research needs to be interpreted through a number of interconnected dimensions which cannot be reduced through paradigms which situate researchers as powerful, and the researched as less so. My stance regarding the study is informed by my social and personal experiences as an Aboriginal woman, and also by the theoretical and conceptual discussions undertaken in Chapters 2 and 4. In particular, collective systems of dominance continue to exert their influence in reproducing a power relation that resides beyond the interpersonal, and that affects the empowered (and disempowered) standpoints of the researcher and researched in this study.

What follows is my response to the guidelines for reflexivity provided by Alcoff (1991) for analysing the “power relations and discursive effects involved in research” (Young, 2000, p. 643).

*Purpose of my choice to study non-Indigenous students (Alcoff, 1991)*

My history and collective and individual experiences as an Aboriginal woman were central to my decision to teach Indigenous studies. The development of ISP (2.3) was prompted by my misgivings about the failure of Indigenous studies to facilitate significant shifts in how non-Indigenous students see themselves in relation to Australian culture and history and consequently to Indigenous peoples. Researching non-Indigenous students’ participation in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was motivated on personal and professional levels. Specifically, I am persuaded to

contribute to a shift in the ways that Indigenous peoples are taught about in universities, and by extension the ways that Indigenous peoples and knowledge perspectives are related to at social, cultural and institutional levels. Hence, my choice to study non-Indigenous students rather than the effects of dominant systems on Indigenous students, the latter already included as a large part of the existing corpus of knowledge in relation to Indigenous education.

*How does my location, context and desires affect my words?* (Alcoff, 1991)

My own ‘resistance’ to colonial dominance is evidenced by the position that I take in the research context; also by the position that others take in relation to me. My experiences have become part of the results given that there are instances when student responses are directly connected to me, and one or more of my roles. The effects of this have been mitigated by me taking as distanced a stance as possible within each of these roles, and paradoxically maintaining a conscious awareness of my subjectivity (Meyer, 2008) in the process. Such relationships are not dissimilar to the types of survival and management strategies employed by Indigenous people in negotiating colonialism (West, 2000). However, the personal and cultural location of the researcher should not be seen as a limitation for as Yang (2005) advises

All the personal background of the researcher has strengthened the researcher’s capability to be a sensitive instrument to adjust and evaluate the interaction between the researcher and the respondents, to grasp tacit values and beliefs of the respondents and to construct and understand multiple realities through the researcher’s tacit knowledge. (p. 71)

The notion that the researcher’s personal background can be an advantage given the sensitivities that allow them to ‘evaluate’ and ‘adjust’ the words that are spoken is particularly relevant in this study. Through Japanangka and Indigenist research principles, the standpoints of Indigenous peoples are privileged when viewing the complexities of colonialism. This means that it is important for me to be conscious of the power of colonising knowledge systems to constrain and transform expressions of my culture and identity to any relationship I form, whether these are personal, professional or academic. For the participants, I embody the cultural group of whom we are speaking (Indigenous peoples and Australians). And the knowledge and experiences in relation to non-Indigenous peoples – and my experiences in managing those relationships – have the capacity to bring greater depth to the research, and also

for me in ‘reading’ the sub-text of non-Indigenous peoples’ words and meanings with regard to Indigenous peoples.

*What are the effects of the research on the researched?* (Alcoff, 1991)

My intimate connection with each stage of the research project: curriculum writer, subject co-ordinator, lecturer, teacher, interviewer, assessor and most importantly my Aboriginality, also means that I have some power over the context of the research as well as the interpretation of the results. Participants therefore will be managing their respective positions in relation to their perspectives as students and toward me in my role as co-ordinator. However, the specific context of the research is complicated by multiple dimensions of power-relations within which I am positioned as disempowered, at least in a collective cultural sense.

I am an Aboriginal academic conducting research with non-Indigenous students in a Western space. Indigenist methodologies obligate the researcher to engage with the processes of research using a “fully conscious subjectivity” (Meyer, 2008, p. 222). The Japanangka paradigm (Chapter 2 and 4) challenges the sterility of existing Western paradigms for teaching and research and allows a shift to a “form of Aboriginal, culturally sound dialogue between the author and the reader” (West, 2000, p. 18). Therefore, by situating my research through these frameworks, I am able to manage the effects of dominance in a personal sense. However, my experiences and the shared experiences of my family and communities, has developed a set of assumptions that I bring to the research. As these assumptions have been tested in interpersonal, social and professional contexts there is a danger that certainty about the forms of resistance to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives may skew my interpretation of the results to fit with whatever biases are created from this context. There is additional consideration however that works to counterbalance the dangers of potential assumptions. My experiences have also provided me with opportunities to deal with non-Indigenous peoples who have shown a remarkable capacity to be reflexive about their position in relation to Indigenous people (me, in particular). Therefore along with assumptions about non-Indigenous attachments to systems of dominance and resistance, I also bring to the research knowledge and assumptions about the potential for shifts.

*How is accountability for the findings maintained?* (Alcoff, 1991)

As an Indigenous researcher, I do not “own” the knowledge resulting from the research and, furthermore, the knowledge I bring to the research process is not mine alone to use in whichever way I please (see 2.1). These principles (Figure 2.1) guide my personal and professional approaches, in opposition to Western approaches (2.1.2) and allow an understanding of the “multiple realities” that Yang (2005) refers to in a colonial context (which includes the context of this research).

## 5.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Section 5.1.6 outlined the impact of privileging Indigenous experiences in both the research context and the research design, including a discussion of its possible effects on the participants in the study and my interpretation of the results. The additional issue of the effect of the research context, and the broader socio-cultural and historical fields on perceptions of the researcher by the participants in this study was also addressed. In this section I outline the ethical considerations of the research and any problems and limitations which may threaten the validity of results.

Due to the varied inter-subjective relationships – known, not known and emergent – that the researchers will have with the informants and that they in turn will have or develop with each other, some significant ethical issues are presented. These issues are a product of history, wherein Indigenous voices are reinscribed with meanings supportive of dominance. This presents a dilemma in the research given the consequences of disempowering non-Indigenous participants’ voices by privileging Indigenous experiences and modes of knowledge production. The complex arrangements and alignments of the concepts *and* the meanings in this study necessitated a range of measures be put in place to ensure validity of results.

Validity in research is described as “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the *real meaning* of the concept under consideration” (Babbie, 1998, p. 133). Additional forms of validity, as suggested by Lather (2000) are “catalytic validity and situated validity” (p. 647). These refer in particular to how a study can be validated in terms of its contribution to emancipatory social transformations, and how findings are contextually embedded (Lather, 2000). Initial understandings held by the researcher about her position inside the complex relations of dominance outside the research context will assist in the engagement of strategies to circumvent problems arising in inter-subjective research in an Indigenist context

(see 5.1.6 for discussion on knowledge which assists in this regard). This will also increase the chances of reliable data to be collected and analysed by reducing the contamination of collection and analysis due to researcher bias. It is not possible to entirely dissolve the affects of bias in the research, however maintaining an awareness of the potential dangers of bias is one way to resolve this.

### 5.3 ETHICS

This research was conducted following QUT Procedures for Ethical Research: reference number 4088H. Approval was given for data to be collected from 2005-2010, inclusive (Appendix G). I submitted my study to the QUT Research Ethics Committee for re-confirmation each year with no amendments to the terms of the research at Level 2 status.

### 5.4 LIMITATIONS

This study focussed on the effects of a single compulsory subject within a 4 year pre-service teacher degree in one university, and while it was not a longitudinal study the long data collection period resulted in a mass of data, which showed consistency in responses to the subject over a number of years. However, this does not lead to an ideal position from which to extrapolate conclusions about Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers in general, or for similar studies in other disciplines. First, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a foundation unit, which at the point of design was conceived as the first stage in a broader endeavour that aspired to provide more specific contexts for pre-service teachers to apply their learning in other subjects of their degree; curriculum development and professional practice in particular.

While the data collection did not specify gender, class, ethnicity or age of participants, one mature-age Indigenous student did volunteer but withdrew from her studies early in the semester. A limitation on the scope of the study was the decision not to specifically seek out Indigenous students' participation or to focus on related issues of how such students might be disadvantaged or affected by their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Interviewing Indigenous students may have provided an additional dimension to considering the relationships between peers in the learning process, how they responded to the teaching staff (Indigenous and non-

Indigenous) and the advantages or disadvantages they perceived about critical enquiry.

The students participating in the interview phase of this study were all non-Indigenous and those who were relatively comfortable with sharing their points of view in interview given that the initial call for volunteers invited participation on this premise. The data collected through online reflections and end of semester journals were more diverse in terms of engagement with the challenges, and supplemented interview data. These additional forms of data were also important to gathering information from students that showed their immediate responses to the subject as they progressed through the modules. Within the requirements of Western research frameworks the ethical issues were attended to by maintaining a full awareness of the power relations and reassuring interviewees that their words were confidential. There were no long term dangers presented by involvement in the study given that participants undertook no further study with me across the remainder of their degree program. One exception was two participants who had approached me with a request to be interviewed after completing *Cultures and Indigenous Education*; one of these students was enrolled in an elective subject I was teaching after interviews had been completed.

A major factor impinging on the study was the understandable itinerancy of students. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a first year subject, and for the main data collection phase in 2005, participants were sought at the beginning of their second semester of study. Therefore students who re-considered their decision to study teaching through this time ceased their participation in the study as a consequence. Likewise, for those students who maintained their involvement in the study, increasing pressure around assessment across the semester, out-of-university work commitments, family obligations and general exhaustion meant that only four participants were involved through the full phase of individual interviews, and the final Group interview. To guard against misrepresenting the ‘voices’ of the research participants, I had planned to provide copies of interview transcripts. Unfortunately, this did not work out for all participants due to a number of reasons:

- Two students withdrew from the Bachelor of Education degree, and therefore were unavailable after the first round of interviews;

- One student chose to participate in the first two interviews after Modules 1 and 2 but was not able to be contacted for the final focus Group interview. This meant I was unable to provide transcripts of the interview. According to enrolment information, this student was no longer enrolled in the Bachelor of Education.
- One student transcribed her own individual interview and provided an edited, approved copy of the transcript at the end of the semester.

Three students participated in the final focus group and provided clarification of earlier points made in their individual interviews as we progressed through the interview. Some students were only willing to share their progress after they had completed their studies in the subject – by interview (2 students) and submission of their written journals. Additionally, only one student who had not experienced shifts was willing to provide their journal for analysis and it's reasonable to assume that her position wasn't exceptional. Data collected from other highly resistant students would have provided a firmer foundation for consideration of the nature of resistance in this study.

## Chapter 6: Disrupting Systems of Knowing

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The purpose of this chapter is to identify how pre-service education students respond to the first module of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This module focussed on the clarification of standpoints in relation to Australian culture and history and subsequent influences on relationship to knowledge about Indigenous peoples. The research context was discussed in Chapter 3, and introduced a selection of examples from the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was first offered in 2003 and each year since, 800-900 students have completed the subject as a compulsory requirement of their teaching degree. The majority of these students are non-Indigenous and teaching staff comprises academics from a variety of cultural backgrounds. I have always been the co-ordinator, and I deliver the initial lectures designed to provoke students to critique their own perceptions/standpoints. This is a starting point for the ongoing critical reflection central to their work in the subject across the semester.

*Cultures and Indigenous Education* aims to engage pre-service teachers to deconstruct their standpoints through critical Indigenist methods with a view to decolonisation. The aim of this chapter is to address the first research question:

*How do pre-service teaching students respond to Indigenous studies curriculum which authorises Indigenous knowledge perspectives of Australia's colonial history and contemporary cultural frameworks?*

The purpose of the question is to clarify the initial issues and concepts which students found most confronting when they commenced their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Additionally, it endeavours to identify how students articulate the effects of the authorisation of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, the significance of these experiences and how they manage its impact on their personal standpoints and learning engagement. The responses of students in Module 1, studied in the first four weeks of the program, provide a baseline for understanding what shapes resistance. The analysis in this chapter foregrounds the analysis in Chapter 7, which explains the discourses of resistance students deploy.

The range of data types (Table 5.1) permits analysis of relatively unfiltered reactions in the case of the student reflections posted online weekly than data which is subject to more editing or censorship in the interviews and final entries in student journals. Data collected over a long period of time provides an opportunity to note whether there is consistency in the types of resistance students express. This has broader implications for establishing general principles for university curriculum in compulsory critical Indigenous studies due to the identification of consistency in student engagement, or non-engagement.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Indigenist research methods focus the inquiry on how non-Indigenous participants make meaning within contexts where Indigenous knowledge perspectives are centralised in learning about Indigenous issues in a non-Indigenous learning context. Critical Discourse Analysis allows for identification of the connections between language/text and other elements in an individual's social environment (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). Indigenist approaches privilege the voice of Indigenous peoples in research conducted on and for Indigenous peoples (Rigney, 1997). The blend of these approaches enables analysis to target responses provoked through inter-subjective enquiries in this space where Indigenous knowledge perspectives are centred. This allows for the clarification of how students create meaning while learning in an unfamiliar social, cultural, historical and political learning framework.

While the nature of data sources may have been subject to self-censorship by students, many were very up-front and willing to present their relatively unfiltered thoughts across all data types. One student remarked in the end-of-semester reflective journal that

on perusing previous journal entries, I feel I would like to destroy the earlier ones which highlight my ignorance, however, if my uninformed statements can help another person understand then please show my idiocy to everyone...it is the least I can do to make amends. (Megan, Journal, 2005)

This type of honesty and student willingness to reflect back on earlier statements is crucial to the research.

The issues covered in this chapter relate primarily to the experiences of students in the first module of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. First, I discuss the form of students' initial expectations. This allows an analysis of the shape and form

of pre-existing understandings that students bring to bear on the learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (6.1). It provides an understanding of the relationship between students' individual ideas about Australian culture and Indigenous peoples, and public constructions of these collectives (6.1.3). Second, given this context, I consider how student expectations of teaching staff emerge and influence the types of responses they articulate in response to the pedagogy (6.2). Third, I examine the effects of learning relationships between tutors and students to consider how the dynamic created between the social and cultural standpoints of teaching staff and students influences the ways they engage with the curriculum (6.2).

## 6.1 INITIAL EXPECTATIONS AND REACTIONS

As shown in Chapter 3, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is a compulsory subject and this has an immediate effect on forming students' expectations of the program prior to their enrolment. It is a first year subject that is delivered in the second semester. Commencing students are therefore exposed to other students' interpretations of what to expect. While detail about the research context is discussed at length in Chapter 3, the key issues of significance here are:

- There is minimal focus on studying content *about* Indigenous peoples or cultures in the first module but instead it is directed at self-investigation and critical processes designed to encourage students to clarify their standpoints;
- Indigenous perspectives on non-Indigenous cultural positioning are fundamental to the processes of disruption, therefore three of the four lectures in the first module are delivered by me as subject co-ordinator and as author of the first required reading;
- The concept of 'racism' is not seen as the most significant issue to be addressed but instead there is a focus on power, history and how relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have evolved in Australia;
- The subject is the first and only Indigenous studies subject that students must complete as a compulsory requirement in their teaching degree.

In the first module of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, priority is given to engaging students in a process of critical self-investigation to unsettle the foundations upon which knowledge about Indigenous peoples and Australian culture and history is built. In this section, I discuss the impact of the students' experiences in Module 1 of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and analyse the implications for this engagement, particularly when expectations are revealed to be low, neutral and/or hostile (6.1.1). I consider the connections that students make between the pedagogy and their reactions in these initial stages by analysing how they respond to the unexpected shift from learning about Indigenous peoples to clarifying their own standpoints (6.1.2). I also discuss the relationship between students' perceptions of themselves in relation to a collective culture, the opportunities this provides for critical introspection and how this is affected by their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

#### **6.1.1 MANAGING EXPECTATIONS – “YOU KNOW YOU GET CALLED AN INVADER?”**

The first module of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is concerned with self-exploration and student discovery of existing ideas about ‘being Australian’ (see 3.2.1). Through critical questioning, students are guided to explore their understandings about the relationship between their cultural position and their perceptions of ‘cultural difference’. As discussed in Chapter 3, the first activity requires students to list expectations for their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, to give reasons for these expectations and to make links between their personal knowledge and these expectations. They are then asked to consider what ideas they hold around the concepts of ‘race’ and ‘culture’. These questions are open-ended and students are encouraged to clarify their feelings, thoughts and intuitions about *their* culture and how this might affect their relationships with ‘Others’ on this basis. However, student talk encourages other expectations, as Martha points out:

...And you know you're in other lectures with people who've done [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] before and they said, ‘You know you get called an invader?’ And I thought ‘Ooh, I'll just get through that, whatever, and I'll try not to feel offended and try to maintain my composure. (Martha, Interview, 2005)

Understandings that students develop about Indigenous peoples prior to their enrolment are further compounded by the student grapevine that Martha tapped into. Students have already been alerted to the supposedly ‘offensive’ nature of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. They have also been subject to social and media driven understandings about Indigenous peoples and our positions within the Australian nation. This may not only establish a firm intellectual position – or system for interpreting knowledge about Indigenous people - but also emotional strategies for coping with anticipated attacks and accusations. Martha expected to “feel offended” and prepared herself for this by coaching herself to “not feel” and “maintain [her] composure” in the face of the aggression associated with being called an “invader”. Farrah’s response to this pre-existing perception was to silence her own opinions: “... I basically came in with the idea – ‘tell them what they want to hear’ because of the fear of offending” (Interview, 2005). This resolve to censor on the basis of a ‘fear of offending’ and a fear of ‘being offended’ is common in Indigenous studies programs, compulsory or not (Sonn, 2005, p. 7).

Daphne questions the value of Indigenous studies and uses common-sense definitions of Australian culture to highlight how ‘unreasonable’ she finds having to do the subject:

My first thought[s] about undertaking a unit on Indigenous studies were negative, I couldn’t understand why we would study Indigenous perspectives. Australia is always referred to as a multi-cultural country with great diversity among the population ... Indigenous Australians may be native to this country but singling one group of people out to study of the many different groups that we will teach seems to be unreasonable. (Daphne, Journal, 2005)

Daphne positions Australia as a ‘multicultural’ country, locates this as a taken-for-granted fact and then depersonalises any contribution to the formation of this understanding even as she uses it to rationalise her negative expectations. On the surface her statements seem motivated by a desire to maintain equality within our “multicultural” nation, which she reasons is undermined by “singling” out Indigenous Australians for study as opposed to one of the other “many different groups that *we* will teach” (my emphasis). The personal pronoun ‘we’ is used to align herself with a professional identity, creating even more distance between

herself and the collective cultural framework she has positioned as unquestionable and disconnected from her personally. In doing so, Daphne positions herself in a privileged social space as a cultural mediator, reinforcing an unstated cultural dominance while avoiding self-reflection on this dominance. Daphne's response mobilises a discourse of "citing authority" which is one of eight discourses identified by Haviland (2008, p. 44) in her research on the silencing power of Whiteness in education (see 2.2.3). This positioning is described by Haviland (2008) as "powerful yet power-evasive" (p. 44).

The privileged space Daphne occupies is further masked by the personal distance she maintains from a national identity within which she claims cultural diversity is respected. Daphne remains invisible *and* apparently neutral. The discourse of "authority" that Daphne employs when she suggests that it's unreasonable for Indigenous Australians to be "singled out" at a cost to others in "Australia" allows her to shift focus from herself and therefore potentially stall explorations into the unearned power she expresses by taking this assumed position of decision-maker. By speaking up for the "many different groups" who are silenced by the special treatment she assumes is being meted out to Indigenous peoples, Daphne is able to claim a particular moral ground from which to express ideas about cultural difference. This moral position is framed by the cherished Australian cultural value of multiculturalism and this, as well as her own self-interest, is protected from scrutiny by the socio-spatial arrangement she deploys. Through Daphne's layered system of seeing relationships within a collective cultural sphere, not only is her own assumed authority over others made invisible but Indigenous peoples are also artfully positioned as enemies of social justice.

Perceptions about the relevance of Indigenous studies also appeared to affect students' expectations and attitudes toward studying *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and offer additional explanations for the initial reluctance and fear. As can be seen in Table 6.1, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* invites critical, in-depth reflection and personalised approaches to engagement. Introductory questions are designed to emotionally and intellectually engage students by tapping into, and ultimately revealing, any initial reluctance or hostility students hold towards learning in Indigenous studies. These questions are posed to encourage students to clarify their existing ideas, not to impose assumptions about 'who they are' (e.g., Indigenous

or non-Indigenous) and the social knowledge they hold in relation to Indigenous peoples (e.g., negative, positive or neutral). There are connections that students are asked to explore between individual and collective understandings and taken-for-granted assumptions, and these connections can be revealed through targeted questioning techniques (Table 6.1). I posed these questions in the introductory lectures for *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in Weeks 1 and 2.

Table 6.1 – Investigating standpoint (Source: Cultures and Indigenous Education Week 1 Lecture notes, 2003-2009).

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Collective</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<b>How do you order your world?</b>	Describe your culture.	How does your culture influence your life on a daily basis?
<b>What ideas do you prioritise over others, and why?</b>	How does your culture influence the lives of your parents, grandparents and ancestors?	What influence do the beliefs of your family and collective beliefs about Australia have on your individual perceptions?
<b>How does this affect your actions in the world?</b>	Describe my culture. (Asked by Aboriginal lecturer) How does my culture influence the lives of my parents, grandparents and ancestors?	How does my culture influence my life on a daily basis?
<b>Drawing Connections</b>	How does your culture influence my life on a daily basis? How does my [Aboriginal] culture influence your life on a daily basis?	Students make connections between what they see, what they don't see and the power of the visible and the invisible on their perceptions of themselves and Indigenous peoples.

Many students find these questions particularly difficult to respond to as they grapple with their fears and expectations, a process which Joanne (Online, 2005) describes in the following way:

In the first tutorial I was asked to write down what my expectations of this unit were. In my three years of university I had never done a subject with the words 'culture' or 'Indigenous' in them and to be honest the concept ... was frightening ...

Penny (Online, 2009) specifically drew attention to the “scary” nature of the questions (Table 6.1):

The questions, although very important, were things that are not spoken about openly they just are there but not to be touched questions. This in a

sense scared the hibbie jebbies out of me, as how could I answer these types of questions without seeming to put someone else out of place.

Penny's sense of being "scared" may be explained in part by the disruption that occurs when students are called to become intimately connected to the course materials rather than participate as 'disconnected observers' (Graham, 1999). She comments that while "important" the questions were not to be "spoken about openly" or "touched". This finds resonance with the "open secret" (Frankham, 2001, p. 65), where Penny is alluding to the concealment of knowledge that is already known. Strategies for coping, for example by keeping silent in order to avoid offending others are no longer useful in a context where they are expected to voice their opinions. As a consequence, Penny is alarmed by the possibility that her thoughts might impact on how others see her, which leads to her fear of "put[ting] someone else out of place". In this context, concealing knowledge can be linked to concealing knowledge about herself, or at least not expressing it openly in this case. Through the program students are given many opportunities to critically reflect on why such trepidation was felt.

The questions shown in Table 6.1 establish the direction for students' learning and aim to generate critical self-enquiry by the students. The importance of critical self-enquiry and re-evaluating "personal knowledge and experience" is identified by Cochrane-Smith (2004, p. 49) as integral if the concern is with developing teachers committed to social justice. Furthermore, these questions enable students to begin to make connections between their expectations, existing knowledges and historical influences on their understandings. Powerful discourses, formed through colonial history, continue to reinforce assumptions about the "unchanged and unchanging" nature of Indigenous peoples and cultures (Russell, 2001, p. 3). According to Beckett (2001), there are two strands evident in these colonial discourses. The first strand, "colonial victimisation" is representative of the oppression and silencing of Indigenous peoples, and includes political struggles to give voice to these concerns. The second strand, "cultural authenticity" emphasises cultural difference "not just from dominant culture, but from modernity itself" (Beckett, 2001, p. 124). Students' experiences of Aboriginality as 'politics' and Aboriginality as 'exotica', are supported by these discourses.

Many students cite that they expect to be observers of well-known cultural constructions of Indigenous peoples as exotica and ‘remnants of the past’ (Langton, 1993), or alternatively, as slogan bearing political activists. The responses from Farrah and Darren are illustrative:

I only had two things to look at. Traditional: You know, the ‘We’re doing Aboriginal Studies now so here’s two sticks, clap them together’ and the activism thing. (Farrah, Interview, 2005)

I suppose when I first got in here I expected this to be more traditional. I expected to learn about the traditions and things like that, when you’re doing Indigenous studies that’s kind of what I expected I suppose. (Darren, Interview, 2005)

Martha, who had spent time as a consultant in a remote Aboriginal community, drew on these previous experiences to inform her expectations and explicitly describes how she thought learning would require little effort from her.

I thought it would be more like a message stick thing and that I would be immersed in Indigenous culture and that somebody, which I assumed would be you as the coordinator, would hope that just through this immersion we would become respectful ... and act more appropriately. (Martha, Interview, 2005)

Farrah, Darren and Martha’s reflections were shared just after students had completed Module 1, which ran for four weeks. They had been guided through a process of open discussion in tutorials and to some extent had the opportunity to gain some clarity of thought in relation to the issues. There appears to be a greater level of comfort in freely expressing their thoughts and less hesitancy when admitting to the influence of tokenism on their expectations. In Farrah and Martha’s recollections particularly, there is self-deprecating humour, indicating a reduction in the fear of ‘saying the wrong thing’. There is a personalisation of the effects of their words/thoughts on others in their statements which leads to a resistance to sharing their thoughts. This could be seen as a product of the subjective repositioning of students in public discourse about Indigenous peoples which contradicts the ideas of Western rationality that assume “impartiality” can only result from “anonymous and impersonal” reasoning (Gal, 2005, p. 25). There is also an indication here that students are using the discourses of “Avoiding Words” and “Asserting Ignorance or

Uncertainty” (Haviland, 2008, p. 44) to resist making explicit statements about Indigenous peoples and knowledge they have about their own cultural knowledge framework.

The lack of connectedness Martha sees between Indigenous peoples’ experiences and her own as a non-Indigenous Australian is clearly evident in the way she anticipates that learning would occur by osmosis. The expectation that information would be delivered and that she would ultimately make the decision about whether to change her way of relating to Indigenous peoples as a result of this “immersion” is clear. This positioning also presumes a certain powerlessness of Indigenous peoples to affect the process in any meaningful way, ironically even when Martha acknowledges that Indigenous people are in control. The presumption is reinforced when Martha says she assumed that “you as the coordinator would *hope*” for a transformation, rather than take strategic steps to achieve it.

Farrah had spent much of her life living in Papua New Guinea and Sydney prior to settling in Brisbane and from these places had developed two main frames of reference for ‘knowing’ Indigenous peoples. These were her expectations of “traditional” representations, which she describes as “clapping sticks together” and the “activism thing” (Interview, 2005). Farrah admits in the interview that she “came armed with” these assumptions (2005): “I have negative Redfern experiences” (Redfern is an inner city community of Aboriginal people hyped by the Australian media as ‘violent’ and ‘dangerous’). She also explains the significance of her time in Papua New Guinea: “Papua New Guinea is a good example, for wow, white really is quite dominant. I can be there and still be ‘top of the food chain – pecking order’”.

In addition to an expectation of the ‘traditional’, several students indicated that their role as a student in Indigenous studies would require them to be observers of particular aspects of Indigenous cultures.

I thought that I would be learning about umm Indigenous peoples’ culture umm and the tokenistic things that we have all grown up with learning ... like the tokenistic things that white Australia puts onto Indigenous people ... relationship to the land, relationship to, like, ceremonies or that tokenistic sort of thing ... I also thought too maybe it would show me how to teach Indigenous peoples. (Chantal, Interview, 2005)

I thought perhaps I would be introduced to Indigenous culture, how to teach Indigenous students, cultural values and to identify and abolish stereotypes about Indigenous students. (Joanne, Online, 2009)

My early expectations of this unit were that we were to delve into all the issue[s] surrounding Indigenous history, culture, art and music, and that this unit would prepare us predominately on how to teach indigenous children. (Kim, Online, 2009)

When I found out that the second semester involved Indigenous studies, I presumed that we would learn about ‘Aboriginal’ culture, dance and art and stories. (Michelle, Journal, 2009)

As discussed earlier (2.1.3) being an “observer” in Indigenous studies is a powerful position to occupy; objectifying Indigenous peoples not only creates a need for an audience, it reinforces the privilege of a “non-racialised subject” to establish the limits of what can be know about others (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 74). The expectation that culture is purely performative, in relation to Indigenous peoples as least, signifies that these students are unable to conceive of Indigenous cultures as anything beyond the concrete and tangible. Additionally, expectations of: “tokenistic things” (Chantal); “art and music” (Kim); “dance and art and stories” (Michelle); learning how to “[abolish] stereotypes” (Joanne), and learning how to “teach Indigenous peoples” (Chantal) further emphasise the distance between perceptions of Self and those of Indigenous peoples. The distance is first evidenced by the objectification of Indigenous peoples and cultures as static artefacts and second by the positioning of Indigenous peoples in a problem-space (Dodson, 1994). Consequently, the students position themselves to either *give* to Indigenous people or *receive* from them, but not connect with, reinforcing the power relation (Moreton-Robinson, 2004).

While questioning techniques are deliberately open-ended, a fear emerges through students sensing a personal attack to such an extent that students report feeling like they are being directly accused or blamed.

Week 1 and 2 were very in your face. Made me feel very out of place and on edge. I also felt under attack [sic] when I didn’t know much about my history and self identity. (Rachel, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

*Cultures and Indigenous Education's* beginning lectures were extremely confrontational. The information was presented in a negative way towards myself and I feel that it was unnecessary to 'put the blame' on individuals such as myself ... (Tammy, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

I felt confronted and it seemed as if Jean was very anti White Australians and believed that Aborigines could do no wrong ... (Carrie, Online, 2009)

The first module, I feel, was harsh at first, as after the first few lectures and tuts I came away feeling very angry. (Carmel, Journal, 2005)

The first module was very intimidating and made me feel uncomfortable (Candice, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

I initially found the first couple of weeks not only confronting and challenging but also off-putting. (Mark, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

In managing this emotional turmoil students resort to making statements about Indigenous peoples – or their presumed representative – to resist examining their own standpoints. As shown here, typically, students in the first exploratory weeks describe their feelings using emotionally charged language. Common to each these responses above are the feelings of: being attacked; deliberately intimidated; uncomfortable; confronted; challenged and out of place.

In their reflections, Candice, Mark, Tammy and Rachel do not draw specific reference to their membership of a cultural group; only Carrie does in her reference to "White Australians". However, the emotional tone of the words, and the words themselves, suggest that perceptions of Self and unstated connections to a collective culture are being used to contest the knowledge perspectives being presented in the first few weeks of the semester. Overwhelmingly, words such as: "confronting", "challenging" and "intimidating" feature in response to these questions, leading students taking a defensive position to ward off presumed attacks on self. Consider particularly, that these responses emerge from the critical questioning shown in Table 6.1; questions which target understandings about collective culture and individual positioning in relation to this. They are generic, non-specific to particular cultures (except when I ask from my standpoint as an Aboriginal person) and designed so that students can maintain control over their level of self-disclosure.

Individuals bring a “specific discursive history” to encounters that enable them to mediate the experience as well as their perceptions of self inside that encounter (Agha, 2005, p. 1). In the context of the pedagogical event that spurred these vitriolic responses, students do not appear to be directly responding to the questions (Table 6.1). While resistance in places of social conflict is expected at individual and group levels (Wilson & Stapleton, 2007), in an inter-discursive sense one event (the resistant responses) seems to lack any explicit relation to the other event (the critical questions posed by the lecturer) although a direct causative relationship is implied by the students. There is a lack of critical self-reflection in these remarks, instead the lecturer (who is also the researcher) is positioned as “negative” and “anti-White Australian”, and the module itself is deemed “off-putting” and “harsh”. Haviland (2005) argues that the Self is a discursive object that “has its allusions and chronology, looking both to the past and to the future” (p. 82). There is an indication of a powerful subtext given the students interpretations of the questions. As this is their first encounter with me as the lecturer, their assumptions about my speaking position (and intent) are filtered through ideas developed in other places, at other times (see 2.1.3).

In her end-of-semester in-class reflection, Jacky reported that she felt personally confronted. She explains how this feeling contributed to her seeing the questions as statements about her rather than a means to encourage self-examination, a process over which she ultimately held control: “In lecture one I felt very confronted with the content. I had to look at an issue I felt did not concern me. I felt like I was being blamed for Indigenous people’s plight” (Jacky, Final in-class reflection, 2005). In his study of ‘guilt’ in a psychology class focussing on Aboriginal issues, Williams (2000) identified two levels of guilt expressions: feelings of ‘guilt’ along a continuum from none to a little, and depressive guilt where students felt overwhelmed with the magnitude of the issues. Jacky offers little explanation here for what was specifically confronting about the content, however there is a sense that her perception of being drawn into an irrelevant ‘issue’ compounds her feelings of being “blamed” by that “content” and her sense of powerlessness in the face of this presumed targeting. The earlier discussion about the generic nature of the questions to which Jacky’s responses refer indicated her feeling that she was being “blamed”. This could be seen as evidence of what Williams (2000) refers to as

a “defence searching for an accuser” (p. 137), which was compounded by her assumptions that Indigenous issues are irrelevant and unrelated to her. Alternatively, the tone of Megan’s first entry in her end-of-semester journal demonstrates that she is taking responsibility for her opinions and how they are framed: “To commence my journal I want to say that I am extremely petrified to be judged on my opinion; however I appreciate that this needs to be explored in order for me to progress with this subject” (Megan, Journal, 2005).

Students were encouraged to record their responses on a week-by-week basis so that they could reflect back on the strength and form of their feelings experienced at the beginning of the semester. Students were also encouraged, but not forced, to openly articulate their responses in class and in multiple reflective spaces where they could choose to share publicly, or choose to keep private for later self-reflection (e.g. online journals and weekly reflections). The value of providing a range of options for reflection is demonstrated by Jill who found the subject “incredibly challenging” at first (Journal, 2005). Jill felt so challenged that it affected her attitude toward coming to class. Even through her feelings of “hostility toward the subject”, Jill continued to be engaged and eventually made sense of her standpoint in the following way:

I have found myself practically hostile towards this subject which has confused and frustrated me as I haven’t understood the basis for it. I think the reason this subject has been so confronting is because it has and continues to challenge me on a fundamental level – literally, who am I as a non-Indigenous person – and the experience has been at times, terrifying.  
(Jill, Journal, 2005)

The emotional strength of statements by students while in the midst of their learning reduces as students move through the subject and become more reflective and self-interrogative. As shown by the data in this section, data selected from interviews, journals and online reflections in the first module were mostly framed with words like ‘*I feel*’/‘*I felt*’ rather than ‘*I thought*’. Also, data from interviews were more likely to be circumspect with students having moved from ‘feeling’ things to being self-reflective about the reasons why, so there was a tendency for these reflections to be framed in terms of what they ‘thought’, as is demonstrated by Jill in her reflection above.

