NEGOTIATING RACIAL BOUNDARIES AND ORGANISATIONAL BORDERS:
AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF A CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

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Date of Submission: 1st November 1999
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature:

Date: 1.11.99
ABSTRACT

The environment in which Non-Aboriginal government social and welfare workers and Aboriginal clients meet presents a problematic with roots in historical and contemporary policies and practices. Past organisational procedures and processes regulating Aboriginal people, coupled with sometimes unquestioned ways of working, can provide the potential for discrimination, leading to conflict, resentment and resistance in the workplace. This is the setting in which I examine some of the existing barriers when engaging in a training strategy designed and implemented in a state government welfare organisation to assist workers learn about providing services in respectful, sensitive and culturally appropriate ways.

An ethnographic exploration revealed that the benefits of the training strategy accrued mainly to the Aboriginal workers in the organisation who took on training roles and gained skills, confidence and a visibility in the organisation. This gave them networks and access to the policy decision making processes they might not otherwise have had.

Workplaces wield unequal power through their procedures and practices. For small portions of time, the Aboriginal trainers (particularly but not only) were in positions of control through their ownership of the training. Some trainers were able to use the resistances and rejections they encountered to advantage, and indeed had central roles in the development of policies affecting Aboriginal people in the organisation. Other Aboriginal people found the experience of training so hostile that they quickly withdrew and ceased their contact with the programme. The
difficulties in accepting perspectives different from the way they had been accustomed to work were too much for some of the non-Aboriginal people, trainees and others connected with the operations of the programmes, who resisted new knowledge and practices.

I inquire particularly into the resistances and rejections apparent here, and seek to explain these at both individual and institutional levels through an examination of positioning and knowledge, by the application of critical hermeneutic analysis. The training environment can be constructed as one in which there were struggles about who people are and what they will credit as being true and acceptable. I counterpoint the negative reports to the positive and rewarding experiences of the Aboriginal trainers and some non-Aboriginal workers who were able to negotiate their way through the boundaries and borders erected around ethnicity, race and organisational functioning. The arena in which these events occurred is that of Whiteness, the invisible norm against which all matters are measured, giving those people who are White unmarked privilege.

The trajectory the training has taken as a means for producing change has been predominantly through subjective experience, that is embodied knowledge. Participation in the narratives of the people whose stories they are is a major focus for the training. These narratives are powerful crucibles for forging understanding which then impel action. Such processes and other interactions with Aboriginal people have allowed non-Aboriginal workers to meet Aboriginal people in ways not typical of the usual interaction between worker and client. The spaces for interaction thus created can generate relationships which foster understanding, and which may be seen as a public ethic of dialogical performativity.
The struggle for non-Aboriginal trainers and educators now, is not to design a programme which will do the work of this programme, that is for Aboriginal people to do and control. They show here that, at present, it is important to them for non-Aboriginal people to hear their history and their personal experiences of its effects. That might not be the need in ten years or next year. But that is their decision.

The task for White educators and trainers is to provide the supports in ways that will assist their processes. This means ourselves engaging in dialogues, putting ourselves in the places where we can listen and hear, and accept their teachings. It is also incumbent on us to construct ways to assist the people the Aboriginal people will be training to understand and confront our own Whiteness.
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It is fitting that I write these acknowledgements at this time and in this place. Sitting here in a forest cottage, where I and my post-graduate colleagues have spent many weekends working towards our respective degrees, I reflect on the companions who have shared this journey with me.

The companions of these writing weekends, Wendy Earles, Nola Kunnen, Paul Murphy, Marilyn Palmer, and Dyann Ross, have shared their wisdom, humour, inspiration, nurturing food and restorative walks with me, at the same time as they have been Critical Friends. Thank you.

An early companion, Ernie Stringer, who encouraged me to undertake this particular journey, commenced it with me as colleague in the project and then continued as one of my academic supervisors. I have benefited from his creativity, understanding of working cross culturally and his rigour, as well as from his friendship.

I have also been fortunate in my other supervisors, Jim Ife and John Mallard. Jim, as principal, became my academic supervisor before he also became my academic colleague, in both of those roles being always accessible, providing sympathetic hearings when I needed them, asking guiding questions, and giving me the privilege of participating in the excitements of new learning. John, like Ernie, was present from the beginning of this project and has always had faith that it should and could be done, offering encouragement and friendship during its long process. These three supervisors have provided balance and expertise for which I gratefully thank them.

Companions of other parts of my life have provided the sustaining and practical assistances to this task, treating with patience and tolerance my prolonged absences
from their lives when they would have otherwise expected me to be present for them. To Antonia and Zoe, Mark, and John, I thank you for the grace with which you have all given the permissions for me to temporarily take leave of my responsibilities as a parent, grandparent and partner. I especially thank John, for whom structure is an important part of life, for providing the structure to contain my chaos with such good will.

Thank you to Pauline Carroll for her assiduous and speedy editing, and to colleagues and students at Edith Cowan University for the forbearance shown in these last days.

This thesis could not have happened without the participants in this study, some of whom I have only known through this process, and others who have journeyed alongside from the beginnings. I count myself privileged beyond measure to have had the opportunity of working with you, and thank you all for the good will, the enthusiasm and above all the trust shown to me.

It is to these un-named, but very present people, that I dedicate this work.
PREFACE - HOW TO READ THIS THESIS

The prime focus for this study is to foreground the lived experiences of the people most concerned in the project, that we might (i) understand better the training process as a means to assist a group of people, whose cultural backgrounds differ from those of the service recipients, provide more culturally appropriate services; and thence (ii) use these understandings to improve working interactions between non-Aboriginal workers and Aboriginal people. The standard and accepted manner of presenting a research thesis allows poorly for such foregrounding, concentrating more on a realist and objective representation of observable fact. The lived experiences as told and understood by those people whose experiences they are take precedence here, and so their accounts tell their own stories (albeit through my interpretive filters), to be followed by my account and my interpretations.

I offer here a brief description of how the thesis is structured as a way of explaining its slightly unorthodox arrangement. The thesis is divided into Prologues, Sections, and Interludes.

The Sections carry the main body of the study, its description, interpretation and conclusion. Prologues introduce information (for ease of reading) or crystallisation (for entrée to a Section). Interludes are matters of my biography as they pertain to the study.

The first Prologue contains an “advance organiser”. Here is a rationale for the design, list of abbreviations and a list of study participants for quick reference while reading.

Section One introduces the study and its topic, and contains two chapters 1 & 2.
An **Interlude** separates Sections One and Two and provides an etic pause (to be described below) for reflection and comment in which I introduce the dilemma of personal whiteness.

**Section Two** contains the emic accounts of the study participants and contains two chapters, 3 & 4.

A second **Interlude** is situated at the end of Section 2, and provides my questioning of the problems of organisational whiteness, again from my own biography.

**Section Three** provides an interpretation that elucidates the meanings I have found. Prefacing this Section, but part of it, is a **prologue** followed by two chapters, 5 & 6.

I pose questions about political whiteness in the third **Interlude** before **Section Four** which answers the research question by bringing together the commentaries on training as a mechanism for changing non-Aboriginal workers’ work practices and the reflections on personal, organisational and political whiteness.

There follows a set of **Appendices**.
PROLOGUE

This “advance organiser” provides the rationale for the form of the thesis. It contains explanations of: the etic-emic configurations; the “bridging” sections; the three-part form of section three; and the location of material in the appendices.

Etic-Emic

Although I am a participant in the project I am describing, thus enabling me, according to some perspectives, to claim emic status, I am also the researcher with corresponding etic status (Denzin 1989a). I have positioned the sections in this thesis acknowledging the etic, or outsider, nature of the introduction (Section One) and the Interpretation/Analysis (Section Three). The Accounts conform, as far as is possible, to an emic, or insider, presentation. These are the accounts of study participants. Section Four I consider to be an etic-emic melange as it emerges from a blend of my reflections and learnings as researcher (etic) and participant (emic).

Interludes

This study is an interpretive ethnography, in which I am both researcher and participant in the project I am about to describe. I have attempted to re-position myself so that the voices of the study participants gain at least equal standing in parts of the thesis. While I want to present the subject of the study for examination, my own questioning and experiences cross cut the project under study. So there are two strands weaving through this study. One is the question of how non-Aboriginal people are prepared/trained to work more appropriately with Aboriginal people. This is the main focus for the study. There is, however, a second strand which intertwines my own biography and experiences with the study subject, after the manner suggested by Denzin, in which the research act emerges from the personal troubles into public issues (1989c). This concerns my initial reason for coming to the project, and thence the study, and may be characterised as my own experience of Whiteness as a private trouble moving to a public issue. I represent the main topic under study through the body of the thesis in the more traditional approach of chapters. My own biography and comments on Whiteness I present
within what I call etic interludes. However, these are more than momentary pauses. I also consider them to have pivotal functions, in the manner of an enforced pause, or disrupted step to reflect on what has gone and to contemplate the possible future steps. Thus they have a retrogressive-progressive character, after the manner of Sartre (1963), in a mode important in a hermeneutic study, which allows the argument to be built within and alongside the main body of the work, a type of double-helix of argument.

Section Three
This section has three parts and contains an analysis of the preceding accounts. The first part consists of a prologue in the form of three biographical vignettes (an emic bridge). They perform the dual function of identifying the main themes of the previous chapters to provide an entrée to the theoretical discussion which follows. The following two chapters interpretively reflect on the previous accounts and the vignettes through the two main theme groups of identity and belonging, and subjective and objective knowledge.

Appendices
While there are the accepted inclusions in the Appendices, such as Informed Consent Forms, the Appendices also contain a body of theoretical discussion concerning the methodology. I have presented the way I carried out the study in Chapter One, but have placed the discussion concerning it at the end. It relates to the study, but sits slightly outside the "flow" of the context-setting process of Section One.

A final note concerning style. Single quotation marks in the text signify direct speech (study participants or authors); double quotation marks provide emphasis (except when mentioned); and indented text blocks are participants' speech (italics), and authors (plain).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCS</td>
<td>Department for Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOC</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>Family and Children’s Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>HROs</td>
<td>Human Resource Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDOs</td>
<td>Training and Development Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCSR</td>
<td>Welfare and Community Services Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOW</td>
<td>Ways Of Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWAP</td>
<td>Working With Aboriginal People</td>
</tr>
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</table>
PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY¹

Bernard  Member of executive, and director of a region
Charles   Member of executive, and director of a region
Eric      Member of executive, and director of a region
Desmond   Middle-level manager in central administration
Julia     Member of central administration
Graham    Project team member
Harriet   Project team member
Norman    Worker at Centre for Aboriginal Studies
Keith     Aboriginal trainer, also assisted project team
Nora      Aboriginal trainer, also assisted project team
Leslie    Aboriginal trainer
Marian    Aboriginal trainer
Ian       Aboriginal trainer, member of administration
Olga      Member of administration and Aboriginal trainer
Penny     Aboriginal trainer, also assisted project team
Teresa    Aboriginal trainer, member of administration
William   Non-Aboriginal trainee,² clerical staff
Xanthe    Non-Aboriginal trainee, field staff
Yvonne    Non-Aboriginal trainee, field support staff
Vera      Trainee, field support staff
Ada       Non-Aboriginal trainee, field staff
Bernadette Non-Aboriginal trainee, field support staff
Christine Non-Aboriginal trainee, member of administration
Doreen    Non-Aboriginal trainee, field staff
Hannah    Non-Aboriginal trainee, member of administration

¹ All names here are pseudonyms.
² In the absence of another suitable term to describe the people who participated in the training programmes as learners, I use the term trainee. I believe this is necessary to avoid confusion with the study participants, should I try to use the term participant.
The four broad categories I used initially for the study are:

Central administration senior and middle level staff who were responsible for decision and policy making concerning the Working With Aboriginal People training project. With the exception of Olga, all these people were not Aboriginal. Bernard, Eric, Charles, Desmond and Julia represent this group.

Project team staff were located at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and representatives here comprised two non-Aboriginal people, Graham and Harriet, and Keith, Nora and Penny who are Aboriginal people and assisted in the project. Norman worked at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and was influential in the project.

Aboriginal trainers, who were Department for Community Services staff and conducted the training. These include Penny, Leslie, Keith, Marian, Nora, Teresa, and Ian.

Trainees, who were departmental staff from a range of work roles and locations, and who undertook the training. Here they are represented by Christine, Hannah, Doreen, William, Ada, Xanthe, Yvonne, Bernadette and Vera. All were thought to be non-Aboriginal.

As will become apparent, these categories provided a heuristic device for research purposes, and the later subject for discussion and analysis.
SECTION ONE - PROVIDING THE CONTEXT

The first chapter in this section describes the location and setting of the Working With Aboriginal People (WWAP) Training Project. It shows how a human services department chose it as a strategy to attend to some issues it was facing in the latter half of the 1980s with regard to one of its main client populations – Aboriginal people. The descriptive manner serves two purposes: it will provide the necessary context for understanding the locus of the study and its genesis; and it will introduce some of the themes to be considered later in the study. The chapter then describes the research journey used for the study, and is appropriately located here to introduce the reader to the interconnectedness between the research process in which I am both researcher and participant, and the research content, or the fitting of paradigm to study (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Inseparable here are the biography of the researcher (Denzin 1989c), the questions to which I sought answers and the means I used to contribute towards an understanding of the study topic.

The second chapter in this section describes the WWAP training programme in detail. This is distinct from the project (described above) in which it occurred. Even though this study concerns cross cultural training, focusing on one programme in particular, the training programme itself is only one, albeit major, part of the way in which the WWAP project was developed, implemented and managed. In this chapter, the project, programme and appropriate literature are examined.

Section One is followed by an interlude – a reflection on the journey which brought me to the study, and a comment on a central inter-twining theme of this thesis – Whiteness. It is an emic rendering of my journey, poised between the description of the project and the accounts of the people who embodied it. It characterises what Sartre has termed a ‘regressive-progressive’ (Sartre 1963, pp
133-35) mode important in a hermeneutic study, which I use to build the argument alongside the main body of the study, in a type of double-helix arrangement.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL\(^3\) PEOPLE TRAINING PROJECT

This chapter describes the genesis of the WWAP training project: its political, cultural and organisational setting and the issues it was intended to address. I describe the study problem as it relates to the WWAP project and outline the methodology I used.

**INTRODUCTION**

The WWAP training project was formally constituted in 1989 with a contract between the state government department for welfare services provision in Western Australia, the (then) Department for Community Services (DCS)\(^4\) and the Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS), an Aboriginal run division of Curtin University of Technology. The contract specifications provided for the development of a set of materials which could be used to sensitise the department’s staff to Aboriginal culture\(^5\) (Centre for Aboriginal Studies 1989). The staff of the department were predominantly non-Aboriginal, and a large proportion of the clients in a number of functional areas were Aboriginal.\(^6\) Development of the subsequent materials followed a state-wide research, consultation and development phase, the result of which led to the materials forming part of a larger process which included plans for

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\(^3\) It is now widely acknowledged that the term ‘Aboriginal’ was an imposed construct, homenising the many different groups in Australia. Recently Aboriginal people throughout Australia are now being referred to as Indigenous Australians, for example (Moreton-Robinson 1992; Molnar 1995; Mudrooroo 1997). However, the training was devised and labelled with "Aboriginal" in the title, and so, with respect to Indigenous Australians, I shall use the term here.

\(^4\) Now known as Family and Children’s Services (FCS). This department has had a number of name changes over the past two decades, and has been variously known as Department for Community Welfare (DCW) and Department for Community Development (DCD), all of which will be referred to in this thesis appropriate to the period under discussion.

\(^5\) The term ‘culture’ is in itself, problematic, having many different usages and meanings. I will discuss the difficulties later. In this present context, a definition of culture, and hence what should form the focus for the materials the department sought, was not made. My discussion on culture and how it is used in this work will be left to chapter two, despite my choice of methodology which is ethnographic, therefore, literally ‘writing culture’.

\(^6\) Although the statistics were not reliable, it was generally thought that approximately 25-30% of the clients were Aboriginal. In WA approximately 2% of the state’s population is Aboriginal. This discrepancy warranted attention in policies.
training the trainers, the processes to be used, the underpinning philosophy, detailed programme plans, and materials and resources. This development took ten months and the WWAP Training Package (as it was subsequently to be called) was launched by the Premier in October 1990.

There had been increasing, but intermittent, small contracts let by the department to outside agencies during the eighties, but this contract was significant for two reasons. It was the first to be contracted to an Aboriginal controlled organisation. More notably, it represented an acknowledgement on the part of the department that welfare provision to Aboriginal people required concerted attention, in contrast to the universalist philosophy which directed the Community Welfare Services Act 1972. The Welfare and Community Services Review (WCSR) of 1984\(^7\) had reported that twelve years of such an approach had not addressed the disadvantage of Aboriginal people to an acceptable degree. The Western Australian Equal Opportunity Act had been enacted in 1984 and required government departments to report on their policies and success in ensuring their workplaces were discrimination free, and that they were taking steps to improve employment opportunities for minority groups. These two events contributed to the department's Executive endorsing policies to address these issues.

The Departmental Problem: Issues Leading To The Programme

The establishment of the training strategy to help the department's workforce respond more appropriately to a client group resulted from a number of separate events. This section introduces them through the narratives\(^8\) of a number of people

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\(^7\) The Welfare and Community Services Review (known as The Carter Report) (1984) was called by the incoming state Labor government in 1983 to report on the welfare sector and reported in 1984. Among its recommendations was the need for the department to employ more Aboriginal people. The senior policy officer's position was one of those positions considered important, and was the most senior Aboriginal position at that time.

\(^8\) The term narrative in research has a number of usages (Langellier 1989; Clandinin and Connelly 1994; Manning and Cullum-Swan 1994; Richardson 1994; Barone 1995; Polkinghorne 1997; Foley 1998). I use the term in the manner of Ricoeur (1986) to refer to the stories people tell about their lives. Thus they may be partial, contradictory, fragments of action, thought and events. This will form part of the discussion in the methodology.
who were initially and intimately involved with the project’s genesis and, for some of them, its continuation.

The engagement of the CAS to produce a training kit for DCS staff followed a lengthy period during which the department had re-structured and employed an increasing number of Aboriginal workers. They and the political climate in the Aboriginal community contributed to the decision to confront a problem of work practice which had remained largely ignored during the department's history. The department's predecessors had had a prolonged involvement in Aboriginal people's lives to the extent that, for many contemporary Aboriginal people, the department, or the 'welfare', constituted the means and authority for their daily lives. Most departmental workers had learned their jobs in the department either prior to or while working through some of the more recent organisational changes; others had been employed as colonial administrators in Papua New Guinea; yet others were newly employed workers with little or no contact with Aboriginal people. While these workers pursued different approaches with their clients who were generally considered to be a welfare-dependent group of people, there was growing dissatisfaction in the Aboriginal community at the inappropriate service delivery. We shall see that Aboriginal people at all levels complained about the lack of culturally appropriate and discriminatory service delivery.

The department's senior Aboriginal worker encouraged Executive to acknowledge this problem, after having been approached by community members with their complaints. Additionally, some other departmental Aboriginal workers criticised recent policy and practice guidelines which required them to offend against their

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9 For example, it wasn’t until the mid eighties that the last of the reserves were handed over to the Aboriginal Land's Trust. During my time in the North, as a District Officer, I had legal responsibility for the reserve, and thus how people there lived.

10 A story told by Fran Crawford in Community Work, Solution or Illusion? (1991) illustrates the issues. A welfare worker in a remote location expressed despair to a visiting anthropologist that he was never fortunate enough to meet the sorts of people the anthropologist described, with rich traditions and connections to their culture. When some Aboriginal people (regular clients) came into the office, he was astounded to find they were the very same people of whom the anthropologist had been talking. He had not been able to "see" beyond a welfare status.
own cultural mores when carrying out the work of the department, as I shall show later.

At the same time, senior non-Aboriginal departmental staff were hearing the same messages both from external committees which had Aboriginal members, and which were constituted to attend to issues of Aboriginal well-being in a variety of settings, and through a number of reports to government citing some of the discriminatory practices current in government departments. Increasingly Aboriginal people were taking the opportunity to speak out about their disadvantaged position and the discrimination they experienced.

The problem the department faced and sought to address through the development of a training "package" was the inappropriate work practices of its staff when delivering services to Aboriginal clients. These work practices were framed within a policy setting drawn from a mono-cultural Anglo tradition and permitted no official recognition of the legitimacy of different customs. The response to these issues was to endorse a training strategy, as part of an Aboriginal Human Resources Policy, to improve work practice.

Some of the events leading to the endorsement of the training strategy are presented here by four of the key players in the study.

**Olga’s Aim: Empowering Aboriginal People**

Olga was the senior policy officer responsible for advice to the department on Aboriginal services. An Aboriginal person herself, Olga was originally employed to develop an appropriate policy for Aboriginal children in care, which had been one of the department’s previously most contentious policies. Following the

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11 Committees such as Police and Aboriginal Relations, Consultative Committees on Aboriginal Affairs, for example.
12 Equal Opportunity Reports were now mandatory, and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was sitting.
WCSR, and the establishment of the senior policy position, Olga received a number of promotions until she occupied this, the most senior of positions for an Aboriginal person in the department.

Olga recalls how she became convinced that a problem existed in the way non-Aboriginal staff were responding to Aboriginal clients.

*I suppose it all came about because, being Aboriginal and being in this position that if Aboriginal clients went to any particular office for a service or anything ... if they didn't get what they wanted, or felt that they were being discriminated against, not being dealt with respect and dignity, that they'd complain to someone and someone would say 'ring Olga O....'. So I was constantly getting calls from people, and from then I'd have to feed back through the line manager who was involved ... I was getting one a week.*

Olga shows that she can, and does, act from a position of authority in the department, even though, as we shall see, hers is a non-operational position. Here is an indication that she is willing to step outside the organisational boundaries for a reason she finds compelling. Although Olga explains her interest in terms of time management, her concerns are much more located with the nature of the interactions which she considered to be discriminatory.

*I figured that it was a lot to do with people's perceptions, staff perceptions of Aboriginal people and them being a little more powerful ... and the bottom line for me was that they were service providers and unless they could show that they couldn't extend the service because of guidelines or whatever, then they were discriminating, or could be seen to be discriminating.*

Having a senior Aboriginal person in the department apparently encouraged clients who thought they were being discriminated against to lodge complaints to someone they believed would help them. There was evidently a level of awareness amongst
the clientele that discriminatory treatment was no longer to be tolerated. This had not yet extended to some of the non-Aboriginal staff, who were still not paying attention to the particular circumstances and cultural needs of the clients.

Olga had spent some time previously at the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and was well versed in the provisions and requirements of the recent legislation. She considered the EO guidelines could be used to justify requiring staff to learn appropriate workplace behaviour, thus solving the problem. If, after training, staff continued discriminatory behaviour, they could be disciplined.

I went to the Director General about a couple of occasions [and] said to him, 'Well we really can't make them accountable under the Equal Opportunity legislation because their comeback is 'the department hasn't given us any training to show us how to do this' and so they're going to get let off the hook. And I then decided to put up a proposal for the development of a package and I argued it on the grounds that we couldn't make staff accountable unless we gave them the appropriate training and also argued on the basis that we're not about changing attitudes, that it's about behaviour in the workplace.

Olga understood the department to be responsible under the act for its employees’ behaviour. She also concurred with the premises of the EO legislation that behaviour rather than attitude change was much more possible to effect.

Olga’s next move was to propose a training strategy to the departmental training committee. The committee’s response, however, was not what Olga wanted. Instead of funding the training corporately,13 the Executive recommended the Aboriginal Affairs Committee seek “Aboriginal” funding. Olga’s initial

13 The department had restructured following the WCSR and now had a regional-corporate configuration. An outline is provided in Appendix 1 with accompanying explanation. This will be of assistance in later chapters to help explain the roles and responsibilities which affected and were affected by the operations of the WWAP.
assessment was one of non-Aboriginal staff training needs. Therefore, in her view it was a corporate not an Aboriginal problem. Olga identified this response as no different from the experiences clients were complaining about, and if the Executive didn’t meet her request appropriately, she would treat it as a discriminatory response. She objected and stated her intention of complaining to the EOC for ‘treating it discriminately’.

Olga continues her narrative.

_The Director of Human Resources, of course he got upset by that and went screaming to the Director General. I hear that the Director Human Resources consulted the EO co-ordinator, the co-ordinator informed him that I did have a case and when he went to the Director General and the Director General knows I would have been really serious about taking it to the Equal Opportunity Commission and he just said, ‘Give her the money’ [laughs]._

Olga reflects that this move served her purposes well as the training ultimately had to be included as a corporate activity which gave it a department-wide priority status. Olga’s political nerve and determination won her a project. Demonstrating that the potential for discrimination existed at the most senior level in the department was likely to affect some people adversely. However, she did have hierarchical support as well as legislative legitimacy.

Olga continues her reflections and attributes her success in part to the lack of understanding in the training committee and the director in particular of the processes of discrimination.

_It was just the case of the same discrimination of what I was saying that this package needed to be developed for ... because I was just asking for something that anyone could ask for corporately and put up a proposal and he [the Director] saw the word Aboriginal and treat it differently and I used that_
The difficulties did not end there. As we shall see Olga was to find many obstacles placed in her way. One concerned the site Olga chose for the project’s development. She was insistent that the training be designed and developed by an Aboriginal controlled agency.

I just saw that as giving it a lot more credibility, I knew I didn’t have the resources and I didn’t want training section [in DCS] to develop the package. They wanted to and I just didn’t want ... I had it set in my mind that the Centre for Aboriginal Studies should do it and so we had to constantly argue for that to occur ... I was aware that they had an Aboriginal advisory structure, and the head of the centre was Aboriginal ... I liked the process of what I’d witnessed in terms of Norman and the philosophy and principles of that particular unit, whereas the others around WACAE, I’d seen some of the stuff that they’d done with the whitefellas at the time, the whitefellas control too much.

Choosing an external agency created opposition as there were sections within the department who had responsibility for training and could, technically, develop a training package. They, too, were ‘whitefellas’. Olga was determined it would be developed under Aboriginal control. There was continual resistance. Olga considered it had much to do with the Director’s animosity.

That process went on for quite a while ... the resistance. The director was still hurt about what I’d done and he was constantly trying to sabotage the whole thing wherever he could, he wanted to win something, it became a real personal battle between me and him and he was determined to get even with me. Thank god he never, but I still keep it in the back of my mind that if he ever gets a chance to kick my

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14 West Australian College of Advanced Education (now Edith Cowan University) which had a substantial reputation in working with Aboriginal material and knowledge.
arse I won't be able to walk again [laughs] and so it just went on that to-ing and fro-ing for quite a while.

Such political acts as the reversal of control are never likely to be neutral or detached. The political issue of control became personal and the resultant tensions were to affect the project. Finally, though, the project went to the Centre for Aboriginal Studies. The processes used there were of the sort Olga thought could effect the necessary change. The principle of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal issues had started within the department.

_We managed to get it to the stage where the Centre for Aboriginal Studies was accepted as the consultants to develop the package ... this whole package was about empowering for Aboriginal people, and I felt that I had to be consistent with things that I wanted, the objectives of getting the package up, I had to at every possible opportunity just get Aboriginal people involved, empower them, I had to do the things that I was saying to these whitefellas you have to do._

Olga’s assiduous determination for Aboriginal control led directly to conflict with a departmental system which repeated the same patterns of behaviour and practice she saw between staff and clients. That the people involved did not or could not recognise this pattern demonstrated the legitimacy of her course of action. Her use of EO legislation to justify her proposal and support her claims of discrimination demonstrated political acuity, understanding and will. Even more importantly it confirmed a changing political climate, which had foreclosed on personal practices of discrimination for which organisations would ultimately be held responsible.

Reversing the standard procedures of ‘whitefellas’ taking control of Aboriginal matters was one of the outstanding characteristics of this project. Even when Aboriginal people were involved, such as she had been in helping devise policies for child placement, she was still answerable to the ‘whitefellas’. In this instance,
the development and design of the project was to be answerable to an Aboriginal authority before it returned to the department.

**Charles' Response: Developing A Policy Framework**

Charles was a senior departmental Executive member and Olga’s manager. He had joined the department three years after the WCSR. Charles came to the project through his involvement as the departmental representative with Aboriginal consultative committees. He was challenged there by Aboriginal leaders who recited the same complaints Olga had heard from clients.

They [committee members] gave me a bit of a hammering about our staff’s interaction with Aboriginal people, and also about the fact that we had at that stage very few Aboriginal staff. And that conversation, it was more than a conversation, (laughs) that experience, I couldn’t but help to agree with everything they were saying.

As Charles tells me this, he recalls the discomfort he felt in these challenges. Perhaps being a relative newcomer to the department gave him an ability to hear the complaints without any past “history” from which he could justify a departmental position. He could see and accept their perspectives as accurate. This prompted him to remember an Executive endorsement some twelve months earlier of an Aboriginal Human Resource policy, which had not been activated.

Although we’d endorsed it almost twelve months earlier [Dec 86], nothing ever happened ... what I found was a quite good policy framework, which needed some work done to move it ... we ended up pulling a number of Aboriginal staff from around the state, and out of that came a list of priority strategies. And that included a strategy of increasing the number of Aboriginal staff, the creation of the Aboriginal employment position, and quite a range of other strategies, including training for our non-
Charles’ experience almost replicated Olga’s. He heard complaints from Aboriginal people concerning discriminatory or inappropriate service delivery from departmental staff. Departmental commitment to Aboriginal issues, exhibited by the lack of progress in increasing Aboriginal staff numbers, was also questioned. Irrespective of whether this indicated a lack of organisational commitment or some other failing, he was to find a twelve month delay in action, which is not uncommon in bureaucratic actions. However, Charles took responsibility for the inaction on behalf of the department. Had he not been the metaphoric target for the committees’ criticisms, the policy (which the department would have been required to attend to for EO reporting purposes) might have taken longer to be activated, and taken an entirely different turn.

**Penny: Striking Against Native Welfare Policies**

Penny had been employed by the department for some eight years in positions ranging from clerical assistant to field worker when she and other Aboriginal field workers in the north of the state attended a staff conference. Specialist child protection workers from the head office in the south of the state had developed a set of procedures for assessing situations which required departmental action and were touring the state to inform staff of their new duties. These guidelines first frightened and then angered the Aboriginal Staff.

On the final day of the conference, the staff were asked to evaluate the presentation. Penny takes up the narrative.

*I would say definitely we were all scared because of the implications that the manual [Child Protection] had, you know like, what is neglect? And, like, if the child has no shelter, so many people in the Aboriginal community have no shelter. If children don’t have adequate clothing, so many people in the*
Aboriginal community don't have that. Food, and medical attention, so the people in the community are like that. All we could see it was a backward step for us, for our people, and we felt if we didn't say anything we were going back to Native Welfare policies, that's how we saw it. OK, in the manual it had certain sections said that cultural norms had to be taken into account, but you don't read small print, when you're actually in a situation. All we could see was something that was truly terrifying that we, as field officers, we'd be doing that and we'd be accountable to our Department to do that.

Penny articulates the fear among these workers. They believed they would be required to apply non-Aboriginal standards to Aboriginal family care and continue a punishment for circumstances over which most Aboriginal communities have no control. This group of workers agreed on dramatic and uncharacteristic action. They decided to strike. Even though they were advised of the illegality of their actions, they continued.

Welfare workers traditionally get on and do the job required of them, often adjusting the policies through bending the rules to fit rather than challenging them outright. In this case, though, a group of Aboriginal workers, of whom there had previously been so few in the department and who occupied the lower rungs of employment levels, thought this particular issue of such importance they didn't hesitate.

Penny recounts the close connection between their own experiences and what they could see to be the implications of this policy.

The other thing that we stated was that it was worth it, that we weren't just talking about ourselves as individuals. I think there was 26 of us, so the 26 people that were there, not one of us had escaped the clutches of welfare, or if not us then our parents or our grandparents and all, all of the truly horrific experiences were within our memory. We couldn't
leave it, it was too important. So we went on strike ... And non-Aboriginal staff in the meeting, all bar one, gave us assurances that they would support us.

The reach of “welfare” into Aboriginal life was not something that had happened to other people. First-hand experience left these workers with a determination not to inflict a repetition of their parents’ and grandparents’ lives on other Aboriginal families.

I think at the time it brought us together. It not only empowered us, it gave us a whole range of possibilities, just by allowing us to get together. And when we did get together we realised there was more, we realised we had more in common and a bond that I think will remain with us today.

Support from others supplemented the support members of the group gave each other. It is not surprising that together people can do more than one, and that joining together for action, which is meaningful, leaves its mark on future relationships (Kelly and Sewell 1988). For Penny, this was one of the instances which was to contribute to her understanding and later use of collective action both in her work as a community development worker and trainer.

Penny told me the story of the strike in response to a question of mine. ‘Tell me’, I’d asked, ‘of your involvement with the WWAP training’. Penny started her story here, so powerful a memory for her, that it forms a touchstone for her future.

After the strike had been settled, the Aboriginal workers had a meeting which was attended by senior staff, including Olga, who told them of the plans for a training programme.

And that was one of the things that was brought up at that meeting, the training manual to get other staff to get to know our history. We weren’t looking for sympathy, we needed people to know that it wasn’t
sympathy. We just wanted them to acknowledge we were different, our paths were different, our experiences were different, that colonisation to them might have been something great, but to us it was the beginning of being exploited. And that was a lot of things for us that changed because of that conference, and I think that, as I say, that was the first time I heard about some sort of training that would introduce people to us on our terms and that’s where I first heard it.

Penny articulates the shifting mood and locus of control. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people’s common history was experienced differently. Penny and her colleagues recognised the implications of the departmental policy, endorsed by the non-Aboriginal hierarchy and which would have a direct impact on them as workers. The salience of these issues did not escape the Aboriginal workers, but it could form the point of departure for learning by non-Aboriginal people.

**Norman: Learning Developmental Processes**

Norman worked for the Centre for Aboriginal Studies before and after, but not during, the short period of the development of the Working with Aboriginal People training project. He was one of the people with whom Olga negotiated the contract, and whose way of working had so impressed her as being what she wanted to underpin a training programme for departmental staff. Norman’s previous experiences of discrimination made him particularly receptive to processes that encouraged people to change their work practices to treat people with equality and respect. He traces his history in the WWAP programme to a far distant time.

*My involvement started way back when I first started work [in] 1969 [laughs] ... in the education department as a clerk and after 3 years working as a filing clerk I was starting to get so frustrated about it ... about the attitudes of people. I remember at one stage I threw a table upside down full of files because someone made a cheap crack about Aboriginal
people, anyway, then I travelled a bit, Darwin and places like that and saw things were a little bit different there, Aboriginal people had a fair amount of influence in some of the places where I worked in Darwin. And then when I came back to Perth ... and worked in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs ... [I] just got so frustrated ... Aboriginal people weren't just treated like human beings, people would talk about you in front of you, as if you would just turn a deaf ear or something

Norman’s own experience of racial discrimination was to have a powerful effect. In one place, the Aboriginal Affairs Department, where perhaps he might have expected to be treated fairly, he was still treated as less than human. These experiences served as a stimulus to action. The lack of progress for Aboriginal people was a further goad.

Even that began to get like you’re banging your head against a brick wall, you really had no resources, the government had all the resources, and the resources weren't being used properly for Aboriginal people

The frustration followed him until he saw what was happening at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies. He found a way of working which acknowledged Aboriginal ways and gave Aboriginal people control. Norman started working with people in training non-Aboriginal people in how to work more appropriately with Aboriginal people.

So just working [training] with the police, with Telecom, and BHP and so on, and going through a good process of bringing their issues out and dealing with them in a constructive way, did a lot for me, and I suppose it, it really showed non-Aboriginal workers there was a way of working that helped them do the job better and help their clients as well.

Norman channelled his experiences of frustration and lack of Aboriginal control into training. He could see the practical changes people could make in their work
behaviour partly through the processes of giving Aboriginal people control and partly through attending to the issues non-Aboriginal people identified so that they could work on problems which were directly relevant to their work. These realisations were to influence the direction of the WWAP project. Norman could see the outcome of helping groups to jointly work on solutions to problems. Olga respected his opinion and, even though there were other models for training available (which will be discussed later), Olga was committed to Aboriginal control. This developmental approach, which appeared in the community development literature but nowhere in the cross cultural training literature, was the one to which she turned for the project.

The Training Target: Yvonne's Story

Yvonne, a non-Aboriginal staff member, volunteered for my research project. She has worked for the department for many years as a support worker in field services and attended one of the training programmes held during the first two years of its implementation. She responds to my question concerning her learning in the programme, by telling me of her previous contacts with Aboriginal people.

Oh well, many years ago [my family] used to foster a child, I think it was then Sister Kate's or somewhere. They had this kiddie out for weekends and [me] being a Catholic school kid lots of friends used to go and work on missions, you know, exposure with people who had, you know, worked in the missions, in inverted commas, friends who were priests and nuns, and missionaries. We knew somebody who had worked up at Derby years ago when it was the leprosarium, so [pause] without being aware of the knowledge I had from childhood, the stories from my family who had lived in the country and so on ... my brother who now works in Kununurra with Aboriginals up there, I mean, total acceptance of them, my daughter was nursing up there last year, I know that we have a different slant to a lot of these issues than what a lot of people I work with ... I've had one or two Aboriginal clients, but not many. I
probably mix more with them when we've been camping on a river bed up in the De Grey river or somewhere like that, and I mean they are black, black up there, and chatting to them, and I was very fortunate when my son was in year seven at school, this is going back about twelve years ago, I went on a camp with him and we went to Newman and we went out to Jigalong and, I mean, it was just wonderful, they made damper, it was just great. So I guess I've had exposure, those little things along the way that others [in the training session] hadn't... well my daughter was up at Ombulgarri which has just been evacuated in the floods, I mean, a dry community, black as the ace of spades, got their own culture, all the rest of it, you can't just say that they're anything like the people who live in Lockridge or Medina or somewhere, with all the white man's problems and the, the housing problems and everything else... Polly Farmer and the Barry Cables\textsuperscript{15} and what he is now, and I mean I never knew was Aboriginal and I mean there was people we never even knew was Aboriginal, that they've come out in the limelight, Polly Farmer, and he's been around for yonks, and actually thinking about it, we had Aboriginal kids at school which going back in Floreat Park in the fifties was something, yeah, really something. But I never knew then, I didn't know then, it's only the last five years, fifteen years that I knew that they were Aboriginal, we just thought they were Indian or something like that. Fascinating, isn't it, but they never identified with their culture, it was just they lived there, they went to school, their dad had a business, he was a thriving person...

Yvonne's narrative encapsulates some of the major issues which signalled the need for and potential barriers against a training project such as the WWAP. Claiming a previous knowledge born out of her experience, Yvonne implicitly challenges the necessity for specific training for herself and others like her. She also poses questions about "culture", identity, and by implication who constitutes the "real"

\footnotetext{15}{Barry Cable and Polly Farmer were popular Aboriginal footballers who did not announce their Aboriginality publicly until relatively recently.}
Aboriginal people. These issues will form a major part of the examination of the project in the rest of the study.

**Narrative Reflections – Emergent Themes**

These five people provide separate windows into what was to be the WWAP project. Through their narratives we see the results of political action affecting policy; the determination to effect change born from experience; the insidious nature of discrimination at many levels of organisational life; and the reinforcement of the need for Aboriginal people to be central to decisions made about their affairs.

Olga, Norman and Penny were political actors, albeit at quite different levels, taking action in response to a perceived unfairness of treatment of Aboriginal people. Both Olga and Penny stepped over acceptable organisational boundaries to counter discriminatory behaviour. Olga showed herself to be an astute political player in her use of management and legislative means to achieve her ends. Norman and Penny were to realise the power and value of collective and developmental action through experiencing their benefits. These people realised the inadequate provision of services for Aboriginal people had a direct connection with the policy agenda which did not include Aboriginal people in their development.

At the senior Executive level, Charles realised that the tardiness, or inability of his own department to address the necessary change, meant it was incumbent on him to take responsibility for ensuring that some action was taken, and he did so, by consulting Aboriginal people. He was not alone, as we shall see, but that firm action was needed was demonstrated by the deflection (at senior Executive level) of Olga’s proposal for staff training to a special Aboriginal body rather than considering it as a corporate responsibility. This act illustrates the pervasive nature of acts and beliefs which effectively discounted Aboriginal people. It was evident there was a lack of understanding of these issues, even at the highest levels.
In addition, Olga’s insistence that the project had to have Aboriginal management was a stark warning that this group of Aboriginal people would no longer tolerate their affairs being run without their involvement. The example of the child protection guidelines which precipitated the strike provides a graphic illustration. Three separate policies affecting Aboriginal people were being developed around the same time: the child protection guidelines, child placement principles (on which Olga had been working prior to her gaining the policy officer’s position) and employment policy for Aboriginal staff. None of these activities seem to have involved an integrated approach even though there was at the time an Aboriginal Services Committee comprising members of Executive to co-ordinate Aboriginal matters in the department. The management of Aboriginal affairs was not, evidently, one which the Executive found particularly easy. It is unsurprising Olga should want the training project to go to an Aboriginal controlled agency.

Yvonne’s narrative provides a counterpoint to these positions. It both hints at the resistances to come, and illustrates some of the barriers already affecting the progress of any project designed to disrupt the status quo.

The purpose of enacting a training strategy was twofold. Firstly, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy adopted by the department required a workforce comprising more Aboriginal people (to meet EEO guidelines) and thus encompassed a related expectation of non-Aboriginal staff who were culturally understanding and accepting. Secondly, the training project was intended to provide the department with staff skilled in working with Aboriginal clients to meet access and equity requirements. The project was initiated to fulfil these two requirements. Yet, even before the project started, illustration that senior departmental staff could not be regarded as having a greater awareness of the issues, and thus be able to practice appropriately, has been identified through Charles’ recollections of the tardy nature of policy enactment, and more explicitly through the responses to Olga’s proposal which were subsequently judged to be discriminatory.
Senior departmental staff undoubtedly anticipated work practice modifications as the result of training. As we have seen, though, the enactment of Olga’s purpose was instrumental in moving the project from departmental control to an Aboriginal controlled organisation, to ensure Aboriginal ownership of the process, performance and product. This was a deliberate challenge to ‘whitefella’ control, and was to gain her, and thus the WWAP project, enemies.

The oft-used characterisation of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal to denote two populations, despite Olga’s usage of a generic ‘whitefella’, is eroded when we consider Yvonne’s reflections on what she knows of Aboriginal people. Clearly differentiating between ‘black’ Aboriginal people and urban dwellers, instantly, but un-deliberately, she highlights the complex nature of identity, and who may claim Aboriginality. Olga does not differentiate. She is clear that it is Aboriginal people who should be centred in this project, not distinguishing between who is ‘black’ and who an urban-dweller. Matters of perceived identity, allegiances and belonging start to emerge here.

They are supported in Penny’s account. Twin elements of belonging and connectedness emerge from her experiences, the meetings across ethnic groupings towards an Aboriginal understanding engendered by the strike which are also constitutive of lasting and supportive relationships. There are hints here of the connections across ethnic boundaries and relationships which can form. The disjointed nature of policy is also revealed. The strike occurred because of policy adversely affecting Aboriginal people. But the WCSR and EO legislation had meant that concerted efforts were being made to employ more Aboriginal staff. This gave them a platform from which to speak. So despite the lack of coherence in Aboriginal policy, and possibly in the employment structures too, the policy that led to increased numbers of Aboriginal staff also meant that a collective voice was possible.
Despite this potential, it is hard to escape a sense of conflict running through the stories told so far. The presence of the black-white opposition casts its shadow. The experiences of discrimination of Olga, Penny and Norman bear witness to the possibly intentional but mostly unrecognised acts which place people into opposing positions with no way out which does not involve conflict.

Underlying some of these emergent themes are those which pertain to how people have experienced these events, and what they consider to be important to have people learn. Emotionality, or experiencing events emotionally, and its expression in social interactions are starting to emanate from these initial accounts. Olga, Penny and Norman tell their stories emotionally, evoking feeling responses in their audience.

The Formulation Of The Project

An extensive research, consultation and development activity by the project team\(^\text{16}\) at the CAS resulted in the formulation of the eventual WWAP package, which will be described in detail in the next chapter. The principles on which it was founded reflected Olga's determination that Aboriginal people would be in control of the process and the product. For ten months the only contact departmental representatives had with the product was through a formal reporting mechanism of a steering committee on which sat departmental and CAS representatives and, at Olga's insistence, an external Aboriginal agency representative. This "arm's-length" approach was to have serious consequences for the operations of the WWAP when it did return to the department.

\(^{16}\) The project team will be described later, but for now, it is important to note that this team comprised both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members.
My Connection

The department's distance from the project in its development was not so great as might be indicated by the above. Olga was a member of the Aboriginal Advisory Board to the CAS. Another of the connections was mine. I was seconded from the department to the CAS to work on the project. Selected for my background in training and working with Aboriginal communities, I worked with the project team for the duration of the development of the project, leaving it and the department to take extended leave when the completed materials were handed over to the department for printing. By that time, one programme of training the trainers had been conducted, and two pilot programmes with departmental staff had been run. On my return to the department I was not to have any formal connection to the project until asked, two years later, to commence consultations with a section of the department which had not been specifically targeted in the initial materials, the secure institutions. The initial project had been directed at staff providing direct welfare services to clients. These were distinct from those activities which involved staff responsible for the care of juvenile offenders (most of whom were Aboriginal) in the secure institutions. I was to start the consultation process with a view to adapting the existing WWAP to make it relevant for these staff, as they had requested training. This renewed my interest in the broader topic of cross cultural training and at the end of this period I enrolled in a Masters Prelim course at UWA to examine the WWAP in light of cross cultural training models.

A RESEARCH JOURNEY

For the ten months in 1989 and 1990 during which I worked on the Working with Aboriginal People project I was immersed in its intricacies. It was not until two years later that I was able to think about it with some distance and the choice of my MA Prelim topic was rather, I thought then, peripheral to the intensity we had all

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17 The contract specified that the CAS staff would train departmental staff in the use of the materials (Centre for Aboriginal Studies 1989).

18 Although, as Harding and colleagues point out in a later work, statistics on Aboriginal juvenile offenders is notoriously difficult to obtain with any degree of accuracy (1995).
experienced. It had emerged, while we were putting the design of the WWAP together, that our model seemed somewhat different in a number of ways from those models most talked about in the cross cultural training literature. A suitable MA Prelim study, I believed, would be to verify these perceptions, as well as allowing me to write down at least some of the story of the WWAP project. Encouraged by a colleague in the project, I undertook a comparative ethnographic study in which I conducted interviews with some of the Aboriginal staff who were trainers for the programme. The findings of the study indicated two things. Firstly, the literature review I conducted supported the beliefs of the project team that the programme was sufficiently different from other models in several important aspects to warrant claims that it constituted its own model. The key distinguishing features (to be discussed in greater detail later) related to the design and presentation of material by Aboriginal people from their own ways of knowing; the aim of behaviour change, but not using confrontation and the anti-racist underpinnings; linking the contexts of the larger socio-political understandings of sociology with the behavioural principles of psychology; and the principle of organisational support.

Secondly, and more interesting to me, during my discussions with the Aboriginal trainers, the theme which underpinned their involvement in the project, and their subsequent participation as trainers, was their own growth and development. They named the significant features as relating to their status in the department, in which their acknowledgement of their Aboriginality was a key factor, and their understanding of Aboriginality as constituting important and valuable knowledge (Young 1991). Their development encompassed more than the technical learning of new skills or the personal gaining of insights into their lives. The training was intended as a developmental tool for non-Aboriginal staff members, as one strategy in the improvement of services to Aboriginal clients. That it had, for these five people, primarily other benefits was significant. This prompted me to wonder how other people experienced these events, and how they understood them. What did

19 This is a particular form of training and will be discussed later.
that mean for other structured activities in the department involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and would it be possible to build a model for training, and a way of practice with Aboriginal clients? A set of postgraduate research questions was born.

How might we understand the interactions between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in a human services department by considering closely the Working With Aboriginal People training project?
What might those understandings mean for other locations and other people?
How might we construct ways of practice that help us build productive cross-cultural relationships between service providers and service recipients?

As I was to enter more deeply into this study, I came to realise the importance of Denzin’s admonition that research of the nature I was approaching would inevitably be connected to my own biography (Denzin 1989c). Heeding this warning I asked a research colleague to interview me so that I might identify those aspects of my own story which had influenced my choice of study and method. In addition, I was a participant in the project, and so my experience of the WWAP needed to be recorded. My interview re-stated my history with working in the department as a field officer in the north of the state, my move into training and my work with Aboriginal people. Three key stories were uncovered. My first contact with Aboriginal people was as a staff member of an educational hostel which catered for Aboriginal children whose families lived too far from town for their children to live with them. One sight which will never leave me was that of a five and six year old brother and sister with little English being brought to stay in the hostel by the school principal. I did not see those children speak to anyone in a whole year. The second incident concerned my work as a field worker some years later and my relationship with an Aboriginal staff member. He was employed as a liaison worker, an ill-defined role and one which stretched his capacity and mine as his supervisor. I was a young white woman, and he an older and Elder black man, brought together in the workings of a department desperate to make its way as
(then) a provider of universal community services to a group of people to whom it would be forever "the welfare". We neither of us knew how to act in those circumstances, although there was always good will between us, and he finally left, both of us dissatisfied. The third dimension to my story was my description of a work activity that I did find satisfying and rewarding, the training activity. I was able to describe in detail what it was about this activity that I so enjoyed, seeing and participating in the 'AHA' experiences, the joint learning generated between trainer and trainee. These aspects of my biography explained to me why I had participated in the WWAP project and what I had taken away from it. These experiences had shaped much of my working life. My task, now, for the research journey was to set these temporarily aside having identified them and recognised their influences. I should not expect to see these same aspects in others' stories and lives, but their presence could also assist me to recognise the aspects in others' stories which had been meaningful for them. I was ready to start to hear the stories of others.

The Study Problem

The study problem, as distinct from the departmental problem the training sought to address, concerns the desire to illuminate a process designed to attend to the department's problem. The problems fold back into each other. What can an examination of the WWAP project, which was designed to help non-Aboriginal workers provide services in more culturally appropriate ways, show practitioner-researchers about how non-Aboriginal workers can work in more culturally appropriate ways with Aboriginal people? These circular forms of investigation needed unpacking in order to design a research study which would help in an understanding of the WWAP and its implementation.

The research problem suggested by my previous study, and one which I wanted to examine further, concerned the experiences of the people who had been touched by, engaged in and central to the operations of the WWAP. Why? Because I believed
these experiences would thickly illuminate a way of constructing and enacting a process for assisting non-Aboriginal workers to work out ways of and designs for providing services to their Aboriginal clients. In short, these people’s narratives of their experiences of the WWAP might help human services personnel construct and implement training which will serve better the needs of Aboriginal clients. My research question then became:

What can an examination of the WWAP project show about how non-Aboriginal workers can work in more culturally appropriate and effective ways with Aboriginal people?

Three assumptions underpin this question. One suggests that the way non-Aboriginal people are currently working with Aboriginal clients can be improved. That is, current practices are not fully meeting cultural sensitivities. Secondly, the problem to be solved is a matter for non-Aboriginal not Aboriginal people. Thirdly, the process of learning is assumed to be possible; that is, there is not something inherent in either party which will obstruct the process. These assumptions underpin the training project itself, with its emphasis on learning new behaviours through exposure to information and a willingness to interrogate one’s own biases and often unquestioned behaviour patterns.

Focusing on the experiences of people to investigate these matters led me to my choice of inquiry process.

The Study Process

My accompanying inquiry question gave rise to ensuing problems. How can we understand the lived experience of others? What are the mechanisms by which we can ask the questions and hear the answers, so that we might see how the experience was for another person in ways which capture the meaning s/he has put
on it? A researcher who sets out to understand these experiences of other people has several options within an interpretive framework.

**Methodological Orientation**

‘There are two ways of walking through the woods.’ (Eco 1994, p. 27)

Eco’s binary choice suggests ‘try[ing] one or several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible, say, or to reach the house of grandmother, Tom Thumb, or Hansel and Gretel)’ or using the walk as a journey of discovery, asking questions, and posing wonderings along the way. In the first case, says Eco, it is probably enough to complete the walk, or read the book only once (or for researchers to follow a well and prior determined process) in order to reach a goal. In the second, multiple readings and musings are necessary, and enjoyably so, for on each walk or reading are to be found, discovered, learnt and experienced many new insights and ways of viewing the world (or experience). The research journey, so conceived, suggests that there are competing perspectives underpinning the process of inquiry. I will first offer a discussion of my methodological perspective (in which I infer an epistemological positioning), after which I will present the strategies and techniques I use.

My approach to this study follows the second of Eco’s suggestions of walking through the woods. I have had to retrace my steps many times, and look at events and people and actions in many ways to emerge at an understanding of what the Working with Aboriginal People project signifies. The signposts and walking sticks on these many journeys have been some of the more standard methodological aids in social science, and all contribute in some way to the end point.
The tension produced by seeking to understand without also seeking to prove\textsuperscript{20} is reflected in the many questions I found when introducing this study to people in the department from whom I needed permission to conduct interviews. The immediate response was 'Oh an evaluation'. While indeed a value would be placed on participation it would be done by those people for whom the process had provided an experience which they found useful or not, not objectively by me. I, too, had my own value. In terms of an evaluation, such as is usual for organisations wishing to assess programmes, this study was not to be of that kind. Answers to such questions as, 'Did the training work?' ‘Was the training effective?’ and ‘How many people improved their work behaviour as a result of the training?’ need to be left for another piece of research and another researcher. This research seeks to provide a rich and in-depth, otherwise termed ‘thick’ (Geertz 1973), description of the development and implementation of a training programme so that service providers and organisational managers might be able to consider ways of working with Aboriginal people which will be productive and rewarding.

It is apparent from the above, that this is not to be a realist or objective piece of work (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Crotty 1998). Constructed from the accounts of people involved in the process it already attains an epistemological positioning which acknowledges the nature of making not finding meaning amongst the experiences of the study participants. I also acknowledge the close involvement of the researcher as instrument (as well as project participant, and current participant observer); the dependence for understanding on the context; the lack of causal claims; and the recognition of a value based study. As is appropriate, constructions emerge from the data (Schwandt 1994).\textsuperscript{21}

In this research I employ an interpretive ethnographic process (Denzin 1997). Elevating ethnography to a theoretical perspective may be extending its influence

\textsuperscript{20} Which is admirably answered by Ricoeur in his work on explanation and understanding, as part of the hermeneutic process. (1976)

\textsuperscript{21} Although see Crotty for a critique, and a discussion of the different uses of constructionism and constructivism. (1998)
somewhat (contrary to Crotty (1998) for whom ethnography is a strategy not a theoretical position). However, Denzin’s (1997) formulation of ethnography which carries a moral imperative suggests more than a strategic activity. Hence my choice of interpretive ethnography includes both theoretical position and strategy for investigation.

An accompanying perspective which informs my analysis is drawn from critical hermeneutics (Bleicher 1980). I apply this to narrated lived experience as provided by people specifically connected with the development and implementation of the WWAP training programme during the years 1989 to 1996 in the DCS/FCS. I, too, participated in this project, so I occupy joint roles of researcher/participant, which allows me in parts of this thesis to provide an auto-ethnographic representation (Ellis 1995).

**Research Strategies**

Having perhaps myself committed the methodological sin implied by Crotty’s (1998) formulation of ethnography as strategy, I here describe the research strategies which include my selection of sample, the data forms, their collection and analysis.

**Selecting And Engaging The Study Participants**

As I wished to allow for the maximum variation possible, sampling procedures such as snowballing, which help to generate the study population, and purposeful selection of typical, extreme, critical cases or those which are otherwise information rich (Patton 1990) formed the basis of my sampling process. Thus my starting points were people whose roles I knew had a connection to the project.

Potential groupings emerged from my previous MA Prelim work: members of the project team at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies; management and Executive
personnel in the department, the Aboriginal trainers; and people who had undertaken the training as non-Aboriginal staff members of the department, the trainees. In addition, the WWAP project identified four target groups for the training programmes: clerical/reception staff, field staff, managers and Executive. The group which is noticeably absent represents the Aboriginal client, a matter I shall discuss later.

These group boundaries overlapped, with people often having multiple positionings. For example, one Aboriginal trainer was also a front-counter staff member. Several of the Aboriginal trainers also worked with the project team in its development phase before becoming trainers. All Executive members attended a training programme and so qualified as trainees at the same time as they had Executive responsibility for decision making and policy setting for the overall programme. I interviewed a woman as a trainee, and she revealed her participation in a Train the Trainer programme specifically for Aboriginal people (even though she was not Aboriginal), and was at the time of the interview responsible for the management of the project. Roles, then, were fluid in the study as they were in the organisation, and the perspectives offered came from different facets of a person’s experience, adding richness to the accounts. Implications for analysis were thus raised, but cross-referencing added complexity and richness and the categorisation became an initial tool, rather than a determining factor. There was at least one person from each of the four target groups (which itself raises questions about representation).

The Selection Process

I purposefully selected an information-rich sample formed of those people I knew (from my experience) to have had immediate contact with the project, and then adapted the stratified purposeful sampling process by using opportunistic and snowballing techniques. A total of seventeen people resulted from this process.
The group of trainees lent itself to a more standard random process for selection. I used departmental records of people who had attended programmes during the first three years, and who did not fill any other roles as described above (to my knowledge at the time). A mailed invitation sent to people in this category who could still be located, that is, they still worked for the department, resulted in nine respondents.

Negotiations with all respondents covered their permission, processes for checking and verifying interview material, procedures for their further involvement (eight of these participated in more than one interview) and protection of their identities and information. As already mentioned, all names in the study are pseudonyms, and any singularly identifying information has been omitted to provide anonymity.

Although these categories were not equally represented, relevance, impact and significance are not signified by number or prolonged interaction. Lincoln and Guba's suggestion of a qualitative informational isomorph (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 233, italics in original), where sampling proceeds until the point of redundancy is reached, needs to be followed with some care. A narrative process is likely to by-pass bounds which may be thought to provide redundancy as each person's experience is like no other. This is shown by Sartre whose characterisation of the universal singular dimension to understanding (Sartre 1981) and regressive/progressive method (Sartre 1963) might add to Lincoln and Guba's redundant point allowing an assessment of how well the personal narratives collected contribute to an understanding of the whole. Trusting Sartre's universal-singular concept, I selected information-rich cases, and the fourth group was invited to self-select.

**Study Participants**

Invitations to potential information-rich sources resulted in seventeen responses. These included people who had immediate responsibility for the decisions made in
and for the project. All the people I contacted from the management, trainer and project groups, save one, agreed to participate.

Twenty-five people participated as individual interviewees, and an extra person who participated in one of the two group interviews. As mentioned above, one of the difficulties of categorising people was that most of them (save the trainees) occupied one or more roles. Between them, they were able to cover the four categories in the following ways: there were ten Aboriginal trainers, of whom four also participated in the project team and two were part of the management structure; six people represented the project team, of whom two only had project team responsibilities; there were nine people from management, of whom two were, as already mentioned, Aboriginal trainers, and, in addition, four others were also participants in training programmes in their own right; and there were thirteen participants or trainees in programmes. Nine of these latter occupied this role solely. Of the twenty-six, eleven were men, and of these four occupied senior Executive positions. No Executive position, at the time of the investigation, was occupied by either a woman or an Aboriginal person, although the management group comprised people from different levels within the organisation. Fourteen of the twenty-six people had long histories with the department, having worked in their present or similar roles for some years. Nine people joined the department around the time of the development or implementation of the project, and only three of the twenty-six had never worked for the department. Of the thirteen trainees, three were clerical workers, three held field positions, three were from Executive, and four held administrative or managerial positions.

I knew sixteen of the participants personally as either co-workers in the department prior to or during my involvement in the project. With some of them I had formed close relationships. That this might have implications for potential bias in responses (people saying what they thought I might have wanted to hear, or not hear) is a matter I discuss later.
Collecting Empirical Materials

Interviews formed the major data collection method. However, I had participated in this project for over five years as a member of the project, where I was known and acknowledged by most of the intended study participants. I was not going to be able to remove myself from the project in their minds, even had I wanted to. Thus my own participation provided a major source of data. In addition, I used original departmental and project documentation.

My Observation As Participant

In my role as a member of the project team, I took part in the research and consultation phases, the development of the materials, the training activities which comprised the training of the trainers and the piloting of the programmes. Later, I was engaged to start a consultation and development phase for a similar set of materials for staff in juvenile institutions. Thus my contact with and knowledge of the operations of the project were first hand over a period of five years from 1989 to 1994, when I started this study. The approach taken for the development of the project followed the processes used for action research (Stringer 1996) with the application of the 'look, think, act' cycle to our work. For these processes, and possibly because of my previous social work and anthropological background, I kept journals and extensive notes. The mode which perhaps best captures this type of participant observation is that which Clandinin and Connelly call the Personal Experience Method (1994, p. 413). The work previously recorded of the experience becomes a field text, which stands in relationship to the participants and is shaped epistemologically by this relationship. Hence my being drawn into the discussions (or not) by the participants then enabled my own personal experience to be used (or not) as part of the interpretive process (Clandinin and Connelly 1994, p. 419). Further interrogation of my lived and written texts to unfold hermeneutic understandings (Ricoeur 1981; Gadamer 1994) add to the analytic texture. In addition I have participated as a support worker in many training programmes

22 Denzin uses this term to describe research data. (1989a)
which allows me my own experiential knowing of the form and substance of how they are enacted.

**Interviews**

Twenty-six people participated in a total of 40 individual and two group interviews. Individual interview lengths varied from forty-five minutes to two hours.

I conducted un-structured interviews with procedures drawn from Spradley (1979), Minichiello (1995) and Mishler (1986). The main drawbacks will be discussed later in the limitations section.

Nine of the respondents participated in more than one interview, three people engaging in an ongoing discussion process. Most commonly, respondents considered the initial interview covered what they wanted to say. Those people who engaged in the process following that initial interview either wished to comment further or reflect on the initial interview. In the three cases of multiple interviews, respondents had specific stories they wished to tell. This supports Hammersley & Atkinson’s contention that all interviews are structured to some extent by interviewer and researcher, for the researcher has something s/he wants to know and the respondent has something s/he wants to say (1983, p. 113).

Most of the interviews took place at the participants’ work sites. As the training programmes were designed to address work place behaviour, and the study is asking questions about how staff have responded to those programmes, amongst other related issues, this would seem to be appropriate, or at least not out of place. Evidently people saw this study as connected to their work and conceptualised it within their own work practice. It was a place, for most of them, where they felt...

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23 A matrix formed of the nine dimensions and the four domains used by Spradley allows a comprehensive framework to enable an in-depth and broad coverage of the subject or topic, and is intended to allow the respondent to cover the territory he or she wishes.

24 Minichiello’s frameworks are not so schematic, but include aspects such as structure- how informants arrange their knowledge, contrast, knowledge, sensory, original/primary, secondary/probing, opinion, devil’s advocate, hypothetical, posing the ideal, nudging probe, reflective probe, or mirror or summary question (1995, p.121) passim.
comfortable, their offices, or other work areas, but this, too, would shape their responses. Several of the multiple interviews were conducted in my work location. While the interviewees seemingly responded within a range of my expectations, again, I did not explore what effect my, or their, space had on them. Indeed, commentators warn against the tendency to consider the interview setting as a usual part of the respondents' worlds in which the researcher is a participant (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p119). These are more accurately to be represented as locations in which the reflexive activity may occur, and thus the interview is less part of the observational process, but more of the reflective meaning making process which is conducted jointly with researcher and respondent.

I audio taped all individual interviews, transcribed them, and then returned the interview transcript to the participant for further discussion, the transcript forming the basis for recollecting, re interpreting and elucidation of themes. All participants were voluntary and continued co-operation depended on their interest.

The two group interviews included six of the Aboriginal trainers, all but one contributing individual interviews in my study, and had additional purposes. Individual discussion with the interviewees suggested that they would value the opportunity to reflect on the project. This was accommodated in the group meeting which was attended, with their consent, by another of the Aboriginal trainers. Another purpose was to discuss how the WOW package (which developed as a general package from WWAP) should be revised. These sessions were taped, but not transcribed. Notes were made of the sessions and used as the basis for further discussion and verification with the participants. These sessions were each one and a half hours long.

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25 Ways of Working, operating from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies.
Documents

These are primary sources chronicling the project and its process. They are contained in Departmental and Centre for Aboriginal Studies archives, as well as in my own collection from my involvement with the project. Included are policy statements, meeting minutes, discussion papers, Executive briefings, reviews, memoranda, lists of personnel and training activities, and file notes. A major collection refers to the consultation and development phase of the project and this includes questionnaire responses, lists of consultations by location and person, outlines, plans for and evaluations of the pilot training programmes, as well as my field notes and other personal communications relating to the project.

Analytic Process

The analytical process starts from the moment of deciding how the study is to proceed (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Ely, Anzul et al. 1991). The decisions about location, sample, and questioning all require justification of the choices made. The gradual building of and interrogating frameworks for application to events, activities and interactions provide an ongoing analytical journey. The meaning made from paths which are straight and direct, crooked, wide and open, or hopelessly tangled and impassable, in part emerges from the epistemological foundations, as well as the analytical process used. In this study, constructions must inevitably be partial, incomplete and changeable.

Both during the fieldwork and after, themes gradually emerge. Patterns and priorities impose themselves upon the ethnographer. Voices and ideas are neither muffled nor dismissed. To the professional positivist this seems like chaos. The voices and the material lead the researcher in unpredictable, uncontrollable directions. (Okely 1994, p. 20).
The twin attributes referred to here of analysis which starts with the data collection, and the inherent unpredictability of the qualitative and naturalistic research process are well supported in the literature (Bryman and Burgess 1994). In such an approach, analysis is the creative act (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991), making what is seen into what is understood. The empirical materials suggested themes, told often in narrative form which revealed major meaning making events, or epiphanies (Denzin 1989c). These provided the framework for my analysis.

**Narratives And Epiphanies**

People tended to use narrative, either by recounting experiences chronologically or through emplotment (Ricoeur 1986). Often a major turning point provided the pivot from which other accounts emerged, such as Penny told earlier in this chapter of the strike. Other types of epiphany, such as the cumulative, provided the structure on which people rested their accounts, such as Olga’s examinations of discrimination in the department. These analytic devices of narrative, emplotment and epiphany, I believe, merge a Ricoeurian model (of narrative) neatly with Denzin’s own processes of epiphany, to provide an interpretive métier.

**Themetising**

Commonly categories are defined into which developing and emerging answers are put (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991, p. 87); problem focused approaches encourage analytic induction by examining cases relevant to the problem (Bryman and Burgess 1994, p. 4); grounded theory provides conceptualising frameworks of constant comparison, and theoretical questioning and sampling to generate theory (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p. 280); and other forms of coding are employed (Richards and Richards 1994). Although I chose not to use grounded theory as a research method, because of the possible restraints imposed by its strict categorising (Stern 1994), and the suspicion that it would not allow the ‘muted’ voices to emerge

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26 See Denzin (1989c, p. 129) for the four types.
(Ingamells 1996, p. 154), I nevertheless chose the NUDIST computer programme as a data storage and retrieval system, but not as a theorising process (Richards and Richards 1994).

Instead, the coding allowed me to identify and work with themes. So, for example, a manager’s (Desmond) narrative was long and detailed, but provided themes which readily related to matters other people were offering as part of their narratives. I inserted other narrative voices and in the final telling, the text which started life as Desmond's story became a dialogue between four project participants, the narrator and the reader.

This action brings with it dangers, especially in the form of partial and thence un-contexted quotes. Attempts to situate and thickly describe the contexts and situations are thus necessary to provide what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as transferability.

The narrative form permits stories belonging to one participant to set the scene or the plot to unfold (Ricoeur 1986) for others. The narratives especially lent themselves to a metaphoric analysis. Ricoeur’s belief in new understanding arising as a result of investigating metaphor led me to consider the powerful metaphors used throughout people’s tellings of their experiences. Emergent metaphors from the stories such as Penny’s and Norman’s (with others) recount of their anger and resistance provide pointers for other such identification of resistance, and led to the framing of chapters five and six.

Criteria For Establishing Rigour

A research activity which relies on an emergent process shaped by the research participants necessarily requires measures to satisfy its audience (which also incorporates the participants) that its results were obtained rigorously. The standard scientific procedures for doing so are not appropriate. Instead, Lincoln
and Guba suggest the following alternatives (1985). Trustworthiness and credibility replace objectivity, reliability, validity and generalisability. A research study may satisfy these requirements if it can show prolonged engagement, use of multiple data sources (triangulation), member checking, peer debriefing, transferability to other contexts, and an audit trail of description. I am mindful also of Lather's 'checklist' against which to note transgressions against what West might have called epistemic foundationalism, which I hope to show throughout the thesis (Lather 1993, p. 686).

The length of connection with the project, the use of participant observation, interviews and documentary evidence and returning the transcripts to participants satisfy these first three requirements. An audit trail may be found through this study in which I identify and record the processes I used, and transferability to other contexts may be made through the understandings I show concerning cross cultural training processes. The predominant criteria I wish to discuss concerns peer debriefing, for its salience to this research project, and the reference group.

Peer Debriefing – A Collegial Inquiry Group

The importance of establishing trustworthiness and credibility in research of such a hermeneutic nature, quite aside from the difficulties in establishing the seriousness (Chase 1995) of interpretive qualitative research is well known. (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991; Lather 1993)

Peer debriefing assists in addressing the contradictory and potentially dissonant existence of performing research characterised in its fieldwork phases by connectedness to people and their experiences, and by isolation and separation of data from their sources in the analysis and particularly writing phases. The peer debriefing process employed here was a collegial inquiry group formed at the

27 Although see Flick (1992) for a critique of this type of triangulation.
commencement of research for its members and has retained its core for several years. The group meets regularly for extended periods in a forest setting, which has just recently adopted the description of being a “Discovery” centre – a tourist attraction for PR purposes, but most apt for ours. The act of debriefing has been but one component of the experience, with the group providing critical review as well as discussions which lead to analytical insights, planning processes, and solving problems. A recent development has been the group reading a draft of this thesis and providing critical comment, which we agree signals a new phase in research collegiality. These co-operative activities remind of the interconnectedness of all facets of the researcher's life (Smith 1992). Artificially separating place, space and identity (a requirement exacted from the more traditional researcher) serves to distance researcher from the research activity.

This collegial practice is an integral part of my particular research study, and is acknowledged for the advances it permitted in my thinking, the challenges it presented to my assumptions and for the contributions it made to the relationship of the ‘knower to the known’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 37). The contributions of this group occupy a central place in the thesis journey, planning, data collection, analysis and writing. They have provided the necessary challenge, critique and insightful comments which have impacted on this study. Extensions of this activity merged the more formal seminar performances which are another method of maintaining a credible and transparent research procedure.

The Reference Group

As this is a research project involving Aboriginal people, it was incumbent on me to ensure that my research processes and practices met with the approval of Aboriginal people. The issue of which Aboriginal people is always likely to be contentious (see Chapter Five for a full discussion of related matters). This project rightly involves Aboriginal people. I have a reference group comprising Aboriginal people who have a working knowledge of the WWAP programme,
although its membership has changed slightly over the years of this study. In addition, one of my research supervisors is a senior Aboriginal manager at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies.

**Attention To The Limitations**

The inevitable limitations when engaging in this type of research across cultural groups and with processes which seek to aid understanding of matters little understood relate to: competing cultural paradigms and other interests; the roles of participant, observer and researcher and their relative relationships; the interviewing/questioning process; hermeneutics and the lay interpreter; and the inevitable partial nature of the process.

**Whose Cultural Paradigm?**

Representation of one cultural group by a member of another, such as Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people, particularly by a researcher who amasses power in this role, is problematic (Thompson 1990; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Lincoln and Denzin 1994; Smith 1999). Further, the method of analysis draws from a particularly Western form of understanding, which is a contradiction when working in a cross cultural setting. My perceptions are formed from within that tradition, and others reading this work, and should they have access to the data, may come to quite different conclusions. My attempts to overcome this have been to engage in the member checking process, and to ensure the reference group oversaw the project.

**Responsibilities To Whom?**

Denzin’s moral imperative (1997) reflects the growing concern that not only should research privilege the interests of the researched, it should go further than “doing no harm” and engage in an emancipatory practice. There are always likely to be competing interests. I found during this research that some respondents were concerned whether the department had a right of veto over the information
provided for the research. This was raised in another way when I contacted a senior staff member as a courtesy measure to request approaching his staff (I had already received formal departmental approval). He requested that I inform him of any adverse findings prior to writing my “report”. We discussed this through an interview and while I explained it was not to be a report, nor did it have the potential for ‘adverse findings’ (his words) in the evaluative sense, I am not sure, still, that this was understood. But it did remind me of the potential for competing interests, and that inclusion in a process is not necessarily acceding to the powerful, but more likely to be able to defuse concerns. It will be seen later that engaging the interests of all people concerned was not done with the project, with damaging consequences.

Another example involved one of the Aboriginal trainers, who was hesitant in our next meeting. I asked him about his concerns. He was afraid that I’d ‘do a Daisy Bates’ (a previous worker with Aboriginal people) on Aboriginal people; that is, exploit the relationship for my own and not their gain, he said. He and I were able to settle his concerns and we have since had many productive interactions both within and outside the study. I have not had any requests to withdraw from any of the participants.

**Participant, Observer And Researcher Roles**

The paradoxical position of ‘tacking between the “inside” and “outside” of events’ (Clifford 1988, p. 34) as a participant and observer and then writing objective records of a culture is now well known as the postmodern critique of ethnographic representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986). Becoming submerged in the events does not necessarily de-centre the participant-observer or researcher. ‘Simultaneous generation and grounding of interpretations’ (Denzin 1989a, p. 158) and the development of a ‘shift of attention’ (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991, p. 44) allows observers to see the events as those who are participating in them construct them, but does not necessarily remove him/her from position of subject
and object, near and distant, and importantly, the final author-ity (Geertz 1988).
Clifford’s solution is the use of a hermeneutic ‘dialectic of experience and
interpretation’ (Clifford 1988, p. 34). This in itself brings dangers, which are
connected to the means of representation which is almost always written,28 and the
further distancing of the author who removes her/himself from the scene when the
“participant” activity of the “observation” is over. Representation becomes textual
and textualised (Clifford 1988, p. 38) referring to Geertz’ adaptation of Ricoeur’s
text theory of the text. Textualising action, as Ricoeur suggests (1971), adds to the
possibilities of interpretation, and avoids the tendency of reducing interpretation to
written texts, an outcome of some critical and cultural studies (Stringer 1999).
Taking Ricoeur’s stance, observation and its participation thus can be construed as
text to be interpreted hermeneutically. (For a full discussion see Appendix 2).

Wolcott (as cited in (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991, p. 44)) proposes that the researcher
clarify the type of observational and participatory role undertaken, a transparent
act, but nevertheless one which need not necessarily overcome the problems.
Auto-ethnography and other representations of the self are ways of managing the
tensions produced in the varied roles one plays during the process (Richardson
1992; Ellis 1997).

While I occupy a participant and observer position, the material drawn from that
position is checked by the study members and the reference group, as are their
interview transcripts (by individual members) for authenticity. I have obtained
permissions from the department and the CAS to conduct the research, and consent
forms from the participants. At all times I have been careful to declare my role.

My status as a past participant in the project raises other problems which I also
discuss under the next heading. I have only used material from my participation at
that time with corroboration. This, however, does not overcome the matter of

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28 The performative processes Denzin recounts try to move from this fixity in written form. (1997)
representation (mentioned above) nor my choice of informants as information rich sources as representing my own position.

**Representation Of Data**

The extensive use of people's narratives from transcripts presents problems of representation. Some writers insist that dialogue be represented exactly (Riessman 1993). It is apparent from other writings that this stricture is not universally followed (Van Maanen 1988; Wiersma 1992; Blumenfeld-Jones 1995; Foley 1998). I have chosen to edit non-verbal utterances, and also occasionally insert words in square brackets to assist in understanding. I draw on my presence in the interview and the whole transcript to justify this act. Also present are dot sequences to denote missing dialogue. I also acknowledge that dialogue is positioned according to the topic under discussion, and not always according to its chronological order. I have attempted to remain as truthful to its meaning as I have perceived it. Member checking of the meaning of the representations has been another strategy to ensure I have not misrepresented data. Finally, evocative text is pursued rather than representative text (Tyler 1986).

**Interviewing And Questioning**

The problems of interviewing are micro problems of the process of participant observation. Interviews in naturalistic inquiry are variously likened to conversation (Denzin 1989a, p.109; Ely, Anzul et al. 1991, p. 58; Kvale 1996, p. 19), discourse (Mishler 1986, p. 6), speech events (Spradley 1979, p. 55), observational encounters (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 118; Denzin 1989a, p. 112) and so are considered to be relational, reflexive (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 113) contextual, living (Minichiello, Aroni et al. 1995). As such they have all the attendant problems of interpretation and representation.

Using such frameworks as offered by Spradley (1979) to prompt the interview can both guide and constrain the interviewer, and, consequently, the interaction
between interviewer and respondent. Formulating a series of starting questions from the above available frameworks, my schema was to start deliberately neutral. ‘I'm interested in what the experiences of people who have been involved in the project have been. You were involved. Can you tell me of that experience?’

An example of constraint is an early interview which was the second with a member of the project team, who had spent the previous five years working at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies following the project. Her experiences had been variously rewarding, epiphanic, positive, joyous, and devastating. As I started to hear her pain relived, my inexpert research questioning programming swung into gear. I asked a structural question. Part of the difficulty, I believe, on reflection of this, was my separation in my own mind between social work and ethnographic interviews. Had I allowed myself to hear her pain, and her way of telling it, the ethnographic revealing may have been less fractured, and closer to how she wanted to tell her story. I was to find that people had stories they wanted to tell, and they told them despite any blockages I might have put in the way, which supports a narrative hermeneutic process (Denzin 1984; Kemp 1985; Ricoeur 1986; Moore 1990; Widdershoven 1993).

My next interviews used these considerations rather than assumptions as to the specific information I hoped to find. The interviews to surprise me most were those from which I had expected to gain only “technical” information. I expected Julia, as a member of the administrative section in the department responsible for the training implementation, to provide some times and places, and numbers of programmes. Instead she provided an in-depth study of the emotionality of the programme, insights into the shifting and reconstituting boundaries people found difficulty in crossing, and understandings about personal gains. I expected Teresa, as an Aboriginal staff member also with some responsibility in administration, who did little training as a trainer, to provide more information about who participated,

29 There is considerable literature which clearly denotes the similarities. (Curtis 1990, illustrate a few; Stenson 1993; Grossen and Apotheloz 1996; Sands 1996).
and what difficulties there might have been in the management of organising Aboriginal trainers to facilitate the training programmes. In addition to these, Teresa provided an in-depth study of identity as it is constructed and reconstructed in response to the ongoing events of the programme. There were other people who surprised me. There were none who did not provide rich and meaningful data.

It is never possible to "get ourselves out" of the frame, absolutely, as questioners, but a worthy task is to minimise the extent of our intrusion. My early involvement in the project posed potential problems of questioning. Some respondents included me in their reflections, often asking me to verify their recollections, or asking me to prompt their memories. Neutral questions had no effect here. I also found myself hearing statements which differed from my recollections, such matters as times and places, and even events. The decision whether or not to investigate these disparities related more to the relative importance I judged they indicated and the atmosphere of the interview. My way of dealing with the perceived inaccuracies, or different views of reality, was to record them in my field notes for use in my analysis, or as points for reflection with the study participant later. These judgements reinforce the inseparability of the researcher from the researched in naturalistic processes, in which the researcher is both research instrument and integrally connected to what is ‘known’ and ‘discovered’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985). De-centring myself from the focus proved to be impossible, but an attempt was made to make as neutral as possible within those confines the positioning of the researcher.

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30 A conference paper presented to the International Qualitative Research Conference. (Stringer and Young 1995)
Research Participants And The Hermeneutic Process

Encouraging a joint hermeneutic activity with participants as the research unfolds should not be a surprising suggestion, although it has not traditionally lent itself to the participants explicitly making their own meaning and then reflecting on it through the research process. Rather it has been the habit of the researcher to make meaning for the participant. Feminist research processes have encouraged us to consider the inclusion of the “researched” as full participants in the process and meaning making of the inquiry (Weedon 1987; Smith 1992). Engaging jointly in interpretation, however, requires time, understanding and willingness on the part of the participant to explore his or her world with, sometimes, a stranger. This activity is not at all new to social workers, or action or collaborative researchers. The problem still remains, though, of whose interpretation, and whose meaning. The standpoint and the relative power, interests and statuses often results in whatever meaning is made, especially in a research thesis, is that of the researcher. (Stacey 1988; Lather 1991; Lather 1993; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993).

Interviewees clearly did make their own meaning in this study, coming to their own understandings of what their involvement in this project signified. I will relate the full story of one trainee, Vera, later. We had two interviews, during the first she reported that she thought the training to have been conflictual and dissatisfying. By our subsequent interview, Vera had derived meanings from her reflections, relating to her uncovering Aboriginal heritage. Six months after the second interview, Vera rang me to say that she was now feeling the most settled in herself that she ever had, she was moving to the country and looking forward to a life in which she was embracing and at ease with her ancestry. She attributed her current position to the ability to reflect during those interviews.

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31 Giddens’ double hermeneutic of ‘lay actors’ making their own meaning relates here (Blaikie 1993).
Another interviewee, Teresa, participated in a community presentation during the Bringing Them Home\textsuperscript{32} feedback sessions. Afterwards, she told me how much her reflections on her experiences of the WWAP during our interviews, in which she stated that this was the first time she had done so since the events of which she spoke, had helped her in this emotional process.

\textit{Incomplete Data}

There will always be questions concerning how much is enough to illuminate an issue, and how much is yet to be revealed. Not everything may be shown, and what is, is likely to be partial, changing and incomplete. My choices of study participants could well have been different and thus revealed different matters. There were people, especially the Aboriginal trainers, for whom the process was not a rewarding one, as I was to discover through talking to other Aboriginal trainers. Perhaps these people might have provided a different picture of damage rather than gain. Or would they? Perhaps they would have revealed that their involvement was of no consequence to them as they had forgotten it. I don’t know. I only know the perceptions of others whose interpretations are theirs – they don’t “know” either.

\textit{Aboriginal Clients}

A major limitation could well have been the lack of any Aboriginal clients of the department. Had this study been an evaluation, this indeed would have been a damning criticism. Inclusion of clients to report on their experiences following the service providers being trained is part of a study which could follow this.

\textsuperscript{32} These occurred following the tabling of the report of the Inquiry subsequently referred to as the Stolen Generations inquiry (Wilson 1997).
Researcher Bias

The strategies recommended by Guba and Lincoln to attend to the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research also apply to the potential for accusations of researcher bias in selection of empirical materials and their interpretation. Auto-ethnographies (Ellis 1995) and feminist research are among the two research forms which defend subjectivity (Lather 1991). I take heart that I am in good company.

Methodological Implications

Ethnography has a contemporary crisis of representation and legitimacy (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rabinow 1986; Tyler 1986; Clifford 1988; Sangren 1988; Hammersley 1990; Pool 1991; Clough 1992; Johannsen 1992; Aunger 1995; Bochner and Ellis 1996; Denzin 1997). Research such as this has also the potential for exploitation. Smith (1999) sums up an ethical project for research with Indigenous people by providing a set of guidelines to be observed by researchers. These include practices common among indigenous groups, but which are worthwhile incorporating into all research practice. Respect, generosity, face to face interactions, caution, (Smith 1999, p. 120) are to be practised alongside other critical requirements which question the role, purpose and framing of the research (p. 173). In other words, an ethical research practice, as Denzin proposes (1997) must ask for whom the research is being carried out. It is clear that this research is to contribute towards my doctorate. It has other purposes, which shall be guided by the research participants, and especially the reference group. Pursuing practices to advance cross cultural understanding has been its main aim.

PROJECT TO PROGRAMME: THE NEXT STEPS

This contextual chapter has introduced the WWAP project. It has also introduced the study, its processes and discussed how some of the methodological problems have been addressed. I review here the main themes.
The WWAP training was initiated from different motivations and locations, but within an identifiable context. This comprised a political and social environment in which departmental policy makers were required to meet the legislative requirements of the Equal Opportunity Act to increase access, equity and participation for marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

The five narratives used here to introduce the project provide a narrative construction of people’s lived experience. Tales incorporating the impressions, the confessions (Van Maanen 1988), and the standpoints (Clough 1992; Smith 1992) weave through their poetic (Rose 1993) tellings. Contrary to the more usual synchronic manner of providing a research report, the diachronic (Polkinghorne 1997) account makes for a messy text, the fixity of the “snap-shot” synchronic telling only capturing one of many possible views. The reiterations reflect the research effort making the present written form one of many interwoven threads which are not distinct in themselves, but depend on the others for the shape, pattern, texture and tone.

The introductory accounts separately described the training. Olga considered it a necessary forerunner to any disciplinary remonstrance should workers fail to treat clients with cultural respect, while Charles believed it should assist in the construction of a welcoming climate for the intended increase in the numbers of Aboriginal people employed by the department. Penny described the training as being necessary to progress understanding based on an acceptance of different experiences. Norman sought self-determining change for Aboriginal people out of a dependency creating environment. Finally, in this introduction, our single initial representative from non-Aboriginal trainees, Yvonne, considered the training to be somewhat out of place in today’s world for several reasons, not least of which was her questioning of the constitution of “Aboriginal” identity and its meaning in our contemporary society. These five preliminary chronicles give an entrée to the broad dimensions which form the framework for telling the story of the training project.
Chapter Two continues the context-setting and provides a detailed description of the training programme. This explains its purposes and provides an in-depth description of a typical programme.
CHAPTER TWO: THE WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TRAINING PROGRAMME

In the previous chapter I described how a training strategy was articulated within a larger Aboriginal Employment Policy to meet the different yet complementary needs of a human services organisation and Aboriginal people. This chapter provides a description of the eventual "package", and outlines the processes used in its development.

I follow this with a composite description of a training programme. This is constructed from my own participant observation of such programmes, the training package as an ethnographic artefact, and details of particular instances provided by the study participants during our interview discussions. These have been merged to provide an account of a programme as it might typically be expected to run over a three day period.

As a final section, I offer a view of cross cultural training literature and relate it to the model described here.

THE CULTURAL SENSITISATION TRAINING STRATEGY - WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The Working With Aboriginal People (WWAP) training programme kit comprises a set of materials to be used by trainers to design and present workshops or training programmes. It contains information, such as books, videos, and readings; suggested programme designs; processes for the training activity; and an outline of

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33 Almost instantly on its development the set of materials and the processes used for its implementation were referred to as the "package".
34 The programme was originally conceived as a four day event: three days of continuous training with a follow up day six weeks later. This design was configured to enable practice of strategies formulated during the third day, and reviewed during the follow up day. It was to enable on-going learning. Almost immediately during implementation, the programme "dropped" the follow up day. I will explain why and with what consequences in following chapters.
35 The proposal for a training package had as its title Proposal for the Development of an Aboriginal Orientation/Awareness Training Package. Goal 1 was: To develop a training package to sensitise DCS staff to appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal people. (Department for Community Services 1990) I will discuss later the confusion the use of the various terms caused.
why the project was instituted and what it was intended to achieve. It is possible for a newcomer to the WWAP to pick up the “package” and, having read it from cover to cover, design and run a three or four day programme from its contents. The only additional information this trainer would need would be that concerning the trainees - specifically who they were, what work they do, their previous contact with/knowledge of Aboriginal people, where the training was to be located; in short the standard training brief given to or asked for by a trainer contracted/commissioned to run a training programme.

**Training Programme Design And Content.**

A training framework, developed from extensive consultations with Aboriginal people and DCS staff during the research and development phase of the project, explains the problems, issues and concerns to be addressed through the presentation of information and activities contained in the manual.

The most common concerns identified by both Aboriginal people and DCS staff were:

- what had happened in the past and how that had affected what was happening now;
- the difference in cultural background between providers and recipients of the services;
- how people communicated, particularly those people whose first language differed from that of the service providers;
- the type of relationship between Aboriginal people and DCS staff, which was one of unequal power and had a lengthy lineage; and
• the diversity of Aboriginal culture and the need to know and understand the local ways, customs and expectations. (Department for Community Services 1990, p.2)

These concerns were developed by the project team into a training framework which comprised seven modules to allow for working towards change:

"Self as Worker" in the workplace starts with the worker's self-examination of the attitudes, beliefs, feelings and subsequent opinions which influence behaviour in the workplace.

"Past and Present" highlights the Aboriginal experience, presenting information about Aboriginal/Government interaction particularly in the immediate past. Workers need to have an appreciation of what has happened collectively to Aboriginal people in order to understand their present situation and outlook.
"Identity and Everyday Ways of Life" examines culture concepts and Aboriginal culture. Workers are helped to identify reasons for conflict and difficulty and situations which could provide positive interaction.

In "Communicating", the barriers as well as the contributors to good communication are explored, with the intent of learning specific cross-cultural communication skills.

In "Relating", the power and status imbalance in the relationships between DCS workers and Aboriginal people, particularly clients, is explored and workers learn skills to enable them to establish better working relationships with their clients in ways which support self-determination and self-reliance.

"Working in My Local Community" recognises the cultural diversity of Aboriginal people and provides methods by which workers can learn about local customs and form linkages.

The final module "Working Together" unites all the learning, knowledge and understandings gained from the previous content areas, which assists workers to determine a more productive and appropriate work style. Methods for analysis and planning are provided (Department for Community Services 1990, pp. 4-6).

The project team used the adult learning principles available at the time and their practical experiences of training and developmental work to develop the learning methods and activities employed in the programmes. Information from films/videos, written material, Aboriginal guest speakers, and experiential activities such as field visits, discussions, role-plays, problem-solving and planning provide the basis for trainees to develop increased knowledge and understanding, and articulate strategies for future work.
Training Purpose

The project as contracted to the Centre for Aboriginal Studies was loosely defined apart from some general guidelines in the contract. Expectations were for a package of materials which would:

...sensitise DCS staff to appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal people... (Centre for Aboriginal Studies 1989, p.1)

Staff involved in direct delivery of welfare services and their supervisors were the priority training targets. Stipulated in the contract were requirements for heightened staff awareness to cultural differences (through a training process), and the provision of written materials, including Aboriginal history, culture and departmental policies, which could be disseminated widely around the organisation. Apparently this would meet departmental corporate responsibilities in ensuring services were:

sensitive to gender and cultural difference [and] just, humane and empowering. (Department for Community Services 1988, p.2)

This spare detail allowed the project team at the CAS considerable latitude in design and development. The team was then able to include principles for practice in keeping with developmental principles such as evinced by Norman whose experiences of dis-empowerment and re-empowerment, already told in Chapter One, epitomised the ethos of the team of there being ‘a whole new way of doing things, that were culturally appropriate’ (Norman).

Cultural appropriateness, Aboriginal control, and problem-solving which was located in people’s daily work activities, were all features of individual training programmes then being run at the Centre for agencies such as Telecom and mining companies. The Department for Community Services programme extended those principles and practices into a larger undertaking, taking note of the variety of roles
and work in which the departmental staff engaged. Particular attention was paid to
Aboriginal diversity across the state, as DCS was a state-wide organisation.

**Work Behaviour Change**

The programmes were designed on the assumption that a change in work practice
was required to ensure the services provided to Aboriginal people were respectful
and considerate of cultural mores. Both non-Aboriginal staff and their Aboriginal
clients needed to identify problem areas in order for learning activities to be
devised to achieve behaviour change rather than to merely raise awareness.

This training process had not started with the intention of changing attitudes; the
team believed that was a long-term approach. Olga's own aim for the training was
that it should target discriminatory behaviour in the workplace. She argued from
her understanding of EO philosophy and requirements,\(^36\) as well as acknowledging
staff could reasonably raise a defence against any disciplinary action for
discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of not having been appraised of these
requirements. Olga was predominantly interested in changed workplace behaviour.

*We're not about changing attitudes ... you can't
really suss out racism really, racism's really not that
blatant ... so we couldn't tell how many racists we
had in the department or we didn't have ... I don't
care if they're racists, they can be whatever they
want about five o'clock ... we had to have some
control over it ... I'm not worried about their attitude
and hopefully once they get the exposure to the
package but acting in a particular way that their
attitudes will change and it would be good if that
does, but really my priority was nine to five treating
Aboriginal people with respect and dignity. What
they do after that just wasn't a priority. But you've
got no control over people's attitudes anyway.*

\(^36\) Vicarious liability was one of the key elements Olga used to support her action. Equal
Olga’s view supported the Equal Opportunity legislative approach which maintained attitude change could follow behavioural change (see Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994, for a discussion; Nihas 1994) but that behaviours which are visible are much more easily monitored than attitudes.

**Variety Of DCS Work And Roles**

The training also needed to include specific attention to departmental work and the worker roles, which spanned the wide range of state-authorised welfare services. The corresponding roles meant that four broad groups could be identified: clerical/reception staff; field staff which included all staff who provided direct services to clients and included the psychologists, education workers, family support workers and the like; managerial staff; and Executive. Their own work practice was the focus for change. The eventual arrangement for training programmes dissolved these boundaries and changed the responses significantly, as we shall see.

**Diversity Of Aboriginal Culture**

The heterogeneity of Aboriginal groups across the state required that locally relevant and accurate information be provided to avoid the potential for stereotyping and generalising across populations. Additionally, staff needed to understand the culture concepts so they could recognise the causes of conflict and discrimination which can result from the interaction between different signifying systems and then make the necessary changes. As was to be discovered later, but was also a feature of the vision for the framework for learning, introducing workers to local Aboriginal people has other benefits. It helps to start build positive

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37 This is directly from the proposal for the project (Centre for Aboriginal Studies 1989). Theorising about Aboriginal cultural diversity has moved on to include understandings about difference between people within and across locations. Further discussion in later chapters will explore this matter in more detail.
relationships as well as ensuring that the work which needs to be done together for the improvement of services is locally determined, by the people whose place it is.

**Commitment To Developmental Processes**

The developmental approach favoured by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS) emphasised the empowerment of people to determine how they would attend to their own problems, the use of democratic, local, humanised approaches to assist people to understand their own situations and working out ways to solve their problems in ways that suit their localities.\(^{38}\)

These core principles for design and programme delivery were variously maintained, as we shall see, affecting the resultant programmes significantly.

**Implementation Issues**

There were two major outcomes of the research and development phase which were to have considerable effect on the implementation of the programme. These concerned ownership of the training, as intended by Olga, and the principle of corporate endorsement and support.

Appointing Aboriginal staff to the training role was a consequence of the principle of Aboriginal control. Final decisions acknowledged Aboriginal staff should have the right to choose the extent of their participation commensurate with their interest and comfort. Thus all Aboriginal staff were included in Train the Trainer programmes, with options to participate in several ways. They could take a major organisational and delivery role as Trainers; assist in preparation, planning and identifying segments of the programme, perhaps with small group work, for example, as Presenters; or play a role which did not involve direct training delivery (Waller 1990).

\(^{38}\) This type of process has found later published expression in Stringer’s Action Research (1996).
The second requirement was for organisational support. Any change strategy auspiced by an organisation which has an element of training attached should in any eventuality have the full backing of the organisation in terms of resource and personnel support, as well as public statements of authority for the venture (Clark 1988; Lynton and Pareek 1990; Aungles and Parker 1992; Burns 1995). It was particularly important that organisational support be public here. The low employment status of most of the Aboriginal staff, their unfamiliarity with performing training, their small numbers, and their sudden elevation to very visible positions in encouraging behaviour change strategies would make them easy targets for any criticism or challenge other staff might wish to make. Organisational authorising of resource allocation was essential to protect them from potential work overload and having sole responsibility for the success of the programmes.

This principle extended to Aboriginal trainers being allocated support teams comprising non-Aboriginal staff whose departmental roles were to co-ordinate training activities for staff, the Training and Development Officers (TDOs) and Human Resource Officers (HROs). It was intended that each Aboriginal trainer would have two or three of these specialist workers to provide logistical as well as back-up support, but not have any presentation responsibility.

Consequences for Aboriginal staff were considerable. Because of their circumstances, they frequently had responsibility for presenting new material and activities designed to change behaviour to audiences which would inevitably include people senior to themselves. They would find themselves much in demand when the programme schedule was at its height, taking them away from their daily work thus affecting their office work teams. They would also be expected to learn new skills in order to run training programmes. These changes would not only affect them, but they would affect those people with whom they had close working relationships, their support teams. The unaccustomed reversal of roles would present difficulties. All these matters had implications for how the training
proceeded in the department, and for how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (as trainers, support staff and management) would respond or adapt. All these issues will be discussed in later chapters.

THE TRAINING SESSION- THREE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF THE WWAP PROGRAMME

Some of these principles and procedures, designs and directions, roles and relations may be differently understood through entering the world of the WWAP as it typically unfolds over a period of three days. This next section provides an in-depth description of a programme, constructed from some of those I have attended. I have interspersed the "typical" with the recollections of study participants of their experiences in programmes they either attended or delivered as trainers. I have denoted the movement between these with the notation ~~~~ and the use of a different font.
Day One

Picture a typical training event. Workers arrive, casually dressed as though to a day out. Aboriginal music is playing as they arrive ...

Three trainers greet people. One calls people together, ‘we’ll start now’. And the programme begins.

Introductions

Hello, I’m ... and I am a ... person from the ... tribe.
This is my country here, and I welcome you on behalf of my people who are the traditional owners of this land.

He points to a location on a map of Aboriginal Australia hanging on the wall, as he starts to tell a little about his family and tribal connections. He says he can only talk about what he knows and he doesn’t talk for other Aboriginal people, he is not an elder of his people, ‘but Uncle Fred will be along later, he is an elder of my people’.

The next trainer introduces herself, identifying her people, who come from different places. Her grandfather is local, but her grandmother came from the north, she points to way up the map. Her grandparents are from different tribes, displaced as a result of the removal of children. She says she has been able to reconnect with her mother’s family there, and tells a little about that finding.

The third trainer identifies himself. He too, has both local and distant connections.

Introductions over, the Issues section of the programme begins.
Issues

Trainer:

We'd like you to tell us what your particular issues, problems and concerns are in working with Aboriginal people. You are all here because you want to know something more about working better with Aboriginal people, there are some issues you have. We'd like to get them out right at the beginning so that we can focus on them during the day. We want you to be honest, we can't answer your questions if we don't know what they really are. Get into small groups and talk about your issues. Then write them down on the butchers' paper and we'll put them up on the board...

The trainees move their chairs into rough circles. The noise of intense, concentrated discussion starts to fill the room. The trainers look round the room, their gazes slowing momentarily over the most vocal and the most quiet. They seem to be assessing the mood, the reactions of people. After about ten minutes, the trainers wander round the room.

How're you going? Ready to write it down on the butchers' paper yet? Nearly finished?

They return to the front of the room and call people together.

OK. Let's start putting the butchers paper up and have a look at your concerns. This group, [pointing to one group at the side], do you want to start? Just put the paper up, just summarise for us what's there...

And so all the groups put up their issues papers. Some of the issues are questions 'How do you... how should you...?' and 'Why do Aboriginal people...?' Others are statements 'Aboriginals never... or Aboriginals always...' There are stereotypes 'Aboriginals are always drunk and dirty when they come into the office'; blaming questions 'Why don't they look after their kids better?'; questions
of perceived unfairness 'Why should Aboriginals get more money than us to send their kids to school?'; mixed with genuine concerns 'The guidelines state who is not eligible [for emergency relief] and I can’t do anything'; and statements of personal lack 'I don’t understand the culture or the language'.

The trainers make one or two comments as the sheets of paper are put up:

*What does this mean? Are you referring here to...?*

After all the sheets are on the wall, the trainers say that most of what is written here will be attended to throughout the programme, and what is not will be discussed at the end.

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Penny, an Aboriginal trainer, tells of two experiences she had with the Issues section in two different workshops. One morning she contributed to a training session being run for bus drivers before going on to a programme for departmental staff in the metropolitan region. Both programmes were being run from the same design, and so started with the Issues. She arrived at the Transperth training programme to find that the Issues had already been discussed and put up on the wall. One of the items there apparently stated that Aboriginals are dirty.

*I looked at the Issues paper, and I said 'I'd really like to go through this with you because I'm really pissed off. How dare you say that, you know, like, that I'm dirty, you know'. They turned round and said 'Look, we don't mean you'. I said 'You're talking about Aboriginals generally, you said "Aboriginals". I am an Aboriginal. You're saying I'm dirty and scruffy, do I look scruffy? 'No'. My jeans are bloody ninety dollars, my shoes are worth*

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39 Transperth is the local public transport facility.
seventy, I've got a watch on that's worth three hundred bucks. Isn't that what you people relate to?

Penny continues.

And then there were [on the butchers paper] all these things about what Aboriginal people were and what was the problem, and one man said when he sees an Aboriginal he drives straight past . . . And then I came back to the laugh and the joke and said 'You really have to look at where I'm coming from because when you said "all" you said about me, I'm part of it and by you saying that I'm different "you're different" you've separated me from my roots and you don't have the right to do that'. And these people, it was wonderful, and it hit them. And after, all the other issues that came up, after, it was really good, they let me know, 'Well, maybe she's right', and I'd say 'Would you like me to tell you some really bad stories about what white people have done to me, you know, and to generalise to say that "all" of you are the same as "all" of them?' (Laughs)

Penny then tells how she went to the next programme which was for the staff of the department.

So that was in the morning. Then I went to East Regional office. There the Issues were identical. These were professional people, and so many, I was shocked. There the Issues were the same. And it was a shock to me 'cos I thought that surely these people, you know, who see Aboriginal people every day, surely they're above, you know, aren't they, don't they have any views, aren't they educated? And then it hit me, of course they're not, it's not in the education system. How could they be, they had to have a very personal interest to follow it through and then, when it hit me, I thought, well it makes sense . . . And I said 'I just went to Transperth, and these Issues are identical. Those
men drive buses all day, yet they have the same concept, the same opinion as you do. So I'll tell you what I said to them. I said ‘I wasn't angry’. You know, there was a couple of people there like, Lena C. was there, and in tears, and I thought, poor thing, I don't want to put you through this one. But, no, I can't exclude her, it's gotta be. It worked out well, yeah. But it was, like, well, one this side and the other, two different, there could be no two different departments, so different and the same sort of attitude.

Penny's experiences of the Issues session indicate one of the most important considerations for training workers about working with Aboriginal people, that no assumptions about previous knowledge and consequent understanding can be made. While Penny attributes this to lack of such material in the education system, it also indicates a lack of attention in the workplace or in professional training to issues of cultural difference. In the case of the bus drivers, the Aboriginal passengers are dirty and there to be ignored, driven past; for social and welfare workers Aboriginal people form a group to be provided with welfare services, with their dirtiness and needing to be ignored providing potent metaphors for how those services may have been provided.

Self As Worker In The Workplace

The next section of the programme focuses on the feelings, beliefs and opinions workers bring with them to the workplace. Here the worker is central.

40 See the modules framework. This is from the first, and central module Self as Worker. Subsequent headings follow the framework (Department for Community Services 1990)
These opinions, beliefs and feelings [of the worker] will influence how they work, especially when they come face to face with new situations. (Department for Community Services 1990, p.4)

The activities are designed to assist workers consider the effect their values have on their responses to clients, particularly those from a different cultural group. There are two or three activities in the package from which the trainers can select, if they don’t have an activity of their own. One asks people to identify the life experiences they have had where they might have been in contact with Aboriginal people, and then discuss what those experiences might have led them to believe about Aboriginal people. Another presents a hypothetical story of a woman who tries in vain to find someone who will ferry her across an alligator-infested river to her lover. In the end, desperate, she consents to have sex with the ferryman in return for the boat ride, but her lover scorns her when she arrives and beats up one of her friends who tries to defend her actions. Trainees are asked to allocate blame – who is most at fault in this story? Alligator River (in whatever form\textsuperscript{41}) remains a favourite and is almost always the trainers’ activity of choice for the Self as Worker module.

The trainers hand out a sheet to each person.

\textit{We’re going to go on now with an activity about values. This sheet tells a story. Just read it and then talk about who you think is to blame. Get into groups, about four or five in a group and when you’ve read it you can start ...}

The groups reform, and there is quiet for a few moments as they read. Quickly the room erupts with laughter, rising voices, oppositions and agreements. Everyone has a point of view, most people voice their own loudly and with energy. This is

\textsuperscript{41} Or Crocodile Creek, an adapted version (Australia only has crocodiles, not alligators).
fun, the group is absorbed. Most people here, when they come back together to state their own choices of villain, are able to nod and say, yes, we understand about values, and how they lead us to act and judge. They are alert now, they’re engaged, responsive to the trainers, they’ve started to connect with them.

They can’t tell how hard this part is sometimes for the trainers ...

Marian, an Aboriginal trainer, is standing in front of the group. She’s feeling terrified, sick to the stomach. People can’t tell, she looks so confident.

[I was] quite terrified by the whole idea of being a trainer . . . [but I managed] initially because I prepared so well for all the workshops . . . I was really nervous, it was just, yeah, speaking in the group. But because I’d prepared myself so well I felt confident, and knowing a lot of the issues for Aboriginal people was something I was familiar with. The initial first couple of hours of the workshop I was quite sick in the stomach, but as the day wore on, and plus being, like the facilitator, and being up front and being the expert, so I felt quite confident as the day went on.

Marian’s feelings of nervousness are not enough to immobilise her, but indicate the difficulty for people who are asked to take on an “up-front” role, on view and responsible for conducting learning activities. It is especially difficult when that is not a “natural” attribute, exacerbated here by the differential in occupational levels and culture. Marian takes charge of this process and instead of being overwhelmed by it, prepares thoroughly so she rapidly becomes very confident. The allocation of being the “expert” in
this setting also helps. As we shall see, this didn’t occur for all the trainers.

Morning tea, with its bustling activities helps pave the way for the next session ....

**Past And Present**

Settling, the group is told that they need to understand what is happening for Aboriginal people today if they are going to work well with them.

*But in order to do that we have to think about the past too. We will see some videos which show us what policies affected Aboriginal people and we will then discuss what effect we think they have on some of these problems [points at the Issues on the butcher’s paper]. We’ve got a guest speaker coming, he’ll help us here ...*

The video The Aborigines Act 1905[^42] is the first to be shown. It is a short film which uses old photographs over which the narrator tells of the conditions and purposes of the Act and its results. Meant to provide protection for Aboriginal people, who were being increasingly persecuted, the stipulations of the Act only regulated their lives even more, leading to mass concentrations of people in settlements where families were separated, and living conditions were poor. The Act was repealed in 1936, but subsequent Acts regulated lives further and children were taken from families and placed with non-Aboriginal families.

The group is quiet now. Some trainees, it seems, have not known this history. They did not know that some Aboriginal people owned land before the proclamation of the Act. They had not realised the extent to which Aboriginal life

[^42]: Edith Cowan University (nd). In order not to interrupt the flow of this, and some later sections, I here cite the videos as footnotes, in contrast to the remainder of the referencing system.
was controlled, and how much they were forced to give up. It is a surprise, a shock.

An excerpt from the next video is shown immediately – *Black Magic*. In the few minutes shown, an Aboriginal father walks round the site on which his house once stood as he tells of the day officials came to take his children. He stares straight at the camera as his voice rises in pain of the memory. He strikes a policeman, breaking his arm to prevent them taking his children. He is arrested. When he returns, his children are gone, and all that is left is their footprints in the dirt. He covers them over, he says, they are all he has left. He cries.

Most of the group has not seen this video before. Some people are crying too.

The guest speaker brought to discuss these events starts to speak. ‘I am Charlie Kickett’, he says. ‘That was my father…’

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William, a non-Aboriginal trainee, particularly remembers the videos.

*The videos made quite an impression because . . . I was used to seeing American Negroes in America always chained up and used as slaves but . . . I didn’t really see the Australian Aboriginal people like that so that was quite an impact as well, ‘Oh they did it over here as well’, you know, you never hear any of that sort of stuff, they don’t teach that sort of stuff, they only teach you about the American slaves when you’re at school and that sort of stuff they never teach you that they used to do that stuff here.*

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43 (Roberts and Rijavec 1988)
44 Charlie is a frequent guest now of many programmes based on this WWAP design. He states openly that his presence and his retelling of his and his father’s story is indeed part of his therapeutic journey. He first started this process early in the life of WWAP and then went on to run training himself for the Police department. (Milli Milli Wungka 1993)
William's surprise at what he now realises was missing in his formal education is tempered by the generosity of the Aboriginal speakers. He is impressed with what he sees in the guest speakers as a lack of blame.

*It was obvious to me that they didn't blame us, they didn't blame us, they didn't, the people that were there, they didn't blame today's society. So I got quite a lot out of that.*

The showing of these videos touches people immediately and deeply. Marian, like many trainers, explicitly uses this emotion-provoking device by inviting Charlie Kickett.

She says:

*I mean the saddest guest speaker we had was Charlie Kickett. Gosh, it was so sad, I couldn't handle it, yeah, it just made such a huge impact. And I loved him, I use him over the years as guest speaker, and he really wanted to tell his story too, I think.*

Sadness and love mingle here for Marian, her compassionate insight suggesting to her that the re-telling of the story helps the son too, in his journey of healing.

It is not only the guest speakers who find the narratives healing. Penny also uses both of these videos.

*The first three times I saw it [1905 Act] I had to leave and cry. The fourth time I left. I saw it about four weeks ago in one of these training workshops and I didn't get upset, and for me that was another*
step for me that, you know, I could start to look at other things. And there was Black Magic yesterday\textsuperscript{45} and, well everybody there was bawling.

Tears flow, people are visibly affected by what they are watching.

Desmond’s role as the manager responsible for ensuring the training programmes were run throughout the department meant that he was intimately connected with its design and implementation strategies. He too is struck by the power of the personal stories. In the first programme he attended:

> there were some people brought in from some of the placement homes, you know, who had grown up, who had been dragged away from their family and basically told their story... about the impact of being taken away from their families had and growing up in some of those institutions and they were very, very good.

He thinks:

> the medium that Graham had employed [of telling personal stories] and as one of that powerful learning was very strong.

Hannah, a non-Aboriginal trainee, responds with an increased ability to understand. She feels herself able to ‘start to feel the feelings of the Other. She “knows”, thinks, it has been very difficult for them.

\textsuperscript{45} Penny had run a workshop for senior administrators of a large institution.
It [participating in the training] gave me a lot of the personal stories I think, it allowed me to start to empathise more than I could have had I not had people’s stories, Ingrid H’s personal stories, I know that was very difficult for her, and that was probably the first time she’d told it in that form like that, I had the impression.

Ingrid is in her thirties. She tells the story of her mother’s removal as a child, and of her grandmother’s removal - shattered families who find it so hard to reconnect to each other as families. Ingrid tells of the removal of her own child. The inevitability of repetition hangs like doom as she recites the pattern.

Ingrid now successfully runs a business. She comes to tell her life and her family’s lives so that these horrors might be prevented from continuing to happen. She, like Charlie, also knows the therapeutic power of the narrated story, and having listeners bear witness (Laird 1989; Wiersma 1992; Saleebey 1994; Sands 1996).

When Christine, who has a role in the department of assisting with the implementation of the training, hears these stories for the first time she can barely contain her sadness, shock, outrage. She can’t understand how the occurrences she has been hearing about could be allowed to happen.

The stuff that really shocks me that I think there must only be the North American Indians had their children removed as well, and where else did that happen? Where does it happen? Maori children in New Zealand were never removed from their families, it wasn’t something that happened. So that will impact on me for ever, because I often think, you know, what would happen, what would people feel if someone just knocked on their door and took their children away because they weren’t
perceived to be cared for in the right way? There would be an outcry if it happened to you or I, but for people to be in such a powerless position, it was just outrageous. So there's a lot to be, you know, a lot to be made up.

Christine's own education and experiences have not prepared her for this information. She has not seen it in other countries. But further, the injustice of it affects her. Putting herself in Aboriginal people's shoes she asks the empathetic question - how would we feel?

Marian is listening to the trainees talk. The discussion is happening as the trainers planned, it's good that they talk and start to understand. Marian is surprised, though, that these people, professional workers, don't already know about what had happened to Aboriginal people. She's astounded, shocked.

They [professional workers] didn't know a lot of stuff about, like the legislation affecting children, or when it stopped and actually what was going on in the Aboriginal community at the time and things like that, like with Social Security and Family and Children's Services, and the old Native Welfare department... I would have expected them to know, it only happened like thirty, thirty five years ago, that the policies were now repealed some of them were quite shocked by it. So these were the people who knew absolutely nothing about Aboriginal people... I was quite amazed and you started talking about the 1905 Act and children being removed and citizenship and permits and all that, I was astounded, people just didn't know what was going on, it really amazed me.

Marian's astonishment that workers didn't know what had happened in the past reinforces the perceptions of others in this
section. This was not a history which was talked about or acknowledged. But there is a real sense of amazement that of all people, welfare and social workers should have no understanding of the histories of the people they were being required to help. That knowledge and understanding was not there.

This section of the programme has been hard. Charlie has been a willing and talkative speaker. He has answered the questions fully, he has told the group how he blamed his father for a long time for letting him go. It wasn’t until recently, he says, that he talked to his father about it and started to understand himself what happened, and he was able to forgive his father and stop blaming him. The trainees are unwilling to let him go, even though the scheduled time is up. Charlie and they can keep talking. The trainers finally step in and summarise.

*Although the 1905 Act was such a long time ago, it has had repercussions for what happens today.*

*Charlie, here, is one of the products of those policies*

Lunch offers a respite. People seem relieved to pause. There’s also much that some people want to ask Charlie, and he is surrounded, voices soft and intense asking questions. Other groups form and snatches of discussions can be heard reviewing what they had just seen and heard, linking it to other experiences some of them had had or knew about...

**Identity And Everyday Ways Of Life**

An hour later, the trainees are seated, waiting. The next item on the programme is Identity and Everyday Ways of Life. The trainers and Charlie form the panel to discuss the diversity of Aboriginal culture. There are four of them, including Charlie, and they come from the Southwest, the Murchison and one from Darwin. They have different cultural experiences which they can share and they look very
different too. Not one of them has a very dark skin, and this is one of the main points of their discussion. They maintain that identity is felt and group allocated, it does not depend on an artificial, or scientifically determined bloodline.

_The days, one says, of the part-Aborigine are over._
_We don't accept the labels half-caste, octoroon, quadroon, any more. Our identity is ours, not yours to give..._

Vera is sitting listening to the discussion about identity. She is hearing them talk about identity. The trainers are firm in their belief about identity - you are either Aboriginal or you're not, and it's not something that non- Aboriginal people can award or take away. They talk about the shame and denial that Aboriginal people have had instilled in them, and it is no longer valid that they internalise white people's construction of their identity. She tells me later that the presentation left her confused and troubled, and at the same time it was as though a door was opening.

She has spent most of her life not thinking too deeply about her heritage.

_My father's part Aboriginal so it fitted in that half caste, quarter caste, they wanted to call it at that time, and there was a lot about that that was kept secret because the political situation at the time and the way society viewed it, so it was not talked about and you just got on with being who you were without looking too greatly into your identity without being, pronouncing it to the world, you took on an assumed, in a sense, assumed identity..._

_Until I went to the training, and that was probably the beginning of it, of actually having to, it overtook me, I had no idea that it would do that to_
me, and raised, and it was the feelings of denial and the shame that they [the Aboriginal trainers] were talking about, it was shame that we grew up with and, and denial.

Secrecy, shame, denial about her ancestry are suddenly manifest for Vera by people who are talking about their own experiences, not hers. She’s overwhelmed, ‘it overtook me’. After years of not questioning her Aboriginal heritage, because it was ‘not something that you talked about’, she now finds she has to listen.

She questions:

*Where do I?, where do I fit biologically? fitting, is it a, an adopted fitting? or where is it that I fit? because biologically there has to be a part because that’s a reality, I didn’t choose this . . . but I think in terms of identity, how do I, how do I express that? That’s probably what bothers me, where does it fit? Can I legitimately say, I can say I’m part-Aboriginal, that my father was part-Aboriginal and my grandmother . . . ?*

Hers is an effort to understand. This usually fluent and articulate woman can barely contain the tumble of questions in an attempt to understand.

Vera’s unfolding realisations about her undisclosed Aboriginal heritage accelerate as she listens to the speakers. She becomes resentful and angry. She thinks her own identity is being challenged.

*I’m part of it too, I’m not on the other side of the fence.*
Rejected unknowingly, she leaves the training session in tears at the end of that day. She's had to question her identity, had to listen to views from people who did identify as Aboriginal which challenged her previous conception of who she was. She had been resistant to being trained in something she thought she knew about, and then found that she had to confront her identity in herself.

Perhaps Hannah's response could help Vera. Her learning from such sessions as these has included not judging who is Aboriginal.

*You know 'how Aboriginal is Aboriginal?' Well, I now don't have thoughts about that. I don't think that somebody who's got very dark skin is more Aboriginal or that somebody from the country is more Aboriginal... I think that's been a very big learning, I mean, for me.*

But belonging and identity are potent forces and attract strong rejoinders. Not everyone has learned Hannah's lesson. Who belongs and who doesn't and why, hit susceptible marks. People are protective of their identity and sensitive to any perceived challenges to how they "should" or "shouldn't" feel. They particularly seem to resent being discounted as possibly having similar feelings to those people who consider theirs is the biggest discrimination. Vera tells of the response from the other trainees when the Aboriginal trainers make a claim for Aboriginal belonging to the land which is Australia. Questions of authenticity as being "first" are challenged by Scottish and Welsh people who also consider they have been displaced by a colonising power.
Trainees ask why Aboriginal people are different from people in other countries which have been invaded. These seemingly unanswerable questions only serve to separate Aboriginal from non-Aboriginal people further in a confrontation which leaves both sides feeling aggrieved.

Sometimes, in this session on identity, depending on how many videos have already been shown, trainers like to use Babakiueria. Made in the bicentennial year, Babakiueria reverses white and black histories of Australia, and starts with a group of black people landing on the shore where a group of white people is having a barbecue. The black man in charge asks slowly and in words of one syllable ‘what-do-you-call-this-place?’ Puzzled and a little frightened, a white man says ‘this is a barbecue area’. ‘A colourful native name’ the black man replies aside to his troupe. The audience by now is smiling and laughs when the black man names the land ‘Babakiueria’. The smiles and giggles start to dwindle as the cherished cultural habits and beliefs of white Australia are knocked down, represented in distortions, and there is silence, punctuated only by the in-drawn breath of shock, when finally the white children start to be taken away.

Christine is sitting behind a woman during one showing of Babakiueria and she is stunned at the intensity of the silent response.

I could see her tensing in her chair, and I mean gripping, just gripping her fists, I couldn’t work out what that was about.

(ABC International 1988)
But, of course, the point of the video being shown is to provoke a reaction. It is not entertainment.