Four weeks of the semester are focussed on the explorations in Module 1. Module 1 is also when the most attention is paid to drawing out, and positioning students to express resistance. The data in section 6.1.1 shows that resistance occurs immediately and is couched in avoidance of self-interrogation, and that perceptions of the subject matter are not always dependent on the specific content of students' learning. While chaotic and challenging for students, this is the most important stage given that we need to re-constitute the space (Prashad, 2006; Turcotte, 2004) in order to shift the ways in which they engage with the more specific content (Nakata, 2007) in the later modules of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

### 6.1.2 DEALING WITH THE INDIGENOUS OTHER – “WHAT CAN I ASK? WHAT CAN'T I ASK?”

At the beginning of the semester students use sanctioned language for dealing with Indigenous peoples and issues. Much of the time, these discussions take place in contexts where Indigenous peoples do not have a voice to interject or speak back (Hart, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). When placed in a subjective relation with Indigenous peoples, the other is dissolved as an 'object'. The link between the sanctioned, taken-for-granted views about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships is revealed in the ways that students speak about Indigenous people and also in how they speak (or don't speak) about themselves. The resultant negotiation of shared meanings in inter-cultural spaces does not, as Moreton-Robinson (2000) argues, “necessarily result in changing the subjectivity of those who carry the baggage of another culture, but it does make dialogue possible” (p. 48).

The presence of Indigenous peoples and voices initially silences students and also confuses them. Cultural dominance has closed off spaces for open dialogue with Indigenous peoples, which serves to minimise the capacity of those comforted by this arrangement to cope with the disruption when dominant beliefs are called into question. Students arrive in the unfamiliar setting of an Indigenous studies classroom with an intuition that what may be acceptable to say about Indigenous peoples 'outside' may no longer be appropriate. As shown by the following excerpt from the group interview conducted in 2005, students report that they spend some time attempting to locate a safe position from which to enter the dialogue:

**John:** It took a little while though [to] get to a point where you feel like you can ask questions and you're not going to get that look [which also

means] you won't be getting the grade that you'd like, so that just comes back to [having a] safe environment.

**Samantha:** It took a while didn't it? It was like a face-off I think in the beginning. You know, 'What can I ask? What can't I ask?'... I went in thinking it was a bit scary and I'll be offensive and I'll say the wrong thing [so] I'll be better off saying nothing.

**Chantal:** I think that is what it is...

**John:** That's the biggest fear.

**Chantal:** You're more concerned about being offensive to somebody than probably asking a question because you don't want to offend. (Group interview 1, 2005)

The initial silence generated by a fear of offending Indigenous peoples is managed by students bargaining away their right to speak in favour of identifying the rules of engagement: "What can I ask? What can't I ask?" (Samantha, 2005). In the first stages of establishing a "safe environment" students appear to favour obedience, in some cases merely to ensure that they pass the subject or "getting the grade you'd like" (John, 2005).

The discussion of students' expectations (6.1) demonstrates how these affect the starting point for students' learning. Some of these expectations relate to existing ideas about what Indigenous studies entail, some expectations are formed through listening to other students who have completed the subject, others still are a consequence of the fear of being exposed as racist (7.1.2). Given that the fears of offending (6.1.1) and getting the desired grade as indicated by John were present from the first day of the semester, I was interested to see why students thought they emerged so rapidly. I was also interested in why they thought these fears were so influential in determining their ability to engage with the subject.

When asked about the starting point for the "face-off" that Samantha describes in this interview, in particular when these fears began to surface, one student is emphatic in her response that it started "way before [the start of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*]. *Way before*. It was, umm, it was almost like it was your job to undo that" (Farrah, Interview, 2005, original emphasis). For Farrah, social and historical understandings from her time in Redfern (6.1.2) had developed an

expectation that she positions here as the responsibility of teaching staff in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* to resolve. Teaching is, according to Turcotte (2004)

... almost always, at its best, about elucidation. It is about the opening up of texts to understanding; it is about revealing an unseen dimension of a text, and in turn, of allowing a text to open an unseen truth about ourselves. (p. 7)

In the initial stages of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, expectations like Farrah's are cultivated by and within students' social experiences, limited or otherwise, which may be reinforced and girded by projection and assumption. Teachers in Indigenous studies do have a role in exploring the conditions under which knowledge about Indigenous peoples is constructed to dismantle these assumptions. However, critical introspection *by the student* at points when fear is expressed most strongly is important and necessary for revealing the "unseen dimensions of text ... and self" that Turcotte refers to. John highlights the benefits of this in his end-of-semester reflection:

I think that it's a good way to teach, I think it umm, it's hard too, if you were to tell someone what to expect ... It's very hard to put your finger on [it], because it will depend on their whole life. What they've been through so far ... in that they are coming through the door with all their life [experiences] and you'll come out with a lot more ... (John, Group interview 1, 2005)

Joanne experienced "conflict" between what she was learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and her "values":

During Module One I have to admit that I was facing some conflicts in my values but I kept them hidden to myself. While I was open to learning about my prejudices it was hard to hear all of these things which conflicted with everything that I'd been raised to believe. I knew truth from lies but I didn't realise just how many assumptions I had about Indigenous peoples. (Joanne, Online, 2005)

Module 1 was focused on students investigating their own standpoints and responding to open-ended questions (Table 6.1). Joanne's acknowledgement that there may be limitations to the ways she constructs knowledge about Indigenous people is denoted here by her recognition that she holds "prejudices". As mentioned earlier, the subjective relationship between Joanne and Indigenous peoples leads her to silence taken-for-granted views, or "everything [she'd] been raised to believe",

which she sees as no longer sanctioned in this new space of enquiry: dialogue *with* Indigenous peoples, not discussions *about*. Fear in speaking out in Indigenous studies has been associated with a “fear of getting things wrong and feeling guilty about getting things wrong” (Sonn, 2008, p. 163). However, once Joanne accepts the “conflicts” she experiences as a progression toward realising the extent of the “assumptions” she holds about Indigenous peoples, her fear gradually lessens. Creating opportunities for the overt expression of the anger that some students present at the beginning of the semester is integral to facilitating this.

What non-Indigenous students choose to share and what they might feel a need to deny is impacted by the perception that they are coerced into a space where they have to speak about, discuss and reflect on issues not always seen as relevant to their lives (6.1). Paradoxically, students exercise their privilege through Whiteness in their choices to maintain silence or in overt defensiveness against what they are experiencing, while at the same time denying existence of this privilege. Maggie and Libby own up to being very resistant to *Cultures and Indigenous Education* although they remained engaged with the program in spite of this. Maggie admits that she was confused by her continued engagement, declaring “and I turned up to the tutes, just to, *I don’t even know why*” (Interview, 2005, original emphasis). When asked whether assumptions of being ‘good people’ contributed to their early resistance to *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, they mentioned that cultural privilege allowed them to respond with seemingly acceptable justifications for their non-engagement, for example, with opinions such as:

- [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] is just a waste of time. (Maggie)
- Yeah ... I was just like, doing the ‘I don’t get it’ comment. (Libby)
- Yeah, I don’t get it, what’s the subject about? (Maggie)
- I don’t understand, what’s the point? (Libby)

They went on further to say:

**Libby:** I think it was just ignoring, like I just didn’t [want to be there], it wasn’t something that I was ever confronted with so ignorance is easy.

**Maggie:** ... I think that’s the biggest power that white people within Australia have is that we can ignore it.

**Libby:** Yeah we are privileged in the fact that we don't have to talk about it, we don't have to answer, we don't have to rationalise nothing...you just go on your merry way and without it ever having to be an issue. (Group interview 1, 2005)

In this sense, Carter (1997) sees Whiteness as a “filter for race-based information” (p. 199), noting that it operates as “a psychological template” or “worldview” for interpreting information and responding to the world. Within this interpretive worldview students’ anger toward the culturally contextualised processes they are embroiled in is compounded by the very explicit positioning of themselves inside that context. Within this interpretive worldview, students’ anger toward the culturally contextualised processes they are embroiled in is compounded by the very explicit positioning of themselves inside that context and the strategies devised by Indigenous peoples to reveal this filter. A culturally diverse teaching and lecturing team is therefore important (see Section 6.2) to enable students to deconstruct their responses to Indigenous peoples using a range of viewpoints. This exposure assists to disrupt normalised perceptions of an ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary (see Section 7.1.3).

Remarkably, given that students are being asked to share only what they feel comfortable with, it is interesting to note how displaced from their comfort zone students become almost immediately, as Genevieve recalls:

I have been amazed in just one week how much this subject has pushed me outside my comfort zone. I had always thought that I had a good grasp of what culture is and a complete understanding of race and racial issues. It seems that I was terribly mistaken. (Journal, 2009)

What this indicates is that there is a pre-existing “comfort zone” that sanctions particular ways of thinking about “race and racial issues” that do not work in an inter-subjective critical space because the Other is present and may speak back (Hart, 2003). Genevieve does not elaborate on what her “good grasp” was, but it seems from her reflection that it was unable to bear up under scrutiny in this new space of enquiry.

Any progression toward transforming the ways in which students think about ‘race’ and ‘culture’ commences with being able to “undo” (Farrah, Interview, 2005) the fears and trepidation in order to guide students toward critical examination of their standpoints. The disruption therefore is strategically embedded as part of the

formal pedagogy and re-sets the direction in which discussions around these complex issues are able to proceed. Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy makes allowances for the social, cultural, political and institutional forces that influence students toward particular assumptions. Therefore disruption is a logical response to examinations of the discord between accepted understandings, and those contradicted by Indigenous knowledge perspectives.

### **6.1.3 STANDPOINT AND COLLECTIVE CULTURE: “THIS PART IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES JUST DROVE US NUTS!”**

Students are required to make specific links between their individual ideas and how these ideas are supported, denied or conditioned in social, cultural and institutional spaces. They consider the influences of history, and the historical record through a timeline activity which requires them to reflect on questions such as “What are the consequences of settlement for non-Indigenous Australians?” and “What are the consequences for Indigenous Australians?” (see 3.2.2). In this section I present data which relates to students’ investigations of what provokes them to think more about themselves and their standpoints. I consider the effect of learning relationships on students as they begin to distance themselves from the more familiar and safe path of objectification of Indigenous peoples and how they articulate their experiences when the gaze is turned upon their own positions.

The learning environments in which students are involved influence progression of their thinking in relation to their connections to a collective cultural framework. Links have been made between recognising cultural standpoint and creating new positions inside working for social justice in education contexts. For example, Page (2009) proposes that

[I]f White teachers can understand themselves as racial, cultural beings and understand the privilege afforded them by their race, then they can take the next step and work against such arbitrary injustice. (p. 5)

Developing an understanding of one’s cultural standpoint can prepare the individual to facilitate shift in the racialised conditions under which ideas about Indigenous peoples and cultures are perpetuated in education. Critical reflection by the pre-service teacher on Self, Collective culture, and relations of dominance, is therefore key to more effective curriculum development and teaching practice (Frankenburg, 1997; Page, 2009).

*Cultures and Indigenous Education* temporarily places non-Indigenous students into a space where invisible assumptions of dominance no longer preside as the taken-for-granted understorey of collective systems of knowledge production about Self and Others. Instead, students are invited into a necessarily complicated “relational space” where these power dimensions are revealed and called into question in overt and subtle ways. Although temporary and fleeting, given that it is only one subject in a course of many other subjects, clarifying and articulating standpoints as part of Indigenous studies is daunting for non-Indigenous students, as Samantha reveals:

I was really looking forward to doing the subject, and then when we got into the first part and it was like right “so who am I”? And it’s like “ohh God” and that freaked me out. ‘No I don’t want to have to look at myself, don’t want to have to think about myself, I want to think about other people!’ So that was really good. Like it kind of, it was a great way to start because you had to think ... it really breaks the journey then you really did have to think about who you are, and you kinda start to realise... (Samantha, Group interview 1, 2005)

The new, unexpected space of enquiry is initially confusing for students as Samantha’s reflection shows. Her “freak out” resulted from being placed into a situation where she had to consider “who am I”. The context of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* disrupts the powerful position of being an “observer in an observed world” (Graham, 1999, p.106). The ingrained social mechanisms for dealing with knowledge about Indigenous peoples are immediately subverted by the different role assumed by Indigenous peoples in the subsequent dialogue. However, in Samantha’s statement that she “wants to think about other people”, it is unclear whether she is referring to Indigenous peoples, or other non-Indigenous peoples, either as a collective or individually. Either way, Samantha’s statement indicates that there is an assumed distance between her standpoint and who one might be expected to “think about” in an Indigenous studies classroom. If “other people” refers to non-Indigenous peoples, there is also a distance that she interprets between herself and a collective cultural group.

Being introduced to this process by an Aboriginal academic leads some students to an immediate recognition of their whiteness and in some cases, the

configuration of this standpoint as being a disempowered one in the context of Indigenous studies.

I, like other students, felt as if I was not going to do well in this subject. The first two lectures were confronting and their [sic] were many discussions between groups on how we thought we were going to do in this subject because we were white ... Jean scared us all a bit in these first lectures ... (Mary, Journal, 2005)

I wasn't sure if it was possible for me to do well because I'm not Indigenous and I've never had much contact with Indigenous people ... I have never suffered the oppression that Indigenous Australians have faced. I live a non-Indigenous, white, middle class life. Who am I to comment on Indigenous issues? I don't feel like I have the right, or the knowledge. (Joanne, Online, 2009)

Again the restrictive element of 'fear' works its way into the equation. Whether this fear has any grounding or not is irrelevant if students believe it to be a factor affecting their participation in the subject. Joanne's initial understanding of her place to comment was that she "had no rights". This indicates that she sees a disconnection between Indigenous peoples' experiences in colonial history, and in the present, and her own experiences.

The exploration of power relations from a personalised standpoint is important in the first stages of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Fear emerges when individuals begin to recognise complicity to racism and often as a consequence, challenges to unconsciously held dominant ideologies can cause "resentment" (Bartolome, 2004, p. 100). Activities in the subject are designed to expose and deal with the problems that arise as a consequence (3.2). This is especially important in light of previous discussions of how students exercise privilege through whiteness (6.1.2). This privilege allows them to frame expectations of Indigenous studies as irrelevant to them as non-Indigenous peoples. In both Mary and Joanne's reflections this position of privilege conferred by their Whiteness is contradicted by their feelings of being 'disempowered' by a lack of "knowledge" (Mary) and having no "right to speak" (Joanne). It is telling also that Mary has questioned her ability to succeed in the subject. The presumption that success is dependent on the cultural background of the student is indicative of how some students see themselves in

relation to others in positions of perceived power (e.g., Unit Co-ordinator) rather than the deeper aspects of their cultural location. Indigenous people analysing and speaking about non-Indigenous peoples' systems of knowing is not the intersubjective positioning expected given the "dead and dying" (Lucashenko, 2009) motif underpinning collected knowledges about Indigenous peoples in public domains (2.2). This kind of response should not be construed as occurring due to a lack of familiarity with non-white teachers, as these two students had spent the semester learning with an Indigenous teacher. Other factors must be influencing their response. The effects of their initial investigations, and to being exposed to an Indigenous viewpoint through the lectures in the first few weeks of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, exerts a power still felt by Mary and Joanne at the end of the semester.

Reflecting on the complex relation between self-perception and the influence of collective cultural knowledge production, John conveys the confusion he experienced in re-negotiating *his* position in relation to Indigenous peoples when he exclaims, "But even being able to look at yourself, you know, this part in Indigenous studies just drove us nuts!" (Group interview 1, 2005). Self-examination in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* takes place in a context that requires students to recognise that we are not individual entities bound only to ourselves; and neither are we individuals trapped by a collective cultural system that compels us to act and know in pre-determined ways. The focus on "individualism in Western practice" is cited as a barrier to acknowledging the effects of a collective cultural framework on the ways in which the (non-Indigenous) individual functions (Gair, Miles & Thomson, 2005, p. 181). While Gair et al., (2008) refer here to the influence of Western individualism in the practice of social work, it has resonance for any practice in which human relations are central to the achievement of professional goals, for example, education practice.

John recalls the point when he started to make connections between his individual stance and an outside, collective cultural influence on his viewpoints:

You go past that and you start thinking, 'Why am I feeling like this? What's making me do this? *What?* You try to pinpoint what's making your stomach turn when you think about things ... (John, Group interview 1, 2005, original emphasis)

Here, John is beginning to conceive of ‘culture’ in a much deeper sense, not as a fixed entity that individuals have or don’t have, but locating it as a complex generative force that Meyer (2006) defines as a practice of ‘culture-making’. The systemic silencing of Indigenous knowledge perspectives is integral to fortifying the dominance of the national story about Australian collectives (2.1.2). John’s “stomach turn” could be seen as a visceral response to the reintegration of Indigenous voice into this collective narrative. In one sense, John is in the process of re-making his perceptions of his culture, and therefore his views of himself as a consequence. John’s reflection on the connections between his standpoint and understandings about his culture are significant. Until students become aware of these connections, even if they can’t articulate it exactly like John in this instance, they remain challenged by their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Furthermore, data discussed in 6.1.1 show that responses are emotional and expressed at the level of what is ‘felt’ by the students; in John’s case there is a transition toward attempts to reason through his emotional reactions when he asks himself “Why am I feeling like this?”, “What is making me do this?”.

The ongoing challenges experienced by students who avoid making connections between what they ‘feel’ and what they ‘think’ is shown quite clearly in the reflections of student, Daphne, who appeared to experience no shifts over the semester. She reflects in her end-of-semester journal (2005) that:

The first module “Identity and Culture” I found very confronting. The first module did not change my perspective. I found it very limited in the scope. I think that the next module will again be limited in the scope.

Daphne’s first statement is a reflection on her emotional response to the materials, describing her learning as “confronting”. The invisibility of cultural dominance (Kendall, 2006) and the lack of familiarity students have with a process of deep investigation into one’s standpoint in relation to Indigenous peoples within this dominating conceptual framework work in concert to confound students. While Daphne is not specifically describing her knowledge about culture, her resistance to making the connections is clear. Her feeling of being “confronted” segues into an immediate assessment of the module’s content: it was “very limited in scope”. Furthermore, she is as firm in her expectation that the next stage of learning will “again be limited in scope”. The subtext of Daphne’s statement appears to equate the

need to clarify her ideas around her cultural standpoint to “changing perspectives”. Her emotional reaction to this presumed obligation prevents her from providing detail about the reasons for her beliefs about its limitations.

## 6.2 LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS

The general principles of Indigenist theoretical approaches that *Cultures and Indigenous Education* adheres to include centring Indigenous knowledge perspectives as a focal point for investigations, privileging these viewpoints in these contexts and advancing processes that lead to emancipation. In a study of 15 universities delivering compulsory Indigenous studies, Mooney, Halse and Craven (2003) found that there were mixed responses in relation to the question of who should teach Indigenous studies. Overall most respondents agreed that “Regardless of [their] ethnicity, confidence, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and the capacity to teach critical thinking about Aboriginal issues, was thought to be the most important attributes for teachers” (n.p). However, the role of Indigenous lecturers is important when discussions centre on Indigenous cultural knowledge to maintain intellectual safeguards and avoid the misappropriation of these knowledges. In *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, grounded by the recognition that dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is key to breaking down current power relations, the role of non-Indigenous teaching staff is clearly necessary to modelling and instigating this dialogue, along with Indigenous teachers.

Since the first delivery of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in 2003, teaching staff have varied in gender, age and cultural background, with lectures organised strategically to take advantage of this range of voices for re-establishing the foundations and promoting new forms of relating across and within multiple cultural spaces. Furthermore, questions that direct discussions away from ‘What do I need to know about Indigenous peoples?’ toward deeper levels of enquiry are motivated by questions like ‘Why do I think like I do?’ Questions such as this are used to orient learning toward taking responsibility for our own contributions to the shape and form of the ‘relational spaces’, which Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson and Wright (2007) describe as “sites of complexity, coexistence and situated engagement” (p. 218). This approach challenges the literature which locates Indigenous studies as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge *about* Indigenous peoples, which to some extent

leaves it up to the benevolence of the individual who may or may not choose to engage on that basis.

In this section (6.2) I explore the dimensions of the learning relationships created by this alternative approach to Indigenous Studies and to discuss how students respond. First, I analyse the various reactions of students and tutors to the positions that are taken in the initial discussions which are focussed on standpoint and collective cultures, including a discussion of how the cultural backgrounds of participants influence the learning relationships established in Module 1 (6.2.1). Second, I discuss the influence of class size on the level and type of engagements students display (6.2.2). Finally, I consider how responses to Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers are reinforced or de-emphasised as a consequence of the relationships that surface in the learning environment (6.2.3).

#### **6.2.1 SEEKING A SAFE SPACE – “NO ONE IS ASKING YOU TO SAY SORRY”**

Before tutorials start students have attended the introductory lecture which I deliver, and completed readings of two chapters from the set text *Introduction to Indigenous Studies in Education: The importance of knowing* (Phillips & Lampert, 2005). The first required reading is authored by three non-Indigenous students written immediately after their completion of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This reading discusses their experiences in the subject. It analyses their early expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and discusses a range of influences on the development of these expectations. The students also provide some analysis of the ‘blame factor’ in terms of their attitude toward their studies and the challenges that emerged from viewing Australia and Australian history through Indigenous lenses. They state that “due to our lack of understanding, a fear of disrespecting Indigenous peoples, failing assessment pieces and misrepresenting factual content was continuous and very real” (Miller, Dunn & Currell, 2005, p. 65). In their chapter, Miller et al. also broach the issue of ‘cultural racism’ and how social distance between themselves and “minority groups subjected to racism” subverted the need for them to consider this issue as relevant to their lives, arguing that “without even realising we were implicated in this form of racism, it entered our lives in a multitude of ways” (p. 63). At one stage in their analysis the authors discuss cultural dominance, citing Hollinsworth’s interpretation of student guilt in Aboriginal studies

as “an indulgence, another privilege of dominance” (1998, p. 24 in Miller et al., 2005, p. 64).

When contemplating her responses to her reading of the first set chapter, Penny (student) says that she felt

a little cranky ... I most certainly did feel very sorry over the past actions and representations of Indigenous history ... After reading this statement I wasn't sure what to feel. Yes, I was sorry but was I sorry because I am a white person from the dominant culture? Is it therefore wrong to feel [this]? ... and then I thought because I am white will it ever be right of me to feel sorry ... or will it always be I am feeling the guilt because of the white thing? I then became very cranky over the whole colour issue. (Online, 2009)

Penny's response to the first required reading for the semester demonstrates that from the outset, her pre-existing knowledge, opinions, beliefs about self and emotions were influential to her interpretation of the reading. As discussed in 6.1, students often couch their responses in these early weeks in terms of what they 'feel'. Penny's response provides further evidence of the power of emotion to *re-thinking* ideas about Self. For example, her reading about 'white guilt' (Hollinsworth, 1998) disrupted her from her existing standpoint of compassion (“I most certainly did feel sorry”), creating a situation where “she didn't know what to feel”, as if there are right and wrong ways to feel. The dilemma erupting from her attempts to find a safe space for her as a “white person” to relate to Indigenous issues or peoples is evident.

The second reading completed by students prior to tutorials was authored by me. From one Indigenous standpoint (mine) the chapter critiques the positions through which most non-Indigenous Australians come to know Indigenous peoples. It highlights history and contemporary systemic dominance as fundamental to knowledge produced about Indigenous peoples for particular purposes (Phillips, 2005). The chapter also makes links between these ideas, teacher positioning and schooling in Australia. In response to her reading of this chapter Michelle asserts that

this chapter, I am sure is the beginning of a learning curve in my knowledge of Australian history and a culture I am a part of ... after reading [it], my emotions were very strong ... when I was reading the end part of the chapter, I asked myself ... geeez ... how are we meant to start teaching children

something that their parents probably don't agree on? ... something most people are sooo closed off to! ... how scary, but necessary. (Online, 2009)

The disruption that eventuates from exposure to the empowered voice of Indigenous peoples and Indigenist approaches (which includes *not* taking a position of defence in the pedagogy) is strategic (Williams, 2000). The lectures and activities are not positioned as a means to substantiate the inherent 'racism' of non-Indigenous Australians. Not all students are as measured as Michelle in sharing their initial concerns and fears that this may be the case. The pre-formed expectation of being "attacked" has been shown to put students on the defensive (6.1) and Carrie doesn't hold back in expressing her angst: "I didn't really agree with anything that was said [in the first lecture]. I felt very frustrated! I do not support racism in any way and am appalled by people who do treat Aborigines with disrespect" (Carrie, Online, 2009). This is echoed in an observation by teacher Persephone that "Guilt ... is the stuff that started to come out this week: 'Why do we have to think about white people as bad?', 'It's not my fault', 'We can't change history', that sort of comment. Lots of emotions running high" (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005).

The conflict and contradiction experienced is immediate. As already discussed, some of this can be attributed to a 'fear of offending', a fear of being labelled a 'racist' or simply a response to the word-of-mouth expectations that students take on from previous students of the subject. According to Todd (2003), in pedagogy "guilt is a constitutive feature of subjectivity itself, characterising an *anticipatory state*, a *susceptibility* to becoming a subject in relation to another person" (p. 98, original emphasis). These responses are common each year, and are an indication of a successful start to the program given that decolonisation requires that individuals deconstruct, and eventually, detach from ideas in which they have much investment (see 4.2). The combined effect of reading "confronting" chapters, the pre-existing expectations of Indigenous studies, resistance to being forced to study *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, the immediate Indigenist stance taken and the realisation by students that they are expected to self-interrogate, all influence the tenor of students' reflections on their engagement in their first tutorial class. Learning activities are carefully organised to provoke students to consider the knowledge they hold in a more critical and self-aware manner. While teachers are aware of this and the lengthy journey ahead from the early stages of the subject, students are not. For

many it is several weeks until they are able to understand the process they are engaged in and to shift out of their silence.

The ‘silence’ of students in the first week could be seen as a consequence of the shock they experience after commencing the program prepared to sit and listen to content solely focussed on Indigenous peoples and our experiences. This may generate a fear following the recognition in the first lecture that their views are to be deconstructed: that they are the focus of the enquiry (Pearson, 2007). As previously mentioned, students come in prepared to “be offended” at being “called an invader” and prepare themselves to deal with this by “just getting through it” (Martha, Interview, 2005). Or, to avoid causing offence, students ready themselves to say whatever “they [teaching staff] want to hear” (Farrah, Interview, 2005). In these beginning stages particularly, when the context and principles for learning are being established, teachers are advised to deal with questionable remarks about “drunk Aborigines” (Persephone, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005) swiftly or to re-direct back to the student for explanation. Student Samantha describes the way learning occurs in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* as

a slow process ... where you’re making people start to think and question without them even really knowing it ... yeah I often wonder why it’s such an emotional thing [going through it] but often I come back to that you don’t want to be seen to do the wrong thing. (Interview, 2005)

The learning environment in the first weeks is characterised by fear, scepticism and rancour, therefore students need to be reassured that fears about “doing the wrong thing” as expressed by Samantha (Interview, 2005) were not going to compromise their participation. However, it was equally important to not comfort students out of the notion that they will be challenged by the materials presented in the subject. Understandably, especially considering these challenges, there is a period of adjustment required for students and teachers while establishing a learning environment conducive to meeting these challenges. Also essential is the role of teachers in mitigating students’ fear of sharing deeply personal perspectives with strangers in an as yet unknown space. In the first week particularly, there is a period of superficially polite observation and testing the waters. Even though teachers experienced in teaching *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are aware that this phase will eventually be replaced by another, there is a sense of optimism at the

commencement of the semester. Teacher Persephone (Teaching Team Email, 2005) shared the following with her colleagues in an amusingly jaunty team-email in Week one: “Seemed like a pretty good group yesterday - the usual sorts of suspects - some nodding happily, some sitting arms crossed, some already claiming their lives are changed”.

In contrast, Persephone’s reflection in Week 3 demonstrates how students move quite swiftly from being polite to sharing and testing: “Oddly, it gets to me every single time. I think it’s that just when I’m starting to like the group, out it all comes and I have to not like them again, at least for a while” (Teaching Team Email, 2005). Tutor Xena agrees, responding:

I had to laugh when I read [Persephone’s] email ... this week I have been feeling exactly the same; fell in love with my group in Week 1, thinking, ‘this is great’, but by Weeks 2 & 3 I’m finding some students in my group quite difficult. (Teaching Team Email, 2005)

Persephone is non-Indigenous and Xena is Indigenous and it is apparent here that there is no distinction in the way that students are filtering their responses according to the cultural background of their teacher (Housee, 2008).

Mandy says that she “found [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] to be a challenge from beginning to end. For the first few weeks I didn’t really know if I liked the content, thought it was interesting, I didn’t like what it was making me feel” (Mandy, Final in-class reflection, 2005). Mandy’s intellectual engagement is shown by her “interest” in the content. The disruption she experienced is evidenced by the emotional difficulties occurring as a result of “feeling” something as a consequence. This demonstrates multidimensional learning. Not only are the intellect and emotions engaged simultaneously as a consequence of the pedagogy, but these levels are also interdependent responses acting as both cause and effect for Mandy’s choices in maintaining her connection to the curriculum. Sarah’s response was similar in some respects as she said that “for the first few weeks I did not enter anything into my journal at all as I was extremely stubborn and did not want to express my assumptions, thoughts and a variety of mixed emotions. I thought it was a waste of time” (Sarah, Journal, 2005). This type of response is quite common in these early stages; however, this process of guiding students to express and clarify their standpoints is critical. This process aims to target the unspoken agreements that lie

dormant beneath the cover of a whole host of taken-for-granted assumptions which contribute to cultural dominance.

Taken-for-granted assumptions refer to those issues which students take on face value, for example, that cultural studies programs should be about the culture of others, and not about ‘us’ as non-Indigenous peoples (Milner, 2007). This is connected to misconceptions students hold that culture is something exotic and observable rather than a worldview that governs how we make meaning and sense of the world around us (Dei, 2001; West, 2000). Sarah demonstrates how this manifested for her. She speaks about her initial disengagement but further into the reflection was able to describe the responsibilities she has as a learner for breaking through those barriers:

Looking back I see why I did not want to ‘unpack’ my inner thoughts and feelings, as I found the content which was presented to me very confronting as a non-Indigenous individual (from the dominant culture) ... People say the past should be left in the past, but what some people don’t seem to realise is that the mentality of the past moves on into the future. (Sarah, Journal, 2005)

There seems, however, to be a difference in the way that the older students process their experiences. While students like Martha find what the younger students say “really cringe-worthy”, she confesses that she’s “not saying that none us believe the same thing, we’re probably just more diplomatic” (Interview, 2005). Mature age student, Darren (Interview, 2005) reflects on the reactions of his fellow students:

**Darren:** That’s why I don’t understand the comments that I hear in the refectory because this is something that we all need to know. If we are going to change it you need to know. No one is asking you to say sorry, at least you haven’t yet, and you’re learning about the way the media is portraying it and I guess if no one is actually criticising anything that you’ve got to say, there is no need to get on your high horse about it; it’s just taking what actually happened and working it out for yourself.

**Interviewer:** So did you feel personally attacked at any stage?

**Darren:** No. I suppose if I had stronger negative opinions I might have, but I mean no, I think that there are a lot of people that sit in the tutorials going either ‘I don’t know what to say’ or ‘This is so different to

everything I've been told and I don't know really whether I am coming or going'.

Darren is making a significant connection between how the level of defensiveness students experience when investigating their own standpoints is influenced by the strength of the “negative opinions” (Interview, 2005) held by those students. Other students like John expressed that the things that other students say “makes [him] so angry, you know, and it's the hypocrisy that gets me. When this is coming out of your mouth and your actions don't line up with what you say” (Interview, 2005). This discrepancy between theory and action is highlighted by Lampert (2005) as an issue of concern in Indigenous studies. Individuals from a dominant culture have a choice about whether to act, and platitudes such as “I believe in human rights” can act as a barrier to further action (Lampert, 2005, p. 88). The power of platitudes in simultaneously framing a moral position, and closing down further questioning is addressed by the pedagogy (see 3.2) and data related specifically to this issue is presented in 7.1.2.

Darren provides some insight into what he sees as underlying reasons for the silence of his peers in class, locating these as linked to ‘not knowing what to say’ and being so unfamiliar with the learning environment and subject content that they are confused into stasis or, as with John's observation, contradictory behaviour. A response to this lack of familiarity with the content and pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in comparison to other subjects they have studied is reinforced by the observation made by Persephone (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005) that the defensiveness of the students in her group was expressed in part as a discomfort with the unusual nature of the pedagogy. She cited as a barrier to discussions, “the ‘difference’ between this unit and others” with students asking, “How are we supposed to take notes and on what?” (Persephone, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). Farrah offers some advice about what would encourage her to speak out in such a space and indicates that she would be more encouraged in this respect if there was a balance in the materials presented:

I'm sure if there were some positives then you would have more people listening. It puts a lot of white people on the defence to be constantly negative ... I start to feel like this – ‘Don't completely bag me because I'm all defensive then I'll shut up. Like anyone does when they're put down or

marginalised'. Now I can see where they're coming from but I think 'God, I can't take it'. I feel if you can acknowledge the good part of me – I'll acknowledge the truth." (Farrah, Interview, 2005)

Farrah has raised a number of significant issues in this interview, which was conducted four weeks into the program just after completion of Module 1. This module uses reading material that theoretically explores the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (6.2.1). These readings are supplements to the main enquiries taking place through lectures and tutorials (3.2.2). These activities are designed to encourage students to explore *their own* ideas about self and culture (for example, Table 6.1). This is contradicted by Farrah's interpretation that there were "constant negative portrayals" of "white people". However, positioning herself as being under attack ("don't completely bag me") does enable Farrah to rationalise her defensiveness. Her final statement pits two opposing aspects against each other: "the good part of me" and "the truth". The acceptance of potentially upsetting "truth" is reliant on her, as a white person, being gently cajoled to see it. The feeling of being "marginalised" is interpreted through a pre-existing lens that Farrah neglects to expand on, although earlier she did suggest that it was the job of the teaching staff to "undo" this prior learning (6.1.2).

### **6.2.2 SMALL VERSUS LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION**

As shown above, students are challenged by aspects of the program and its initial focus on clarifying standpoints with targeted questioning techniques, and at a more personal and intellectual level. This creates the need to provide spaces for students to safely explore their ideas without feeling exposed to their peers or their teachers. Data from teachers suggest that there is a difference in the way that students share their thoughts when placed into small groups as opposed to whole class discussions:

- People were keen to share experiences in groups – but not so much in an open forum. (Alec, Week 1, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)
- Some students really sat back with arms folded and were reluctant to engage in the discussions as a whole group. (Alyssa, Week 1, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)
- Another barrier was the students' starting point or level of knowing, as they mostly seemed naive, ignorant and lacking awareness of the issues

involved, but they are not unwilling to discuss them. They responded well to small group based discussions. (Xena, Week 1, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)

Teachers acknowledge the difficulties of discussing the issues raised in a large group, attributing “silence” to a discomfort with sharing in that space. Xena’s observation that students seem “naive, ignorant and lacking awareness” is not positioned by her as a barrier to discussion. Excerpts from other tutor data show that for some students silence is a way of avoiding talk about “racism”. Links have been drawn between responses of ‘guilt’ and ‘silence’ in classrooms which focus on issues of race and whiteness. From her point of view as an anti-racist educator, Wagner (2005) suggests that “white students ... may feel silenced into guilt as they become increasingly aware of how their White identity is complicitous with [racially oppressive] historical and contemporary structures” (pp. 264-265).