Desmond has a different reaction to hearing about identity and culture. He attends the programme with other managers, people who had been with the department for a long time, and who had responsibilities for the provision of direct services to clients.

Desmond is surprised that these people who had been in the department a long time and had responsibility for the delivery of services should be as surprised about the history as he, a newcomer from a non-welfare background.

*They had never had the story telling at first hand* . . . *and it was the first exposure too that I had had to some of the . . . customs about why the boys who were incarcerated behaved the way they did, you know why it is, so you know, coming to- Aboriginal-man-type issue, so I mean, you know, I didn't know that sort of thing existed . . . [and] well they didn't realise that, 'well you guys have been dealing with this for years and you're telling me that you've got policies and procedures which are actually inappropriate!'. That was quite impressive to find that they had been working in a vacuum when they should have known better.

Culture and Identity are difficult concepts.47 It is both personal and political, private and public. Vera exhibits the sort of opposition and anger common amongst people whose sense of self has been controlled or prohibited and whose heritage presents them

47 Both of which I shall discuss later.
with questions about who they are. Every person will have his or her own “take” on what constitutes identity. When this is again overlaid with the lack of knowledge and understanding from those very people who perhaps could be expected to have realised the consequences of policy and practices on people’s sense of their place in the world, the interactions between the two groups are likely to be very tense indeed.

A quick break interrupts the mood. This session has been testing. The groupings now are more marked. The trainers and Charlie are left to themselves. There is no-one who wants to ask a question. Are they just tired, or is the distance necessary, to show what side one belongs to?

The trainers, too, sometimes find these interchanges draining, challenges to their authority and identity just under the surface.

Harriet often provided a support role to an Aboriginal trainer. She describes one typical session.

There was negativity after negativity, Olivia [the trainer] would find another way to deal with it, and at the breaks she’d be very angry, very difficult for her to cope with, and we’d go back in and try a different tack, give different information, or in the group to talk about things, but there were certainly times when things were too much, to give the types of answers they’d want.

48 Mudrooroo (1997) provides a recent compelling example. This is discussed at some length in the Honours Dissertation by Bessarab. (1996)
To help Olivia deal with the situation, Harriet would provide the debriefing role. Sometimes the strategy involved Olivia telling the group why she was angry. However, one of the costs to letting people know that it was difficult for her because of their negative comments was a reluctance on the part of the group to disclose further. So although some people responded and became less confrontational, there were costs. In developing understandings of Olivia as a person, Harriet suggests they also lost the ability to be honest and therefore pursue discussions which would lead to change.

*After that, they'd keep some of that back, some questions, issues to themselves*

The cost for seeing Olivia empathetically was honesty. It is evident that this training which challenges people to make fundamental changes to the way they have considered Aboriginal people in the past is sometimes so difficult for people to achieve without some cost. Confrontation and conflict, rejection and withdrawal, or here, reservation and guile take the place of connecting at a human level.

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**Communicating**

This is the last major session of the day. There is time now for an opportunity for people to develop and practice some skills. This module examines the problems of:

assumptions [which] are made that understandings of everyday events are shared when in fact they’re not.

Some workers and Aboriginal clients express confusion when what they consider to be normal everyday communication results in
misunderstanding. (Department for Community Services 1990, p. 85)

The trainers introduce the session.

*Let's practice a little of what we've learned by doing a role play. We're going to do one first, as an example. Then it will be your turn to identify a problem situation and role play it as it was, and then change it so that it has a positive outcome.*

The trainers act out a situation in which an Aboriginal woman has come into the office seeking help with a rental agreement. Her English appears good and the worker reads it out to her, but she still doesn't seem to understand. The worker is getting a little short, he is busy and has to go out. The worker and the woman are not getting anywhere. The trainers ask the group to help out.

*What could we do to make this situation better?*

The trainees start to answer, 'perhaps the words you're using are unfamiliar', 'put it in your own words', 'say ....', 'perhaps it's not the rental agreement that's the problem, perhaps it's something else, ask her what the problem is' ... 

The group quickly moves into threes and, prompted by this example, people start to remember situations of their own where they were frustrated by not being able to get to the heart of the matter. 'What was I doing wrong?' 'How could I do it differently?' They ask each other. The trainers move round the room helping ...

Christine tells of being at a training programme where a role play was enacted. One of the Aboriginal staff played the role so well that no one could understand him.
None of us, the staff who were working with them could understand him, and it was just going nowhere and they felt very uncomfortable and just hated the experience. But that was a real experience.

The inability to understand speech and therefore provide the service required produced discomfort in people who are accustomed to being in charge and in control of the situation.

Entering into the world of the Other through role plays has a powerful effect.

Doreen attended the training specifically to help her with some of the difficult cases involving Aboriginal people. She is allocated the role of a mother whose baby is going to be removed.

We had to do a role play... about somebody having their child taken off them, and I had a case at the time, a very difficult case and it was an Aboriginal woman... I got to play this woman who the welfare wanted to take her baby off them, and I had to be this woman saying 'please don't take my baby', that was very, yeah that was very hard. So that was what was very powerful for me, it was just like experiencing for me, you know, when you do role plays you take on a lot of it, and so that taking on a role, it was really all this identification, as much as I can, that identification with this client, and about her stuff around her child, it was personally powerful for me... it seemed to have quite a big impact on the group as well.

In the role play Doreen starts to experience what it might be like for her real client, she identifies with her, she starts to feel a different perspective.
Marian has planned for these role plays. In the office where she works, she doesn't think some of the social and welfare workers handle cases well. She takes those cases and changes them slightly for these role plays, so that people practice real life situations before going back to their offices.

_Just working in the district office, like some of the cases that were coming through I picked up then made them into scenarios, 'cos I felt some of the officers weren't handling it properly and sort of whited out names and that, but when the officers came to the workshop, I don't think they picked it up that it was their case loads [laughs]._

Marian's insights are counterbalanced against the workers' lack of recognition.

The communication module provides a good opportunity for experiencing what the interaction feels like to the Other, engendering frustration at not being understood, and taking and feeling an unfamiliar position. It can be a place of great learning.

_each person has had an opportunity in the small groups to practice some communication they have found difficult, and the trainers have visited each group to help. The full group reforms. It is the end of a long and full day. The trainers summarise, pointing to the Issues sheet on the wall. 'How far have we got with understanding some of these issues?' People in the group nod, yes, they indicate, we've dealt with some of them. But there is tomorrow and some of what is not covered can be looked at then._

_We'll do a quick review in the morning..._
Day Two

The day starts, trainers welcome everyone back.

Has anyone got any comments about yesterday that they want to make now?

There is a discussion about some of the points: the poignancy of Charlie’s story, the surprise about the policies, the range of difference amongst Aboriginal people. Some people state that they hadn’t known about the 1905 Act and how it had so dislocated families that mothers and fathers today had not learnt how to be parents. Others say they will look at Aboriginal society in a different way now, not expecting people all to be the same or want the same things.

The trainers move along to the next session in the sequence.

Relating

For many reasons there is an imbalance between the status of Aboriginal clients and non-Aboriginal workers. One relates to history where government departments had ultimate control over the lives of Aboriginal people. Another reason relates to the present organisational and bureaucratic responsibilities wielded by the department. A third reason is the different understanding of, and familiarity with, bureaucratic processes between many Aboriginal people and departmental workers.

The challenge is for this difference in power or status to be overcome when workers interact with Aboriginal people. A good working relationship helps provide the services that the client wants and needs, in a way that will enable him/her to become self-reliant and self-determining.

Workers will investigate ways to overcome these relationship barriers (Department for Community Services 1990, p. 124).

The trainer starts.

We’re going to hear some guest speakers talk about the different groups in Aboriginal society and some
of the difficulties between these groups and how they have been affected by government policies ...

A panel of four Aboriginal guests is first. They come from different parts of the state and they start by telling where they come from, where their country is, who they are related to. They have all got stories they tell of moving from their country, of being moved from their land, of who moved them and how this affected them. While people relationships is what the trainees expected to hear about, it becomes clear that land and country relationships are also important. The historical relationships between Aboriginal people and the "welfare" have also been difficult. The 1905 Act showed the level of authority, leaving a generation dependent on welfare. One of the guests says:

*We have been the most governed people. We've had the most policies on us...*

Trainees start to ask questions, 'Why do we hear about feuds between Aboriginal families?' 'Who is the proper person to approach about a particular problem with a family?' 'Why is [...] organisation run by people who are not from this country?' ...

And hear answers ...

*Aboriginal people have been moved around ...*

Harriet's part in the formation and design of the package and her later role as support to Aboriginal trainers gives her a clear understanding of what she thinks is one of the purposes of having guests. It is important to provide a human face.

*[It's] creating opportunities during the breaks and in the workshops for people to say, 'I met an*
Aboriginal person today, we got on fine, they told funny stories, got some good ideas’. Lots of times it worked, once they [trainees] were there, they were pretty interested in what Aboriginal people had to say, and they’d come to us afterwards, and they’d say ‘he’s quite a character, where can we find more on this?’ That would have been [the trainers’] perceptions too, ‘we’re all people here, and Aboriginal people are funny, stupid, sensible, wise, like you, you can talk to me, this might be your first opportunity to talk to an Aboriginal person, and here I am’. It’s great, developing relationships out of which other things would flow.

The design of the programme is in part to give people the opportunity to meet Aboriginal people in settings and for purposes they might not have had the opportunity before. Most of the staff attending see Aboriginal people as clients, and in very few other ways. The interest and personal connections make it easier for the staff to see Aboriginal people as people, not just as cases or problems.

But the relationships weren’t all positive. Julia gives an example of one Aboriginal trainer who trained staff from her own office.

*The feedback I got from staff they felt attacked, they weren’t just defensive, they felt attacked... [and] it was never resolved, which was really sad, because to try and do anything similar in [that] office is going to be very difficult.*

In this example, there was an existing tense relationship between the trainer and her colleagues. The sensitive nature of the programme where discussions of power imbalances, discrimination, welfare dependency, and stereotypes can all so easily erupt into disagreements and people taking positions, and can lead, as in this case, to people feeling attacked. Julia expresses sadness because
she is aware that the barriers in that place are now fixed, and to overcome the resistances is going to be difficult.

In the programme Bernadette attends, the trainers are trying to not give offence. It is trainees here who are attacking. She explains that there were people present in the workshop who weren’t prepared to accept an Aboriginal viewpoint. Bernadette quotes them.

‘You know, we’re the majority, you should change to the way of life as it is... you live in Australia, therefore you should be doing what we do over here, why should we have to understand?’

The trainers tried to deal with the hostility but according to Bernadette were nervous and possibly new to training. She thought they couldn’t respond without getting angry themselves.

Bernadette suggests a solution might be to have both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal trainers so that they will work together to overcome some of the potential difficulties. Bernadette believes this session was ineffective because people left angry. It was:

*just a slanging match and nobody's going away with any change.*

Vera shares similar experiences, for the training programme she attended was full of anger and separation. To her the training seemed to be characterised by a ‘them and us’ attitude which set people in opposition to each other. Her preference would have been a more ‘objective’ approach which did not separate people. Instead, she said there was negativity.
There was a distinct “them and us” and it was, we were justifying, and it seemed to be sides, which was unfortunate, which to me isn’t where it should have been, justifying each others, our own positions to the other.

Furthermore she gained the sense that blame was being allocated which resulted in even more animosity.

It was our fault that the anger was there, that probably was the key issue was it was us as so-called “whiteys”, it was our fault, that they were in this position and that had to be addressed and I didn’t think that that was the forum for that to be addressed.

She asks questions of why more is not done to unite instead of separate. She believes it results in accepting a disadvantaged position.

It’s separatism in a sense, it can be called positive apartheid but I still think if people are continually called disadvantaged and underclass and all of that, that’s exactly what you’re going to end up being because you’re focused on being that, you’re a minority and you’re disadvantaged. Why do you have to be disadvantaged? People keep calling you disadvantaged, that’s exactly what you’re going to be...

Blame, anger, confrontations, conflict all led to people trying to defend their positions.

Situations such as these, which are so highly charged with rejection, resistance, anger, or where, in Julia’s example, the trainees themselves feel attacked look more like a cauldron than the place for forming positive, productive relationships that are the stuff of Harriet’s hopes.
In this training session though, there is a greater understanding now of the complex nature of Aboriginal relationships within Aboriginal society, and the fractured relationships as a result of the policies. The trainees also understand better about the contradictorily intricate relationship between the “welfare” and Aboriginal people, the “welfare” as part of their social system in providing resources, and part of the controlling system in regulating their use.

A short break …

**Working In My Local Community**

*We’re getting to the parts now where you are going to be doing the work. The guests here are going to help you identify some of the resources you need in your area, and how to access them. There are some protocols. Form into groups with people you don’t usually work with and start by describing the area you work in, and what you want to know to help you get started with working with Aboriginal people in your area. About four groups will be fine…*

People gather round tables scattered around the outside of the room, ready this time to do some work, they gather butchers’ paper, pens, start telling each other about their own work locations, what is there, what they know about, the things they wish they knew more about. The guests sit down with the groups and start asking questions,

*What do you know about this area?*  
*Do you know who the local leaders are here?*  
*Do you know how to find out?*
Lunch comes and goes almost in passing, so engaged are the trainees in the dialogues, the identifications of places to go, people to contact, discussions of problems and solutions in their own areas. They know that the afternoon will be spent in identifying and choosing one action each that they can do when they are back in their workplaces. This will take time, each person needs to formulate an action plan, with help from each other to define a problem or issue they can address, how they will go about it, what they will need to use as resources, help, and how they will know whether it has succeeded.

Working Together

‘All right’, says the trainer, ‘you know what we’re going to do now, let’s identify what you are going to do when you get back to the office. You know what we’ve done in the last day and a half, we’ve given you some information and some understanding of what some of the issues are. It’s up to you now to do something about it ...’

The trainees form into role-similar groups or with others from their locality. They may be able to work together on solving a particular problem.

In one of the training programmes Keith runs, this session brings success.

I did a workshop in East Metro region and these social workers and field staff came into training looking visibly drained, you know, just going through the process in life in regards to their work, I think they were just out of ideas and energy and fighting a lost cause, I think. As a result of the training at the end of the two days you could see that they were revitalised, rejuvenated, you know, they regained enthusiasm ... I think what the case was they were heading in one direction in regards to the service delivery and the Aboriginal clients were heading off in another, and during that training we
brought Aboriginal community people in to speak to them about their aspirations and where their community was going, and so the field staff were able to see, you know, where they were going wrong and they also saw other factors of, you know, historical factors and why Aboriginal people are regarding the agency with suspicion sometimes give that impression, and, yeah, at the end of that they grew another leg so to speak. When they left they had all these plans they were going to do when they went back to work.

Seeing the change and the hope in people who were tired and discouraged by the failure of previous strategies, gave Keith reassurance to go on too. Being a trainer was itself a draining activity, particularly when the group was both negative and conflictual.

Programme Summary

It is the end of the two days. They have been full: full of humour, the trainers have connected with people through laughter; full of sorrow, the stories and history have touched them deeply; full of tension, some of the challenges to their long-held beliefs have rocked some people; and above all, full of revelation. Some people will go away changed by what they have experienced here.

Penny's first experience as a trainer is in a trial run programme, before the WWAP is finalised. She and the other trainers are apprehensive, and a little scared. They don't know any of the
trainees who come from very different work backgrounds. She recalls the end of the programme.

There were twenty-six people. No-one dropped out, no-one wasn't there on the second day, it had them spell bound all that time and then at the end of it they wanted to sit and rage\(^{49}\) ... talk to us and form a relationship that we'd told them it was OK to have, you know, it was OK to talk to Aboriginal people, you can ask, all that can be said is 'no' that's the worst thing. Good stuff, yeah.

The words rush out, inadequately representing her eagerness and exhilaration at the memory of this, her first, training session. The training programme trainees are eager too. They want to 'rage'. They are spell bound, the enchantment of the process and the connections they are making with people, with history, with knowledge, with action overtaking them so that their demeanour is spirited and alive.

The programme ends. People leave. Their next meeting will be in about six weeks time, when they return to review the actions they have carried out in their workplaces.

The Follow Up Day

The trainers greet the familiar people as they arrive...

\textit{It's good to see you all back. How's it been? Good, great, hard, difficult come the replies.}

\(^{49}\) Penny's term for animated elated interaction.
Well, we’ll deal with them all in turn today, and see where we might go from here. Have you all been able to try out some of what you planned?

There are many nods and ‘yes’s’, some heads shaking ‘no’, one or two silent, immobile people.

The trainer starts.

First, let's recap on what we did last time we were here. A lot’s happened in between for you, let’s just cast our minds back to then and summarise. How about you just briefly get into groups and identify one thing each that most impressed, and one thing that you remember but didn’t find useful. Then we’ll just do a review.

People huddle. They start thinking back. They start remembering, talking. The 1905 Act, Charlie, the difficulty of the role plays …

The programme moves through this recalling phase, intended to help people to become “present” here, to concentrate on the training and what it meant to them.

They re-group, and start to review the programme of six weeks ago. They are now attending, “here”, and focussed on what the aim of the day is - to review their own activities.

Who would like to start? ... Yes, Jenny, remind us what you were going to do and let us know what happened …

Julia is the support worker to the trainers for one programme which has had its share of difficulty. Among the group is a non-Aboriginal worker who has a long history of working in the
department. He doesn't believe there is anything anyone can tell him about working with Aboriginal people. But Julia recalls:

There was a guy from [the country] he [had] worked for Aboriginal affairs, the old Native Welfare, an old guy, and 'I know Aboriginal people, and I've worked with Aboriginal people all my life' and 'I know Aboriginal people', oh, and, you know, we'd go out of the room a couple of times, and the Aboriginal trainers had finished their little bit and go for a walk and there'd be lots of swearing [laughs], and, we did the two days, and we came back and did the follow up day. Well ... he'd gone away and what he looked at doing was ... which were the people to go with, with whomever to court ... and so he actually changed trying to force the parent going to court, to involving perhaps a grandparent or perhaps someone else ... he came back, and you know he was kind of mind-boggled about the impact that that had had ... So that, for him, had been a real big win ... the change [in the] entrenched ways of working, yes, and also an attitude of 'well, I've been working in the field for a long time, you can't tell me anything. I know it'. So that, that was the real win ... and that was only one little thing, but it was a win, you know ... and we all went for coffee afterwards, and we were all so on a high after that follow up day ...

Resistance turned to success for this man, through the simple, but effective action of merely working with the protocols of the people.

The trainers and Julia, too, can share the success.

The third day is a problem solving day. It is a trainee driven day. The trainees help each other with solutions from their own experience, share information they have
found out, encourage others to try different tactics, support those who have had difficult times.

It ends with enthusiasm and energy. It is not always so, as we shall see later.

**SUMMARISING THE WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TRAINING PROGRAMME**

This (re)construction of a typical training programme highlights three themes as having particular significance. They relate to the ownership of the material and processes; the chosen focus by Aboriginal people on history and identity; and the interactive nature of the learning.

**Ownership Of The Training Material And Processes**

Olga’s early determination that Aboriginal people themselves should control the process was initially upheld, and Aboriginal people directed and were central to the programmes. This was a significant departure from much previous training to teach non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal matters. As Olga had observed about the (then) predominant locale for learning about Aboriginal people, the tertiary institutions, the ‘whitefellas control too much’. The programme was developed with Aboriginal people central to its formation and its performance. Emergent difficulties included the lack of training skills among Aboriginal staff at that time (although it was evident from these recollections and experiences that some of the trainers quickly became adept) and the lack of material (such as videos and written information) prepared by Aboriginal people. The focus of the training was on Aboriginal people presenting Aboriginal information.

**Emphasis On History And Identity**

Although an integrated and substantial framework was developed to address the joint concerns and issues identified by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, it
quickly became very clear where the Aboriginal trainers and guests were most interested. They chose the Narrative they wanted to tell and it was through that Narrative that the programme was framed. Although much of the material in the form of readings, videos and other information was prepared by non-Aboriginal people, in this instance Aboriginal people chose how it would be used and set their own experiences firmly within it. History and identity were the two subjects which most captured their interest and it was these they insisted should be covered in depth.

Interactive Experience Of The Training

Two significant features emerged from the interactive style of the training favoured by the project team and the Aboriginal trainers. Firstly, it encouraged trainees to “see” Aboriginal people in a different light. They were not “clients” on the other side of the desk, or presenting problems to be solved; they were knowledgeable, competent people who were teaching them, the workers, something useful. Secondly, it engaged an emotional response to learning. Training concentrating on the provision of information usually uses didactic means, which distances the trainee from the subject. Here, people’s lived experiences were the information, and these provoked an empathetic reaction. Even the use, in this training, of information-giving at the beginning of the programme is set within a framework of interaction which is intended to immediately engage the trainee.

The positioning of Aboriginal people, their concentration on their past and identity, and the active and non-neutral nature of the training all contributed to the effects or major impacts of the project. They were central to the benefits experienced by trainers and trainees, and they were all matters which would be contested and resisted. These form the subject for examination in the following chapters. Prior to

50 I use “Narrative” here to indicate a larger story than that told by an individual, after the manner of Lyotard (1984)
that discussion I will conclude this chapter by situating the WWAP programme in the field of cross cultural training.

THE WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING

In 1989, when surveying the field for suitable models for designing the WWAP, the project team made two broad assumptions. One was that what we were doing fell within the realm of cross cultural training. The other was that we would find assistance in the literature to aid with the design. Both assumptions had more inaccurate elements than those which would prove to be helpful. I will examine cross cultural training first.

Cross Cultural Training

Cross cultural training describes a structured learning process to enable people from one cultural background to learn to interact more effectively with others from different cultural backgrounds (Gochenour and Janeway 1993; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Bhagat and Prien 1996; Cushner and Brislin 1997). Cross cultural training contains further complexities by its inter-related synonyms: intercultural, communication/orientation, understanding/interaction/training.

Distilling four broad goals from the current literature, Cushner & Brislin (1997, p. 2) suggest the aims include: the removal of obstacles which may impede people’s enjoyment or sense of well-being; the formation of positive relationships with hosts; the accomplishment of work-based tasks within a cross cultural setting; and overcoming the stress which results from a cross cultural experience.

Cross cultural training is a relatively recent activity emerging in North America following World War II particularly to support North American and especially United States’ interests in growing military, economic, humanitarian and
educational enterprises overseas. (Hoopes 1979; Damen 1987). Later, attention was directed internally to focus on “home” populations in business and government services with the resident Asian, African-American, and Hispanic populations, and with the increasing numbers of migrants and refugees. A similar emergence occurred in Great Britain during the movement of populations during the sixties.

Hoopes (1979) and Pusch (1979, p. vii) were among the first to describe the categories emerging from this fledgling industry, identifying ‘international intercultural’ and ‘domestic inter-ethnic’ (Hoopes) to distinguish between the overseas, sojourner and ‘home’ experiences. The former concentrated on learning for industry, business or social development purposes, and the latter mainly concentrated on ethnic groups’ disadvantage within the formal education system.

Advances since then include models being either discarded as being no longer suitable or practical, such as those based on behaviourism, or further developed, such as the culture assimilator (Attribution theory based) (Cushner and Landis 1996; Bhawak 1997), and the anti-discriminatory processes (Morgan 1991; Hollinsworth 1992; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Dansby and Landis 1996; Ferdman and Brody 1996; Fried and Matsumoto 1997). This latter model may also include the managing for diversity processes although some commentators might disagree (Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Nihas 1994). Oomkes & Thomas (1992) have added the relatively new form of training to acculturate new arrivals to a country, but not targeting their disadvantaged status (in effect, a reversal of the sojourner experience).

The apparently different models are categorised according to content. This includes raising awareness about one’s own values and cultural positioning; recognition of differences and acceptance that working together is possible; providing knowledge about immediate concerns, area and culture specific material; and confronting one’s own emotional reactions to the difficulties inherent in cross cultural work (Cushner and Brislin 1997, pp. 2-3). Although the approaches differ
in location, specific purpose, prime trainer, and other variables, these broad content areas are more or less the basis for what is presented in a training programme. The differences which occur are largely those which provide a socio-historical contextual overview, those which take the unashamedly political stance of anti-racism training, or those such as the diversity training which use a very wide definition of cultural difference. Damen offers a slightly different perspective, characterising process instead of content, suggesting these as cultural critic or cultural dialogist, derived from anthropological cultural relativists and the psychological traditions informed by Freud and Jung respectively (Damen 1987, p. 238).

Recent collections and categorisations of cross cultural training in Australia have been made by (Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Nihas 1994; Stubbs, Cunneen et al. 1996) who chart the emergence and trajectory of cross cultural training practice, noting its sustained connection with the migrant experience. While there are differences in the naming of categories, similarities are inevitable, as most models draw heavily on the material from the US and the UK. These writers note with interest the development of training for business to manage diversity (sometimes called Access and Equity Training - (Nihas 1994)), which owes a theoretical lineage to organisation literature, and posits the consequent shift in emphasis from cognitive and attitudinal goals to those of skills and competencies (Nihas 1994, p. 17), or from the emic (ethnographic) to etic (sociological) (Stubbs, Cunneen et al. 1996, p. 57).

Cross cultural training does not stand alone. As has appeared evident in the above short description, it derives its theoretical understandings from a larger sphere, being informed predominantly by adult education (for training processes) and the social sciences, anthropology in particular, (for understandings about culture). It is to these I turn next.
Adult Education And Training

Irrespective of various claims to differences between precepts from psychological and critical theory (Jarvis 1988; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997) and their relationship to adult education theory, both have a fundamental interest in and centring tendency of the idea of a conscious knowing subject which forms the basis for learning and teaching. The divergence of teaching and learning aims and methods can mask the convergence of foundationary principles, as the "self" retains its central privilege in the project, in either the development of a self (psychology) or the emancipation of a self (critical theory). Most education and training processes are informed by these principles (Cranton 1992; Stubbs, Cunneen et al. 1996; Giroux and Shannon 1997; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997).

Much training, including emancipatory and transformatory projects, use, unwittingly or not, learnings derived from psychology. For example, group norms established at the beginning of a training programme emphasise confidentiality and the provision of a safe and respectful learning environment which invites disclosure and risk-taking. There is often provision for debriefing and the expectation, albeit implicit, that the trainer will facilitate trainee growth and development, and will protect potentially vulnerable selves from unwarranted damage by guiding the learning process in respectful and sensitive ways, with a focus on self. Listening and facilitation skills, an emphasis on genuineness, trust, empathy, authenticity, and openness all characterise the expected interactions. Accordingly, the engendering of a trustful atmosphere and the relationship between trainer and trainee is of prime importance.

The other humanist-informed strand of adult education which leaches into the training process emerges from a critical perspective which promotes an emancipatory project. Freire’s problem-posing model is probably the best known

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51 The education/training debate is an interesting one, but is more than can be dealt with here. (For further good discussion see Jarvis 1988; Collins 1991; Tennant and Pogson 1995; Cranton 1996)
52 These theories have relevance for any future training process, but are not addressed in detail here.
here (Taylor 1993) but other adult educators of this persuasion also emphasise dialogue, and the development of analytical and evaluative skills, the intent of which is to lead to emancipatory action of an exploited subject in an explicitly political context. This pedagogical position which draws on critical and radical theory and is used by theorists such as McLaren (1995) and Giroux (1997) provides a critique of the functionalist approach to education including, but not specifically, adult education.

I do not dispute that the aims of a critically-oriented project and a psychologically-oriented enterprise differ, even though their foundations are common. Although they may use similar processes, they do diverge into different practices, such as the Interpersonal (psychologically-oriented approach), and the Anti-racist (critically-oriented approach) models. However, given their philosophical heritage, it is not surprising that there are other points at which they converge, which will become apparent in a later discussion.

The other strand which informs cross cultural training is that derived from an anthropological understanding of culture.

_The Paradoxes Of Understanding Culture_

Culture and its interpretations are another of those terms the contestation of which often masks a humanist foundation. It is nevertheless central to cross cultural training, and articulation of its definition by the trainers considered to be imperative (Jayasuria 1990; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994), if for no other reason than to signal the position of the trainers. That this in itself can have serious consequences we shall see later.

Trying to give a specific definition of culture is less easily achieved. As Raymond Williams reminds us, culture is one of the most complicated words in the English language (Williams 1983, p. 87) leading to misunderstandings and different
interpretations. The certainty required by foundational humanism has perhaps resulted in the conflicts which ensue over definitions competing for primacy. Yet leaving culture as an indeterminate concept can also be detrimental to a positive outcome for an activity such as cross cultural training. The paradox is one not yet settled from within the humanist project, and postmodern approaches are deliberate in their refusal to do so.53

The definition offered in the WWAP materials is general and encompassing.

The knowledge people use to generate and interpret social behaviour ... therefore refers to ways of thinking, feeling and believing, as well as the way people go about doing things – their actions, behaviours and activities. (Department for Community Services 1990, p. 72)

This definition clearly derives from an anthropological understanding, and makes the point that it is one of many which might be useful, suggesting alternatives exist. More importantly it recognises the differences between people as being constitutive of who they are and how they live, and recommends trainers and trainees consider diversity for its richness and not as a hierarchy.

These considerations do not necessarily find favour with people whose upbringing has shaped their expectations or sense of self which depends on a ranked system. Nor do they appeal to people already fighting for a place of equality in the world. One of the major difficulties is to consider culture, however defined, as the only filter or veil through which people live their lives, which at one and the same time centres and obscures it, and provides an opportunity for cultural determinism. To consider lives to have a cultural contributor as one of many permits an agency which can change and differ from one’s cultural companions in ways which do not separate. An undifferentiated positioning is to condemn people to a future already mapped. For people occupying already lowly rungs on humanity’s ascribed ladder,

53 I return to a discussion of culture in later chapters.
opportunities for “advancement”, while few, mean leaving a milieu which has
given a place in the world, however harsh or disadvantaged. A fixed notion of
culture results in a cultural hierarchy. But a relative ascription to culture gives
primacy by default to the dominant group, who, by the power of choice, may
choose acceptance or rejection of another’s self-definition.

Posing The Problems

The overview presented reveals five connected problems. Although they may be
considered to be variations on a theme, I will deal with them separately. They
relate to the dominant paradigm informing the practice of training; the peripheral
positioning of training as a learning activity; the issue of pedagogical rationale; the
lack of indigenous training models; and the choice of change strategies within
training.

The first issue concerns the dominant paradigm wherein sits the practice of cross
cultural training. The activity emerged from a Western desire, albeit inclusive of a
humanitarian purpose, and from an understanding of the world informed by a
philosophical tradition emphasising and explaining development and progress.
Even though the pathways evident in the field of cross cultural training towards
such progress seem to diverge into individually-focused approaches, and those
taking a more critical stance, their common heritage ensure they retain an
embeddedness in Western thinking. Assumptions made about cross cultural
solutions to how people from different cultural backgrounds can live and work
together equably originated from the value base of predominantly white, middle
class, intellectual, industrial, and developed North America. This position uses a
discipline most suited to the study of individual interaction- psychology- and its
interpretation of what is meant by culture gleaned from another particularly
Western discipline -cultural anthropology. The merging of these two perspectives
seems to constitute a certain cultural and intellectual chauvinism when compared to
the usual target culture(s) of generally non-white, different intellectual traditions,
located in either a developing nation or minority group, and correspondingly less powerful.

There arise a number of issues connected with an individualistic approach.

Firstly, the privileging of the individual experience tends to overlook, or relegate to lesser importance, the effect of the wider social, political, and economic setting, and how that contributes to the reasons why people from different cultural backgrounds sometimes continue to mistrust, fear and scorn each other. A structural analysis does not appear frequently or substantially in many of the more individually focused approaches.

Secondly, although Cushner & Brislin frame some of their aims in neutral form, how to overcome barriers to effective interaction and communication represent by far the majority of cross cultural training aims (Mitchell 1990; Kalowski 1991; McCaffery 1993; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Mullavey-O'Byrne 1994; Blake, Heslin et al. 1996). Thus the context remains in a problem solving mode within a negative context (McCaffery 1993, p. 223; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). This, in an individually framed perspective, can run the risk of locating the problem with the individual, the learner or the person from the “target culture”. The danger then exists of “blaming the victim”, or labelling the individual inadequate, thus relieving societal structures of responsibility for what may not be solely an individual issue.

Thirdly, the uses of psychological methods to produce learning have their drawbacks. The earlier reference to the similarity between a counselling relationship, and that between trainer and trainee, at least in traditional usage, (cf. feminist counselling practices Laird 1989; Hudson, Ayensu et al. 1994; Lewis 1996; Sands 1996). Implicit then, are expert roles and therapeutic goals which hinder mutual learning. Ethical issues concerning privacy and protection arise. Consequent expectations that the trainer/teacher be the source of knowledge and
wisdom, be a provider and comforter, an object of admiration and envy, and the judge and authority figure, are likely to seriously disrupt what should be a journey of learning together (Tennant and Pogson 1995, pp. 177-8).

This extends to the fourth point which relates to the privilege accorded the adult learner. Privileging adult self-direction in learning and particularly concerning experience as providing a knowledgeable foundation for learning leads to a possibility of further inequality between already unequal groups. Who can question the truth of someone’s experience? In accepting the translation of experience into knowledge, authenticity is treated as unproblematic, difference is eliminated and experience is accepted as neutral, not representational (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997, pp. 101-2).

Contradictorily, a psychological perspective may also work against the individual in a struggle between individual and societal structures, especially those embodied in organisations, for whom psychological practices have also devised processes for managing progress (Clark 1988; Jones and May 1991; Aungles and Parker 1992; Peters 1992; Albert 1998). The status quo is thereby inevitably maintained.

The other main direction provided within the humanistic paradigm seems to provide an opposite view. Critical pedagogy provides a powerful disturbance of traditional methods of information dissemination, and provision and development of knowledge. In particular, it enters the realm of the Other, and addresses a postcolonial project with a promise of challenging hierarchical and oppressive structures, and validating different knowledges. However, this contentious style is unlikely to be supported organisationally, and its goals will almost certainly not include the liberation of the workers.

Here the concerns relate to an oppositional politics, which invariably attract oppositional responses. The very nature of casting “oppressed” and “oppressors”
allocates roles which people play out. RAT\textsuperscript{54} (UK) and anti-racism training (US and UK) deliberately use these strategies to demonstrate the extent of racism, but neither is conducted without angry and rejecting reactions. They are not the essence of reconciliation.

An additional criticism could be made here, similar to that separating liberal feminism and radical feminism, with Equal Opportunity training and anti-racist training occupying the respective positions. Delgado (1995 p. xv) provides an extensive account of the value of civil rights legislation (read EO) to whites more than to blacks. The former actually supports the status quo while the latter seeks to change it. Perhaps one of the needs here is to try to define a new categorical framework which positions the approaches differently.

Some of the particular variations (Jane Elliott’s brand of anti-racism (William 1987) and some diversity training (Paige and Martin 1996) for example) provide a sustained structural analysis to support this oppositional process. RAT attends only minimally to this, garnering the potential for trainees to feel guilty and blamed, with no recourse to a structural analysis to aid understanding. Inside and outside the training room trainees are likely to respond angrily, sometimes deliberately sabotaging efforts at change. This type of training by itself is likely to leave untouched the prevailing power differentials in both actions and attitudes which conspire to maintain positions.

A contradictory situation may also exist here. Critical pedagogy is still on the fringes of the learning profession, and although Freire and other critical pedagogical thinkers have increased their domain, they still operate within a system which only allows small change at the margins. Should an organisation auspice

\footnote{\textsuperscript{54} Race Awareness Training. There is a considerable body of literature which critiques these processes. (Good overviews may be found in Gurnah 1984; Shaw 1990; Hollinsworth 1992; Pruegger and Rogers 1994; Ptak, Cooper et al. 1995; Hollinsworth 1998)}
training for ‘conscientising’ purposes, the very notion of “permission” suggests a colonising tendency.

An abiding problem with equating, or using, adult learning theory to frame cross cultural training, is that adult learning theory too is and has been largely a domesticating exercise. Both psychology or critical theory, whose world views are shaped by a Western discourse, setting goals, effectiveness measures for success, and processes for use in the training activity, run the risk of replicating those positions.

It would seem apparent that the critique provided by Usher et al (1997) in reference to adult education, may also be made here. Even though there is a deliberately political stance from the anti-racist perspectives, none of the relative models de-centre the autonomous, rational, conscious and unified self, which is a firm product of the dominant Western paradigm (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). Further, all approaches draw on processes informed by psychological understandings of interpersonal interaction. (Even Freire’s conscientisation process unashamedly draws on a psychological base (Taylor 1993)). Perhaps the real problem is that they all sit within the same domesticating framework.

This point constrains what presents as a varied and wide field with its panoply of models, all with purportedly different contexts and inferred purposes suggesting real choice. In the end, real choice is narrower than we are led to believe.

Problem two emerges from the previous one. Training is at best a peripheral activity in the field of learning. It operates from the good will or at the command of the organisation, which then sets the goals, processes and effectiveness measures; or within the domain of professional development, which again tends towards a requirement set by a dominant body. The scope, then, for cross cultural training to be anything other than the handmaiden of the business, organisational,

55 The term used most often in this framework, drawing on Freire’s teaching (1972).
educational, legislative and other interest systems to do their bidding, is even further reduced.

A learning activity which is auspiced as training by an organisation for its workforce is also likely to have external political influences. This is certainly true of the WWAP, which emerged from several connected sources. Adult learners might expect to direct their own learning, according to adult learning precepts, however their learning experiences were in fact shaped by the expectations of the organisation. Tension was likely to arise. And the issue mentioned above, referring to the un-likelihood of organisations condoning overtly oppositional training activities, is also applicable here.

**Problem three** is again related to those above, and refers to the pedagogical rationale which informs the training process. Whether from a psychological or critical theory perspective, determining how learning occurs and hence the route to the state of change requires specific and clear articulation.

A major difficulty appears to be the links between attitudes, understanding and behaviour. The purported universality of these characteristics notwithstanding, the linkages between “learning about”, “feeling or believing about” and changes in behaviour are tenuously drawn. Again, assumptions are made about these connections and what needs to be done in order to effect the desired outcome. Race relations training which addresses Equal Opportunity principles is perhaps the most clear, for it states which behaviours are not acceptable in a prohibitory message, and change is required by law. But EO practice is only one part of a larger whole, and it is by no means as clear in the other approaches, and more work needs to be done in this area (Nihas 1994).

The recommendation for cultural perspectives to be made explicit should also apply to educators and trainers in regard to their informing paradigm, for much teaching and learning occurs in settings which provide taken for granted assumptions about
ultimate aims (Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994). The distance between objectives and outcomes is indeed unsurpassable if there is no clear understanding of how one achieves the other. It is a pedagogical theory which helps that bridge to be crossed.

**Problem four** relates to the significant lack of attention in the cross cultural training literature to working with Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples.

Australia has yet to witness the development of a significant body of literature which talks about the cross cultural training experience with its Indigenous populations and is developed from Australian conditions. What does exist here is almost entirely located within the migrant experience, having reached prominence in the eighties with the Federal Government’s multicultural policy (Stubbs, Cunneen et al. 1996). A subsequent bibliography published in 1991 shows that of thirty kits, handbooks and manuals available then, none mentions working with Aboriginal people (Cole 1991).

The invisibility of Australian Indigenous peoples, and North American First Nation peoples, in the current literature is a potent statement.

Finally, **problem five** relates to the processes used in training, which again emerge from psychologically informed understandings. They are not usually derived from the world view of the people who are the focus for the training.

Specific criticisms include the reliance on a didactic model of providing information to address stereotypical attitudes. Presenting potentially emotive information without associated means of debriefing or attending to the emotional outcomes may be counterproductive (Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994, p.32; Collard 1998, p. 19) or further reinforce stereotypes (McCaffery 1993, p. 220). Hollinsworth refers to a potential for a backlash and cites an example of Police training which served to reinforce stereotypical views and reify culture which then excludes people who do not conform to the romantic ideal (Hollinsworth 1992, p.
43). Trainee participation is mainly passive and there is insufficient link made between information and its translation into effective behaviour. If the trainee already holds stereotypical views then presentation of learned facts is unlikely to change these beliefs (Harrison and Hopkins 1967).

This criticism extends to the provision of such aids as the “check list”, a list of “do’s and don’ts” much sought after by trainees. Rule or rote learnt behaviours add nothing to a cultural understanding, rather leaving the learner non-plussed when faced with the inevitable slightly different behavioural response, much in the same way as the foreign language phrase book runs out of use after you’ve ordered the first cup of coffee.

And the issues raised concerning the similarity of a training session to that of counselling are also pertinent here. If counselling-derived techniques are used in the process of training, then there are ethical issues of confidentiality, protection from harm and duty of care from qualified professionals to be considered.

**Placing The Working With Aboriginal People Training Programme In The Literature**

At the outset of the project, the project team already had some ideas of what design features were important to include and avoid, and the consultations added substance to those positions. Our expectations that what we were doing fell within the realms of cross cultural training and that we would find guidance in the literature for suitable models proved to be partially correct, but unhelpful. Predominantly we found the existing designs did not allow for the two main features we wanted to incorporate. The training had to be run and controlled by Aboriginal people. The only design which allowed for such an event (save the immersion model\textsuperscript{56} which was not practical in the training room) was that

\textsuperscript{56} The immersion (area simulation) models were commonly used by Peace Corps trainees as a preliminary to their postings. (Gudykunst, Hammer et al. 1977; Cushner and Brislin 1997)
emanating from the UK where black trainers used an anti-racist approach. It was this latter feature which the project team rejected on the grounds that such an approach was likely to (and indeed had) induce opposition from the trainees (Hollinsworth 1992; Dominelli 1997; Hollinsworth 1998). Trainees did not take kindly to the overt accusations that they were racist and the consequent guilt and blame did little to promote on-going productive working relationships. Hence, although eight model types\textsuperscript{57} were discovered in the research phase, none, on their own, were considered to be suitable. The WWAP was designed according to the principles mentioned above.

My current description of this model locates it within a reconciliatory framework, one which engages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in a joint approach to finding solutions to problems of interaction, from the information given by Aboriginal people. There were no off-the-shelf packages which described the situation of Aboriginal people in the human services and so the framework had to be constructed. Our pedagogical framework was a melding of a competency approach (that if we could describe the activities which people did and where they went wrong in those activities, then together we could learn different ways of acting) with the political stance of Freire (1972) (that those who are suffering unequal treatment are the proper ones to identify how they want to be treated). In this it differed from those models described in the contemporary literature, as almost none of them referred to Indigenous populations, nor used the reconciliation processes as distinct from the anti-racist processes, much less relied entirely on the target population to take control of the new learning process.

A model to provide ways of working with this population was missing. The project team suspected that training was occurring in government departments similar to the one for whom we were preparing our work, but that it was out of sight, piece-meal, and largely uninformed by theoretical considerations. There was not even the type of reporting of programmes that is now starting to appear (Aboriginal cross

\textsuperscript{57} Young (1991)
cultural training 1989; Wyse 1991; Milli Milli Wungka 1993; Simpson and Munns 1993; Thomas 1994; CRA 1996). It is not to be expected that such articles should include pedagogical underpinnings, (as Cope et al (1994) note in one of the programmes they review, participants are not likely to have a sociological background, and so theory, as understood as being an academic exercise forms no formal part in the proceedings).

The confusion in terminology mentioned above could also have been a factor in our failure to locate a suitable and appropriate model. We were clear that we wanted to do more than “sensitise” trainees to or make them “aware” of Aboriginal culture. The contract specified both, but it also quite specifically stated that the aim for its development was to assist staff develop ‘appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal people’ (Centre for Aboriginal Studies 1989, p.1) which indicated it had a practical application and was intended to be more than just raising awareness. Yet, as we shall see, Aboriginal Cultural Awareness is a term with currency, rather than Cross Cultural Training with Aboriginal People.

The WWAP conforms best to that catch-all description of an integrated approach (as described variously by Gudykunst, Hammer et al. 1977; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994; Cushner and Brislin 1997) with its mix of didactic and experiential processes, its “self” and “other” examinations, and the culture general and culture specific content. Its reliance on the psychologically informed individual learning and group processes is evident, and it works through a sequence of learner directed, and trainer guided activities towards a conclusion of providing answers to problems posed at the outset. In its full form, it encourages participants to identify and define problems, then practice and evaluate their solutions before moving on to the next set of problems. It has a socio-political base from which to work, and it relies on the knowledge and worldview of the Aboriginal people as presented by them to inform and guide all the processes. It is evidently more than an awareness raising and sensitising process.
However evident this may appear to me, others do not necessarily see it the same way. On a number of occasions I have realised that when I blithely use the term “cross cultural” to describe the work that I have been doing with the WWAP, others’ expectations have been quite different. In fora in which I expect to have a dialogue about helping people to focus their work practices to be inclusive of Aboriginal cultural requirements I am repeatedly told that I am really referring to cultural awareness training, instead of cross cultural training. Yet, we as a project team deliberately set out to deliver a design which would do more than make people aware. We sought to provide the structure and means by which, admittedly through increasing awareness and understanding, among other things such as knowledge and information about correct legislative requirements and cultural matters, for example, people could move beyond “knowing” to “doing”, and that “doing” would be developed jointly with Aboriginal people.

In a later development, I have been advised by an Aboriginal colleague that training for the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal setting should more properly be termed bi-cultural training to clearly distinguish it from that occurring between migrant and ethnic groups. This may be one reason why such training as this is often preceded by “Aboriginal cultural awareness” (Nihas 1994) as a term. It may also explain why literature concerning Aboriginal cultural training is absent from the cross cultural training journals.

The literature is expanding rapidly. Until recently the main focus has been on ethnic or racial difference, but now cultural difference includes gender, sexual orientation, physical and intellectual ability, and age to name the more frequently mentioned (Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Cope, Pauwels et al. 1994). The field of cross cultural training has expanded to meet these challenges, and almost daily, it seems, more approaches and techniques are being developed to attend to the surfacing issues. It remains true, however, that North American and British developments dominate the literature and practice, with the writings and practices
conducted here in Australia drawing liberally on their overseas counterparts. And still, Indigenous people remain relatively unseen in this literature.

Before I go on to the next section, I pause for the first of my emic interludes. In the Section following that I provide the accounts of people’s experiences which encompass the programme and the project and relate specifically (but not solely) to the matters raised here to Aboriginal centrality to the programme, their emphasis on history and identity and the emotional non-neutral nature of the training.

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A BIOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY: DISCOVERING PERSONAL WHITENESS

By the time I started work on the WWAP project in 1989 I had spent about fifteen years working in and around Aboriginal affairs. The changes during this period, about rights and needs, government and social responsibility, working for and working with people, in the circles I was in, were both dramatic and paradoxical. As non-Aboriginal workers in the welfare field, aspiring to social justice, I and my colleagues committed to a policy of Aboriginal self-determination while at the same time questioning what our future role would be as part of that political struggle. While that paradox presented murky waters to navigate, there was sparkling clarity about how far there still was to go for Aboriginal people to achieve basic social justice. We needed look no further for an example than the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody, which had just convened.

As I was soon to realise on starting this thesis, the journeys of those of us who worked on the WWAP project had their geneses in varying times, situations, experiences, and parts of the country. Mine can be traced back to Halls Creek, the memory lingering longest:

Uncomprehending eyes, fearful, stared above tearstained cheeks from dusty black faces. Tiny children, thin, clad in threadbare cotton, shoe-less. Their names, we were told, were Flora and Gerald, sister and brother. They had, that day, been driven by the headmaster from their homes on the border between WA and the Territory, the only children to arrive that day from so far away. They were to start school. We took them in to the large dining room which doubled as a recreation room where, already, other children, noisy and familiar, were greeting, teasing, fighting the previous year’s school mates, shepherding brothers and sisters, grabbing from the bowls fruit, unaccustomed, but problematic delights which would, with the other rich and different food, result soon in boils. Separated that night into a boys’ and girls’ dormitory, who can tell what they thought, felt. An older girl and boy allocated to look after

59 A small town in the north of WA.
them, make sure they showered, brushed teeth, and
dressed in new, stiff night wear, when they climbed
into separate beds with sheets and slept alone.

They may not have visits from their families who
travelled large distances with the cattle work, but, in
any case, family visits had previously been
discouraged, as it would only upset them, and hinder
their progress at school. They were quiet in class.
We had not even the thought to enquire what level of
English they spoke - didn't they all speak English?
What progress? They did as best they could
understand and were told. But, in any case, most of
the children would only proceed, later, into 'project'
classes to fit them for their return to their lives, girls
to cook, and boys to mend fences. I don't know if
their demeanour altered in the next year before they
returned home, but if they smiled, I did not see it. If
they talked, to anyone, to each other, I did not hear it.
Partly as a small step towards attending to what
injustice I, we, did not fully comprehend at the time,
being newcomers to the North and, indeed, to the
country our forebears had colonised, during that
year we changed the duties of a domestic worker to
include her spending a large part of her working day
with the children, talking, telling stories, watching
them play. What use was this for Flora and Gerald
were they from the same language group? Was she
an appropriate guardian, teller of stories? Our
ignorance was, then, profound, now, only marginally
better informed.

Now, twenty years later I wonder about these two, brother and sister, removed
from their family and all the life they had known for five and six years.
Inserted into an environment to sleep alone in beds in different dormitories,
eating strange foods which initially didn't suit them, addressed by names so
patently not their own, they were expected to learn to read, write, speak about
topics which didn't appear in their cosmology all in a language which was not
their own. What part did I play in the trauma of these two young Aboriginal
children? What could I have done to ease their discomfort?

These events happened more than twenty years ago now, but I have never
forgotten Flora and Gerald's faces. I wonder if this trauma occurs still in the
1990s. I wonder what, in our ignorance, we thought we were doing. I wonder if 'education at all costs' was helpful to these two young children. I wonder where they are now, and what they are doing, and whether that first year of Western schooling helped them to do what was important according to their community. Did their family have a choice? Did they want it for Flora and Gerald?

This was one of many moments which have stayed with me over the years I have been doing the work that I do - community development, training, welfare work, in a setting of demonstrably unequal circumstances and experiences of people, some white and some black. My upbringing in rural England and life as a student in large conurbations was relatively untouched by experience of other cultures, and especially races. As a young mother I left England and the larger social issues which were about to change its social fabric in 1968. It was 1974 when I first met Flora and Gerald.

PRIVATE TROUBLE TO PUBLIC ISSUES
This journey taking me from a young mother to a professional worker in 1989 has brought me into contact with Aboriginal lives in many different settings. These encounters stimulated moments of bafflement (Spivak and Young 1991) which have endured. None of the theoretical or ideological positions have been sufficient to explain the persistently unequal positions of Aboriginal people. Personal experience provided no solutions either, for some of my contacts had presented me with contradictions, had tested my idealism, had revealed I was as culpable of racism and stereotyping as other people I was so quick to condemn. My departure from a field position was as much fuelled by frustration and despair as it was by my own professional and social isolation. The sight of people drinking themselves into oblivion each fortnight left me with little energy to engage those same people in productive activities when they were sober. The decisions I was making about the placement of children were influenced by the inebriated and unstable lives of their parents. I concealed poorly an irritation at having to make special arrangements to accommodate Aboriginal people's practices. Organising airlifts, for example, to

60 Local area office providing generic welfare services.
supply stranded people who had taken the opportunity of good rains to 'yandy' surface tin ore, I did with bad grace. Official warnings not to go went unheeded against an economic imperative. The official was me.

What price my ideals, my convictions of social justice?

These experiences occurred during the seventies. Here I retell a story told to me in the nineties by an Aboriginal worker in the human services department which provides the context for this research. He is angrily telling me of an example of why he considers social justice to be mainstream wanking.

... one of our senior staff, she was a child protection worker who said that she wasn't going to take any Aboriginal cases ... now it was left unchecked, this lady apologised to me, and said, 'Oh Ian, I don't mean to offend you by it', but to do that it makes it (worse) ... I thought hard and long about it, so I went and saw [the manager] and I said, 'you're going to have to deal with it' ... now I've made a play against one of our own on this area knowing that they've got Aboriginal cases which they are having difficulty with, they are very hard to deal with, they're not going to have the training and resource and there's not the Aboriginal staff or supports in the community to work with those people ...

So it's, you know, WWAP training's nice but these people have a fucking responsibility that they work with my people in the same way that they worked in domestic violence situations with people, substance abuse, they work out what those frameworks are, they look for key spots in those frameworks they work with their own, you know ...

It was an outright, it was a racist statement ... it was a racist statement, and we need to have the training, and ... to me it was also saying ... when you work with Aboriginal families ... it's tacked on the mainstream ... we've got a situation where at last annual report thirty percent of the department's child protection cases were Aboriginal families so two

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61 Using a shallow bowl to sift tin ore from gravel.
thirds of it gets a framework and a third is given three or four pages, and that's reflected across the department.

That separated it for me once and for all. Social justice to me now is what I consider mainstream wanking ... we should take power back and enact our own power and one way of doing it is saying 'I'm now informing you that this is how it is supposed to be. If you fail to do this then you'll be held accountable' ... I don't see that it was a choice between Black or White because that's already been decided. We need to say as a community, not a Black issue or a White issue, but we as a community need to resolve the issue of why our kids, who happen to be Aboriginal are all in jail, not because it's a bloody Black issue. Aboriginality is not a criteria by which we service people, we service people because they're in need. The fact that they're Aboriginal is the way that they work it out, so yeah.

Ian's anger is palpable here, directed at a worker who can choose whether or not she will provide services to Aboriginal people; at the department which provides little in the way of supports to the workers, or guidelines to help them work with unfamiliar situations; and a society which allows injustice and inequality to continue. No wonder Ian has lost faith in social justice.

My own turning point came in that northern town when I first saw Flora and Gerald, although I was not to realise then how salient it would be for my future directions. Reflecting on my life to locate my own connection with the public issues present here allowed me to identify these and other moments which have led to this place and activity. Examining what they mean is the hermeneutic activity in which I am now engaged. One interpretation resides in an increasing (but not complete) understanding of my own Whiteness. 63 Being

62 As recommended by Denzin as a research strategy (1989c).
63 Over the last few years a movement started in the US has reached Australia and stimulated a discussion of what White means and how it is enacted (Lucal 1996; Dyer 1997; Hill 1997; Ferber 1998). This is despite Katz, who seems to have coined the term, and is responsible for Jane Elliott’s form of training started writing in the seventies (Katz 1977; Katz and Ivey 1977; Katz 1978). Australia’s body of ‘whiteness’ literature is starting, with a notable conference held in 1998 out of which is to be published conference proceedings.
White gives me privileges, too many to count. I have daily licence, as Peggy McIntosh (1992) has pertinently commented, to ignore the fact of Whiteness and its effect on those not-White around me. I have not felt the terror of which hooks speaks (1995), and on my first reading I grappled, horrified, with its implications. Yet, here I am, being White, talking about Black. The dilemmas posed by this position are equivalent to the innumerable positions of privilege. They emerge from the tensions named in the previous two chapters, and reflect clearly the almost silent claiming of ground through an academic exercise. My attempts to counter the worst of the effects of such positioning will be judged by readers, Black and White. I offer the guide, which I use, of Lila Watson's words.64

If you have come to help me you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

For it is, as Ian says, not a bloody Black issue. It is indeed, a bloody White issue.

64 This is a much-quoted statement, but no-one really is certain where it originated. Stringer (1999, p. 193) uses it in his recent edition.
SECTION TWO: PARTICIPANT'S ACCOUNTS

Section Two comprises the body of the accounts of the people in this study. Here people describe the effects their involvement has had on them personally, professionally and as organisational actors. They reflect on individual learnings and how these have been applied to practices in the workplace. They tell of benefits and costs, to themselves and others.

Chapter Three describes the effects of the project on the Aboriginal workers, who found themselves spotlighted by this project – they were the central players. The chapter begins with the example of one of the Aboriginal trainers to show how some of the trainers gained prominence through their embracing of the processes and opportunities of the WWAP. This is contrasted with experiences of others who found their involvement to be punishing or negative in other ways.

Chapter Four describes the effects of the project on personal practices and organisational processes of the non-Aboriginal staff, who had support and administrative roles and (for some) key decision-making responsibilities in the performance of the WWAP. It will be shown that even the least central of the players could affect its success or failure. This chapter provides accounts of learning and resistance, rejection and withdrawal, and the effects these actions had on organisational processes. The central-peripheral positionings were not static, and the movements between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff led to the complexities evident in the performance of the programme.

Section Two concludes with another of the interludes which provide a bridge between sections and an opportunity for me to reflect on and further develop the interwoven theme of Whiteness. In this ‘regressive-progressive’ pause between emic accounts and etic analysis, I question organisational uses of Whiteness.
CHAPTER THREE: EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT ON ABORIGINAL WORKERS

The design for the programme specified that Aboriginal staff were to be central in its performance and organisation. In addition to Aboriginal control (Olga’s requirement) direction by Aboriginal people has other advantages. They can best demonstrate diversity, as one example (among others). Visual enactment has a greater impact on trainees who can witness difference and discuss firsthand the range of cultural experiences with people whose lived experiences they are than merely reading about Aboriginal clans or tribes in a book. The previous discussion of different models of training and the underlying theory should indicate, however, that the pivotal position of Aboriginal people in managing the training processes could bring tensions and potential problems. For example, although William, a non-Aboriginal trainee, reported that he believed the Aboriginal guest speakers did not blame non-Aboriginal people for the general plight of Aboriginal people, the very nature of the material could well induce guilt in the trainees, with subsequent feelings of resentment. Such has been the experience of the anti-racist training, described previously (Jones 1983; Gurnah 1984; Hollinsworth 1992). The ensuing implications of Aboriginal control and ownership of the programme were barely considered in the design. The accounts in this chapter present the effects of having Aboriginal trainers leading the process, and particularly show that they have been significant benefits to some of the trainers, while at the same time others have found the experience too onerous to continue.

WORKING IN THE SPOTLIGHT: ISSUES OF POWER, CONTROL, STATUS AND RELATIONSHIPS FOR ABORIGINAL WORKERS

Arguably the greatest effect of the training project has been on the Aboriginal people in the department. Instead of being incorporated into the general work of the department, where, in most places, they occupied the lowest of occupational
position, Aboriginal workers were thrust into the spotlight by their centrality in the Working With Aboriginal People project. theirs were to be the identifiable faces of the programmes. There were generally only one or two Aboriginal workers in workplaces, so they could claim a measure of anonymity. They occupied roles which did not thrust them into the spotlight. The WWAP design was to change that. The implementation plan included all Aboriginal staff as potential trainers or in some way involved in the training. The aim was that the staff choose their own level of comfort and participation, but that they should all have a sense of ownership of the training and its materials. As such, potentially all Aboriginal staff could be the centre of a training activity with the eyes of their colleagues, managers, or Executive on them as they sought to assist professional staff to change the way they delivered services to Aboriginal clients.

This change of roles, which was a reversal for many, was to have consequent impacts on them. Recognition for having valuable knowledge; the development of skills and confidence; the formation of sustaining and productive relationships across ethnic and organisational boundaries; and control and ownership of the programme leading to pride and confidence were all outcomes of their involvement. The obverse is also true. Aboriginal ways, skills and knowledge were challenged and dismissed as ineffectual and irrelevant; personal issues intervened; and existing relationships disintegrated. These experiences left some Aboriginal workers feeling powerful, and others attacked. Aboriginal workers’ status, visibility and influence in the department constituted a contested terrain. The implicit challenging of a previously un-challenged way of operating was not going to go un-noticed. This will be discussed further in a later chapter. Marian’s story, to follow, highlights the attainments and benefits experienced by some Aboriginal trainers.
'Something of Value': Positive Impacts Of Increased Visibility

Training programmes are usually envisaged as places for learning for the trainees. Other outcomes for the Working With Aboriginal People training programme were for the trainers such as Marian, who found her experience of being a trainer in the WWAP project positive, beneficial and productive. Her story also illustrates some of the impacts experienced by a number of other Aboriginal staff. Marian was working as a clerical worker when she participated in one of the first Train The Trainer programmes. She was not fully prepared for the role she would take, or the activity she would engage in over the next two years. By the time Marian started her social work course, two years later, she had conducted the most WWAP training programmes of all trainers, becoming very proficient. Marian’s story is hers, but it exemplifies much of the WWAP process and what it was like to be an Aboriginal trainer at the beginning of the WWAP project.

Marian's Story: Building Confidence And Taking Control

Unaccustomed to the training role, and feeling unsure of herself, Marian was soon to realise that she had greater knowledge than the other staff of the department whom she was training. That knowledge was also sought after and valued, and made her feel like the expert.

The non-Aboriginal staff, because they were from professional backgrounds, and it felt good to be able to pass on something to them that they, they honestly didn’t know. And that's what surprised me about the early workshops, that these people just didn’t know anything about Aboriginal people.

Being “professional” meant to Marian that these people could be expected to know about the client group with whom they were working. The differential in roles did not give them a greater knowledge than Marian, which was a surprise. Marian reflects now about the nature of expertise and realises that she still has much to
learn and to know. What has stayed with her was that she knew more than the workers who were her senior in occupational status.

I felt like an expert saying, 'well the way you do things is different' ... but as my studies and as the training went on and on, I realised I'm not really the expert [laughs] so I came down a peg or two.

This increasing awareness gave Marian a sense of power and being in control.

[I felt] powerful. [laughs] [I was training] clinical psychs [sic], the divisional admin. [sic] officers, team leaders, yeah, people that was anything above me, any level above me ... field staff, front counter, yeah, just about every level in the department .... And it felt like I was in charge, I was in control of the whole show. And they had a question, or they had to come through me if they wanted to ask something.

Marian identifies how she developed her commitment to the process, relating it to her own preference to be well prepared.

I tend not to do things half heartedly, I like to appear confident, I really prepare myself 'cos I don't want to make a fool of myself, so I do it like that, it's just that commitment, yeah, commitment. If I am going to do something, to do it well, and that's just the line I took.

But it was more than just a personal preparation strategy. As time went on, Marian became convinced of the need to transmit the information about Aboriginal history and lives in order for the disadvantages to be rectified.

[It was] a personal thing, yeah, it was a personal thing ... it just became an ownership thing for me too, that it was time for me getting out of there, telling non-Aboriginal people that there was, there was differences, and there were things that were wrong, so, yeah, like a personal crusade, I think.
Other trainers also reflected these feelings of ownership. Marian can identify that for them too there was a sense of owning the process which was important.

*I think there was ownership of the programme, like it was an Aboriginal cultural awareness programme. I think we, yeah, owned the programme. We owned the workshop.*

These gradual realisations of knowing more, gaining control and becoming confident were rewards to Marian, and potentially to other Aboriginal trainers, in these reversals of roles.

Marian herself transformed the programme. Becoming more and more confident, she added her own material and her own processes.

*[I was] actually preparing programmes, writing up exercises, 'cos I've written up case scenarios, and everything.*

Power and control, increased confidence, and skills emerge from the practice of doing.

*Just by doing. Actually just by doing the workshop ... the 1905 Act and the history thing, I think it really affected me because with my partner at the time, he'd been removed and placed in a mission. So it became like a personal thing for me ... I think, yes, getting confidence.*

One the consequences of moving out of the usual role-based occupational setting, was the opportunity for forming relationships which didn't rely on roles or the hierarchical structure. Importantly, too, trainers started to form relationships across ethnic allegiances. Marian was from another state and thus did not have the ethnic connections to people in the South West, where she worked. She was to form close
professional relationships with other trainers. In addition, as already mentioned, the programme delivery depended on teams comprising people whose usual roles were to organise and deliver training programmes to provide support to the Aboriginal trainers. Marian describes the team with which she was most involved as friendly and supportive, leading to professional connections and personal friendships which have endured.

Marian believes her team of Human Resources Officers (HROs) and Training and Development Officers (TDOs) trusted her, especially to ask for assistance when she believed she needed it and to let them know what she was doing so that they too could be confident in the direction they were all taking.

> So that sort of support was there for me ... I think the building up that relationship, they trusted me to go off and do my own thing.

Marian was very thorough and conscientious and took the initiative as this statement shows.

> And I sort of handed them the outline of the programme and they'd say 'that's fine'. And plus like in between ... when we had the breaks [in the programme] I'd say to Veronica you know, 'how're we going? give me feedback', she was really good like that.

She was grateful and learned a lot. She became a dedicated trainer. Marian’s thoroughness led to her increasing competence which resulted in Marian and her support team working well together. Marian recalls these interactions with pleasure, especially as she has remained friendly with these people, and they became more than a support team. She also believed they provided her with the necessary assistance when she needed it. However, in her account she acknowledges that she had to request assistance.
If you didn't approach them, how were they supposed to know?

The point, though, was the package design did not provide for selective or conditional support. It should not have been the task of the trainer to ask for assistance. It again puts Aboriginal people in a supplicant position. Furthermore, the relationships as described by Marian here, look more like a supervisory than a support relationship.

I always consulted them, like 'I'm having problems with this Veronica, I really can't'...

Her support team knew Marian would come to them for advice and to check her work.

Nevertheless, these experiences left Marian feeling in control. It could so easily have been otherwise. Marian had to battle her non-Aboriginal colleagues in order to conduct the training. The other administration staff in her office objected to her being out of the workplace on other duties which, in their view, didn’t contribute to the daily work.

The other admin. staff kicked up a fuss about it...mainly the person in charge of admin, which was the divisional admin. officer and I couldn't use the photocopier, I had to go and get reams of paper from head office, things like that, anything that had to be typed up had to be in my own time, so it was quite difficult.

Despite these additional pressures, Marian rapidly began to feel on top of the task. She prepared thoroughly, and became confident. Other Aboriginal staff with whom she worked, were not so quick to overcome the intimidation of the process and the prospect of taking a central role in the training. Marian recalls one event, which she says was not isolated.
One lady, she was very shy, and she co-facilitated with myself and another Aboriginal worker. We gave her an exercise to do but I can remember writing out word for word what she had to say, so she wouldn't feel threatened.

Marian found that she was more and more in demand, and others relied on her, when, as she states, she was only just ahead of them. Marian eventually overcame these hurdles and became a very dedicated and proficient trainer, assisting other people outside the department to develop training activities in a variety of settings.

Marian’s initial terror of standing in the gaze of the non-Aboriginal staff, all of whom were senior to her, and being the centre of attention, was rapidly overtaken by two central and significant realisations which had a profound effect on her. She realised, to her surprise, that professional workers did not know what she knew (and she thought, as professionals, they should know) and she discovered an inner drive to fuel her ‘personal crusade’. Marian had started to become a political player, and one who would seize the opportunities the training offered. Revelling in being the ‘expert’ for however short a time, and however spatially bounded, Marian determined to become the ‘expert’ outside the training room too.

As importantly, she discovered a greater drive, the personal crusade of helping non-Aboriginal people to develop knowledge of the circumstances of Aboriginal people. These realisations of the personal developments and abilities and political opportunities were among the major outcomes of the project for people such as Marian. As her story has shown, being involved and becoming committed to a process she could see was important in disseminating a message, helped her to become confident, and developed her skills. It also gained her a place or status in the department which had previously not been there for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people were starting to be formally recognised for their knowledge and skills as Aboriginal people.
Pride In Ownership: Experiences Of Other Trainers

Seizing the expertise of both Aboriginality and trainer, other trainers, like Marian, could use this role to demonstrate their abilities and gain a place of notice for themselves and other Aboriginal workers in the department where they had hitherto been incorporated rather than highlighted. Penny, Leslie, and Keith, (early Aboriginal trainers) were to have similar experiences, build confidence and be valued for their expertise. Penny’s development as an Aboriginal trainer has been rapid and sustained. She now trains and presents a variety of different workshops and talks which are much in demand. Here she reflects on the gains she believes she has made as a result of her participation in the project.

It’s also given me confidence to go into areas where I’ve never been before, it’s given me the skills to facilitate training people, as I said, my confidence, I mean I’ve always been confident, cheeky, at least I can be more strategically confident.

Penny’s confidence, or ‘cheekiness’, has not always been positive, her angry adolescence bearing witness to the difficulties she has had to overcome to now be able to face a hostile audience with acceptance and forgiveness, and a “strategy”.

Leslie’s confidence as an Aboriginal trainer, on the other hand, came from his scrupulous attention to detail and being very connected to the material.

You get to know the context. So you get very confident. Your own confidence, your awareness of the programme, your awareness of the history, makes it much easier to do then you have a very relaxed style, ‘cos you’re not so nervous. And obviously before the training you’d think twice about standing up in front of fifty or so people and talking, whereas now it means nothing, you know. You only get scared now when you’re standing up in front of a couple of hundred people or Executive or something. [laughs]
Leslie's relaxed style has made him a much sought after trainer, who is very successful and well regarded as being able to put across difficult messages in ways that are accepted, not an easy feat in such training. Like Marian, he too became committed to the programme. His purpose in the project became clear shortly after his first training session. It became a mission.

It's almost like there was this mission, there was a mission going out there to tell people ... [about] the Aboriginal cause basically. It was an important part of going to tell, telling non-Aboriginal people that Aboriginal people haven't had such a great history and in term of the trainers there was a moral, there's almost like there was a moral, ethical [purpose].

Other staff noticed an increased confidence and ability in the Aboriginal trainers. Hannah, Ada and Julia, all non-Aboriginal staff members who have participated in different roles in the training programmes, remark on the skill level.

Hannah:

One of the things that it [the training] did was give a number of Aboriginal people to be very confident about their ability to present in front of any person at any level and manage very difficult people. I think it skilled a number of people.

Ada:

It was a great experience [for Debbie] to go down and have that sort of training, and then to be in charge. And to have material that made it possible to be confident in that role ... and very much in control of the material and able to stand back and see what she was doing ... It was a real training that went on for her.

Julia:
Just to see the way some of them over the two years or two and a half years developed, Marian J. comes to mind, she had been stuck in the slot of being the level one clerical in [a metropolitan division], she was brought out of that, she copped a lot of flack in terms of doing the training, but she just grew in confidence and about herself and about her abilities and about where she wanted to be and where she wanted to go and never looked back.

Penny explains the increased confidence in the Aboriginal trainers by linking it to the ownership of the package. The material used and delivered is chosen by Aboriginal people, and the ownership of it and the process remains the root of achievement for her.

And there was Black Magic yesterday [in a training programme], and, well everybody there was bawling and it was just the impact of, that was amazing. I mean, it has already had all this stuff. It depends on how much you want to affect somebody as to what you show them and, I mean, the package, it paves the way for people to being comfortable doing that, that the Aboriginal people that own this package I think they've changed so much. So much confidence themselves.

Penny attributes the ability of the training and the trainers to achieving this to their ownership of the package and the process, through which they, in turn, have become confident and skilled.

Increased skills and confidence, in part developed through the increased visibility, led to other achievements.

Eric, a member of the departmental Executive and director of an administrative region, notes:

some of the Aboriginal staff standing up and being heard and being counted, and also having the
confidence, I mean, like Leslie. Leslie came along to our Executive planning day which was fantastic, and the way he delivered was just excellent and really challenged the Executive about where we were at in terms of services to Aboriginal people and, and that has really re-focused us in a big way, his challenge.

Issuing a challenge and having it acted on is a particularly powerful event. Leslie’s confidence and his success in being heard by the combined Executive of the department (who were at least three full levels senior to him), is reminiscent of Olga’s earlier challenge. Leslie builds on Olga’s achievements and the department now has several such people who are standing up and being counted, and more importantly, being heard.

Other members of the department noticed the increased confidence and ability of these Aboriginal workers who took to the training process with such enthusiasm. Olga’s immediate response, when asked of the effects of the “package” in the department, concerned how the non-Aboriginal staff viewed the Aboriginal trainers whose development had flowed over into other work areas. She mentions Keith in particular, but has seen that the development of other staff too has extended beyond the training and been noticed by other non-Aboriginal staff.

And just the recognition of staff in terms of the whole department ... has had great flow on effects that no-one ever envisaged at the beginning.

Olga took a personal and professional interest in what was happening for the staff in the project. She would ask for feedback and during this informal de-briefing ‘they always feedback about their own self esteem, it’s really good’.

Hannah occupied a number of different roles; as a manager of training services some years after the implementation of the package, as a training programme participant and as a non-Aboriginal participant in an Aboriginal Train The Trainer
programme. She also witnessed the growth in the trainers and the resultant benefits from their involvement.

[I] saw lots of people really grow through that process in terms of their confidence, and was also able to see some of the outcomes. It also gave them networks, where people they wouldn't normally have had much to do with, started to take them very seriously and realised that they really did know what they were talking about and they had knowledge and stuff to offer that wasn't maybe on their job description form, so I'm sure there were other spin offs too from that, and I think, in thinking of Keith and Leslie, for example, who've just gone from strength to strength.

The strength that the early trainers had is now evident in their current roles. Three are now senior executives in different settings, and others have moved into other professional roles at middle range levels. While it is not claimed that their part in the training is the sole reason for their advancement, they state quite clearly the benefits they gained from their participation, the skills, the knowledge and the confidence to go on.

For example, Keith, who is now a senior manager, is often invited to address Train The Trainer Programmes conducted to train future Aboriginal trainers. He always prefaxes his remarks by stating that he owes his current confidence and skill level to the opportunities he was able to take while training in the WWAP.

Penny, a professional worker with management responsibilities, talks about it in terms of offering a gift.

I think that this package ... made it possible for us to look at ourselves as people who are teachers and we have something of value that we can give to others, and it's a gift ... yeah I think it's just given us licence to do what we felt was important to us, to recognise that it's some good.
The sense of gifting has been a focus of Penny's training and work since those early days, helping Penny's transformation from the angry welfare ward of her youth, to the capable, generous and valued worker she is today.

Later, when asked about benefits to other trainers, she says:

*Aboriginal people walk with pride. They always had it but, I mean, I think it's to do with the process itself giving them, empowering them, seeing what they had as valid and looking at what they had as important, not taking it for granted any more, that it is important. I think without that, without the package, the training package, it wouldn't have happened.*

Realising they had 'something of value' was not restricted to the trainers who claimed and kept the spotlight (and some of whom were to form the future core for departmental consultation on Aboriginal matters). Other Aboriginal staff could share in the achievements and enjoy the sense of having valued knowledge.

**The Strength Of Supportive Relationships**

Another major outcome of the project came from bringing the Aboriginal staff together. There were comparatively few Aboriginal workers in the department, and they predominantly occupied the lowest of the work levels. They also tended to be employed locally, having cultural connections to specific places. Although they tend to be talked about as the “Aboriginal workers”, Aboriginality is a conferred identity (Beckett 1988; Attwood 1989; Mueke 1992; Briscoe 1993; Burney 1994) and many Aboriginal people prefer to refer to themselves in their tribal names, such as Nyoongar or Yamatji, for example (as shown in Gilbert 1978; Roughley 1991; Thiele 1991; Mueke 1992; Langton 1993; Burney 1994). One of the effects of the training project was to both heighten for the non-Aboriginal staff the understanding of the great diversity among Aboriginal people, which I will discuss later, and to give Aboriginal people the opportunity to form links with each other across tribal
or language groupings, where they previously might not have had the chance. The forming of lasting connections within and across the groupings has been important to people in this study.

Penny’s telling of the aftermath of the strike, which was one of the events to precede the WWAP project, reveals quite markedly the importance of group unity as well as the personal relationship and empowerment value she gained as a result. The Aboriginal workers present were from all over the north of the state and represented several different tribal groups.

I think at the time it brought us together. It not only empowered us, it gave us a whole range of possibilities, just by allowing us to get together. And when we did get together we realised there was more, we realised we had more in common and a bond that I think will remain with us today.

Following that event, the department facilitated the regular, if not frequent, meetings of Aboriginal workers. The potential barriers of regional and cultural differences were able to be overcome by familiarity and face to face contact, in which there was a realisation that the workers had more in common than they had perhaps thought. The individual Aboriginal workers became a group of Aboriginal workers who knew and understood each other, even if they may not have always agreed with each other. In view of their tiny numbers, this was a valuable result.

Leslie agrees. One of the most lasting impacts of his participation, he says, is the relationships he has formed and which ‘will stay with me ’til I die’. He tells a story of planning a training programme, to illustrate what he means. He has not worked with these two trainers, a Nyoongar like himself and a Bardi person from the Kimberley, before, and prior to the programme they meet at his house. His previous contacts with these two people had been through their role performances in the department, especially Tanya who would ‘talk about child protection issues’, and, although Leslie had a close relationship with Vernon ... ‘I got to see another
part of Vernon that I'd not had a lot to do with before'. Because this was a
different forum, different views of the other were possible and enhanced the
relationship forming potential. Leslie reflects that these people will continue to be
important to him, not just as colleagues, but as people.

They'll be people I'll remember in my life. Important
people in my life. I remember and I really enjoyed
that evening, obviously a lot of talk about other kinds
of things which were important to us, how to save the
world, but, yeah, a good process to go through really.

Brought together for work purposes, these people have started to forge deeper
connections which enhance private and professional roles and lives. Leslie places
great value on the doing things together, especially in what he calls 'the cause'.
Framing these relationships within the personal domain of friendships, 'the kind of
relationship that was developed between the trainers and 'cos a lot of these
connections were almost like a long lasting friendship', Leslie also places them
within the political domain.

Well there's probably more to it than just going out
there training, there's that sense of and addressing
the rights and doing it as a group and as part of a
team and a very important part of the Aboriginal
cause and however so small. And we were helping to
chip away at the resistance while we were there, and
strengthening the bond I think.

Like Leslie, Vernon and Tanya, other Aboriginal workers quickly formed
relationships that were to support them and, for many of them, provide a
recognisable and identifiable role as a group. But it was not only the formation of
relationships with each other that was an outcome of their participation in the
training, they also formed sustaining relationships with non-Aboriginal workers.

Undoubtedly the personal connecting was valuable to the project. It was also
productive to the way people believed they did their other work and so the
organisation benefited. People valued the ability to make the personal connections which extended beyond the official work but had significant effect on how those official tasks were conducted.

In her reflections, Penny looks back over her five years since first becoming a trainer, a period in which she has also, like all the participants in this study, done many other things. For Penny, much of that time and the work involved have been stressful, and difficult to the point of her wanting to quit. As she speaks to me in 1995, she is currently experiencing a particularly distressing process in her work. Her reflections on the training provide one answer why she has kept going.

*I have done a lot of reflections, you know lately, what I've actually found that lots of times I've just jumped out but it was the relationships that kept me there and even when things are getting...*

And her voice drops away. Looking up again, she seeks to explain.

*Like when you name the nature of the beast, that was the most scary time for me because I knew, I know about racism, I know that first hand. But for you mob [in the project team] to tackle it, because for me it was the scariest thing ever, because it meant that I would be subjected to this racist violence again, and I didn't want it. And what I tried to just push yous away, and I tried a couple of little sabotage things, too, but you two [myself and Graham] were on top of that, and if I recall it was something like devil's advocate when we were having our meetings. Because I was trying to throw them off and say 'fuck yous don't do this, don't do this to yourselves'. And then I realised, it wouldn't matter what I did, these people had faith in, in the future and then I thought 'well I'm not going to go against them, so I'm going to go with them, and if I'm going to go with them it's only going to be to pick up the pieces you know, care for them, and it's as much as I'm going to do'... and*

65 Withdrawn
those relationships have endured, and I don't know, I think we started something special, we were together when it all happened.

Penny is visibly affected by these recollections, and in associating them with her present situation which is becoming untenable. She names racism, perhaps connecting with what is happening to her now at work. But she is able to reflect further, and she leaves the present and recalls other things which were happening at the time of her involvement in the early years of WWAP. Her study at university was opening up many new ways of looking at things; her realisations about her past as a welfare ward and the welfare workers she struggled with were impelling her to repair those relationships; and she was valuing her ability to re-form and enhance relationships. She refers to the welfare officer who was responsible for her wardship and how important it has been for her to mend this particular relationship. It is this capacity which contributes to her success as a trainer as well as gives her the insight in the training room to actively encourage relationship building.

Penny's first experience of a training programme formed part of a unit of the social work course she was attending at Curtin University. It was a pilot testing some of the materials contained in the WWAP. There were twelve Aboriginal students in all who participated throughout the unit, and at the end they conducted a training programme to which they invited non-Aboriginal people from a variety of organisations.

We loved it. Because not only did we present it to ourselves, at our graduation, we got a bunch of hard nuts, we opened it to the public and we got people from really diverse backgrounds, employment backgrounds and, you know, no two people were the same, all of them had different life experiences, amounts of contact with Aboriginal people, and I think it was like chucking [us] in the deep end so when we finished the two day workshop nobody wanted to leave, they wanted to stay and talk with us, and they felt really comfortable with us, and, you know, and we, (laughs) talk about swelled heads, we
all felt for each other, we'd done it and it was just wonderful and we all felt good.

Penny found benefits in enabling non-Aboriginal people to meet Aboriginal people in settings conducive to interpersonal interaction. She expresses surprise and delight that the outcome of this programme was that people wanted to stay and connect with them, the trainers. No one wanted to go home. Breaking down some of the misconceptions that people start out with and helping people to get to know others in ways that are not threatening and welcoming help, in turn, to form relationships. The threads these relationships then help to spin have a greater chance of reconnecting when there is the need (Kelly and Sewell 1988; Ife 1995).

In more technical and instrumental training, where performance of new skills is perhaps the greater focus, there are few expectations that the trainers and guest speakers will provide the means whereby relationships can be formed. Rather technical training focuses more on the transmission of new and previously unknown knowledge. In the WWAP training, people who open their lives and experiences cease to be roles or representatives of more concrete aspects of a knowledge base; they become people, individuals with whom there can be the possibility of understanding other lives.

The activities of doing things together which are found meaningful are strong adhesives in the formation of relationships which then become important. The importance, though, usually remains at a personal level. One of the relationships which had organisational significance and which says much about the way the project was allowed to run the way it did initially, was that between Olga and Charles. Olga tells of a significant, yet typical, incident.

Oh, this Aboriginal woman complained about what I did, and the incident actually happened in an Aboriginal forum and I just said to Charles 'it's an Aboriginal issue and the days I answer to a white man about being Aboriginal are gone, the mission
days are gone, and you tell that woman to take it back to the Aboriginal community and I'll deal with it'. And then he was trying to rationalise his position in terms of being the head of the unit and I said 'I'm never a public servant, Charles, I'm always an Aboriginal', and I said 'that's what you have to understand that you can't control me because I'm on your staff in relation to Aboriginal issues' and I said, 'the day you ask me to compromise my Aboriginality the day I don't want this job any more'. And he said, 'What shall I do with this complaint?' and I said 'rip it up and put it in the bin and tell the woman that if she's got an issue she's to come to me'. So they've got it clear that I won't compromise my Aboriginality at all.

Olga, who was in a subordinate role to Charles, and could expect, in the usual course of bureaucratic working, to be reprimanded for such behaviour, was, instead, supported in her stand.

Well, that's ripping up the paper and throwing it in the bin, you know, that really gave me a good sense of support from Charles. For him to actually do that and where some other people would make me write up a big briefing and explanation and the whole thing.

Overcoming the role based determinant to how work should be performed was one of the characteristics of how Olga operated in the department. It was not that she deliberately set out to form relationships which would subvert roles, but Olga used her identity as an Aboriginal person to work in ways which were different from the role expectation. Her Aboriginality was what drove her work not the role she occupied. Charles somehow understood this and accepted it and worked with it. But this sort of understanding and this sort of relationship was not typical nor is it easy to identify the components which enable it to happen and thus possibly allow it to be transferred to different settings involving people who are not Olga and Charles. Olga was in a position and formed a relationship with her superior which
allowed her to undertake what was a change process in the department for Aboriginal people.

The Cultural Shift Of Empowerment

The effects of being in the spotlight for some of the Aboriginal staff brought them individual rewards which they valued. Even more so was the recognition of being valued for their knowledge as Aboriginal people, a reversal of previous attitudes of assimilation. These trainers revelled in their new status, and included their other Aboriginal colleagues in the glow of approval. Charles, a member of Executive, names this 'a cultural shift'. Looking back over the eight or so years he was involved with the project, he believed it was in part a result of the work the Aboriginal trainers had done in impressing their colleagues and management with their ability, knowledge and presence. This is despite some of the initially negative responses from non-Aboriginal staff to the Aboriginal employment strategy, believing that it would be 'these token Aboriginal people as it was seen', who would replace the professional workers.

The cultural shift identified by Charles to which the activities of some of the Aboriginal trainers contributed has possibly emerged out of their own sense of pride and ownership they have in a process that they value. Although they may not all have contributed to the original development of material they certainly consider that through their present contribution they now have ownership. Taking control of the process and the materials has been important to them. Pride, ownership, power and control, reversals of positioning for people, are important aspects of empowerment, which Olga sought from the very first. When I asked her two years after the initial implementation of the project, how she thought it had turned out, her response was jubilant.

I can see the benefits of it, more and more, more and more benefits every day you know .... Aboriginal people wanting to come and work here ... top quality
people [are] applying for the jobs, so that's a good indicator ... this empowering that's taking place with the training, like having to have a say about what's happening and to talk about what's happening they're [Aboriginal staff] not worthless any more, their Aboriginality is starting to get acknowledged.

Olga talks in the collective, inclusive of the Aboriginal staff, even those who are not taking roles as trainers. It is this sense of inclusion which has been another important impact for some of the Aboriginal trainers.

The opportunity to participate in the WWAP project meant that all Aboriginal staff were acknowledged as having a legitimate and valued part to play in the training programmes. Their participation was central to the performance. This brought the opportunity to develop skills that might not otherwise have been presented to so many of the Aboriginal staff as a group. In addition to their own skills development gained through practice, they started to be valued as having important knowledge which increased their status. Their ensuing confidence made it more likely that they would be consulted and their opinions valued. More importantly for them, and possibly a reason they stayed with the project although it has not been easy, as we shall see, was a sense of ownership and control of a process they felt belonged to them and in which they could feel pride. And, lastly, but possibly centrally, sustaining, productive and long-lasting connections have been formed which they value.

TARGETED BY THE SPOTLIGHT: NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Visibility and its shadow, invisibility, were paradoxical companions in the fixing of the spotlight on Aboriginal workers. The very visibility which was to propel the valued attributes of some of the Aboriginal workers who became trainers into the public eye, was to work against other Aboriginal workers whose position in the public eye now rendered them targets for judgement. Such assessments were almost inevitably made from the standards of those people making the judgements. Performances were assessed according to the expectations of their non-Aboriginal
colleagues. Knowledges and skills were doubted, and, in some cases, relationships previously formed were casualties of the stresses and doubts. However, despite this “centralising” of the Aboriginal workers, with the attendant expectation that they had important attributes, some non-Aboriginal workers were to dispute any value their Aboriginal colleagues might have for their work. For these workers, Aboriginal staff continued to be invisible. The resulting experiences were such that some of the Aboriginal trainers left the project.

**Devaluing Skills And Continued Invisibility**

Despite the significant increase in visibility for Aboriginal staff as a result of being central to the operations of the programme, which was beneficial for some, the opposite occurred for others. They remained invisible.

Doreen was a non-Aboriginal field worker, who attended one of the metropolitan training programmes. She had Aboriginal colleagues in her present and previous office locations. In her current position, an Aboriginal colleague was one of the trainers for the programme Doreen attended. Her specific reason for wanting the training was to have some answers to some of her ‘burning issues’, which related to problems she was having with some Aboriginal families and agencies. She left the programme disappointed that she didn’t get the help she wanted. When I asked her if she discussed these issues with her colleague, the trainer, she responded that they weren’t ‘something that I would discuss with [her]’.

Doreen expected much of the programme she attended. In addition to having her problems solved, she expected trainers who would be competent, enthusiastic and inspiring. She found instead that they couldn’t help her, nor did they have the energy she required. She didn’t think they had a lot of confidence in what they were doing.
The people were well meaning, they were kind trainers, they were good nice people, they weren't good trainers though.

Doreen's account of the training suggests she thought the trainers were not skilled enough to help her. Perhaps Doreen's issues were not appropriate for attention in a training session; perhaps they required a level of detail better suited to other settings. But in Doreen's work history there have been Aboriginal colleagues, whom she has similarly not consulted on such matters, the possible reasons for which I will explore in a later chapter. However, this isolated incident suggests that some trainers did not inspire the confidence in the trainees that they had anything to offer. Or it could suggest that the expectations were too high and the trainers themselves were unwilling to meet what they considered might be impossible tasks. Nevertheless, one of the consequences seems to be continued invisibility of Aboriginal workers in the workplace where they are regarded as having neither the skill nor expertise necessary to assist non-Aboriginal workers, or they are simply not noticed.

The level of skill became an issue. The particular disputes concerning what constituted "proper" training and presentation skills are matters I shall discuss in more detail in a later chapter. Here it is important to note that the trainers became targets for the attention of competing ways of working. The package had been designed with Aboriginal ways of working as a central consideration, drawing on their knowledge and ways of dissemination of information. There was less attention paid to polished presentation skills as such. Yet, once the implementation process started, non-Aboriginal workers supporting the trainers held the view that presentation skills were of prime importance. Non-Aboriginal training staff convinced trainers that their skills were insufficient, and trainers attracted criticism from their audiences in part for their un-polished performances. Without access to
the CAS supports, there was no counter-action to these criticisms nor positive reinforcement of Aboriginal ways of working.

Reflecting On The Personal And Political

This training, which had started to change discriminatory work practice could not avoid being political. In its choice of medium, primarily narrative, it could not avoid the personal nature either. The underlying political nature of the training, which emerged overtly in the content, antagonised some trainees. Their resistance to the political message led trainers to abandon their continued involvement. One such trainer was Jane. Teresa tells the following story to illustrate some of the problems, which, again, were not isolated.

This is how petty it got. One day at some training, she had some Aboriginal flags on a table ... people objected to the flags, and to me that's the spirit of the training. So (laughs wonderingly) to me, to Jane that was the final. Because Jane was a bit swinging at the time, because she could see the benefits of it, was coming to the training and sharing. But when they objected and carried on like that, she thought, well, you know, 'stuff the training', basically is what she said. And she dropped out.

It seemed Jane was also working through some personal issues at the time and the dual burden became too much and she stopped training. The personal connection the trainers have to the content of the training is often a matter that some trainers are still dealing with as they are training. This places an additional pressure on them. As we have seen, some Aboriginal people use the training as a forum in which they actively engage with issues of importance for them, and use it as a healing place for themselves and others. For other people, including some of the trainers, those matters were still too personal for public examination.

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66 As already mentioned, the CAS was only contracted to provide the first three Train the Trainer programmes.
Vera thought the training should not have been so personal, it lacked objectivity.

_I would have liked it to be a little bit more objective, I would have, I know that for the people involved, their own personal issues were playing a large part in the message that they were wanting to get across, but it concerned me that that was probably interfering with the objectivity of the exercise, and getting the workers, the people they were training, to have greater understanding._

According to Vera, objectivity and distance from the subject matter enables training to be judged as valid.

Julia recalls one trainer for whom the personal issues were still too raw and had not been sufficiently worked through. The result, from Julia’s viewpoint, was that the anger still present, spilled into the training room, resulting in conflict between the trainer and her non-Aboriginal colleagues. Julia’s suggestion, later, that she and the trainer work through these issues, was rebuffed.

_Susan was really resistant to almost getting it resolved, and it never did. There was talks about doing it, but it was never resolved, which was really sad, because to try and do anything similar in that office is going to be very difficult._

Julia goes on to consider the extreme vulnerability that trainers experience by being part of what they are training about, and so need understanding and support as well as some means to assist them process their personal issues.

_[The trainers] are very vulnerable in that trainer role because ... you're putting them out the front, and it's who they are, it's their story and unless they are able to deal with that [pause] in some way to protect themselves, to work through it all, prepare themselves they were going to be in a very vulnerable_
situation... it all reflects back to the level of support that was given to the trainers from a number of levels and for them to take the time, or have the time to do the planning... I felt it was very important, and for that to have some problems [in lack of managerial support] with it, I felt it was quite, quite damning. And I think that's part of what was going on with Susan.

These matters that Julia raises in relation to lack of managerial support and the vulnerability of the trainers will be discussed in more detail later. What is of issue here concerns the intrusion of the personal into the training room. The trainers were inevitably going to be intimately connected to the subject matter, even if they personally had not suffered removal or other effects of being a welfare client. As Penny's earlier experiences have shown, it was likely that many of the Aboriginal staff would not be completely unconnected to these very real issues. Jane's and Susan's different, but similar, responses relate to the personal dimension of the training which departs considerably from a technical form of training, and illustrate some of the potential tensions that could be expected and experienced in the training. Lack of preparation of both trainers and trainees, and understanding on the part of the trainees, was likely to result in rejection. Disputes over values, ownership, ways of working should have been expected. But when they did occur, the tensions tended to erupt into separation in which people took refuge in positions rather than taking the opportunity offered for healing dialogue. The gulfs created permitted little bridging.

Dismissing Knowledge

Failure to acknowledge the value or importance of Aboriginal knowledge continued amongst some non-Aboriginal staff. Some of the trainees weren't working with Aboriginal people and so, for them, it lacked relevance. But even more than not being interested in the topic of the training, and preferring information on different cultural groups, there were also people who doubted the
veracity of what was being provided, and thus whether or not they could trust the information. This devalued the training activity.

Yvonne did not accept the information from the Aboriginal people, much preferring to hear what the 'white woman' had to say.

A woman came from Curtin Uni. [sic] she was excellent, absolutely excellent. And she was a white woman, and she ran or she was the head of the Aboriginal Studies Department ...[she had] very blonde hair, that's all I remember, she was as fair as you could be, and she seemed to be a fair person, and she was great.

Yvonne sets this scene by recounting the dispute between this woman and the Aboriginal male trainer. The man had denounced the use of "black" as a derogatory description of Aboriginal people, to which the woman had replied that to Kimberley people "black" was a mark of respect, resulting in the man 'looking daggers at her'. Setting aside for the moment the definitive nature of skin and hair colour (which I take up in a later chapter), Yvonne's implied message here is that this 'white' woman was more believable and therefore her information acceptable.

By comparison, Yvonne would have valued information about Moslem rather than Aboriginal families, because she was then working with Moslem women. Bernadette is more encompassing, but she too no longer works with Aboriginal families. She would like some information on working with other cultural backgrounds.

Vera accepts the need to learn about Aboriginal families, but only in a unifying context.

Different treatment, treating different people differently I don't agree with. I... would have liked to be able to take into account people's different
parenting styles, different backgrounds, different beliefs, just as part of what we do and then say “well, OK, well, this is what you're wanting, this is what you're needing” and no matter who they are, where they come from or what race.

Reducing training to the provision of instrumental information ‘just as part of what we do’ suggests that information is unproblematic, and is a major hurdle for training such as this. Differing perceptions about what was included and hence what would be valued in the training collided with other beliefs about what constituted “good” training. The Aboriginal trainers, differing in experience and interest, were caught in the unenviable centre of conflicting expectations. They could not meet them all, and so for some of the critics, they, and the training, failed. The larger matters of what should be included and how then that knowledge would be legitimated, and who constituted the “right” people to impart the information, will be matters taken up in later chapters discussing knowledge and identity.

**Damaging Interactions And Fractured Relationships**

A final impact for the trainers was the extent to which their relationships with each other and with non-Aboriginal workers suffered as a result of their participation.

Most of the Aboriginal staff in the department were in the north of the state, with other groupings mainly in the juvenile institutions and hostels. In all other places, it was unusual for non-Aboriginal staff to work in a setting in which there were more than one or possibly two Aboriginal staff members. It was unlikely that non-Aboriginal staff had working or social relationships with Aboriginal colleagues, whereas for the Aboriginal staff there was no option. Their entire working day comprised working activities with non-Aboriginal people. They had to “get on” with non-Aboriginal people as a matter of course. What these relationships were like before the project is not possible to state, but this study has uncovered what it was like afterwards for some of them. We have seen that some relationships were formed and some strengthened as a result of working together. For other people,
existing working connections, whether they were satisfying and productive or otherwise, were problematic.

Teresa joined the department from another government department around the time of the development of the project and was one of the first trainers to be trained as well as occupying one of the management positions for the project. Teresa, like many other Aboriginal staff, was the only Aboriginal worker in her section. She is characterised in this study as being both claimed and rejected by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. For example, when recalling the discussion in her section at head office when it became public knowledge that Olga had succeeded in gaining corporate funding for the training package, Teresa was “claimed” by her non-Aboriginal colleagues and assumed to line up against Olga.

People always put me at loggerheads with Olga, so whilst I was sitting around talking about Olga, there was bits and pieces about the money, there was, ‘these things won’t affect Teresa, because Teresa isn’t necessarily a friend of Olga’, but it wasn’t about friendships and personalities, it was about the need and Aboriginal services, but people weren’t able to see that these comments still affected Teresa because she is an Aboriginal person ... it was very hard, it was very very hard, actually, because I came up against a lot of pressure.

Teresa felt misunderstood by her non-Aboriginal colleagues, and somehow forced into a position where she had to either defend Olga for her work for Aboriginal people, or side with her non-Aboriginal colleagues and effectively denounce her own Aboriginal allegiance. Nor was that all. Teresa was also rejected by the Aboriginal people at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies, with whom Teresa did feel an affinity, because of her role in the department.

I came up against a lot of criticism from Curtin, at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies, and I was regularly viewed as the Department’s person, and not ‘Yes I do work for the department, and I do have
to follow the corporate structure because I'm employed to do that, but I have a personal view', and I was disappointed. I was really disappointed because I felt they would have seen it, or understood it better ... I was made to feel very much on the other side.

Teresa felt the pain of what she identified as lack of understanding, and expressed sadness that she should be so misunderstood. She characterised that period as being very difficult.

When I think of it, I tended to isolate myself, sometimes, the morning tea break would be on and I'd stay at my desk, when I got an office space of my own, I'd just stay at my desk, I stayed in my own space ... I felt like I didn't fit anywhere.

The lack of "fit" or accepted space describes Teresa's view of her world. She often speaks of herself in the third person, ascribing to herself a role as descriptor, thus further disrupting the potential for finding a place to fit. Being expected to side with one or other of the cultural positions left Teresa not fitting. Teresa is not intended to be a model for other Aboriginal staff, but so many of the Aboriginal staff were the sole Aboriginal person in their workplaces that it is easy to imagine they too experienced similar circumstances, being required to compromise allegiances in order to manage the daily work.

Marian's relationships with her office colleagues suffered similarly, as we have seen. As soon as she started to engage in different work, which was potentially to challenge some of their practices, Marian was to be confronted with rejection and hostility.

Jane's on-going relationship with her Aboriginal trainer colleagues ceased when she withdrew from training because of the reception she received. The potential for

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the support and rewarding development was thus denied her through that role, although she may well have found other similar supports. She dropped out of sight as far as the training was concerned, and had to make her own and different way.

Julia's story of Susan's experience also illustrates fractured relationships.

Susan also trained in her own patch ... which was her office, and there obviously was some history there as well in terms of her dealing with other staff. From the feedback I got from staff they felt attacked, they weren't just defensive, they felt attacked.

Susan's relationships with her non-Aboriginal colleagues were, by Julia's account, irretrievably damaged. She, too, suffered a closure of potential support through this process. She was classified as an "angry" trainer.

Leslie has seen a number of other trainers whom he considers allow their anger to show and their bitterness get in the way of producing good working relationships.

Andrea [another trainer] can come across as very aggressive, I think she misses the point of the training, she wants people to cry about it ... her purpose of the training is that everyone ends up crying.

These reflections on other trainers' behaviours and motives support some of the experiences told by trainees who have felt attacked and blamed. Penny, too, has told of hearing about trainers who have taken these behaviours into the training room.

And what I've seen and what I've heard is that some facilitators take that opportunity to scratch people and make them bleed and you lose them for ever so they'll never trust again, and that that's been a bit of a dilemma. If I hear about it I approach the trainer and find out their side of it and find out if something's
been said in a very flippant way, either racist or some sort of, of hurt or that sort of meaning for the Aboriginal facilitator and they've just gone in and scratched, I think it's part of not coming to terms with your past.

Here her view is that trainees themselves are vulnerable and need care, so that they will 'trust again'. But her concern is also for the trainers, who she understands come under attack themselves and respond with the only defences they have learned.

The different types of trainer behaviours stem from different training styles, different underpinning training philosophies, and perhaps different past experiences. Penny believes it has to do with whether or not a trainer has come 'to terms with your past'. She has previously acknowledged that that has been a difficult but necessary road for her, she has had to make deliberate attempts to re-forge relationships broken as a result of her reacting against her own history. Perhaps, she suggests, others have not been yet able to do that. So the resultant behaviours emerge as anger and the desire to hurt others when the positions are reversed. The trainer then is in a position of relative power and can make others, for no matter how brief a moment, feel what he or she has previously felt. Penny acknowledges that this attitude brings her into conflict with others who accuse her of:

*being too forgiving about not making people accountable. It's about being able to forgive is the biggest gift there is and, you know, like you don't have to forget but you can forgive too if you choose to, and I've found that that works, and for people to hear the words. You can't blame them, I'd like to blame somebody, but it doesn't change anything.*

Penny, in her youth, could not forgive, and lashed out at people who tried to help. As she grew into an adult, Penny somehow learns the forgiving lesson. It works for her as a trainer, partly because of the gifting she uses. Sincerity and honesty, as we
have seen, are part of Penny’s armoury. They enable her to engage trainees in positive relationships, as does Leslie, because they both use a style of training which engages people, in positive and constructive ways. Leslie refers to it as ‘unarmed truth’ using the Martin Luther King aphorism as his guide.68

But other trainers have not had such fortunate experiences. One of the possible supports might have been instituting a formal debriefing procedure, over that included as a programme debrief, where these types of matters might be discussed. Nora recognised the potential for destructiveness in allowing the anger to continue.

Some of the feedback is, oh that we are racist against non-Aboriginal people and sometimes that anger comes through and I sometimes think that is not always well received however right it is to be angry.

Nora feels it’s important to have strategies, such as debriefing, so that the:

Aboriginal staff person, community person, is able to channel that anger how they want it in a constructive way and not self destructive.

The potential for forming productive relationships was reduced in circumstances of blame, attack and anger. The potential for becoming even more distant was correspondingly increased. What was also likely was that Aboriginal staff became even more invisible as identifiable Aboriginal people as they sought to avoid standing out and becoming the possible targets for increased hostility.

ABORIGINAL WORKERS: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF THE TRAINING PROJECT

This chapter has shown that their participation as trainers in this project was significant for some of the Aboriginal staff. Marian, Penny and Leslie, for

68 Used in Training For Trainers sessions by Tony Kelly in which Leslie, Ian and myself participated in December 1991.
example, embraced the opportunity to develop their skills, becoming quickly confident in their own abilities. More importantly, they also rapidly recognised the opportunities Olga had hoped would eventuate, and used the training as a means for their own (and other Aboriginal people's) empowerment. Marian's 'personal crusade' and Leslie's 'mission' were political acts for change. These motivations were inextricably intertwined with these trainers' sense of themselves as Aboriginal people, who had started to use Aboriginality as a political act.

Only a few out of the tiny number of Aboriginal workers avidly embraced the training role. But their effect was to engage the attention of people (such as senior management) who otherwise may not have noticed them as Aboriginal people (rather than workers performing a role). The performance of the training could have left them swamped and un-noticed. Instead, for brief periods of time (the two or three days of the training) they took centre stage, and their abilities and the message their Aboriginality carried were noticed. The interconnected nature of what they were doing gave strength, status and recognition to these people.

The opposite occurred for others, for whom the activities seemed more like an enmeshed tangle than a rich weave of supportive and creative interactions. Struggling within the snarled knots of negativity, their potential strength dissipated. Being at one and the same time the dual subjects of their own training and subjects to their audiences was too much for some of the Aboriginal staff and relationships, reputations and possibly ability suffered.

The benefits and disadvantages shown to have accrued to the Aboriginal trainers in this chapter may not be solely because of their participation in the project. People, such as Penny and Leslie, may well have developed the skills and attained the status they did irrespective of their being trainers. Equally, there may have been other circumstances in which Susan and her non-Aboriginal colleagues experienced animosity.
The non-neutral nature of the training, in which people found they could not attend dispassionately, as is standard practice in technical or instrumental training, had on­going effects for trainers and trainees alike. How people see their world and their investment in those views, have been shown here to provide one of the contested arenas. Despite this, some of the Aboriginal trainers have been able to develop skills, productive relationships, demonstrate valued knowledge, and enact political strategies for change.

The goals here are high, and the risks correspondingly so. Other people, including Aboriginal people, were damaged in these processes. In the next chapter, the benefits and disadvantages can be seen to extend to other people in the department.
CHAPTER FOUR: EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT ON PERSONAL PRACTICES AND ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES

The previous chapter showed the effects the Aboriginal participants in this study considered the Working With Aboriginal People training project had on their professional lives. In addition to individual development and other changes, they also noted the ways in which WWAP activities affected the broader organisational operations of the department. This chapter describes the effects of the implementation of the WWAP on the non-Aboriginal participants and their view of how it affected the organisation. They recount the learning and changes they associate with the WWAP, as well as the dissatisfactions and difficulties that were experienced by themselves and others. People experienced these events as individual workers and organisational actors in a setting affected by the two (at least) cultural systems. 69

A CHANGING ORGANISATIONAL LANDSCAPE: INDIVIDUAL WORKERS AND PERSONAL PRACTICES

In their encounter with new knowledge and ways of working, through the Working With Aboriginal People training programmes, non-Aboriginal staff demonstrated a wide range of responses, from embracing the new to overtly rejecting it. These encounters intersect knowledge, attitudes and skills, the usual targets of learning (Griffin 1987; Jarvis 1988; Tennant and Pogson 1995). Participating in this project has impacted subsequently on what people know, the way people act, and what they believe. In some cases, these changes have been rejected outright. This section follows the positive responses to new learning, and the hesitant and reluctant positive reactions. There are also, inevitably, the rejections which characterise some people’s views of the project.

69 See (Jones and May 1991; Aungles and Parker 1992; Albert 1998).
Embracing New Knowledge And Skills

For some people the gaining of new knowledge and skills has been important, valuable and purposeful. Being given information different from that previously believed and the opportunity to engage in explorations which result in insights can help people’s understanding. As a non-Aboriginal trainee, William’s perspective of what it might be like to be a welfare client changed on hearing those experiences from Aboriginal guest speakers.

\[ \text{[It] gave me a greater understanding of how they feel ... coming into the welfare setting.} \]

He states he was able later to translate these insights into more accepting and understanding responses to his clients.

For Desmond, who also attended as a trainee as well as being the manager for training activities, revelations were in the form of getting to know other people in ways different from the role-based expectations of the work place. Knowledges about the way others live, even to a person such as Desmond, whose parents were from two different ethnic backgrounds, enabled him to embrace the new.

\[ \text{It’s like that you discover another side to somebody. You start to discover their story ... I think you saw people in a different light ... you actually saw something more to a person ... a sort of eye-opener for me, even in terms of how I spend my free time, and what’s important to me, I mean there’s no connection at all with what Mark [an Aboriginal trainer] does, so it was just really that eye-opener stuff.} \]

Another trainee, Hannah, also gains different insights into people's lives through hearing their stories. She, too, has had previous different cultural experiences, which perhaps enhance her ability to see and recognise the importance of what is presented to her a-new.
I think [I've gained] a lot more respect for people's past experiences, that they're contemporary, they're not history. People's living history, it's current history, it's not ancient history and therefore accepting that any single Aboriginal person I may meet in my contemporary or current life can have had those experiences almost yesterday.

This leads Hannah to challenge her own assumptions, for example, about skin colour, which she now acknowledges is not conclusive as an indicator of cultural difference. Glimpses into worlds outside their own immediate workplace setting, to see what workers bring with them, allows deeper insights into what strategies might be necessary to overcome existing barriers to working cross culturally.

Recognising the immediacy of the narrative from people whose stories they were, Desmond calls his learning powerful. The surprise of the new knowledge for himself was overshadowed by his additional realisation (already cited) that it was also new to senior staff who had worked in the department for many years. He had expected they would already know what he was learning.

Perhaps Desmond's expressions of surprise are predictable. Charles, who had a long history of working with Aboriginal people, recognised that work familiarity was not in itself sufficient to engender knowledge and understanding. He recalls a very experienced social worker telling him of his realisation of how little he knew after attending a WWAP training programme. Charles agrees.

As a whitefella who has done a lot of work with Aboriginal people, the starting point's how little you know (laughs) and how little you'll ever know.

Desmond demonstrates such a realisation.

As a trainee at the time of speaking above, Desmond was also responsible for the implementation of the training project into the department. He could not go home
after two or three days training and forget it. He had to live with WWAP on a daily basis, irrespective of what he thought about it. The negotiations with the Centre were difficult, he wasn’t convinced that the product was going to be worth the money spent on it, and he didn’t know if it was going to produce the sort of change hoped for in the organisation. His was the managerial responsibility for WWAP, and could well have been blamed for any shortfall or mishap. In the end, through contact with the process, Desmond came to see that there were different ways of working.

_The turning point came when Graham explained, well, that’s not the way the world works in his world, and that it was a case of us having to understand the processes that had to be gone through, the consultation, the talking in different ways, before we could get what we wanted ... When we saw the picture for the first time, it was like the light went on, put it that way ... I built up a knowledge base from that point on._

Desmond’s public acknowledgement of his acceptance of these different ways of working and the value of a programme such as the WWAP came after the second of the pilot training programmes, which is where Desmond saw and experienced the “product” for the first time. He was so impressed that he was heard to say, excitedly, by many of us who attended, ‘we’ve got a winner here!’ Desmond attributes the way he subsequently performed his work in policy change to his experiences here with the WWAP.

Merely reading about or being told new knowledge does not necessarily lead to new learning. The accounts here suggest that there is an interactive, rather than didactic experience of learning, in which people engage. These influences and their processing of new information through these interactions led to new knowledge.

These trainees who demonstrated their willingness to learn did not necessarily mention how their new knowledge and understanding was translated into work
practice. The learning seemed often to remain at a knowledge level. It was the trainers who seemed to demonstrate new skills. However, some trainees recognised changes in their ability to do as a result of the training, developing skills for use in their daily activities. Their greater knowledge and understanding increased their ability as a result of the information gained through the training. For others, it was a psychological boost to go further towards other, perhaps larger, activities.

William was able to identify some of his learning which he can describe as leading to action. He states he is now able to take a stand against racism. His example is from his family, members of whom he realises are racist towards an Indian in-law. He believes the programme enhanced his understanding and gave him some ways to act. By increasing his knowledge of Aboriginal life and culture he believes he can now challenge racist comments with the authority of information.

*Having the awareness ... so I'm able to challenge ... fire back at them [the detractors], and hopefully make them think a little bit more so that's how I use it to my advantage. I'm not actually fighting from, just firing blanks, I've actually got some ammunition.*

Although this is a seemingly small act, taking a stand against racism is significant.

Hannah’s experience with the WWAP was multi-levelled. She had participated in training programmes, and later had responsibility for its management. She found her first involvement with the styles of working difficult, but was able to learn from the different ways of working amongst her Aboriginal colleagues.

*I remember finding it difficult to get task oriented at the training. I was much more task oriented, people just wanted to work differently ...I'd be taking on a role of getting people to do that everyday planning and development that was fairly important for me at the time. I suppose again now I'd be less concerned about that because I know that if you work in certain*
Being part of the experience, and learning from those interactions, has led to her working differently with Aboriginal people, especially now that she has to manage certain departmental training activities. The working relationship she has now with a group of senior Aboriginal people as a colleague, and their responses to her, demonstrate how well she has been able to ‘just trust that more’.

There has been less emphasis on learning specific skills in this type of training. Rather the emphasis has been on learning from the interactions between people, and then transferring that understanding to other situations. That this enabled people to act from their understandings indicates a measure of the power of those interactions.

Olga believed that racism underpinned the discriminatory behaviour that led to her initiating the training strategy. Racism, however, was a larger issue than could be attended to in the training. The training design tried to provide people with some tools to change their work practice. The programme designers might, like Olga, hope that eventually behaviour change would lead to attitude change. But their main aim was to provide a structure in which people could work through their antagonisms and stereotypes to find ways to hear and see difference, respect it, and provide the necessary service in ways which were not hostile or discriminatory.

The design of the training was also such that it drew out and used an emotional trigger, to move learning from the cognitive to the affective. Therefore, some people who participated in the training reported an enrichment of their attitudes as a result of hearing the stories and opening their minds to the new. The process was helped by the generosity of those Aboriginal people who gave freely of their stories, and attributed no blame in order to promote understanding. William recalls that what had the most impact on him were the stories told by the Elders and that they ‘didn’t blame today’s society’. This enabled him to be open to their messages.
Hannah's learning and attitude enhancement came about through an experiential event. She attended a Train the Trainer programme for Aboriginal trainers in which she and a male colleague were the only non-Aboriginal people attending. They both faced fierce objections to their attendance from some of the Aboriginal trainers. Being one of the only two white people in a room full of black people was a powerful learning experience for her.

Everything [was] different, and having to think, mind your Ps and Qs and think, well, what, what, what's gonna piss people off, what's gonna make them accept me, you know, and then being thoughtful about how you behaved all the time, so that I didn't alienate anybody any more than I already had just by being there, you know. So I suppose that must happen for Aboriginal people a lot and, they feel like they can't completely be themselves ... I learnt a lot more in that time.

Hannah learned about differentiation at first hand from people whose daily experience is one of rejection. It has left her with a core of understanding she seeks to use in different situations she faces now, and particularly those which are likely to have policy outcomes. Through these experiences and learnings, Hannah has been able to consider the workplace in different ways. She is able to argue why bringing a competency approach to the employment of Aboriginal people is of value, and also why it is not often fully applied. Expecting everyone in a particular position to follow the designations of that role is, according to Hannah, missing the point.

You're so busy trying to turn them into all the things that you didn't employ them for ... with Aboriginal people, you're probably missing about ninety per cent of their skills ... it is about a way of working, it is about knowledge and skills.
She considers that role based positions inevitably mean reducing the extent of what is possible, such that people’s capabilities are funnelled rather than expanded, and workers end up being reprimanded for not performing in a set way.

They get employed because they're Aboriginal, that's what'll be said, then they come along and try and work in a way that is [pause] in their way, and those people end up on performance management issues, and why? Well, because they haven't written reports and they haven't filled in their CCSS\(^70\) ...I think [the department has] just missed the plot entirely in the past and it's employed them because they're Aboriginal instead of employing them because of the skills and knowledge they bring as a result of their experiences of being Aboriginal and it's about tapping those and acknowledging those.

Instead of being worried about ensuring all people work the same, she suggests that partnerships can occur very productively for a good result. So, as we saw earlier, she is no longer concerned that people work in different ways. She can work in ‘bureaucratic’ ways, and others can bring different skills and attributes.

I know how to do that stuff, so that's what I can bring, they can do the other stuff, so if we work together we can have a very good outcome ... [But] It isn't often done [laughs].

Hannah’s experience epitomises what the WWAP training set out to do, even though her learning was enhanced by an unplanned event. Hannah “felt” what it was like to be “different” and to be rejected for being so. She had already signalled her willingness to learn, so she was open to the new experiences, and the treatment she received did not deter her; rather she was able to use it to analyse other situations. She transferred her learning, and came to the conclusion that different sorts of partnerships were possible. Not all her interactions were fraught; nor were

\(^70\) The computer tracking system for clients in the department.
those of Desmond and William. There was some essence or spark which enabled them to enter into the spirit of the learning in the way it was delivered.

Embedded in the accounts presented here, of people seeking to translate their new knowledge into action, is the immediate connection with people whose stories are the vehicle for new learning. People here recognised the generosity of the Aboriginal people in making their personal experiences public in an atmosphere of reconciliation ('no blame' as William noted). Powerful learning resulted, and some people were able to translate the stories and experiences into new behaviour. Central to these learnings are personal engagements and interactions.

**Reluctant Acceptance - A Halting Admission**

Some people who attended the training approached it hesitatingly, with some doubts that it could or would lead to change. These included people who believed they knew all there was to know about working with Aboriginal people. Even here, people were not immune to learning there could be different ways of working.

Norman’s early experiences with the processes of the programme showed him that trainees responded positively to being shown ways to make their work easier. Some of the organisations which had originally engaged the CAS to run programmes had done so because their employees were frustrated by their interactions with Aboriginal communities. The workers themselves were reluctant to attend and exhibited some of the same attitudes as Penny had found with the bus drivers (cited in Chapter Two). Norman, however, had seen the outcome for people.

*It really showed non-Aboriginal workers there was a way of working that helped them do the job better and help their clients as well.*
The skills, or changed work patterns, and subsequent actions people undertook were useful and resulted in a valued product.

Norman continues:

*We didn’t change their attitude all that much [but] at least they were able to get a better working relationship.*

Having a working relationship at least kept communication lines open for further work. It was this opening up of possibilities that was encouraging.

Julia provided one example (noted previously) in which a long serving officer believed he could be told nothing new about working with Aboriginal people, but when he tried the new, was ‘mind-boggled about the impact’. Keith, too, was encouraged by the ‘revitalised … enthusiasm’ staff gained as a result of being able to engage with Aboriginal community leaders in ways they had not previously taken the opportunity, or known how, to do.

Even in situations which have the potential to be dismissed as being too oppositional, or confrontational, there are gradual signs of positive realisation. Vera’s disappointment at the lack of objectivity in the training programme she attended has already been cited. When we meet again a week after our initial interview, Vera has reconsidered.

*The learning situation was on-going ... even though it didn’t turn out to be as objective as what it was meant to be ... it still questioned their [other trainees’] beliefs systems.*

Vera initially dismissed the learning as being inadequate, mainly because she thought the training was insufficiently objective. It wasn’t until our interviews that she realised what she had learned. Instead of the external application of skill, or
different knowledge about others, Vera had learned about identity and belonging, and she had learned much about herself. Vera’s initial reaction had been negative, and it wasn’t until she reflected on what her attendance meant for her, that she realised her learning. This suggests that other trainees, particularly those who attended the same programme as Vera, may well have been dissatisfied, and remained so, because they did not have the opportunity to revisit it, as did Vera.

Positive benefits can occur, but they seemingly still require a measure of good will and perseverance. Experiences of success help demonstrate the worth of the process. For some of these agnostics here, through these activities, a grudging acceptance was born.

Rejection

Some people rejected the training completely and overtly, unlike the passive resistance or the failure to attend which Desmond describes later in this chapter. Criticisms ranged widely, some of the most frequent maintaining the training created a divide between two groups of people instead of unifying them. Resentment spilled over into the training rooms, with people labelling as unfair perceived “special treatment” of Aboriginal people. Information demonstrating economic and social disadvantage resulting in their over-representation in the welfare arena was not accepted. Sometimes anger and conflict resulted, or trainees questioning the need for special training for these matters, believing they were not relevant to their work.

Vera talks more here about the programme she attended. In this programme considerable anger erupted, exposing tensions between the trainers and the trainees. The issue of separate treatment and the position of Indigenous people in a colonised country is raised but inadequately dealt with, leaving everyone there, including Vera, dissatisfied.
There was still this anger which got in the way of the objectivity and that bothered me. And I thought 'well how can you expect others to accept different cultural and the Aboriginal way if there's constantly going to be this negative attitude about it?'... people who were taking the training were still very inside the sections of it, of the training, were still fairly personally involved. It was coming from a personal perspective. My overall feeling was, I would have liked it to be a little bit more objective. I know that for the people involved, their own personal issues were playing a large part in the message that they were wanting to get across, but it concerned me that that was probably interfering with the objectivity of the exercise.