Persephone explains how her group negotiated the silence that occurs around issues of ‘race’ in a space where individuals are unsure of what is acceptable to say: “Interesting that in my two groups one student will take on the role of ‘speaking’ the racism – this is good in a high trust groups – they open up to discussion” (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). This observation was made in Week 2 of the semester so may also mean that students just don’t know each other well enough to share anything, let alone issues of such a touchy nature. As comfort levels increase, students begin to become more vocal (6.2.1). Xena reports that

By Week 3, some students are getting more comfortable in the group to speak up, one student is quite annoyed that she has to analyse media articles, what’s the use, and they’re just pieces of media that I don’t even read, listen to or watch. She felt that at no time does media influence her thinking at all, I suggested she put her feelings into her journal. (Teaching Team Email, 2005)

In this section I have discussed the general ideas behind the pedagogy and student responses to the difficulties arising from processes designed to establish a critical thinking framework. This stage is integral to preparing students for the more theoretical investigations that follow. Students need to be personally aligned in order for the theory to be made relevant to their own professional identities. Educators like Wagner (2005) go even further, arguing that in the emotionally charged spaces of

classrooms dealing with ‘race’ and culture, “content cannot be conveyed unless the process is first carefully developed and cultivated” (p. 263). The consideration of how students’ standpoints implicate them in achieving social justice, particularly when they want to be seen as ‘good people’, is crucial. I now explore the effect of student assumptions about Indigenous peoples’ and non-Indigenous standpoints on these reactions and describe the range of intercultural learning relationships that occur in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

### 6.2.3 CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS – “OKAY, NO EYE CONTACT”

The relationships that students see between their culture and the cultures of the teaching staff impacts on how they perceive their freedom to speak, and express their assumptions. Students are more cautious with what they share when they have Indigenous (or non-white) teachers. With non-Indigenous teachers, particularly white teachers, this reticence seems to be set aside earlier as can be seen in Persephone’s experience from Week 2.

We started discussing media representations and racial targetting...then stories started to be 'shared'. "But I was attacked once", and "Sometimes they ask for it, don't they..." and, "I couldn't afford to go on school camp but the Aboriginal kids in my school got it paid for"...and...and... But being now being well trained in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (didn't we once call this the 'F' factor?), I re-directed questions back to student: 'What is that statement meaning to you as you say it?' and finally [asked] them to write down where they thought their statements came from and why they thought the question of race made them uncomfortable. I also asked them what made them desire so strongly to 'defend' white practices. (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)

Persephone’s reflection indicates that some students were relatively comfortable with making stereotypical remarks about Indigenous peoples getting special treatment (“the Aboriginal kids ... got it paid for”) and being violent (“I was attacked once”). Whereas students in tutorial groups led by an Indigenous tutor report that it felt safer to not say anything at all: “I went in thinking it was a bit scary and I’ll be offensive and I’ll say the wrong thing [so] I’ll be better off saying nothing” (Samantha, Group interview 1, 2005). As an Indigenous teacher, I notice this from the other side as “students seem to think twice, thrice or more before they say anything, whether about

black people or white people” (Researcher, Journal, 2005). Non-Indigenous teacher Medea’s remarks echo Persephone’s experience:

When the [student] made the assertion that "Who would want to belong to a culture full of rapists", I asked him directly what made him say that, (this was still small group, not large group), and he said that it happens all the time in communities in central Australia. I asked him how he "knew" this to be true. He shrugged ... It always makes me wonder why they think it is OK to say this stuff to me. I wonder if I look like a neo-nazi, or if it’s because I fit a stereotype of who is a lecturer, or whether it’s because us whitefellas look all the same!! We must all think the same. (Teachers’ Online Group, 2009)

The assumption that students may expect a non-Indigenous teacher to be more agreeable to offensive statements about Indigenous peoples is broached by Medea here. The reason the student feels free to share is hard to estimate.

In my reply to this post by Medea, I comment that “after 8 years of teaching in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* I have never ONCE had a student make a derogatory remark in the first weeks of the semester” (Researcher, Teachers’ Online Group, 2009). Students’ unwillingness to express their points of view to me in classes may be attributable to factors additional to my Aboriginality. As I also coordinate the unit, students may see me as someone who has power over them in terms of the administration of the subject. In comparison, Indigenous teacher Myra’s experience of the ‘racism’ of students is hidden in the terminology students employ. She reports that: “One student used racially offensive language. Given that we are still establishing a trust environment I chose to deal with this gently and quickly” (Myra, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). There is a difference between ‘racially offensive language’ and the kinds of statements that Medea and Persephone report being exposed to.

An understanding of how students manage their relationship with Indigenous teachers is evident in the conversation that occurred between students involved in the Group interview in 2005. When they were asked to reflect on their reactions to Indigenous teaching staff, the following discussion ensued:

**Interviewer:** So all of you had Indigenous teachers didn’t you, so what were your first thoughts when you met?

**Samantha:** I think [my Aboriginal teacher] is brilliant. I don't know how she can stand up there and do that class sometimes. I just...

**John:** I saw her take a deep breath a couple of times.

**Samantha:** She's just...

**Farrah:** She has a feisty class or...?

**Samantha:** Oh, I wouldn't say it was feisty.

**John:** Not feisty.

**Samantha:** But some of the comments ... I don't know how she could just say "Well what does somebody else think about that?" And I guess it's probably better to do it that way, but she has a lot of self control. ...

**Farrah:** ... My tutor [Xena] was, again, the same thing. They must have done, you know, Restraint 101. But, umm, by the same token, she sort of encouraged ... a safe environment. And it was terrific, this safe environment, so if you did say something stupid...

**Samantha:** Yeah and that's how you've got to be to get people to learn I suppose.

**John:** It took a little while though [to] get to a point where you feel like you can ask questions and you're not going to get that look [which means] you won't be getting the grade that you'd like, so that just comes back to that safe environment.

**Samantha:** It took a while didn't it? It was like a face-off I think in the beginning. You know, 'What can I ask? What can't I ask?' ..."

This interview took place at the end of the semester. However, themes which emerge from this conversation are that initial expectations about what might, or might not be acceptable are compounded in learning relationships with Indigenous teachers. There were some students in Samantha's class who made comments that seemed questionable to her: "but some of the comments ... I don't know how she could just say ..." (Group interview 1, 2005). Farrah also suggests that the patience of Indigenous teachers is "terrific", "they must have done Restraint 101" (Group interview 1, 2005). In this discussion, Samantha, John and Farrah discuss an

important issue relating to effects of the cultural background of teaching staff on the learning engagements in Indigenous studies. John recognises the difficulties that Indigenous teachers might face when he identifies that a “deep breath” by his tutor may have been necessary to gain composure. He situates his own response of taking “a while [to] get to a point” to ask questions without “getting that look”. While John does not elaborate on what this “look” is, when analysed in the context of his other statements it could be interpreted as one which affects how “safe” the “environment ... *feels*”. He then links this emotional safety to express points of view with his academic achievement in “getting the grade”.

Samantha and Farrah make similar observations on the “restraint” required by their teachers to deal with potential conflict – in teacher’s responses to student comments and also in relation to students’ openness about perceived reactions by their teachers: “it was face-off” (Samantha); getting comfortable with “say[ing] something stupid” (Farrah); “what can I ask?”. These students were all mature-age, and relatively amenable to engaging in the learning of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, which is evident in the reflexive quality of their explanations of the dynamics of the teacher-student relationships in their tutorial groups. In these groups there is a direct relationship possible between the tutors and students so there is more opportunity for this “safe environment” to be developed given the direct connections that can be made. The most powerful responses to Indigenous teaching staff however emerge in relation to the lectures, where no direct engagement is possible in the course of the discussions.

Rarely is the teaching team provided with explicit reflections by students about how the cultural background of their teachers affects their interactions and responses. Students do discuss this issue outside of class however. Harriet (Online, 2009) provided her reflection of this issue, explaining the ways in which her peers were discussing this outside of the learning space of the classroom:

I also thought it was worth mentioning here some comments I have heard from other students. Mainly what stood out is the comments on the difference between having an Indigenous lecturer and a non-Indigenous lecturer and how they feel on a personal level, how much they take away from these sessions. The words that was [sic] used a lot in these conversations was ‘guilt’. [With a non-Indigenous lecturer] I can actually

take it in because I'm not feeling guilty the whole time...' or, 'She comes across a different way because she's not Indigenous'. I don't personally feel this way but I found this interesting and I thought you might also (not sure if these people will mention it in their personal journals).

Of the data collected over the years for this study, this is the first time that any feedback has been made available about this issue. Even as a secondary source it provides a useful way to conceptualise the relationships between some non-Indigenous students and Indigenous lecturers. As mentioned previously, there are four lectures in Module 1, with three of these always delivered by an Aboriginal academic (the researcher). In nearly every year, the final lecture in Module 1 is delivered by a non-Indigenous lecturer (Persephone), the main topic of which is: "The Dangers of Essentialising". Harriet has indicated that there is a lot of "guilt" felt when listening to "an Indigenous lecturer". Previous data also show that many students also feel "challenged" and "confronted" in the first weeks (6.1; 6.2). These feelings of "guilt" and being "confronted" prevent some students from actually "taking in" what the Indigenous lecturer is saying. Yet, students quite clearly respond as if they have heard something. Recall Farrah's comment about the "constant ... negatives" when referring to non-Indigenous peoples (6.2.1), Tammy's comment that the "information was presented in a negative way" (6.1.2), or earlier discussions across each of the sections in this chapter. The related issues of resistance are discussed in Chapter 7.

As show in Table 6.2, there is a distinct difference between the reflections students made about lectures delivered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching staff. Students' receptivity to lectures from non-Indigenous lecturers was marked by openness to the language, tone and ideas presented, although there was no significant difference in each of these respects in lectures delivered by Indigenous lecturers.

Table 6.2 Comparative summary of responses to Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching staff

Non-Indigenous students on non-Indigenous teaching staff	Non-Indigenous students on Indigenous teaching staff
<p>“So wow, what an intense lecture. I really feel as though I need to build on my vocabulary! E.g. anthropological taxonomy (and I still don’t know if this was right!!!) ... I’ve heard three of [guest speaker’s] lectures and I think he has an amazing ability ...” (Carrie, Online, 2009)</p>	<p>“... lectures were extremely confrontational. The information was presented in a negative way towards myself and I feel that it was unnecessary to ‘put the blame’ on individuals such as myself ... Lecturers need to be made aware that their actions and presentations were discriminatory and compeltly (sic) inappropriate, against the dominant class. I felt pressured, and emotionally uncomfortable.” (Tammy, Journal, 2005)</p>
<p>“I really enjoyed the lecture ... [Persephone] raised some very important issues” (Mary, Final in-class reflection, 2005)</p>	<p>“I went to the fourth lecture on Monday and listened to the [Aboriginal] woman who was a famous writer. This lecture made me so ANGRY! I enjoyed the first part on the history; however ... I understand [us not knowing] may frustrate her but why should we be made to feel stupid if we were never taught this information.” (Carrie, Online, 2009)</p>
<p>“The lecture on ‘Essentialising ... was the most beneficial lecture to me. I felt I learnt a lot about myself as a person in this lecture and came away from it feeling very positive”(Alison, Final in-class reflection, 2005).</p>	<p>“I felt confronted and it seemed as if Jean was very anti White Australians and believed that Aborigines could do no wrong. I also felt like the lecture was very contradictory.” (Carrie, Online, 2005)</p>
<p>“I learnt a lot from [the] lecture on ‘Essentialising’ and how I sometimes do this without realising” (Dawn, Final in-class reflection, 2005).</p>	<p>“I found today’s lecture very confronting. I felt that my learning experience revolved around dealing with the built-up anger aimed at us throughout the whole lecture. I am not sure whether this was the intention of the (Aboriginal guest) lecturer, but I could not concentrate on anything else ... (Latika, Journal, 2005)</p>
<p>“I particularly enjoyed lecture six on ‘Essentialising’ as it was very informative about myself and indeed my culture” (Cheryl, Final in-class reflection, 2005).</p>	<p>“I kept looking at him last night looking for signs ... and do you know someone behind me – this is interesting – the person behind me said “Oh, I’ve heard this one (names Aboriginal guest lecturer) is controversial. I thought ‘Great. Just great. There’s no one in front of me and I’ve got eye contact’. So I joked with the person next to me and said, ‘Ok, no eye contact’ ... When the guy behind me said that, my first instinct was, [the guest] is going to have a go at me.” (Farrah, Interview, 2005)</p>

The responses by Carrie, Mary, Alison, Dawn and Cheryl as shown in Table 6.2 demonstrate the receptivity mentioned earlier. Confusion about the language used was expressed in a tone of excitement by Carrie, who, while challenged by the vocabulary used, was comfortable with experimenting with new ideas:

“Anthropological taxonomy (and I still don’t know if this was right!!!!)”. Mary, Alison, Dawn and Cheryl appear to be entranced by the lecture on “Essentialising”, delivered by a non-Indigenous lecturer early in the semester, and re-contextualising the issues relating to standpoint that were covered in the first lectures. These students report “learning a lot about myself” (Alison), remarking on how “very informative” the lecture was. Dawn shows reflexivity in her reflection, reporting a critical shift in her self-perception saying that, “I sometimes do this without realising”.

In contrast, the reflections on the lectures delivered by Indigenous teachers are less rational and focussed more on the emotional reactions experienced, rather than the intellectual quality of the lecture. Perceptions of the lecturers as “confrontational”, “anti White Australians” and “contradictory” (Carrie); “angry” (Latika); and “controversial” (Farrah) create a filter for the knowledge being shared by these lecturers. In the case of Farrah, these perceptions were influenced by the opinions of her peers and forced her to develop a coping strategy, “Ok, no eye contact”, *before* she had even laid eyes on the lecturer in question. She reports that her first instinct was to expect that he would “have a go at me”. While this set up an initial position for her to listen to the lecture, Farrah was also able to shift into a space of receptivity when she realised her fears weren’t realised, as her reflections in the Group interview shows.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter examined findings related to Research Question 1, and focussed on examining student expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and initial responses to their studies in the subject. As demonstrated by the analysis, the expectations that students have when they commence their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are informed by popular discourses which exoticise, politicise or mythologise Indigenous peoples. In theoretical terms, the discourses employed by students objectified Indigenous peoples (see 2.3.3) as disconnected from them as non-Indigenous Australians on one hand, or an irrelevant burden on the other. The perception that Indigenous studies is not relevant to their personal or professional lives, as read through these discourses, generates emotional reactions that vary from apathy to mild interest and hostility. Consequently, students display fear and resistance when called upon to examine their own understandings and conceptions in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives and collective Australian culture and

knowledge systems. There is an element of frustration which seeps into students' reactions when they begin to examine their own standpoints; this is aggravated by their unclear understanding about the concept of culture, generally. When making links between history, culture and their standpoints within these dominating frameworks, students' emotional reactions are compounded.

As students begin to interrogate the connections between their expectations and the multiple dimensions of their own meaning-making practices, they develop an awareness of the links between their assumptions and their emotional reactions to the subject. The ways in which they filter understandings about Indigenous peoples is also revealed, leading to self-censorship in the language they use and, in some cases, students choosing silence over expressing their points of view. These choices in engagement are couched in terms of the perceived effect of their words on others (especially Indigenous people), although there is an indication that 'silence' is also related to their inability to articulate explicit responses regarding the form and effect of their own culture and knowledge systems.

The direct relationships that students have with their teachers in the subject have been shown to affect how they initially engage. The data show that in the first few weeks of the semester students struggle to find a safe or comfortable position from which to express their points of view. This struggle is particularly marked when students are working with Indigenous teaching staff: in some cases their uncertainty and hostility to Indigenous voices created a lack of receptivity to the knowledge being shared by these staff, particularly in the lectures. Students' desire to ensure that their words do not cause 'offence', or reflect them as 'racist', influenced their responses to what they were learning. The difficulties of sharing contestable views seem to have been minimised in smaller groups, however this effect dissipated as students became more comfortable with their teachers and peers.

Overall, the responses to the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in the critical learning space established in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are highly charged. Student responses varied, however the data indicates that these were underscored by similar ideas and positions in relation to their studies: emotional reactions were sometimes expressed through silence, other times more vocally. In these early stages of the subject students did not seem inclined to intellectualise the issues, and their visceral responses were more powerful in

influencing their engagement with the pedagogy. The disruption that occurs in Module 1 reflects that a lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples beyond exotica/victim paradigms was compounded by students' confusion around standpoints, and the nature of Australian cultures. Additionally, this was shown to influence their fears and insecurity when called upon to speak in relation to these issues. Self-interrogation of student responses assists to promote deeper learning, which moved students beyond passive observance even if the new space of enquiry was characterised by confusion and confrontation. In Chapter 7, I address the connections between these initial responses, students' theoretical explorations into the nature of dominance, and the vigorous forms of resistance that are consequently incited.

## Chapter 7: Resistance to New Systems of Knowing

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*Cultures and Indigenous Education* sets out to generate powerful forms of engagement in students. My previous teaching experiences – and social experiences – enabled me to anticipate common forms of resistance to deep learning in Indigenous studies. Specific strategies for purposefully arousing and dealing with resistance were subsequently embedded into the teaching materials for the subject. The pedagogy acknowledges that there is no neutral starting point for students or staff, as shown in the analysis in Chapter 6. The pedagogical approaches and the vehemence of student reactions in the beginning stages of the program (6.1) provide evidence of a host of significant contradictions useful for determining how resistance to, and within Indigenous studies manifests. Resistance to compulsory Indigenous studies is not construed as a by-product of ‘racism’ but rather evidence of inherited cultural privilege and therefore symptomatic of the standpoints through which personal, professional, political and historical relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are interpreted and understood through history into the present. The pedagogy is designed to facilitate students’ examination of their own standpoints in relation to Indigenous peoples and the collective knowledge systems which motivate individual understandings.

In this chapter I identify how students articulate their responses as they begin to make connections between the knowledge they hold and the detection of hidden knowledges facilitated by their exposure to Indigenous perspectives on non-Indigenous cultures in Australia. This analysis responds particularly to Research Question 2 to examine

What discourses are used by non-Indigenous students to manage, interpret and resist Indigenous knowledge perspectives when they actively engage and personalise their standpoint in relation to authorisation of these knowledge perspectives.

Through the analysis in this chapter I aim to show the connections between students’ understandings of Self, their understandings of Indigenous peoples and the impact of

revisiting historical spaces to redefine these relations. I analyse student resistance to explain how inconsistent perceptions simultaneously comfort and reinforce mindsets under which dominance over knowledge produced about Indigenous peoples and Australian culture thrive. I discuss the conditions surrounding these responses, highlighting contradictions between the pedagogical strategies and student reactions.

The value of emphasising resistance as a pedagogical tool in critical Indigenous studies programs is raised (2.3.3). This is achieved by first discussing resistance in the context of knowledge about ideas in relation to self, collective cultures and Indigenous peoples (7.1). Second, I consider how the dimensions of culture, ideas about race and individual standpoint are located by students in an historical context (7.2). To increase understanding about these learning events, data from teaching staff are also used as most of the resistance expressed by students played out in the tutorials. Data from journals and interviews were not as useful given that students were reflective on their original beliefs, rather than expressing them in overt fashion. Data from online reflections, however, were useful as there was immediacy in these responses to activities as students progressed through the subject. An analysis of how students express and interpret shifts from their own perspectives and move on from resistance to acceptance (Research Question 3) is undertaken in Chapter 8.

## 7.1 GAZING

The focus on students' exploration of their standpoints in the first module gradually shifts and expands in Module 2 to investigating and theorising the impact of individual and collective knowledge relationships. In the previous chapter the discussion was focussed on student expectations and the initial outcomes of their participation in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. In this section I extend the analysis to consider how these experiences act as resistance (7.1.1) and discuss the connections between these experiences and the subsequent engagement that students have with the pedagogy. As the challenges from Module 1 do not automatically vanish as we progress through the program of study, I revisit the ideas and reactions of students discussed in Chapter 6 and detail Module 1 learning events where relevant to the analysis in this chapter. Dodson (1994) argues that the colonial gaze has been continuous since the first point of contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In this section I analyse student responses as signposts of

resistance and to explore how students see themselves in relation to Self/Culture and Indigenous peoples. I also consider how the ideas held by students influence their perceptions of Indigenous peoples and subsequent relational constructions. First, I discuss how students engage with questions around the concept of culture and the positions they take in relation to this (7.1.1). Second, I consider constructions of Indigenous peoples as perceived through the lens of non-Indigenous knowledge perspectives (7.1.2). Third, I explore the connections that students make to Indigenous peoples through the standpoints as constructed through notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (7.1.3).

As discussed in the Chapter 2, resistance is shaped in many ways. It is not always expressed as a violent reaction to the unfamiliar or the undesirable. In its most powerful form it can present as an outwardly moderate reaction. The actions that students take on the basis of passive resistance, for example silence or non-engagement, can be a more powerful way of protecting students from new systems of knowing that are initially judged as irrelevant or threatening to their sense of self (Elder, 2009; Wolfe, 2002). I distinguish between resistance that emerges as a consequence of pedagogy designed to target students’ standpoints and students’ pre-existing resistance as discussed in Section 6.1. The analysis in this section should be read as a holistic representation of this persistently shifting chaos rather than as a neat sequence of learning events that students travel through and respond to methodically.

### **7.1.1 EXPLORING CULTURE – “WE DON’T GET THE LOVELY ADJECTIVES”**

*Cultures and Indigenous Education* engages students in a process of learning to understand the complexities of cultures and to enable them to recognise and disengage from the comfort arising from invisible dominance. There are particular difficulties in this process as identified by Lampert (2003) who suggests that reconciling “white privilege” requires a shift from the idea that the “problem [is] a Black issue, rather than a White issue; about ‘them’ rather than ‘us’” (p. 24). Triggers are embedded into the curriculum to reduce this possibility by guiding students to evaluate where they stand and why, and also to eventually consider what they can and can’t see from these vantage points. Data indicates that powerful feelings are stirred by seemingly ordinary questions, like “How does your culture influence your life on a daily basis?” and “How does your culture influence my life

on a daily basis?” (see Table 6.1). The purpose of these questions is to rupture superficial understandings that students may have around the complexities of culture. These questions are used as an entry point for self-interrogation of knowledge perspectives that may underpin students’ actions and ways of thinking.

To initiate the process of critical self-examination, questions were formulated to guide students to consider ‘how’ and ‘why’ they ‘know’, rather than to identify ‘what’ they know (3.2.1). Discussions around the questions relating to culture invoke a range of emotional responses. Libby reflected on the impact of being emotionally engaged by critical self-enquiry in an interview after she had completed the subject:

... it does get very confusing and the more emotionally involved you get in it ... the more unclear it all becomes. If you’re ignorant to something or you don’t really care about [it,] it’s just all very simple and straight forward and [you can] just sort of gloss over it, but the deeper you go the more confusing it becomes... (Interview, 2005)

Libby makes links here between the level of emotional engagement and the extent of her “confusion”. She indicates that there were many facets to her explorations which she couldn’t make sense of immediately as the “deeper” she explored her own standpoint, the “more confusing” it became. Libby, by her own description, was a highly resistant student who attended the first six weeks of semester even though she reported that through that time she “didn’t want to be there” (Interview, 2005). Her engagement in these first weeks was therefore emotional and not intellectual as she reported that throughout this time she “thought it was a complete waste of time” (Interview, 2005). For Joanne, an emotional response was provoked when she was “asked to identify my cultural background” (Online, 2009). She said “for some reason the task upset me. So I need to ask why” (Online, 2009). Students in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are charged with the responsibility to explore what their statements mean about their understandings. They are guided to critically examine and question themselves and to deconstruct statements they make in the learning space. When students respond in ways that “confuse” them (not the teaching staff), or in ways that are discomfiting to self, as with Joanne in the above reflection, they are directed to explore and keep questioning why they feel, think or react in particular ways. In this way, students develop an understanding of their own ideas, which is a useful starting point for their investigation into how and why they respond

to others in their world. The acknowledgement of their standpoint positions clears the path for knowing others (West, 2000).

The form that resistance takes in an Indigenous studies classroom is varied and infused with contradiction. The power of an individual's resistance increases the more they are asked to problematise their own perceptions which are often comforting, and upon which many facets of an individual's personal and professional identity rely. Teacher Persephone reports that the "high defensive emotions ..." were a "barrier" to be explored, with one of the students in her group asking, "how come we talk about whiteness as if we're all bad?" (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). This statement was made by this student in the first week of the semester, therefore the inference that "white people" are being constructed "as all bad" appears to emerge quite early in the learning of some students. Directing students to consider reasons why they might assume that we are replacing one binary (exotica/observer) with another (good/evil) is crucial to moving students towards acknowledging the limitations of certain ways of interpreting things in their world, including knowledge about Indigenous people (West, 2000).

Other teachers report issues of significance in the first two weeks that relate to confusion around the concept of culture.

- ...students seem to engage in only superficial discussion of the meaning of culture and social reality and were focussed externally (that is, it was something other people had) and were exploring them as static notions. (Alyssa, Week 2, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)
- ...students were unable to describe Australian culture. (Ebony, Week 2, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)
- ...students were not ... able to describe their or Australian culture in a coherent, un-hypocritical way. On one hand, they said 'Australians have no culture', then said 'We're multicultural', [and] then said it doesn't include certain characteristics, such as extended families (making it non-multicultural). (Medea, Week 2, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)
- ...students are still grappling with the idea that white Australians have a culture and a history ... [they] struggled to define 'us' in [key] question 1." (Electra, Week 2, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)

- ...some students are struggling with the concept of culture. In particular few of them appreciate that white Australians do in fact have a culture. Few understand that celebrating the ‘exotic’ elements of a culture can actually be dehumanising. (Myra, Week 2, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005)

A similarity can be seen across the teacher feedback, with a number of themes emerging. The first commonality is the ‘superficiality’ of the discussions and the perception by students that ‘culture’ is something that other people have, and that students appear to be locating culture as a “static notion” (Alyssa, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). This corresponds to expectations that learning about Indigenous cultures is focussed on the traditional (6.1). The second theme is the difficulties students appear to experience in these early stages in defining Australian culture without being “hypocritical” (Medea, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005), which illustrates the existing unfamiliarity and “incoherent” foundation for understanding the concept generally, and specifically in applying it to their own cultural position. Third, common to tutor feedback is the stated conviction that “Australians have no culture” (Medea, Electra & Myra, Weekly Teaching Evaluations, 2005) and the difficulty with “defining” this. In reflecting on this Samantha says, “When they said, ‘What’s your culture?’ I just went, ‘Oh, I don’t know’. I never really thought about that. I had a culture, *probably*” (Interview, 2005, my emphasis). Martha was similarly confused and took it further by questioning even the need to have a culture, “Do I have to latch onto a culture in, you know, hell we are the convicts” (Interview, 2005).

There are links between this reluctance to name Australian culture and the ideas expressed by some students that “white Australians” are presented negatively in Module 1. By naming Australian culture in the context of the “challenging” and “confronting” atmosphere of Module 1 (6.2), students’ resistance can be linked to a resistance to admitting to the “negative portrayals” (6.2.1). There is also the additional complexity that dominant cultures are generally not marked as distinct cultural groups, and this invisibility of “whiteness” is problematic when students are asked to “name” their standpoint in relation to privilege (Fee & Russell, 2007; Hatchell, 2004; Warren & Hytten, 2004).

As discussed in 3.2.1, the key questions which Electra (2004) refers to in her reflection that students “struggled to define ‘us’” are: “How does history inform your social reality?” and “How does history inform your cultural reality?”. These questions are not designed to direct students toward a correct answer or one all-encompassing definition. These questions are used as a regular reflection point for students as they progress through their studies. They have been designed to facilitate students’ investigations in how one’s standpoint affects what we see, interpret and locate as ‘truth’ about ourselves and about others. This assists students to consider how their perceptions of their realities are dependent on the standpoints through which knowledge is constructed. As West (2000) argues, “Social reality may be seen as a projection; social truth is our own creation, and its existence depends on our affirmation of one state of affairs as truth” (p.192). The explorations of ideas relating to collective culture and the links between individual standpoints are roused by these key questions (Figure 3.3). Students become challenged as they move through these reflections, as Rachel showed in an early response: “I ... felt under attack [sic] when I didn’t know much about my history and my self-identity” (Journal, 2005). Rachel states that her knowledge is limited, instead of seeing this as a point of departure for learning, it provokes a resistance. Her lack of knowledge is a secondary consideration for her, behind her feelings of being “attacked”. However, Marla’s investigations around these questions led her to conclude: “I have never learned so much about myself or my culture” (Journal, 2009).

Previous discussions on student expectations (see 6.1.1) indicate that there are relatively fixed understandings about Indigenous peoples which translate into assumptions by students that they will be learning about Indigenous exotica and/or be bombarded with politically motivated representations (see Chapter 6). These prior understandings of Indigenous peoples interact with the fluid, indefinable and nebulous positions students take in relation to their own cultural standpoints. Struggles over interpretation and processes of meaning making within and between collective cultural groups will always exist (Riphagen, 2008). However the struggle to arrive at mutually agreed and empowered points of reference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia has been subverted by systems of colonial dominance. This dominance relinquishes the need for any struggle toward agreement, and for dominant cultural groups the status quo is reinforced with

dialogue no longer considered necessary (Phillips, 2005). Having inherited these systems of knowing, students find it confronting when placed in a position where the constructions this system reinforces are gradually exposed as myth, and where they are asked to identify and explore the conditions of dominance inherent to ‘culture-making’ processes in Australia. In the early stages of the curriculum, students often express an adverse reaction to discussions of dominant cultures and the conditions under which such dominance is maintained. Indeed, dominance itself is presumed to be another word for ‘white racism’. Other studies have noted that discussions of “white dominance” in anti-racist education are resisted and as a consequence of interrogations into dominance, “white people believe they are racially disadvantaged” (Bartolome, 2004, p. 101).

Martha and John made a connection between the unstated descriptions of Indigenous culture in the curriculum and the binary created through the overt questioning of dominant standpoints. Martha explains that the reason she finds it difficult to identify with the concepts is that “We don’t get the lovely adjectives ... yours is always a ‘rich culture’ and mine’s never ‘rich’. There’s a lot of negative stuff with dominant” (Martha, Interview, 2005). Similarly for John: “If I say, you know, ‘Aboriginal’, you might say ‘... ooh I associate that with a long proud history ...’” (John, Interview, 2005). The ‘truth’ that students reveal through these investigations becomes more complex and begins to fluctuate as they move through the dimensions of their ‘truths’, whatever they are or may become, toward clarification of their standpoints.

In this absence of a clear way of conceptualising ideas about culture, students resort to concepts that serve them in their presumptions about Indigenous cultures (fixed and static) to maintain their balance. In conceiving of culture in this narrow way some students find themselves unable to find anything distinct or ‘cultural’ about their own ways of life. Genevieve describes how this led to her “struggle to find her own racial or cultural identity,” admitting that her “perceptions of culture and race are narrow-minded and strongly ethnically focussed” (Journal, 2005). Genevieve explains further:

I personally view myself as having little culture or no racial identity ... I guess I’ve always thought of myself as being a white Australian with

European ancestry who participates in ‘Australian’ cultural experiences –  
*whatever that means.* (Journal, 2005, my emphasis)

Genevieve appears unsure about the connections she has to culture, specifically, and more broadly, “guessing” at her culture and aligning it with an ancestry that is “European”. She indicates that she has little faith in her response to the question of her culture by ending her reflection with “whatever that means” (Journal, 2005). This supports the initial view she expresses that she had “little culture or no racial identity”. Whiteness studies conclude that it is this unnamed status which maintains cultural dominance as authority and which is contingent upon the absence of specificity in relation to dominant racial identities (Moreton-Robinson, 2003a; Dyer, 1990). In turn, ideas around a national cultural identity become very difficult to recognise for they tend to be “taken as no more than common sense” (Reynolds, 1999, p. 222).

As Carrie engages with, and responds to the learning strategies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, her reflections show that she has started to move beyond her initial aggressive stance to the unit, which was discussed in 6.1. In these early stages, Carrie had reported that she felt “blamed” (Online, 2009). In this reflection, Carrie attempts to link the intellectual aspect of her learning to this earlier position she took, by trying to make sense of the previously mentioned Hollinsworth quote (6.2.1):

Anyway after the lecture I was reading the textbook (and I am not sure if I interpreted this right) ... the textbook said something about students feeling guilt after hearing about Australian history and what the settlers did to the aborigines, however the writer seemed to think that when white Australians feel guilt that it actually gives them a sense of dominance or power. This makes me feel very confused as to what white Australians are supposed to feel!!!! (Online, 2009)

Carrie is beginning to demonstrate recognition of the processes of ‘cultural dominance’ but is unsure about the form it takes. There is little self-defensiveness around feeling guilty or the “anger” and “extreme frustration” she expressed in earlier (6.2.1), yet she emphasises, using multiple exclamation marks that she is “confused” about what she is *expected to “feel”*. As a result of reading the textbook Carrie intimates that there exists a pre-defined emotional position for “white

Australians” to occupy in relation to Indigenous peoples. Penny is similarly challenged yet takes responsibility for her feelings:

... between reading the chapters and doing class work in tutorials I am not sure how I feel over this whole issue, I am a little bit [confused] over how I should be feeling and reacting ... I am not saying that I was blind to [how Indigenous peoples are portrayed] but it still makes me a little cranky that I have been persuaded to think a certain way [and] that the beliefs I thought I did have in fact might not actually be my own. (Online, 2009)

There are differences between Penny and Carrie’s reflections on the same learning event. The attention of both students’ is drawn to the emotional consequences of particular forms of knowledge production from their reading of the textbook. However, there is a difference in the emotional tenor of each statement. Carrie’s ire is raised because she “doesn’t know how white Australians are supposed to feel” (Online, 2009), while Penny directs her awareness to how non-Indigenous systems of knowledge have “persuaded her to think a certain way” (Online, 2009). She feels “cranky” (Penny, Online, 2009) that her individual beliefs may be externally mediated without her explicit awareness or permission.

Chantal considers the links between emotional responses, resistance and disconnecting from identification with Australian culture:

When I’ve spoken to people who’ve been resistant ... they are at that pain barrier at that level where they’re thinking ‘...ohh this is just too hard, I don’t want to have to do this, it’s too much, I don’t need to question myself’. And I have heard comments like ‘...well my parents weren’t born here and so why should this be my problem? This is not my problem’. (Chantal, Interview, 2005)

It is at this emotional level where most resistance to *Cultures and Indigenous Education* resides. Chantal’s reflection on discussions with her peers draws out her understanding that when “they are at the pain barrier” it becomes “too hard”; so this is where resistance to exploring the questions start: “it’s too much, I don’t need to question myself” (Interview, 2005). According to Chantal’s interpretation, in distancing themselves from the processes of self-enquiry, some students also distance themselves from any firm connections to collective Australian culture: “well my parents weren’t born here ... this is not my problem” (Interview, 2005). Surprisingly,

the key to moving past this sole focus on emotion, as revealed by Samantha was accepting that we all have a culture. When asked in her final interview about the main things you got out of studying in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, she replied: “I think for me personally, I got a lot out of going, “okay, yes, I do have a culture” (Interview, 2005).