Evidently the trainers were exhibiting anger and frustration, or were seen to be doing so, and were not able to separate themselves from the activities, events and policies which were the subject of the training. The trainees, on the other hand, felt pushed into having to defend themselves. A classic win-lose confrontation was being enacted. In particular, some of the trainees were from Scotland and Wales, and did not accept any difference between British colonisation of Australia and English colonisation of their own countries. The confrontations which erupted were not settled, with people leaving the training feeling defensive and unconvinced.

There was anger, and we were defending our position... I think [the training] created a more negative image than a positive image... So it set up a lot of things which I don't think was part of the plan.

Comparing the plight of Aboriginal Australia at British settlement with that of any invaded country is often done. The failure to recognise the on-going effects and the inherited privilege from those actions for the waves of migrants particularly from the British Isles is commonplace. Vera questions the appropriateness of raising what seem to be political matters in the training room. These are not work related, she believes. Vera’s descriptions of this training programme highlight some
criticisms of the training which construct it as oppositional and challenging trainees' own beliefs. These relate to the perceived and relative injustices found amongst many groups, with no one having a monopoly on being oppressed. In addition, trainers are believed to have a degree of anger which trainees consider inappropriate for the training activity, being unprofessional or too subjective, unlike an emotionally-distant manner of a training activity. Importantly, there are questions about the legitimate subject matter for the training exercise, and the place of politics in the work place.

Vera’s questionings are to be further discussed later, particularly in light of her own developing realisations concerning identity and what the subsequent five years quest has meant for her. But Bernadette (whose experience of the programme she attended has already been cited) supports her opinion that the programme could provoke anger. Attitudinal change is important to Bernadette here, which she assumes to be possible through a training event.

Vera’s observations, that division only serves to perpetuate difference, illustrate a common enough opinion that racial difference should be ignored in the spirit of equal treatment; if everyone were treated as equals all would be well, the sort of “We’re all the same under the skin” argument. Demonstrably, and this is often what is complained about in the training, Aboriginal people are not, and have not been treated as equals, hence the need for training.

Doreen’s dismissal of the programme she attended has already been mentioned. The programme included a visit to an Aboriginal Centre which she concedes was interesting. She repeats that it didn’t help her in her work.

You looked around Clontarf [an Aboriginal managed facility] and saw what people were doing there ... it showed Aboriginal people achieving and but, I mean, it didn’t help me in my work, you know, and that’s, that’s what I wanted.
The juxtaposition of 'achieving' with the 'difficult cases' she was experiencing, did not impact on Doreen. Her own inability to use the resources available to her, in the form of Aboriginal workers in her own office, has already been discussed and is indicative of the expectation of both instrumental training and discounting different knowledges. In contrast to engaging with people, as did William and Hannah, Doreen's instrumental need overshadows any possibility that she might engage with the people in ways that don't immediately relate to her work needs.

The disparity between what some people thought they should get through the training, how it should be presented, and what was actually provided was, in some cases, sufficient to result in rejection of the totality of the training. These three voices do in fact represent others who have not participated in my study as such. In my work and experience in the department, including participation in several training programmes, I have been privy to many similar criticisms which indicate that people have expected a particular outcome and when it has not resulted, have labelled the training a failure. Blaming inadequate trainer skills, and the confrontations, some trainees have considered the training to be provocative and without value, citing trainers' anger as a prime factor. Indeed, some trainers' anger has emerged, possibly as a reaction to hostility from the trainees.

Training, Change And The Individual Worker

The Working With Aboriginal People training programme was designed to help individual workers address problems of cultural inappropriateness and discriminatory practices. One premise underlying the WWAP programme was that many non-Aboriginal people do not have a background in Aboriginal affairs, a realisation Penny noted in Chapter Two, when commenting on the lack of any education on Aboriginal issues in the school system. This is only part of the story, but some trainees and other project participants were keen to learn, recognising that there were gaps in what they knew and how they knew it.
It is evident from the accounts in this section that some people connected immediately and productively with the message of the training and sought to engage further with the process. It is also evident that some people rejected outright the premise on which the training was based. What explains these disparate views? Reducing the experiences to individual interactions runs the risk of pathologising behaviours, yet clearly, personalising experiences in empathetic ways has had significant effects on people such as William, Desmond and Hannah. In the same way, the anger attributed personally to the trainers was cited as part of the reason the trainees, of whom Vera tells, rejected the training, a result far removed from the positive and productive experiences which led to Hannah's formulation of different work practices.

Reluctant learning has been acknowledged, suggesting reluctant attendance, the hesitations perhaps contributing to an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion. In such a milieu, it is easy to image latent hostilities emerging. The keys to encouraging people to persevere with the process, when they may start hesitantly, are not always obvious, nor universally applicable. Not everyone has the opportunity to reflect, as did Vera, nor have the experience of a success in trying out a strategy. These experiences require a longer exposure to learning and the training processes than is often available in the training room. These too, as in the personal interactions noted which result in positive responses, rely largely on the presence of patient and tolerant people to assist the learning process, either in the form of the trainers or the guest speakers.

The people who valued their learning found the interactive process between them and the Aboriginal people useful. They were able to hear the stories of the people in the spirit in which they were told, to enhance understanding. They were able to see more dimensions to people than their work role, which added to their knowledge of cultural difference and helped them add to their repertoire of work practices.
For those people whose reluctance provided the potential barriers to new learning, overcoming these was itself important, and not always managed the way the training had been planned. Norman’s recollections show that learning different ways to solve workplace problems is itself an aid and valued by people who originally are suspicious. Vera’s example provides us with the possibility that other people, who did not have her opportunity to reflect, may still consider the training to be of little use. For her, the act of reflection was her aid to learning.

Anger, as one response to sensitive political issues is also shown here. Some people can see the reason for anger and can work with it, such as Hannah and William. But others construct it differently and see it as a personal attack or do not understand its connection with the present activity. In particular, there is the suggestion that political issues should be kept out of the training room, indicating that people made little connection to the subject of the training and its process. We have already seen that Aboriginal trainers lacked a debriefing process which might have assisted them to deal with their anger, and the rejections they felt from the trainees. Equally, a debriefing process for non-Aboriginal people might have been useful.

The training design was premised on providing processes in which people could use new information to devise new activities in the work place. With the gradual truncation of the programme, this became less available to people. Even less accessible as a result was the possibility of assessing what level of change resulted. Setting aside the possibility that some trainers might have found it more appealing to express anger and blame (which I shall discuss in a later chapter), some trainees went into the training room resistingly and aggressively. Some trainers have been able, through prolonged contact and process, to help people work through the conflicts and adopt different points of view. Reducing the time available for those processes places additional stresses on the trainers to perform quickly, not allowing people an unhurried opportunity for meaningful interactions.
In the next part of this chapter, study participants describe some of the effects on departmental processes as the training proceeded, and identify some of the associated issues.

**CHALLENGING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**\(^{71}\)

As will become evident in what follows, organisational formations and operations were to be affected by the implementation of the training. The full implications of Aboriginal people being in the spotlight, as a result of their central role, were not immediately apparent. Theirs would be the voices which would be heard, and they would be instrumental in deciding what would be spoken and how. These challenges across organisational operations bordered on the impudent. People in the hierarchy were unaccustomed to having their work practice challenged. This was suddenly disrupted by a group of people who expected to be acknowledged for what they brought to the programme.

**Mobilising: Engaging Support For Changing Practices**

The project’s original architects, Olga and Norman, had hoped the training would result in Aboriginal people becoming organised,\(^{72}\) and empowered. So strategies included foregrounding Aboriginal cultural imperatives, as well as seeking the support they would need to advance their cause. They anticipated a de-centring of the bureaucratic mode of operation to include the way Aboriginal people wanted to work and have services provided.

Norman, who was influential in Olga’s decision to engage the Centre for Aboriginal Studies to develop the project, saw the potential for change.

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\(^{71}\) A diagram of the departmental committees and their relationships to the main players (including the Centre for Aboriginal Studies might be useful here. See Appendix 3.

\(^{72}\) Organised in this context refers to social action on the part of a group of people who want redress for some of the injustices they believe they experience. (Scott 1981)
Aboriginal people are getting organised. One day we'll get there, that's why the DCS project is important, that's the only state wide strategy that we've been able to get up and running ... a lot of the Aboriginal players that are strategically placed throughout the state and if they can impact upon decision making at regional and local levels which then in turn impact on the state level, we're going to have changes in the way things are done. So we're going to have long term benefits for Aboriginal people, we'll start to move away from the hand out mentality. So I think the thrust has to be more and more empowering those Aboriginal people that are continuously lining up at the door of Department of Community Services, that they can start to deal with things in their own way, with their own resources.

Norman had political expectations of the training strategy, seeing it as a structural change measure, as well as the opportunity for people to 'organise'. This was no neutral training for him.

Olga originally intended the training project to give Aboriginal people control over the means by which non-Aboriginal people learnt about working with Aboriginal people. This is a considerably powerful reversal of position.

The whitesellas control too much, this whole package was about empowering for Aboriginal people.

An essential part of the empowerment process for Aboriginal people would be for non-Aboriginal people to understand the different approach in working with Aboriginal people within the department. Desmond was one of the first, and significant converts. Desmond was in a key position for this project, as manager for the implementation of training activities throughout the department. He was, then, a worker new to the department and new to working with Aboriginal people and had to confront this cultural dimension in what would usually be the relatively straightforward process of planning for a project. Accepting that there would be tensions in any project where people from outside the department were involved,
such as the representatives from the Centre, Desmond expresses surprise that cultural necessities overshadow those of budget and deadlines. This is Desmond’s first contact with Aboriginal ways of working, and amongst the issues he identifies ‘the cultural and bureaucratic clashes’.

[We had] a few heated debates ... it wasn’t about personalities, it was about our perceptions about what was required.

Having to integrate the usual considerations of bureaucracy, Desmond’s usual way of operating is disrupted. He had, as a result of these challenges to his accustomed practice, to try to find other and more appropriate responses. Even outside the training room, Desmond was learning about different ways of working.

Despite these initial difficulties, Desmond becomes a strong advocate of the programme as a result of his experiences. He himself undertook a training programme which he regards as ‘powerful learning’. Convinced by the power of the material and the presentation, Desmond is able to define a role for himself in supporting and guiding a change process which was being constrained by ‘some of those polices and practices that have been around for years’. Whether or not the training on its own could make a great deal of difference, he thought it was a useful strategy and one worth his effort.

The only way that I could see that you could make those connections to make the differences [changes in policies and practices] was through the training programme more than anything.

However, dwindling corporate support was almost inevitable after the first successes, as political and organisational imperatives redirected the focus, and Desmond describes himself as almost singly trying to keep the project active.73

73 Interestingly, so does one of his subordinates, as we shall see later.
Desmond’s involvement with the programme extended from his beginnings in the department in 1990 to just before the time I interviewed him in 1995 when he left the department. He explains the different energy being given to the programme during that time by the changes in the political environment.

[It’s] whose head is on the line today in relation to what issue, and today the heads are not on the line because of Working With Aboriginal People. It’s on the line because of something else. Competitive tendering and contracting, it’s the big training push, there’s the big training push. Substitution, see.

Desmond saw it as one of his responsibilities to manage those political interferences so as to diminish their effect on the workings of a programme of which he had become a staunch supporter.

Experiencing the tensions associated with the cultural dimension leads Desmond to become more attuned to the manner in which policies are determined in ways that offend the cultural norms of the client group. Policy and practice come together for him after participating in the narrative process used in the training,74 by people who can articulate how past policies have affected their lives. It is very ‘powerful stuff’. Desmond now contributes to the structural changes which he believes are necessary. Being exposed to information which demonstrates to him the ‘miss-match’ between the ‘policy and practices which were culturally inappropriate’, provides him with the ‘real first time connection’ with Aboriginal issues.

[I can] identify a whole stack of things, policy and practices which were inappropriate within the organisation.

Desmond is able to justify his support of the programme because, having been through a training session himself, and participating in the discussions with Centre

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74 Narrative is not something which is heard passively, in some views, but engages the listener actively, as will be discussed later. For example (Bruner 1984; Lyotard 1984; Chase 1995).
personnel ‘it completed a picture for me’. That leads to him developing ‘a vision, then’. It all fits for him, and he can see what he and his unit needs to do. ‘That’s where I found it very useful’. Desmond believes his contributions now are better informed, and more purposeful. While acknowledging that some organisational procedures are so entrenched that it is often difficult for one person to change them, he uses the power his position allows to encourage and promote what he considers important.

Olga has already been quoted as believing that the WWAP had started to make the sorts of gains she had hoped for. Just before she left the department for other work, she expressed her satisfaction in what she had seen emerge from the WWAP process.

The flurry of activity which the WWAP development represented was a major challenge to bureaucratic ways of organising. The contract was let to an untried Aboriginal-run organisation. It was effectively out of the department’s hands or control. Norman anticipated structural change as a result of the increasing control and participation of Aboriginal people, something possibly the department had never considered. Olga hoped that Aboriginal people would become empowered, taking some power, and by the time she left she was starting to see those signs. Certainly, Desmond was an early and effective convert – his job enabled him to take a directive role, and once he was convinced of the programme’s value, and power, he became a strong advocate. The spread of supportive structures, so necessary for Olga’s aim of empowering Aboriginal people, was fragile and sparse. As is often the case with bureaucracies, adaptation to new programmes or projects is a tenuous act, one which is often beset by bureaucratic tradition. The next section shows how the workings of the bureaucracy gradually closed ranks against the WWAP.
The Problems Of Implementation - Passive Resistance Or Bureaucratic Inertia?

Systems and practices within the organisation had been in operation for years. There were standard and expected ways of working. The WWAP sought to change at least some of those practices. Although it was enthusiastically promoted by some of the main players, once the novelty wore off, the organisational machine reasserted itself. People in charge did not quite know how to deal with the new programmes the project generated. Problems emerged in the different levels of the department, those which had the responsibility for supporting and managing the project, and those which were the focus for change in work practice. This section examines the organisational barriers which provided resistances to change. These relate to the use of organisational practices which comprise the hierarchical location of authority (or who’s in charge?) including the corporate-regional nexus; roles and expertise; and administrative procedures. One analysis provided by a study participant relates to the lack of a training culture, and another to the lack of a developmental process in instituting the project, and these follow.

Central Control – Regional Resistance: The Hierarchical Location Of Authority

One way of explaining the problems was to consider the regionalised structure of the department, with its Executive-Director nexus, always likely to affect the process of the training. In its operations, the corporate structure embodying the department had also to allow scope for the individual regional configurations responsible for responding specifically to the needs to the locality. Thus regional directors had the dual allegiance to locality and the corporate entity. Both must be responsive to political and organisational demands, but the relative autonomy in regions meant directors could choose to a certain extent the order and strength of their responses.
Desmond recalls that management and Executive were all agreed about the “rightness” of the programme because of what was assumed to be the client base, that is, at the time it was widely believed that approximately one third of the clients were Aboriginal. No-one would disagree in principle. But there was an element of what Desmond calls ‘passive resistance’.

He started to hear from his staff of instances where people were not attending training when they should. Managers seemed to collude with their staff who considered they already knew what was contained in the training, or dismissed its necessity. Teresa, an Aboriginal member of staff with responsibilities for supporting the employment of Aboriginal people, considers there was something more sinister in the lack of support given. She believes (in part) that the sequencing of training (that is prioritising training for field and front-counter staff) seemed to enable some managers to interpret their attendance as voluntary compared to the compulsory requirement for their field staff. She sees the disjuncture between the policy and practice.

[Managers say] 'yes is it compulsory that you go', and 'does it look good in our EEO reporting manuals that go to various Government departments and does it look good for our supposed Aboriginal programmes that we're supposed to be running in the Department?'

The reality is different for some areas such as one she mentions which tends to be viewed within the department a bit like the ‘holiday home’ office where people go to retire.

So if you look at that group of people, and you look at those who had been old welfare, the Working With Aboriginal People was never going to work, and if Exec. were serious about their compulsory training, it would have happened in [...], and it didn’t.

Teresa believes the managers deliberately (in some cases) obstructed the training.
They [managers] put so many blocks in the way, it was never, in my mind able to happen the way it had been planned, so I thought that managers did things like not allowing the preparatory days, allowing work to bank up for staff who were going to deliver [the training], and although they said that it was things like their operational style, needing to get their work done, I also viewed it as a bit of sabotage with some managers.

So even the tasks of planning suffered.

[Trainers] were supposed to get, as I said before, the planning time up front, it was something that started being granted but then ‘do you need to go and plan?’ I mean how in the Dickens are you going to run a training programme without planning?

Desmond is not so fervent.

There was a degree, I suppose, [of] passive resistance to some extent from some particular directors and district managers at the time as well, who also underneath harboured those same beliefs, but politically couldn’t make those statements.

Executive had endorsed the training strategy and to retreat now would be unwise, particularly in the current political climate. This did not mean that compliance at the regional level would be swift or committed. Directors, as members of Executive and as authorities in their own regions, did not always follow the same paths. Even though the public statements supported continued implementation of the training, delays at the local level occurred.

There was ownership as an exec. [sic] group, but maybe some passive resistance ... corporately we were saying it was a need, and we shall be trained,

75 The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was still relatively recent.
and exec. as an animal said 'you shall be trained',
but the regional director would go back and say
'We've got this on the corporate training calendar,
and we're going to do this regionally, and we need to
do it, but (whispers) maybe we won't do it as much as
we should'.

Passive resistance is a very effective strategy. Publicly stated intent can mask
delay, any amount of which can be justified by local conditions. Desmond
maintains that the Aboriginal trainers also noticed the passive resistance. This
merely reinforced the suspicions held by some of them that the department wasn't
serious in its intentions, especially after Olga had left.

All the good will that we built up with Aboriginal
staff ... gets dissipated. People become disillusioned,
and the staff became disillusioned ... And two years
down the track, we're almost off the edge, we're
hanging on, but almost off the edge, you know, and,
so people became very cynical about it. Aboriginal
staff, it just confirms in their mind that it's not
something that was necessarily going to be sustained.
It wasn't something that was dealt with honourably,
it wasn't genuine to that extent, and people became
cynical.

The passive resistance of the regional directors and their managers might not have
mattered quite so much had the process for the training been allowed to set down
firm roots before Executive's attention was drawn elsewhere. But it was a new
programme, and the flagging of the early enthusiasm coupled with passive (and
possibly active) resistance meant a dissipation of the energy which had initially
been engendered.

Who Has Control? Relative Authority And Influence

The corporate-regional nexus was one authoritative complication. Another can be
seen by returning to Desmond's own position and how it relates to Olga's. WWAP
originally was a corporate project requiring operationalising in the regions. There
were thus joint responsibilities for many of the activities of the department, with staff in the Head Office and regional directorates having joint authority for certain functional activities such as the WWAP.

Desmond was the manager responsible corporately for training activities. His section staff, including Training and Development Officers (TDOs), had administrative responsibility for those training programmes the department had corporately authorised, such as the WWAP. There were also regional counterparts who were jointly responsible to both Desmond and the regional directors. Other related workers, not under Desmond’s direction but having roles to play in the management of training, were the Human Resource Officers (HROs), who were also represented regionally and corporately. Desmond’s authoritative and administrative reach thus extended throughout the department. This is important when considering the comparative levels of influence between himself and Olga.

Olga’s was a corporate position, directly responsible to the Assistant Director General. She was responsible for advising on all matters relating to Aboriginal services. She was part of a small unit, other members providing policy advice on such matters as Ethnic Affairs and Women’s Affairs, and she had access to one or sometimes two support workers. She had no operational responsibility (even though she crossed the line early on in the position, as she told at the beginning of this thesis).

Desmond and Olga were employed at the same level. Olga was the authority for the WWAP. Desmond had the responsibility for its management and implementation. The capacity to influence how the WWAP would proceed, which was available to Desmond’s section through functional responsibilities,

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75 Refer again to the Appendix 3
76 Also connected, laterally, to Desmond’s section, was the position of Aboriginal Employment Officer which had responsibility for implementing the policy activities of the Aboriginal Employment Policy, endorsed by Executive in 1986. This position had connections with the Aboriginal staff throughout the department, and the officer played a large role in selecting and supporting the Aboriginal trainers for the WWAP.
access to resources and operational ability, far outweighed all of those which were available to Olga and her small team.

Desmond characterises these unequally balanced positions as part of the functions of a large organisation when he reflects on the early days of WWAP’s operations.

I didn’t know whether I was managing the programme, process, Olga was to manage the programme and process. So for a period of time there was a blur about who was actually responsible or accountable at the end of the day ... the ownership of that and the chairing of the whole process should be with the senior policy officer not with me. I would manage the development of the implementation strategy and training, but I would not manage the overall development of the programme. Now through whatever process, that didn’t actually occur, Olga was in and out of the organisation at that point in time, like a yo-yo, so invariably I ended up actually managing the process, in my view rather than Olga. Now that was OK because things like that come out in the wash anyway, at the end of the day it was probably more appropriate that I do that anyway, because she was more out of the office than in the office in that period of time. I ended up wearing it ... I ended up effectively running it, although I didn’t particularly want to own it because Olga’s view was that it should be owned by Aboriginal people in which case she should own it, so in that sense I suppose again we left her as the “owner” in inverted commas, but I ended up being the manager, the doing of it.

Desmond says it is because Olga was absent from the department for periods of time during the implementation phase that he took over management of the WWAP. ‘Whatever process’ he refers to is Olga’s absence. He doesn’t refer to the functional responsibility or operational capacity. Nor does he further comment on
the underlying meaning to his statement 'we left her as the “owner” in inverted commas'.

The interactions between Olga and Desmond were positive and productive. After Olga was no longer in the department, someone for whom the project was not a personal cause took her position. The project became largely a management matter for Desmond with almost no oversighting by an Aboriginal person.

Desmond relies on his position as manager as justification for his actions, despite having learned that the ‘ways things worked in Graham’s world’ were different. He was able when Graham, or someone similar, was present to remember ‘checking myself and thinking differently’. But, in the absence of these reminders, Desmond reverted to the standard way of working. Learning is seemingly not linear, or progressive, interruptions can occur at any time.

Julia, as one of Desmond’s non-Aboriginal staff in the Training Section, in hindsight, also acknowledges the difficulties. In one of our interviews, Julia confesses to having sometimes felt that she was solely responsible for keeping the training going because of her role.

At some times I felt as if I might have been viewed as the white person taking control of, keeping it, of pushing it along, keeping it on the agenda.

As we talk, Julia’s weariness is evident. The energy needed to maintain and manage a cultural shift is too much for one person, particularly when fighting the tendency to be the ‘white person ... pushing it’. Although Julia acknowledges now she might have been perceived in this light, it is perhaps easier to retreat to the known and carry on working in the previously accepted ways, when such events occur, than it is to investigate how the familiar route towards working differently may be traversed. Organisational functional operations tend to support the status
quo rather than act to change already standard modes of working, as Desmond’s statement above indicates.

The Stranglehold of Roles And Expertise...

As explained in Chapter Two, support for the Aboriginal trainers relied on two structures, organisational auspice, and a functional team. As we have seen, organisational auspice remained, but practical support waxed and waned. The functional teams which were the major practical manifestations of support comprised the TDOs and HROs, specialist workers in matters of training and human resources management. Issues of authorised skill level become relevant here in conjunction with the roles people occupied.

Teresa, who was in a position to observe how support was being provided, notes that some of the formal work teams were very supportive, while others could ‘stuff it up’. She recalls an early response from the Training Officers to the suggestion that the Aboriginal trainers be paid a higher level for performing the task of training.

The training officers were like freaking out. It was a case of ‘you can’t give them’, and this is public service mentality, ‘you can’t give them level 5’ because they’re not training officers (laughs) and they’re only facilitators’. Well the reality is our training officers are only facilitating, it was exactly what they were doing anyway, they were putting this stranglehold on virtually.

At this point, the role differentiations, and by implication, skill level, were invoked by the members of the support team. Differences in roles and positions were expected to be maintained.

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78 A public service classification. It will be remembered that Marian, who conducted much of the training, was a clerical worker, classified as level one.
Julia supports Teresa’s assertions by wondering whether the TDOs and the HROs had received the ‘messages’ concerning the support role. But she also wonders if there wasn’t the view that one group in the department was getting special treatment, a reaction she thought was a ‘really racist view’. She continues, that while perhaps it wasn’t blatant racism, certainly some of the Aboriginal trainers didn’t get the support they needed as a result.

_I didn’t think there was the necessary support given, and [pause] yeah, ‘why should we do this differently’, you know, ‘we don’t do it differently for other trainers’._

It seems the covert resistances, mentioned in relation to the managers earlier, extended to the support teams.

Harriet’s role in the Centre for Aboriginal Studies was similar to those of the support personnel described here, with the addition of co-presenting in Train The Trainer programmes, for the Ways of Working (WOW) programme. She tells of her dilemmas.

_As co-presenter it has frustrations about how you come across, how you work together, I have been maybe overly sensitive about what I say and what I do, and I’ve got my own eyes looking at me from all around, all the time ...what are they going to think of me? are they going to stereotype me, and they probably will, what do I say to break down that stereotype? How careful do I have to be not to be put back in that box of White vis-à-vis the Aboriginal co-presenter?_

The role leaves her feeling constrained and uncomfortable.

_Someone who’s standing up in front of a group of people who’re expecting answers but my hands are tied and my mouth is gagged, that’s what it feels like._
Harriet finds the unaccustomed supporting (and by definition almost, subordinate) positioning difficult and upsetting. She finds herself caught between the Aboriginal trainers and the non-Aboriginal participants. She has her own career and skills development to consider. Yet Harriet came into this process because of the relationships she formed and stayed because of them. She did not have quite the same investment in organisational roles as perhaps did the HROs and TDOs in the department, but it is possible that some of what she has reported as feeling was also experienced by them.

Earlier Marian has been quoted as asking, ‘if you didn’t approach them, how were they supposed to know?’ in relation to her support team, whom she considered to be helpful. Her team evidently waited to be approached by Marian for assistance. It is possible other teams were similarly hesitant, perhaps not wanting to be found to be patronising or critical. Julia and Teresa believe that at least some of the reactions from the support teams were hostile and negative. There is evidence here of the complex sets of reactions from these support teams which are neither uniform nor easily explicable.

Keith seeks to explain the more negative of these reactions from his position, then, as part of Olga’s team. He is critical of the departmental training section.

They were not] putting a whole lot into the whole thing ... I don't think they were whole-heartedly committed to the whole thing ... I think they were suspicious of anything that was Aboriginal initiated sort of thing.

He continues, supporting Teresa’s earlier contentions.

A lot of them [the non-Aboriginal support teams], I guess, feel threatened. You know, Aboriginal people, I guess they feel are not capable of doing things for themselves ... they were suspicious and in a way
unnecessary barriers were put in place as a result of their suspicions.

Keith uses the term suspicious to describe the perceived attitude of people in training section to ‘anything that was Aboriginal initiated’. He extends his own distrust, or suspicions, to other workers in the department, such as social workers, whom he considers to be particularly dangerous in their practice because of their lack of knowledge about Aboriginal matters.

I would say that they were dangerous, because, you know, they had the attitude where they thought they knew everything there was to know about Aboriginal people, when in fact they didn't.

Lack of knowledge leads to inability (to fully understand, with consequences for the services delivered to clients), despite formal qualifications or skills developed on the job. Keith believes non-Aboriginal workers have never been able to see Aboriginal people as equal partners in the work relationship, and so didn’t allow their presence to interrupt the standard way of performing the work task.

Charles’ recollections support Keith’s assertions. He remembers professional workers rejecting the Aboriginal Employment Policy on the grounds that it might diminish professional standards.

What was far more controversial [than the training project] was swapping professional jobs for jobs that employed Aboriginal people who were not professionals. We had an enormous resistance from a lot of our non-Aboriginal staff to this ... many of the comments being that ‘that means we’ll have to take on more ourselves so there’ll be less professional staff, and we’ll have to carry it, these token Aboriginal people’ as it was seen.

Withholding unconditional support in order to maintain professional standards is only a marginal step from closing the borders to ensure territory is protected.
Insistence that the formalities of skill learning (as in gaining credentialled qualifications) is indicated here, further demonstrating the denial of an “Aboriginal” way of working as having legitimacy.

...And Administrative Procedures

The bureaucratic activities, enacted through organisational procedures, added to the difficulties. Teresa has considered her experience of the WWAP project as one of constant struggle. ‘I just continued to battle, battle, battle. Every little thing, every single thing’, is how she characterises her work. Recalling these struggles, she sighs deeply as she relates two examples. Allocating a higher duties award to the trainers who were performing activities outside their usual roles and reimbursing Aboriginal guest speakers adequately for their time and contributions were two major points of contention. Departmental officials in charge of these administrative arrangements delayed and presented barriers which, in Teresa’s view, should not have occurred.

To me those things should have happened naturally, quickly. It shouldn’t have been the bottleneck hold up all the time, because on the one hand we’re trying to say ‘yes we’re delivering this package and we’re helping people to address issues for Aboriginal people and it will affect how we work with Aboriginal people, but we’re having to pay the dollars to the people who are giving their time to come in’. Hurry it up. I mean, heavens above, what the Dickens are we trying to train here, you can’t abide by what you’re trying to train ... the people in those positions could have instantly approved payments, instantly.

Administration of the training was the province of staff who were being asked to perform tasks out of their routine. Perhaps they had not been through the training. But they did not, or would not recognise or accept different ways of working.

Nora alerts us to another perceived inconsistency.
I'm also aware of the lecturer's rate is seventy-five dollars an hour and we're only paying forty-five for guest speakers and I query that, aren't they being recognised? Valued by the department?

While guest speakers were perhaps not as polished performers as lecturers, in their own world they were the heroes of their narratives, the authorities occupying the narrative 'posts' which give them credence (Lyotard 1984, p. 21). They were judged instead according to the world in which lecturers have academic qualifications, and were consequently considered of lesser value which disregarded their authenticity. They brought with them their lives as performance, in all their emotional intensity, for the viewer to experience. As a learning tool, they were invaluable.

Such bureaucratic barriers were erected perhaps because these events were unusual in organisational terms, and so some delay could be expected. Teresa and Julia do not think this is the total story. Teresa's comments support Desmond's contention of passive resistance. She also maintains there was some deliberate obstruction. Teresa believes the early support by committed people gave way to people who did not believe in the process or the value of the training and therefore could bring it apart by their actions.

The whole process could have been dealt with a lot better ... it was that values stuff, scoffing at Aboriginal things, like 'Hah' those sorts of comments, so again although you had this very expensive package, you had trained people, you had umpteen dozen guest speakers out there, one person could stuff it up because of their own value system.

If the person in charge of administration was of such a mind, he or she could disrupt the entire process even before it reached the training room.
Administration was merely one of the organisational operations which, if carried out according to official guidelines, could interrupt and delay the training project sufficiently to make it untenable. Other hindrances such as roles, expertise, authority and hierarchy fell layer by layer on the fledgling activity called the WWAP training project, threatening to suffocate it.

Desmond and Julia provide different explanations of why they think this occurred. Desmond thinks the department lacks a training culture, and so managers do not understand how the processes should proceed. Julia explains it by the failure to precede the training project with good developmental practices to engage interest and support.

**Sheep Dips Or Training Minds? The Lack Of A Training Culture**

The planned four days for the programme were based on good training foundations incorporating principles of learning, practice and review. Almost immediately, managers objected to the amount of time involved, citing other priorities. Desmond understands their perspective, but claims they don’t understand the training requirement.

_We all agreed when we developed the process that it was only good if you could link it back to job and experience and then come back and deal with the next round of issues. I suppose it was a sort of continuum, it wasn’t a sheep-dip process... There were some people who thought the inoculation shot, you get it, and that created a fair degree of management tension, it created a fair degree of, I suppose, difficulty for Aboriginal staff who wanted to use the process to inform the next part of the process, and so on... But the bottom line when you get at the operation level, people say when you want to release them for the other day, they say ‘what’s the value of an extra day?’ and actually the next day will benefit them too, but they don’t think with a training mind, they just think of somebody on the ground delivering the service._
Even though Desmond had been able to persuade Executive of the value of a process of learning, and have that process endorsed, the directors and managers could only think operationally rather than with what Desmond calls a training mind. Consequently, the follow up or fourth day did not often occur. This is not necessarily the sort of sabotage of which Teresa spoke, but an inability of people with different understandings to see the value in processes outside their own realm of expertise or operations. The urgency of what was considered “real” work continually competed with the training.

When the follow up day did occur, for some of the participants there was real excitement at having achieved something, tried new strategies and seeing them work. The thought of putting plans into action was stimulating as we have seen in Keith and Julia’s earlier accounts. But almost immediately, the training was reduced to two main days with a follow up third, and by 1999 the training now appears in single days, in hourly lots, as “awareness”, “sensitisation” and with no built in mechanism to enable trainees to change behaviour.  

Training was not seen by operational workers as an integral part of an organisational operation (let alone as a mechanism to address discriminatory practice). It was rather seen as an optional extra.

**Top-Down And Bottom Up? The Pivotal Role Of Managers**

Julia’s belief is that the training project was flawed from the beginning because of the lack of attention given to engaging the key people.

All departmental field staff were supposed to attend the training. The training materials had been written, according to the brief in the contract, for all those staff

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79 The department has recently engaged the CAS to prepare an up-date of the training materials with instructions that it not exceed one day full training.
who had immediate contact with Aboriginal people, and those who managed such staff. This meant that field managers were intended to undergo training, and there had been agreement during the development of the project that Executive would also undergo some training. However, it would be eighteen months after completion of the package before Executive would undertake not a three-day with follow up one-day programme, but two hours of specially constructed presentation. And some field managers never attended any training. This was not a choice given to the other staff. Evidently the passive resistance amongst the managers and directors who did not require their staff to comply with as much dedication as would be expected from their public endorsements, affected attendance and the project’s viability.

Julia believes managers were not fully engaged in the process from the beginning. Had they been, she considers that their support would have been better informed and more sustained because their first hand experience would have enabled them to understand what their staff were understanding, and thus support them accordingly.

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\text{I think there were a couple of examples of managers who had been through some of the training with their staff fairly early on ... and some of the stories that the Aboriginal trainers shared, people went 'I never knew that they went through that sort of thing'. 'I didn't know that's the sort of life that they had to cope with' or that 'This person is able to do all of these particular things'.}
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Being able to make the connections between histories, policies, practices and people they knew could have assisted managers to understand the importance of the training and the need for workplace support for the trainers. It was not just a case of knowing, but feeling, and that empathetic understanding comes best through an experiential moment. So, as Julia states, knowing intellectually about such policies, for example, as the 1905 Aborigines Act, does not necessarily make the connection with consequent behaviours, based as they are on people’s lived experiences. In Julia’s view, it was the hearing of the personal stories connected
with the policies which were crucial to develop empathetic understanding so that managers could move forward, and support their staff to provide services appropriately.

*And so the managers would be aware of the 1905 Act, and theoretically the implications that that would have on the individuals, but not on the feelings that that would have on those individuals ... But you can't do that sort of thing just by giving managers documentation.*

Extending their understanding of the impact of the policies and practices on people, however, would not necessarily have led managers to understand the need for those of their Aboriginal staff who were trainers to be given the time and assistance they needed to conduct the programmes, but it might have helped. The expected support for basic preparation tasks associated with the training, professional supervision and allocation of time were often not provided.

Julia believed that in addition to support for the practical tasks, the personal dimension of the training necessitated their supervisors providing them with the structures to help them in their emotionally vulnerable positions. Julia attributed responsibility for this gap to the separation of training into groupings, with priority being given to the front-line staff, which effectively meant that managers were able, initially at least, to avoid attending.

*I felt it was quite, quite damning. I still feel quite strongly about the process of the managers not going through the training, that, in terms of the support that they could then give to the Aboriginal trainers.*

Not having been engaged in the process from the start, and lacking an understanding of the principles underpinning training, managers and directors (and by implication, Executive) could not give informed authoritative support to the

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80 Reception, clerical staff, and field staff who provide direct services to clients.
project. When other matters arose requiring their attention, they had left nothing in place to sustain the project.

**Returning To The Fold: The Re-establishment Of Control**

With the disagreements, tensions and resistances at senior levels, it was not surprising that the tenuous Aboriginal control over the programme was soon dissipated. Conflicts rippled through the organisation extending from the Human Resource Directorate to the operational levels of the regions. As line manager for Aboriginal policy, Charles found himself having to mediate between the various players, to the extent that he says he most probably would have known almost nothing of the WWAP process had it been amicably managed at the lower levels. That it flowed over into the most senior management levels is indication of the tensions present, and the inability to resolve them at the operational level.

One of the implications relates to the mechanisms developed by the project team, in consultation with Desmond, to support the Aboriginal trainers. By the time the project returned to the department for implementation, these structures were already flawed. It is evident from the above accounts that there was distrust and rejection of the processes among the people who were going to be responsible for providing the necessary supports to help the Aboriginal trainers deliver the programmes. This meant that the project would struggle, and trainers would be frustrated and discouraged.

These initial problems were to be exacerbated as time went on, and as other priorities were to take over. The third Train the Trainer, run some six months after the handing over of the package, was the last formal contact the CAS had with the WWAP. Some time later, Harriet was contacted by Ian. The early scepticism evident in the project team about departmental commitment seemed to be fulfilled.

*Ian P. rang me up and said, 'things have fallen in hole, what do you suggest?*'
It is not so much the ability to remain focused on one project or programme that is demonstrated here, as the lack of understanding of what is required to change processes to make them more inclusive and appropriate. The stops and starts in the process of encouraging the organisation to examine what it needed to do in relation to its Aboriginal staff and related programmes indicate uncertainty, perhaps, and an inability to admit to more than one way to work, rather than overt obstruction.

Hannah canvasses a proposition of change which would incorporate Aboriginal ways of working, through the use of the newly developed competencies (footnote in 1994), as a solution to some of the seeming difficulties. But she concludes that in her view the department is not yet ‘grown up enough’ to allow other than standard bureaucratic forms of control of its operations.

This organisation...[is] still working in traditional male dominated directive sort of management models that don't allow difference... the idea is that you'll fit ... you don't modify the bureaucracy, you modify yourself... it's never about the department changing to suit what the clients really need.

The sort of change required by Aboriginal people is a far cry from that seen as possible or desirable by people in charge of departmental operations, and even, perhaps, by the general workers.

The management model to which Hannah refers is only one of the possible barriers to the inclusion of people from different cultural backgrounds with different ways of working. The WWAP did not enter a departmental equivalent of a tabula rasa, but an already inscribed complex set of organisationally-sanctioned role-defined boundaries.

Julia sums up the problems evident in the implementation of the WWAP in the “middle years”, by reflecting on her own experience. She was responsible for
reporting to the relevant committees, but considered they didn’t follow up on any of the issues, such as on-going training for the Aboriginal trainers. She became tired and disillusioned.

Then I thought perhaps that’s not my responsibility any more ... at times I felt as though it was, well it should have, it was meant to be Aboriginal driven and I felt that that wasn’t happening, and I was perhaps pushing it too much. And, I don’t know, perhaps it was time for it to, [pause] to stop, to die for a while and then to be resurrected when it was time to be resurrected ... there wasn’t a whole lot of, I felt, management support, and in the end I came to conclusion that it had actually been put in the wrong way. I know that the emphasis had been from the bottom up, but the district managers hadn’t actually been through the process or the awareness raising until very late in the process, if at all for some of them, and they didn’t really have the commitment to the training, the real commitment, the gut commitment, rather than just the verbal commitment, and therefore there were huge problems in getting Aboriginal people released to do the training, the time to do the planning for the training, to do some follow up at the end of it ... and other staff viewed [trainers] having time off, you know, this was a bit of a cushy number, and if the management were really supportive of them they would have intervened and sort of nipped those sorts of perceptions in the bud ... so towards the end of it I think a lot of the Aboriginal staff were feeling very tired, were feeling on the one hand they were committed to it, but on the other hand it was almost a use [her emphasis] and not the real recognition for what they were doing, a lot of that enthusiasm had gone, and also some of them were sort of expressing, ‘why do you have to constantly give that message, why am I always responsible for giving those messages out’, so I think that perhaps it was just time, it had lived, to some extent, its life.

Julia had been with the project for three years at this time. She had, by her own admission, thought she was the ‘white person pushing’ it. She’d had difficulties with management and the CAS. She saw what it was costing the
trainers in their energy and the reactions from the trainees and other staff. She saw the resistances and rejections from the other staff who were supposed to be providing the necessary practical support. The organisation and its workers were not whole heartedly helping the WWAP to run. At this point, for many people involved it was draining and unproductive.

Keith believes non-Aboriginal workers can't credit Aboriginal people with ability. Desmond cites political imperatives. Teresa and Julia suggest racism. Perhaps these matters could have been foreseen and measures taken to forestall them. But they circumscribed an Aboriginal activity trying to operate within a non-Aboriginal organisation and the corresponding weight of unequal resource, positioning, roles and the hierarchy affected the operations and the people who tried to work within it. It is little wonder that, during the process, people tended to fall back on what they knew. And what they knew and how they acted reinforced the sort of system that Olga had tried so hard to outwit through her audacious insistence that the project be developed outside the organisation in an Aboriginal controlled setting.

Although the Executive climate was sensitive to the need to consider different cultural mores at this time, bureaucratic structures were less amenable to the desired changes. Inserting a project such as the WWAP, which was designed in a non-bureaucratic and Aboriginal controlled environment into a highly structured non-Aboriginal environment with the two aims of assisting workplace behaviour change and supporting the larger Aboriginal employment strategy was a challenging move. Previous acceptance and inclusion of Aboriginal staff (tried on several occasions in the eighties) had not been totally successful, and the implications associated with the need to change work practices were not thought through to their logical conclusion. Departmental borders which accompanied these two factors were not insurmountable, but they did mean those people associated with the project had negotiations to make. The official line was support for the WWAP. The borders around roles, authority and expertise, however, influenced how it was to proceed.
Initially, the space the department made for the WWAP, and by implication Aboriginal people, in its structures and operations, with many plaudits and much enthusiasm, was soon to be overtaken by other bureaucratic matters. An organisational culture is much more difficult to change than just inserting a programme (Aungles and Parker 1992), no matter how novel, and hoping that event alone will complete the task of change. By itself the WWAP could not match the passive resistance by significant powerful figures, the subsequent lack of organisational support for the training operations, and the tactics sometimes used which Teresa labelled ‘sabotage’. Trainers and their supporters started to become disillusioned. The least powerful people in the department, the Aboriginal workers, were those on whose efforts the programme success rested. Organisationally, the department found itself unable, for many reasons, to provide them with the support they needed. Organisational will, as an outcome of Executive directive, was insufficient to overcome individual and regional disinterest and, in some cases, active resistance. Hannah’s explanation is that the organisation is not yet grown up enough. It seems it will take more than a legislative framework to help it develop.

The next section shows how fortunes can change in this chronological account of the WWAP.

**Reconstructing: Creating A Cultural Shift**

Even though some of the Aboriginal staff became despondent at what they perceived as the lack of departmental will to fully support the one project over which they felt an ownership, the years following its initial implementation were seemingly only a temporary set back. By 1995, departmental processes returned to include Aboriginal people in a greater way in the operations of the organisation.

From his position as a member of Executive, Eric reviews the process of changes in government and different political agendas, ministerial priorities, and societal
events which pushed the training programme off the departmental priority list. Now, as he talks in 1996, he believes the department is refocusing on Aboriginal issues again.

*I think probably for three or so years we lost our focus, on services to Aboriginal people but there's a, there's a number of things happening right now. They are being driven by a number of things again, change of minister, some of the Aboriginal staff standing up and being heard and being counted, and also having the confidence.*

His colleague Charles supports this idea. He reflects over his involvement since those early beginnings when he was surprised at the vehemence of Aboriginal criticisms of the way the department treated Aboriginal people.

*I think the training created a cultural shift, you know. From, I guess, the starting point of my real involvement in '87 ... the Aboriginal issues were really marginalised, to four to five years later, the exec. of the department nominated them as number one priority, you know, it was quite dramatic. And, I think, yeah, the more I think about it, I think the training was probably critical, the way that training was delivered and the sort of consciousness it raised, I think had a lot to do with this cultural change within the department.*

Eric and Charles were both present from the beginnings of the training strategy and can see what looks to them like a cultural shift.

This may not be the way others in the department see it, especially those Aboriginal people who were discouraged by what seemed to be a lack of progress. Especially, some people doubt the extent of behaviour change. Individuals can claim shifts in attitudes and increased awareness or knowledge, but where it matters between Aboriginal clients and non-Aboriginal staff, there needs to be a separate study conducted. I asked Marian if she thought workplace behaviour with Aboriginal
clients had changed. Her response displays disappointment that workers can still be so unaware of the effect their criticisms of Aboriginal families and the language they use can have on their Aboriginal colleagues.

These were people that I enjoyed working with and I thought they were friends ... I was quite distressed about it, so, yeah, I don't think it's made a difference. That's just from my personal experience, yeah, but I mean the friends I've made on the way, I hope it's made a difference to them, but overall, no, things haven't changed in the department, I feel it hasn't changed, they're just more aware of it now.

Being aware, in some instances, does not lead to behaviour change. And especially it seems that for these people in Marian's office, their awareness does not even extend to their Aboriginal colleagues.

Julia, too, has a sense of disappointment. She queries the extent to which sensitisation leads to behaviour change.

I think hopefully for all of them, it was sensitisation, I don't know how much we actually got into a lot of behaviour change.

Both Julia and Marian construct the training as sensitisation or awareness, when it was originally designed to create behaviour change. Their opinions are a long way from those of Eric and Charles for whom the training helped to create a cultural shift in the department. It seems there is almost a world of difference between the policy arena and that of practice, despite Olga's review of the success of the WWAP as leading to a reduction in complaints to her. The area affected by change seems to be in policy rather than practice.

Certainly the policy area is where Ian's current project is situated. At the time of one of our several interviews, he is conducting a review to help Executive make decisions about the future of Aboriginal services. It is an important time for the
status of Aboriginal people in the department. So much of what Ian wants for Aboriginal people is contained in this activity. Ian has had an uneasy relationship with the department, a story which will be told in more detail in a later chapter, but relates to the intertwined history of the department and Aboriginal people in general, and his family history in particular. He is cautious about the best way to present his report, and wants to be able to ensure its most effective reception. Although the subject of our discussion is the WWAP, in his mind, they are connected and he returns to his most pressing issue.

Hey, I figure that, in thinking about this in terms of this review, it's, it's almost for this one whole moment ... it's an extension of all the generations that have been before, this is the same damned agency that, that damaged [the] Aboriginal community, or was the agency [responsible] in undoing, the unpicking of Aboriginal communities, the fabric of ... [they are] deliberately now seeking a report.

Ian carries the metaphor, as he rehearses what he might say to Executive in the report.

The same way that you undid it, you're now going to have to participate in putting it back together.

He returns his attention to me.

Which is bloody precious isn't it, eh?

Ian sees this irony clearly. It amuses him, but it is also singularly important. Reconstituting a way of being, repairing the fabric, is the act which he foresees as an outcome of his present work. He has come through his struggles with his and the department's histories. Along the way he has been intimately connected with the WWAP. It has been one of the reasons he can do the work he does. The WWAP, to him, 'created a platform from which to argue in, in their backyard ...
action clearly did not affect other people, who were also in positions which could ensure a smooth passage for the programme or could effectively becalm it. Perhaps the close examination of Desmond’s actions, when Olga had left the department, provides a key to understanding why organisational change is not easy. Without the constant reminder to look at the world differently, old patterns are so familiarly re-instituted. Nor is this the entire story, for there are also suggestions here of overt and sometimes hostile resistance. People perhaps feared the new and unknown, feared being displaced, or perpetuated within their actions the learnings of their pasts. Socialisation to a stereotypical attitude is only one component of a practice so deeply entrenched in a dominant society which condones the ignoring of others’ experiences and ways of being.

Over a period of eight years (the period of the study), the WWAP programme has been enthusiastically supported and welcomed by people who wanted to know more about how to work with Aboriginal people, and who, once persuaded of the need, supported it fervently. People who feared for their own positions, questioned standards, or whose work habits did not entertain change or adaptation, were able to slow progress or stop it altogether. Of course, the obstructions and resistances mask deeper and more complex problems than these, indications of which can only be guessed at from these accounts. Racist attitudes, as suggested by Julia and Teresa, themselves provide stereotypical and one-dimensional views of people which are unhelpful as targets for change. Inertia and passive resistance can be called into question as also providing masks hiding other attitudes. But the WWAP did not attempt to change attitudes. Behaviour was the target. Here, in the implementation phase of the project, even behaviour faltered. People as autonomous agents, the learning processes used, and political action are three central factors of importance.

It is often easy to blame the faceless “them”, who somehow (dis)embody an organisational structure, for failures of policy and procedure. Here, though, it is clear that people acted (sometimes inappropriately) and failed to act (when
they should), and these (in)actions affected the WWAP process. People interactions run through the study and the project, resulting in successes and failures. People are central in making the learning “real” for others such as William, Desmond and Hannah, who gained much from their contacts with Aboriginal people. People, too, are central in the rejections and anger expressed within the training room which inevitably spilled over into how the trainees (in particular) responded to further entreaties to hear the messages of the training. Excusing inaction or blaming action on the inanimate “organisation” is a way of distancing one’s own culpability, which Desmond, in his way (and without being able to sustain it without help), sought to redress. Relying on structural determinism is no longer a viable excuse (if ever it was) (for examples of alternatives see Marshall 1992; Thompson 1998).

The process of learning is one of the other crucial factors here. The principles underpinning adult learning, which suggest self-directed learning is the most effective, evidently cannot be seen as the single most important aspect of the training process. Had Vera been left to herself following the training, no doubt she would have pursued her identity as she did. This was happening before she and I spoke. Our interaction, however, prompted her to reflect on the events in a way she (evidently) had not done until then. She then stated she believed she (and possibly others) had learned something, whereas prior to our discussion, she had dismissed the training as a waste of time and, possibly also damaging to previous relationships. Doreen shows that she wanted particular matters addressed, and when they weren’t, labelled the training a failure. How far training should and can go in directing adult learners in these sensitive learning environments (involving the acceptance of one group of people by another) is pivotal in WWAP and other such programmes. This is a matter addressed by Brookfield (1993), who introduces the moral imperative to ensure trainees are not totally self-directed, for this very reason.
And, finally, (although not totally) the interactions and behaviours exhibited here are of a political nature. From Norman’s and Olga’s initial intentions, to Ian’s current activities, the performance of a training activity to “sensitise” non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people could not but help to displace the image of a people traditionally thought to be quiescent and welfare-dependent (Guthrie 1977; Collman 1981; DeMaria 1986; Haebich 1988; Rowse 1992; Briscoe 1993). Resultantly labelling Aboriginal people “angry”, to ‘too inside the training’ (Vera), welfare practitioners had difficulty seeing anything other than the welfare problems in their interactions with Aboriginal people. Like the practitioner in Crawford’s earlier story, they failed to recognise the vibrant and rich familial and cultural systems embodied by Aboriginal people, or their highly developed skills of survival in a hostile environment (Western society). It was left to a constructed event to demonstrate these different images, which, when presented, did not sit easily with some people who could not accept the difference.

The three phase chronological representation of the WWAP is less a sequential articulation of progress than an account of grouping and re-grouping, much in the manner of a campaign. For the language used here has been that of the fight. There has been something in the programme itself or its idea that has encouraged tenacity, from Norman’s aspirations for structural change, ‘the long term benefits for Aboriginal people’ moving away from the ‘hand out mentality’, to Ian’s re-constituting the fabric of his communities. Neither relied on the WWAP programme solely to complete these goals, but both saw it as one of the means towards attaining them.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that others in the process also saw it as a conflict or a battle. The struggle for primacy, to be heard above others, to have a measure of control over how matters should proceed, how people should be positioned, are all indicated here through the accounts of the study participants. In the search for the space to be heard (the trainers and their message) and
protecting existing spaces (the people whose roles and existing ways of working were being challenged) it is inevitable that those who already occupied the territories would seek to exact a measure of control over their own places. That this might mean seeking to exclude others, or incorporate them by having them learn their ways, has been shown to occur here. There have also been examples which suggest that people who genuinely wish to seek partnerships sometimes do not know how to act and their actions, therefore, are sometimes clumsy or inadequate.

It is to this construction of the training activity and its processes as occupying an arena in which there are disputes and contests that I shall turn in the next section, after the second of my biographical interludes, in which I reflect on organisational Whiteness.
A BIOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY CONTINUED: LEARNING ABOUT ORGANISATIONAL WHITENESS

The private trouble which I had previously identified as somehow existing outside myself, in the institutions and structures of society, where I could accept, at a distance, the notion of collective colonial culpability - we are all to blame - was able to protect me no longer. I, not we, was to blame. It was the realisation of a fault running through the relationship I had with people, no one person in particular, that led me to seek to understand the personal trouble, and thence the public issues which are best held up for inspection through what Mills calls the sociological imagination (Mills 1959). Many were the acts during this troublesome initiation that, on reflecting, I am now able to interpret in different ways.

An Aboriginal colleague, who had embraced the prospect of the particular work for the department of being an intermediary, interpreter of behaviour and custom, encourager of project work amongst the local Aboriginal community, was successful in obtaining a state housing commission house. He moved in with his family, with their few material goods, accompanied by brothers and their families. Of all the adults, only Stan was employed. Some months passed. The housing authority contacted me, as the person who was, to my everlasting resistance, expected to undertake work for other agencies in that town. What was I going to do about Stan's arrears? My response, after suggesting that the most appropriate move they should have undertaken was to have contacted Stan directly (which they had done), was to tell Stan of the contact. I lent him some money to pay off his arrears. While I was never repaid, Stan was still evicted, started drinking more heavily than usual, was charged with driving a government vehicle while drunk, and, eventually, lost his job. He moved from town with a part of his family, leaving one brother whom sometime later was allocated a house and gained employment. Stan moved around the country with his family, collecting tin.
What do I now make of this one of many incidents? The pressure of many different expectations on Stan was immense. The job he was to do was so ill defined and lacking in clear purpose. What was the real intent of the work? Whose goals were we (in the department) trying to meet? Whose energy were we trying to tap? The motives were of the best, there was a bridge to be built. But was expecting him to define his role for our purpose justifiable? His successor, who had fewer traditional expectations on him, or community responsibilities, stayed a long while and was, in non-Aboriginal terms, successful. My own behaviour wavered between being patronising and purposeless, tainted by lack of understanding and ability to negotiate either satisfactorily or appropriately.

I was, nevertheless, quick to identify and criticise behaviour in others which I was slow to accurately identify and attend to in myself: the state housing officer who chastised me for publicising the housing authority's unwritten policy that there were Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal houses; officials who would only work through other non-Aboriginal people on communities; other officials who would make the first contact with me for the solving of Aboriginal people's problems rather than directly approach them; workers who were rude, impatient, intolerant, refusing to heed cultural requirements or who would insist on 'White' responses and manners. While trying to guard against such behaviour, I too was guilty of showing a face which clearly indicated that my expected way of doing things was to be preferred - I was intolerant of "lateness", expecting people to keep to my deadlines, and other typically "white" ways. Much of this was due to lack of awareness of what I should have taken more effort to discover. Mostly, though, it was being overwhelmed by a difference so great as to render my management of being so overwhelmed impotent. The failures of relating to the mosaic of cultural imperatives, personalities, individual behaviours, living arrangements, which made up different Aboriginal lives were too much for me to deal with on my own, in the single officer location I was in. I left.

They are, I suspect, too much for many people and they result in failures of relating, communicating, understanding. They result in a dominant group, which has access to relative privilege and security, not wishing to foray very far
from that security to the unknown, the discomfort. In the most part, I don't think it is through lack of caring or compassion, or through the need or urge to punish, it is rather that the urge to be in control of their own lives means that control of the lives of those others who can disrupt the working day through their different needs, wants and circumstances, becomes a necessary part of that control. For in giving up some measure of control means discomfort and the possibility of having to negotiate for what was previously taken as unproblematic.

The years following these experiences included returning almost immediately to work with just such people as those I had run from - the difference being that I could come home. But, it was during these years, which also contained larger experiences than just my personal ones, that I was to start to see the personal trouble magnified into a public issue which was no nearer to being adequately resolved in the dying years of the eighties than it was in the hopeful days of the last years of the sixties, when Aboriginal people were finally formally accepted as Australian citizens.

The identification of my private trouble includes the connections I have had with other people, indeed it grows out of those connections. Those other persons who have peopled my narrative, and who occupy the roles of workers within the department and other government offices, may well have different interpretations of these events, and make meaning of them in ways which are contrary to mine. The troubles which affect me undoubtedly are not felt in the same way by Aboriginal people. Yet, clearly, there is a set of related personal troubles which encompasses us and presents us with the puzzle of what to do.

In 198x a brother from a family I knew well from my days in the North became one of the statistics investigated by the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody (RCIADIC). A long time sufferer of epilepsy, he had started minor offending just around the time his brothers and sisters were being educated in the local school, and

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83 Noonkanbah (1979) and the death of John Pat (1983), for example stimulated political activism.
who were to live after their Hostel years on the reserve.

This young man was one of many people whose contact with a different society was not to help him or protect him from becoming one of its casualties. Did those workers with whom he must have come into contact throughout his short life have the same sense of frustration, failure, feelings of being overwhelmed, lack of understanding of what impelled him, and the authority to which he answered, as I had? What failures of the education, health, and welfare systems led to his death?

The temptation to consider these failures people experience as a 'bloody Black' issue is ever present. Indeed, as Wilson cogently demonstrates (Wilson 1996) the positionings which serve to “bond” people are potent forces for excluding others, even when, and especially as, those positions are themselves fought over, displacing, sometimes, equality and fairness. So deeply rooted in the systems and operations which some of us take for granted as the “right” way, because that is how they have always been (to some of us), it is often difficult to re-position ourselves to “see” the oppressiveness of these requirements on others. A realisation of my own profoundly shaped racism prompts me now to ask regularly (but not always with success), ‘how does this act/word affect a person of colour?’, for it is my responsibility, not theirs, to ensure I don’t allow the taken-for-granted processes of organisations to further deprive them of their abilities to take their place in society in fair and productive ways.
SECTION THREE: AN ETIC INTERPRETATION

In this section, I want to reconsider the accounts presented so far through a theoretical framework provided by positioning as a condition of the search for cultural belonging, and the interplay between learning as a cognitive and affective process.

This third section signals the move from accounts (emic) to interpretive analysis (etic). The accounts have provided a thick description of how study participants experienced the Working With Aboriginal People programme and project, from which we may reconsider the research question.

*What can an examination of the WWAP project show about how non-Aboriginal workers can work in more culturally appropriate and effective ways with Aboriginal people?*

I have shown that the provision of information about one cultural group (Aboriginal clients) to another (non-Aboriginal workers) was not as straightforward and unproblematic as appeared from the original project documentation which sought a kit to sensitize staff to the culture of Aboriginal people. The accounts illustrate that even before the project started there were opposing perspectives and aims (Olga and Norman differed from the Director of Human Resources, for instance). Disagreements continued through the project’s implementation at the same time as some people (some of the Aboriginal trainers in particular) recounted significant benefits.

The previous chapter has indicated that when faced with different ways of working and the prospect of having to share authority, some workers invoked organisation procedures and practices to reassert a measure of control. Despite this, some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have managed to find a way to work
together on negotiated terms which have been found to be productive and rewarding. Clearly this has not been a uniformly experienced set of events.

There are two recurring metaphor groups in these accounts which help me present an interpretation\textsuperscript{84} of the project, in keeping with the methodology I signalled in Chapter One. I interpret the experiences in the project, witnessed and as told to me, as those of a contest, and the environment as a battleground. Many are the references to fighting, defending, challenging, and other contest-related actions. The idea, then, of the project, its site and people describe a ludic performance metaphor (rather than the language games of Lyotard), in which a contest is played out in an arena\textsuperscript{85} with strategic and accidental moves resulting in winners and losers. As such, one of the ways of considering the project events is through examining the positioning as described by the players. This forms Chapter Five, which considers how people describe where and how they belong in the positions they enact through the project, the associated contests and challenges, and the emerging positions which result.

This project was experienced as the training had been constructed – emotionally as well as cognitively. It challenged what people already knew, what they thought they knew, wanted to know, valued as knowledge, and whom they accredited as authorities for knowledge. These two themes appear throughout this study, rather like the warp and weft of a fabric, providing pattern, texture and shape. It is an apt metaphor, referring to different weaves present here, tensions and frameworks, constructions and unravellings.

Two chapters present these arguments. \textbf{Chapter Five} considers the negotiations which have been conducted between the boundaries of ethnicities and the borders

\textsuperscript{84} Ricoeur's hermeneutic \textit{erklären} and \textit{verstehen} are crucial here (1976) in which Ricoeur claims that understanding and explanation are both necessary features of interpretation. Understanding is necessary for explanation.

\textsuperscript{85} Scheurich (1997, p. 97).
of the organisation during the WWAP project. Chapter Six examines the disruptions made to people’s familiar understandings about each other.

A Prologue to this section is provided in the form of three biographical vignettes which bring together themes emerging from the experiences of the study participants as told in the previous chapters. These biographical segments illustrate the use of epiphanic interpretation to highlight the significant features of people’s narratives. The emergent themes provide a segue into the interpretation which follows.

At the end of this section I provide the last of my biographical reflections on learning about Whiteness.
BEING ABORIGINAL: LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING

This illustrative prologue of three biographical vignettes provides an introduction to the next section in which I examine the previous accounts analytically. They are at the same time a reiteration of some of the themes which have emerged in the previous section and so provide a reminder of the experiences of some of the study participants.

These three vignettes demonstrate the complex affiliative, appropriated and allegianced spaces of emergent selves, and indicate the separate, yet overlapping, and partial domains which describe this study. People do not enter any process as blank slates, but bring their histories and experiences. Aboriginal people in particular struggle with the diverse demands on their lives in settings constructed from other cultural systems. This section throws these matters into sharp relief in the intersections of organisational operations, individual practices and cultural performances.

Ian’s Identity: It’s In The Heart

Ian is Aboriginal, a child of an institutionalised parent, and acknowledges the insecurities, confusions and contradictions about who he is and where he belongs. While Ian is now connected to his identity and his community and describes himself as working for the advancement of Aboriginal people in the department and society, this position has been hard won, and still presents some difficulties. Ian’s embracing of ‘living black’ (Gilbert 1978) does not provide all the necessary comfort or unquestioned substance on which to build a life. He tells of the journey he has undergone to come to this point in his life, where he still has moments of anger, resentment and perplexity.
Having a dialogue with Ian reflects the whirlpool of emotions evident in his speech and thoughts. It is a very visual event. He gestures to pictures on the walls, boxes in the corner full of papers, ‘photos on his desk, all props in his telling. Ian is animated, he gesticulates expansively. It is necessary to follow his lead, his speech overtaken by thoughts, so that sentences are left unfinished, and the gestures complete them. Bewilderingly swift, one thought leaps to another, it is hard to keep up. Slowing down, he recognises my need to understand, he starts to tell his, and his mother’s stories, which locate the start of his journey towards his identity.

I talked [in a previous interview] about being first generation Sister Kate’s... I want to tell my story, which is my mum’s story. What that means, that’s what WWAP [phonetic] did. That’s, that’s what I want to tell, but I want to do it justice, you know? ... I mean you deal with, [pause] generations of people, you know, first generation Sister Kate’s, who [pause] are very clear about what happened and watched their parents struggled and watching their families have to live between the two worlds, and the lack of legitimacy in certain extents, in both cultural domains, being not a real Aboriginal in terms of the White eyes and not being Aboriginal enough in the eyes of our own communities. And yet, knowing that of all this crap, the ones that had to stand up and take the most pressure, that’s as I see, those ones who went through that system, ‘cos they’ve, after all that happened to them, they’re still the ones who are still out there fighting ... they’re got no reason to, to grab Aboriginality, their Nyoongar culture, you know, they really haven’t ... but, they do, ‘cos it’s the heart that stands. After all that’s been said and done, it’s in your heart, and it’s in your blood and it’s a knowing, it’s a spiritual thing.

Ian’s pride in his family is evident, they have given him their strength. Ian’s mother spent her childhood in a series of institutions. Ian’s metaphor of unravelling describes their journey from their pasts.

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86 Ian’s mother was one of the young children who was removed from her family and placed in foster and children’s homes.
[Mum's been] working through this shit she'd been through, this institutionalised crap and unravelling it and I unravelled mine in my own way ... it was around the whole process of undoing and I never realised it at the time we were discovering how, how it is, but it was unravelling.

The effects of institutionalisation designed to erase one identity and substitute it with another leave some people tightly constricted (Wilson 1997). Some people are never able to remove them. Ian and his mother are gradually unravelling them. Ian explains it thus.

We've had to live between the two, Black and White, right on the cusp.

Understanding a journey such as Ian describes, with all the inconsistencies and discrepancies which accompany the human condition, is difficult, not being within the experience of the many people who occupy either side of his cusp. Why bother, they might ask? The answer must be, as we will find later with Vera, it must matter. Finding what's inside, when it has all been unravelled, the core is the promise.

You need to find yourself inside there ... all those things that you feel, insecurities ... then you can start, you know, try to find my culture. Where am I going to find it? In these boxes over in the corner? Oh Ian's culture, here it is, and really looking for that place ... what is it? language? got it through law? get up there and do Martin Luther King, or is it? what is it? And it came to me, it was with me all the time, I was in it, it's in my blood, it's, and all those feelings you have. Because the culture's alive in you man, if you're dead to all this, you're not worth a crap of shit, but you got to chase your tail sometimes.
The anguished tail chasing brings with it, not calmness and satisfaction, so much as restlessness and frustration. But Ian has found his culture, and his identity, in the heart.

He comes back to a quietude, he settles, and explains his reasons for working with the WWAP project.

So I want to have my chance, of course, you know. People are just people, still wanting to be in the same land, saying, 'you really do need to know this stuff' ... it's about a heart. I'm finding out about that ... knowing quietly that there is a strength out there. And around the timelessness of it, and the preciousness of the individual ... [but] if I get some opportunities, sometimes I'll make a swing 'cos I do and not always in the most appropriate place.

Quietness, acknowledging the centre, the heart and the timelessness, do not mean that Ian will not be moved to react, and 'make a swing'. These vacillating emotions in Ian's construction of who he is and how he wants to be indicate his own struggle to find a firm base on which to found a self. Like so many people, Ian embodies contradictions and uncertainties.

Ian concedes one of his greatest contradictions is working in the department.

I didn't know the department ... were old native welfare, didn't give a shit, I needed a job ... [I'm] a Nyoongar person who came from that background and lived right there you know, in that middle section ... culturally you have to stand and look at Mum's aspect of having come through the institutionalisation, in the Native Welfare Act, there she is you know, that's incredible ... it actually makes you wonder what the hell I'm doing in this department.

But Ian does know why he's in this department. He knows what his purpose is.
We are the next set of warriors ... this is around, you know, getting into the backyards, and, and the places of power ... and saying "You ain’t gonna wash us away, you can’t shift, you can’t keep shifting, we’re actually learning your language, we’re learning your systems, really understand them, what your problem is, and we’re going to sit down with you, across your table, and it’s now our table and we’re going to negotiate around how these needs are going to be met and you’re going to do it because you have the power, and you have the resources", and that’s where I’m pushing.

Ian’s speech quickens and becomes more fervent as he claims this ground, this sense of himself as a new warrior. He has a potent reason now for working in this department. ‘You really do need to know this stuff’, he says. His identity now settled, behind him in his telling, his energy points towards the future.

Ian has a pale skin, and could ‘pass’ as not Aboriginal (Mudrooroo 1997). His mother, a Sister Kate’s child, brought him up Black. She and her family are strong Nyoongar people, active in their communities despite the years of assimilatory practices they endured. Ian has experienced the challenges to who he is from the Black community as not being Black enough, and from the White community as not being quite White enough. What is the culture, he asks, which can sustain him? ‘It’s in the heart’, he finds. And so he can work for the department, he can work for Aboriginal rights, ‘that’s what WWAP did’, he can be involved in training, policy development and know why. He no longer has to justify to himself who he is, even when people like him continue to be challenged for their legitimacy to speak for Aboriginal people.

Vera: Constructing An Identity

Vera lives firmly on one side of Ian’s cusp, although she is from Nyoongar descent. Vera has lived as “white” all her life, and occupies a comfortable work and social position. Her Aboriginal ancestry is not something which is
widely known amongst her work colleagues. Vera’s search for an answer to who she is was triggered by her attending the WWAP training. Listening to the Aboriginal trainers talk about the shame and denial of being Aboriginal during the assimilation era, Vera recognises these emotions as ones she has felt. She is overcome at this event, and she leaves after the second day of training in tears. In the following five years, Vera has investigated and confronted identity. Now she can selectively reveal her heritage. Ambivalence and wondering characterise her telling.

Vera has always known of her lineage, of course – it’s always been there, but it was hidden from the outside.

*We knew we lived a little bit differently, we knew the things we weren’t allowed to, it was unspoken, you didn’t talk about it, when you did, you sort of got cut off pretty quickly, very little background history, but that was the time of the fifties, sixties.*

It wasn’t until she attended the WWAP training that she was confronted with the need to investigate. The recognised emotions, and the feelings of division between White and Black, left Vera, on the second day, in tears. This reaction surprised her.

*I wasn’t even aware those feelings existed ... Until I went to the training, and that was probably the beginning of it ... it overtook me, I had no idea that it would do that to me ... and it was the feelings of denial and the shame that they [the Aboriginal trainers] were talking about, it was shame that we grew up with and, and denial.*

Vera then embarked on a period of investigating just what this unspoken parentage meant to her. She was living a comfortable lifestyle she wasn’t about to disrupt. But, it had mattered in the training room, and the need to search for her identity became strong.
But it's interesting how identity obviously means, or where you come from, that's the other thing that surprised me, I didn't realise it meant so much.

She kept returning to it.

But I think it does matter somehow.

The realisations of the hidden shame and denial that she recognised at the training as being the concealed part of her childhood led her to personally confront what that meant for her.

I just couldn't believe that I was feeling like that ... it became more and more real to me that I perhaps had to look at this identity issue, to see where I fitted.

In this journey, those feelings of shame and denial provoked many questions which Vera is still asking, for the search for identity is neither linear nor straightforward (Clifford 1988; Rabine 1988; Roosens 1989; Glass 1993; Keith and Pile 1993; Goldstein and Rayner 1994; Angrosino 1995; Pieterse 1995; Holland 1996; Sands 1996; Sarup 1996; Craib 1998). Defining what it did and would mean is a continuing task, with some of the questions concerning, among others, the bureaucratic and official standpoints, what to answer on the forms, why should she need to declare one allegiance over another, and given this, could she then legitimately apply for positions for which Aboriginality is a genuine criterion? Who we are and how we think of ourselves ranges widely across many aspects of our lives.

Vera's efforts to define what an identity might mean for her runs into all those problems the theoreticians face. There are the collisions with a biological understanding, and what an Aboriginal inheritance, apart from health concerns, might mean for her. One of the critical points in the training had been to hear
that the trainers believed culture, hence identity, was inherited. There was no escaping your cultural inheritance.

*I think it, it helped, for me personally, to understand a little bit more about the impact of the identity or the genetics, because it’s not just being a learned way of life, that it’s inherent and the abilities and the way of thinking, culture’s inherent.*

Vera shares this understanding with her children.

*Some jokes used to be I used to stand with, you know, my leg tucked up like a stork, you know, my kids look back and say, you know, ‘Mum, you’ve always stood like the Aboriginals stand’, you know, I said, ‘yes, I know I have’. I’ve, I like art, I like music, I like rhythm, all those things, then I think, don’t be ridiculous, you know, that’s not inherent, that’s something you learn. Well, I wonder if it is, you know, I really think it’s something that’s already there, skills, and, yeah, it’s a bit spiritualistic.*

Reaching into a mythologised understanding of what constitutes “real” Aboriginal, Vera falls back on what supports her, a biological interpretation. This understanding helps her to move forward to the construction of an identity for herself.

One of the most useful factors, for Vera, has been the discovery of a book which details the family trees of Southwest Nyoongars.

*I've just found that Lois Tilbrook’s book, and being told that ‘...’ is my family tree, my father, my grandmother ... has got her in it, my father’s mother, that’s her there [points to the book].*

87 Tilbrook (1983)
There’s some substance now to who she is, it is set within a larger frame than the private denial of a past Vera had no part in determining. It is as though, through the publishing of a family tree, Vera, and people like her can now somehow concretise a private heritage and come out in the public arena. This is still a journey for Vera. There is a growing satisfaction in her searching.

But there remains a confusion of how to manage reactions to mixed heritages which puzzles Vera. There is at present no room for a multiple identity. Vera extends this to the affirmative action debate, which acknowledges the need for anti-discrimination and positive discrimination strategies to overturn years of disadvantage. She objects to what she calls separatism, believing it only fixes disadvantage. But this is not her problem. She’s never been seen as anything other than White and privileged.

Finally, Vera considers she is now at a stage in her life at which she can comfortably acknowledge and reveal her heritage, albeit selectively. ‘I don’t see myself as going out there and identifying as Aboriginal’. She is now much more at ease with how to talk about who she is. She tells me of an encounter just earlier that day when she mentioned casually that the picture they were looking at was of her aunt.

*She was quite taken aback, and I thought it came out so easy, it’s nice to think that I can do that, without feeling that I have to hide it.*

No longer feeling that she has anything to prove to herself, which drove her early adult life, Vera’s search through her past for who she is, is not dislodged, rather confirmed. She can acknowledge her heritage, understanding some of the confusions she has felt, reveal as much or as little as she feels she wants, and concentrate on her future. There is little to trouble her. Vera’s journey of personal discovery which started with her attendance at the WWAP programme is similar yet qualitatively different from that of Ian. Her ability to be at ease now with
herself and who she is has been assisted by examining for herself what identity means. She can accept the biological heritage, if she chooses, which allows her to connect some of her own behaviours, feelings and aspirations to a biological ancestry. She recognises the shame and denial she felt as a child, and understands now why the denials were there. Frightened pasts are also part of her ancestry. She has also explored what she thinks about “claiming” an Aboriginal identity for herself might mean and has rejected it, locating some of her reasoning in the constructions of disadvantage from which we, as she says, have to move on.

Vera’s orientation is towards unity, rather than separation. Vera believes training should emphasise the similarities and characteristics people share rather than isolate the differences which separate into “them and us” and keep people apart. She wants to be “both”, not “either/or”. Despite Vera’s insistence on unity, she chooses to only reveal who constitute her ancestors to select people in select settings. Vera has more than Ian’s limited choice.

**Teresa: A Mixed Allegiance**

Teresa provides the third of our vignettes. Like Ian, Teresa is publicly accepted as Aboriginal. She, too, is a Nyoongar from the Southwest. Hers is not a questioned ethnicity, as with Vera, and her management of it bears little resemblance to the way Ian is working through what his identity means to him.

Our first interview took a turn which neither Teresa nor I anticipated. In the telling of her involvement in the WWAP project, Teresa cries. She is affected by the memories of how hard she found her participation. One story relates to her being told by her sister (who already worked in the department before Teresa joined) that she didn’t want anyone else in the department to know of their relationship. Her sister told her ‘Don’t tell anyone you’re my sister. I don’t want anyone to know you’re my sister’.
Another concerns her public denunciation by a cousin who criticises her for supposedly recently claiming her Aboriginality. ‘Suddenly she’s Aboriginal’, was a retort Teresa faced from her cousin, suggesting that previously Teresa had not claimed or acknowledged an Aboriginal identity. People at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies where Teresa is studying at the same time as participating in the WWAP project, shun her. Further rejections from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were to follow. These events hurt Teresa, they hurt her now as she remembers them. They are connected with her part in the project, for it was her joining the department in an ‘Aboriginal’ role which attracted the rejections by her family members. These events lay hidden until now, in the interview, Teresa talks about them.

*This is the first time, this is actually the first time I’ve said how I felt during the process.*

She tells me about her mother, who has just recently died. Participating in the training, Teresa says, ‘gave me a much broader understanding of removal processes’, and she was able, before her mother died, to raise these issues with her, for her mother, like Ian’s, was a removed child. Teresa had previously been reluctant to talk to her mother about her experiences but what she learned during her participation with the project had opened new understandings for her.

*The package gave me the understanding and the strength of being able to say to my Mum you know, "would you like to get your file? and would you like to go back through that past?" and had I not done the package I wouldn't have done that.*

The discussions she was able to have with her mother resulted in her mother agreeing to a story being written about her during NAIDOC week, and ‘when Mum died she was comfortable with who she was’.

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88 Some positions were specifically named Aboriginal Policy Officer, for example.
89 It will be remembered that the term “package” was almost instantly adopted by many people to refer to the training project, as it comprised a case full of materials.
90 National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration.
Teresa, too, wants to be comfortable with who she is. She wants others to accept that.

*I've got relatives now who used to be OK with me and now they're not, because I'm in this management job that I have.*

Teresa finds she constantly has to defend herself. Her family calls her ‘cold and calculating’.

*I tend to justify it by saying someone in the organisation has to remain removed from emotion and has to remain dealing with facts, that’s me.*

Teresa has turned, for her survival, into an organisational player, using an objective and bureaucratic demeanour for protection. It is, further, a role in which she takes some pride. Even though it continues to result in her rejection by family and other Aboriginal people, Teresa gains a great deal personally from being the ‘first’ Aboriginal person in a series of positions she has held. She retains the pride in ‘being the first and the first and the first’, which outweighs the negatives.

*There’s all that extra struggle, as a person and all that extra stuff about the cost factor to self but also being strong enough to be the one that breaks in, holding those positions.*

Teresa is proud of her ability to withstand the pressure, and considers her success is because of her ability to connect with her Aboriginality. So although she acknowledges she doesn’t ‘have many opportunities to connect back, to connect back at community level’, she does try to keep in touch. She is fearful of being like others who are criticised for forgetting ‘their roots, they do forget themselves’.
So I can understand why Aboriginal people at maybe lower levels don't give credit to us all, community people generally bag Aboriginal management people ... [but] another thing that bothers me, I hope it's not a case of people seeing me as maybe being plastic like one of the Aboriginal people putting on a show and acting.

It is important to Teresa that she is perceived as genuine and contributing to the community. But her own growth and development is also important to her. These two motivations sometimes conflict, and the community is more likely to reject people who move into senior management roles, where Teresa is now. This is even further from the 'community', and while she does want to 'give something back' she is also keen for her own career advancement.

*I mean I'm really career driven ... and I was trying to turn opportunities into winners for me.*

She thinks this may explain some of the animosity she has attracted from her colleagues and peers.

Another of the costs of this success has been the loss of personal as well as family and community relationships.

*I was reading through one of the transcripts and there was stuff about Julia, and Julia and I, and I started to cry [laughs]. See, what's happened now is that since I've moved on we don't have a friendship any more and I've 'phoned a few times but it's not the same. [sighs] She makes cutting comments about being too busy for her, that's just how it is for me at the moment. I'm awful busy. And sometimes I have to fly home at the weekends, 'cos I'm in the office the full weekend I mean that's just how it is.*

Teresa is evidently torn by this reflection. She cries, but in its recalling she laughs.

There is a self-deprecating, but honest wonderment that she can’t have all that she
wants, the way she would like it. She realises that friendships come second to her ambition.

We talk about these revelations. Teresa wonders out loud if other Aboriginal people in the project have felt their involvement as deeply as she.

*I'm not sure whether other of our trainers' issues are as bad as mine because of the juggling I was doing for all the different masters if you like, the department, and myself as person and corporate training mob, and Aboriginal staff.*

The four 'masters' here seemingly required different responses, for the work Teresa did evidently did not meet all their demands. It is as though the allegiances are in competition, the maintaining of which adds to her stress, something she doesn't think other staff had to manage.

Our final interview occurs at her home on a Saturday morning. Teresa considers this is one place we won't be disturbed and she won't have to postpone again because of other demands on her time. She is pulling together the threads of our previous three discussions and the subsequent transcripts. This process is important to her, she tells me. She has confronted her own journey. She has told me of the rejections. Her first tellings were with puzzlement. She didn't understand why people rejected her. But she looks at me and sighs.

*I couldn't understand why these people were viewing me with such contempt, but I can now.*

It will not stop her journey, but she understands it better now. There is a wistfulness in her voice, 'but personally I wouldn't change it'.

In the end, whether or not she can understand why people were viewing her 'with such contempt', it doesn't matter, for Teresa is going to continue to do what she
considers best for her and her family. She relishes her position, her ability, her achievement. She has an image of herself which is strong, caring, non-judgemental, which sustains her. She will continue to work for what she considers to be the Aboriginal community, even if that community is ambivalent, at best, about her inclusion. There are moments of insight, though, into what she is trading.

_I always feel like I'm trying to win people over. I always feel how much of me do I have to give?_

And:

_Even now I'm seen as more White than Black._

Teresa’s identity is perhaps more indicative of an unsettled struggle than Ian’s or Vera’s – perhaps she comes closest to who she is when she says ‘I’m really career driven’, and her settings of her self description are those of organisational roles rather than family or community relationships.

**EMOTION, IDENTITY AND ALLEGIANCE: LEARNINGS FROM THE NARRATIVES**

These vignettes give an entrée to how these three people have and are confronting their places of belonging.

These three people do not have to admit Aboriginality on the basis of how they look. All could, and one does, pass un-noticed as not Aboriginal. On revealing, or having revealed, their heritage, all three would, in a bygone age, have been classed as ‘octroon’ (Chesterman and Galligan 1997). “White” society would have labelled them and allocated positions for them on a ‘colour’ marker which has no rationality, but has had the effect of socially, economically and politically marginalising a whole society of people (Pettman 1992), thus denying them life
chances able to be pursued by non "black" people. Two of these people had parents who were institutionalised because of that logic of colour and the third has a hidden history in part because of the fear of removal by Vera's father's parents. Yet "black" is a marker which is either instantly and devastatingly applied once Aboriginality is acknowledged (Holland 1996) or the claiming of Aboriginality is contested with just as much vehemence (Mudrooroo 1997). Vera's hesitation to disclose her heritage, save in places and at times of her choice, testifies to an understood fear of the reaction it might bring.

But the journeys each have undertaken reveal other enduring strengths. Ian locates his identity formation as one forged by living on the cusp. Perceived boundaries meet, merge, incorporate, repel, eject. Finding a culture is one of the tasks for people living on the cusp, and forming an identity through the struggles that particular journey brings. Ian tells of unravelling, he and his mother, conjuring very different images of peeling back the layers, the firm centre losing its grasp, or picking a way through the maze, all three evident in Ian's telling. Multi-directional, contradictory, fluctuating, vacillating, are all applicable to Ian's search for and 'grabbing' hold of an identity which is constantly under challenge from the outside, 'not Aboriginal/White enough', and from within, 'where is it?' These emotional searchings for identity, and finally settling on one because it's 'in the heart', are part of a self in construction.

Construction too is Vera's journey, tempered by choice. Her journey, seeking a 'foundation' for her identity, includes the 'hurdles' of shame and denial, the jumping of which she hopes might 'put to rest' her quest, as though identity might be fixed once and for all. Emotionally reactive to the divisions of 'them and us', in both of which she feels she has a claim, Vera's search primarily is to feel comfortable, and the comfort attained, then to move on with her life.

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"Black" here is distinctly referring to colour. As I shall show later, black is also a political stance, and, in view of my use of the concept White to examine differentials between people of the Western Centre and those who are their Other, I capitalise Black.
Both Ian and Vera’s searchings look outwards for certainty. Ian’s searches are towards something concrete he can find which will tell him where and what his culture is, ‘the boxes in the corner’, some representation of certainty, objectivity and solidity, structures which other people may see, recognise and accept as real, evidence to their eyes too. Vera seeks a concrete verification of the “real”, a book, the authority of the Other, awarding accuracy and veracity to the reality as given by the Aboriginal trainers. They have become, for this tiny moment, the authorities, they have said what is true for Vera. That the next moment she contradicts them and rejects the results of their other assertions, the division into ‘them and us’, the not being ‘objective’ enough, does not matter. They have said what aids Vera along her path, over the hurdles towards her identity. Both Ian and Vera are searching for something which is going to quiet their felt turmoil, still their emotional upheavals. For Ian it is cultural feeling, in the heart, for Vera it is knowing a heredity, even though that knowing itself may be contested by both cultures.

Teresa’s predominant feeling is one of unfairness. She feels judged unfairly by her peers, colleagues, family, and community. She has attempted much, and achieved much. She has the twin driving forces of self attainment and working for the Aboriginal cause. She believes these two motivations should be able to be managed together. That they bring hostility and rejection from all quarters is something that Teresa can’t quite accept. Final understanding is just out of reach, puzzlement remains. There is an emotional depth identified here, which Teresa connects to the tension produced by the conflicting roles she occupied, naming self, community and organisation.

Teresa’s own interpretations of who she is are conflictual. Success in her roles, her ability to always remember her Aboriginal roots, to connect with the Aboriginal community, all sit uneasily, culminating in her own acknowledgement that other people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, see her as ‘more White than Black’. The
answer for Teresa’s construction of self and identity may, perhaps, be found in an understanding of identity which is in a never ending construction and reconstruction, the mestizaje sensibility of cultural melange and development.92

The complexities of the domains within which the WWAP operated, in particular that of ethnicity, show that identity, as part of ethnic belonging, or positioning, is neither fixed nor immutable. The struggles these vignettes evidence are those of people trying to find the firm ground on which to stand which locates them as identifiable beings. It also illustrates how they want to be identified, where they position themselves. For Ian, it is telling his story in a way which expresses his finding out what his culture meant for him. It was prompted by his being involved in the WWAP and he has continued on a journey which has enabled him to justify why he’s working for the department and what he wants to do with his work. For Vera, her journey has been to settle and understand feelings of shame and denial. She hopes the future can find acceptance instead of separation and division. For Teresa her future is organisational, being the first Aboriginal person in whatever she does. For all three they have experienced the domains of Aboriginality/non-Aboriginality as circumscribed by ethnicity in which colour, white and black, and culture are major factors. These ethnic boundaries or markers of difference have had to be negotiated on personal and public levels which have brought them all some satisfaction in that they can articulate more clearly how and to where they want to proceed.

The other major domain is that of the organisation for which all three have worked, and in which they have been confronted by the tensions produced by questionings of where they “fit” and how they describe and position themselves. Ian recognises the contradictions inherent in his working for an organisation complicit in the policies which resulted in his mother’s institutionalised upbringing, but has found a role for himself there. Vera has worked through her heritage and settling on where

92 McLaren (1997) derives these understandings from Bakhtin for whom dialogized hybridity referred to the de-privileged and relative ‘double-voiced’ nature of dialogue (1981).
she is, views a future of inclusion as both White and Black, a hope she extends to society. Teresa has settled for a career in an organisational domain, describing herself as more career driven, while realising the distance this puts between her and the Aboriginal community.

They also show the mixed emotions, the unsettled questioning the nature of ‘who I am’ and ‘where do I belong?’ These questions characterise these three people but give windows into the worlds of other participants and how they may understand identity, belonging and the ways of moving easily in the bounded territories between ethnicity and organisational systems towards better working relationships and activities.

The impact on these journeys by the WWAP has been to illuminate, magnify, or force an engagement with who these three people are and how they want to be. These realisations were prompted or triggered for them by their connection with WWAP.

The implications for WWAP, which sought nothing so profound, are numerous. It indicates that a programme which identifies identity as a key informational and processual training strategy can expect to have to deal in more depth with how people generally identify themselves. It involves not only how staff respond to clients, but how staff respond to staff. An individual workplace behaviour change to accommodate cultural difference for either staff or client may not be sufficient response when the nature of cultural difference is not simply that between binary positionings of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal but inclusive of a range of allegiances. These incorporate all or some of the complexities we have seen with the three people here.

A design which sought to demonstrate diversity and encourage inclusion could do little to plan satisfactorily for the unseen and concealed positions people sought to protect or were hesitant to reveal. The department itself needed to undergo a
cultural shift, a cultural re-positioning to allow the space for a different world view with the attendant changes in behaviour and outlook.

Further implications relate to the principle of Aboriginal control of both the information and the processes used to deliver it. The training design recognised the diversity of Aboriginal culture and the complexity of organisational roles and so training programmes, activities and processes were provided which acknowledged and engaged these positions in the training event. These vignettes verify the assumptions made in the design, illuminate the boundaries around the domain describing Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ethnicity, and provoke questions such as who is Aboriginal, who can speak for Aboriginal people and which Aboriginal people can speak for which group of people? These questions are posed, and will be addressed in the next chapters when discussing the interconnectedness of belonging, knowing and feeling.
CHAPTER FIVE: NEGOTIATING THE MARKERS OF DIFFERENCE – RACIAL BOUNDARIES AND ORGANISATIONAL BORDERS

The positions specified and imposed in this project are illuminated in this chapter, for it is here where I examine the different and competing locations of interest as people found or looked for their places of belonging. Inevitably, there were contestations. These are examined through the markers raised by the study participants as belonging to an ethnic or racial ascription, and those belonging to the organisational functioning.

In this chapter I want to examine experiences related to struggles with issues connected to the contested claims concerning belonging and allegiance, appropriation and exclusion, as a way of understanding the dynamic complexities found here. I will first examine the boundaries marking the ethnic/racial frontiers as themes from the participants’ experiences, followed by a discussion which identifies the borders enclosed in the department in this project. I will conclude by applying the concept of Whiteness as an explanatory marker.

The biographies, used as the prologue to this section, illuminate the belonging, affinity, and allegiances which characterise the experiences of these three people. Throughout their and others’ narratives one of the predominant themes may be interpreted as that of contestation, at personal, organisational and societal levels. Among the frequent references to the fight, or battle, from other study participants, Ian refers to himself as one of the ‘new warriors’, and is now demanding negotiations ‘across the table’ over future resource allocation and work practices. It is to the idea of negotiation that I now want to turn, for here is a description of an arena in which these events are enacted. And in their emplotment, people have taken positions, made explicit in the three biographies and implicit in the previous accounts.

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93 Ricoeur (1986). How people form their stories (life), to provide a sense-making narrative.
We may interpret much about where people’s energies and purposes lie from how they position themselves in their public lives. In this study, the allocation of “Aboriginal” and “non-Aboriginal” (generally but problematically considered to be culturally distinct (Thiele 1991)) is an important designation. Olga’s identification ‘being Aboriginal’, opposing her Other, ‘the Whitefellas’, invokes the contrasting images of the boundaries present in this project. Ian’s cry of ‘not because it’s a bloody Black issue’ signals the distances to be covered in order to achieve a culturally appropriate and responsive practice in the jointly inhabited workplace. Inclusion, or at least not exclusion, was the organisational aim of the WWAP, but belonging and identification with others with whom people feel secure and supported often serve to separate and produce the barriers to inclusion. Those on the outside may feel then that even the most seemingly welcoming acts are superficial and elusive at best. “Belonging” here is the tension between inclusion and exclusion, acceptance and rejection, being valued and discounted. The hints of such rejections and discountings lie just beneath the surface. Discounting, ‘you can’t just say they’re anything like the people who live in Lockridge’; rejection, ‘people would talk about you in front of you’; exclusion, ‘we had at that stage very few Aboriginal staff’; all start to reveal what and where people “belonged” in this study, and indicate what trying to fit in the spaces between boundaries might mean for those who tried to straddle the lines.

We might see “Aboriginal” and “non-Aboriginal” as broad categories, joined by the department as an organisation (contemporarily considered to have cultural elements as already described) whose different groupings intersected with those of ethnicity and race.94 People in this study may be interpreted as having enacted their parts in the WWAP project prescribed within these territories.

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94 Ethnicity and race are two concepts commonly conflated (Banton 1983; Brown 1986; Harrison 1995; Kahn 1995). I use them here after the manner of Goldberg (Goldberg 1993) who considers the many ‘masks’ of race, but includes the social, political and ethnic characteristics of race, as well as cultural (ethnic) groups, which are not separate (always) entities.
The multiple and relative allegiances shown here contribute to how study participants describe themselves and gain a sense of self (identity). These three systems are not separate entities, but interconnect at multiple points, providing the potential for high levels of energy across what can sometimes appear to be unstable, volatile places. Crossing here and the protections erected can be fervent and highly charged. They are thus strategic places for change.

The divisions of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, across different roles as employees, are not neatly placed. For example, Vera has an Aboriginal ancestry, but lives White, a position which was disrupted by her attendance at the training programme. Teresa is openly acknowledged as Aboriginal but has a central interest in her career which takes her further from the Aboriginal community. Ian now works for the department, despite its history, for what he can see as benefits for the Aboriginal community through his work. Olga was ‘always Aboriginal, never a public servant’, yet she rose to the top of her field and was extremely influential. Questions here might relate to the negotiations people had to enact, and the consequences for future programmes and for non-Aboriginal people’s ways of working with Aboriginal people.

**EXPLORING BOUNDARY CONSTRUCTIONS**

An illustrative entry point here might be another of Ian’s narratives. At the time of one of our interviews, Ian is writing a proposal for an Aboriginal Unit in the department, with policy responsibilities for Aboriginal services. Mike Samson is the department’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and he is telling Ian that Executive is willing to support the proposal, with some modifications. The CEO has his own doubts which he voices, and which Ian retells.

‘Ian’, said Samson, ‘Ian, ... we bought the Aboriginal Services [Plan]’. [At the] Executive in July, Mike

95 The essences and meanings of cultural systems have been well described elsewhere (Geertz 1973; Dirks, Eley et al. 1994; Kahn 1995; Sarup 1996; Bauman 1999). I am not going to repeat them. What I am interested in is the interstices, see Bhabha (1994), at which the negotiations become important.
went in with this review I'm doing. 'But how can you build a house if you don't know who you're building it for?' Cool, no worries, Mike, thanks for the imagery, right. So the metaphor is that he sees it as a house, and a separate house, like different house, to their house.

Mike Samson's concerns relate to the substance of the proposal, and he uses the house metaphor. But here there is the suggestion that there will be separate houses. Where are people thus to position themselves in these houses?

The markers of separation which seem evident in the CEO's remarks are those of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. It is clear too, that this is what is behind the suggestion of an Aboriginal Unit, although how this is to be constructed is the essence of the question Mike Samson poses. What constitutes the various possible configurations, who selects them, on what criteria? Thus does this fragment of interaction conjure the boundaries of ethnicity which encompass (after Barth (1969)) those markers of difference so commonly used to identify groups of people as separate as well as to maintain their own social ties, and organisation, the structured and formal legitimation of hierarchical locations.

The CEO's metaphor may serve to examine the WWAP environment. The question 'how can you build a house if you don't know who you're building it for?' may be read in several ways.

Ian has been quoted earlier as working on this project with the deliberate purpose of being able to negotiate 'across the table', for the distribution of society's resources, the withholding of which has resulted in Aboriginal experiences of exclusion, subordinacy and inequality (Edmunds 1989; Dodson 1991, Vols. 1 & 2; Johnston 1991; Rowse 1992; Holden 1993; Daube 1994, are just a few). The acceptance by Executive of the proposal seems to indicate their support. But the house has not yet been built. The CEO asks 'how can you...? Does he mean you, Aboriginal people are going to build it or is the 'you' generic? There is not a notion of 'we' in the text we have, and Ian's initial interpretation was that it was to
be separate. Is the separate house to be organised according to ethnically decided structures, or is the organisation (the department) configuring ethnic groups? Who decides, and how? Will the occupants of the separate house be autonomous, or only partially self-determining? What level of resources will they have? To whom will they be accountable?

If the CEO means the ‘you’ to be Aboriginal people then this reinforces the sentiment put forward by a number of people that Aboriginal people are the ones who must solve the problem. Although he doesn’t state that it is an Aboriginal problem, it raises the associated issue already mentioned, that if the problem is constructed as Aboriginal, then it relieves White people from finding a solution. Trying to avoid ‘dumping’ (Dominelli 1997) the total responsibility on Aboriginal people here remains a prominent problem to be solved.

Additionally, unequally distributed rights, responsibilities and resources have the tendency to revert to a victimisation of the least powerful when their efforts are judged by the most powerful to have failed or not achieved their aim (Dominelli 1997; Thompson 1998). It was clear from the beginning of this study that the WWAP was conceived as a strategy to alter non-Aboriginal responses to Aboriginal people, not that Aboriginal people were in some way at fault for the interactions. Engaging Aboriginal people to take a lead role in that process was not to suggest that they were somehow to “blame”. Yet among the positive acceptance, learning and change there was also the tendency to allow the process to become perceived as one of Aboriginal inadequacy or Aboriginal anger, resentment and blaming. The resistance of some of the non-Aboriginal staff who resented such perceived feelings, deflected these negative attributes to the inadequately resourced group of Aboriginal trainers, thus relegating the project to another failure in Aboriginal relations and self-determination. Would the “house” of the CEO thus encourage just such a reaction?

The problematic of which is the best way to proceed, as if there is only one best way and not many strategies which can be used, has beset policy makers who have
moved between selective-universal, targeted-mainstream solutions (Bryson 1992; Ife 1997). But, at least in this instance, the CEO and the Executive have opened the way for these questions to be asked, ushering the possibility for negotiation.

Projecting a single dwelling for people as those occupying the WWAP project has shown there are possibilities for peaceable interactions and co-operations as well as the enmities and skirmishes typical of territorial protection and resistance to change. In the borders, the fringes of the occupied areas, however, are the places where the negotiations may continue. And it is here that the WWAP most usefully may be engaged. It is possible to see the WWAP project as much a process of negotiating across these boundaries as it did teaching the non-Aboriginal staff to incorporate culturally appropriate practices into their interactions with their Aboriginal clients.

But what constitutes the markers to denote the boundaries, how are they understood, and what is their effect? Differentiating markers identified by study participants, relate to culture, colour and lifestyle about which there are oppositional claims, leading to questions such as: who may presume to speak for whom? how is that legitimacy judged? (even should the listeners accept that people might only speak for themselves, and take their word for their own identity), who has credibility as Aboriginal and how is that credibility awarded, by whom and on what criteria? What the biographies at the beginning of this section have illustrated is that mixed or hybrid (Pieterse 1995; McLaren 1997; Valades 1998), multiple and questioned identities (that is, who people are, and how they describe themselves) is a far more complicated matter than just allocating racial/ethnic descriptors to which society has become accustomed, and designating “houses” accordingly.

Organisational affiliation and the associated roles and relationships of the formal positions are important self-descriptors too (Albert 1998; Pratt 1998; Whetton and Godfrey 1998) and are articulated through the contemporary idea of organisation as cultural entity (Schwartzman 1984; Jones and May 1991; Aungles and Parker 1992; Hatch 1997). The use of culture as metaphor to describe organisation also reminds
us that culture is both community and diversity (Hatch 1997, p. 206). Agreement on the main aims and processes is expected, but separate and different paths to complete the tasks are required. Including a view of the CEO’s house as encompassing diversity within the larger cultural environment, perhaps as a type of authorised sub-culture, might answer some of the conundrums. From this perspective, Teresa and Julia’s descriptions of departmental customs and practices, which at different times and possibly for different reasons permitted the borders to be closed against people from outside, perhaps illustrate nothing more than border skirmishes between the dominant and sub-cultural groups as organisational players. I will argue, however, that I do not believe this to be the case, and that the enactment of the WWAP revealed a deeply racialised system.

I shall turn to a brief overview of culture and identity and their application to organisation and ethnicity/race in order to provide some grounding for the examination of the boundary markers found in this study.

**Culture And Identity**

It is a contemporary commonplace for culture and identity to be inextricably linked, often with little further explanation, as though one provided the symbiotic framework for the other’s centre of belonging (Strathern 1987; Alcoff 1988; Clifford 1988; Roosens 1989; Sarup 1996). I don’t wish to conflate one to the other, and will discuss culture first.

Problems attendant on the definition of culture are many (Williams 1983; LeVine 1984; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Spiro 1984; Sue and Zane 1987; Pyle 1993; Saleebey 1994; Kahn 1995) especially as postmodernism has shattered unitary representations (Denzin 1991; Pool 1991; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993; Nicholson and Seidman 1995). Nevertheless, culture (and identity) are meaningful terms to some people, especially to groups who want control over the ways they

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96 There is an associated, but larger, discussion to be had here about race and identity, which I will address later.
describe themselves and their aspirations. An image of the world as indefinable because that is one cultural view (postmodern), which then denies equal descriptive capacities to others, is perpetuating an already imbalanced relationship of power. Heeding this prescription, acknowledging its relative value, and not suggesting that this definition counts for all, my way of understanding this complex concept in relation to the WWAP project draws from Williams (1981). If culture is the expectation of community, or common existence, as Williams suggests (1987) (but also see his critics see Pyle (1993)), then an understanding of its forms, substances and processes also provides us with an idea of its boundaries, those interconnecting places of protection and negotiation, which is of interest here. Williams’ ‘signifying systems’ (Williams 1981, p. 207) links past, present and future; material and ideal; and dominant, residual and emergent cultural reproduction into a framework for understanding people’s lived experiences within a common environment. Wholly relational and yet constitutive, as a communicative non-determining but reflective act, culture sits within a social context which is itself dynamic, and may be thought of as Williams’ social hermeneutic (Pyle 1993), a map to aid direction and interpretation. These abilities of culture to re-store as well as create suggest a future for the social, or common existence, even as experiences of marginalised, contradictory subjectivities take place in the border lands between cultural systems (Dworkin and Roman 1993, p. 4). This synchronic-diachronic dialectic (Bauman 1999, p. xxviii) of culture encompasses unity and flux, positing a postmodern reading. Bauman’s suggestion of culture as a matrix, in which any number of permutations exist to be “mastered” or not by a culture’s inhabitants, leads to endless possibilities of difference.

Culture also incorporates a spatial concept of borders representing historically enacted relationships of imperialism (particularly), which served to constrain and impose, as they also provide the point where negotiation is possible, a point both Lyotard97 and Bhabha (1994) recognise. What is important here is not so much a

97 See Lyotard on boundaries vs. borders (1985, p. 43). ‘Boundaries are not borders … the pragmatic relation of discourses, does not obey a pragmatic of border to border, between the two perfectly defined blocks or two armies, or two verbal sets, confronting each other. On the contrary, it is a place of ceaseless negotiations and ruses.’
clear definition of what is culture as much as the recognition of the interstices, those emergent overlaps and displacements of the ‘domains of difference [where] the intersubjective and collective experiences are negotiated.’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 2).

Culture as part of a system in which is formed people’s allegiances also follows from Barth’s description of boundaries encircling groups of people with common experiences, histories and beliefs (frequently as well as language and geo-political connections). The boundaries take primacy for Barth, for they provide the distinction with and against others which denote inclusion and exclusion. The boundaries are the points of maintenance, to keep the group sound. It is at the boundaries where negotiations can occur, or what Barth calls ‘structuring of interaction’ (1969, p. 16). The boundaries then, as Lyotard suggests, may not become borders, with fixed crossing points, but places of ‘ceaseless negotiations’ (Lyotard and Thebaud 1985). He adds that they are also places of ‘ceaseless ruses’, suggesting there will also be “feints”, concealed bargaining chips, and the withholding of some vital piece of information until the most strategic moment - the language games, in fact, of which he talks, enacted by the peoples who face each other in the border lands. The accounts here illustrate that situation, that the people in this department, in the enactment of this project, did indeed occupy different territories, calling on different authorities to support their stand, their access to resources and their right to determine their own actions. If we consider the border lands as spaces in which lie the boundaries then the possibilities are also there for ‘ceaseless’ negotiations.

The cultural characteristics of an organisation derive heavily from anthropological and sociological understandings of culture (Aungles and Parker 1992; Hatch 1997) and include many of the features ascribed above to ethnic and racial groups, in particular shared values and common understandings of how to work collectively to maintain their “society”. While there are inevitably distinctions and
contradistinctions (Jones and May 1991), organisation theory now relies heavily on culture as an analytical tool.

The irony of applying “culture” to the operation of organisations implicated in an imperial history at the same time as using it as criterion for judging ethnic authenticity (often its most employed application (Barth 1969; Langton 1981; Brown 1986; Roosens 1989; Kahn 1995)) would not be lost on Raymond Williams. Culture’s signifying and distributive nature contributes to both individual and group allegiance, as well as permitting a recognition of the contradictory communicative efforts which render permanent settlement impossible. The vital importance for the ‘ceaseless’ negotiation of positions is thus demonstrated.

A dynamic is thus envisioned of ‘overlap and displacement of the domains of difference’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 2). These spaces (or interstices) of competing claims are locations for ‘cultural engagements’, which are always ‘produced performatively’. The cultural engagements which occur at the interstices (Bhabha (1994)) or boundaries (Barth (1969)) are places of instability, tension and eruptions. They are points of energy, where action is made possible.

Identity and its formation is an associated matter. Characterising the issue of identity as moving from ‘ascription’ that is, given, to one of ‘achievement’ (Bauman 1999, p. xxix), Bauman reiterates the postmodern re-framing of identity as one of multiple choice. This, however, is too simple a demarcation, in a world in which who one is (identity) still matters. A useful examination of the constructs of identity and thus belonging is provided by Ricoeur who in the sequencing of his theory of narrative separates (heuristically) the concept of identity into sameness (idem) and self (ipse) (1991, p. 73). Such a characterisation allows for multiple permutations of belonging. Identity which relies on distinctiveness of self, and its development through its environmental artefacts (including culture) as well as similarity to others in a recognition of sameness (the formation of the ‘we’ of a cultural experience) provides an image Bauman refers to as eddy preferring it to that of island (1999, p. xlv. Italics in original). Consequently, identity may be
considered a process (Sarup 1996), dialogical (Rabinow 1986; Angrosino 1995) and performative (Bhabha 1994).

With these understandings, identity and belonging may be conceptualised in various forms. Individually, communally and organisationally, referents invoke construct, question or metaphor, (Albert 1998, p. 2), (referring to identity in organisations), in addition to identity as process (Sarup 1996). These categorisations allow multiple layers of analysis of the construction, location, and changing allegiances identity embraces in its multiple belongings. All of these have resonance here.

We have seen that the cultural engagements people found important, necessary and unavoidable in the project were welcomed, sought out and productive, as well as resented, rejected and destructive. They relate to the roles people performed in the organisation, their allocated and hierarchical locations, associated perceptions of the expected tasks to maintain their social order (as cultural ascriptors of organisations), and the ethnic ascriptions of people as belonging to one group on the basis of colour, lifestyle and heritage.

In this next section I will summarise the cultural engagements as appear prominent in this study, and their associated consequences. Some people left, others argued, whilst others stayed and attempted the negotiations.

**THE WWAP AND BOUNDARY MARKERS**

The cultural engagements, noted by the study participants as contentious, illustrate the negotiations needed to settle border disputes and are those which refer to colour and lifestyle (from among those many describing ethnic difference). These surface indicators, which are most prevalent in the reports from the study participants, mask underlying enigmas for people in their expectation of a certain unity amongst Aboriginal people, and trainers especially. Acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal society, there was still a contradictory element of expectation of pan-Aboriginality in some trainees. This extended to expectations of similar styles of
working, perhaps a leakage from the other markers of difference found here in the organisational setting, where roles, rank and professional qualifications stand out as the most pertinent to affect the operations of the WWAP. Expectations of similar products from similar activities extended into the training and displeased some people, and puzzled others, when Aboriginal trainers performed or produced differently from the expectations, and from each other.

Having definitional privilege over others as different from oneself (Bell 1995a; Hartigan 1997; Austin and McMaster 1998; Ferber 1998) emerges from an unquestioned security of belonging (Kruks 1996). When Aboriginal people started defining their own worlds in the training, offering definitions contrary to long-held beliefs, some non-Aboriginal trainees rejected both the definitions and Aboriginal people’s rights to do so. Others were confused that the markers they expected to point the way no longer represented their own certainties on a pre-conceived cultural map. Instead, the markers of difference, which previously served to distinguish, were found to contain contradictions and overlappings, providing indistinct pointers to how people should respond and interact. Aboriginal people presented in the training as coming from more than different locales, which was expected, but they also presented in different hues, with different backgrounds, aspirations and lifestyles, thus offering multiple challenges to well ordered beliefs. Previous understandings of what constituted Aboriginality were disrupted. That Aboriginal people themselves disagreed with each other and provided opposing viewpoints only served to confuse people further. I discuss this next in considering colour and lifestyle.

The Universal Imaginaries Of Colour, Tradition And Pan-Aboriginality

Aboriginal people have been subject to a lengthy history of categorisation according to criteria not of their own choosing (Beckett 1988; Langton 1993; Tyler 1993). Policies have segregated along “blood-lines”, which is intricately associated with colour (Chesterman and Galligan 1997). The chromatic argument (Spivak and Young 1991, p. 228), therefore tyrannises authenticity. Accordingly, “full-blood”
Aborigines are black and traditional desert dwellers, and constitute the standard against which others are judged.

The urge to use colour as a central defining feature of difference is strong, and is witnessed throughout the accounts. Yvonne’s differentiating people who are ‘Black as the ace of spades’ from the urban dwellers as somehow conferring authenticity on the former and discounting the latter characterises the problem many people have in trying to decide whether or not they have been privy to the “truth” and thus can trust what they have been told by an Aboriginal person. On the other hand, Hannah has a different realisation and now she no longer regards ‘somebody who’s got very dark skin is more Aboriginal’. Hannah’s learning that being Aboriginal is more than the colour Black, has not extended to Yvonne, for whom Black is real, and anything less than that won’t do. Teresa recalls the decision of some Aboriginal people who are ‘White skinned and [have] blue eyes’ to avoid being involved or included as Aboriginal, decisions for which she ‘can’t blame them’ when ‘they believe they might get a better deal by not identifying’. Colour counts.

Vera has shown that people with light skin but an Aboriginal ancestry could choose where to place themselves, a contention Teresa supports when referring to the choices some Aboriginal staff in the department (known to her) have made and who lived and worked White. Choice of which world to live in however is no real choice for many, as it would seem with Vera. Assimilationist policies and practices continue to infect attitudes to the present day, despite officially being abandoned three decades ago. This is demonstrated by Yvonne, and to an extent Vera, inferring that living disadvantaged is an active choice, by stating you have to ‘get on with your life’.

98 Kruks presents Sartre’s discussion on choice and imposition of identity. Sartre is quoted as saying ‘The liberal, when he met a Jew, was free, completely free to shake his hand or spit in his face; he could decide … but the Jew was not free not to be a Jew’ (1996, p. 124). Vera is free in the way others are not.
Vera could choose, as do some of the people in Teresa's accounts. She is able to pursue an identity at her leisure, and make her own choices, a position not available to people of darker skin colour. Ian, exemplifying others when he says 'being not a real Aboriginal in terms of the White eyes and not being Aboriginal enough in the eyes of our own communities' is not only referring to skin colour. His choice was harder because of known and felt connections. Living 'on the cusp' brings with it other sorts of imposed identities, and imposed choices.

Overcoming the absence of a visible defining marker is difficult for some people. Challenges to white-skinned Aboriginal people that they are not "real" Aboriginal people continue, with added suggestions that they are using a slender biological link fraudulently. The retorts from family about Teresa 'Suddenly she's Aboriginal' suggest they think she is claiming Aboriginality for gain. Such people have a double task when their authenticity is being challenged. Deprived of an external marker, which for some people is an obvious deciding factor, identity takes on a different turn. Many trainers have to confront this in the training sessions, and justify their Aboriginality, because of the colour of their skin, which causes them no little anguish.

Keith, whose skin colour would allow him, like Ian, Teresa and Vera, to "pass" as non-Aboriginal, told me of his surprise on finding the difference between his family whom he had considered as being the 'blackest Aboriginals in our families' and those people further north, 'real black ones', was really nothing more than colour. Keith realised, as have many people through this study and through their participation in the training, that Aboriginality has more to do with beliefs and practices than it does with degrees of colour, supporting Langton's (1993) insistence that Aboriginality is socially lived above its physical typologies.

Feeling Aboriginal has been said by some people in this study to have little to do with the amount of skin colour pigment, while allocating Aboriginal identity to

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99 See Mickler for a discussion. (1998)
Other is often done on the basis of colour pigment. This contradictory experience can occur for the same person at one and the same time. Being Black and living White or looking white and living Black is surely an experience only those who are White cannot understand, for it is White society which determines what the experience will be without ever having to experience it for themselves (Frankenberg 1993; Dyer 1997; Hartigan 1997). Those of us who are White do not daily have to think about who we are, we just are. Those of our society who are not White, and not just in amounts of colour, have daily to confront an identity (Williams 1993; hooks 1995; Giroux 1997; Sandoval 1997).

The certainty of a biological racial definition is no longer possible (Archer 1991; Lewins 1991; Roughley 1991; Birch 1995), nor is it useful. Trying to classify people according to blood content, or even skin colour is a nonsense, accepted latterly by the current definition emanating from a High Court opinion (Chesterman and Galligan 1997). Thus an Aboriginal person is not one who looks Aboriginal, but is socially accepted, rather than scientifically allocated (Langton 1993). Despite this judgement (and that it represents another imperial/colonial imposition) inevitably, colour as a boundary marker endures.

**The Colour Black – A Political Act**

The ‘Black’ and ‘White’ which have little to do with actual skin colour provides another dimension for considering the markers of difference. In a training programme attended by William, one of the guest speakers prefaced her story by saying ‘I’m Black, let’s get that out of the way’ before going on with her history, as though it were a potential barrier to her being heard and understood. But taking a Black stance irrespective of actual colour, may be a political act (Fanon 1967; Gilbert 1978; Rabine 1988; Hesse 1993; hooks 1994; Zaretsky 1995; Holland 1996), designed to claim ground previously denied (and possibly on the basis of degree of Aboriginality as indicated by the blood line (Chesterman and Galligan 1997) to make oppositional and challenging statements (Giroux 1981; Mann 1994;
Valades 1998) and to refocus on White as the locus for solving the problem of racism and discrimination (hooks 1995; Bell 1995a; Giroux 1997; Sandoval 1997).

Bringing politics into the training room through living the experience of Blackness as interpreted by some of the trainers was not always appreciated or accepted. Jane’s experience of opposition to the Aboriginal flags led her to stop training. Vera has shown quite clearly that she would have preferred this training to be ‘objective’, meaning the neutral portrayal of experience. But Black is not neutral (Fanon 1967; hooks 1995; Williams 1995). For some of the trainers, their oppositional stance may have been interpreted as unwarranted anger. Even other Aboriginal trainers thought they ‘missed the point’ of the training. Black anger in training rooms emerges from lived experience just as much as does Penny’s forgiveness and Marian’s crusade, and all are political acts of noting and sometimes challenging the power differentials (Archer 1991; Lewins 1991; Thiele 1991).

Vera and Bernadette have characterised the training as presenting a separating rather than unifying front to the trainees, by divisions into ‘them and us’, in which, for this time, previously “us” positionings were reallocated to “them”. Sitting uneasily on the other side of the divide she did not actively choose, at that time, to attribute or accept (although as a representative of White that choice is unequally distributed), Vera turned the blame on personal attributes – the trainers’ anger and personal lives which engendered conflict she believed inappropriate. The subjectivity criticised by Vera was an uncomfortable shattering of what had previously been hidden (for her) and unknown (for others); or known more generally as history, and therefore past; or explained by some personal fault or inadequacy (hinted at by Vera); or through any number of other rationalisations. People started to hear complaints which they interpreted as allocations of blame, which they rejected. Predictable responses of ‘I don’t want to know’, ‘I’m not to blame’, ‘it’s not my fault’, or ‘I’m/we’re disadvantaged too’, in bids to reclaim the centre ground. These complaints hide possibly deeper concerns which may be read as ‘I don’t like being dis-placed’, much less by people who have occupied lower positions in society (perhaps with the unspoken rider of ‘they’re not as able as I’
Vera and Bernadette voice this concern, supported implicitly by Doreen, who would not credit that Winnie, in her own office, could provide her with at least some insight into Aboriginal family life to help her with her work.

Displacements evident in these interactions represent the dynamic of positioning and repositioning as people struggle to keep their centrality, their place and their comfort. The training for these people was not objective enough, or neutral. They do not acknowledge that neutrality favours the dominant (Freire 1972). Nor do they realise that to objectify is to continue what Fanon has termed the objectification of the colonised, resulting in the refusal of genuine human relationships as a key factor in a continuing racialised system of oppression. A genuine human relationship, contrarily, is based on mutuality and a deep attention to the Other (Schmitt 1996, p. 48).

Increased resistance to Aboriginal centrality in the training started to be associated with these criticisms, despite the early agreement on Aboriginal control and ownership. Bernadette suggested that perhaps the trainers in her programme would not have had to face so much anger had there also been non-Aboriginal trainers in attendance. Citing equal treatment, reconciliation or relevance for people who were not working with Aboriginal clients, Bernadette’s suggestions were echoed by others. Even Harriet, who participated in the development phase of the project and understood and believed in the need for Aboriginal primacy, towards the end of her involvement, started to canvass similar ideas concluding, like Bernadette, that categorising ‘them and us’ is destructive. Events which de-centred Harriet were perhaps a reason for her to consider ‘modelling some type of relationship to the group’ would have a potential benefit, despite her own experiences with trying to find her own way in those relationships. Eventually, she was to find that Black had a need which overshadowed her privileged White positioning, and the relationships she thought were cemented, she found to be insufficient to challenge the Black need. Trying to negotiate her way through these difficulties, to find a place for herself in that system, Harriet is surprised and hurt to find that the place she thought she had earned as a person, friend and colleague, was negated as a ‘White
woman’. Ceaseless negotiations, Lyotard calls it, but the ceaselessness of the engagements are tiring. Those who do tire of the ceaselessness of these negotiations forget sometimes that struggles to keep culture and identity alive have a much longer history in Aboriginal lived experience than the requirement of White to negotiate.

The reasons Harriet and Bernadette give for joint training are convincing and compelling, and are obviously heart-felt, but would it not just result in, again, the more confident, articulate people in the non-Aboriginal world striding ahead in front of their Aboriginal colleagues? Here assimilation is the most likely result.

Aboriginal Lifestyles – The Paradox Of Descentism

Acceptance of light-coloured Aboriginal people is only one part of the racial or ethnic divide. Lifestyle (a cultural feature) is another of the markers of difference and one which surprised and impressed people attending the training.

Desmond accepts the accounts of difference from the trainers when he “hears” other ways of living from staff with whom he shares the working day. Mark’s (an Aboriginal trainer) life outside the working day is so significantly different from Desmond’s that he remembers the effect this has on him years later – the eye-opener it was into different worlds. Desmond has a mixed cultural and linguistic parentage, yet he is surprised that there is such disparity between himself and Mark, a factor which features large in his learning and valuing of the programme.