As the discussion in this section (7.1.1) reveals, students appear more comfortable when their gazes are trained upon Indigenous peoples. Students experience more challenges when interrogating their own points of view about Australian culture, and the connections between their individual standpoints and collective knowledge production. In the next section (7.1.2), I examine how the difficulties around clarifying standpoints, reinforce the attachments students have to particular discourses, and how these are used to engage with the learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

#### **7.1.2 GAZING ON OTHERS – “WHERE ARE MY EXTRA ENTITLEMENTS AND WELFARE”**

The construction of Aboriginal people as ‘victim’ has a long history in Australia along with other objectifications which reinforce the “culture-as-victimisation” discourse (Beckett, 2001). The colonial gaze has been directed toward Indigenous peoples in reinforcing particular versions of Australia’s national identity and serves to support these versions in the present (2.1). As demonstrated by previous analysis (7.1.1), students were reticent to air their perceptions of Australian culture. There was also confusion around what the term ‘culture’ meant, which may account for some of this reticence. The following discussion focusses particularly on the ways in which students perceive Indigenous peoples, and cultural difference through the lens of Australian knowledge perspectives. I spend time in this analysis discussing how this lens is also trained on others who are racialised in order to provide a map of how knowledge perspectives explored in 7.1.1 apprehend difference in multiple and shifting ways.

Following the discussion of their expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, students undertake an activity where they are asked to think about their first racial experience, an activity based on a bell hooks’ (1994) idea. Students are asked to recall when the experience happened, whether it happened to them or someone else and whether memory of this experience is strong today (see 3.2.2).

This activity precedes the introductory discussion on defining Australian culture and influences the direction that students take in deconstructing Australian culture (7.1.1). Discussions around students' first 'racial experience' acted as a catalyst to a particularly informative series of events in one class. These events were related by one teacher to her peers, describing how, in class, an "Australian-born student with Filipino parents" shared a story about being told "to go back to her own country" by a classmate when she was in Grade 5 (Medea, Teacher Online Discussion Board, 2009). Following the admission, this student "promptly burst into tears". The tutor reported that "none of her peers knew what to do with her distress – just pretended it didn't happen. [I came back to it later]" (Medea, Teacher Online Discussion Board, 2009). After this incident, the predominately "white Australian" class proceeded to discuss the ideas about what constitutes Australian cultures:

The hot topic was why any cultural group would want to distinguish themselves from "Australian" culture - i.e. Indigenous Australian, Filipino-Australian ... That doing so was some kind of unpatriotic act and was a disadvantage to those individuals because clearly Australian culture has more to offer. (Medea, Teacher Online Discussion Board, 2009)

The question of "why would any cultural group" want to maintain their own cultural identity was rationalised by ideas regarding "patriotism" and Australian culture having "more to offer". An earlier, related, discussion had focussed on the "defensiveness" of the Aboriginal lecturer (researcher) and the deconstruction of a popular Australian bumper sticker: *'Australia. If you don't love it, leave'*. The teacher relayed one student's reaction:

It's perfectly reasonable to have a bumper sticker to tell immigrants that if they don't like our laws they can leave, and that the lecturer has totally misunderstood the purpose for the bumper sticker because "it's not aimed at Aboriginal people, it's aimed at foreigners. (Medea, Teacher Online Discussion Board, 2009)

There is no indication in these excerpts, or the detailed context provided by the teacher in her submission of this reflection to the *Cultures and Indigenous Education* teaching team that the students involved exercised any wider awareness of their standpoint in relation to Others. Non-Indigenous students involved in the discussion were apparently fearless in expressing their views initially. In response to Medea's

online reflection, her peer, Persephone responded: “Wow ... for what it’s worth, we had the same sorts of discussions – same misconceptions, same myths, same emotive responses” (Teacher Online Discussion Board, 2009). The exposure of these ‘misconceptions, myths and emotions’ that are seen through the colonial gaze (7.1) are key tools for student critical examination.

The aim of having students recall and describe their first ‘racial experiences is not to prove the existence of Australian racism, neither does it seek to position Indigenous or other culturally different groups as ‘victims’ of racism. Rather, it is designed to enable students to identify events that provided the genesis for their knowledge constructions about ‘race’ in the present, and whether they see themselves as racialised subjects (hooks, 1994). Many students interpret the question in terms of when they saw someone from another culture, or themselves, experience racism (Researcher journal, 2005). Evidence of the influence of these constructions can be seen in Persephone’s reflection on what emerged when students were directed to critically examine their statements:

[It] was interesting how the two different groups went - in the first one, they got SO into the discussion. The second one just COULD NOT get themselves out of wanting to talk about 'drunk Aborigines in parks' no matter how I re-shaped questions, this is what a group of about 5 of them wanted to keep coming back to. I had to impose a rule – I told them I didn’t want to hear anything about anyone but THEMSELVES for the rest of the tutorial. I turned it into a joke - and almost imposed a 'swear box' kind of fine. (Team Teaching Email, 2004, original emphasis)

By focusing on their ‘knowledge’ of Indigenous peoples, students also deflect investigations into their own standpoint. Students are guided to address the basis of why their attention is drawn to these kinds of constructions in responding to questions relating to themselves (see 3.2.1 & Table 6.1). Anecdotal evidence of ‘drunk Aborigines’, ‘flag waving activists’ and ‘traditional welcome ceremonies’ are mobilised as evidence to reinforce their position in relation to Indigenous peoples. These witnessed events are called upon to defend students’ as yet unstated cultural beliefs about self. Williams (2000) noticed this in his study of non-Indigenous students where their defences would run in advance of even the hint of accusation.

As mentioned earlier, Indigenous peoples are not portrayed as ‘victims’ by the pedagogy, however some students are defensive of the idea that only Indigenous peoples can be ‘victims’, as indicated by Megan’s reflection:

I personally did not contribute to this nation’s terrible history and yet I am expected to fix the problems my forebears created. I think as a country we do far more for our Indigenous Australians than we do for our non-Indigenous Australians. As a financially challenged member of this community where are my extra entitlements and welfare? Is it fair that in this generation someone with Indigenous blood gets more than I do regardless of what we as individuals have? I don’t think so. I would like to conclude this entry, this very confronting and thought provoking chapter, by saying that I take every person I meet on face value no matter who or what you are. (Journal, 2005)

On the surface Megan’s reflection seems like a very complex piece of data; on closer inspection most of the popular constructions that circulate in the Australian context about Indigenous peoples are presented, served fresh with self-righteous indignation. Megan has constructed Aboriginality as a “problem to be solved”. The way in which Indigenous peoples appear under her gaze is: Aborigine-as-welfare-bludger, Aborigine-with-special-treatment, Aborigine-as-blood quanta and Aborigine-getting-more-than-her. Her relation to Indigenous peoples is established when she demands: “I’m financially challenged too ... where are my extra entitlements to welfare?” The cultural privilege, not recognisable to Megan in her early enquiries in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* allows her to occupy a position of defence against claims of privilege. This position is established through the identification of her “disadvantage”: for one cannot be privileged *and* disadvantaged. Megan has neutralised any paths that may link her to notions of cultural dominance by equating “privilege” with financial wealth and challenges: “other Australians are as poor and disadvantaged as Indigenous Australians”. With no sophisticated sense of how ‘cultures’ operate, students, speaking from the space which Megan appears to, can feel justified in their resistance to hearing Indigenous perspectives on non-Indigenous systems. At the end of the semester, Megan’s reflections were very different: she said that she is unsure whether she “is able to completely express the horror she feels [over] her previous thoughts and attitudes” (Journal, 2005).

Similarly, in her end of semester journal, Tansy recalls:

By stepping back and looking at the cultural constructions that the general society forces upon me, it was apparent that I was free of having to think about my ethnic background, colour and how this will affect my life.

(Journal, 2009)

Tansy's reflection shows how working through the program allowed her to gain clarity. This clarity was not only in relation to the limitations of the "cultural constructions ... forced upon" her, but to the realisation of how "free" she was to not consider herself as a racialised subject. The new lens that Tansy has allows her to see Indigenous peoples differently, or more specifically, to see "how Indigenous people are (mis)represented [and] their obvious absence in society" (Journal, 2009). Here, Tansy is equating absence from her viewpoint to absence from "society" as a whole. While Tansy is expressing a view that negative representations "tainted" her view, she still relies on the 'Aborigine-as-victim' discourse to create an equally comforting moral position as sympathetic white person.

Daphne takes her assessment of the welfare-dependent construct a little further, making explicit reference to the problem and to what she consequently sees as a solution:

It seems to me that Indigenous Australians are the same as the rest of society, in that everyone is looking for someone else to blame for their problems. What would have happened if they didn't get welfare? **If** welfare money is the reason for this problem the answer is simple stop welfare payments and make people work for a living. (Daphne, Journal, 2005, original emphasis)

Here Daphne asks, "What would happen if they didn't get welfare?", then proceeds to put a metaphoric question mark around the assumption inherent to this statement – that Indigenous people do get welfare as a consequence of "blam[ing] someone else for *their* problems" (my emphasis). She continues, doubly highlighting the proviso, "**If** they do ..." then proceeds to reconfirm that the "problem" exists, and the solution is to make "people work for a living". Daphne is making attempts to create a sense of equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians using a problematising discourse, however she uses a negative premise to do so. Power over 'the Other' is asserted even as she positions herself as powerless in the equation (Haviland, 2008).

There are a range of platitudes that are often mobilised to defend against accusations of ‘racism’ and deflect the associated threats to individuals’ moral positioning. Examples of this come from the feedback from one teacher who reported that “students ... found it difficult to understand the relevance of racial difference” (Myra, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). A range of responses indicated the ease with which certain statements can be made in relation to notions of social justice, although the individual may not ever be called upon to prove the statements through their actions (Lampert, 2005). Some examples were shared by teachers through Module 1: “Common responses were ‘I treat all people equally’. Colour does not matter to me.” (Myra, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005) and “We are all human” (Alec, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). Student Martha reflects in the interview that she is aware of the purpose of these platitudes, citing another common expression in her explanation:

I’ve always had a distaste for, ‘Some of my best friends are Aboriginal’ ... I think – big deal. It always comes out and it’s like a gratuitous pat on the back. (Martha, Interview, 2005)

These platitudes also act to camouflage cultural dominance (Lampert, 2003; 2005) and enable individuals to disconnect from this privilege while allowing the objectification of Indigenous peoples to proceed without a disruption to the moral positioning (Bird-Rose, 2004). “I treat all people equally” is an empty statement in the context of limited experiences with people from a range of different cultural groups. “We are all human” suggests a lack of understanding of the complex social, cultural, historical, political, institutional forces conditioning the lives of “humans” – and that these conditions operate differently to different ends depending on the context. Therefore, to think that it’s possible for “people to be treated equally” is an indication of a significant lack of knowledge in this regard. These platitudes, when expressed in an Indigenous studies classroom become both evidence and expression of power (Haviland, 2008; Wagner, 2006). Platitudes shut down dialogue. Given dominance, these platitudes are also able to be mobilised frequently, without contradiction by others who may hold alternative views. The gaze students tend to train on Indigenous peoples is filtered through inherited ideas (Chapter 2), which both reinforce and assert the power of individual perceptions as ‘truth’.

Moral power can also be maintained by positioning self-in-relation to Aborigines-as-victims, as discussed previously in the case of Tansy. The construction of Indigenous peoples as victims, and the comfort arising from this is demonstrated in statements made by Daphne and Martha about one of the required readings for the subject. This reading is a narrative by Martin Nakata (1990) in which he describes his experiences as a Torres Strait Islander student. He speaks about feeling out of place as a child in Western schooling. A surface reading of the text might see Nakata positioned as a ‘helpless’ child in the face of uncaring teachers, although the cause of this ‘inability to succeed in a Western school’ focuses on the mismatch between his cultural background and that of his teachers and the school. Consequently, readers of this narrative, particularly teachers, might see themselves, through the text, in the role of ‘saviour’. Ironically, Nakata (1990) makes several points about the inability of the Western school system to acknowledge his differences yet Daphne, who has complained about the lack of “objectivity” in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (7.3), finds relief through reading the article:

I feel that [the] Martin Nakata reading “Another Window on Reality” in my opinion is the best reading to date. I feel that this reading, while a *personal account was the most objective point of view* presented in this unit ... I got a number of things out of this reading ... [That] all people are individuals. Looking at all Indigenous and Islander *people as having a culture and giving them an image* is very dangerous. This is another way in which “they” will be disadvantaged by the system [and] adding Indigenous and Islander stories and history to the program is just an add on to mainstream education and serves political agendas ... (Daphne, journal entry, 2005).

There is a comforting relation established between the reader and Indigenous people as represented in this article. The reader’s gaze is drawn to the Indigenous person, and even though the Western education system is constructed as limited in its dealings with cultural difference, the sub-text targets the familiar ‘victim/helper’ binary (Beckett, 2001; Grieves, 2008; McConaghy, 2000). Farrah conveys a similar reaction; “I’ve just read Nakata. It’s a good read. It’s quite balanced. It’s the first one where I didn’t feel there was a negative play on culture” (Interview, 2005). The comfortable relation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples that is reinforced through the historical and contemporary knowledge practices naturalises the relation (Wolfe, 2002) that Farrah establishes here. For example, Farrah’s

observation of the “balance” of the reading is explained by her “feel[ings]” that there wasn’t a “negative play on culture”. Farrah makes this comment on culture in a general sense; however she appears relieved to be able to read something that did not require her to think differently about herself. The lack of “negative play” then can be directly linked to her perceptions of “balance”. In reading the text she mobilises her perceptions about what is comfortable, and then interprets the meaning of the text on this basis (Todd, 2003). Positions in relation to Indigenous peoples (or their personal narratives) are affected by the refracted gaze which can reinforce existing inter-subjective relations (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). There is a contradiction however in the statements of both Daphne and Farrah which assumes that the combined reading of their personal narratives, with those of the authors has resulted in objectivity.

Discussion of the data in 7.1.2 shows that there was discernible resistance to examining the characteristics of Australian culture. Students appeared more comfortable and open in sharing their perceptions of Indigenous peoples. Social and systemic conditions for reproducing knowledge about Australian culture and Indigenous peoples in the everyday – schools, media, kitchen table discussions – reinforce a range of taken-for-granted beliefs. Most individuals, whether recent or more long serving arrivals in Australia are subject to the conditioning of blame-the-victim discourses (Beckett, 2001), which is often applied to interpreting knowledge about Indigenous peoples (West, 2000). This reinforces both distance and dominance. The idea that it is possible to distinguish between a ‘real’ Australian (for whom Indigenous issues are a “problem”) and absolve particular individuals/families from the implications of cultural dominance due to historical geographies is a resistance underpinned by these taken-for-granted understandings about non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. In Section 7.1.3, I discuss how students interpret the relation between ‘us’ (Australians) and ‘them’ (Indigenous people) to extend understandings about the multi-faceted nature of resistance.

### **7.1.3 RESISTING CONTRADICTIONS: ‘US’ AND ‘THEM’ – “BUT HE’S A GOOD ABORIGINE”**

Revelations about students’ current standpoints in relation to Aboriginal people are sought directly and indirectly in the pedagogy as part of the sequence of exploratory questions posed in the first lecture, in addition to those mentioned in section 6.1.1. As part of this sequence, students are asked by the Aboriginal lecturer (the

researcher) to explore their ideas about culture through defining ‘my culture’, their culture and the impact of these on our daily lives, and the lives of others (see 6.1). There are no universally ‘correct’ answers for these questions. They are posed to enable students to determine what they don’t know and allow them to become aware of what they can and can’t articulate about cultures. These stimulus questions also guide students to explore the foundations of their cultures. In this section I discuss how students responded to these questions, and consider how they use terms such as ‘us’ and ‘them’ to mark the boundaries between themselves and others.

In their first assessment tasks students critically examine how the media constructs ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’. They analyse what persuades them, as readers, to take particular positions in relation to the textual and sub-textual constructions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. If students have difficulty in defining and articulating their own cultures and standpoints, this is revealed in this assessment task. This process is also useful for examining how students develop detailed schema for knowing Indigenous peoples (see section 6.1), although very few report having any direct personal contact with Indigenous people. This contradiction exposes the power of ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledges about Self and Others and encourages students to identify why such contradictions were not evident to them before. Students subsequently reflect on how they might rationalise resistant positions to Indigenous voices as a consequence. This process leads to some intriguing discussions in the tutorials where students are simultaneously configuring a range of descriptors for ‘Australian culture’ and also reflecting on how they include Indigenous peoples within the range of they collate (Figure 3.1).

Students begin from what they ‘know’ and where language exists to express this thinking (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). When individuals do not look critically at society, King (2004) argues that the resulting “subjective identity [holds] an ideological viewpoint that admits no fundamentally alternative vision of that society” (p. 73). The interrogation of how the terms ‘us’ and ‘them’ personally position students, and the ways in which they may have been naturally incorporated into ‘culture talk’ previously, become more meaningful for students when named and personally interrogated. The uncritical consumption of ideas and cultural constructs permeate texts such as ‘us’ and ‘them’ and serve to reinforce the ideas underpinning

all textual constructions which individuals are exposed to. When attention is drawn to the text and its purposes, clarity around the subtext emerges.

As students grapple with naming their cultural situatedness, terms such as ‘us’ and ‘them’ are brought into stark focus. This terminology gains a sinister edge for students once their attention is drawn to how knowledge about cultures in Australia manifest in their individual thinking. Reflecting later in the semester one student described the effect of being positioned in a certain way to read text:

I strongly believe in the power of words. I have seen people become what others said they were. I know the person I am has been shaped in many ways from what others have said to or about me. And I am beginning to really understand the effect of using words such as them, us and others. (Harriet, Online, 2009)

The power of text is highlighted by Harriet and she draws on her social experiences with others to reinforce this point: “Others become what others say they are”. Harriet has also noticed the power of sub-text, evident when she refers to “really understanding the effects of using ... them, us and others’. She has not positioned herself as being influenced by this necessarily; focussing her attention on what she has seen others experience to make her point.

As indicated previously, the schema for Indigenous peoples is deployed even when constructions of Indigenous people are absent from popularised ideas about what it means to be Australian. Interestingly, from the first week students begin to critique the language I (the Aboriginal lecturer) use and ask “why the terminology of ‘them’ and ‘us’ is used through the lectures and not the terminology of ‘we’?” (Ebony, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). Students at this point are unable to make distinctions between the use of such terminology to theorise and explain positioning, instead seeing this as the natural language of the lecturer. This type of fault finding is common, where students seek evidence of contradiction in the words of Indigenous teaching staff in order to reinforce that Indigenous people are socially unjust, or “racist” too (6.2.2 and 6.2.4). This misinterpretation can be seen as both resistance to and defence against the perception that they are being accused or blamed.

It is important to be able to discharge the pre-occupation with describing Indigenous people, Aboriginal people in particular, and provide an explicit pivot for

looking at ‘why’ such constructions exist in the absence of direct experience and knowledge. While students appear to have difficulty defining ‘us’ and ‘Australian culture’, their responses to the pedagogy make use of the ‘us/them’ binary conceptually, as Carrie shows: “She made me feel that white Australians were stupid because we didn’t know about different Aboriginal tribes” (Carrie, Online, 2009). Carrie’s reaction to the lecture material is a personal one yet she has rushed to the defence of “white Australians” on the basis of something the Aboriginal lecturer has shared about the extent of Indigenous peoples’ belonging across all parts of Australia. Carrie has made an intimate connection between ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’ which reveals a gap in her knowledge about “white Australians” (‘us’) yet it appears to inflame her to such an extent that her first resort is to direct her anger at the Aboriginal lecturer (‘them’). Carrie exploits her lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples to secure her defence against the attack she perceives on “white Australians” in a space where the intent of the lecture was to provide her with this knowledge. There is a contradiction underpinning Carrie’s resistance. While she admits to not knowing, her sense of being “stupid”, and her anger at the lecturer for ‘making’ her feel this, closes her off from the resolving this destabilisation through gaining the knowledge being shared by the lecturer.

In their explorations of standpoints located by ‘us’ and ‘them’, students explore why knowledge about Self and collective culture, even when not expressed explicitly, can affect our views on the world. To ‘get things out in the open’, students are often instructed in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* to list what they (think) they know of Aboriginal people. Tutor Medea describes a thought provoking exchange after guiding the class through an activity which emerged as a consequence of the discussions around culture:

One of my students start(ed) off by saying, ‘I have an Aboriginal friend who got a \$20,000 scholarship to come to uni’. So, I said, so "who wants to be in the money (or something like that) - is that the blank you're filling in?" And she said, "No, he's a good Aborigine". As soon as she said it, she winced, and realised that saying something like that might incur the wrath of the tutor, and other members of the class made noises of disbelief. So, I said "you've got a list in your head of who is a good Aborigine, and presumably, who is bad or not-good?" She proceeded to ... attempt to redeem or justify the comment; that she is from North Queensland, has seen plenty of drunk

Aboriginal people in public, as well as "Aboriginal people wearing uniforms and going to work, and her friend who has done lots of community work and volunteer work with special needs children (hence his "good Aborigine" status??). "OK", I said, "you need to write down your list tonight - who is (or what characteristics make) a "good Aborigine" and who is not. (Teaching Online Discussion Board, 2009)

This response to speak only of "Aboriginal people" ('them') when investigating perceptions of Self and culture is revealed in the above exchange. Such responses are identified by King (2004) as a product of "racial privilege" (p. 73) and for those with such privilege to move beyond this uncritical position requires "a fundamental shift in the way white people think about their status and self-identities and their conceptions of black people" (King, 2004, p. 73). Facilitating this "shift" in the first instance, requires that such racialising practices be exposed, followed by a process of critical investigation. These investigations must also avoid any reinforcement to the power that labels such as 'us' and 'them' have in constructing ideas about race. In the situation described above by Medea (Teachers' Online Group, 2009), students are beginning to reveal their perceptions of 'them': "good Aborigines/bad Aborigines" and, to indirectly share ideas about the cultural groups they might identify with ('us') through the value distinctions they make about 'good' and 'bad'. When situations like this occur in the classroom tutors do not pursue these with admonishments or rebuttals of the actual statements students make; neither do they explain to the students why such positioning is fraught. In the interest of self-investigation, the focus is not on correcting the assumption; the focus is on directing students to analyse their standpoints to interrogate the limitations of their thinking. The pedagogy supports students in this interrogation in a self-directed and organised manner to lead them to a point where they may understand the errors in their thinking, and more importantly to explore 'why' such constructions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are so ingrained.

As the activity progressed other students entered into the discussion.

Another student piped up at this point and said she had already done a list of "who is Aboriginal" and was shocked by what she wrote - her list was huge and contained many things that she was not proud of ... The first student said "does this make me racist?" (she had already said a priceless "I'm not racist but" earlier in the class). (Medea, Teachers Online Discussion Board, 2009)

Again, the pedagogy is focussed on investigating the reasons students might think in particular ways and not on assumptions that we, as teachers, can know what they are thinking. Situations like this are exciting learning opportunities which allow teachers to work specifically with what students express rather than to provide a general one size-fits-all approach to examination of these complex issues. Additionally, teachers are advised not to respond directly to closed questions such as “Does this make me racist?” with ‘Yes’ or ‘Maybe’ as other students may become reticent to share their own thoughts. Alternatively, if teachers respond ‘No’ to such questions then certain presumptions may go unchallenged. Therefore, under circumstances where such questions are asked, or when statements indicate questionable thinking about Indigenous peoples, the onus of exploring what it means is directed back onto students. To this end, the student who asked about being racist was directed to simply “work out where those items on the list came from” (Medea, 2009) for further reflection and later discussion.

Following this discussion, students watched a video called ‘Best Kept Secret’ (1991); which is a documentary on the life of Archie Roach. The documentary is a powerful life story which covers themes of ‘Stolen Generations’ and survival through Archie Roach speaking about his early years of drinking in laneways in Melbourne, his experiences with foster families and his musical triumphs. His music, including songs such as ‘Took the Children Away’, provides a haunting backdrop to his story. Persephone reported that following the earlier discussion where students kept talking about their perceptions of Indigenous people (7.1.2), in this instance “neither group could talk after the video – both said they wanted a week to process what they felt” (Teaching Team Email, 2005). This follows one of the strategic patterns in the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*: stimulated discussion around standpoints to enable students to openly share their thoughts in a safe environment followed by introductions of Indigenous perspectives which are related to the issues around which discussion is provoked. Given that taken-for-granted notions about Self and other gain strength and power through their invisibility (Phillips, 2005; Srivastava & Francis, 2006; Todd, 2003), teachers take advantage of every opportunity to make these explicit. The value of this approach makes it possible for other students, who may remain silent, to also consider the issues in a safe environment and to allow them to independently cross-reference reasons shared

publicly by willing students with their own, unspoken frames of reference. Materials such as videos, Australian history timelines, and cartoons allow students to reflect on what they have said.

Speaking up is important to the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* as it makes the unspoken ‘real’ and allows a more public consideration of the connections between standpoints and the unknown. In 7.1.3, data shows that as students began to ‘speak up’ the contours of their resistance became evident. Additionally, while there was a high level of emotion expressed by some students, intellectually they were beginning to demonstrate limitations. Deconstructing ideas about race require connections at cognitive and affective levels, and teachers must focus attention on dealing with the emotions that are provoked in studies of ‘race’ and culture (Wagner, 2005) in order to stimulate a shift at the intellectual level. Given these complexities, unless students are equipped with the skills to take responsibility for explaining their positions, they will not engage at the levels required to move beyond resistance (Sonn, 2008). In this next section (7.1.4), I analyse student responses to their investigations of historical and institutional cultural dominance to consider how lack of knowledge about these practices may work to justify resistant positions.

## **7.2 RACIALISING HISTORY**

In the literature review I examined the ways in which daily experiences align with institutional forces to support racialising practices of the individual. In this section I discuss how students interpreted their ideas about ‘race’ and culture through historical discourses. In section 7.2.1, I examine how ideas of ‘race’ and ‘culture’ confuse students in their attempts to locate a cultural standpoint for themselves, and the consequences of this for the shape of the resistance displayed. This is followed in 7.2.2 by an examination of how student resistance to understanding our shared history as non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians contributes to reinforcing positions of dominance in the present. In addition, student resistance to seeing the discourses they use as having their genesis in historically derived knowledge frameworks is investigated. In this section I reflect on responses by student Daphne who was a particularly resistant student. While I have shared Daphne’s reflections before, her reflections on history are particularly noteworthy given that of all the data

collected, she was the only student who did not report any shifts – even minor – in her resistance to the ideas under investigation in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*.

### 7.2.1 RACISM AND CULTURE – “I’M NOT RACIST BUT ...”

All students, who are in their first year of study, have completed another foundation subject in the previous semester which provided a brief introduction to sociological theory regarding ‘race’ and culture. Racism is a word that is rarely employed in the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* given the angst that surrounds this social issue (Kendall, 2006; Pennington, 2007). Minimising use of the terms ‘race’ and ‘racism’ is a deliberate move to guard against the pitfalls of discussions degenerating into unhelpful denials and feelings of being threatened (Warren & Hytten, 2004). However, in the required readings for the first two weeks of the semester, chapter authors briefly mention non-Indigenous complicity to racism (Miller, Dunn & Currell, 2005; Phillips, 2005).

As previous data have shown (Chapter 6), students still ‘feel’ that they are being targeted as ‘racist’ regardless of the language used. The automatic conceptual leap from discussions about ‘difference’, who we are and where we are situated, to assumptions of ‘racism’, is telling:

At the end of the lecture when she [Aboriginal guest lecturer] was talking about 10 year old Aboriginal boys, compared to white Australian boys, I had to walk out. She was so racist against white Australian children! (Carrie, Online, 2009)

This response by Carrie was recorded in Week 4 of the semester. There is a high level of emotion stemming from her assumption that the guest lecturer was “so racist against white Australian children” (Online, 2009). The lecture topic was *Indigenous self-representation* and the lecturer had spoken about the processes of parenting in some Aboriginal families, suggesting that there were some differences between these practices and those of non-Indigenous families particularly in regard to the level of responsibility given to Indigenous children. Carrie has personalised the statement, transforming the lecturer’s words into an accusation about non-Indigenous families rather than interpreting the statement as information about Indigenous cultural practices. Carrie’s interpretation of racism can be seen in the way this phenomena is framed as “individualistic” which Hytten (2001) says leads to the perception that the elimination of “racism [means] we must find ways to persuade people to think about

all people in equal terms” (p. 435). Carrie is not yet at the point where she can consider resolutions, instead she deploys a perception of ‘racism’ as an interpersonal experience (Ryan & Dixon, 2006). She attempts to re-assert equal space for “white children” who she feels have been misrepresented in the words of the guest lecturer, even though no specific mention was made of ‘white children’.

The lack of attention that is given to ‘race’ in the curriculum, and the immediate assumption by students that culture and race are transferable concepts demonstrates students’ prior knowledge and why discussions about Australian culture evoke in students such “high defensive emotions” (Persephone, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). Students avoid defining Australian culture, by focussing attention on the emotions associated with being called to make their understandings about who ‘we’ are as Australians explicit (6.1.1; 6.1.2). Although Medea (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005) reports that “race” was a problematic term that students “couldn’t talk about as clearly as culture”, she further notes that

... what they said about culture wasn’t consistent either. Some thought [race] was an obsolete term, some said it was racist, some said it was an instrument of dominant cultures to label less dominant cultures (from previous semester classes), some used the term as I would use culture.

Here students are attempting to make sense of these overlapping concepts. Although “race” is located as a tool of dominant cultures, significantly its purpose is positioned in a passive way, for example, to “label” others. Teacher Ebony reports that students were experiencing difficulty with an additional concept, calling for clarity about “what is meant by ‘racial’, ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ (Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005, my emphasis). The discursive dimensions of a dominant culture – and individual subject positions in relation to this collected privilege - are rarely interrogated (McLaren, 1995). The invisibility of dominant subject positions not only secures this privilege but reinforces it through not naming it (Fredericks, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2003b; Nicoll, 2000).

One teacher described how he thought students felt they were already sufficiently prepared to deal with issues concerning cultural “inclusivity” from their prior studies. “I get the feeling that students in my class feel like they are being hit over the head with issues of ‘inclusivity’ from all their classes. (Maybe) they feel like we are preaching to the converted” (Alec, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005).

“Preaching to the converted” is commonly mentioned in social justice teaching (Cochrane-Smith, 2004). ‘Preaching’ implies a static process where the learner is a receptacle for new knowledge while ‘converted’ suggests that learning about relating through cultural differences involves a movement from one set of beliefs about the other to a more socially just way of relating. This is problematic. Such statements indicate a disconnected way of perceiving intercultural relationships; there is no one moment where the ‘light goes on’ but rather a series of many. Adair (2008) sees this as a logical response to learning in spaces where your cultural perspectives and racialised ideas are not privileged as students reposition themselves in relation to “re-organised cultural capital [by] discarding certain types of comments, and modifying others” (p. 197). Statements about ‘preaching to converted’ are a resistance substantiated firstly by the lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples in Western spaces and secondly, that the expectations around what students assume they will be learning in Indigenous studies is narrow and focussed only on popular, safe constructions. The type of thinking that underpins this statement is “we accept that Indigenous peoples have been victimised by history” (Persephone, Weekly Teaching Evaluation, 2005). However, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* through Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy locates this recognition as a minor stage in the process; the hard work in thinking about the issues in more depth lie beyond this. Assumptions that the key goal of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* is to ‘convert’ students is an indication of faulty assumptions, not only about the subject but about the presumed relationship stemming from an unhelpful victim/sympathiser binary. The impact of this cultural deficit thinking on student learning in the subject was discussed in Section 7.1.

The confusion around the meanings of ‘culture’ and understandings about how ideas about ‘Australian culture’ are reproduced daily, is evident in the way that students appear to see ‘culture’ as synonymous with ‘race’. Later, the curriculum addresses and extends theories relating to these sociological concepts but in the early stages questioning is used to encourage students to explore the distinctions. Through questioning students about ‘why’ they hold certain beliefs and encouraging them to consider how institutions such as the media and schools authorise and shape these personal understandings, students are able to draw deeper inferences from theory. Jack recalls: “My own research helped me to construct new understandings that were

reinforced by the lectures and tutorials” (Final in-class reflection, 2005). In contrast to the mediated responses given in interview as seen in Section 7.1.1, Jill’s response in Week 2 indicates that she was experiencing a disruption to her current ways of understanding culture:

This subject is making me incredibly frustrated! The lecturers and tutors continually tell us that this subject will confront us and yes I’m confronted but I’m also angry, offended and confused. I don’t understand how saying all white Australians are innately racist purely because they are part of the ‘dominant culture’ is constructive for either party as it immediately puts up barriers ... (Jill, Journal, 2005)

Jill’s tone is one of extreme frustration. I discuss the shifts in understanding experienced by Jill as she progressed through *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in 8.1.3, however if the emotional aspect of her reaction in Week 2: “angry”, “offended”, “confused”, is held up against her attempt to intellectualise the concepts, it is apparent that she has translated the idea of cultural “dominance” to being synonymous with racism. Through this misconception, reasons for the eruption can be identified. There is a powerfully expressed contradiction in Jill’s response which demonstrates how the lack of conscious recognition of her membership of ‘Australian culture’, in all its complexities, is breached when that culture is called into question, or specifically, when it is depicted as “dominant”. Even though she has not stated it overtly, Jill *has* recognised that she belongs to ‘Australian culture’ and the defensiveness against the claims she assumes are being made against her culture (and therefore her personally) disrupts the barrier to this subsumed knowledge. Resistance to this knowledge is necessary to maintain her existing standpoint (Giroux, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2004). The misconceptions surrounding “culture” and “race” force the translation of the concepts of “dominance” into being “innately racist” and thereby instigated an immediate and powerful denial by Jill.

The connection between history, perceptions of self in relation to a collective culture and the transposition of ‘culture’ and ‘race’ all contribute to how students define racism. I interviewed students about how they would define ‘racism’ to get a sense of what they may have seen as connections between these concepts, and to observe whether the leap to immediate defence against perceived accusations of racism could be explained another way, considering the outwardly innocuous

questions posed in relation to culture, history and Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations. Maggie's response was informative:

Umm, I think [racism is] seeing cultures other than my own as so different that I didn't need to be involved in it and or the history of Australia as something so removed from my life that I didn't need to be informed about it or involved in it, and so saying it didn't matter, I think. (Maggie, Interview, 2005, 2006)

This response indicates an evolved definition of racism. The personalisation of the concept framed with "I think" rather than "I feel" is perhaps a consequence of Maggie having reflected following her completion of the subject. As the data analysed in Chapter 6 demonstrated, many students were concerned in the initial stages with emotional responses to the materials. Not only is Maggie's positioning far removed from the simplistic 'who oppresses who' but she also admits to a personal responsibility for 'not knowing'. That is, it's not how she treats others, rather it is how she thinks about herself in relation to others that forms the basis of this understanding of racism.

In this section (7.2.1) I have discussed data which shows how students begin to manage their responses to the curriculum, with a particular focus on what they interpret as causing their initial expectations as they explore introductory theory on social and cultural construction. Specifically, the social knowledge that students bring to the reading of history was highlighted to get a sense of how racialising practices from the past influence the positions they take in the present. In the next section (7.2.2), I examine this further with attention to the types of resistance that students express to acknowledging and accepting the history that informs their standpoints.