But expectations of difference can calcify into judgements of what constitutes “real” and “not-real”, epitomised in Yvonne’s statement, ‘you can’t just say that they’re anything like the people who live in Lockridge or Medina or somewhere’. Comparing the people she knew as “traditional” in Jigalong, Newman, and De Grey to urban dwellers, Yvonne discounts the possibility that these people who

\[100\] See Thiele for a discussion. (1991)

\[101\] Locations in the North of WA.
live in the city may “have” a culture, rendering them associatively adrift. It is true these groups differ, but Yvonne’s ascription has the effect of supporting a commonly held belief that “traditional” equals “true” and urban as “false”. Detaching people from a shared lived experience excuses incorporations and invites assimilations, enhancing one perspective over another.

Perhaps Desmond’s background made him more open to hearing/seeing difference than Yvonne, whose own background included family fosterings of Aboriginal children intended for White life through being brought up in Sister Kate’s. Mark was able to capture Desmond’s understanding in a way the trainers in Yvonne’s programme were evidently unable to do.

The separation of real/not-real has further insinuated itself into common parlance amongst Aboriginal people themselves. Marian described her partnership with Norman in training sessions as useful for the very reason that she didn’t know anything about culture, saying ‘I don’t know anything about traditional stories and stuff’, whereas Norman did. Marian identifies clearly as an Aboriginal person, but for her, “culture” is not what describes her life. This raises the issue of what is considered authentic and thus legitimate as a speaker for Aboriginal people.

Certainly, difficulties can be experienced by Aboriginal people who have been brought up away from their cultural roots, in presenting a cultural persona which could be taken as authentic (Thiele 1991) when past policies have effectively robbed them of a cultural background that should have been theirs to choose. Nora, another Aboriginal trainer, affirms that ‘there are non-Aboriginal staff that sometimes are more aware of Aboriginal needs’. The training process had to confront this issue, especially as all Aboriginal staff were expected to participate, in some way, in the training process. Work had to be undertaken to assist people whose knowledge was sparse, as well as help them come to terms with previously unknown histories.
The way some Aboriginal people talk about culture, as though it were separate from themselves, illustrates the myth perpetuated on them by non-Aboriginal people that “culture” equates to authenticity, (Langton 1981; Archer 1991; Lattas 1993), shown and proved by objective measures and recognised by outsiders as genuine, such as is the case with traditional lifestyles.

A greater injustice is perpetrated here on Aboriginal people. If a biological inheritance is no longer the defining criterion for Aboriginality, so that people with less Aboriginal “blood quantity” than that of their other “race(s)” may still claim Aboriginality, then understanding identity as socially constructed is seemingly acceptable. Thiele posits the idea that if identities are socially constructed, one may “convert” to Aboriginality in the same way as one might become Catholic. This apparently is not the case. Even though people with minuscule proportions of “blood” are brought up Aboriginal and counted among their number, this is not quite the same as choosing to convert. Certainly people may choose not to disclose their Aboriginality, but this is not the same either. The implications raised by the accounts mentioned above illustrate this paradox. People are counted and discounted as Aboriginal because of their cultural association. But clearly they are also ascribed identity on the basis of their descent lines (however thinly stretched). It seems a person can be Aboriginal if s/he can locate a heritage, and a cultural continuity, but a person who has a strong biological connection and no cultural association is still claimed (and can claim) as Aboriginal; and a person who has very little biological connection but a very strong cultural association can also be Aboriginal; and a person who has neither in very strong amounts may also still be claimed (and can claim) to be Aboriginal. There is evidently a social construction at work here, as there is also an essentialism (which is the foundation of racism). Thiele refers to this as definitional confusion (Thiele 1991, p. 197). Definitional privilege thus remains with White society, where rejections of a cultural ascription may be made (as Yvonne has on the basis of it not meeting a traditional expectation, supported by Marian’s comment) or acceptances may award Aboriginality if the Aboriginal person has been sufficiently persuasive (as happened with Desmond).
Difference is perhaps acceptable as long as it contains no threat to an ordered and accustomed life in which there is no dispute about resources. It can continue to be "exoticised" and treated as commodity, and contradictorily valued for its difference (to be bought and sold) in a society where equal treatment demands difference to be ignored.

At the end, although diversity of Aboriginal culture and lifestyle is central to the understandings promoted through the training materials, we find that polarity overtakes acknowledgement of the multi-faceted nature of Aboriginal life, and we return to the positioning of Aboriginal facing non-Aboriginal in oppositional stances.

**Imagining The Universal – Pan-Aboriginality**

It often takes a deliberate effort to avoid the temptation to talk about “Aboriginal” as generic. The agreement at the beginning of the project was to eschew pan-Aboriginality for its inaccuracy, disrespect of people’s affiliations, and as potentially leading to the same sort of cultural offences as had prompted the training in the first place.

Attribution of a single racial identity to the people who inhabited Australia prior to European invasion and colonisation was one act (among many) of domination, the legacy of which Indigenous Australians are trying to unscramble today (Langton 1993). It has had the effect (again amongst many) of continuing the myth of unanimity of which there is evidence in the training room. It is manifest in the expectation that there is a “truth” about Aboriginality (the essentialising expectation related to descent and inheritism), and that, therefore, what an Aboriginal person represents is Aboriginality. Common expectations are as Peggy McIntosh writes (1992) that Aboriginal people can and will talk for their people, as though that view point should be acclaimed for all. When it is not, judgements as
to how accurate the view is may be made according to the listener's determination (another form of definitional privilege).

An associated expectation is that there is unanimity among Aboriginal people, of aspiration, direction and purpose (a myth perpetuated by the allocation of the term "aboriginal" on British invasion (Attwood 1989)). Any suggestion of dissent or, worse, criticism, are seized upon as illustrations that Aboriginal people cannot agree (and by inference, be trusted). West describes responses to this as one of the temptations of doubt, resulting in 'Black jealously in the face of Black "success" [and] ... a Black "battle royal" for White spectators.' (West 1996, p. 103). Teresa has noted several instances where she was rejected by other Aboriginal people, including her own sister, on the grounds that Aboriginal people are suspicious of success. These complex interplays confuse spectators. Detached watching encourages and allows the bystanders to leave, dismissing the entirety instead of trying to grapple with the contradictions people present.

Desmond's experience highlights these first two problems admirably. Desmond, who came to value his Aboriginal staff for what he could learn about working more efficiently as a manager, illustrates this in relation to Teresa, whom he considered had 'a foot in both camps'. Teresa's sister came later to work in Desmond's section. Desmond believed he had entrée to another cultural system through his association with Teresa. When Teresa's sister also came to work in Desmond's section he was able to extend his knowledge and understanding to learn about allegiances, and the politics of the Aboriginal networks, another aspect of Aboriginal background and family life. His management skills with Aboriginal people increased (one of the aims of the WWAP). But he also became aware of the intricacies of Aboriginal networks and family connections, so much so, that he used another Aboriginal staff member to verify what he was being told by Teresa or her sister. Listening to the warnings from others, 'because of the various allegiances or whatever within the network itself', he would then check it with Keith. Apparently Keith was trusted to be able to provide "accurate" information. Desmond had made his own assessment of Teresa's positioning, and considered her sister to be 'less
conformist in some ways to the bureaucratic world that Teresa was’. From being able to compare the differences between Teresa and her sister, Desmond was then able to discern whom to ask for what sort of information and to observe the unspoken connections which would make his job as a manager easier.

Desmond realises as part of his learning from the WWAP that there is a complexity of relationships within Aboriginal society which means that people will have different goals and ends to serve which may not coincide with the ends of the organisation. So Teresa’s information (vital) is set against her sister’s (also vital) and checked against Keith’s verification (also vital). This provides Desmond with the certainty he believes is necessary in his position. He has learned about the myth of unanimity of representation, and the myth of agreement and unity, and responds by trusting no-one until he has checked it three times. Workplace practice including Aboriginal workers thus starts to take on a thicker texture than just the division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, and incorporates the delicate distinctions between people as workers and people representing a cultural or ethnic group.

A third problem of universalising relates to another of the expectations from the world view of the definer who has privilege to set standards against which others are judged, a common skill level. In the case of the trainers, when one failed, so then did the training – as though the person was the training. The centring of the training on the Aboriginal experience led people (justifiably in some views) to consider that this was so. The Aboriginal trainers were not uniformly skilled, adept or competent. Nor did they all approach the training in the same way for the same ends. Leslie recalls trainers whom he considered to ‘miss the point’ of the training and want people to cry about it rather than learn. Penny heard about trainers ‘scratching’ and sought them out to help them, understanding that they were in need of assistance. The variation trainees encountered in the training room was a subject for discussion outside. Yvonne remembers:
talking to other people who'd had other trainers, and it did seem that there was not a common thread, that everybody was doing different sort of stuff, and from speaking to one person who attended half the training session with this group and half with another group that we got probably the worst trainers.

The training and the trainers thereby suffered by comparison.

The academic problems of pan-Aboriginality are not solved, especially as the drawing together of minority groups as a response to external threats (Barth 1969; Lewins 1991; Langford and Ponting 1992) is widespread and reinforces external impressions of unity (at the same time as they are condemned as being subversive). Confused and oppositional stances remain, leaching into the training room as trainees struggle to find a small measure of certainty.

Realising that identity, and so possibly Aboriginality, is a process, dialogical and performative as already discussed (among its other significations, for example, a political act (Lewins 1991); what Hall, extending Gramsci calls the ‘war of position’ (1992, p. 255); relational (Burney 1994; Gilbert 1995); a societal function (Clifford 1988); or even as iconograph (Tyler 1993)) is something only very few people in this study have been able to do, distrusting the lack of objectivity that stance necessarily means. Hannah’s view is perhaps the closest we have been able to locate. Now she would not be so uptight about her task, just ‘trust [the process] more’.

The Problematic Of Ethnic/Racial Boundaries

These negotiations of different colour, lifestyle and heritage contribute to the problematic of an ethnic/racial identity. Is the claiming of ethnicity by all in this postmodern world an act of dilution or an act of defiance? Ethnicity or cultural equivalency extends beyond the colour line to such aspects as sexuality and disability, resulting in what Castells calls the ‘symbolic composites ... of blurred identities’ (Castells 1997, p. 59). There is even the suggestive dangerous frisson of
the forbidden, as people claim a Black racial ancestry with its additional romanticism, contributing to the composite (Langton 1993).

Identity in a postmodern world has overtaken racial ascriptions, displacing race. Fragmented re-constitutions of people's sense of themselves as autonomous actors disallow a racial determinant (except for those people who are Black) reinforcing Kahn's (1995, p. 154) division between academia and the general population. Cultural belonging is now something to which all people aspire. In a deft turn, White has re-focussed attention on White, in ways unintended by those theorists who turned a critical eye on White discursive practices as a dominating strategy (Dyer 1997; Giroux 1997; Hill 1997). "White" can now (re)claim centre stage as dis-empowered, dis-enfranchised and dis-advantaged, in much the same way as men have claimed a dis-advantaged status in gender politics. But postmodern fluidity aside, the seeming acceptance of hybridity (Bhabha 1994; Pieterse 1995; Sarup 1996; McLaren 1997) also masks a greater problem of again applying definitional boundaries (or lack of them) to people whose survival as an autonomous group(s) is still under threat. Neither do the general public necessarily accept hybridity, seeking certainty instead. In this they are in agreement with each other, but for different reasons. I turn next to the other significant set of borders and boundaries, those of the organisation.

THE INVISIBLE BORDERS OF MANAGEMENT AND MERIT

The perceived differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were not the only boundaries to be negotiated, although they were central to the training and formed a large part of the interactions between the trainers and the trainees. As I have shown in Chapter Four, what happened outside the training room was to have just as much effect on how the training would proceed. The support systems and departmental procedures for the training were just as influential on processes and perhaps had more capacity to halt, stall, or interrupt the operations of the training itself, which may also have affected how the trainers and the trainees experienced the training. I showed that the operations of the programme were dependent on
how the support teams provided their support, how the managers in regions responded (whether with enthusiasm and alacrity or with passive resistance and impatience), and how other staff played their parts (‘stuffing it up’, or complaining). Less visible were the day to day operations which settled in the non-Aboriginal controlled training section (where it remains today). I identified the borders as relating to roles, rank (authority and hierarchy) and professional qualifications. These borders have overlaid those of Aboriginality and non-Aboriginality, making this a much more complicated process than originally anticipated by the project team.

The matters raised in Chapter Four demonstrate the elusive nature of institutional/structural/indirect racism which Goldberg defines as organisationally auspiced behaviours having ‘racially patterned exclusionary or discriminatory outcomes’ (Goldberg 1993, p.99). The managers could claim legitimacy for some of their acts of omission, delay, neglect (in attending themselves and of their staff), and objections (to the length of time the training removed their staff from direct work). Work at the client level, or other political imperatives, can always compete favourably with training. Failing to ensure staff provided the necessary supports could be excused through appeals to procedures, which is what those staff themselves did. Using guidelines for payments, and ensuring budget allocations for training materials use (the photocopying Marian had to conduct away from her office), are all correct, if irritating, administrative procedures. They mask the discriminatory nature of the acts, which serve to further disadvantage one group of people, on the basis of their race, although this most likely would be vigorously denied. The training, which was supposed to be controlled by Aboriginal people, was hindered by these acts.

The other managerial dispute was that of ownership of the WWAP project itself. Desmond and Christine, as non-Aboriginal people, wielded significant authority over the day to day operations, giving them considerable power over how it would run. Neither noticed that they had slipped back into a well functioning system where patterns of management and operation were already set. The business
continues, and that's what matters. It is really irrelevant that they, as non-Aboriginal people, are doing it.

Teresa noted more overt acts of discrimination, which were rightly the province of managerial authority and should have warranted reprimands. The most explicit demonstration was detailed by Ian in reference to the specialist worker who told him she would no longer deal with Aboriginal cases. This is not a matter of choice, and should have been (and was) the subject of reprimand. Keith's experience includes perceptions (his own) of negative judgements of ability on the basis of Aboriginality, a much more difficult matter to address. Indirect discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is extremely difficult to prove to the satisfaction of a tribunal or court. People have become adept at avoiding overtly racist acts, especially in the workplace, and making a case is not always successful (WA Commissioner for Equal Opportunity 1998). Olga's somewhat ambitious hopes in 1989 that behaviour would improve were to be tested, as the sophistication of masking discriminatory acts has increased, and the underlying organisational practices remain intact.

Professional expertise is another of the procedural matters which assist discriminatory practices despite the provisions made in legislation. The complaints levelled at unqualified people enacting roles for which they had not formally competed and been selected, and concerning the requirements that procedures be re-arranged to suit a different group of people could (and most probably would) have been justified on their own bases. Roles and procedures are equal for everyone, according to the legislation, irrespective of their ethnicity. Unfeigned hurt may well have been responses to accusations of racism.

On the face of it, de-centring people through their roles and through administrative procedures may well have not had a racial dimension, which is one of the arguments of equal opportunity. But, as we have already seen, equal opportunity

\[\text{102 Section 50D of the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) (WA) refers.}\]
tends to serve those already in positions of authority more than those who are seeking to be treated equally. Iris Marion Young refers to the 'myth of merit' in this association, and the ranking and certifying of people's positions a political act (Young 1990, p. 210). Equal Opportunity (EO) legislation can only work to a certain level. The Critical Race Theorists (CRT) maintain that EO legislation itself masks and serves to maintain the underlying inequalities, for it convinces White liberals that they are attempting to solve the problems of access and equity (Williams 1987; Williams 1993; Delgado 1995; Williams 1995; Bell 1995a; Bell 1995b).

The political nature of the training was not lost on people such as Norman and Ian, for both of whom the training was part of a state-wide strategy and an arena for action (respectively), both overtly political acts. Vera objected that the training was too 'political', and she suggested this was not appropriate in the training room. Yet, if we accept the arguments made by Young and the CRT group, the training itself was embedded in a political setting in which all acts were political, the more overt statements of the trainers hiding the undercurrents of positionings which go un-noticed as maintaining inequality.

Although Teresa and Julia suggested that the acts of discrimination and sabotage they witnessed bordered on racism, it is most unlikely that these acts in themselves would ever be subject to legal scrutiny, much less attract compensation. The individual acts of indifference or rejection, while important to confront, as are all discriminatory acts, by themselves contribute to only a very small part of the discrimination people of colour (and other groups who are subject to organisational discrimination) experience as a regular occurrence. Iris Marion Young (1990) has highlighted significant systems of oppression enacted as a matter of course without notice, because such systems are embedded within the expected and accepted processes of society. Indeed, she states that the oppressed need not necessarily have an opposing oppressive group, such is the nature of systemic oppression (p.41) in which the dominant group unthinkingly allows practices to continue
which actively (but often invisibly) detract from a person's ability to take part on an equal basis.

Professional and other practices of expertise are examples of the regulatory mechanisms within this schema. The professions themselves are part of the political enactment of what Foucault calls 'governmentality' (1991a) (albeit deriving more relative power but less autonomy for their pains). As long as this symbiotic relationship between the professions and other expertise-invested occupations and the state exists, the exclusionary practices necessary to maintain these statuses are all the more likely to continue. Should professions seek to work outside the state apparatuses in more independent modes, power as well as autonomy is at risk. Either way, the interests of the professions such as social work, and the expertise-laden occupations of managerialism and training, as shown here, are served by exclusion rather than by diluting their own borders. People seeking to practice, such as the Aboriginal trainers, must of necessity pass their requirements before being allowed entrance. While these practices are seemingly racially or ethnically neutral, they reinforce divisions based on colour or culture.

The WWAP has occupied the border lands in attempts to negotiate the differences between people so that they may work productively together across the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal boundaries. But we have found those boundaries themselves to be blurred and indistinct as well as fixed and rigid. Other boundaries overlay them. Roles and systems of the bureaucracy, already present in the organisation and which might otherwise not have been especially noticed, are highlighted in this instance when juxtaposed with the racial/ethnic dimensions of the WWAP. So the binary of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal kaleidoscopes into ethnicities with the differing views of culture, lifestyles and colour, negotiations necessary between all those, and the inserting of organisational roles with their various hierarchical, professional, expert qualifiers.
THEORISING EXPERIENCE OF NEGOTIATIONS OF THE WWAP: A MATTER OF WHITENESS

Two interwoven matters of importance to the WWAP (and any other similarly intentioned and on-going) training are raised here. One concerns how people can feel settled in their identities (and not subject to continual challenge), the other is how the wider society can manage their difference without seeking to hide difference through inclusion. The first matter concerns identity and its politics and the second, the privilege of Whiteness.

How people are and how that sense of identity sustains them has been illustrated by three people in this study. This has been mirrored by disputes in the training room where identities have been challenged and the foundations on which people build selves have in some cases been demolished. This is hardly surprising given a political determination to regulate identities (in the manner of which Foucault (1983) warns) so that people have not been given the freedom to allow their identities room to develop the way other members of this society take for granted. People who have connections to the First Peoples of this continent still find themselves having to defend to others who they are. This goes to the very heart of mental health and community well-being.

The second matter is directly connected and relates to how the society in which people (as described above, as well as members of the dominant groupings) manage the inclusion (exclusion and assimilation (Frankenberg 1993)) of others who are different. In the regulation of identities, society curtails some and favours others resulting in an intricate web of unequal relationships founded on constructions of one (and not another) group’s choosing. I shall deal with the politics of identity first.

Formation and re-formation of identity is recognised as having crucial implications for mental health (Sarup 1996; Craib 1998) along with recognition in some quarters (as we have already seen) that identities are not fixed, nor fully and irrevocably settled, but always in the process of becoming (Sarup 1996; Craib 1998). This is
one of the tasks of being human, to develop identity, and belonging (Craib 1998). However, it is also recognised that identities need to be in the process of becoming from an early age and that disruptions to this process or challenges to who people think they are, which disturbs a pattern of identity formation can be detrimental to adult functioning (Glass 1993). Yet the state has taken over this function for a group of people in Australian society with legislative regulations which categorise and restrict their own paths of formation in ways not imposed on any other group of people. It is not enough under these regulations to be different but people have to be different in prescribed ways (again with reference to the governmentality as noted by Foucault). That this has been occurring for the better part of this century for almost an entire population should indicate that people’s sense of themselves as autonomous, deciding and self-directed beings has been severely shaken.

Ian continues to discover that for him ‘it’s in the heart’. It is so for many others too; witness Ian’s family, about whom he wonders ‘they’re got no reason to grab Aboriginality, their Nyoongar culture, they really haven’t ... but, they do, ‘cos it’s the heart that stands’. But such a struggle it has been, echoing many others perhaps as not being White or Black enough to satisfy either side, as though the settlement must favour one or the other. Bhabha (1994) investigates this positioning with the understandings derived from a postmodern perspective which challenges all meta-narratives, identity included, through these cultural engagements which are themselves discursively embedded spatio/temporally, always already (Derrida 1978) enunciatively changing. There is, therefore ‘no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content’. Such an ‘enunciative split’ means a negotiated settlement concerning cultural status is really only a temporary outcome, in the realisation that “originality” or “purity” of cultures are untenable (Bhabha 1994, pp. 36-7). Extending this to what has here and elsewhere been termed cultural hybridity (Pieterse 1995; McLaren 1997; Valades 1998) Bhabha raises the figure of revolutionary Fanon who embraced the freedom from colonially imposed

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103 Albeit that this is within a society which favours a collective sense of identity (Mueke 1992; Langton 1993; Burney 1994), this does not detract from the need to be mindful of the mental well-being of the community.
continuities of identities on the eviction of the coloniser. The resultant cultural identities may be negotiated and translated, bearing perhaps little resemblance to previous or externally expected images, through what Bhabha calls the Third Space (Bhabha 1994, p. 36). This position may provide a direction away from the polarity of certainty (the requirement that we are either ... or), a view supported by Langton who, in reference particularly to Aboriginality, maintains such identity formation can only be intersubjective, and is:

[R]emade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. (Langton 1993, p. 33)

Emphasising the intersubjective nature of such formation, Langton suggests three cultural categories of which the last is of most relevance here, that between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in any moments of interaction which provide the opportunity for genuine dialogue. This is reminiscent of Fanon’s own depiction of the experience of colonialism, in which an overwhelming feature was the refusal, on the part of the colonisers, to engage in genuine, reciprocal and mutual human relationships (Schmitt 1996). Langton gives as answer to her own question ‘why are some people not racist?’ a similar position. Racism, she argues, occurs in the absence of such relationships where avoidance has characterised the engagement (1993).

Spivak’s (Spivak and Young 1991, p. 228) anecdote of cultural work repeats the injunction as she tells of rejoinders by two people from different cultural backgrounds, to questions of the possibility of majority group members working with culturally different people.

If you can do it [work with the Other] such a way that we can really talk to you, then there is no problem ... either you do it as carefully as you do your own work or don’t do it.

Spivak endorses the ability of people to cross the boundaries in genuine and reciprocal ways. Cultural hybridity and the continual negotiations between people
through the developments of identity are perhaps some way off in this identity-regulated world, but these writers consider it possible. My reading of Fanon, Langton and Spivak is not that their meanings of hybridity are chaotic or disordered, but change according to the autonomy of the previously dominated. It is both a political act and a matter of choice (see also Sarup (1996)). Hannah, in this study, has been able to work with it, Yvonne has not. Both have had cultural engagements, but differ in their outcomes. On-going dialogical processes have been rejected by Yvonne, but welcomed by Hannah despite the discomfort she has felt in working differently.

The second and related matter I want to discuss is that of inclusion, exclusion and assimilation on the basis of difference and its connection with the liberation of racialised identities, which is, according to Giroux, as important as the struggle against racism (of which it is a part) (1997). If the project is anti-racist then the public deconstruction of White identity is a central task.

The concept of Whiteness is a recent addition to the tools of a scholarship interested in examining the continued disadvantages experienced by groups of people, and the ruptures still present in Western societies some thirty or so years after the introduction of laws and practices designed to provide access to societal rewards for all, not just a few of its members. Failures of such measures have been attributed by disparate theorists across critical and post-colonial spectra to the deep-seated interests of the dominant cultural groups in Western society, coming together under a banner of an explanation derived from ‘Whiteness’. This, of course, covers much ground, from the Critical Race Theorists (CRT) who apply critical theory to the on-going oppression of Black Americans (in particular) (Williams 1987; Delgado 1995; Williams 1995; Bell 1995b); through the Western Centre’s self-critics, those who position themselves as White as interrogator, for example (Dyer 1997; Hartigan 1997; Hill 1997; Austin and McMaster 1998); to the

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104 Although I have shown that the WWAP training was decidedly not anti-racist.
105 Note here the Derridean meaning, which I discuss in the next chapter.
106 Note here the divergences within this body of work which is well discussed in Hall (1996b).
post-colonialists writing from the margins (Said 1989; Spivak and Young 1991; Bhabha 1994). My interest here is in the evidence available from this study to assess Whiteness as a factor in the workings of the WWAP.

My first point of departure is to acknowledge that this body of thought is not unique or particularly novel, White having been considered as a source of oppression as early as Black writers have been published (Lerner 1992) in the West. It has gained contemporary resonance perhaps as a consequence of the dismissal of the meta-narratives by postmodern critiques, race, class and gender theorists unwilling to entirely rid themselves of an oppositional politics. Applying deconstructive strategies to the Western Episteme has permitted Whiteness proponents to pursue an oppression-focused project at the same time as they are embracing the fragmented and local narratives of a postmodern period. Taking the gaze from Black as the oppressed and moving it to White as the oppressor moves the analysis no further to resolution of the unequal power relationships. Taking a White stance (meaning acknowledging White privilege) may provide a self-congratulatory posture wherein one asserts a greater understanding and awareness of the troubles of Black, but carries with it the real dangers of re-claiming central place, with no appreciable improvement in either the relationships between Black and White or Black’s circumstances in a continuing racialised society (Hall 1996a; Giroux and Shannon 1997).

It is this realisation, of a continued (but unacknowledged) racialised society, that this study has reinforced for me, that the structures of the society in which I live, and the WWAP was enacted, and the behaviours of the people who have peopled it are racialised in ways which continue to bear scrutiny. It is no longer particularly useful to apply solely the race, class and gender divisions as explanatory concepts for a divided and unequal society, for they run the risk of essentialising, or universalising experiences which obscure the changing and mixed identities people embody. Denials of divisions on the “basis” of race, citing equal opportunity and anti-race discrimination legislation and measures, are no defence in the light of obvious racial disadvantage (for Aboriginal Australians). But application of the
analytical tools of modernism does not provide much satisfaction, nor the means to dismantle existing dominating and discriminatory practices and structures. Lorde’s (1992, p. 502) epithet ‘The master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house’ carries a mindful salience. Whiteness studies may be the ‘master’s tools’, thus extending the EO arguments earlier (as they too are the ‘master’s tools’). They require a re-examination of privilege on the basis of race, and return race to the centre.

Frankenberg offers an important (but not entire) formulation of the process of Whiteness in her work on the constructions of Whiteness among US American women (Frankenberg 1993). Describing guilt, resentment and rejection among her “subjects” Frankenberg delineates the stages of responses to a realisation of privilege (but one quickly denied). The almost instant repositioning of privilege to one of disadvantage is shown amongst the responses of the non-Aboriginal trainees Vera describes in the programme she attended, supporting Frankenberg’s findings. Claiming an equal oppression and thus disadvantage from British invaders, the Scots and Welsh line up temporarily alongside Aboriginal people, to be repositioned almost immediately, but not with their acknowledgement or agreement, alongside their White counterparts in comparison to Black, whose subordinated situation continues as an un-stated racialised experience.

In a nice irony, Douglass advances the project in her study of Jamaican White elites through the study of White kinship and family practices. By considering Whiteness (although she does not use that term) as an organising principle Douglass shows the nuances of political and societal change and allows an analysis of much greater complexity than attributing Whiteness solely to a universally experienced situation (Douglass 1992). It is clear that White privilege is not homogeneously experienced, even if White may be shown to be implicated in Black disadvantage albeit to different degrees (Frankenberg 1997; Bonnett 1998; Britton 1999). The extension of the racialised experience to implicate colonialism in Douglass’ treatise coincides with the treatment of the ‘Americanisation’ of identity in Frankenberg’s work (few of her compatriots avoid the slippage of US citizenry to encompass
‘American-ness’, thus dis-placing all those Other Americans, mostly non-White). Understanding that Whiteness takes different trajectories influenced by time, place and structure enables an examination of current experiences which takes into account the appeals of those trainees mentioned above. This allows the suffering of their ancestors under the colonial enterprise, but their own current comparative privilege is accumulated through their social history. Dis-placement becomes re-placement. There is little need to reserve employment (among other) opportunities for people of Scottish or Welsh descent in Australia in the same way as is deemed necessary for Aboriginal people, for their competitive capacities still outweigh those of the first inhabitants. These competitive hierarchies accrue on the basis of a racialised status, irrespective of the “social construction” of such identities. The ‘inferiorisation’ (O'Loughlin 1997, p. 3), of which Sarup remarks and other negatively attributed qualities such as dirty, evil, lazy and savage (Fanon 1967) are less “feelings” than present experienced interactions reinforce. Keith well recalls the ability of Aboriginal people to manage programmes as called into question by non-Aboriginal colleagues. Whether or not Scots and Welsh descendants of British colonial rule now in Australia “feel” inferior, or dirty, lazy or evil on the basis of past invasions, does not alter their differently positioned and relatively experienced privilege. Only those Aboriginal people who have white skins and act White can experience the daily absence of discrimination on the basis of race these Scottish or Welsh trainees experience, irrespective of their class or gender status.

Whiteness occupies the central but unmarked (Hall 1996a, p. 26) position which requires, for all its centralising dangers, examination. No longer only critiqued from the margins (a post-colonial danger) White must be central to White’s own critique. White identity remains profoundly contradictory, perhaps no more so than in Tonkinson’s (herself a Black Jamaican) reported astonishment at being labelled ‘Whitefella’ by Aboriginal people (Wilson 1996). As not one of them, she embodied, in achromatic style, all that was White, carrying that privilege and associated dominative potential. White also has an ahistorical tendency (Bonnett 1998) which has served to mask its effects well. Hall poses the paradox that White ahistoricality is also constructed historically, politically and culturally, to speak for
everyone while being itself everywhere and nowhere (Hall 1992, p. 257). The need, recognised by this scholarship, is to centralise Whiteness with the aim of permitting its features to be re-marked, so that it might be recognised as a discourse of privilege (albeit not homogenous). Markers of class, gender and ethnicity remain, to which is added the dimension of White.

The cultural engagements examined here show how deeply implicated are the positions people enact and locate for themselves with the larger socio-political issues of domination and subordination, reaching back into a history one of the groupings needs to remember and the other would prefer to forget. Disputes over claimed affiliations, the right to speak and speaking the "truth" are the preliminaries rather than the main event in what Nietzsche has shown to be the will to power. The contemporary engagement is no longer the overt colonisation of the Other, rationalised with Enlightenment and Empire building justifications. Despite the dismantling of colonies and the withdrawal from imperial borders, the West has managed to leave in place webs of structures and influences just as binding as the actual rule of the coloniser. Privilege remains with the inheritors of those colonial masters, and they are White, irrespective of their own multiple constructions and on-going reconstructions of identity. Against these boundaries of ethnicity and race, and the borders of organisation, Whiteness as the unmarked frontier provides the place where Lyotard's 'ceaseless ruses' take place. They are also thus the place for ceaseless negotiations.

The provision of a 'house' as intimated by the CEO at the beginning of this chapter does not help to solve these issues which are deeply rooted in a set of practices born from a colonised and racialised past, until and unless the unmarked nature of White becomes present and is marked at the points of construction of the dwellings. It is at these points that the 'ceaseless negotiations' must engage. WWAP has shown itself to be both possible and inadequate for these negotiations. In particular, training processes which presume that new learning will take place leading to new practices are not so easily predictable when founded on diverse and multiple constructions all claiming an equal hearing.
The impact on people’s sense of belonging as illuminated by the WWAP project has implications for any on-going training process. A programme which identifies identity as a key informational and processual training strategy can expect to have to deal in more depth with how people generally identify themselves. It involves not only how staff respond to clients, but how staff respond to staff. An individual workplace behaviour change to accommodate cultural difference for either staff or client may not be sufficient response when the nature of cultural difference is not simply that between binary positionings of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, but inclusive of a range of allegiances which incorporate all or some of the complexities discussed here.

Further implications relate to the principle of Aboriginal control of both the information and the processes used to deliver it. The training design recognised the diversity of Aboriginal culture and the complexity of organisational roles and so training programmes, activities and processes were provided which acknowledged and engaged these positions in the training event. The vignettes and other accounts verify the assumptions made in the design, illuminate the boundaries around the domain describing Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ethnicity, and provoke questions such as who is Aboriginal, who can speak for Aboriginal people, and which Aboriginal people can speak for which group of people? These questions also relate to how the knowledges, which comprise the information and process to be used, are legitimated, and how people involved have reacted emotionally. These are matters for the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX: NEGOTIATING SYSTEMS OF KNOWING

This chapter extends the concept of negotiated positions by applying it to another of the experiences in this study which I have interpreted as containing contestation – that of knowledge. The supposedly straightforward aims for the WWAP programmes became problematic when departmental workers met together in the arena of the training. Some of these events have already been cited, and in the previous chapter I offered one set of interpretations that related to the positioning people took on the basis of ethnic/racial expectations and their organisational locations.

Another set of positionings can be used to explore people’s expectations of the learning process – what should constitute training (that is the transmission of knowledge, skills and values), how that transmission should occur and the means by which trainees might judge this “new” material to be accurate and useful. Inevitably, the result of the clashes evident from the previous chapter about who should be judged as having legitimacy to speak as well as what constituted their ‘truth’ affected trainees’ reactions to the training as a whole. There were other sites of potential disagreement which required some negotiation, the underpinning expectations of what constituted learning (and hence training) and how it should proceed. The latter is the subject for this chapter and raises matters of knowledge, what it comprises, how it is transmitted, and by whom.

An emergent consequence from the arena of positioning relates to the reason-emotion arena where learning, here, may be shown to vacillate between the two. The Western Episteme (Foucault 1972) has provided the hierarchy in which light and sight is privileged (Vasseleu 1998). Knowledge thus resides more certainly in what may be demonstrated through visual means, attaining its highest orders through intellectual knowing, in literature and the written word, as reflections of expertise and authority. Embodied knowing, emotion and emotionality, is the inferior partner here, representing all that is unreasonable and irrational. From
these positions emerge understandings as revealed through visual means, and those through felt experiences. In this dualism the learning enterprise has privileged reason over emotion, or people's cognitive capacities over the affective. That adult learning and subsequently cross cultural training, should seek to re-forge a unity between cognitive and affective learning processes through the conative capacity is all the more remarkable given this history. People in this study refer to their learning through the information provided, which frequently stood in opposition to what they already "knew" to be true, and sometimes being rejected on this basis. Others refer to the learning which resulted through the feeling connection made between people, through relationships, or through emotional connections opened through an empathetic moment. Struggles occur between a rationality of the expected and the emotionality of the experienced. People want the certainty of what is demonstrable, true and continuous. They found instead changing and partial glimpses, which left some people dissatisfied.

**INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY AND KNOWLEDGE FROM EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE**

As noted in the previous chapter, a Western project is one in which participants have been categorised according to their places of belonging (among other features). This extends to their ways of knowing which underpin these hierarchies of positioning, often in ways un-acknowledged. The effects have been to shape systems of society, themselves shaping the way people live. Freedoms resulting from imposed hierarchies enhance some people's lives and restrict others. The WWAP was one attempt to re-position practices developed in one hierarchy which affected people as its subjects. This was not a revolutionary aim, nor was it then thought particularly threatening to the main system, just a recognition of and respect for difference.

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107 I hope to avoid conflating knowledge and emotion by showing they are usefully considered as having meanings for and from each other.
Accounts in previous chapters have shown that some people did consider consequent re-positioning as a threat, perceiving this as a zero-sum rather than shared positioning, in which space given up would not be able to be retrieved. This extended to challenges to previously held truths – as much about what people know, as how they know it. Displacing knowledge is not in itself such a potentially dangerous act, people build on knowledge as a matter of course, but the WWAP presented, in more ways than one, challenges to how people should know and how that knowledge develops.

People’s normative expectations themselves reflect a particular system of “knowing”, extending to the expectations of training and its performance, the expectations of Aboriginal people and how they should run the training, and what they (the learners) can expect to learn as a result. Expectations did not necessarily consider the outcomes of the training to have affective as well as behavioural and cognitive dimensions, save for people with training backgrounds. Knowledge often remains considered within the sphere of the intellect. Anticipated learning did not necessarily fall neatly along the ethnic/racial divide either, with one set of expectations accruing to Aboriginal people (trainers and workers) and another to non-Aboriginal people (trainees and support personnel), for we have seen that this is not so. Instead, what I seek to demonstrate is not so much the domination of the Western Episteme, that has already been well covered elsewhere (Foucault 1972; Derrida 1976; Lyotard 1984) but how this group of people characterise the struggle to find a way through notions of domination and subjugation, (a particularly oppositional formation), marginalisation, exclusion, appropriation, and affiliation (all matters of the previous chapter), to a negotiated place of learning and joint work.

I will revisit the accounts to comment on the expectations people have of the training experience and how that relates to the form of knowledge people expect. I will reflect on people’s acceptance and rejection of cognitive/affective means used in the training room, as well as the spill over of emotionality into the project itself.
I will conclude with an examination of learning in postmodernity as a prelude to the final chapter.

**LEARNING THROUGH THE WWAP EXPERIENCE**

The training literature presented in Chapter Two noted that almost all writers concerned with the intercultural training experience list amongst its objectives the need to engage the three learning functions, cognition, affect and behaviour, or knowledge, values/attitudes and skills (Bennett 1986; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Milhouse 1996). I think it is worth repeating this well known aspect of training because it is so easy in our contemporary technological world to forget that in the process of learning there is expected to be an element of emotionality (Hoopes 1979; Cushner and Brislin 1997; Erera 1997). It is not surprising that training, so closely linked as it is with adult learning and the humanist project as discussed in Chapter Two, should carry these expectations. A psychological understanding of the human learning function locates it clearly within a motivational construct, making the connections between knowledge and emotion even more pertinent. What is striking about this symbiotic relationship, is that the humanist project derives from a tradition of dualism in which knowledge and emotion, or reason and emotion, have been cast in opposition. Despite a current tendency to engage a technical rational process, especially in training activities in the work place (Burns 1995; Bhagat and Prien 1996), it is clear that the emotional component of the learning activity has an essential role.

The accounts given at the beginning of this thesis, detailing how some people commenced their involvement with the WWAP, indicate that this project was likely to include more than a technical rational form (Clark 1988; Burns 1995) of training. Theirs were positions of commitment, not neutrality. Other accounts demonstrated the sensitivity of the training, likely to engender emotional responses. Addressing discriminatory behaviour goes to the heart of how people interact with each other, suggesting insensitivity or unfairness, as well as lack of knowledge. In other forms of training covering matters of a sensitive nature, for example investigating child
abuse (which it will be remembered, formed the training Penny attended in 1987 resulting in the strike), workers remain in charge, secure in their knowledge that they have a legislative mandate or other professional permission to act as they do. Instead, in this training, those sorts of supports were absent. The centre of control had moved. The people (as representatives) with whom the trainees had problems in the workplace were the very people running the training. Workers had to “own up” to their own attitudes, biases and failures of interactions if they were to move forward. Unlike Equity (Nihas 1994) training where it is possible to learn the guidelines and remain un-engaged emotionally, this training centred their own behaviours, and they were made vulnerable. This confronted people emotionally and challenged previously held beliefs. It was not training in which people could easily maintain a neutral stance, learn technical skills, and take away new information only learned cognitively.

Training activities designed here were of the sort commonplace in training for human services workers, so trainees could expect the programmes to consist of more than a series of information-giving lectures. Their own active participation in developing change processes for themselves was expected (with the possible exception of clerical staff for whom participative training may have been unusual). Irrespective of an acceptance by people with training backgrounds, such as Desmond, Hannah and Julia, that this would be so, these expectations did not necessarily extend to some of the trainees who expected a more objective (and less emotive) presentation, carrying with it some measure of certainty, practicability and provability of information. Some people were not prepared for what seemed to them the incompatibility of information with what they previously had accepted as true, the different opinions of trainers and guest speakers in their presentations and their information, the level of subjectivity of the trainers, and the challenges to their emotions by some of the processes used. These expectations fulfil technical and practical interests (Habermas 1987, p. 308) indicating an allegiance to knowledge constitution emanating from a scientific project. Criticisms of this form of knowledge notwithstanding (to be discussed below), for these people the training
would be partly judged on the basis of what they believed to be true and the ways truth is proved. This forms the discussion for the next section.

The Constitution And Transmission Of Knowledge: Competing Paradigms

As Lyotard (1984) has shown, the scientific project of the Enlightenment (the predominant Western form of knowledge) has displaced the meaning-giving function of traditional narratives (as another form of knowledge) to people's lives, almost to the point of erasure. Characterised by face to face contact presupposing contextual and local meaning, traditional knowing has to contend with a form valued for its objectivity, distance and universal application. In a cross cultural setting such as described by the WWAP, knowledges were derived from the world view of people for whom a scientific way of knowing was imposed, displacing their own. Knowledge transmission here had been of the form described by Lyotard as narrative knowing (1984). Trainees in the WWAP project who were accustomed to seeking truth in verifiable and generalisable presentations, were now faced with the (possibly unfamiliar) immediacy and subjectivity of a local and contexted knowledge. They had few mechanisms with which to assess what was being proposed by people whose experience of traditional knowing was itself fragmented and overlaid with coverings of knowledge production and transmission not their own, but belonging to the colonisers (see the previous chapter).

Subjectivity, while itself questioned by the scientific narrative, is challenged from within the Western project, and I will discuss this later. What was confusing for the trainees was not so much a subjective or experiential knowing, people accept their own experiences, but that the subjective knowing of others offset to such a degree their previously unquestioned (possibly) objective and subjective understandings of the world.

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108 This is not to privilege tradition in the sense of a particular cultural setting, but the way of knowing possessed and practised by groups of people.
It was not just a matter of disagreement with what might be construed as opinion or belief within a similar world view. Trainees were being asked to envisage the possibility of a different world view. One central example is the Indigenous Australian spiritual attachment to land and country from which meaning is derived. It is an aspect of knowing that I, for example, can accept intellectually, but I am totally unable to feel, spiritually, what I believe Indigenous Australians feel. The distance is too great between my experience and what I accept theirs to be. This extends to other matters of belief, being and behaviour, which I accept as being true for Indigenous Australians, but which I can only accept by belief not by experience or feeling. I am thus placed in the privileged position of choosing whether or not to accept others' truths, and to allow that choice to guide my actions, a privilege denied to people whose belief it is. Indigenous Australians, as other colonised peoples, have not been given the free choice of which system to guide and enrich their lives. Enforced bi-culturalism for Aboriginal people is a matter of how much they are able to include a way of knowing so systematically displaced by past (and to some extent present) policies. Attempts to obliterate the traditional amongst people of Aboriginal and European parentage (Wilson 1997) must surely relate to one of the most compelling attributes of traditional knowledge, its formation of a social bond (Lyotard 1984, p. 18).

Trainees seeking factual, truthful, authentic, authoritative, and undisputed knowledge about Aboriginal people were likely to be unprepared for ways of knowing which were not readily recognisable. They were also likely to be faced with ways of operating which were unfamiliar. They could accept these differences or reject them. If they accepted them, they had, perforce, to displace some of their own expected learned and possibly previously unquestioned ways of knowing. As mentioned above, it was not only the difference between objective and subjective knowledge, or ontology (which formed the topic for the previous chapter); the added layer was epistemological.
Western Knowledge: Authority From Order And Reason, A Historical Project

The scientific project of the West has elevated reason and order as arbiters of what may be judged as truth. Unquestioned acceptance of the practices of knowledge signify their success, the result of which has valorised categorising mechanisms to impose order on chaos (Dews 1987, p. 186); ‘assigned the origin of truth in general to the *logos*’ (Derrida 1976, p. 3); privileged History as a progressive totalising discourse (Robert Young 1990); legitimated authority as an ideal of impartiality (Young 1990, p. 115); and constituted the ‘relations of ruling’ (Smith 1990a; Smith 1990b). Seeking to legitimise what they knew and how they knew it, people in this study drew on the above features of a scientifically shaped epistemology.

Objectivity: Learning With The Mind

An enduring aim of the Western Episteme is that of a progressive society, founded on a technological development driven by rationality (Habermas 1996, p. 42). By itself this would not be overly remarkable, save for its driving impulse towards progress, technology and “civilisation” as necessary constructs of so-called advanced societies. A related result of such a seemingly benign system being used to describe the world, is in the devastating relegation of people, not just “things”, to inferior positions (Hannaford 1996). The ensuing hierarchical structuring of the natural and social world is a heritage some twentieth century citizens are finding increasingly problematic, not least those people consigned during the nineteenth century to sub-human status in part on the basis of their comparative lack of industrial technology. One effect such categorisation has had on Indigenous peoples around the world has been to dismiss all their knowledge and associated authority as unimportant. Differing interests and claims (such as over sacredness and attachment to land) only serve to further satisfy the critics that these (and other) claims to authority are to be discounted (Crawford 1988; Gelder and Jacobs 1998).
Technological superiority of an emancipatory project imposes an objective order on
the world privileging what can be understood with rational rather than emotional
processes. The choice called the Occident (Lyotard 1984, p. 8) has cemented the
empiricism of verifiability against those ‘tricks’ of experience. What is ‘concrete
and relevant’, or objective, is accepted and that which is ‘idle speculation’, or
subjective, is rejected (Williams and May 1996, p. 3). So skills and information
derived from a technological society, the authority and expertise which are its
products, and the “facts” of history which support its progress are all features of
how people in this study sought to legitimate their positions (as we saw in previous
chapters). The way they “knew” their world justified their claims.

Principals of the genesis of the project, Olga and Eric, had no hesitation in what
they thought should be the central aim of the training. Olga wanted staff to be
informed. Non- Aboriginal staff had to be given good information and ‘put
through a training where they could actually process that information’, so it would
influence their behaviour. Eric cited history as providing that information. ‘I think
once you understand the history you can actually understand a lot of what’s
happening in Aboriginal people's lives today’. Embedded in these statements lies
understandings about the nature of knowledge. For both Eric and Olga, knowledge
becomes material and tangible, presuming change. Neither of these influential
people considered that this knowledge was itself to be scrutinised for potential “un­
truths”. Impartial or detached learning is a perspective fostered by an
understanding of knowledge as objective, information-centred, and truth-laden.
Other people, too, expect that the subject matter for training will be knowledge as
fact and information, carrying the inference that assessments can validate what is
provided as true and accurate, which then affords substance and certainty on which
to base future actions. The following accounts invoke these certainties through
their own search for legitimacy, using criteria such as fact, authority and
experience, none of which remain separate or uncontested as people challenge the
veracity and validity of the content given by others.
Skills And Information

One of the outcomes of an objective, information-rich process is its translation into skills. Assumptions were commonplace among departmental staff that they could identify what they should know. Awareness of difference was an expected preliminary step, a short distance to cover by way of preparation, and often claimed as known by participants. ‘Yes we know they are different, what we want are skills to help us deal with the difference. How do we work with Aboriginal (read difficult) families? How do we deal with child abuse cases in Aboriginal families? What are the skills which are useful in parent-child conflict in Aboriginal families?’ Skills equate to knowledge which is a tangible entity, able to be packaged.

Harriet’s experience of many programmes suggested to her that this, indeed, was what people wanted.

They [the trainees] wanted Aboriginal presenters to go through every step of their job and tell them, ‘OK you’re confronted with a client group out at Mirrabooka say’ and they say this, ‘what should I say?’ or ‘if this issue comes up what should I do?’ They found it very difficult to take the information as presented by the presenters and rearrange that or adapt that in their minds to their own situation, they found it very difficult to transmit it to that other situation.

We have seen from several accounts the desire for this sort of information, and the disappointment when it was not provided in that form. This type of learning suggests a distance between the learner and what is learned, which remains at a cognitive level. The investment here is intellectual, it does not reach deeply into who people are and what they feel.

Vera’s accounts support this position through her repeated calls for ‘objective’ training using as example learning about ‘different parenting styles … just as part of what we do’. She rejects what she perceives to be ‘different treatment’ and
frames the training, before she catches herself, as ‘it was a bit like a, oh, not a therapy session, but …’

Vera tries to explain that she was not learning what she thought she should learn. This, too, is embedded in seemingly deeply held beliefs she holds about different treatment for Aboriginal people. She ends with ‘just as part of what we do’, as though the evident complexities in how she thinks about what is happening are, in the end, unproblematic, and able to be addressed through learning about a topic (parenting styles) mechanistically. That this turned out quite differently for Vera has already been seen. Perhaps it was a therapy session. It certainly produced change in people, and is used for healing purposes (among others) by Ingrid and Charlie. Perhaps this indicates the close connection between emotion and cognition as Williams suggests (Sarup 1996).

The corporeal form of knowledge assumed in these formulations emphasises its mode of transmission and verification. These characteristics give rise to knowledge as commerce (Lyotard 1984, p. 5), a commodity which has a price, and is valued accordingly. Thus knowledge may be given, donated, traded, or sold while remaining in the control of those whose positions enable them to do so. The commodification of information knowledge (Lyotard 1984, p. 4) relocates control from the intellectual to the trader and expertise is measured by its success in the market place. This has particular consequences for that form of knowledge which is desired to be transmitted and “known” by workers in order to perform their work tasks, and which is often translated into competencies.109 It requires an efficiency and effectiveness of both transmission and learning, which translates in recent years to modularised or packaged information which may be easily accessed and understood, and becomes both ‘payment’ and ‘investment’ knowledge (Lyotard

109 Although Hannah earlier recommended the use of competencies for describing the work and skills of Aboriginal people, so that they might compete in an unequally constructed workplace, the danger is of the “marketising” of skills, in which already unequal players are likely to be further disadvantaged.
1984, p. 6) to be used for productive (that is consumable) rather than 'educational' purposes.

**Authority And Expertise**

The issue of authority and expertise has been raised in previous chapters, and shown to be one of the points of contention between professional status, organisational hierarchy, and the Aboriginal people who claimed their own authority as those who should speak (Foucault 1984).

Denying authority to speak on the grounds of disputed authenticity is familiar to others (Smith 1992). A society which organises itself hierarchically (a result of the Cartesian split), necessitates its authorities to have expertise in those hierarchical means (just as, by contrast, traditional narratives of which Lyotard speaks, privilege different authorities, the narrators).

Lyotard examined the superordinancy of the scientific over traditional ways of knowing in his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) accounting for the transmutation of knowing into commodity through borrowing Wittgenstein’s metaphor of language games. This application of the rules of language games shows how scientific knowledge has overtaken and dominated traditional narratives. Categorising knowledge as a competence for judgement (for example of efficiency, justice, happiness or beauty) and a cultural consensus (for customary knowing), Lyotard addresses the *pragmatics* of both types of knowledge (1984, p. 18) and finds a differential use in the variety of language games employed. In contrast to the numerous forms used in traditional knowledge, Lyotard can identify only one language game in scientific knowledge to which all others are in thrall. Denotation (or Freire’s ‘naming of the world’ (Freire 1972)) is that ‘game’ which provides proof as its authority, and verifies or falsifies claims to truth. Divorced from context, the game removes, displaces and reconfigures the knowledge.
provider into expert and trader. This re-positioning of knowledge as commodity for sale, but as representative of the truth, is one of the major contradictions of contemporary society. Displacing social and reciprocal responsibility, a feature of the social bond of traditional narrativity, reinforces knowledge's ability to be considered objective. While narrative knowledge does not question scientific knowledge and accepts that it may have its own truths, as of many possible, the same is not so for scientific knowledge which ignores, dismisses or seeks to prove untrue, the narrative knowings.

Authority on two levels becomes crucial here. Firstly, the commodification inherent in "who pays the piper" directs knowledge production and hence the knowledge that can be disseminated. As an operational application, or in Habermasian terms, technical/instrumental (1987), knowledge becomes a tool judged according to its productive properties by those forces which have interests in its production. They then become the authorities for what should and shall be learned. In a world in which knowledge has objective characteristics, as well as commercial purposes, the authorities of science have become the target of what Lyotard calls the 'double legitimation' (1984, p. 8) in which knowledge and power are so entwined that in the question of 'who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided', the answer deflects to the issue of government (p. 9), resulting in a moral bankruptcy of authority (Sim 1996, p. 30). Lyotard's socio-political (1984) perspective coincides with that of Foucault in the embodiment of the power-knowledge nexus in sovereignty. Coining the term 'governmentality' (Foucault 1991a). Foucault explored the way the types of knowledges moved from the economy of family to the economy of politics in spheres of sovereignty. For both these theorists authority becomes a matter of the substance used to justify its domain and the forms used to maintain its position, and both saw substance and form in the claim to truth, indissociable from the rhetoric of power (Bauman 1997, p. 112), and deeply rooted in the scientific tradition of the Enlightenment. Critiques of the Enlightenment project from theorists such as these have permitted an interrogation of the webs of dominance enacted by the totalising
and authoritative discourse of science. It is a nice irony that the shifting shape of the department, from an instrument of the destruction (almost) of Aboriginal society to its current integration of Aboriginal people, is conducted from within what Foucault calls the ‘governmentalisation of the state’ using ‘the tactics of governmentality’ in a sort of ‘epiphany of triumphant reason’ (1991a, p. 69). It is within the gift of the state, then, that the direction and extent of acceptance of Aboriginal ways of knowing will take place.

Derrida’s works address the second problem of authority which resides in language. Joining Lyotard and Foucault in their critiques of the philosophical foundationalism supporting Western knowledge, Derrida shows it contains the paradox of its own project. Derrida continues such subversion with his concept of difference by reversing presence and absence in metaphysics in which philosophy (or any totalising discourse) fills the absence with its own presence. The simultaneous differing and deferral qualities of meaning in language (which to Derrida is writing (1976)) effectively undermine the very possibility of capture of truth that writing (in particular) is intended to convey. At the moment of re-telling, that which occurred before and is now re-told, is re-inscribed. Taken with the activity of deconstruction, the purpose of which is to neither critique nor analyse, (Derrida 1988) nor method (Derrida 1978), but to uncover the ruptures and inconsistencies in texts as properties of difference, Derrida’s purpose is to suggest endless iterations of meaning through the written word. Author-ship and its intentionality hence take their places among a series of possible meanings. Thus a notion of author-ity as transmitter of truth and knowledge becomes de-centred, especially that which, in the manner of Lyotard, claims legitimacy through a call to emancipatory reason (1984, p. xxiii). An interpretation of what formerly has been regarded as true by virtue of its (written) heritage may now be considered to be one of a number of competing claims, ones which, furthermore, have an interest in concealing inconsistencies. When people such as Eric and Vera in the study make

110 Unlike Foucault, who resisted linguistic constructions of self (1983).
entreaties to knowledge through the written word as given, Derrida suggests those entreaties are as suspect as calling on History as truth and fact.\footnote{Robert Young discusses History as a totalising discourse (1990).}

\textit{History And Facts}

People call on the knowledges they hold almost without thinking about their source or veracity, by the language they use and the expectation that they contribute to a shared understanding of what constitutes “truth”. In Western societies, such knowledge commonly derives from what is called “fact”, that which is provable and demonstrable, opposes fiction or imagination, and is real (Habermas 1987).

‘Achieving facticity’ is embodied in the claiming of ‘I know’ (Smith 1990a, p. 66). History is considered to comprise “facts”, and hence is truthful.\footnote{For example, Sartre’s theory of history presents this idea, see Flynn for a good critique (1992).} In addition, the Western preponderance for writing has invested it with truth so that the written word is often privileged over the spoken (Lyotard 1984; Dews 1987) (but cf. Derrida (1976; 1978)). While these three are not all that is considered to constitute provable and verifiable knowledge (Phillips 1990; Crotty 1998), these types of expectation of knowledge found representation in this study.

For Eric, it was fact that solidified the WWAP. It made it unassailable. Slightly concerned, at the beginning, when no-one in the department had seen any of what the package was to contain, ‘as a senior bureaucrat [laughs]’, Eric says, his fears were assuaged when he saw that the package ‘just rolled out the facts … you can't distort history, you just trot it out, you show the videos, you have the articles, it's the way it was’. There is no disputing of the facts, especially historical facts. He also recalls the programme that he experienced, as a member of Executive. It was presented as ‘a matter of fact … just the way it was’, so, obviously ‘you couldn't get aggro about it, or distressed about it’. Because it was a matter of fact, there was ‘no blame, no guilt’.

111 Robert Young discusses History as a totalising discourse (1990).
112 For example, Sartre’s theory of history presents this idea, see Flynn for a good critique (1992).
The importance of addressing the past (history) was an imperative for the trainers and other Aboriginal people who had been consulted for the design and development of the training, who insisted that their history was vital. It was essential that their truth be told. But that truth differed from the historical truths told previously in which Aboriginal people had been written out of their own pasts (Reynolds 1988). Harriet, a member of the project team, realised through her own learning that this history as previously understood was itself problematic as it had presented a version of the past which was inaccurate for a whole group of people. So Harriet felt impelled to tell this truth through the training media to people who had had similar experiences of the education system.

*Once people found out a bit people were desperate to find out more.*

Both Harriet’s and Eric’s ascription of truth to this history contradicted previous versions which had hitherto been unquestioned as true. How could Eric now invoke history as truthful and unquestionable? Evidently history is a relatively understood term, for all that it stands objective and true.

Hannah’s valuing of the training was predominantly concerned with the pasts of the people who told their stories. It was where she started to have a sense of what other people’s histories had been like. It was the beginning of being able to “know” differently for her.

*I remember it was the most fabulous training I’d been to in my life ... I found it to be very informative, from a historical perspective, it gave me a lot of history context that I didn't have before ... I think that the general awareness of history and, you know, that baggage that any field worker that goes and knocks on someone’s door and brings to the door, people are much more aware of that and people are much more conscious ... I expect that a lot of people would approach Aboriginal people a little differently ... I certainly found it experiential in nature in that some*
of that stuff that came out of it was feeling base not just knowledge.

Hannah clearly demonstrates her increased knowledge, mediated by affective engagement, and her translation of that into expectations of behaviour change. Her own behaviour changes have evident foundations in how she has been able to empathetically understand, as we have seen earlier.

A feature which solidifies historical "truth" in the Western tradition is its written inscription, which gathers unto itself respectability and un-deniability. Vera demonstrates the investiture of realism in her acceptance of a written truth, located in a book listing her family tree. As she says:

*that's [points to the book] probably the greatest validation.*

That histories told had effectively been written out of the teachings of Australia’s past, and are only now just being included in an understanding of Australia’s development as a nation, demonstrates the un-assailability of a historical "given". One of the spoils for victors in conflicts is the right to tell the tale.

The insistence of the Aboriginal people consulted coincided with the beliefs held in the project team that these hidden histories of Aboriginal people (Reynolds 1999) were important. People’s personal histories were relevant here too. All of us, project team, trainers and trainees, had our own histories, the events which shaped our lives. If we could value these past experiences as contributing to who we are and what we do, then it was not such a great step to recognising those events which occurred before our own personal times as being crucially important to what we did now. The importance of recalling, or re-membering the past as a means of reconnecting with the past in order to move forward, is illustrated in Fanon’s

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113 Also see Holland (1996).
writings. 'It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.' (Bhabha 1994, p. 63).