### **7.2.2 RESISTING HISTORY – “THE POOR INDIGENOUS BEING KILLED”**

The absence of Indigenous peoples from the Australian historical landscape is firmly entrenched and influenced by inherited assumptions that “once the British flag was planted Indigenous peoples were presumed to have just disappeared” (Guest Lecturer, *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, Lecture notes, 2009). Reflections by students indicated that this lecture on *Indigenous Self-Representation*, within which this statement was made, stirred defensive emotions. Students like Faith, who does

not consider herself to be “patriotic”, is respectful of the connection between the stories of the past and the cultures of today. However she says

I was very challenged by [the Aboriginal guest lecturer’s] choice of words ... when talking about how Aboriginal culture didn’t just disappear when the British arrive in Australia. She said something along the lines of “little rag was hoisted” when referring to the British flag. Personally, I am not that patriotic that this would upset me on a personal level. However considering we were in a lecture that was challenging us to question our beliefs and is all about respecting culture and others beliefs and practices, I found her wording be contradicting of the purposes of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. (Online, 2009)

Faith has depersonalised the reaction she describes to the “disrespect” shown to non-Indigenous peoples and cultures – in this instance, “the British”. Her response to the lecture is couched in her understandings of the contradiction she noted between the “purposes” of the subject and effects of the words used by the Aboriginal guest lecturer to describe the beginning point of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. This reaction is also about re-contextualised notions of power and privilege, through the assumption that the words “little rag was hoisted” contain the same measure of force and potential to dominate as the fact of the flag-hoisting itself, and what this means for non-Indigenous Australian privilege today. This reflection does not appear to be emotional, instead it is evident that Faith has not fully considered the dimensions of dominance, historical and otherwise, in order to interpret the meaning of both her response, and the idea expressed in the lecture.

In Module 1, students participate in a learning activity which requires them to unpack song lyrics to guide them toward a comparative critique of the relationships between representations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The songs in 2005 were *People of Australia*, by Midnight Oil (released 1987), and *We are Australian*, by Bruce Woodley (released 1988). *People of Australia* use the experiences of Indigenous peoples as a lens through which to view Australian people, for example:

The Aboriginal people have lived here for 40,000 50,000 60,000 years  
They didn’t sell it to anybody  
They didn’t give it away for toys

They didn't trade it in for houses up the coast  
 They had it stolen off of them, they had it nicked off them

Alternatively, *We are Australian* positions the listener to view Australia as a multicultural nation, within which romanticised visions of Indigenous peoples are used to frame the national image as tolerant and inclusive:

I came from the dreamtime from the dusty red soil plains  
 I am the ancient heart, the keeper of the flame  
 I stood upon the rocky shore  
 I watched the tall ships come  
 For forty thousand years I'd been the first Australian.

Teacher Xena relates how two students in her class were particularly offended by Midnight Oil's re-presentation of Australian history and collective culture:

Another student in the class was also offended by Midnight Oil's *People of Australia*. She felt that it totally privileges Indigenous people, [and said], I didn't steal the land, I wasn't there when all that happened, I feel like he's directing that song at me and it makes me mad! (Teaching Team Email, 2005)

Anger at feeling personally targeted by statements made about Australian history and culture resulting in feelings of being "blamed" coalesce here to cause an assumption about the privileging of Indigenous people in representations of the Australian nation. Throughout the semester students are progressively introduced to information about Australian history. However, in these early stages there is a lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples' experiences, significantly in regard to 'Australian' history'. There is evidence here that a relationship is already established between representations of history and a sense of belonging inside a collective Australian culture for the student, given that she reportedly felt like the song was directed at her, which "made [her] "mad!"

The text of *People of Australia* creates a closer relationship between the representation and the audience through the use of such phrases as "we nicked it off of them" (Midnight Oil, 1987). In this way, history becomes a contemporary, lived experience because, as explained by Phillips (2006), "every form of historical representation ... position[s] its audience in some relationship of closeness to or distance from the events and experiences of it" (p. 95). The lyrics of *We are*

*Australian*, creates a distance between the past and the present with descriptions of the “ancient heart ... watching the tall ships come” (Woodley, 1988). In the case of the student responses reported by teacher Xena, the text which brings students in closer relationship to Australian history; that makes connections between Australian culture today and the brutality of that history is resisted quite strongly. One form of historical relationship (distant) can be favoured over another (connected) especially if the representations resonate with the knowledge students already hold as a consequence of their social and prior educational experiences.

Penny recalls what she was taught at school; “I remember doing the first fleet in year 5 and not really liking it I wasn’t a big fan of the convicts ... I can remember not learning anything at all except the basics that they [Indigenous people] were here and what they looked like ...’ (Online, 2009). Christine agrees that there is a major impact stemming from a realisation of their personally limited knowledge about Australian history:

When I discovered [the] ‘shared history’ between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people, I was so surprised that no-one in our class knew about the true Indigenous history which struck me as really interesting. I felt quite ashamed that I hadn’t been taught the full story and it just goes to show the power that dominant socio-cultural beliefs have over not only individuals but social institutions as well. (Christine, Journal, 2009)

Christine is falling into something which Phillips (2006, p. 89) refers to as the ‘moral trap’ of history; a trap where ‘knowers’ will swing from false objectification toward temptations to assume a position of ‘unwarranted intimacy’ in the face of past suffering. Each position relies on a self-belief that there is no complicity either in action or memory with regard to the desolation of the ‘past’. Penny (online) takes her reflection in the opposite direction after admitting her lack of knowledge about Australian history beyond the “convicts” and “what [Indigenous people] looked like”. She neutralises the power of this admittance by stating that

I also think that no matter if it was done differently such as surrender or war or something else, when has a culture that was not white (or even sometimes if they were) ever been taken over in a ‘nicer’ way. (Online, 2009)

In his analysis of the relationship between “white ignorance” and historical memory, Mills (2007) argues that “memory is selective - out of an infinite series of events

some trivial, some momentous, we extract what we see as the crucial ones, and organize them into an overall narrative” fundamental to our cultural identity (p. 29). For Penny, the representations of Australia’s history that she was exposed to in her schooling form the basis through which she remembers, and thus interprets the inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ experiences in this history on that basis. While she is able to acknowledge the effects of that history in the past, suggesting that “she wasn’t a big fan of the convicts”, she offers an indirect defence for the treatment of Indigenous peoples, saying that it probably wouldn’t “matter” because “when has a culture that is not white been taken over in a ‘nicer’ way” (Online, 2009). Penny expresses her acknowledgement of the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Australian history at the same moment that she rationalises it as inevitable: “no matter if it was done differently”. Penny prioritises the events surrounding possession, rather than those related to dispossession, to rationalise her cultural identity. This leads her away from the threat posed by a full acknowledgement of Australia’s history to her cultural identity in the present.

In the final part of this section, I examine the data from an atypical case in this study: highly resistant student, Daphne. Data from this student has already been examined in Chapters 6 and 7, however, Daphne’s resistance to acknowledging Australian history was very marked and she experienced minimal shifts in her responses to the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* on completion of her studies in the subject. The reflections shared by Daphne in her journal were not expressed in overly emotional tones, indeed, her journal was written with consistent use of appropriate terminology as advised in the course materials. Academic writing conventions were more or less adhered to and Daphne submitted weekly responses to her experiences in the subject – to the readings and to the issues raised in the tutorials. The words and phrasing of Daphne’s reflections appear to be very carefully organised and on the surface attempt to balance her discussions around the representation of Indigenous peoples and history. In short, Daphne produced a meticulous journal with detailed weekly, sometimes daily journal reflections. Students were not required to submit a journal with this level of detail, yet Daphne did.

However, critical self-reflection was missing from Daphne’s journal entries with her work focussed mainly on organising her thoughts around perceptions of

Indigenous peoples. Daphne did not interrogate her standpoint, as demonstrated by the lack of self-reflective entries in her journal. As she moved through her learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, there is a noticeable increase in the contradictions in Daphne's thinking. These contradictions become more concrete, and built on earlier journal responses, as the weeks progressed. She is critical of the focus on personal interrogation saying that having to "look at personal stories a lot ... made the unit more difficult [because] for personal stories I feel you have to take a far more critical point of view" (Journal, 2005). Daphne does, however, appear willing to engage with the questions posed in the subject in the first week when she reflects:

The tutorial today really got me thinking. The question posed, "What does it mean to have a culture?" I found really hard to get my head around as I believe that everybody has a culture. To have a culture is to be part of society at this time and place. If people say they don't have a culture I think that they are so used to their culture that they just can't see it. (Journal, 2005)

As Daphne moved into the Module 2 though, there was a shift in the tone of her journal reflections, where she began to respond to content that did not form part of the subject (e.g., "high rates of abuse") to interpret things that were mentioned (e.g., "stolen generation"):

High rates of abuse is not acceptable in my opinion in any community or culture. However, I believe that the dominant culture is afraid to act because of historical events such as the "stolen generation". (Daphne, Journal, 2005)

Daphne's journal entries became more strident as she progressed through Module 2, and over Module 3.

I have argued in previous discussion in this chapter, and in Chapter 6, that affective responses to learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* are motivated toward the negative in the first instance. The ability to notice and consider the multiple dimensions of the message is key to developing the critical thinking required to understand the intent of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* in the first instance, and to meet the challenges presented for re-considering standpoints in the second. Sometimes, resistance prevents students from making the shift to a reflexive space to consider why they are feeling challenged. The discomfort experienced by Daphne because of the questions relating to critical self-reflection led her to conclude

in a reflection that, “I believe that so far module 2 has been more useful than the first module as information on Indigenous people was provided and not just questions asked” (Daphne, Journal, 2005). Daphne comments on the subjectivity she sees in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, reasoning that “for personal stories and opinions people bring their prior experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs to the story and reading of the story” (journal). While she recognises the significance of individuals’ social positions and the implications for the ways stories are told and unfold, Daphne uses this to negate the value of Indigenous perspectives, asking “... if the ‘white’ versions are [claimed as] not true, how do we know that the Indigenous versions are true?” (Daphne, Journal, 2005). There is a connection here between Daphne’s questioning of the truth of “the Indigenous versions” and the ways in which she justifies her resistance. Daphne conjectures where the location of ‘truth’ is: “It is my belief that the *real and objective version lies somewhere in the middle* of the two opposing versions.” (Journal, 2005, my emphasis)

False dualism (King, 1998) is evident here in Daphne’s construction of “two opposing versions” and the assumption that another’s story is being presented as a replacement for her story. This signifies the lack of connectedness she perceives between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through history to the present. There is evidence here of the ‘distance’ to which both Phillips (2006) and Todd (2003) refer, which allows Daphne to strengthen ideas about the disconnection between Indigenous peoples’ experiences and collective Australian history. Daphne appears to exercise her privilege by reifying certain remembrances over others and maintaining the “open secret” (Frankham, 2000) of Australian history: supporting the concealment of knowledge about the knowledge. Attwood (2005) speaks of this in terms of the “public memory of nations” where a link is implied between the way a nation commemorates and celebrates history and its connections the construction of ideas about national identity itself (2005, p. 1). These commemorations rely on arranging and reinforcing only those memories which serve a purpose in the present, either to reinforce the ‘public memory’ or to resist aspects of history that threaten to reveal the ‘open secret’ surrounding Indigenous peoples’ existence.

The lack of familiarity with Indigenous peoples’ experience of, and contributions to Australian history is the least toxic of reasons for resistance. Most influential is the discomfort experienced from personalising these experiences and

realising how powerfully they underwrite a reified ‘public memory’ of Australia’s valorised past. The first activity that students do at the start of the second module is called ‘Charting Historical Journey’ which is designed to get students to investigate these connections. They consider a timeline of Australian historical events, including Indigenous peoples’ experiences. One question required them to consider: ‘What impact did the arrival of your family/ancestors have on the social, political, cultural and spiritual landscape [in Australia]?’ (Figure 3.3). Students reflect on these historical events through two lenses, listing the consequences for Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. They must also think about the relevance of these histories to their lives today. Daphne responded that:

When reading the timeline on the website it made me angry. It negatively represented Non-Indigenous Australian. This is what we are looking at that Indigenous Australians are poorly represented but Indigenous Australians do the same as Non-Indigenous Australians. We have to find a balance and meet in the middle. The timeline reflected a number of different stand points, the poor Indigenous being killed and then all the Indigenous cricket team. This seemed to be in conflict with each other ... (Daphne, Journal, 2005)

The power of the inclusion of Indigenous peoples’ experiences into the Australian history timeline is evident in Daphne’s response. She appears to be focussed on managing the ‘anger’ she expresses by enforcing a dualistic framework for mediating the history, attributing equivalency between the timeline and the *terra nullius* record of Australian history. Daphne tries for superficial objectivity but reveals the emotional vigour of her opinions, using a sneering tone to talk about “the poor Indigenous being killed” (journal). The conflict she notes between Indigenous massacres and representations of “the Indigenous cricket team” is illogical and belies her misunderstanding of standpoints. However, this appears to have served its purpose to redirect the inquiry from her, and back to Indigenous peoples. This enables her to make the following assumption in attempts to further diminish the power of Indigenous voices to upset her cultural composure:

... the people in Australia today did not directly displace Indigenous people some peoples ancestors may have but it is so distantly removed now that we have to find a middle ground. History can not be one side. If we look at WW2 from opposing stand points for example Hitler’s point of view only or

the Jew's point of view only we would not have a true, balanced, objective or real understanding of WW2. (Journal, 2005)

The perception that history is of little consequence to today is illustrated by Daphne when she remarks: "The people in Australia today did not directly displace Indigenous people ... it is so distantly removed now ..." (Journal, 2005). There is evidence in Daphne's response of the resilience and flexibility of a system of "frontier narratives" through which the past can be seen as a "series of epitomising events" and selectively apprehended in the present to either reinforce or challenge existing power structures resulting from these events (Furniss, 2006, p. 173). These narratives rely on a standard structure of binary opposites and a belief that absolute conquest was achieved (Furniss, 2006). Daphne's reflection shows evidence of both as she positions the "people in Australia today" in binary opposition to both the "displace[d] Indigenous people" and to "some people's ancestors". This reinforces the assumption of absolute conquest given that the people against whom the injustices were perpetrated (Indigenous people) and those responsible ("some people's ancestors") are fixed into a past long over, while "Australians", as distinct from Indigenous people, appear to be all that remain from this history.

This binary thinking offers some explanation for Daphne's goals of "finding middle ground" between "two sides of story", "objectivity" and achieving social justice for non-Indigenous Australians. She is able to maintain distance by summoning arguments using her own interpretations of the intents of Indigenous peoples' in order to return to the status quo. However, Daphne established shaky intellectual ground for her resistance, drawing inconsistent power relationships between the inclusion of Australian historical events (e.g., massacres of Indigenous peoples) on the one hand, and the requirement for her to consider these events in one semester of study. Overall, given the emotional tenor of her responses, Daphne's comfort with Australian history was certainly troubled by the visibility of Indigenous peoples into the Australian story.

In this section 7.2.2, connections were drawn between the capacity of students to critically reflect on Australian history, and the types of resistance expressed as a consequence of their skill in dealing with the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. There appeared to be a correlation between acknowledging Indigenous

experiences as part of Australian history, and its connections to the present, and the form and strength of student resistance to what they were learning.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter 6, I focussed on the disruption to students' existing 'systems of knowing' as a consequence of their studies in Module 1 of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. In this chapter I contextualised this disruption and extended the discussion to consider how these experiences might shape the resistance that students expressed as they moved into Module 2. The findings show that the initial concerns expressed by students around their lack of understanding of 'culture' and 'race' influenced them to resist explorations into their standpoints. Student assumptions of 'negativity' toward non-Indigenous Australians in Module 1 further compounded their confusion about these concepts. I found that this translated into a resistance to making explicit references to their own cultures in favour of focussing attention on rationalising beliefs about Indigenous peoples. For instance, when asked to explore culture student attention was drawn to describing Indigenous peoples (7.1.2; 7.1.3) or expressing confusion about what 'culture' was (7.1.1).

Contradictions were evident in the perceptions that students held of Indigenous people which coalesced around binaries of 'us/them, 'good/bad Aborigines' and the idea that non-Indigenous peoples were disadvantaged in relation to Indigenous peoples. This was analysed in terms of what this demonstrated about students' perceptions of Self in relation to Indigenous peoples, in particular how such constructions were mobilised to reinforce a comfortable, and comforting relation. These discourses were employed by students to manage the knowledge relationships in the subject and most pointedly to resist learning about new systems of knowing that would be established through Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Furthermore, resistance to deconstructing their filters resulted in some students not being able to critically explore (and question) the systemic conditions of dominance stemming from history and institutionalised racialising practices (e.g., Daphne).

While students were at times willing to concede that history has played a role in situating Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples today, the belief that this history is not relevant to a great extent to our social interactions in the present was prominent. An interesting finding through the analysis of data from one highly

resistant student (Daphne) suggests that the more extreme the resistance to acknowledging the effects of history, the greater the contradictions expressed when rationalising why she believes this to be the case. Binary thinking was shown to emphasise the resistance to locating a subject position in relation to Indigenous peoples with ‘cultural-deficit’, ‘welfare-dependent’ binaries expressed overtly, while the dominant position in relation to these constructions was more covertly engaged (7.1). For some students, this reduced the possibilities into for/against binaries: ‘for’ acceptance of Indigenous peoples’ knowledge perspectives, or ‘against’ non-Indigenous peoples’ history, generous welfare provision (7.1.2).

Typically, it was assumed that recognising and acknowledging Indigenous knowledge perspectives would require a complete disconnection from their own cultures and histories as non-Indigenous Australians. A major contradiction was manifest in this type of response given that students, generally, are still unable to clearly articulate this history, their cultures or the connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as a consequence. Throughout Module 2, while at times demonstrating a willingness to explore the theories relating to cultural dominance, students were still exhibiting resistance. This resistance was most strongly expressed at times when students lack clarity about their standpoints and the necessary theoretical knowledge about history, culture and ‘race’ to critically examine the links between individual and collective cultural systems. In Chapter 8, I examine how students manage the shifts in their perceptions as they become more attuned to dealing with these dimensions of critical self-enquiry and theorising.

## Chapter 8: Shifting Resistance / Moving on

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In Chapters 6 and 7, I discussed the disruption to dominant systems of knowing and the resistance displayed by students as they attempted to maintain equilibrium when these systems were subject to an Indigenist lens. To examine the form and extent of these systems, students identify social and cultural constructions within non-Indigenous Australian contexts through a critical media analysis as the first assessment task in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This is supported by questioning and analytical activities in lectures and tutorials. The focus on theory in Module 2 and the application to embedding Indigenous perspectives in the classroom and teacher position in Module 3 are intentionally placed to take advantage of the disruption that has occurred. As students begin to personalise the concepts and locate similarities between their personal views and those in the public sphere, the abstract nature of the theory that follows is reduced. Additionally, locating the intersections between their growing personal understandings and theory leads to particular recognitions that assist them to explain and manage their confusion.

In this chapter I discuss how students manage the junctures between the explorations of their personal standpoints (Module 1) and their consideration of theoretical ideas (Module 2) as they progress their understandings about the knowledge relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, individually and collectively. This responds to research question three to find out

*What do non-Indigenous students identify as pivotal to their recognition and acknowledgement of their standpoints and how they articulate and manage these shifts in recognition?*

Data collected and analysed previously is cross-referenced to highlight the role that resistance plays in sustaining particular points of view and the limitation this places on further developing knowledge and understanding as a consequence. In the first section I discuss participants' reflection on their prior learning, analysing how the recognition and acknowledgement of 'not knowing' impacts on the ways they now see the effects of epistemological dominance on views of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Australia. I discuss how students manage the integration of

the unknown into their systems of knowing Self and Collectivity, and what they establish as turning points in this process. This is conceptualised in relation to student acknowledgement of their fears regarding their learning. Finally, I discuss how students move beyond the challenges and analyse their new perceptions of standpoints and their explanations of the effects of applying this knowledge professionally and socially.

## 8.1 REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING JOURNEY

To establish the positions through which students interpret knowledge about Indigenous peoples requires a concerted focus on the foundations for these interpretations; how students perceive themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples is at the very base of this foundation. The value of self-critical and systematic enquiry is identified by Cochrane-Smith (2004) as “the primary way to link theory and practice” (p.27). Therefore, *Cultures and Indigenous Education* teachers are supported strategically to coax students toward self-examination at moments when they revert to default positions of speaking about Indigenous peoples in limited ways. Explorations into standpoint and culture in a seemingly ‘objective’ academic environment are unfamiliar, and as noted in Chapters 6 and 7, some students responded to the critical investigation of taken-for-granted cultural understandings by perceiving aggression. Such assumptions lead to an immediate resistance and self-defence. However, if crucial understandings about self were allowed to fester untapped in student ideologies then the uptake of new ways of understanding can be haphazard and reliant on student willingness to engage or on a pre-existing motivation to question the world around them.

Recognition of the form and effect of individual and collective standpoints requires students to transgress existing boundaries of knowledge construction. To this end, it is necessary to trouble what is ‘known’ about Indigenous peoples by investigating the critical failures of logic in the systems that underpin these constructions. Without the disruption that occurs as a consequence, there is likelihood that information or content alternative to what is familiar will be contaminated by common sense conventions established to modulate any knowledge concerning Indigenous peoples. These common-sense notions are covert and hold such power in framing dominant knowledge structures that, over time, a need to protect them has arisen. Through the course of this naturalisation, as de Botton

(2001) advises, they begin to appear “too sensible to be the target of scrutiny [and] to start questioning these conventions would seem bizarre, even aggressive” (p. 9).

In this section I discuss how students manage the difficulties associated with this process of critical self-enquiry and move to more open spaces of enquiry. I analyse how participants accept revelations about the connections between self and collective Australian culture and how this becomes central to moving beyond the challenges such acknowledgements present. I discuss how students manage the struggles to admit their perceptions about Indigenous peoples beyond the safe-to-express exotica and upon reflection, how they explain their initial resistance (8.2). Fundamental to this is the recognition that what they thought they knew, or didn't know, has power over their standpoints and thus is necessary to the “undoing” that Farrah mentioned earlier (6.2). I also focus on the next dimension where these new realisations are applied to developing new systems of knowing and relating. Again, students' own voices are the focal point for these considerations.

### 8.1.1 REVIEWING THE CONFRONTATION

Data have been presented showing that students stated that a range of issues were confronting about their participation in Modules 1 and 2 of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, which was compounded by the compulsory nature of the subject. The unique pedagogical approaches in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* also present issues for students who hold an interest in social justice. The pedagogy is layered and students do not complete one week's activity, or module, and then smoothly progress to the next. Each stage of the subject is designed to link across the semester and students are able to reflect back on previous thinking and knowledge through the reflective activities, tutorial tasks, assessment and lecture stimulus. This circular learning approach is useful for learning complex issues because it firstly prepares students to learn in less encumbered ways and to see previous thinking with new lenses (Indigenist and their own as they begin to develop understandings about the grounds of their thinking). Providing regular opportunities for critical self-reflection that enables students to monitor their development as they progress through the program is an integral part of the pedagogy.

While there are distinctions between what is challenging at a pedagogical, intellectual and personal level these dimensions are not disconnected. When interrogated, the interdependence of these dimensions in framing worldviews leads

students to determine how these forces in their social, cultural and educational spaces work in concert to confirm (or at least provide no denial of) certain taken-for-granted values. As shown in Chapter 6, students initially responded to the challenges presented when asked to explore their standpoints by focussing their attention on Indigenous peoples. Reactions were emotional, and reflections were couched in terms of how the course materials, teaching staff, and reading matter made them “feel”. The consideration of this previous analysis is important to contextualise the discussion of how students reflect on their learning as they develop an awareness that their knowledge about self is limited. As mentioned in Chapter 7, students mobilised popular discourses about ‘Aboriginality’ to resist investigations into Australian culture (7.2). Understandings about the power of these discourses are clarified by students as they develop critical thinking processes that allow them to notice the limitations of previous understandings about Indigenous peoples and experiences. In Chapters 6 and 7, there is a high level of emotion expressed in student reflection. The emotional tenor of previous reflections is important to remember through the analysis in this chapter, especially in noting that changes occur as students acknowledge links between the force and direction of their emotions and the lack of knowledge about Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

### **8.1.2 AWARENESS OF ‘NOT KNOWING’ SELF**

Examinations of non-Indigenous beliefs and the common-sense systems that corroborate these on a daily basis through an Indigenist lens create a rupture in knowledge that is compounded by such investigations being led by Aboriginal people. The role of Indigenous academics is important to get students to experience disruption and to incite the expression of certain beliefs that reside at the foundation of their knowledge-building about themselves and Indigenous peoples (Butler-McIlwraith, 2009; Santaro & Reid, 2006). The authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in this way is also integral to reworking those systems for knowing. Carmel (Journal, 2005) says that the first module was “harsh at first, as after the first few lectures and tuts I came away feeling very angry”. She held this up against the greater usefulness of the second module when “information” was presented which helped her to become “aware as to what the first few lectures had been about!” (Carmel, Journal, 2005, original exclamation). The confusion in the first four weeks is often interpreted as lecturers being aggressive, with students like

Carmel reporting feelings of being angry and confronted. While students generally avoid naming who they see as the aggressor, I am the academic who always delivers these “first few lectures” and have done so since 2003. Using other Indigenous lecturers in this first module is avoided given the strength of student emotions stemming from their lack of understanding about standpoint. An interesting comparison between responses to Indigenous and non-Indigenous lecturers is shown in Table 6.2. In the case of Carmel, her initial reflection about the ‘harshness’ of Module 1, and her resulting anger demonstrate an emotional reaction to the materials. However, after this disruption, it was theory – or “information” – that assisted her to approach the ideas more calmly. Carmel demonstrates an element of self-reflection here, although the emphatic declaration of understanding the direction of the first lectures could be taken as either criticism or relief at finally getting it.

Students begin to clarify the concept of culture and dominance when privileged standpoints in relation to Indigenous peoples are disrupted as certain notions about ‘us’ and ‘them’ become more difficult to protect. Resistance to ‘hearing’ Indigenous voices is rationalised by a focus on what these voices are making them “feel” and allows students to initially avoid the acknowledgement of the repercussions of cultural power on their standpoints (Williams, 2000). This serves to divert attention from the mostly unspoken constructions of Indigenous peoples in the collective Australian knowledge framework that students are guided to explore and consider. Contradictions that surface in resistance to the logical exposure of irrational ideas about Self and Other are a consequence of rarely being called to apply any systematic reasoning to consider why such beliefs are so tightly held. Dominant constructions of Indigenous peoples selectively reproduces certain knowledges, to create what Bailey (2007) calls “positions of dominance ignorance”; consequently, this forms “blank spots that make privileged knowers oblivious to systemic injustices” (p. 77). Retaliation against undertaking this kind of enquiry is conditioned by social understandings (Bailey, 2007) and therefore instinctive and emotional with no firm intellectual basis (Mills, 2007).

The grounds for the petulant rebuttals occurring in the first module and into the second become unstable following theoretical analysis. However in final reflections students begin to place their knowledge and understanding into a broader context,

averting their gaze from Indigenous peoples. Unlike Carmel, Perry provides a more self-reflective description of her experiences in this regard.

Initially in the first two lectures by Jean Phillips, I was struck [sic] with a sense that I knew nothing about Indigenous culture. Not only that but I realised that although I didn't think that I was racist, my history and its social construction made me biased towards non-Indigenous people. Therefore, I found the first module confronting. (Perry, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

Even though *Cultures and Indigenous Education* does not frame investigations around the nature of *racism*, Perry draws her own conclusion about her possible attachment to the idea when she says: "I didn't think I was racist". Perry's claim that she "knew nothing about Indigenous culture" is contradicted by the admission that she may be "racist" given that some knowledge about her thinking in relation to Indigenous people is required to draw this conclusion. Perry has clearly articulated the reasons for her feelings of being confronted and accepts that her own limited knowledge was the cause of this: "I was struck [sic] with a sense I knew nothing about Indigenous peoples". Perry's reflection that: "although I didn't think that I was racist, my history and its social construction made me biased" alludes to a developing conviction that her personal knowledge was influenced by dominant cultural frameworks. The effect of this for her is not only a lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, but more importantly a lack of knowledge about the forces that condition her knowledge of herself (Elder, 2007).

Genevieve reflects on the limitations of her self-knowledge saying that: "I had always thought that I had a good grasp of what culture is ... it seems I was terribly mistaken" (Journal, 2005). Similarly, Declan reflects that he became "aware of the little knowledge I had of Indigenous issues and the effects the dominant white culture has had, and is still having on Indigenous peoples" (Journal, 2005). In each case, these students appear to have withdrawn the need to protect and sustain the comforting relation, characterised by invisible links to collective understandings and limited knowledge about Indigenous peoples (Fee & Russell, 2007) to reach this critical point of acknowledging that they don't know, and the effects of 'not knowing' (Brisbane, 2008).

Students are motivated to drill back through their previous socialisations to the realisation that their views, while expressed quite forcefully at the beginning, are rarely concrete. As the borders protecting the knowledge underpinning these views are logically deconstructed, there is a gradual disintegration and progression toward understanding the objectives and thus value of the learning process employed in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Perry, Declan and Genevieve's acknowledgements of "knowing nothing" and their acceptance of the role of cultural dominance is liberated by critical examination of their standpoints (Brisbane, 2008) and not by arming them with descriptions of Indigenous peoples alternative to what they may already hold. As Joshua recalls, "in the first module, I walked to it thinking that I knew a lot about myself, my values and my history. After the first 3 lectures I realised that I only knew a small portion of what I thought. It was a struggle for me when I had to research my background and my beliefs and values" (Final in-class reflection, 2005).

With the benefit of hindsight students like Joshua, Perry, Declan and Genevieve reflect on confrontation as emanating from their standpoint. Matthew acknowledges how crucial being confronted is to deeper learning and awareness, saying that "I realised that I had to challenge my own thinking", but he identifies the "confrontation" he experienced as "the cornerstone to me breaking down the walls regarding racism, marginalisation, culture, education and inclusivity" (Journal, 2005). However, to regard student resistance to Indigenous studies as only emanating from a space of rancour or 'racism' impedes student investigations of their own racialised subject position (Page, 2009; Wagner, 2005). Enabling students to reconsider Indigenous peoples inside the centre, rather than on the margins and then to investigate reasons such exclusion is maintained, assists in circumventing learned behaviours and systems of knowing. If students have never learned that Indigenous peoples are worthy of inclusion inside the dominant cultural space of Australia and that knowledge rationalising the exclusion has been kept from their view, it's confronting for them to learn of the absence (Phillips, 2005). It's even more confronting to learn that they participate, often unaware in securing this absence (Page, 2009). In an analysis of student perceptions of 'race' and dominance in an education program, Milner (2007) noted that "many students were not initially

interested in thinking about race [and] appeared skeptical about the relevance and salience of racialised issues and experiences in education” (p. 587).

In the Australian context, Sonn (2008) suggests that perceptions of ‘race’ and dominance is also challenging, for when one “situate[s] and recognise[s] ourselves as social and cultural beings [with] power and privilege, it undermines what we take for granted” (p. 6). It is therefore difficult to make personal connections to systemic racialising practices given that one must first overcome apathy, acknowledge one’s cultural and social standpoints and explore the possibility of complicity in processes of domination. In the lead up to this acceptance, it is understandable that investigations can become emotionally charged (Wagner, 2005). As students become aware of their own power to label and exert power over knowledge produced about Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples they begin to target Self in attempting to resolve the emotional conflict. Chantal (Interview, 2005) contemplates the effects for her:

I’m thinking about what’s happened in my life. And what’s happened to people I know, and people that I care about a lot. And it’s good because it brings up all these feelings and emotions and I think it is so important to confront this, because I’ve never confronted this before on such a deep level ... I’ve never had such [an emotional] response ... it’s just bought up a lot of things. But that’s a good thing. Because I am looking at myself and I’m thinking ‘I’ve done so much, so many things that are just so bad’...

Once students begin to mitigate the emotional effects of this knowledge fracture – “if I can confront that, I can get over it” (Chantal, Interview, 2005) - they start to logically examine the causes, and subsequently courses for future action. Joanne says that “it feels like the transition of my attitudes, values and beliefs was an inevitable occurrence as I became more knowledgeable” (Journal, 2009).

While reflecting back on her life with a more critical gaze and judging past actions from this new, more open vantage point can also be confronting, Chantal’s acceptance of this allows her to identify the value of “getting over it” and moving on. Later she recalls the point of rupture for her, what was revealed and how this allowed her to notice and see beyond her pre-existing limited ideologies. She relates that she felt like “shouting” (Interview, 2005) to students stuck in their resistance after she had shifted to accept the challenges caused by such enquiries:

Do you not see that it's not really about looking at other people it's about looking at yourself? It's more about what you can do to improve yourself and to look at the way you have just viewed things was not even like taking for granted that certain things are the way they are. But when you really look at them it's like ... putting a magnifying glass on something. It's like WOW, you know, *that's what it really looks like*. (Chantal, Interview, 2005, original emphasis)

The “magnifying glass” that Chantal refers to emerges through Indigenist standpoint investigations which bring her existing beliefs into deeper view, revealing the contradictions inherent to systems for knowing Indigenous peoples. Through taking different perspectives on what she already knows she is able to see what “it really looks like”. Through critical and logical self-enquiry, knowledge dimensions, which are taken-for-granted and previously held as unquestionable, are brought to her attention. As a consequence the comfort arising from ensuring these beliefs stay hidden is also brought into focus given the discomfort experienced when they are exposed. Chantal has moved beyond seeing her cultural comfort as the primary objective of knowledge production in the cultural sphere. In order to get to this point she has to break with majority ‘wisdom’ and accept that the extent of collective agreement about an issue is not the prime indicator of whether that ‘wisdom’ is true. Chantal has moved into a higher dimension of critical thinking where she has proceeded to locate ‘truth’ as something which exists only when “one is incapable of rationally contradicting it” (de Botton, 2001, pp. 23-24).

There is a sense of relief in Carrie’s reflection that “I must say that every week I understand more and more and more ... [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] makes more and more sense to me. It’s really amazing...” (Online, 2009). Carrie and Daphne ( see section 7.3) had very similar aggressive starting points when they commenced *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. After her beginning resistance, Carrie began to immerse herself in the process of understanding the reasons she responds to the world in particular ways, reaping the intellectual benefits. However, students like Daphne (7.3) resisted learning about self, noticing only the “subjectivity” of the process. She positioned the “the focus on just questions” as a negative, claiming that they lead to “opinion” based conclusions (Daphne, Journal, 2005). Maintaining this stance generates two outcomes for Daphne: the reinforcement of her resistance, and the escalation of contradictions in the

justification of her ways of thinking. This attributed to the “delusion of racial superiority” by Mills (2007), who suggests that this can act to “insulate itself against refutation” (p. 19). Conversely, Carrie’s acceptance and willingness to be challenged in her thinking about Self has lead her to new knowledge and an excitement about the process of learning.

Re-setting the foundations of knowing means students can seek answers themselves instead of expecting to be provided with one-size ‘recipes’ for all circumstances. Without the disruption to existing ideas and the subsequent destabilisation of the expectation that there is one approach that works under all conditions, students may remain under the influence of this misconception (Burgh & Yorshansky, 2007). This is evident in Marla’s response to how her learning in the first two modules made her “aware of the issues”, and once this occurred she “*found [her]self frantically searching for answers*” (Marla, Final in-class reflection, 2005, my emphasis). Marla expresses a sense of responsibility to search for “answers”, discharged by her developing awareness of the “issues”. This was also demonstrated by Felicity who revisited her initial fear of offending when experimenting with teaching ideas for the final assessment task: “I feel like I was over-thinking [the teaching episode] too much and worried about offending and doing the wrong thing ... I don’t think this will be a problem when I’m actually teaching because I will have a room full of real people that I will be able to relate to ...” (Online, 2009). She admits her “fear of offending” is still there but acknowledges that she is now capable of resolving this through relating to “real people”. On the surface this appears to be a rather pedestrian statement. However, given that in the beginning of the semester Felicity was “expecting the worst” because she had “heard many things from previous students regarding the level of difficulty and frustration [with *Cultures and Indigenous Education*]”, this final reflection shows how much she has grown in her comfort of not having all the information available to her. Her fears are no longer driving her decision about whether to embed Indigenous perspectives. Her ability to know herself in relation to others becomes the lynchpin for her teaching endeavours. This self-awareness is essential for pre-service teachers in their attempts to establish critical teaching practices (Brisbane, 2008). Felicity resolves the tension of not having the answers by expressing confidence that she will be able to relate to

Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples under whatever circumstances arise as a consequence.

### 8.1.3 AWARENESS OF ‘NOT KNOWING’ INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Students will often distance themselves from admitting pre-existing beliefs by presenting themselves as blank slates; that they have no preconceptions about Indigenous peoples (see 7.2.1). Yet, expectations are framed around particular and quite concrete notions of ‘knowing’ about Indigenous peoples. This schema is initially denied mostly because it entails constructions of Indigenous peoples as victims, violent, political agitators, slovenly, helpless and childlike (Dodson, 2004; Sullivan, 2001; West, 2000). These constructions establish oppositional binaries for those who are ‘non-Indigenous’, ‘saviours’, ‘non-violent’, ‘politically neutral’, ‘helpers’ and ‘highly evolved’. The shock that students express when they find that they are to be implicated in discussions around the constructions of Indigenous peoples is therefore not surprising given the ‘schema for knowing’ that students have been shown to bring to their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. It can be discomfoting to recognise the existence of these in your own worldviews, so students are provided with an array of activities to increase the explicit awareness of them. The first construction of the ‘traditional Aborigine’ can emerge in student expectations of what they will be learning in Indigenous studies (6.1). The first assessment task students complete is an examination of the constructions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples evident in the media. This allows students to see the confluence between a powerful socialising field like the media and their own, perhaps silently held, ways of knowing Indigenous peoples.

The firm resolve to be socially just and aware can also present its own protective shield for students wishing to avoid self-analysis. Sue was a student who found *Cultures and Indigenous Education* “very confronting” and says “I arrived feeling as though I had a very well-rounded view of Indigenous people. Reflection on my own cultural positions (and advantage particularly in the education system) has produced seriously insecure feelings!” (Final in-class reflection, 2005, original emphasis). Sue has presumed a “well-rounded view of Indigenous people” but indicates that this is a distanced one considering how problematic it became once she embarked on reflection on her own position in relation to Australian culture, history and Indigenous peoples. Other students experience the same jolt from their comfort

zone. Jasmyrn for example, remarks that “before this unit I thought I had a good grasp of Indigenous issues and indigenous culture but I only knew the tip of the iceberg” (Final in-class reflection, 2005).

Explicit discussions of the representations of Indigenous peoples were not specifically addressed in the first few lectures, however the influence of perceptions of Indigenous peoples as ‘victims’ can be seen in Cheryl’s earlier reflections in the subject:

The first few lectures and tutorials made me realise just how little I knew about Indigenous Australians, their culture, pains, hurts, treatment etc. This unit was an eye-opener for me and the topics covered helped me to reach deep inside myself and find out who I am and what I truly believe. It made me deal with issues that I have never thought of as being a problem. Now I see the Indigenous Australians in a completely different light. (Cheryl, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

Cheryl is interpreting the questions and theoretical discussions in light of her own starting standpoint which contains particular constructions of Indigenous peoples as ‘victims’ experiencing “pain” and “hurt”. This dimension of knowledge about Indigenous peoples is very powerful and is influential in framing the contradictory rationalisations in student resistance from the outset of their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (see Chapters 6 and 7). Mistaken attributions can result, as with Agnes who in a very early reflection concluded:

Indigenous cultures still do not forgive us white Australians for what we did to their communities and families therefore it greatly impacts upon the present. How they are viewed but also how they still continue to view us in a negative light, despite what happened a million years ago. We need to think as a society about why this is? (Agnes, Online, 2009)

The eventual recognition experienced by Cheryl, that she is implicated and that certain issues are “a problem” that she has to deal with leads her to “see Indigenous Australians in a different light” (Cheryl, Final in-class reflection, 2005). Alternatively, still in the early stages of exploring the impact of her standpoint, Agnes dithers back and forth between calling on a construction of the ‘angry Aborigine’ who does not “forgive us White Australians” to mask her own views, to a platform which could loosely be described as one intent on achieving social justice.

It is unclear in Agnes's reflection whether justice is sought for Indigenous or non-Indigenous people. While Agnes recognises how relevant history is to all of us today, she underscores its *irrelevance* by locating this history as a "million years ago". All of this is used to rationalise her unambiguously expressed opinion that white Australians today are seen in a "negative light" by these unforgiving Indigenous peoples she constructs. The subtext is that white Australians are being blamed. In this early reflection there is a lack of clarity and contradiction in the distanced statements Agnes makes.

One of Agnes's final reflections however demonstrates how far she has moved from this point when she responds online to a student question from her tutorial which asked, "*How can we incorporate Indigenous studies without causing resentment?*" Agnes says, "I think that this can't really be helped, unfortunately some people will have resentment towards embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, but I think [Indigenous peoples' rights] come before the so-called needs of selfish and unfair white people" (Online, 2009). The expression of her viewpoints is more straightforward and less contradictory in this final reflection. Significantly, the constructions of Indigenous peoples are decentred in relation to the statements she makes about "white people". While she overtly positions non-Indigenous people as "selfish and unfair", Agnes keeps a personal distance from the group she describes. What Agnes has done here is merely reverse the binary. This re-establishes a sense of status-quo, while real learning is more likely to take place through "paradox ... and contradiction [beyond] the ease of binary logic" (Hyttén & Warren, p. 337). Therefore, realisations such as Agnes's require further self-interrogation to get to a stage where they no longer need to resort to black and white thinking to manage complex issues or contradictions to their perceptions. The concrete positions Agnes has demonstrated at the beginning of her journey, and its reversal at the end will be unhelpful for managing experiences that contradict her perceptions, for example, if she is confronted with an 'angry Aborigine' who doesn't want 'white people' speaking on their behalf.

Even though resistance protects students from certain realities about their ignorance, reflecting back on it provides students with the impetus for further growth. The overt expression of resistance in the first module is therefore a significant factor in moving to the next stage of increased understanding and

mediated acceptance. Sometimes it takes until the end of the semester for students to reflect back holistically on what has occurred for them:

- ...although the beginning of the unit challenged and frustrated me I can now see the relevance and have brought all this knowledge together for a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture and perspectives. (Dorothy, Final in-class reflection, 2005)
- The first few lectures really challenged me but I really enjoyed them for this. Although they meant something and made an impact it is only now when I look back that it makes complete sense. (Yani, Final in-class reflection, 2005)
- The first few weeks were very challenging. Some of the things we talked about in the tutorials seemed irrelevant however I can see now why we had to talk about them. (Carol, Final in-class reflection, 2005)
- Ok, now I can see the progression of this unit and how it has slowly related to how to embed Indigenous perspectives into classroom settings. I also never thought of myself as being a social justice agent in a very political field ... I relate to being a part of the dominant culture. I must admit, I did feel guilty after I researched ... but after doing more research, especially through module three ... my guilt has turned to empowerment ... (Michelle, Online, 2009)
- At the start, the lectures made no sense to me at all and I was referring to the subject as a waste of time. Personally, I feel as though I have grown throughout the semester and now am capable and understand the lectures more ... I can see how they all fit together in a sequence and how it is essential that all the lectures followed on from one another. (Raven, Final in-class reflection, 2005)
- At the beginning I was floundering, but I can see why as I looked back. The 'aaahhh' factor actually hit about week four ... [being] out of my comfort zone and making me question what I actually thought I knew, I feel I have grown as a person ... (Fred, Final in-class reflection, 2005)

In the sample of student reflections above, which were all provided at the end of the semester, there is consistency in initial perceptions and responses to the

program. Words like “frustrating”, “challenging”, “floundering”, recalling how things made “no sense” and *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was a “waste of time” indicates that initially, reactions were emotionally framed. As they interrogated their standpoints, the confusion dissipates, leading to “aaahh” moments. This demonstrates the limitations for constructing new knowledge about themselves in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives when there is a lack of critical awareness of how students mediate knowledge about others.

The first weeks of the program are not designed to provide students with new information, but rather to assist them to explore what they already knew. The benefits of deconstructing their own standpoints, and the emotional charge that this causes, is shown by their capacity to “bring knowledge together” (Dorothy), to understand “why we had to talk about [things]” (Carol) and to reason why “something ... made an impact” and to see that “it makes complete sense” (Yani). Additionally, for Michelle, emotional factors like “guilt” are common in Indigenous studies. The reason as argued by West (2000) is a product of “having white history and behaviour subjected to Aboriginal adjudication” (p. 60). The guilt felt by Michelle was assuaged through “doing more research”, leading her to declare a commitment to being a “social justice agent”. She is also making links between the personal investigations, theory and practical application in the classroom. These reflections demonstrate a shift that may not have occurred had students been able to remain personally disassociated from the more theoretical investigations undertaken in the subject.

Many students reflected that the inherent challenges they experienced were a consequence of their silent sanction of Indigenous peoples’ marginalisation, and their acceptance of non-Indigenous people’s position in relation to this marginalisation. Students learn about specific events in Australian history after being challenged to consider how their knowledge about Australian culture and history influences these perceptions. Lonnie remarks that when

... we looked at how Australian history can affect the way we view our culture it was as I thought, ‘convict’ history has affected the ‘Aussie battler’ view etc. [When] we looked at where in our definition Indigenous culture fit I started recalling what I’d learned in primary school about ... ‘boomerangs’

etc and we even had some indigenous people come and teach us their dances  
 ... I found it interesting ... (Lonnie, Online, 2009)

Lonnie is drawing connections here between the effect of being exposed to limited constructions of a culture she participates in (Australian culture) and limited constructions of Indigenous cultures that she observes as an outsider. So in this sense, for Lonnie and others, not knowing Indigenous peoples refers to a lack of understanding about the foundations for existing knowledge about self and collective culture. Additionally, not knowing also encompasses the connections students make between their social and cultural location, and the reinforcement of taken-for-granted understandings.

#### **8.1.4 ACKNOWLEDGING FEAR, GUILT AND MISTAKEN IDENTITIES**

Assumptions that any enquiry in personal standpoint is flawed due to the subjectivity required in the investigation also presents as a way to resist exploring to the depth required (see Chapter 7). However, it is possible to apply a rational, objective framework to discover the gaps in one's knowledge through the open questioning techniques described previously. Students who become aware of where they sit in relation to a dominating knowledge framework can begin to identify how pertinent these systems are to their worldviews about Self and Other. As previously discussed, the course materials avoid the use of negatively charged terms like 'racism' and pay only minimal attention to any obvious exposition of this through overt naming. Nonetheless, defensiveness in relation to being 'seen' by another, especially an Indigenous person, leads to the views that individuals are being accused of racism. There can also be conjecture around the presumed desire of Indigenous staff for an emotional pay-off in a fear-driven belief *Cultures and Indigenous Education* seeks to engage non-Indigenous peoples in a battle to decide who is right.

This acknowledgement of the connectedness between dominance and their own 'racisms' leads students away from comforting ideas that locate certain issues as someone else's problem to resolve. Furthermore, the opportunities for students to record their feelings and thoughts throughout the semester provide them with the opportunity to reflect back on reactions without the distorting lens of fear of the unknown. When student expectations are not filtered through insecurity stemming from mindless devotion to common-sense, their explanations become more logical, and less contradictory. When Libby commenced *Cultures and Indigenous Education*

she says that her “privilege” had a powerful effect on her lack of willingness to engage with the subject: she admitted that “for the first six weeks ... I didn’t want to be there. ‘What’s the point?’; ‘This is stupid’; ‘What’s the issue?’; ‘There is no problem. Get over it’. Just all those typical things that you hear” (Libby, Interview, 2005). Libby explains that she managed to move beyond the fears generated by feelings of confrontation and being targeted by accepting and acknowledging the causes.

Umm, I think for me it was at first confronting the facts that...I’m not sure how to put it, but confronting the fact that perhaps I was racist, and didn’t even know it ... it takes you a really long time to delve into that and [to] try and plug into the reasons why that’s the case, because I think I was a big sayer of ‘I’m not racist but ...’ ... like I’m really tolerant of lots of different types of people and lots of different cultures and all that kind of thing. But really I’d never come into contact with people other than, or so I thought, other than people from where I was from, kind of thing. So for me it was confronting that part of myself that was most definitely a racist white Australian. (Libby, Interview, 2005)

Libby locates the cause of her confrontation as arising from an internal unacknowledged belief and shows how her resistance is expressed as a projection of her own fears and interpretations onto the curriculum. This translated into an immediate defence. This internal conflict is silenced only when she acknowledges her own actions as racist, beliefs which she initially protected herself from by using the clichéd phrase ‘I’m not racist but...’ as a shield. Libby also eventually concludes that her knowledge about others was developed in a vacuum, devoid of Indigenous, or other culturally different groups, leading her to question how it could be possible to position herself as “tolerant” when this tolerance was rarely tested by exposure to another’s perspective. On reflection Libby is able to see the positions she took and what she said in tutorials in a new light, “and looking back now, just some of the things I said - a little embarrassing” (Interview, 2005).

Students have compartmentalised – and marginalised – Indigenous issues as irrelevant. This understanding is borne out in discussions around what constitutes public representations of Australian culture and history. In considering the difficulties in re-interpreting a confirmed position and the impact of being challenged to question the unquestioned, Maggie says:

So many people fear change, some more than others think change is big [that] it's this whole other section to think about [so they] compartmentalise different things ... Changing that to look within it and look at it as a holistic thing [can] be really huge and confusing, (Interview, 2005)

Western systems continue to shape a framework for thinking about the world that excludes others but which also provides a blueprint for dealing with Indigenous peoples today, including systems for managing understandings about relevance (West, 2000). Deconstructing this conceptual blueprint at the most fundamental level of an individual's system for knowing self can bring fear. There is a relatively smooth alignment of individual beliefs to collective ways of knowing Self in relation to Indigenous peoples. This positioning is supported socially and systemically to establish a common-sense comfort which relies on keeping certain knowledge out. At one level, resistance occurs when students develop fears around change in their comfortable position in relation to Indigenous peoples (Harrison, 2007). Maggie remarks that fear was generated in her, because of her "compartmentalised" thinking, and how seeing the issues as "holistic ... [can] be really huge and confusing". When students realise that no concrete changes occurs – just intellectual - this becomes a crucial point for them moving beyond the resistance. The positions established by the Chantal and Libby herald from the same space of enquiry, where critical attention to themselves facilitates a shift the way they perceive others as a consequence of clarifying standpoints.

The reassurance that comes with the privilege of not needing to "rationalise nothing" can aggravate fears when students *are* called to justify their understandings. Chantal explains how this contributed to her fear:

I guess it was a fear of rejection actually. Rejection ... and that terrible feeling that I had of [feeling] guilty ... I know I shouldn't feel guilty but I can't help but have compassion for the things that have happened in this country. It makes me feel emotional talking about it. Ohh it just makes me angry to think that this happened and to think that possibly my ancestors were responsible for some of these things. I just feel ashamed and I know that's supposed to be - [*tries to compose herself*] - to be like a white way of controlling people. But, yeah it's just ... Sorry, I don't know why I'm crying... (Interview, 2005)

Chantal attempted to distance herself from feeling “guilty”, and makes links between White “shame” and White “control”, explaining this as a position she can take on account of dominance (Hollinsworth, 1998). However, this analysis does not alleviate the emotion that Chantal feels when describing her fears. Chantal identified the context for this earlier in relation to her individual standpoint (8.1.2) and now expands this to a collective recognition. By recognising the dangers of ‘self-indulgent guilt’ she aligns herself to her ancestors/ family’s contribution to Australian history. This leads her to move from feeling ‘sympathy’ to ‘empathy’ and reshapes her emotional response to one of “compassion”. Consequently, Chantal aligns herself with historical events which lead her to connect at a personal level to the consequences in the present. On the basis of this connection, Chantal develops within herself a responsibility for the future: “... if I can confront that, I can get over it and move on and, like, make the future better for my children, and for, umm, me as well” (Chantal, Interview, 2005).

The recognition of the connections between self and history enables many students to achieve something which they are mostly unable to do in the beginning of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. The focus on their own individual and collective standpoints – shifting the gaze – results in reducing the reliance on descriptions of Indigenous peoples’ as ‘victims’ or other constructions to explain their relationships to Indigenous peoples and Australian history.

## **8.2 GETTING OVER RESISTANCE**

Resistance in critical Indigenous studies has been shown to be connected to the investment that students have in upholding particular points of view about themselves, and about Indigenous peoples (Chapter 7). These viewpoints emanate from connections to collective systems for imagining relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The limited knowledge that students have about their own standpoints and the impact of these within a dominating paradigm produce a certainty that students struggle to sustain when presented with alternative knowledge perspectives. There are intellectual and emotional consequences for interference with this previous certainty. Once students become aware of contradictions in their thinking, and deal with the emotional consequences of learning about a lack of awareness, they start to progress beyond the resistance. This results in potential for more in-depth self-enquiry, making it possible for students to

reflect back on their resistance, and explain it with a more expansive, less self-defensive outlook. In this section I discuss how students clarify their resistance and what they identify as significant factors inducing shifts in their perspectives on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations.

### 8.2.1 NEW PERCEPTIONS OF SELF

The tendency by students to justify existing standpoints is disrupted as they begin to reflect on their viewpoints using theory. The freedom to speak about self in new ways is grounded by an acceptance that previous ways of knowing were limited. In arriving at this point students experience discomfort but they also develop skills to rationalise and understand why their prior knowledge was limited. There are many dimensions which students move through in order to deconstruct and re-construct understandings about where they are, and how they have been situated in relation to Australian culture and history, and knowledge about Indigenous peoples (8.1.1). These dimensions are interdependent and as students begin to cultivate perceptions of self that are more consistently aligned with the new knowledge (Brisbane, 2008), the causes of previous misperceptions become apparent. Through the articulation of knowledge about collectively framed cultural values, labelled as Australian, students learn how powerful they are in demarcating the territories within which knowledge about Indigenous peoples is placed.

The acquisition of new perspectives on issues such as culture, race and how knowledge is constructed triggers new perceptions of self and collective culture. Consequently, students begin to develop new approaches and willingness to apply these new ways of knowing to transform other spaces. To consider the questions that Lonnie poses: “...have I been discriminatory? Before [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] were my feelings towards Indigenous or other cultures different? ” (Online, 2009), necessitates the relinquishment of comforting notions about self. When first researching, Lonnie found that she was “delving into all my experiences to justify everything I had felt” but with more research, and gaining an understanding of theories she’d “never heard before”, she came to this verdict:

I’m ashamed to say that it was [discriminatory]. I am ashamed to say that I almost believed what the media and everybody else said about Aboriginals being alcoholics etc. It’s sad to think that as a child I grew up thinking these things. (Lonnie, Online, 2009)

Alternative perspectives of the knowledge that Lonnie previously held have enabled her to see both cause and effect of her ideas about Indigenous peoples. The feelings of shame associated with this new perception show that Lonnie is taking responsibility for her actions yet seeing that also, given the circumstances of her prior learning, alternative positions in relation to Indigenous peoples may not have been possible.

Redefining one's subjectivity at this most fundamental level entails the denaturalisation of binary systems that validate a sense of self whether these relate to tangible knowledges (e.g., misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples) or intangible representations of non-Indigenous peoples inside dominance. As Thomson (1999) notes, the assumption that knowledge about self and other can be realised through "self-evident mutually informing binary systems" needs to be questioned (p. 81). However he also warns that we should be careful not to dissolve those categories that are foundational to "political communities and ... personal identity" (p. 81). Thus Lonnie might state her rejection of the constructions of Indigenous peoples framed by a dominant cultural framework; however this does not mean a rejection of her connection to the collective cultural group itself.

This notion of self-reflection in relation to collective dominance is reiterated by Penny in her resolve to "not take views on face value [that] maybe beforehand [she] might have just accepted ... as the truth" (Online, 2009). In addition to this she speaks about how these new insights would impact on her "professional approach" because she would "not like to continue the false belief into the next generation" (Penny, Online, 2009). Penny and Lonnie both identify the continuities in knowledge production about Indigenous peoples and confirm how 'truth' is judged through collectivised systems of knowing (Mills, 2007). The correspondence between the knowledge the individual holds, and collective knowledge is used as a point of confirmation for the 'truth' of both. Individual connections to particular frames of knowing others then, are restricted by how this knowledge is shaped by institutions and external influences. The recognition that dominant cultural knowledges may be limited inspires them to consider their own roles in the process.

The pedagogy allows for students to gradually deconstruct their own standpoints, identify the external causes through critical enquiry in relation to history, culture, socialisation and dominance and to use theory to resolve the

confusion (3.2.2). As a consequence, some students re-position themselves in relation to these collective knowledges to explore how dominance operates on others. Chantal sees this as a way of meeting a need; a need that is “deeper, like the need to be self-fulfilled” which you can only achieve when you “go through this process and to confront things” (Interview, 2005). She configures this difficult route using the analogy of the mirror, confirming that perceptions of self are key: “it’s like looking in the mirror and not really liking what you see. You’re going, ‘But this is the way it is and this is what I have to do’ ...” (Chantal, Interview, 2005). Of note here is how Penny, Lonnie and Chantal have reconstructed the ‘problem’ of dominance as being a direct cause of their privilege, as opposed to capturing dominance as a cause of Indigenous victimisation.

There are specific and general issues which student Libby, who was initially resistant to her studies, starts to notice. She says that “the non-listener part of me was huge until I started [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] and I really had to train myself so much and I’m still bad at it sometimes; listening to people and trying to hear what they are saying”. It is difficult to determine the specific cause of Libby’s conclusion here without considering the context of her previous reflections. She cited previously that her resistance to her studies was motivated by her perception that there was “no point” in Indigenous studies because she “was not racist”. Libby identified that the turning point for her surfaced six weeks into the program, when she began to see that she may have been misguided in this original perception of self. Her comprehension that she lacked the knowledge to draw such conclusions, her willingness to remain engaged through the six weeks even though she “hated being there” and the impact of probing multiple dimensions of her standpoint coalesced to assist her to see the constraints of her pre-existing knowledge (Group interview 2, 2005).

The systems of knowledge that authorised Libby’s original resistance are part of what Swartz (1992) calls the “master script”, which simultaneously acts to silence alternative knowledges and legitimise dominant, white knowledges as the “standard” (p. 134). Libby’s resistance was regulated by dominant norms causing her to make immediate assumptions about the relevance of Indigenous studies to her. The content which focussed attention on individual knowledge about Australian values, culture and history was reconfigured to sit comfortably with her knowledge of herself as a

‘non-racist’ and to also resist naming these values. In essence, Libby’s resistance acted to support the goals of “silencing” Indigenous voices and authorising collective dominance by attempting to control or reshape content that does not reflect dominant voices (Swartz, 1992). Eventually admitting to her role in these processes enabled Libby to listen more attentively and led to her becoming intent on “trying to understand, instead of trying to be understood” (Group interview 2, 2005).

Libby’s self realisation that she was subject to ideas mediated by dominating systems of knowledge is significant and important. Her initial need to be “understood” may demonstrate an assumption that Indigenous peoples have not been exposed to ideas produced in these limiting knowledge contexts. The daily interactions of Indigenous peoples in non-Indigenous domains and our constant exposure to Western texts confirming the dominant position on colonisation, media representations and so on seems not to have figured in Libby’s initial stance. By shifting her focus to “try to understand”, Libby has at least acknowledged the limitations of her own position and effect of minimal exposure to Indigenous knowledge perspectives. In the interview, Maggie identifies this lack of opportunity to hear these perspectives as critical: “if we weren’t here and didn’t do this course [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] we would still be completely oblivious to what’s going on, or ignorant, or whatever” (Group interview 2, 2005). Libby’s new standpoint is clearly reflected in her response to Maggie’s call for more critical Indigenous studies:

Yeah I think about that. [It] makes me annoyed at myself. It would be a completely different story otherwise and you can’t come across this stuff by chance, it’s got to be there, it’s got to be available for everyone. (Libby, 2005, in joint interview with Maggie and researcher)

Maggie and Libby are framing these thoughts as admissions about themselves. Yet they set these revelations inside a context which acknowledges that previously they were invested with power to secure their knowledge base because of *the absence* of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges. They no longer see “being completely oblivious” to Indigenous perspectives as the norm, or even an ideal position to be in. The confusion experienced as a result of learning about their “ignorance” (8.1.4) is beginning to resolve and the recognition that this is a systemic issue leads them to consider systemic resolutions.

### 8.2.2 EXPLAINING THE SHIFT

The level of willingness students have to engaging with the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* bears little relevance to the subsequent shifts that they experience as they move through the program. In the cases of Libby and Maggie, who described how rigid their resistance was for the first six weeks of the program, the level of understanding they eventually reached was complex. Their ability to apply these understandings across a range of contexts to explain and manage the contradictions was multifaceted. Libby and Maggie began to explore ideas that went beyond vague commitments to ‘social justice’ framed in terms of ‘helping’ Indigenous peoples succeed in Western spaces (2.2). Given how persistent these students were in attending classes, I was interested to know why it was that they kept coming back. Libby had earlier admitted: “I didn’t know why” but then proceeded to explain when the shift occurred for her saying, “this might sound really stupid, but I got sick of feeling that anxiousness and that anger and umm, I just made this decision I was going to [try] to understand instead of trying to be understood” (Group interview 2, 2005). The inclination to “try to understand” demonstrates a growing realisation that there may be deficiencies in her current knowledge base. There is evidence here of a paradigm shift from a comfortable focus on justifying existing views about Self and Indigenous peoples to a less comforting enquiry resting on doubt and uncertainty about her perspective.

Maggie notes that the slow peeling back of layers through the pedagogy meant that even in uncertainty the previous safe space of enquiry was no longer an option because, “you can’t put the blinkers back on once they’ve been taken off” (Group interview 2, 2005). This is significant especially as both students were initially firm in their resolve to provide counterarguments to enquiries into their standpoints and perceptions. When asked if they saw a connection between resistance and the need to maintain security Libby states that:

The less power someone feels the more they would tend to resist to try and maintain that power position, the more defensive someone would get ... I think the decrease in power makes you more vulnerable to something, vulnerability means you accept more things. (Group interview 2, 2005)

The notion of power relations is central to Libby’s explanation of resistance. She sees “defensiveness” as a product of “feeling” diminished power in relation to

particular forms of knowing. There is a sub-text here that being powerless in relation to Indigenous peoples' knowledge perspectives is unusual given the defensiveness that occurs.

Resistance is thus an attempt to re-assert power, reproduced by the silencing of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, as well as a response to perceived powerlessness when these views are authorised. Libby also centres a "decrease in power" as being the solution for "acceptance", concluding that "vulnerability" is most necessary to transformation. Therefore, resistance can also be seen as a means of avoiding vulnerability and reducing the discomfort that extends from "acceptance" of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Libby (Group interview 2, 2005) says that for her the more exposed non-Indigenous people are to the perspectives of Indigenous peoples at broader levels, for example through the "input of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into more aspects of our society ... more politics", the less significant power relations and resistance will be as "there is not so much of that power play there". Maggie agrees, stressing that she doesn't "think there would be the resistance there is" as this lack of exposure "makes you more defensive ... and therefore more resistant" (Group interview 2, 2005).

The relationship that Maggie and Libby are drawing between resistance and context is significant here in terms of explaining their resistance and reflecting on how this was impacted by the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Both positions are underwritten by the understanding that individuals are socialised into seeing themselves as entities in relation to others within a specific societal context and the absence of "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" at the centre of this society leads to *and* validates resistance to Indigenist perspectives as acceptable. Chantal describes the impact of the deconstruction of standpoint and cultural dominance for her:

I had no idea it would be more about me and about examining my values. I'd never anticipated that at all ... I really had to take a good long hard look at myself and just say '...well if I continue this behaviour these are the consequences. (Interview, 2005)

The dominant knowledge framework that supports non-Indigenous people's cultural security through the decentring of Indigenous voices, affects the level of insecurity experience when these voices are authorised. Chantal's willingness to "take a good

long hard look” at her “values” and to explore the “consequences” of holding them is noteworthy. Opportunities to develop critical learning events occur with self-enquiry; an increasing sense of where they fit into the world is established when systems of dominance are deconstructed by students. This focus on situatedness lead Libby to reflect that in due course “I was more uncomfortable with the feeling of what I was, of my head space before it happened than I was to argue about it and confront it ...” (Group interview 2, 2005). The discomfort was transformed, but did not disappear altogether; it just became trained on a different element, leading to a reduction in resistance and therefore a clearer view of the benefits of critical self-enquiry.

This process of enquiry enables students to discern what they ‘don’t know’ and the impact of this for them. Lonnie describes her shift:

After completing [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] ... my value is now that I know I can and SHOULD change predetermined presumptions and perceptions of Indigenous communities within our schools ... Whilst I can’t say that I expected the unit to be about ‘dot paintings’ and such, I was dreading the ‘political’ views I knew would be expected in the unit. How wrong was I to dread such political challenges to our community? Perhaps I was scared because I was going to learn about something so important, something that may position many people as ‘racist’. (Lonnie, Online, 2009)

Lonnie’s initial “dread” that she would have to consider “political challenges to our community” emanated from a fear that “many people” would be labelled “racist”. Lonnie implies that judgements about the collective manifest in the labelling of individuals. While her fear is expressed as a personal one, Lonnie distances herself from the “many people” she assumes would be labelled through “political” investigations. Lonnie makes connections between her entrapment of Indigenous peoples inside an objectified space (“dot paintings”) and the possibilities for deeper understandings that ensued when her fears were overcome.

Sometimes self-realisation and the associated pain can be experienced early in the subject, which influences the strength of the resistance. In the first class Maggie describes the impact of being guided to consider her notions of ‘race’ in the introductory activities for defining standpoint (see 3.2.2). I asked these students what they experienced at this point – anything physical, emotional or attitudinal that they felt reflected the depth of their initial resistance.

Definitely there was a lot of anger, a lot of staring in the gut type thing, you kind of associate racism with not being a very nice person. So it's like well hang on I'm a nice person, so how can I be racist? I accept everyone, I love everyone and the world is a beautiful place. (Maggie, Group interview 2, 2005)

Other students were equally courageous in acknowledging how their initial feelings about the subject were very much about their own standpoints. Comparing Jill's first journal entry, which I have discussed previously (7.2.1), and her final entry show the distance of her shift:

This subject is making me incredibly frustrated! ... I also don't understand how they want us to use what we're learning to teach young children. Am I supposed to stand up in front of a class of preschoolers and tell them they are all racist and they will continue to be so for all their lives because they are white?! ... (Jill, Journal, 2005, Week 1)

Jill has expressed these points of view and resistance on the basis of the conditions that existed before focussed study around the issues. These statements represent the knowledge that she developed outside an Indigenist space and subsequently rely on assumption and self-righteousness. When an individual loses the anchor of unquestioned assumptions about Indigenous peoples that exist to “discipline, reform [and] erase” (Prout & Howitt, 2009, p. 401); or even presumes that they will (Williams, 2000), resistance is required to re-stabilise. Resistance thus becomes a tool to maintain a secure sense of self/culture in relation to Indigenous peoples. In contrast, in her final journal entry Jill stated:

As the subject comes to a close I'm starting to wish we had more time ... It has taken me a whole semester just to begin to challenge my own assumptions ... The prospect of teaching young children Indigenous issues and issues of culture and identity is still daunting to me but the teaching I have received over the last twelve weeks has at the very least empowered me with the processes and thinking that will aid me in these challenges. (Jill, Journal, 2005, Week 12)

Jill's exposure to critical, alternative and deep investigations enabled her to calm her “frustration” after the initial outburst, to deal with her resistance and become comfortable at personal, political, intellectual and emotional levels. This data is consistent with previous student reflections (8.1.3) where it was shown that the depth

of emotional reactions in the initial stages of the program derived from pre-existing knowledge. New ways of interpreting the knowledge that supported Jill's initial standpoint enabled her to redirect her critical lens to her own "assumptions" and to "empower" her to meet the "challenge" that teaching about Indigenous issues would invite. A challenge which Jill does not question is her responsibility.

In Table 8.1 below, reflections from Carrie (Online, 2009) have been tabulated to show the particular stages in her progress through studies in *Culture and Indigenous Education* from Weeks 2-6. Some of these reflections have been discussed before (indicated by italics) but I have re-contextualised these earlier reflections to demonstrate how Carrie moved on from her original, very strong views on the "racism" exhibited by the Indigenous lecturers. While the organisation of the data might give the impression that her learning was linear, the difficulties associated with learning about relationships in the complex and contested field of Indigenous studies is too layered to be reduced in this way. Attention is drawn to this by Warren & Hytten (2004) when they make clear that the positions that students occupy in studies of cultural and racial privilege are

not essentialized, false or purposively manufactured ... but cultural logics one borrows or takes on in certain communicative contexts. In this way, students may occupy different [spaces] at different times. (p. 323)

It is interesting to note how Carrie not only expresses a reaction, but offers her own explanations for why she feels as she does initially. As she experiences shifts in her thinking, her rationalisations are more intellectually reflective: "the culture that I have developed plays a significant part of how I perceive things" (Online, 2009).

Table 8.1 Moving through the stages (Carrie, Online, 2009)

Anger, Resistance and Self-defence	Reversal of concepts	Cooling down	New Realisation
<p>“I felt confronted; it seemed as if Jean was very anti-White Australians and believed Aborigines could do no wrong; the lecture was contradictory; I don’t agree with anything that was said; I felt very frustrated!; I do not support racism in any way; I’m appalled by people who treat Aborigines with disrespect.” (Week 2)</p>	<p>“This lecture [by a famous Aboriginal writer] made me so ANGRY! ... I had to walk out; She was so racist against white Australian children; It is so wrong! She is contradicting herself because she thinks white Australians are racist! ... I felt so offended! Maybe I took the lecturer too personally, but this is how I feel.” (Week 4)</p>	<p>“After cooling down ... I have decided to [reflect] on why I thought I felt angry; During the tute I talked to Jean ... When we were discussing each lecture in tutorials we both understood one simple point that the lecturer said in different ways; I assumed the lecturer felt that the aboriginal culture was <i>trying to survive</i>; Jean felt that Aboriginal culture is very much surviving ... even though white Australians don’t ‘see’ them or maybe want to believe it” (Week 5)</p>	<p>“After discussing the lecture, I feel quite calm and contented and definitely not angry. It .. made me understand that the culture that I have developed plays a significant part in how I perceive [things]; I understand that she was not attacking me or my culture, she was simply telling us how she felt from inside her culture; I understand now that <i>Cultures and Indigenous Education</i> is not about feeling guilty, understanding or trying to change the world, it is about AWARENESS. (Week 6)</p>

Carrie explains that “discussing the lecture” was important in being able to resolve the conflict she experienced. Her interpretation that Indigenous peoples are “trying to survive” is indicated as the cause of part of her “anger” given that she is reassured after speaking with her tutor (the researcher in her teaching capacity) that this is a perception established by outsiders. Carrie moves quite quickly to analysing that her perceptions are different given the social contexts in which they are developed: “the culture that I developed plays a significant part in how I perceive things”. Even though on the surface the positions Carrie takes seem contradictory, there is a fluid connection between what causes her emotional outburst, what calms it and her eventual conclusion in relation to her standpoint. Her initial response is fed by an assumption that she is being targeted: “she thinks white Australians are all racist”. Carrie’s response is triggered by her interpretation from the lecture that Indigenous people can only “try to survive” – with this perception of a victim, she situates “racism” as the cause, which leads her to self-defence. Carrie’s anger abates when Indigenous peoples are re-positioned as doing more than “surviving” but are self-empowered, although this may be invisible to “white people”. The reassurance that

Carrie feels in knowing this, leads to the negation of her anger at supposedly being called “racist”. The possibility for further growth beyond this point is signified by Carrie’s willingness to listen and engage with a point of view that had the potential to increase her anger. This willingness is the key to moving beyond the challenges *Cultures and Indigenous Education* presents for students.

A few weeks later Carrie was again reflecting on her reactions to another Aboriginal guest lecturer:

The very first thing that the [Aboriginal guest lecturer] said was that “most” people only really include Indigenous studies in the classroom because they are told to, not because they want to or believe it is important. Upon first hearing this, as per usual, I was taken aback because I personally felt she was attacking me blah blah blah ... (Online, 2009, Week 10)

Humour starts to infiltrate Carrie’s responses indicating a movement away from resistance and feeling the need to defend self and Australians in light of Indigenous peoples’ perspectives.

As the data from this section (8.1.4), when students begin to clarify their standpoints in relation to collective Australian knowledge, they begin to resolve the tensions created by considerations of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. The fears stemming from new realisations ease when students rationalise these emotional responses as a defence against perceptions of being part of the ‘problem’. In the next section (8.2.3), I consider what students identify as turning-points to shifting resistance.

### **8.2.3 SELF-IDENTIFIED TURNING POINTS**

Through the curriculum of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, students are guided to consider where resistance emerges from and to connect how they interpret interactions with Indigenous peoples (or representations of) inside particular knowledge frameworks. In *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, students are not exposed to ideas as bits of information to supplement their lack of knowledge but are instead introduced to content through critical self-examination. There is scope in such a process for disentangling habitual ways of knowing, or disregarding knowledge, and getting students to learn how their belief systems have been legitimised. The shifts that participants describe correspond with the idea that

transformation occurs as a series of ‘light bulb moments’ rather than as one major turning point.

For Darren “there wasn’t anything specific” that he saw as shifting his points of view, however by making connections between “how Indigenous people are perceived culturally” and the influence of his family’s views on this framing, he subsequently realised that “... I pretty much had my parents’ idea because I hadn’t had many encounters; I hadn’t seen much of the other side, so to speak” (Interview, 2005). Darren’s views were not only constructed by, but authenticated within a vacuum devoid of experiences with Indigenous peoples. For Darren, this realisation enabled him to shift to a space where greater critical reflection became possible. Maggie provides an account of how such a process allowed her to re-consider the causes of her ways of relating to Indigenous peoples at a most fundamental and seemingly inconsequential level.

I remember [we had] to relate a recent experience or the last encounter we had with an Indigenous person and how you reacted and I actually happened to have one that morning, and I thought ‘ahh’ ... An Indigenous person passed me and I kind of leaned this way. You know really subtle things, but very important at the same time. And generally you wouldn’t think twice about something like that until you are actually confronted with it and think ‘ohh, hang on’ ... (Maggie, Group interview 2, 2005)

Maggie has begun to clarify the connections between the effects of what she calls “the portrayal of Aboriginal people as being unnaturally vicious, violent” through her schooling and being “petrified” of Indigenous people later in life (Group interview 2, 2005). She explained that her barely perceptible but “very important” inclination to “lean away” from Indigenous peoples has “got to come from somewhere...” Maggie comes to understand this through applying a critical lens to things that previously she “wouldn’t think twice about” (Group interview 2, 2005).

In her consideration of how previous knowledge about Indigenous peoples continues to influence reactions in adulthood, lead Libby to remark in response to Maggie’s disclosure: “It’s amazing how ingrained it is even so much later” (Libby, Group interview 2, 2005). Similarly, John confessed that, for him, self-interrogation was a “weird place” to be, saying “it’s really hard looking at myself ... I’ve never done any of that before in my life I can tell you that”. In light of this he said:

...if someone wants to change me they'd better come up with a good argument [and] what I've found is it has been a good argument. ... All those little pieces of information that we were copping every week in tutes, I think they're great, because they're all the things I didn't know. I was amazed at how much I didn't know ... all that stuff that happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century I had no idea. I even did history at school ... (Interview, 2005)

The multi-layered pedagogical approach of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and the diversity in student experience and willingness to engage results in multiple points of impact in the shifts that students like John experience: "all those little bits of information that we were copping in tutes". The absence of knowledge about Indigenous peoples in the Australian centre continues to be informed by historical contentions that colonisation in Australia was justified on the basis of *terra nullius*. John is making links between the knowledge he was exposed to: "I had no idea. I even did history at school". Enabling students to shift "ingrained" ideas is integral to learning, especially since these ideas are so powerful in forming the foundations for relating to Indigenous peoples. For John, the "good arguments" that were presented, which were in reality just re-placing Indigenous peoples back into constructions of Australian history, "amazed" him. Learning must therefore be nuanced to target conscious and subconscious understandings and to enable students to critique ideas that may have previously validated their resistance.

Interestingly, questioning the very foundation of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in Australia is identified as a 'turning point' for some, which acts as a point of connection between Self, Other and Collectivity.

We talked about the timeline and I realised that every single thing influenced us today. I mean I knew that it had but I guess I have never thought about it. We also drew up a table that compared the "shore" to the "ship". Pretty much everything that we wrote up about the impact of British settlers was positive and the impacts on the Aborigines was negative! It seems so unfair ... (Carrie, Online, 2009)

As already discussed (3.2.2; 7.2) students deconstruct Australian history through the use of a timeline activity which integrates specific events that are most popularly labelled as 'Aboriginal history'. Students are asked to consider the consequences of events such as 'settlement', Federation in 1901 *and* the massacres of Aboriginal people, "Stolen generation", and the Aboriginal Protection Act on non-Indigenous

identity formations. Upon reading the timeline and participating in the tutorial activity, Carrie is shocked into a realisation that is counterintuitive to a primary resistance to Indigenous inclusion, that history is no longer relevant (see 7.2): “everything ... about the impact of British settlers was positive and the impacts on the Aborigines was negative” (Online, 2009). Carrie has made a link between privileges accruing for non-Indigenous people from colonisation to the present.

Penny also began to break down the cliché that the past was so long ago that it doesn't matter today. She became conscious of the fact that “these aren't dates that we can say ‘ohh this happened a long time ago so it doesn't affect me’. This does affect everyone and it made me really think hard about my own culture and identity in society” (Penny, Online, 2009). Thus *not* knowing about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in history is one thing. The lack of attention paid in history to the very foundations of Australian national identity means that other significant information is left out. As with Farrah who reflects that

...the very thing in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* that turned my head was Terra Nullius. I had no idea. It had a huge impact. I can't tell you the huge impact ... I think it's a pretty good tool – a particularly good tool because it worked for me and I'm pretty damn sure it work for a lot of [students in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*] because ... we don't know. (Interview, 2005)

Reviewing *Australian* history is necessary therefore to reinstating those things hidden by ritualistic constructions in the present. Re-placing the hidden foundations Australia's colonisation is pivotal to dismantling the barriers which guard the limited knowledge that students draw on to authorise their resistance.

Finding out about Australia's illegal beginnings also resonated with Angela and Bernadette.

I never knew about the use of terra nullius to conquer Australia, and when I found this out I was shocked and disgusted at the idea that it was not just a battle to conquer as I had always thought, but the twisting of a legal document - by constructing the Indigenous people of Australia as inhuman and barbaric ... I was also surprised that I had never learned this in school; I had believed that with the country attempting to right past wrongs now that

they would have taught us the truth about Australia's beginnings, especially after the apology. (Angela, Online, 2009)

Learning about Indigenous history in this unit was a huge experience for me. I had a minimal amount of previous Indigenous knowledge and when we analysed the timeline of Indigenous history there were moments my peers and I sat back and just said, 'How could this happen? How could we let this happen? How could no one step forward to do something?' It was mindblowing to read of the absolute devastation ... Reading about the vast massacres that occurred just left me questioning Australia and our culture and also just wondering why? (Bernadette, Journal, 2009)

Angela's original resistance to *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was legitimated by a belief that "treating people differently was wrong" and this was contradicted by a "special" subject devoted to Indigenous peoples. It is clear now that there was insufficient knowledge to allow her to draw any such conclusions. The turning point for Angela thus became finding out something which allowed her to see *her* standpoint more clearly. Uncritical examination in this respect can be masked when Indigenous peoples are constructed only as victims of a major calamity in a disconnected long ago past. By reverting Angela and Bernadette's gazes back onto themselves and their cultural history, a potential for the re-formation of these knowledge spaces surfaced. Bernadette's response is telling in this regard, where knowledge "about the vast massacres" left her "questioning Australia and our culture" (Interview, 2009); thinking about her own culture and history is prioritised over sympathy for Indigenous peoples or guilt about non-Indigenous Australia.

Alternative perspectives on creates a rupture as this creates a potential threat to the security fostered by the inheritance of "frontier narratives" (Furniss, 2006, p. 173). This is particularly so when students approach the research to explore the impact of this type of positioning on their individual and collective standpoints. However, this new way of reading their worldviews and those of others also creates prospects for the resolution of tensions. The "forced research and [analysing it's] point of view and looking into all the other documents" was a turning point for John who "thought well while I'm at it I'm going to really try and get into it ..." (Interview, 2005). Similarly, Chantal says

I really think that reading has helped me a lot. [The readings] like the lectures have just been enormously, like, very at times confronting, but extremely, like ‘oh my gosh I didn’t know that... oh my God, you know, I just can’t believe that’. How crazy that I didn’t know this. I’ve been living here and it’s like, it’s been right next to me but I haven’t known that. That’s helped me a lot... (Interview, 2005).

One student who was privileged to form a close bond with an Indigenous student in his tutorial group spoke about the impact of being able to personally relate to the living embodiment of history, in particular the Stolen Generations. Darren concluded that

...there is no rationalisation for It’s just sickening. [Names an Aboriginal student] made a big change to that too. Having her sitting next to me and she told us a story of her Aunty who [can’t] forget the teeth chattering [of her foster mother] ... she said I don’t want to say it, but the teeth chattering over her bed at night. That’s just literally spine chilling. (Interview, 2005)

Darren attributes the cause of his empathy and “spine chilling” response to the story shared by his Aboriginal classmate to “now that I am a father it’s got a big thing to do with it, because if you took my children away from me I’d want blood” (Interview, 2005). Two things relating to events made it real for this student: Stolen Generation embodied in individual student he has a direct relationship with in class; and the empathy experienced due to fatherhood.

Resources that not only allow students to experience a connection but which provide theoretical explanations to assist them in dealing with the consequences of their new learning is important. For John, one of the most “confronting things” for him, was watching *Best Kept Secret*:

Umm just, you know, it’s just a sadness that [comes from] being a parent ... I was watching them drive off you know and I think ‘...ohh my lord how can that [happen]’. I just, I just can’t comprehend that, so very, very strong in my mind. (Interview, 2005)

The depth of John’s emotional response to this scene and his empathy is multiplied when he considers that “someone was affected by that” (Interview, 2005). It is at this point, the strongest peak of his emotional reaction to what he has seen occurs and when he says the voice of resistance started for him. However, John stifled this

resistance saying that what was once a “safe haven” – seeing history as disconnected – no longer “feels safe” for him. John reflects: “it’s confronting ... I don’t know how you would get past that” (Interview, 2005). Similarly, Chantal refers to the “pain barrier thing” and getting to where “...you go, this is too painful. I just can’t do this anymore” and to through this as an individual you have to move beyond the point where the answers seem to dry up. The “pain” here is associated with recognition of silenced knowledge that affirms the comforting narration that “history as disconnected”.

The influences of acknowledging history is significant to the steps that students take to develop new perceptions of their collective culture in the present. The points at which students moved from resistance to clarification, centred on what they came to understand of themselves and dominance through self-enquiry, rather than exposure to the effects of domination on Indigenous peoples. Information about Indigenous peoples’ experiences was interpreted differently as a consequence. In the next section (8.2.4), I discuss data about how students’ perceptions of their connections to collective culture began to shift.

#### **8.2.4 NEW PERCEPTIONS OF COLLECTIVITY**

New perceptions of self are linked to new perceptions of collectivity. What students have indicated in 8.2.3 is that it is only possible to make choices on the basis of what you know. Assumptions that the intent of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was to accuse non-Indigenous people of racism or to position individuals as “invaders” instigated heavy early resistance (6.1.1). The naïveté with which some students approach discussions of collective culture are potent in framing this resistance (6.1.3; 7.1.1). As students begin to clarify their understandings about the concept of culture and examine the connections between their standpoints and collective knowledge frameworks, they begin to notice the limitations of their existing knowledge base (8.2.3). More sophisticated means to regulate their responses are established when new perceptions emerge about the nature of ‘culture’. Angela re-evaluated her resistance as a consequence:

I wrote in my first assignment, that I still believed that the subject was still slightly biased against the non-Indigenous people...this was because I felt that it was portraying all non-Indigenous people as being racist and for making me question everything I believed about myself, but as we move

through the work I have now realised that this is not the true aim, the aim is to help non-Indigenous people such as myself to learn about the past and to think more critically about what we see in the world today. (Online, 2009)

Once these personal connections are made, students start to bring depth to their understandings about collective cultural dominance. They clarify the effects of the absence of Indigenous knowledge perspectives, or the inclusion of fixed and static constructions of Indigenous peoples, on contemporary dominance. Farrah's response indicates that her investigations caused a shift in her perception about self in relation to Australian history and culture, and Indigenous peoples. Specifically, she cited how her previous ideas about self were hard to determine as a consequence:

I'm trying to think. Is there a 'me' before *Cultures and Indigenous Education* and a 'me' after? [Before, when asked to consider 'Who you are'] mine didn't include white at all. I went straight for ... number one ... 'Mother' because it infiltrates my every thought and action ... So, post *Cultures and Indigenous Education*? I'm extraordinarily white! Like I said to [my tutor] I've never been so white since *Cultures and Indigenous Education* ... What does that mean to be white? I have to be blunt but I'll call it ... top of the food chain. (Farrah, Interview, 2005)

In reflecting on her previous belief that being "white" means being at the "top of the food chain", Farrah is naming her cultural/racial standpoint. Previously though she was prioritising her role as "Mother" which placed restrictions on her ability to acknowledge her "whiteness", for, as Ladson-Billings (2004) explains, "when Whites are exempted from racial designations and become "families", "jurors", "students", "teachers" they become limited in their ability to critically analyse their racialised position (p. 53). Farrah's exclamation that "I'm extraordinarily white!" is mirrored in Samantha's contemplation of how her understandings have grown. She declares that "looking back on what I have written I now understand that what I do and who I am, is my culture. I think I struggled at the beginning of this unit, as I believed I did not really have a culture, now I know I do" (Samantha, Journal, 2005). Samantha's initial struggles were quieted, and she was able to ease her way into her studies once her understandings around the concept of culture solidified.

The connections that can be made with these new understandings will affect how individuals subsequently align and connect to the Australian collective. What

then are the consequences of viewing this domain through newly formed critical lenses? Chantal says that it “definitely” has changed her perceptions, and that:

I am a lot more critical of the collective group. I have always been because my parents bought me up to sort of go “ohh the majority is wrong and this is what they are doing that is wrong”. I think that was already there, but yes I do think that I umm I am opened to that criticism and I’m also opened to criticism myself, like I realise I have to examine myself and it’s been since I’ve started this subject; it’s really been such a profound thing because it’s made me look at my life and look at the way that I interact with people and it’s made me go “ohh gosh there’s so much that I need to learn”; and I am going to constantly be learning it, I will never stop learning, but I’ve got to be opened to that and I have to open to that with other people too.

(Interview, 2005)

Although Chantal was raised to question “the majority” and the validity of decisions derived within this knowledge space, she demonstrates that she is no longer seeing “the majority” as a monolithic group disconnected from her: “...it’s made me look at my life [and] the way I interact with people”. Chantal’s consideration of her connection to a “collective group” have led her to recognise that there is “still so much left to learn”. Through her examination of how “collective” ideas operate, Chantal is seeing culture as a daily, lived practice (West, 2000; Graham, 1999; McCarthy et al., 2007) that she “will never stop learning” about. This demonstrates Chantal’s more complex awareness of what culture is generally, and how it manifests for her more specifically. This reading of culture as a multidimensional process of meaning-making, where culture is a daily experience of negotiation, interpretation and experimentation is important to moving beyond ideas that culture is a stable, fixed phenomena (Riphagen, 2008; Warren & Hytten, 2004).

As students became more reflective toward the end of the semester, they began to consider how their understandings about Australian culture and history that emerged through critical investigation of their standpoints might impact on their lives outside of the classrooms of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Gertrude shares how the application of these understandings in her workplace allowed her to guide a young boy to examine his understandings of Australia and Australian history:

I work in a school centre, and ... I asked a young boy [Year 2 student] what he was learning this semester. He replied “countries and this week we

learned about Australia”, which formed a good learning opportunity [for] making links in relation to *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. (Gertrude, Online, 2009).

The discussion between Gertrude and the year two child raised issues we had explored over the semester. The conversation proceeded as follows:

**Gertrude:** Who first found Australia?

**Child:** Captain Cook

**Gertrude:** Aboriginal people were here first.

**Child:** But Aboriginal people have black skin and it’s not their land, it’s ours and Captain Cook’s.

**Gertrude:** But Australia did belong to [Aboriginal people] and still does.

**Child:** It can’t be anymore because they [Aboriginal people] aren’t here.

**Gertrude:** Aboriginal people still live here.

**Child:** Oh, I thought you had to wear nothing to be an Aboriginal.

The child in this interaction is developing understandings about Aboriginal people on the basis of representations in discussions about Australia in the classroom. As a consequence, Gertrude said that, “this incident really made me reflect upon how this teacher is teaching and why that is – maybe a lack of knowledge and understanding about the topic and Indigenous people is involved” (Gertrude, Online, 2009). This experience was a critical event motivating her to consider her role as a teacher, and her responsibility for providing knowledge that was inclusive of diverse representations of Indigenous people. Likewise, other students like Angela draw the connections between systems designed to create knowledge, the effect of leaving out certain perspectives and her accountability in changing this:

We cannot teach children about this stuff, until we understand it for ourselves. Because the reason I didn't know this sort of thing is because my teachers didn't teach me it, they taught me what they thought was the truth without delving deeper. (Angela, Online, 2009)

In making these connections, Angela is able to move beyond feelings of being blamed and distances herself from protecting the system responsible for her ignorance. She attributes the reason for not knowing to the fact that she wasn't taught.

Toward the end of the semester, when fears are overcome, students begin to see how embedding Indigenous perspectives and participating in Indigenous studies as teacher and student is about re-acculturation. As a teacher, re-integrating absent knowledge perspectives into the curriculum and providing children and students with the tools to decipher this knowledge in broader contexts becomes a more useful starting point. Carrie shares her moment of realisation:

... at the beginning of [*Cultures and Indigenous Education*] I thought they were going to make us include Aboriginal art or the past or something ...  
FLASH a light bulb just lit up in my head ... we do not have to teach just one unit on 'aborigines' but it is possible to present the children with the idea of "difference" and relate this directly back to their world; not them trying to figure out the major problems in my world. (Carrie, Online, 2009)

Carrie's expectation that in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* she was "going ... to include art" is released as she experiences a "light bulb" moment. Carrie realises that it's not about "teaching units on 'aborigines'" but rather about investigating ideas around difference that circulate in the world the child experiences, and learns from. Furthermore, she sees that Indigenous studies is not about "figuring out the problems in my world", it's concerned with providing the foundation for children to understand.

Jill expressed her fear about what to teach young children in the second week of her studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. She quips: "What, are we going to stand up in front of a group of young children and call them 'racist'?" (Journal, 2009). This was a projection of her resistance and misunderstanding stemming from her lack of knowledge, a position from which she subsequently shifted (8.3.2). Libby explains that teaching young children differently could be achieved by providing "a different view of history" (Interview, 2005), in much the same way that Gertrude demonstrated earlier. Kathryn clarifies that it would involve teaching other views of history, "rather than just the Captain Cook view ... Not saying that 'you're racist, you did this, you did that'" (Online, 2009).

To get an understanding of whether student perceptions were shifting to consider spaces beyond false dualism, I asked Maggie and Libby in interview to clarify how they might approach this with parents, and specifically if they thought that merely showing the ‘other side of Australian history’ would be sufficient to challenge. Their responses demonstrate that they see taking a critical view of collective constructions of being Australian is important:

I think questioning white Australia, like I see a lot of newspaper clippings and looking at different texts written by different Aboriginal Australians and white Australians and ... I would love it [if parents or other teachers confronted you on your approach] that the kids can give ... reasons why it’s important [to their] Mum or Dad. (Libby, Interview, 2005)

Linking these revelations to the issue raised by Libby previously, it is possible to see the effect of applying understandings about how children are socialised into understanding themselves as part of a culture. She sees that this is “why most of us will grow up with the opinions and everything that we did, because that is what we were taught at school, it has such a huge effect ...” (Libby, Interview, 2005).

There is a self-fulfilling prophecy at work where anticipation of what is likely to occur when relating to Indigenous peoples in their social spheres is used to confirm perceptions of the value of embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. Chantal states that “of course people are never always going to see eye to eye on things, but it’s about taking what the other person says and ... having that understanding for why that person is saying something” (Interview, 2005). In the context of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, the reframing of students’ perceptions of their professional identities was founded on shifts in their personal understandings (3.1.2). As Chantal indicates, just as students might find it challenging to interrogate their cultural perceptions in their university studies, it is equally challenging to apply elsewhere. The skills that students develop in dealing with conflict in social spaces are linked to the knowledge development around specific ‘facts’ about Australian history (McLaren, 2007). Maggie identifies that this skill is “going to be useful” for her even as she recognises that “there is still a long way to go on that” (Interview, 2005). The other space where students suggest they need to renegotiate the boundaries for speaking about these issues, representations of Indigenous peoples in particular, is with friends and families. Most students begin to realise that they have a

commitment to making changes in this space as well; although it is not without its challenges as Maggie reflected:

It's the hardest confronting the people who raise me and the people I grew up with, because, you know, they're the people who taught you ... and it's really hard for them to go back and challenge that and say, and you know, and engage in a conversation: where they think that it's a heated argument, where they think that you are attacking them and you're trying to open them up to the things that you've discovered ... (Interview, 2005)

Dealing with confrontation in social spheres requires another set of skills different to those an individual might employ within the classroom, due to how more intimately linked individuals are with family and friends. Maggie shared that limitation for her was a combination of a commitment to change, and a fear of conflict: “I’m actually quite, ah, scared of confrontation, in the fact that when this subject generally comes up if I am just having a talk to somebody I know ... I tend to get very angry ...” (Interview, 2005). Libby also conveys “a feeling of anxiousness ... cause people want to challenge you” (Interview, 2005). The depth of transformation in thinking for Maggie and Libby can be seen in their puzzlement over the validity of these challenges, with Libby describing it as “amazing” that they do challenge” (Interview, 2005). New perceptions of collectives have enabled students to notice the limitations of the knowledge expressed by those around them, in addition to developing a critical position on Self.

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter 7, I examined the resistance that students displayed as they worked through Module 2 of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Through the data in this chapter I addressed the shifts that occurred as students’ theoretical knowledge around culture, history, ‘race’ and dominance expanded, and the impact of this on facilitating increased self-awareness and confidence in self-critique. The findings show that as these understandings increased, students’ reticence to explore and reflect on their own perceptions diminished. Students also began to be more reflexive in their thinking in terms of their relationships to Indigenous knowledge perspectives, the impact of institutions on their views and beliefs and their commitment to maintaining a socially just outlook in their personal and professional lives.

When reflecting on their learning journey, students reported new ways of seeing their original resistant stance to the subject. As shown in Chapter 6, students were more likely to position themselves to observe and critique Indigenous cultures and peoples rather than examine their own standpoints. In Module 3, I found that there was a reversal of this process and where students focussed heavily on self-critique and interrogation of the institutional structures that had dominated their original thinking earlier in the subject. Subsequently, students developed a different perception of themselves, their ideas about their collective culture and most significantly, their willingness to continue to think critically in these respects. The findings demonstrate that even though ‘exhausting’ and ‘draining’, sharing their new understanding in social and family spaces was important; that they would ‘feel guilty’ if they didn’t pursue this. Furthermore, findings indicate that the commitment to developing more effective teaching practices for the benefit of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was also high.

The particular turning points which seemed to hold most significance to students were linked to their clarification of what culture means to ‘them’ on a daily basis, as well as systemically. From this stemmed realisations around how little they knew about their own standpoints, and even more so, how limited their ideas about Indigenous peoples were. At a safe distance from the initial disruption experienced in the first weeks of the semester, they were able to review the confrontation they experienced in light of their own standpoints, rather than as passive recipients of dangerous and discomfoting knowledge perspectives. Pivotal moments identified by students occurred from shifts in perceptions of self, rather than from information they received about Indigenous peoples. The ways in which they managed these shift in Module 3 were reliant on their continuing ability to be self-reflexive and their acceptance that their knowledge and ideologies were limited, and limiting.

However, while most students in this study were able to create a space for themselves by facing the confrontation and committing themselves to moving through the discomfort felt, data analysed from resistant student, Daphne, indicate that caution is warranted. While most students in the study suggest that they will continue to develop their critical thinking, they acknowledge that this is a life-long process.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

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The aim of this study has been to examine how non-Indigenous students articulate, manage and shift their resistance to their learning in a compulsory Indigenous studies subject called *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. This subject uses an Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (2.3.2) to encourage first year pre-service teachers to examine their standpoints in relation to Australian culture and history, and consequently to Indigenous peoples. The purposes of these critical enquiries are to facilitate deeper understandings about their roles as teachers to shift away from the culture-as-deficit/loss paradigms that commonly underpin Indigenous studies programs.

In Chapter 6, I analysed how students responded to the first phase of their studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Module 1 of the subject is designed to assist students to critically examine their standpoints, and the collective and systemic factors that impact on how they see themselves in relation to others. Key findings from this analysis indicated that students were able to speak in tangible ways about Indigenous peoples and cultures yet were less confident in exploring their own standpoints. While students' expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* were clearly underpinned by concrete ideas about Indigenous peoples, there was a reticence to admitting this. Consequently, students appeared less assured when asked to discuss specific features of collective Australian cultural values and systems. It was noted that some students attempted to alleviate the discomfort stemming from self-enquiry by maintaining a critical gaze on Indigenous peoples, thus avoiding deconstruction of their own standpoints.

The data in Chapter 7 showed the forms of resistance exhibited by some students as they progressed through the subject. I examined the discourses that students employed to rationalise this resistance. The teaching strategies in Module 2 provide space for students to reflect on their understandings from the first module by exploring theories, and providing students with content (e.g., specific facts of Australian history). The pedagogy does not take a defensive position, rather it focuses specifically on guiding students to critique their own perspectives and defend their assumptions. Interestingly, the unapologetic focus on self-critique resulted in a temporary congealment of some students' resistance with specific discourses that

variously politicised, pathologised, exoticised or mythologised Indigenous peoples deployed to validate or verify assumptions alluded to by their expressed expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* (in Chapter 6).

The analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 provided the foundation for the analysis in Chapter 8 which was focussed around how some students managed and articulated shifts through the theory and critical self-enquiry instigated by the pedagogy of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. Students use theory, and an increased knowledge base with regard to Australian history and the nature and formation of Australian culture, to reflect with more depth on their understandings. The key finding in the analysis of data from the final stages of their studies is that the greatest shifts occurred when students engaged fully in critical self-examination. These enquiries became more lucid when students were equipped with knowledge about their culture/history: when saw themselves in relation to Indigenous peoples, rather than critiquing the position of Indigenous peoples in relation to them.

In this final chapter, I present findings from the research, providing discussion and analysis around the key ideas manifesting in response to the research questions. I argue that the responses to *Culture Studies and Indigenous Education*, which applies Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP), provide alternative paths for re-considering the value of Indigenous knowledge perspectives in compulsory Indigenous studies. Though ISP, the authorisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives expands the systems for knowing Indigenous peoples and insists on critical examination of neo-colonial dominance. As a consequence, pre-service teachers are led to re-interpret the ideological foundations upon which their teaching practice is based. While discomfiting, undertaking these kinds of studies in first year is worthwhile for it assists to re-establish the foundations upon which pre-service teachers develop ideas about their professional practices as they move forward through their degrees. Of particular significance to the process of disruption, and troubling knowledge frameworks is contextualising student resistance to Indigenous studies as a pedagogical tool, and specifically situating resistance as a means to facilitate in-depth student engagement with the issues.

The overall aim of the research questions was to guide the analysis how students construct knowledge about their relationships to Indigenous peoples and knowledge perspectives. Additionally, the investigation focussed the enquiry of how

discourses available to frame and validate these constructions produced resistance. The relationships between disruption, resistance and knowledge about self and collective culture that were provoked through self-critique could thus be drawn more explicitly. This allowed the research in this thesis to consider the transformations that are possible when Indigenous knowledge perspectives are authorised and critical self-enquiry is generated through these complicating lenses. I begin this chapter with a brief overview of the study, including a review of the theoretical framework and research design (9.1.1). This foregrounds my summary of the major findings in response to the research questions (9.1.2). I then address each of the research questions independently, analysing the key findings of the research (9.2). Finally, I present some conclusions and recommendations for future research and suggested implications for policy and curriculum development in compulsory Indigenous studies in pre-service teacher education (9.3).

## **9.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

In this section, I provide an overview of the study with a review of the theoretical framework and research design to establish how the aims of the research were achieved. I also discuss the central research problem and outline the approaches used to conduct the investigation. Exploration of how dominating discourses function and permit non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to conceal and deny colonial privilege while exercising authority over Indigenous peoples' knowledge perspectives was particularly relevant to meeting the goals of this study.

### **9.1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

Through the literature I established that the problem of objectifying Indigenous peoples in Indigenous studies secures a comforting position from which to relate to Indigenous peoples and Australian culture and history. By constructing Indigenous peoples through discourses founded on ideas of culture-as-deficit, culture-as-exotic or culture-as-problem, the nature of the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is limited to those that reinforce these ideas. These discourses rely on one-dimensional frames of reference which are historically constituted and supported by contemporary racialising practices that enable individual understandings to be confirmed institutionally. The philosophies of West (2000) and Graham (1999) highlight the oppositional realities of Indigenous peoples which place

Indigenous cultures and knowledges as multi-dimensional, complex systems which continue to thrive today. Indigenous peoples' diverse systems for knowing have facilitated our survival of colonisation. These systems govern how we relate inside Indigenous contexts, and how we conceptualise and relate to non-Indigenous knowledge systems.

The understanding that Indigenous cultures and knowledges are diverse, dynamic and that they continue to exist in the present, contradict ideologies that underpin dominant contemporary objectifications (West, 2000). Culture-as-deficit or culture-loss paradigms do not take into account these sophisticated systems, and furthermore they do not respond to one of the key foundations of Indigenous knowledge practice: that is how relationships - and therefore cultures - are sustained by knowledge about people, places and all other things (Graham, 1999). There is a contradiction then between the centrality of relationships to Indigenous systems of knowing, and the limited relational stance employed by non-Indigenous people to 'know' Indigenous peoples (Chalmers, 2005). Authorising Indigenous knowledge perspectives in Indigenous studies curriculum leads to the integration of "relational knowledge" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). This new relation, through which Indigenous peoples are empowered, subsequently positions non-Indigenous people in an alternative space to consider their ideas about Indigenous peoples. And, ultimately this position can lead to establishing a more critical relation to understandings about self and dominant cultures.

The research design for this study complements the pedagogical approaches employed in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. In the pedagogy, specific strategies were used to generate resistance through Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy (ISP), although resistance to Indigenous knowledge perspectives is experienced prior to involvement in Indigenous studies. ISP, which targets the political, personal, reformative and multiple dimensions of colonial (and neo-colonial) relationships were fundamental to developing theory about resistance in Indigenous studies due to its value to decolonising goals. Opportunities for students to reflect on their own points of view were provided. Students were supported to interrogate their resistance with a view to prompting realisations that would assist them to explain and eventually move beyond these stances. The curriculum was conceptualised through theoretical frameworks that positioned Indigenous knowledge perspectives on

Indigenous *and* non-Indigenous responses to colonialism as authoritative. For the research, I developed a Critical Indigenist Case Study by centralising the philosophies of the Japanangka teaching and research paradigm and Indigenist research methodologies (West, 2000; Rigney, 2001). Additionally, relational philosophies (Graham, 1999; Wilson, 2001) synthesised this research framework in ways that were compatible with ISP.

In the teaching and research context, Indigenous knowledge perspectives were centred as holistic and were positioned to motivate deeper understandings of neo-colonialism, beyond the barriers of compartmentalised non-Indigenous systems (Dei, 2008; West, 2000). In the analysis of data, Japanangka, Indigenist principles and relational approaches were fused with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to frame the research design and to support the examination of contemporary forms of colonialism. In particular, this synthesised approach targeted revelations about how participants saw the effects of social, institutional and historical factors on their standpoints and in explanations of resistance. Whiteness theory supplemented these approaches to interrogate the relationships between standpoints and systems of dominance. Consequently, this study of resistance pursued explanations of the difficulties of self-enquiry for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers as they developed understandings about themselves in relation to others, and also with collective systems of dominant knowledge construction.

## **9.2 PRE-SERVICE TEACHER RESPONSES TO COMPULSORY INDIGENOUS STUDIES**

The research questions aimed to examine student responses to *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, and to draw conclusions about how this learning was managed by students in compulsory Indigenous studies. This subject takes a critical position on the dominance of neo-colonial frameworks for knowing Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous cultures. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* also takes a critical stance on the interrogation of non-Indigenous peoples in relation to this knowledge construction using ISP. Importantly, ISP aims to instigate shifts in how students see their relationships to dominating systems of knowledge production and Indigenous peoples, as opposed to shifting their opinions *about* Indigenous peoples. I do not claim that conclusions drawn from this study are typical, but rather that deeper analysis of some pre-service teacher responses may provide a map for future

development of curriculum in compulsory Indigenous studies. The first research question was explored by considering the conflict ensuing from critical self-interrogation in this context and the existing discourses that were harnessed to relate to Indigenous knowledge perspectives (9.2.1). Research Question 2 focussed attention on the forms of resistance that emerged from this disruption and how these discourses were integrated into the ways that students managed the displacement (9.2.2). The final research question directed the enquiry to what students identified as pivotal to facilitating shifts in their resistance to Indigenous studies, and to their understandings about self as a consequence (9.2.3). I now discuss each of these questions.

### **9.2.1 WHAT ARE THE INITIAL RESPONSES OF NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS TO THE AUTHORISATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PERSPECTIVES?**

When students expressed their expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* at the beginning of their studies, they positioned themselves as passive recipients of knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Students experienced an immediate disruption when called upon to examine their standpoints in relation to collective Australian culture and dominant knowledge systems. Paradoxically, this process of self-enquiry exposed their thinking in relation to Indigenous peoples. In these initial stages, students cited that Indigenous ‘issues’ were largely irrelevant to their lives although there was some interest in learning about the exotic aspects of culture such as Indigenous art, dance and music. Fear was expressed with the expectation that there might be a ‘political’ element to the program, which was discomforting for some students. Additionally, given that *Cultures and Indigenous Studies* was a compulsory subject in their Bachelor of Education degree students imagined that they would be learning how to teach Indigenous students should that be the case.

These expectations of students were shaped by dominant discourses which serve to politicise, pathologise, exoticise and mythologise Indigenous peoples, reinforcing perceptions of the lack of relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. These discourses accentuated the distanced and passive positions that students secured by prioritising the objectification of Indigenous peoples and de-emphasising relationships to reinforce positions of dominance. Dominating constructions of ideas about Indigenous cultures as exotica enabled students to adopt the position of “observer” (West, 2000); constructions of

Indigenous peoples as disadvantaged, allowed the adoption of a position of ‘helper’ (Beckett, 2001), while fears about the expected political nature of their studies cast non-Indigenous students as innocent victims of Indigenous peoples’ political demands (Elder, 2009; Gere et al., 2009; Haviland, 2008). These discourses influenced students’ expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, and affected their receptivity to the knowledge perspectives of Indigenous peoples.

These layers acted to inform and justify student resistance, and in doing so students’ initial reactions were empowered through a pre-existing knowledge framework. Given the absence of exotic representations of Indigenous cultures throughout the program, responses to the beginning lectures delivered by Aboriginal academics were filtered through fear-based expectations of discomfiting political enquiry. Aboriginal academics were perceived as “aggressive”, and as deliberately presenting non-Indigenous people and culture in “negative” ways. In classes led by Indigenous teachers there was reticence for students to share their perspectives because of uncertainties around how their views would be received. This did not affect the reflections shared in online spaces and journals when there was no direct interpersonal connection with Indigenous staff, and students were more forthcoming in expressing their points of view in these spaces. Conversely, lectures and classes led by non-Indigenous academics were met with feelings of relief by students and, in some cases a feeling of freedom for them to openly share their views about Indigenous peoples. In all learning situations though, students avoided any depth in self-interrogation. Their reflections and responses were mainly focussed on expressing, justifying and/or managing what they saw as the potential for conflict stemming from their views on Indigenous peoples.

The learning in Module 1 was chaotic and distressing for students as they attempted to maintain equilibrium. The findings from the data indicated that there were rigid perceptions of Indigenous peoples, although students denied knowledge or beliefs in this regard. Students were resistant to letting go of their assumptions which compounded their attachment to the resistance, and the knowledge itself. Most significantly, resistance consolidated their evasion of critical self-enquiry. Students were unable to articulate clear understandings about culture, Australian culture in particular, and the ideological systems that influence their standpoints in relation to Indigenous peoples. This affected the extent of the disruption; the confusion and

confrontation which erupted when students realised that they were required to interrogate their own systems of knowing. Expectations of Indigenous studies both informed this disruption and enabled students to rationalise the positions they took in relation to the curriculum by providing a powerful filter for interpreting and responding to the demands made of them in Module 1 of *Cultures and Indigenous Studies*.

### **9.2.2 HOW DO STUDENTS MANAGE, INTERPRET AND RESIST INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PERSPECTIVES?**

As students became aware that *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was not meeting their expectations, student resistance to the subject became more overt. In Module 2, the pedagogy guided students to reflect on their initial standpoints and to clarify these understandings by theorising how knowledge is reproduced through particular historical, social and cultural systems. The initial confusion around culture and ‘race’ intensified as students started to think through multiple dimensions – personal, social and theoretical – to explore understandings about self, collective culture and Indigenous peoples. In the early weeks of Module 2, the assumptions of ‘negativity’ and feelings of being victimised by Indigenous perceptions of non-Indigenous peoples, compounded students’ lack of enthusiasm for interrogating their own points of view. The resistance that emerged as a consequence manifested on two levels: maintaining attachment to their initial standpoints and expectations, and a lack of specific reference to Australian culture, or their own knowledge perspectives.

Contradictions surfaced in relation to their expectations, and resistance provided them with a way to avoid exploring the disparity between their personal understandings and the critical ideas exposed through their research. Binaries of ‘good/bad’; ‘us/them’, ‘responsible/not responsible’ informed the shape that resistance took. Students apprehended these binaries to reinforce their sense of being unfairly positioned as dominant or privileged, with examples of their own disadvantage being shared to justify this position. This was not just resistance to acknowledging Indigenous knowledge perspectives, but more critically, was a way for students to avoid acknowledging and interrogating their standpoints in relation to dominance. While there was concession to the debilitating effects of history on Indigenous peoples – reflecting the power of the culture-as-deficit discourse – resistance to recognising privilege held by non-Indigenous Australians was strongly

expressed. The more extreme the resistance, the greater the contradictions were in students' theorising about Indigenous peoples and Australian culture, history and institutional realities in the present (Daphne). In Module 2, most students' demonstrated an inability to clearly articulate Australian history, cultures and the connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This lack of knowledge appeared not to diminish the veracity of the views expressed by some students that history was irrelevant to them, and only tangentially relevant to Indigenous peoples in terms of 'disadvantage'. Additionally, examples of the student perceptions that 'white Australians' were being unfairly targeted (Carrie, Farrah, Daphne, Megan and so on) emphasise the incongruity between this lack of knowledge and students' authorisation of their views and resistance in relation to Indigenous knowledge perspectives. The disruption to expectations experienced in Module 1, morphed into resistance in Module 2. While students were generally willing to explore the theories relating to cultural dominance, they still found it difficult to apply this theory to critically deconstruct their own standpoints.

### **9.2.3 WHAT MOMENTS DO STUDENTS IDENTIFY AS PIVOTAL TO THEIR SHIFTS AND HOW DO THEY MANAGE THIS?**

As students complete their investigations in Module 2, their resistance begins to shift as they are led towards new ways of seeing themselves in relation to systems of knowing that position them to see Indigenous peoples and Australian culture in specific ways. The perplexity around naming and explaining Australian culture, and the ideological systems that underpin individual connections to this began to dissipate as students grasped the theories relating to these processes. As they reflected on their initial resistance and expectations of *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, they recognised that they had a culture. This was a significant transformational moment, as students turned their gaze on themselves (and their cultures) rather than maintaining a distanced stance by positioning Indigenous peoples as the object of their enquiries. From this vantage point, students were more able to be reflexive in thinking about 'why' they held beliefs about Indigenous peoples, particularly when nearly all students in the study reported that they did not personally associate with Indigenous people.

The findings from the data in the final stages of *Cultures and Indigenous Education* showed that students were now less reluctant to name, describe, analyse

and explain their own standpoints. Subsequently, students' understandings about Indigenous peoples began to shift and become less concrete; and, as students became less adamant about their beliefs about Indigenous peoples, their discussions about Australian culture and history became less vague. The opportunities for continual self-reflection, which are embedded into the pedagogy, provided students with the chance to think about their initial resistance to the subject in new ways. Many contextualised their resistance as stemming from their own insecurity in an unfamiliar space of enquiry in which Indigenous knowledge perspectives were authorised.

There was a range of pivotal moments, identified by most of the students, as critical to re-situating their understandings about self and Indigenous peoples inside dominant knowledge contexts. In particular, these included:

- The clarification of the links between collective knowledge systems (dominant) and their perceptions about self;
- The limitations these systems reproduced on the capacity for them to understand their situatedness;
- The relationship between this limited individual and collective cultural standpoint, and their unquestioned objectification of Indigenous peoples (shown particularly by reflection on their initial expectations and the discourses used to rationalise resistance);
- The research and content knowledge they received with regard to specific events in Australian history.

The students in the study did not shift through the processes in an orderly and consistent fashion; their learning was chaotic although the combination of self-critique and theoretical explorations allowed for shifts in this chaos. There were also varying degrees in the depth of their understandings, and for one student in the study, no major turning point was experienced at all. Common to the data was students' developing understanding that what they achieved through their learning in *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was the start of a much longer journey which had implications for their personal, social and professional practices. Although this study focussed attention on pre-service teacher education, the findings may be applicable to other disciplines in devising pedagogy that elicits similar foundational shifts with

potential to positively influence professional practices of graduates. In section 9.3, I discuss conclusions drawn from this study, highlighting how important critical self-enquiry is to facilitating these shifts. I position disruption to students' framework for knowing self and other as key, and suggest that resistance, particularly in compulsory Indigenous studies, is an inherent response to this destabilisation that must be acknowledged and addressed explicitly within the pedagogy.

### **9.3 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

A fundamental privilege asserted by non-Indigenous individuals in their day-to-day worlds. This privilege is enacted in particular respect to knowledge perspectives on colonial history and thus underwrites contemporary relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples which have ensued from this history. Critical self-enquiry of these standpoints to interrogate constructions of knowledge about self, culture and Indigenous peoples provide opportunities to reflect on the nature of this privilege. Through these enquiries, how non-Indigenous pre-service teachers reflect on the role in reproducing systems of knowing that confirm colonial privilege, can also be observed. Indigenous studies programs that focus on describing the experiences of Indigenous peoples in order to facilitate this shift are useful when students hold a pre-existing motivation toward the study. Participation in Indigenous studies, even when voluntary, does not mean that learning will be comfortable and non-disruptive to ideas about self and culture for students. However, in compulsory Indigenous studies settings more targeted strategies are required given that many students bring with them assumptions and general dispositions that limit their ability to engage in the process of learning. It is crucial therefore to develop strategies which explicitly work with and through student resistance given the powerful effect of socialised understandings about Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. At best these understandings can lead to assumptions about the irrelevance of Indigenous studies, or at a more serious level, can cause escalations of apathy and hostility if allowed to fester. For pre-service teachers these outlooks have implications for how they reproduce dominating knowledge and the nature of the relationships they establish (if at all) with Indigenous communities and the students they will teach.

In this section, I draw conclusions about what can be achieved through ISP and critical self-enquiry in compulsory Indigenous studies for pre-service teachers.

Avenues for further research in areas which this study did not (and could not) address are also included. In section 9.4.1, I speak directly to the necessity of disrupting students' inclination to objectify Indigenous peoples – either 'positively' or 'negatively'. Conclusions and inferences about the nature of resistance exhibited by students who feel coerced into studying issues, including their own standpoints, that they feel are irrelevant, are also presented. I then consider in 9.4.2, the transformation that occurs as a result of critical theorising and self-interrogation as a beginning point for future movements towards the acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge perspectives as authority in a decolonising learning context.

### 9.3.1 DISRUPTION AND RESISTANCE

This study demonstrates the disruption and resistance experienced by students in one compulsory Indigenous studies subject. The investigation of the conditions under which knowledge is reproduced is addressed in the pedagogy, and the nature of resistance has been examined in the research. The disruption that students experience when they first engage in compulsory Indigenous studies is immediate. This disruption is not directly concerned with the content they are presented with, given the lack of receptivity displayed by non-Indigenous students from the beginning of their studies. Understandings that develop in contexts removed from open interaction with Indigenous peoples, whether individuals locate Indigenous peoples as 'inveterate alcoholics' or 'victims of a brutal past', emerge from similarly constrained spaces for knowing. Such objectifications permeate the expectations that students describe in their first week of study, demonstrating the power and dominance of collective knowledge about Indigenous peoples on the individual. The study provides a framework for considering the role of critical Indigenist strategies in instigating self-enquiry in students who are resistant, or hostile to learning in Indigenous studies.

The inability of students to identify their own cultures and their unwillingness to see this as important demonstrates the power and invisibility of cultural privilege. This privilege is apprehended and acted upon by non-Indigenous students in the early stages of their studies. This indicates three significant factors for establishing the foundations through which these students, particularly in compulsory Indigenous studies, see themselves as socially and culturally situated. First, the teaching of 'content' *about* Indigenous peoples, cultures and experiences of history to students

who do not have this awareness will taint the ways in which they engage with this content (Nakata, 2007). Second, this lack of awareness demonstrates how imperative it is to ensure that compulsory Indigenous studies re-set this context to constitute a space (Prashad, 2006) which reduces the contaminating influence of pre-existing ideologies. The employment of critical approaches that allow non-Indigenous students to express and reflect on resistance, and that encourages them to understand their standpoints is crucial to this endeavour. An additional consideration in this respect is that an ‘interest’ in Indigenous ‘issues’ or social justice does not necessarily translate into a level of self-awareness that supports students to be critical learners, or teachers. And, third, the effect of the ‘good/bad’ binary, whichever side of the equation an individual’s constructions lean toward, may not automatically translate into professional and social practices that work in the complex, multiple and interdiscursive cultural interfaces (Nakata, 2007) within which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples relate. Through examining the nature and effects of resistance in compulsory Indigenous studies, this study contributes to furthering an understanding of the relationship between historical ideas relating to Indigenous knowledge sovereignty. Crucially, this study demonstrates the value of Indigenous knowledge perspectives for analysing and disrupting contemporary non-Indigenous discursive practices that diminish understandings about this sovereignty.

Resistance to Indigenous studies by non-Indigenous students is a consequence of the ideological predisposition of individuals to invest in national stories fortified by neo-colonialism. The positions of distance from, rather than any long-term engagement with Indigenous peoples, enable their collective cultural systems to reinforce the objectification of Indigenous peoples. Positions of disengagement which stem from an expressed belief of ‘not knowing’ (about Indigenous peoples or about Australian culture) is contradicted by students’ emphatic ideas about ‘who’ Indigenous peoples are; and who non-Indigenous peoples are ‘not’ in relation to cultural dominance. This is one of the primary forms of resistance that students have been shown to use to oppose learning about the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in colonising contexts. If decolonisation is the aim, then resistance must be conceptualised as originating in spaces outside of the educational context. Critical enquiry inside a compulsory Indigenous studies classroom must therefore position resistance as a starting point for any examination into the

dominance of collective knowledge production. In this way, concrete ideas can be deconstructed explicitly. Knowledge about Australian history, which necessarily includes a study of specific events and their relationship to contemporary “frontier narratives” (Furniss, 2006) must follow, only after the conditions for engagement with this knowledge have been established. This allows for the interrogation of complexities about how contemporary identities are derived across multiple dimensions – temporal, spatial and ideologically. Once students are re-positioned to take a more critical perspective on their own perspectives, the *possibility* for developing new ways of dealing with the contradictions arising in critical inter-subjective and inter-cultural enquiries in compulsory Indigenous studies is enhanced.

*Further research:* Critical studies in Whiteness internationally have advanced understanding about the benefits of deconstructing race for ‘White’ students (Greenhalgh-Spencer, 2009; Ryan & Dixon, 2006); and also in relation to Aboriginal studies curriculum in countries such as Canada and New Zealand (Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Weenie, 2008). Comparative studies between Australia, Canada and New Zealand have also been undertaken (Fee & Russell, 2007; Furniss, 2005). Similarly, Australian educators are continuing to advance knowledge and understanding about the impact of dominance and racial privilege in curriculum using critical Whiteness theory (Hatchell, 2004; Norman, 2004; Nicoll, 2004; Sonn, 2008). However, research to examine resistance to critical self-enquiry in contexts that problematise the nature of culture and history - as particular to neo-colonialism in Australia - would be beneficial to developing ideas about pedagogy in Indigenous Australian studies. The ideas around disrupting neo-colonial standpoints and the shape of resistance in this regard would be advanced through a study of students who continue to resist self-examination. Daphne’s journal alone would provide a rich source of data for a case study examination of this.

Additionally, given the extreme nature of the conflict and tensions that occur, an investigation of Indigenous students’ responses to compulsory Indigenous studies – based on Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy - would be of interest. Research could specifically target the effects of such enquiries on Indigenous students’ standpoints in relation to teaching staff, non-Indigenous and Indigenous peers, their professional role as teachers and their management of ‘racialisation’ and conflict. Anecdotal evidence from my experience teaching in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*

highlights that there are a number of Aboriginal students who have not ‘grown up’ in their culture and are therefore reticent to claim a cultural identity. Research with students in this situation would be of interest to explore attachments or dis-attachments as a consequence of their enquiries into their standpoints, and the deconstruction of objectifications of Indigenous peoples in Indigenous studies.

Further research into how broader curriculum development measures can contribute to advancing the initial goals of compulsory Indigenous studies programs is vital. *Cultures and Indigenous Education* was developed as a foundation subject, to be supported by curriculum approaches in other subjects of a Bachelor of Education degree research (see 3.1.1). It was thus conceived as the beginning point for students to pursue more specific studies in relation to embedding Indigenous perspectives, teaching Indigenous students and the development of social justice goals as a priority in their developing professional practice. While shifts can and do occur, one subject can only achieve so much; for some students, it does not make any discernible difference to how they begin to think about their social location, and their professional identities. Specific ways to extend the learning of pre-service teachers as they progress through their degree programs is thus essential. Most useful would be research into existing curriculum developments in pre-service teacher education programs to focus on: academic attitudes toward privileging Indigenous knowledge perspectives in relevant subject areas, perceptions of the value of these knowledge perspectives across all disciplines, including non-traditional disciplines (e.g., science), and the roles of non-Indigenous academics in developing and delivering curriculum in this area.

### **9.3.2 BEGINNING TRANSFORMATIONS**

The acknowledgement by non-Indigenous students that they are connected to a collective system of ideas which dominate their positions in relation to Indigenous peoples allows them to take a more critical stance on issues relating to cultural diversity and themselves as knowledge producers in social and education contexts. When students open themselves to the possibility that what they ‘know’ about themselves and others is limited, they experience shifts in how they read theory and ‘content’ about collective Australian culture and Indigenous peoples. While some students have major epiphanies, for most it is a slow dawning realisation that is only achieved through struggle, chaos and confrontation. This process requires that they

must first acknowledge their existing standpoints, and then realise that ideas around their individual power to consciously mediate views and ideologies, in the absence of any collective or historical influences, is dubious. The recognition that they are subject to a powerful collective system of knowledge distribution and validation is a transformative moment for many students as it provides a new, more open vantage point from interpret people and things in their worlds.

There are two aspects to the transformations that begin to occur with students in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*. The first level is the affective development of students, the maturing of their emotional management of conflict as a result of reflection and intellectual enquiry into the nature of the conflict. The second level relates to the developing capacity of students to be critical thinkers in relation to the colonialism, but also generally to their ability to apply the principles of critical thinking to other layered and complex situations in Australia. Ultimately then, transformations are clearly not restricted to Indigenous/non-Indigenous issues but Indigenous Standpoint Pedagogy has additional benefits beyond this.

*Further research:* It is clear that the complexities of the issues cannot be fully addressed in one semester of study. Given the limitation of the study as discussed in section 5.4, it is clear that there are additional identity markers that affect how students engage with critical self-enquiry. The effects of class, gender and age on students' ability to critique their own standpoints was not addressed, but would be an interesting study for further research. Questions of interest could concern whether students who manage inequality, stemming from one or more of these markers, have a greater capacity to be reflexive learners in complex, multidimensional critical inter-subjective enquiries. As an extension of the earlier suggestion in 9.4.1, a similar study of whether students whose home country is not Australia, are more empathic to enquiries in a critical Indigenous studies program would be useful. Particularly to examine what students see as critical to advancing their understandings about the impact on them of dominant knowledge construction in Australian, and how they subsequently develop knowledge about Indigenous peoples. Another question of significance would be how do the understandings about the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in their home countries influence their participation in, and resistance to, Indigenous studies in the Australian context?

Finally, this study offers opportunities for reconsidering the nature of compulsory Indigenous studies for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers. Students who entered their compulsory studies in *Cultures and Indigenous Education*, with little interest, motivation or understandings about the relevance of ‘Indigenous issues’ were able to shift from positions of distanced observers, to “interested knowers” (Nakata, 2006). Approaches developed through Indigenist Standpoint Pedagogy have the potential to facilitate professional approaches by pre-service teachers which not only benefit Indigenous students, but also provide a way for non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to develop new approaches to teaching Indigenous studies. These practical implications include the shift away from cultural-deficit paradigms which so strongly influence the teaching of Indigenous students to date, and the facilitation of more critical approaches in the teaching of non-Indigenous children and students about Australia’s shared history and contemporary issues.

## Epilogue

One of the stories that shape this thesis is a story of my experiences as a child in a Year 3 classroom, some years ago. Children in classrooms today continue to learn about Indigenous peoples and Australian history and culture through a lens which distances non-Indigenous peoples from their own beginnings. It is still too common to hear of Aboriginal studies teaching which portray Indigenous peoples as relics of the past using images of the ‘noble savage’ submitting to the progress of civilisation, reinforcing notions of ‘lost’ Aboriginal cultures. In 2008, after a lesson on ‘Aboriginal people’, my nephew Biran (8 years old) was chatting with his good friend, and non-Indigenous classmate (Micky\*). The discussion they had shows the power of the classroom in maintaining the myths, and the power of many Indigenous families to neutralise the effects of the white gaze. In the conversation, Micky was reflecting on what he’d just learned:

Micky: “Biran, what was it like to live back then?”

“I don’t know”, says Biran, “I was only born in 2000!”

Confused, Micky asks: “But how can you be Aboriginal then?!”

Armed with very clear understandings about what it means to be Aboriginal, Biran responded:

“Oh Micky, it’s about *family*”.

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# Appendices

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AFFAIRS (1942)



Queensland Police  
Inspectors' Office, MACKAY,

89/66  
Way  
1942

In your reply please refer to  
No. 5

15 JAN 1942

1ST January,

Memorandum.

The Director of Native Affairs,  
Brisbane.

Came date  
note Cora  
6/1/42

I have to advise that the agreement No. 12321 issued in connection with the employment of Cora Hill C-80 with Mr. A.R. Simpson of Mt. Spencer, has been cancelled as from and including the 1/1/42.

During the past few months Cora has got out of hand and the Simpson's were unable to exercise any control of her. Cora is getting the type of aboriginal that cannot make a do of it for more than 12 months at the one place. She is a very good worker but occasionally lapses into a sulky fit and when in this condition she becomes very abusive to her employer. The Range Hotel is only about 2 miles distant from Mt. Spencer and of late she got the habit of visiting these premises. I questioned her on this matter and she stated that she visited this hotel to see a friend of hers' and was not there for the purpose of obtaining liquor.

Acting  
30.6.42

Cora was of the opinion that her agreement terminated on 31.12.41 and during the past few weeks she made her presence at Mt. Spencer almost intolerable, in fact Mrs Simpson was almost driven into a nervous breakdown through Cora's conduct to her. In view of this I deemed it necessary to cancel the agreement.

hope  
6/1/42

Cora is at present at Mackay but expects to get employment in the Abbo Division in the near future.

*[Signature]*  
Protector.

## **APPENDIX B: ROLE PLAY ACTIVITY**

You are a committee making decisions about curriculum policy for schools in Queensland. The membership of this committee is comprised of:

- An Education officer from the Queensland Studies Authority who will be responsible for drafting and writing the ‘embedding Indigenous Perspectives’ policy and promote to schools. This person has worked in schools across Queensland and is concerned about the conflict that might arise in telling schools to deliver Aboriginal studies. Privately, she believes that Indigenous Studies is a waste of time.
- An Aboriginal primary school teacher who has only recently graduated from university but has spent 15 years working as a teacher aide in a remote community school. She has also been involved in a local Women’s Group which has been working tirelessly to heal her community.
- A community representative from the Aboriginal and Islander independent school in Brisbane.
- A government official who really couldn’t care less.
- Two non-Indigenous teachers who are committed to developing Indigenous studies curriculum even though they are aware of the tensions it creates. Privately, they are fully committed to embedding Indigenous perspectives and are willing to deal with any conflict in a measured and open-minded way because they know the benefits. These teachers have never met before.
- One non-Indigenous teacher who did not move out of the room fast enough when his school was calling for nominations to sit on this committee. Privately, he thinks this is all a waste of time and believes that Indigenous people are more racist than non-Indigenous people.
- The great, great grandson of Archdeacon Lefroy who has maintained his family’s tradition of fighting for social justice for Aboriginal people in Australia. He is currently pastor at a local church.

### **A discussion starts to take place in relation to a range of issues -**

Indigenous people get too many government handouts.

*Indigenous Studies should be compulsory.*

The government needs to intervene in Aboriginal communities for their own good.

*Indigenous studies programs are biased.*

History is in the past and we should all get over it.

*Aboriginal people have already achieved equality with all other Australians.*

Indigenous people get too many government handouts.

**Record the discussion for feedback to the group**

## APPENDIX C: BUILDING TEACHER IDENTITIES

Objective	Integration and Critique
<p>Knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and contemporary issues and how they impact on students in the classroom.</p>	<p>Research <i>about</i> Indigenous Australian peoples and communities has been constant, and often inappropriate. Through situating the development of ideas about the position of Indigenous peoples socially, historically and culturally, you will enhance your skills in ways that respect, value and observe Indigenous protocol. You are encouraged to integrate your understandings about yourselves - as culturally and historically located producers of knowledge – into your critique and development of your personal teaching philosophy and practice.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Does the production of knowledge about Indigenous people reflect and/or reproduce historical Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships based on <i>terra nullius</i>?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> When selecting, questioning, recording and evaluating which knowledge you consider important for students to learn what techniques do you prioritise?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> How might your teaching practice reproduce culturally specific research paradigms that may marginalise those who are culturally different to you?</p> <p><b>Questions for you to review your own philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>What effect does your cultural and historical position have on the way you select teaching and learning strategies and the relationships you develop with students through your teaching practice?</p> <p>How might you demonstrate your knowledge and attitudes in this regard? Are there times when you might be unaware of these effects?</p>
<p>An understanding of theories of the construction of cultural identities, of your own cultural identity and of schools as a site of social construction.</p>	<p>The ways that you locate and describe the concerns of diverse groups are influenced by your implicit and explicit beliefs/knowledge about your own cultural framework. Critical reflection and analysis of the broader nature of culture construction and its impact on you will assist you to be more aware of these impacts. These understandings are directly implicated in your perceptions of diverse groups within the classroom and the structure of your curriculum and your teaching practice.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Do terms such as <i>problem-solving, learning, learning styles, classroom management</i> and <i>goal-oriented</i> have particular cultural biases that impact on students and teachers and therefore the organisation of classroom environments?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How do you define these terms? What cultural bias might be present in your definitions? How will this affect your teaching practice?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> Consider how the relationship between your individual culture and the collective cultural systems to which you belong can positively and negatively impact on learning needs of Indigenous students.</p> <p><b>Questions for you to review your own philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>How do the ways you perceive your culture (or not) impact on the ways you judge the value of the approaches you use to foster learning for all students?</p> <p>Are you connected to collective (normative) understandings about learning in ways that create gaps when it comes to engaging with difference? How do you know? Why is it important to know?</p> <p>How might your understandings about the nature of problems, solutions, goals and management influence pedagogy that may not reflect the specific needs of Indigenous students?</p>
<p>An understanding of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on a broad range of issues</p>	<p>Interpretations of what constitutes discrimination, social justice and equity are not always self-evident. Explore how we might interpret these valued notions through the context of Indigenous Australian perspectives.</p>

	<p><b>Critique:</b> Do terms like <i>social justice</i>, <i>discrimination</i> and <i>equity</i> have particular orientations that could skew individual interpretations and therefore how they are enacted in classrooms at a ‘grass roots’ level?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How do you define these terms? What will these concepts look like in your teaching practice? Is there any cultural bias reflected in your responses?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> What specific strategies might you employ to ensure that non-discriminatory practices and social justice are given due attention?</p> <p><b>Questions to review philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>Could your understandings about the practical experience of social justice, discrimination and equity reflect dominating cultural imperatives? If so, how?</p> <p>How do the ways you perceive your culture (or not) impact on how you select and value approaches to acting in a socially just, non-discriminatory and equitable manner?</p> <p>Are you connected to collective (normative) understandings about the nature of equality that might create gaps when it comes to engaging with difference to achieve social justice? Why is it important to be aware of this?</p>
<p>A developing confidence in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.</p>	<p>To be confident in teaching Indigenous Australian studies to all students and in teaching Indigenous Australian learners you will need to develop a clear understanding of how your own cultural location impacts on the development of strategies and learning experiences. It is important therefore to be self-reflexive about your teaching practice.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Does the teaching of Indigenous studies and Indigenous students require specific skills? If so, how might they best be developed? What might it mean for creating an <i>inclusive</i> classroom environment?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How will your own cultural location influence your teaching practice in relation to Indigenous issues? What are your beliefs about the value of Indigenous studies for all students within your particular discipline?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> What particular strategies and personal reflections will you employ to develop effective classroom practice, curriculum and content in consideration of Indigenous issues?</p> <p><b>Questions to review philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>What effect does your own cultural and historical position have on the development classroom strategies and curriculum directions for Indigenous studies and students?</p> <p>Is Indigenous Studies necessary if you don’t have Indigenous students in your class? Why/Why not?</p> <p>How are these beliefs evident in your teaching practice?</p>
<p>An awareness of acceptable professional and ethical approaches in communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.</p>	<p>Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires an acknowledgement and a level of understanding about the historical events that have shaped non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities and the interconnectedness of these.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Do terms like <i>community</i> and <i>collaboration</i> contain notions of historically derived power-relations?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How do the historical relationships between Indigenous peoples and government, social and workplace agencies and policy impact on ‘new’ relationships are developed today?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> What specific strategies will you employ that reflect an understanding of historical issues relating to Indigenous people and schooling?</p> <p><b>Questions to review philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>What factors are important to consider when establishing partnerships with Indigenous communities? How might you acknowledge these in your development of community engagement strategies?</p>

	As a practising professional how will you create ethical and valuable relationships with Indigenous communities and families? Why is it important?
An ability to identify and describe the dominant values, assumptions and processes which have shaped education in Australia.	<p>Identifying and describing dominant values, assumptions and processes is not a simple matter. The enquiries that we are asking you to engage in [---] will assist in identifying some of the barriers that impinge on this.</p> <p><b>Critique:</b> Does the production of knowledge about Indigenous people reflect and/or reproduce historical Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships developed through the Australian education system over history?</p> <p><b>Evaluation:</b> How can you acknowledge the progression of domination from history to the present and develop strategies to redress the consequences?</p> <p><b>Review:</b> What specific strategies might you develop to deal with these complex issues through your pedagogy, classroom organisation and community partnerships?</p> <p><b>Questions to review philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>What effect does your own cultural and historical position have on your teaching practice?</p> <p>How do you demonstrate your knowledge and understandings of the dominating values and assumptions which have shaped education?</p> <p>As a teacher, how could you integrate this knowledge/understanding to reflect more 'equitable' approaches to curriculum development and teacher-student interactions to overcome disadvantage in education?</p>
An understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogies, with a particular understanding of the diversity of these perspectives.	<p>Explicit relationships need to be drawn between classroom practice and the social, cultural and historical influences that are being considered through your explorations in [-----].</p> <p>Certain terms will need to be problematised to assist you in developing pedagogical approaches that address social change and foster learning in core curriculum areas for Indigenous students and others. Pedagogy that attends to these complexities must address the implications of imposing particular your own cultural priorities in ways that reinforce limiting assumptions about cultural difference and cultural deficit.</p> <p>Meeting this objective requires you to conceptualise all your understandings regarding the nature of history and constructions of culture in a direct and concerted way. Therefore in the critique, evaluation and review you should revisit previous sections and consider the questions posed - and to formulate new ones - to make them meaningful to your teaching practice.</p> <p>Your <i>personal pedagogical philosophies</i> should reflect that you have explored and incorporated these understandings.</p> <p><b>Questions to review philosophy and practice:</b></p> <p>How have your investigations influenced your perceptions of the qualities of an effective teacher professional in relation to Indigenous students and the value of embedding Indigenous perspectives in your curriculum?</p> <p>What are the qualities of an educator who respects, values and integrates Indigenous perspectives? How will you make them evident in your practice as a professional?</p>

## APPENDIX D: WEEKLY TEACHER EVALUATION

<b>Weekly Teaching Evaluation</b>	<b>Week 1</b>
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Please provide brief responses to the following:-

**Course content and activities:**

1. Were there any specific issues that required further exploration?

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2. What issues arising from the first module require follow-up and/or further explanation in Module Two?

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3. Were there any barriers encountered which made activities difficult to complete?

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4. Were there any problematic terms or phrases which arose in the course of discussions? Please list.

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5. What strategies did students use to deal with difficulties as they arose?

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6. Were there any 'significant' moments where students "got it"? What were they?

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7. Suggestions for ways to improve activities/Module:

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## APPENDIX E: END-OF-SEMESTER REFLECTION SHEET

**Track your journey:** The objectives for [---] are listed below. Identify where you were at the beginning of the subject, and where you are now. (Lampert, 2003)

- **Knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and contemporary issues and how they impact on students in the classroom.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Understanding of theories of the construction of cultural identities, of your own cultural identity, and of schools as a site of social construction.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Understanding of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on a broad range of issues.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Confidence in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Awareness of acceptable professional and ethical approaches in communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Ability to identify and describe the dominant values, assumptions and processes which have shaped education in Australia.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

- **Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogies, with a particular understanding of the diversity of these perspectives.**

Beginning  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Now  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE 4088H



University Human Research Ethics Committee  
**HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**  
 NHMRC Registered Committee Number EC00171

**Date of Issue:** 5/11/10 (supersedes all previously issued certificates)

Dear Ms Jean Phillips

A UHREC should clearly communicate its decisions about a research proposal to the researcher and the final decision to approve or reject a proposal should be communicated to the researcher in writing. This Approval Certificate serves as your written notice that the proposal has met the requirements of the *National Statement on Research involving Human Participation* and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorised to commence activities as outlined in your proposal application, subject to any specific and standard conditions detailed in this document.

Within this Approval Certificate are:

- \* Project Details
- \* Participant Details
- \* Conditions of Approval (Specific and Standard)

Researchers should report to the UHREC, via the Research Ethics Coordinator, events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project, including, but not limited to:

- (a) serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants; and
- (b) proposed significant changes in the conduct, the participant profile or the risks of the proposed research.

Further information regarding your ongoing obligations regarding human based research can be found via the Research Ethics website <http://www.research.qut.edu.au/ethics/> or by contacting the Research Ethics Coordinator on 07 3138 2091 or [ethicscontact@qut.edu.au](mailto:ethicscontact@qut.edu.au)

*If any details within this Approval Certificate are incorrect please advise the Research Ethics Unit within 10 days of receipt of this certificate.*

### Project Details

**Category of Approval:** Human - Committee  
**Approved From:** 14/06/2005                      **Approved Until:** 14/06/2010 (subject to annual reports)  
**Approval Number:** 4088H  
**Project Title:** Resisting Contradictions: Non-Indigenous pre-service teacher responses to critical Indigenous studies

**Chief Investigator:** Ms Jean Phillips  
**Other Staff/Students:** Prof Sue Grieshaber

#### Experiment Summary:

This study is concerned with explaining the ways that non-Indigenous pre-service teachers enrolled in a compulsory Indigenous studies interpret unfamiliar forms of knowledge and ways of producing knowledge. In particular, how the centralisation of Indigenous knowledge perspectives influence common understandings about dominant cultural locations.

### Participant Details

**Participants:**  
 Students undertaking a Bachelor of Education

**Location/s of the Work:**  
 QUT