This view of history is of course challenged, with the now notorious phrase 'black armband view of history' (Birch 1997) being used selectively to dismiss those aspects of Australia's past as a country and nation some people find distasteful, and to praise and commend those considered uplifting and rewarding. It is particularly challenged by some people who state they refuse to take on the guilt for the acts of the past and are only interested in the future, as though people may live lives atemporally. It denies a possibility of solving problems which have their roots in the past. Immobilising guilt is not the intent, but the provision of a framework which helps in the understanding of the source of some problems that they may be addressed. But this very notion of competing historical understandings and truths was disputed by some people.

One of the grands récits of the Enlightenment, the discourse of History, contributes to the complex locus for the development of an authoritarian political discourse. History has recommended itself as a steady progression of the development of humankind in which the present is privileged over the past. Critiqued in this last period of the twentieth century by those writers challenging a Eurocentric construction of History (Said 1989; Spivak and Young 1991; Bhabha 1994) this grand narrative has been shown to have been complicit in establishing the dominion of European thought over other forms of knowledge. In doing so, the traditional knowledges, of which Lyotard speaks, have been set aside, and along with them the primacy in those worlds of their own truths. And the inheritors of the dominant discourse barely question classificatory systems which have hierarchised (Bhabha 1994, p. 73) white above black, objectivity above subjectivity, rationality above emotionality, and progress as a civilising norm. Explanations for the subordinate and disadvantaged position of Aboriginal people in this Episteme invoke the hierarchy as natural, and residual remedies used to cushion the effects. Assimilation as a practice was one measure. Subsequent EO
remedies (and hence Equity training) may be considered its replacement (Delgado 1995; Bell 1995a).

Historical progress, however, has been shown to be no more than one of its own discourses, the previously supposed seamless, linear development to be now characterised by discontinuity and rupture, thresholds, difference and limits (Foucault 1972, p. 14). As such, History is no more than a practice which has systematically formed the object of which it speaks (Foucault 1972, p. 49). The implications of such a view are that the predictability of a civilising project, such as scientific knowledge, and the march of reason towards emancipation, may themselves be questioned and their proofs doubted. The information cited from History, then, in this view, ceases to be an absolute representation of the truth, but open to challenge and contradicting positions. Historical “facts” become the combatants in a war which pits one person’s accuracy against another’s certainty, the classic “truth” versus “faith” depiction of knowing. For example, Eric has been shown to easily accept as truth what he calls historical facts. A video portraying the removal of children on the basis of colour is used to support his suggestion that these facts will help non-Aboriginal people understand the present situation of Aboriginal families and their inability to provide nurturing environments for their own children. Alternate views which maintain the justification for removal on welfare grounds (Howson 1999; Marsh 1999) are rejected by him, but not others, although both parties entreat a historical factor. These are the same “facts”, but invoke different and oppositional interpretations. Truth and its acceptance are not proven. To call on History as a universal and singular authority is now to invite multiple challenges. The processes through which people proceed in order to accept or not historical “fact”, or truths, are complex in deciding which voice has authority and truthfulness, and thus are believed. The ‘speaker’s benefit’ (Foucault 1984) is no longer invincibly awarded to the expert in academia, or the ‘founders of discursivity’ (Foucault 1984, p. 114) emanating from Europe as Centre. We need now ask questions other than ‘who spoke?’ and identify modes of existence, circulation, and appropriation of discourse, after which the question sitting behind
these may be asked ‘What difference does it make who is speaking?’ (Foucault 1984, p. 120). Helping others for whom these Histories (as true) provide foundations is a central task (not without its problems) of training and learning.

The Incompleteness Of An Intellectual Project

Dispassionate knowledge giving is implicit in some of the accounts in previous chapters, as it is with much training. It carries an expectation of progression, what is not known can be known and added to already existing knowledge. The possibility of displacement or disruption to what is already ‘known’ is not present here. We start here to see the intricate nature of knowledge, particularly of the objective kind, when we consider the surprise evinced by Desmond and William. They realised, separately, not only didn’t they know what was being told them, but that this knowledge had been kept from them (William) and that others who could have been expected to have relevant knowledge, didn’t (Desmond). This resulted in them questioning what they understood to be a knowledge transmission process. They do not articulate it for themselves, but we start to arrive at the political nature of knowledge here, a knowledge system which keeps other knowledges hidden (Foucault 1972). There are signs in Desmond and William, that what they previously accepted as uncomplicated knowledge, was starting to be understood as having complexities which stimulated further searching, and critical questioning. It started to engage an emotional response in them, which they felt, as well as knew. Hannah and Penny arrive at similar realisations about the previously hidden nature of what is disseminated as knowledge.

However, as has been shown, the people in this study reflect an allegiance to ways of knowing which support the bequeathed convention and rely on knowledge which they call fact, historical, objective, and true. Notwithstanding that recent challenges to such truth claims take issue with how Cartesian dualism has dominated the Western way of knowledge, an authority which appeals to reason ensures that the scientific tradition remains one of the substantiating features of
knowledge in the West. I turn next to the inevitable shadow of "objective" knowledge, that is subjectivity.

Western Ways Of Knowing: Experience And Subjectivity

Despite the supremacy of scientific knowledge, experiential knowledge, or the knowledge which emerges from the daily lived experience of people, also occupies a place in Western epistemology. Lyotard's account suggests scientific knowledge seeks to discredit traditional knowledge. But the particular and local experiential knowledges, as traditional, are not those which constitute science's Other. The contender here is the knowledge of experience, its original modern proponents, Husserl and Dilthey seeking truth through experience, with its later followers, Heidegger and Gadamer, eschewing truth claims (Spiegelberg 1960; Palmer 1969; Bleicher 1980; Bernstein 1983; Thompson 1990), but nevertheless situating their project firmly within the Western paradigm. Thus, subjectivity, as a way of knowing, is at one and the same time science's opposite and its companion.

Subjectivity: Learning From The Heart

According to this perspective which includes the practices of phenomenology and hermeneutics, knowledge is best reached through explorations of experience. It is this feature of knowing which has direct significance for the ways in which knowledge may be accessed, transmitted and verified according to the "realities" of the people who experience those events in their lives.

In highlighting experience as a way of knowing, the study participants invoke those theories which propose that experience can be known and through it windows to the worlds of others can also be opened, thus enabling the meanings of social life to also be known, and shared meanings explored. Although there are differences between a transcendental knowing and the everyday interpretation of reality, lived experience is here the key to understanding. The people in this study who recommend the value of experiential knowing do so from their own experience, not
theory, thereby unwittingly (perhaps) echoing such theorists as Ricoeur whose dictum of the shortest route from self to self is through the Other (Kearney 1996).

Experiential learning is well recognised in the literature (Kolb and Fry 1975; Warner Weil and Ian 1989; Boud and Walker 1991; Usher 1991; Mulligan and Griffin 1992; Boud 1993; Gochenour 1993). As I discussed in Chapter Two, subjective learning from experience derives from the Western paradigm through psychological understandings and forms a major part of what is considered to be human development, extending to the adult years where experiential learning now occupies a central place in both formal and non-formal (community education for example) learning systems (Jarvis 1988; Collins 1991; Brookfield 1993; Tennant and Pogson 1995). What is also acknowledged in the literature is the extent to which such learning has an emotional component (Hoopes 1979; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Ptak, Cooper et al. 1995; Cushner and Brislin 1997; Erera 1997). Sociological and anthropological explorations continue outside the domain of psychology, and examine the contribution of social aspects of emotionality to an understanding of the human condition in social action and structure (Kemper 1978; Denzin 1984; Armon-Jones 1986; Harre 1986; Kemper 1987; Ellis 1991; Hochschild 1991; Thamm 1992; Williams and Bendelow 1996; Shilling 1997; Barbalet 1998). Although emotion and learning seem to remain the province of psychology, emotionality (understood in its sociological sense, that is embedded in social action and interaction rather than as an aspect of individual psychology) has connection with the learning process as evidenced in this study.

I want to reiterate that although emotion and reason are often presented as oppositional human attributes, within the adult learning field (including that of cross cultural training), emotion and cognition (purportedly the rational intellectual aspect of the human condition) form two of the three learning functions, behaviour being the third. So knowledge (cognition), skills (behaviour) and values (affect)

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114 Both of which have a lengthy history (Kemper 1978; Harre 1986; Lutz and White 1986), but not a matter I wish to explore in this study.
commonly form the target for a well-rounded training activity (Pusch 1979; Tennant and Pogson 1995; Milhouse 1996). We have seen that the professional trainers among the study participants, Hannah and Julia for example, indicate their familiarity with these expectations. The learning experiences people reported as having significance for them which occurred outside the formal training activity were predominantly those of the affect, or imbued with emotion. That this position seems obvious, but revolutionary, has been remarked recently by Peile who has noted the lack of attention to what he terms embodied knowledge (Peile 1998). This study has indicated to me, too, that ‘the body and emotions are a way of knowing which need to be valued equally alongside conceptual knowing.’ (Peile 1998, p. 39). Turning his attention to activist practice within a critical framework for social work, Peile foresees the importance of learning from an emotive presence, transferring the experience of feeling to a new cognition, using the body as medium. He does not suggest displacing rationality but recommends including emotionality equivalently, positing the same caution as is necessary to avoid the dominating, exploitative or manipulative effects which exist potentially in rational learning. Accepting that this sequence is possible does not necessarily mean that learning will take place, but Peile argues for both an alertness to the potential, and its acceptance.

None of this will be new to those trainers who deal with the affect in the training setting as a matter of course. What is important here is the connections trainers and educators can make to understand the change process we hope will be brought about by new learning, as Peile terms it, through embodied knowledge.

Embodied knowing (emotionality) did indeed take place during this study and, according to the reflections of the participants, during the training project. Three of the more overt examples involved Vera, Julia and Teresa. All three were affected to the point of tears in our interviews when they recalled events which occurred some years previously during their part in the project. All three were able to
identify the emotions they felt then, and the learning which resulted on which they were able to act.

There is not uniform agreement about what constitutes emotions, their meaning (Sartre 1948; Kemper 1978; Denzin 1984; Barbalet 1998), or whether they are all socially constructed or primary (that is autonomic). Among so-called primary emotion labels may be found sadness, loneliness, acceptance (Kemper 1987). Vera, Julia and Teresa all cry as they talk about the rejection they felt during the project. Vera felt rejected by the Aboriginal trainers who did not know her struggle about identity during the training programme; Julia felt rejection from the staff at the CAS, people from whom she expected acceptance and understanding; and Teresa names a number of loci for the rejections she felt, her sister and family, other Aboriginal people, her non-Aboriginal colleagues. These outward expressions of previously hidden hurts surprise all three people. They had not expected to cry. They are taken aback by both the act of tears and its intensity. They all, independently, express wonder that this should happen, that it should happen now, so long (five years) after the events about which they are speaking. Neither Julia nor Teresa have spoken of these matters to any one during that time. They have remained truly hidden and quietly so.

Explorations of rejection revealed feelings of isolation, being alone and misunderstood, complex feelings associated with loneliness and the absence of acceptance. The learning all three people derived from reflecting on these events and related feelings was equally complex. Vera left the training programme she attended in tears, not then understanding why she was so upset. She had not told anyone of this event, save her family, until we talk in the interview. Vera did not respond to my written invitation to participate, but when she saw me at her workplace she asked if she could speak to me.\footnote{Although Vera framed the request in the context of my study, about which she knew, having received my written invitation, I wondered after we terminated the interview if she was using me in a different role, perhaps trying out her feelings.} During that interview, which
started impassively, Vera disclosed her ancestry to me and then cried, terminating our interview. In the next meeting, Vera told me of her feelings of rejection at the training by the Aboriginal trainers, and her thoughts that, until now, she had considered the training to be a failure. When she reflected during the week on what had happened to her, she realised that there had been learning for herself, and possibly for others too. Vera is now able to make the connection between shame and denial and her adult journey, attributing much of her distress to those previously unacknowledged feelings. Being able to name shame and denial have been important for her, and have helped her become more comfortable with who she is and how she will proceed in her life. She understands now that identity is important, and how she places herself in her world, but she still feels the rejection of that day and is working to understand how it is that people can place themselves so oppositionally. Vera’s response in the training was emotive. It could have remained at the bodily level of sadness, crying. She has been able to reflect on those feelings, identify their components and, now, work towards a resolution.

Julia, too, has not had the opportunity to speak to anyone of her feelings of rejection, unfairness and hurt, until now, in the privacy of these interviews. Importantly, too, now that she has responded emotionally to this prospect of reflection in the way she has, she can also ask herself why she is now reacting in this way. She investigates why she perceives her involvement as having been difficult, why she has felt the rejection to be unfair on her and emerges recognising the positives which remain. It is perhaps the beginnings of learning for Julia.

Teresa’s feelings of rejection occupied much of her story which we discussed during our several interviews. She indicated (cited earlier) that her involvement with the training project was important to her in several ways, not least for enabling her to start to understand how other people might have perceived her. She remains,

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116 Two powerful emotions which don’t however appear in the primary lists and could bear further study. Barbalet studies shame from a macrosociological perspective (1998), and denial forms a large part of the social work literature on grief.
at the end of the project, still committed to her career, but she can accept that other people could not understand what was happening for her, and that leads to her evincing (with me) an empathetic understanding. How much Teresa will let this influence her future actions is unknown, but Teresa has evidently started a process of reflection on the events which surrounded her feelings of rejection, unfairness and isolation.

These processes for these three people are similar to those of understanding and use of "self" considered so crucial in social work practice as a means of empathetic engagement, authentic and genuine encouragement for productive work (Hepworth and Larsen 1993). They also have connections to critical reflection, but for these three, in the evidences we have, they remain at the self-reflective and do not move on to action as a result – the critical part of the reflection. Fook points out the differences and notes that in critical reflection, the 'emotional aspects of the experience' (1999, p. 199) are a key feature in a person's ability to reflect critically on what the experience has meant and what learning is taking place. It is clear that emotionality needs to be taken seriously as a factor in people's ability to learn from their experiences. These experiences, as described by Teresa, Vera and Julia, are not yet as advanced as those examined in Fook's work, but they have the potential to move these people towards the sort of theory-building which Fook believes leads to a different practice as a result of reflecting critically. And the realisation of this process has clear implications for educators and trainers.

Other people in this study have also made the connections between their emotional responses and their subsequent learning. Harriet, in particular, has also experienced rejection from people she thought were her friends, who rejected her in the end as 'that white woman', and lay blame for failures in the programmes to that identification. Harriet recalls clearly the anguish she has felt.

*I'm sure we've all got a despair, but it takes a long time to understand that working relationship with people, who see you as you, instead of seeing [you]*
Harriet, here, is starting to move her reflections out of the realm of “self” to other understandings, incorporating larger structural indices.

Their involvement in the project was not an emotionally neutral affair for Teresa, Julia, Vera or Harriet. The depth of feeling for the first three was so compelling that sadness and hurt was expressed in tears as they recalled certain events, and we revisited these events through subsequent meetings. Theirs were not stories which could be covered dispassionately in one meeting. Feelings of rejection were the common report, the unfairness, and associated hurt, characterised their tellings. Harriet, too, had experienced rejection, disappointment and hurt, and her introspection during our meetings has much in common with Teresa, Julia and Vera. Projects as part of one’s daily work tasks do not usually invite such intense reactions, and the nature of the workplace in promoting such activities does not encourage an emotional attachment to the work (as compared to emotional labour (Hochschild 1983; Hochschild 1991; Yanay and Shahar 1998; Wharton 1999; Steinberg and Figart 1999a; Steinberg and Figart 1999b)). However, these four people were particularly affected by their participation. Identity, commitment, and allegiance are commonalities here, with Teresa, Julia and Harriet feeling unfairly judged. Vera’s emergence from a concealed past has been less painful latterly, but was born out of a profound and epiphanic reaction to the events in the programme she attended.

Penny provides another example. When she started training, Penny was quickly to make the connection between giving information and engaging people’s emotions as a way of sustaining the learning. Her experiences, told in the Issues identification section of Chapter Two, quite readily illustrate her approach to the training activity.
Penny’s interchanges with the bus drivers show how she deliberately uses emotional triggers to engage a response. She has read the signs effectively. The rejections enunciated by the bus drivers might well be through lack of knowledge, but they are emotional expressions of rejection born from their experiences, and conceptual explanations are insufficient to change them. She tells the bus drivers that she’s ‘pissed off’, but ‘not angry’, although she could have been. She doesn’t tell them ‘you piss me off’. She says ‘I’d like to go through this with you, because I’m really pissed off’. They have called her dirty. She’s Aboriginal and so she’s dirty. Penny demonstrates a keen sense of use of “self” and understanding of the underlying attitudes which provoke these responses. They are not matters which are easily changed through the provision of information because they are so deeply rooted in people’s experiences and attitudes. So Penny uses a strategy intentionally directed at how people feel, rather than what they think they know.

It ‘worked out well’, she says to me, and I took it that Penny felt she had succeeded in challenging prejudices. What was more remarkable to Penny was not the bus drivers’ attitudes, but those of the social and welfare workers she met later on the same day, and whose issues were the same. She used the same strategy for both groups of people and helped them to understand a little more about their attitudes towards Aboriginal people, and the need for their confrontation. She succeeded because she responded to her own feelings of shock and surprise. And she used her “self” as the means to overcome the conceptual explanations of what are, at least in part, emotional rejections of another group of people.

Of all the trainers, Penny has perhaps moved the furthest away from the provision of an information-based training process, towards one which engages a high degree of emotionality. She has formulated a training framework which draws on her understanding of grief and loss, as a result of seeing the healing which occurs for Aboriginal people during the telling of their stories and having them witnessed in the training. Other people have referred to this potential for healing, for example, Marian’s repeated use of Charlie as a story teller to augment the Past and Present
module. There is an additional danger here, though, in people wanting an emotional performance as part of the contemporary entertainment value of training.\textsuperscript{117} It is this form of anticipated emotional labour\textsuperscript{118} to which Jane Elliot objects in her training. ‘I don’t ask Black folks to bleed for White folks’, she says.\textsuperscript{119} The balance between learning and exploitation through narrative is hard to ensure.

It has been the hearing of personal stories which has been most meaningful for some of the trainees and has led to their further understanding and consequent actions. Participating in narratives (Ricoeur 1986; Merlan 1994; Nespor and Barber 1995; Keppel 1998) makes connections for people that are not so readily possible in watching videos (or more usually reading information), as the accounts remain some distance from the authors.

It was this to which Vera objected when she complained that she thought the trainers were too ‘inside’ the training. Vera believed the trainers were too connected to their own personal issues to be able to present the training material objectively. She sought a much more objective presentation, not least to avoid the defensiveness it produced in the trainees. Vera believed the personal perspective (how the past events had been experienced by people) and the anger, inserted a barrier between the trainers and the trainees which interfered with what she considered the training should have been about, which was acceptance and unity.

Objectivity, in Vera’s words, could be the antonym for emotionality. People’s pasts and their experiences are ‘present’ for them, they can relive them when telling

\textsuperscript{117} This view of training has resonance with what Baudrillard refers to as the simulacra, in which there is the never ending search for the hyper-real without there ever having to have been a genuine experience. With such a perspective the emphasis is towards more and more extreme “viewings”, without ever having to be touched with the real (Agger 1991).

\textsuperscript{118} Emotional labour has been used by Hochschild to refer to an emotional dimension to work performed expected by the employer. Hochschild’s study examined airline attendants. Studies since have examined a range of work. There is a case to be made to consider this type of training emotional labour, but that is for another study.

\textsuperscript{119} Stated in her lecture series in Melbourne 1998.
of them. The possibilities for people to contain how they feel about them in emotion-less ways are few.

Yet it was the same Vera who accepted, embraced almost, the information given by Aboriginal trainers, who told the group she was in, that identity was inherited. This was information she was able to use to explain her own puzzles about who she was. This is despite Vera being initially surprised to be faced with Aboriginal speakers who were from urban areas, carrying with this surprise the implication that Aboriginal people from the city are inevitably part-Aboriginal and not “real” (Langton 1981). Still, these trainers were able to persuade Vera of the veracity of their claims that identity was genetically transmitted.

Vera accepted what they said, because it explained a riddle to her. She admitted to feeling ‘up tight’ about her identity. She had not known this before ‘gee whiz I didn't realise that’, but she had no difficulty in accepting it. These Aboriginal trainers, despite their “partial” Aboriginality, now assumed a position of expert for Vera, perhaps because it helped explain a discomfort. These people became the authorities. Despite other experts making contradictory claims, which as an educated person Vera could be expected to know, Vera was moved to accept this truth. It sounded right, it felt right, it felt real. Vera shows the vacillation between an objective and experiential truth. These people were her truth speakers, people on the other side of the scientific project.

Not all emotional triggers led to learning, as shown by the woman of whom Christine tells while watching Babakiueria (ABC International 1988). There is a danger in using such an emotive presence, which can result in outright rejection, as shown here. Judging how to pitch the training correctly is a gift not all trainers have in such subtle measure.

In other cases, the participants named their own responses to the events they experienced in emotional terms, stating, for example, that they were angry,
disappointed or joyful. More often participants would describe other people’s behaviours in emotional terms, recalling that they were aggressive, or blaming, or lacking in confidence. My own reflection, on reading transcripts and replaying the related interviews, has been to realise, belatedly, that the story the participant wanted to tell was an emotional story and he or she would keep returning to that theme until it was told, despite the direction provided by me through my questioning.

What seems to be happening here is that the emotional or embodied knowledge remains with the "self". It is not yet credited with status equal to intellectual knowledge with which trainers can work overtly. It seems to stop before it becomes open and known. Trainers could look for these clues to push the learning further in some way – perhaps not in the training room, although that might be possible, but through strategies for use outside, such as peer groups or gatherings similar to reconciliation circles (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1993).

*Subjectivities, Knowledge And Training*

Notwithstanding rationality being privileged over emotionality in the Western Episteme, the training activity has been able to include an affective function, largely due to the offices of psychology which provide the basis for much training and adult learning processes, even those which tend towards more technical instrumental formats (Jarvis 1988; Tennant and Pogson 1995; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). Engaging the affect occupies a considerable place in the aims of much training literature which purports to change behaviour (behaviourism now being well out of favour) (Burns 1995; Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). This necessarily means encouraging a somewhat subjective stance. I have shown that this is indeed so. Learning with the emotions as compared to learning with the intellect means a greater personal investment and willingness to “risk”, something some people are not prepared to do, or find too threatening. At the same time, the rewards may be
sufficient to outweigh the threats, and some people place their own vulnerability in positions where their learning may be greatest.

There is much supporting theory and literature for the person who wishes to explore “self” and his/her interactions with others, and much of this supports training and adult learning activities, as I showed in Chapter Two. What is important here to reiterate is the common epistemological source for these understandings shared between an objective and subjective project, or scientism and interpretivism, a point which does not escape the post-structuralist critique.

So, although the phenomenological exploration of knowing, which privileges experience over reason, has led to a body of work which has been surprisingly successful in resisting the domination of the scientific method in the social sciences (Spiegelberg 1960, p. 21), this does not release it from being an object of disdain to its erstwhile students, for example Derrida and Lyotard, who rightly expose it to the same charges as they lay against the total Western project. Even though later phenomenological thinkers moved away from Husserl’s transcendental position, the re-centring of a knowing subject is perhaps their greatest criticism. This is despite the work conducted among them which foreshadowed post-structuralism’s de-centring the subject, rejection of the metaphysics of presence, critique of humanism, individualism and the totality of History, and its recognition of the importance of language (Howells 1992, p.2). Later configurations from such people as Gadamer, who transfigures Heidegger’s use of language (Gadamer 1994) and insists on phenomenology’s temporal and contexted nature (Hekman 1986), have not been sufficient to rehabilitate phenomenology from its essentialist characteristics.

Phenomenology encompasses a wide and often disparate body of thought and practice (1960, p. 2). Included are the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl, the interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger and Gadamer, and critical hermeneutics such as practised by Ricoeur. The term is also used as a generic description to refer to any exploration of experience, making it doubly difficult (Blaikie 1993; Crotty 1998).
The methodological importance of this strand of theoretical pursuit is the subject of a discussion in Appendix 2, but in seeking to situate meaning making humans in their social contexts, the practice of a critical hermeneutics offers the opportunity to develop knowledge in people’s social circumstances, through their lived experiences. The relevance here is their contributions to what constitutes knowledge and how it may be known through experience.

Ricoeur (as already noted) and other critical hermeneuticists (albeit not without their own differences) seek meaning through experience which at once posits an ethics of living, often considered to be absent in post-structuralism, and the valorisation of localised and differential selves, a feature of the post-structuralist critique of humanism. Common positions among hermeneutic phenomenologists include the acceptance of the contexted nature of being and its historical locatedness, the centrality of language and dialogue as a medium of understanding, and the production of new meaning as an ever changing entity through interaction. ‘Historicality’ (Koch 1995) the hermeneutic circle and the ‘fusion of horizons’ are expressions in Gadamer’s work, which incorporate these common themes (if not precise positions). Some theorists resist Gadamer’s idea of the universality of understanding, but the idea of engaging in a dialogical process in which social agents seek a genuine understanding of each other through their shared experiences, is something actors seek to do all the time in their daily lives. Gadamer believes that this dialogic act produces new knowledge (Hekman 1986) at this meeting, which offers a measure of optimism when so many of the positions have been entrenched and immovable.

Charged with the lack of a critical analysis (thus ignoring power relations) Gadamer rejoins that it is impossible to remove oneself from one's own cultural historical vantage point (Thompson 1990). This is a real concern, should

121 Habermas because he believes it is acontextual, and Derrida for its proximity to transcendentalism. Thompson provides a detailed discussion (1990), and the notorious Gadamer-Derrida (non)-debate is discussed fully by Dallmayr (1989).
understanding remain on the individual level, inviting no structural analysis at all. Penny’s interactions with the bus drivers in opening a discussion about their relative values and concerns (including those relating to material property) may well have been an opening to start to explore some of the inequalities of circumstances. Having established a meeting point through dialogue, in which people start to see, as Penny says ‘through our eyes’, possibilities open for future interactions. Providing such venues in which dialogue invites interpretation (accepting that there is no single univocal meaning) encourages exploration of one’s world, and even perhaps to expose meanings which are socially oppressive and which may go unnoticed by the actors silenced through hegemonic practices (Thompson 1990). Not all speakers’ meanings count. History is written by the winners, who spread their meanings and interpretations in such a way as to colonise others’ worlds of meaning. Some Aboriginal people’s aspirations of eschewing Aboriginal cultural ways and seeking non-Aboriginal enculturation (deliberately placing their children in non-Aboriginal hostels, for example), indicates an internalisation of the meanings of the winners (DeMaria 1986; Rowse 1992). Opportunities in training to explore what these problems mean, and how to move forward with them through dialogue towards new understanding, are not to be missed.

The relevance of a phenomenological understanding of knowledge through experience to this study and the WWAP training is in its focus on and validating of the localised daily encounters which are not reducible to disembodied reason. Nor does it call on an objective and provable external entity for verification. While these are the very features for which such positioning is rejected by those seekers after Truth, to people whose daily lived experiences gather credence in their telling, as do the narratives of the Aboriginal guest speakers recounting their lives, there is no greater knowing. Furthermore, the act of displacing previously accepted “truths” from a different historical context through a narrative knowing is in itself empowering and serves to continue such dis-placement.
These stances, however, in which knowledge is neither uniform nor unvarying, despite the acceptance that traditional knowing is important to some people, bring their problems. Accordingly, traditional knowing is only one amongst a number of ways of knowing, disallowing allocation of privilege. For people whose lives and histories have hitherto been at the mercy of other more dominant groups to be told that the truths they hold dear are to have no more meaning than any other “exotic” group is not likely to be accepted, nor understood, as anything other than more evidence of the cultural imperialism from which the WWAP type of training was seen as a means of liberation.

Postmodernism: Countering The Western Project Of Subjectivity And Objectivity\(^{122}\)

The critique of the Western project, as signalled at the beginning of this section, is not solely on the bifurcation of objective versus subjective knowledge, or that which can be shown or demonstrated as superior to that which can only be believed or experienced. As shown by Foucault, it encompasses processes which enable dominance to be taken for granted, the relations of ruling (Smith 1990a) which have positioned people differently, the hierarchical result affecting people’s lives, and importantly, what is legitimate to be known and what should be known. Yet we have seen that the content and process of people’s subjective knowledges has merely “gone underground” to emerge in the ensuing spaces of a challenged epistemology, such as has occurred in a political refusal by people on the margins to allow continued dominance. The postmodern de-centring of a Eurocentric knowledge is augmented by writers who speak from standpoints at once outside the Western centre, as well as being constituted by it. These “postcolonial” voices both acknowledge a debt to its products, in the post-structural writers who have been

\(^{122}\) Postmodernism and poststructuralism are often treated as though they were synonyms (Rosenau 1992, p.3). Rosenau provides one way of treating them differently, which I follow here. Postmodernism I use as a more “global” (although I realise here the irony of such usage) term to include strands of thinking which can be characterised as eschewing the “modern” (that is projects of the Enlightenment such as universalism) while “poststructuralism” additionally refers to matters of language and interpretation (among others).
pivotal in that very de-centring, and take positions on the margins (hooks 1994) which claim separate territories. What is relevant here is the ‘speaker’s benefit’ of which Foucault talked, and which is reworked by Said who notes the sometimes ‘paramount importance not so much what is said, but who speaks.’ (Said 1986, p.153, italics in original). Standpoint positioning is political and personal as the feminist writers have shown. It is also a denunciation of an objective reality, and invokes the experience of the Other.

Through the endeavours of those writers who have participated in these post-structural demolitions of the Western paradigm, man [sic]as knowing subject has been dis-placed,123 reason has been demoted, little narratives accepted and the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment declared dead. Vast bodies of supporting work and application of these views of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities have resulted. There have been equal amounts of rejections on the grounds of relativism, and the nihilistic tendencies of the work and the scepticism it engenders (Owens 1983; Dews 1987; Fraser and Nicholson 1988; Kellner 1988; Sangren 1988; Pool 1991). In particular, while people at the margins have welcomed the legitimising of their narratives, they also posit criticisms that a deconstructive approach merely supports the status quo, and the lack of a political framework sentences the dispossessed to further oppression (Flax 1987; Weedon 1987; Alcoff 1988; Fraser and Nicholson 1988; Rabine 1988; Lather 1991; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993). Having a suspicion of the ability to know and of what might be known has serious consequences for what might be told as truth and who might tell it.

The post-structural perspectives of authority, authorising and consequent control, have relevance for this study. All questions relate to the authority of what is told, either in speech or in writing, and how may it be accepted as truth. Clearly, a

123 And there is a large corpus of feminist critique of the homo-centricity of these works (Flax 1987; Strathern 1987; Weedon 1987; Alcoff 1988; Fraser and Nicholson 1988; Lather 1991), to mention only a few.
predominant question here has been that of ‘who speaks?’ for it is that which has been credited with authority. And it has been the challenges to authority by the formerly unheard spokespersons that have created divisions and criticism. Who has the right to speak and from where does that right arise? If we apply Foucauldian analyses we arrive at a political domain which constitutes, and is constituted by, the relevant discourses and which result in the practices of knowing. These, Foucault has shown, constitute the relations of power of contemporary life, and in particular those of governmentality. Authority, therefore resides within those complex relations, the discourses of which are potent in their actions and determinations. Discourses of welfare and Aboriginal people, for example, (Marcus 1992; Rowse 1992) play a commanding role in present day interactions, and significantly influence the knowledges which are considered relevant and important to know.

The uneasy tension between people wanting to acknowledge the “speakers” and have what is spoken verified plagued the presentation of the WWAP. On the one hand, people demonstrated the close connection they had to their own knowledges and valued those as “belonging” to their experience or previous learning. On the other hand, they genuinely wanted to credit others with having similar ownerships. Subjectivity as positioning in knowledge becomes tense when what is being given is either not valued or is disputed, as being outside or contrary to one’s own experience (and thus not “known”, or believed false). Yet contradictorily, it is disputed on the grounds of objectivity. People’s need to “fix” truth as object to be known explains why the authority of the written word is so tyrannical. Transmitting a Historical truth through the written word reinforces its political truth value. The challenges from the ‘speaker’s benefit’ who oppose such truths, are not always accepted, especially when those speakers themselves have claims to truth which are not verifiable by the spectators in the ways of their (not the speakers’) verification.
But not all knowledge and its transmission need be (or is) confined within the borders of the modern Western project, with its insistence on making choices between an objective proof or a subjective belief. Post-structural critiques (including those from writers of post-coloniality) have provided alternative ways of considering knowledge production and maintenance.\(^\text{124}\) In particular, looking towards the traditional processes of which Lyotard wrote, and calls narrative knowledge to find means of re-engaging the conviviality (Lyotard 1984, p.7) of local, face to face and relational knowledge production, provides different options. These directions have been followed in many disciplines during recent years, with the value of narrated knowledge now well established (Bruner 1984; Johannsen 1992; Richardson 1994; Emihovich 1995; Goodson 1995).

**Narrated And Interactive Knowledge**

Interest in narrative as an inquiry process (already cited) in the social sciences coincided with the post-structural critique of modernism, and Lyotard’s popularising of narrative as discourse, even though narrative’s antecedents precedes any of these knowledge forms. Lyotard did remind those of us who had perhaps forgotten of the power of narrative and its relational attributes, and the concurrent development of narrative analysis has given a new legitimacy to the telling of stories. It is not surprising, then, that the conjunction of one cultural domain with another should be marked by the telling of stories, and that their telling should generate new knowledge.

This form of knowing arises from the crucible of narration in which the lived experience as knowledge of the narrator becomes the site for engaging the listener in an interactive way with the events being told. I have witnessed the integral

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\(^\text{124}\) Although there is an argument to be made that no knowledge may be known outside its own domain (Derrida 1976; Derrida 1978)
emotional character of such interactions which have been powerful knowledge producing events.\footnote{Beresford and Omaji recount at length the life stories as told by two sisters, who have had different experiences as removed family members, which in the telling have profound effects on the listeners as well as the narrators (1998).}

Life stories, allegories, and fragments of events all form a vital part in helping trainees to start to ‘see through our eyes’, as Penny puts it. The interactions with Aboriginal trainers and guest speakers during the telling of stories, as described in the training programme (Chapter Two), illustrate the learning for the trainees which emerges through narration and the interaction which is also part of the story. The trainees enter into the events as they are being told in felt and immediate ways. The examples already told during the description of the training programme illustrate the realisations by people of new learning when they engage in, and reflect on, these events which have subsequent meaning for them.

Repeatedly, people have noted that their learning emerged through the personal stories as told by people whose stories they are. Realisations of aspects of life and re-orientations of thinking as a result of hearing stories (for the listener) and of telling stories (for the narrator) were evident in the programme, and have been shown through this study. A large body of literature supports these functions of story-telling (for example Bruner 1984; Ricoeur 1984; Brown 1987; Cohler 1991; Ricoeur 1991; Rosenwald 1992; Freeman 1993; Chase 1995; Emihovich 1995; Gubrium and Holstein 1995; Josselson and Lieblich 1995; Lather 1997; Joy 1997a).

A valuable concept here is Ricoeur’s application of what Gadamer called a fusion of horizons (Ricoeur 1986, p. 126) to demonstrate the genesis of new understanding and hence knowledge through interaction between people. This is not merely an interpretive act on the part of one or other of the players, nor synthesis, but a genuine meeting and development of understanding between
people. It is at this point that some post-structuralists, in particular Derrida, turn and attack these theorists on the grounds that mutual understanding is not possible (Derrida 1978) nor should it be offered as an aim. It represents a return to the universalising project post-structuralism has shown to be impossible. However, neither theorist (Gadamer or Ricoeur) lays claim to the nihilistic conclusions of the type of post-structuralism which disallows any meaning to be made, venturing instead the potential of better meanings to be made than others. Seeking a way to increase understanding (even if such understanding is imperfect) rather than obfuscate, is the task of a training exercise to enable one group of people to provide services in ways which will be more acceptable to the recipients than previously. Therefore, looking for solutions to this communicative and relational problem in a nihilistic or sceptical (Rosenau 1992) post-structuralism would seem a thankless task. Accepting the benefits of a post-structural critique, as is offered by Ricoeur and Gadamer (Ricoeur 1973; Ricoeur, Gadamer et al. 1982; Hekman 1986; Thompson 1990; Gadamer 1994) without falling into endless disorder (the Derridean likelihood), directs me to the fusion of insights about narrative to the insights provided by Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics. Despite the criticisms both these theorists attract (summarised comprehensively by Hekman (1986)) and the difficulties with their works, I believe a critical hermeneutic approach may be applied here.

Narration of lives is a central theme for Ricoeur as a way of understanding the social (not only the literary), and theorists using his methods have applied these processes to a variety of lived experiences. Joy shows how the narratives of incest survivors are a journey of recuperation as well as an attempt to re-inscribe experiences as working identities, as it were, to ‘provide a base from which the concrete responses to contemporary political and social challenges can be organised.’ (1997b, p. 47).

Here Ricoeur's enjoinder that a purpose of narrative is to bear witness to suffering is relevant:

We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative (Ricoeur 1984, p. 75).

This has been a central theme of the practice of the WWAP training.

Ricoeur believes that narrators can narrate, rather than become the authors of their own lives (Ricoeur 1986, p. 131). Fook's exposition of critical reflective practice would seem to concur. For meaning is encapsulated in the telling and reflecting upon (as Ricoeur notes, experience can be pre-narrative, that is not interpreted (Ricoeur 1986, p. 127)) a life, or lived experience.

[The meaning or significance of a story wells up from the intersection of the world of text and the world of the reader. Thus the act of reading becomes the crucial moment of the entire analysis. On this act rests the ability of the story to transfigure the experience of the reader. (Ricoeur 1986, p. 126. Italics in original).]

We have already seen that Ricoeur has likened social action to text, which enables similar interpretive techniques. Here, the Gadamerian fusion of horizons appears to encourage the potential for mutual meaning making which also 'transfigures' the experience of the reader (other in the interaction). This basis (albeit subject of criticism on the grounds of the heurism of treating social action as text (Thompson 1981); the underlying objectivity of Ricoeur's thesis (Hekman 1986) and the problematic of distanciation (Moore 1990)) I believe is an appropriate framework from which to articulate a future direction for a training process. Using another of his concepts, emplotment (1984) which allows the ordering of events into
meaningful sequences, Ricoeur has shown how people may indeed start a re-inscription of their lives, in ways that enable change in others.\textsuperscript{127}

Ricoeur’s final message (for here) concerns the historical embeddedness of narrative (1991) which temporally contextualises, but does not restrict, the lived experience, so that lives and their interpretations are always in progress. A story told today assists the construction of the identity of tomorrow, rooted as it is in yesterday. This may help deflect the demands for fixed, never-changing and demonstrable identities.

**Performative Knowing**

An extension to narration and adaptation of experiential knowledges finds expression in works which use the theatre as metaphor, as compared to social action as text. Here, performativity seeks to de-centre representation and privilege the audience construction of meaning.\textsuperscript{128} Turner (1982) applied understandings drawn from the performing arts to enable students of ethnography to “know” through experience, a form which has since been adapted by Conquergood (1991; 1992) and more latterly Denzin (1997). Such performances:

> [I]nterrogate the realities they represent, locate the teller’s story in the history that is presented, make the audience responsible for their own interpretations, foreground difference and not conflict, oppose dichotomies, and use multiple voices in their tellings. (Denzin 1997, p. 115).

While these forms of performances re-locate meaning-making from the performer to the audience through an embodied knowing, that is felt experience, and encourage an examination of comparative contexts, such performances still treat audience and performer as separate entities. I will revisit this matter in the final

\textsuperscript{127} Narrative therapy takes this view (Laird 1989; Wiersma 1992; Saleebey 1994; Sands 1996).

\textsuperscript{128} In contrast to Lyotard’s use of the term to describe the optimum relationship between input and output which operates as a self-regulating system (Lyotard 1984, p.11).
LEARNING IN POSTMODERNITY

Adult learning in a postmodern world refers to a fluid and partial process in which knowledge and how it is known will always be contested, contrasting with the project of emancipation, progress and rationality. A centred self, the subject of humanist approaches, no longer provides a sufficient locus for learning. Adult learning here means an interrogation of language, discourse and text as a means of self and context analysis (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997). As a socially, historically and linguistically produced construction the self is to be mediated through language.\textsuperscript{129} This completely overturns all concepts of an objectively oriented self, one who can "know" him/herself outside of the linguistic characters which provide the significations of a life. There is no certainty, no fixed beginning or end, independence or progress, as the notion of development has been psychologically or humanistically understood. In particular, experience as unproblematically transparent, authentic and incontrovertible becomes its own site of dispute. A postmodern being (comprising several and changing selves) who is the adult learner can no longer expect a learning experience with a predicted and predictable outcome, achieve a progressive growth, "know" with certainty a truth or an endpoint, or engage a monological strategy towards any or all of these (previously situated) ends. All is change, fluid and uncertain. The representations available for the telling of selves are through narrative, which are always already changing and changed.

\textsuperscript{129} Although, again, as I previously footnoted, see Foucault, for whom self was largely constituted through regimes of domination.
All this, of course, has profound implications for adult learning, and especially for adult learning in a cross cultural setting.

In contrast to the previous models for adult learning (psychological and critical, both humanist) drawing on postmodern understandings would encourage the telling of the self narrative in which experience is still a part of the process of learning, but it is neither truthful nor false, it is locally and temporally situated, and, as such, constantly subject to many interpretations. Usher et al suggest a framework suitable (with postmodern cautions) for use by adult educators in which the discursive/material practices of adult learning permit the exploration of contexts and meanings of experience (Usher, Bryant et al. 1997, p. 106). They reframe adult education through understandings of contemporary life in which the intersections between consumption and knowledge (major components of Western society) provide lifestyle, confessional, critical and vocational discourses of adult education practices. The representation of which discourse influences which adult education practices (the intersection of an expressive and adaptive practice leading to a confessional practice, for example) permits critical questioning of experience, and no longer accepts an unquestioning representation. The twin purposes of adult education (socialisation and individuation (Aungles and Parker 1992)) are therefore only two of the many stories told by self through experience, providing the possibility of individuals interpreting and re-interpreting their own stories accordingly. As a tool for analysis and planning adult education activities, such a framework has its value. Its major drawbacks are its focus on the self, representing, for a postmodern description, somewhat of a return to a humanist project, as is the use of a quadrant framework, inviting a dichotomisation and ‘boxing’ of experience. One of the aims is to enable different discourses to engage in dialogue, and the more likely result is the identification and defence of position. Certainly, the narratives of self(ves) are able to be described so, and allow for the de-centring of experience (considered as text), and remove the potential for its reification. A problem with this refers, again, to the decisions as to the validity of experience taken from the person whose experience it is. This is a problem which
besets any relative positioning of experience, and applies similarly to the Ricoeurian position.

Accepting as educators, perhaps, that certainty is now uncertain, and truth is now relative, does not necessarily mean that this is so for the learners, who want a measure of certainty (or what is the point of learning anything), and in the case of the teachers (especially those who are transmitting cultural knowledge), their beliefs have already been subject to dispute. To have them relegated to the variable and relative is again imposing standards and positions on them. Problematising experience in ways which enhances understanding of difference is one thing, to deny another’s “truth” because of an epistemological position is quite another.

It is here I want to explore the possibility of weaving Bhabha’s concept of the Third Space with Gadamer’s concept of the fusion of horizons. It will be remembered that the Third Space is the ‘split-space of enunciation’ (Bhabha 1994, p. 38) in which culture (in particular) may be examined and re-articulated as hybridity rather than as diversity, meaning that culture and cultural beings are always already in the process of negotiation and re-formulation. Gadamer’s fusion of horizons (as used by Ricoeur) assumes the interaction between two (or more) people in which the world of the speaker (author) and the world of the listener (reader) are transfigured in that moment of understanding. For the moment of interaction, the world of each is present to the other, extending, perhaps, Bhabha’s idea that ‘by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves.’ (1994, p. 39). The representation, then, in adult education terms, may be to see the spaces enunciated (perhaps as Usher and colleagues have suggested, others, such as Werner and Weill, whom they quote) as dialogical spaces between selves and others, or in other words, those spaces which Giroux calls democratic public spheres. Drawing on Spivak’s concept of ‘moments of bafflement’, Giroux suggests that a pedagogy of bafflement may engage a dialogue of Whiteness, and explore the ‘silences and refusals’ (1997, p. 312) which are present in the White public space. Narrative is a precursor to this dialogue which may then take the
form of performative practices as described by Denzin. Adding possibilities for new meaning through relational and dialogical acts, instead of a narrative performance privileging the analysts, as has been the empiricist practice, a performative narration which engages teller and listener can conceptualise the site of the telling as one in which ‘history, theory, method and topic meet’ (Denzin 1997, p. 249). This might produce new knowledge that engages a radical democratic social practice (1997, p. 287). In short, the aim of these practices, of Gadamer, Ricoeur, Giroux, Denzin and Bhabha, is towards a new ethics of dialogical practice, one which may be approached through the provision of a site in which self and Other meet.

It is to this I shall turn for the final chapter, which follows the last of my reflections on Whiteness.
CONTINUING WHITENESS: THE POLITICS AND PRACTICES

I have grappled with this notion of Whiteness for a year now – having started naming it so for such a short time. It has always been with me. An example of my childhood comes to mind. My description of one of my aunts as Black Aunt Marian, to distinguish her from her fairer namesake, provoked horrified reactions from my family which I little understood, but knew then that to call someone “black” was somewhat to denigrate them. How systemically is our society infused with the intricacies of subordination, through to the very language we use unguardedly.

Only two years ago, a momentary oversight led me to give a project to social work students which effectively repeated past impositions on Aboriginal people. This salutary reminder was timely. My work with Aboriginal people over a number of years, and participation in helping non-Aboriginal people learn more appropriate work behaviours with their Aboriginal clients, was no protection. How quickly and easily do we forget. I was potently reminded of this, my lack, and how unthinkingly people repeat the practices of the past, when told of a colleague at the University where I now teach. This lecturer (unidentified in the telling) had set a project for students the activity of which was to interview an Aboriginal person to find out about the problems Aboriginal people face. A worthy topic. Non-Aboriginal people often don’t know what it’s like for Aboriginal people in this society. We do know that the statistics say they have the highest infant mortality, the lowest life expectancy, the highest incidence of so-called “Third World” and very preventable diseases, the highest representation in prisons, the list goes on. Many people do not know any Aboriginal people. A student project to start to engage non-Aboriginal people with issues for Aboriginal people is important. To interview an Aboriginal person to find out what their problems are of being Aboriginal ...

A student objected, citing the Whiteness theory, stating that there might be other ways to engage with this topic that don’t problematise the individual Aboriginal person, or only see Aboriginal people collectively as “a problem”, or subject an individual again to the White gaze, and so forth. The lecturer’s retort? ‘I don’t believe in Whiteness’, with the instruction for the student to continue the project.
There are a number of ways (Smith 1999) this could be addressed, open dialogue perhaps a useful start. The complexities of power relationships here are so intricately placed that someone is going to lose out – I suspect it might be the student. It may also be the other Aboriginal people who are interviewed by the other students, for whom Whiteness is not part of their lexicon, or belief system.

But I am left with the enveloping miasma of Whiteness. I cannot not believe in Whiteness.
SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS

The final section of this thesis concludes my writing of the story of the Working With Aboriginal project. It is now ten years since my first involvement with the project, and development of the training programme, and this thesis signals, for me, a shift in focus, even though the programme itself continues, in differing and evolving forms. Fittingly, this section looks back over the descriptions and interpretations of what happened, for these study participants as their part in the project, and offers a summary of what might be learned from these experiences. I also look forward to the possibilities which emerge from my understandings for training and future research.

Section Four contains one chapter, Chapter Seven, in which I provide my interpretation of what I have learned through the recounting of the events contained here, and offer some thoughts as to how non-Aboriginal educators and trainers might work with these processes in the future.

An Epilogue closes this thesis, in which I return to my biography and reflect on my personal learnings over these ten years.
My choice of methodology with which to examine the WWAP project meant that I sought to hear the voices of the study participants. It is fitting that I conclude by highlighting what I heard and understood from these voices. This chapter will first reiterate the learnings I have made. I will next re-locate the training programme in the cross cultural training context. And finally I will reflect on the processes we, as White educators and trainers might engage in order to further a project of working with Aboriginal people.

Unlike many training programmes which seek to assist in the learning of knowledge and skills, the WWAP programme was deeply embedded in people’s lived experiences. It was not a technical or instrumental programme, attended and experienced dispassionately. Instead, what this study has shown is that people’s sense of belonging and who they are was intricately connected with the subject matter and the processes used to assist in learning. The Aboriginal voices I heard during this study were clearly (and diversely) claiming their right as Aboriginal people to speak, to be heard, and to take control of their own knowledges and processes. During the project, some trainers took the opportunities to develop further skills and became confident in claiming ownership. For some of them, who they are is intricately implicated in what they do and how they do it, and it became a very political task of reclaiming stolen ground. In the telling of the narratives, power was re-summoned; gentle and firm, fiery and loud, all these voices demanded and warranted attention.

These clamorous activities disrupted the everyday expectations of people who had (perhaps) previously paid scant attention to the Aboriginal people in their midst as
people with aspirations past policies and practices had sought to deflect and
smother. Some of the non-Aboriginal people within this study were surprised, and
humbled, at the unsuspected wealth of talent, creativity and determination they saw
so generously gifted to them. Others took refuge behind the lumbering weight of
what was known and expected, refusing to venture into the unsettled but potentially
rich border lands where productive negotiations could and did take place. These
resistances wore down some of the Aboriginal trainers, but only served to make
others more resolute in their testing of the bounds of the organisation.

Non-Aboriginal people, White people, found they were no longer so firmly in
charge, and the challenges to their everyday assumptions tried the foundations of
their expectations. Preconceptions about the “right” ways to work, and the
“correct” organisational systems were centre-stage, and the struggles over territory
and position became fierce. For some people it was an opportunity to learn, but
others found it too disruptive of their own view of the world, and retreated, or
attacked with the strength of a dominant world view behind them.

Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people confronted each other in this arena
called the WWAP. While there were inflicted wounds on both sides, there were
also the opportunities (which were taken) for negotiations, leading, for some
people, lasting and improved work practices and a future where new ways are
possible.

The practical possibilities may be shown through an examination of the programme
itself in light of the cross cultural training literature, for the potential this type of
process, under Aboriginal control, can bring to cross cultural training.

A simplified diagram might illustrate how the WWAP training model was designed
and later operated. I comment firstly on the design and subsequent operations. I
then turn to an analysis as to what could be.
The WWAP training had a purpose of reconciliation, that is, it was attempting to bring people together in genuine relational ways on the premise that if the "unknown" becomes "known" then there is a greater likelihood of understanding and seeking a way forward together. It focuses specifically (but not solely) on the provision of information by Aboriginal people. This signifies the ownership of the information, as well as "personalising", or making the information a lived experience. This contrasts with the anti-racist training in which there is attention to the structural inequalities (sometimes) and individual acts of discrimination, and which can leave the trainees and trainers in opposition and feelings of guilt, blame and hostility in the trainees as a result. This is not always so, but is made more likely if the trainers are of the group which suffers the discrimination on which the training focuses. Reconciliation, here, may be seen as providing information in the hope of increased knowledge in the trainees so that they understand the background and the need for changed behaviour. This is indeed the mechanism used by the
Reconciliation Council\textsuperscript{131} which engages mainly in the provision of myth-breaking information and knowledge based kits. This is not all it does, and it does encourage the use of Reconciliation Circles (which do not necessarily include Aboriginal people as participants but certainly do as guests) in which information is discussed and action proposed.

The provision of information was located within the life experiences of the people whose information it was. That is, it was contextualised and made manifest in the sense that it had a vitality and immediacy not necessarily present in written material. The WWAP process very quickly engaged a narrative method, largely on the choice of the Aboriginal trainers and guest speakers, who decided early in the implementation of the project that they had a story to tell, they wanted to tell it, it had healing qualities, and for some of them political purposes. The design of the training had included people coming to tell the trainees about customs, communication styles and family life, for example. It had not relied so centrally on the telling of life narratives to the extent that is so currently. These telling of life stories are important now, and they may well be so for some time, according to the wishes of the Aboriginal people, whose use of them is as much political as it is therapeutic. These stories engage the emotions in the listeners, and often an empathy is created, which can lead to trainees wanting to extend their involvement with Aboriginal people in some way. It is often the doorway to action.

The third aspect of the training was its product, its intended aim. This was an action plan, drawn up by the trainees with the assistance of the trainers and guest speakers on the basis of the new knowledge the trainees now had as a result of the in-depth training. They identified a problem or issue they could address (not a utopian aim of changing the world, but one that was within their capacity to effect),

\textsuperscript{131} A statutory body established federally in 1990 to determine a way forward between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations of Australia. It is due to report, at the end of its life, in 2001.
and applied their new learning to problem solving, having also accepted that the problem was theirs (and not the Aboriginal people’s) to solve.

These three features characterised the design. I can now stand back and consider some of what happened in this project, by examining the intersections here. When the reconciliatory purpose was connected to the narrative process (only), the hearing of the stories produced an emotional response such that people empathetically understood. The absence of developing some action (or behaviour) from the empathetic connections made, left the training as sensitivity or awareness training. This is the predominant form of the WWAP now, and can be very successful in making people aware of what they did not previously know and instil a “feeling together”. There remains the problem of how people can use this knowledge and feeling to productively move forward. The length of time available (usually one day or perhaps two) mitigates against an exploration of what might be done, and in some cases only reaches as far as instilling sympathy (or guilt and subsequent hostility and resentment) in the trainees. This is one of the drawbacks, that trainees neither know how to progress their empathetic understanding, which may leave them feeling impotent, or that any of their actions may serve to exacerbate the problems. Trainees may feel that they have no place in action, as now Aboriginal people must take control, and that to participate, they may run the risk of the persistency of patronising behaviour, or again “taking over”, and thus continuing the disempowering process for Aboriginal people. It may also be a disempowering process for trainees, who leave with guilt feelings, which is not a productive emotion. They may alternatively believe their new knowledge is all that is to be done, or worse, that they now know all there is to be known, and leave self-congratulatingly. There is a very fine line here, which serves to potentially disempower both groups, through inaction, over-reaction, or inappropriate action. And, lastly, pitching training at the level of raising awareness does not engage an active analytical and practical involvement with the structural inequalities, and the dominant societal systems which keep people from fully participating or gaining access to societal benefits remain in place.
Some trainees in this study have noted how their hearing of narratives so affected them that they directly relate their changed perspectives to those experiences, in other words, connecting an affective process with a behavioural outcome. Desmond called this choice of process ‘powerful learning’ and Hannah recalled hearing Ingrid’s story having a profound effect on her. Both of these people were transformed at the moment of hearing the narratives, and went on to transfigure their work activities (even if they were unable to sustain the changes for long). The training model usually described by the intersection of affect and behaviour (or in the diagram, narrative purpose with action planning product) is that which I understand as the interpersonal communication model of training (Hoopes 1979; Brislin and Yoshida 1994; Mullavey-O’Byrne 1994; Ptak, Cooper et al. 1995; Milhouse 1996). This relies heavily on the interpersonal connections people are able to make with each other, and tends towards a therapeutic effect, although I have found nowhere in the literature which discusses the healing processes experienced by the trainers (which occurred here). There are two associated matters of interest here. One concerns the narrative as the core of the experience. If sole attention is focused on the narrative as a way of fostering understanding between the trainers, trainees and any guests, then the narrative can become reified and detached from the narrator. It is often the component of the training most sought after. Trainees attend in order to hear the story, rather in the manner of the heroic narrative, or as a vicarious emotion-inducing stimulus to provoke reactions of, perhaps, horror, or shame, sorrow, or blame. Without an avenue down which to progress an active project, the hearing of the story is not necessarily transformative, merely entertainment.

An associated problem becomes the protection of selves (both the trainer or guest who is the author and, in this construction, the subject of the story, and the listener who must not be allowed to become immobilised by the emotions felt) within the training. Risk behaviour in disclosure and consequent therapeutic enactments are seen largely as a private matter between the people present. Understanding at the
interpersonal level, and empathetic responses seek not to transform unjust or inequitable structural arrangements which serve to maintain injustices, but to “unblock” potential barriers to the easy flow of communication between people. This is a valuable process, and can contribute to overcoming personal difficulties between people from different cultural backgrounds, as well as encouraging a more open demeanour in the work setting between individuals. But these behaviours are not monitored as to how they move out of the private realm into a more public arena, such as organisational practices. They have the additional potential for perpetuating stereotypes. Differentiating and accepting those differences between “known” individuals is not necessarily extended to other individuals and particularly groups of people who are not “known”. This is the problem Penny faced with the bus drivers. Accepting that she’s different was quickly picked up by Penny who retorted that they had no right to separate her from her roots, her cultural ties and sustaining systems of her life. It is likely that the bus drivers would regard Penny as a person and henceforth treat her differently when next they saw her, but that changed behaviour would not necessarily be extended to unknown Aboriginal people, and the discriminatory practices for which they were undergoing the training may (most likely in the face of problematic situations) continue. Desmond’s relapse into standard bureaucratic practices illustrates how easily the slippage occurs. Again, as is so for the “sensitivity” training noted above, for neither the bus drivers nor Desmond, does any realisation of a structural or systemic experience of inequality extend to sustained behaviour change.

The third intersection between reconciliatory purposes and action planning was not in evidence in this study. That is, there was no example of a WWAP programme being run only with the aim and outcome of developing action plans using standard information processes from a reconciliatory perspective. I can imagine a training activity in which this could occur, for instance the provision of information concerning the legal requirements of Equal Opportunity legislation with an action plan determining how to put anti-discriminatory policies into the policy framework of an organisation. This would fulfil what has been described in
Chapter Two as Equity or Diversity training. As Cope et al have remarked, managers and other policy makers do not have to agree with or like the requirements of the legislation, they just have to obey the law (1994). And that is what some people may well think is sufficient. The law is by its very nature conservative, requiring only basic compliance, that is to avoid discriminatory behaviour. It does not progress this project further to engage with actively working to make society a fairer and more just place, it just makes society a less discriminatory place. Social work literature which encompasses a radical perspective suggests there are further steps to be taken (Hudson, Ayensu et al. 1994; Dominelli 1997; Ife 1997; Payne 1997; Fook 1999), and certainly the literature of critical pedagogy would concur that good people doing nothing (or little) only serves to perpetuate the injustices (Giroux 1993; hooks 1994; McLaren 1995). This type of training and work activity addresses the call for accountability in organisations (in particular) and invokes the notion of justice and ethics (as Ingamells notes Gilligan critiques (1996)). But as the Critical Race Theorists have suggested, underlying issues of power are side-lined, as measures to provide equity reassure society that anti-discriminatory steps are being taken (Delgado 1995).

I would like to posit that while these training activities discussed above do have merit on their own, that is they should not be discarded as having no value, they can be enhanced by the addition of the third factor present here. That is, engagement with the purpose of reconciliation (to foster understanding), using a narrative process (as part) in which the stories are told and heard (of which more later) and the development of actions to address identified ills fulfils more closely the training goal of engaging the tripartite concepts of knowledge skills and values, or the conative, affective and cognitive.

The original purpose of the WWAP training was to engage non-Aboriginal human services staff in a process whereby they used information provided by Aboriginal people to construct different practices in the workplace so that their interactions with Aboriginal clients would be less discriminatory and more culturally respectful.
As we have seen, that action component of the training was to be quickly omitted from the training activity and henceforth (and continuing to now) when most of the Aboriginal training carried out under either the WWAP or the WOW banner is of this form. We have also seen that amongst the successes of the training, in which change in work practice has taken place, the opportunities to conduct work differently were tried and reviewed, even if they were small acts of seemingly little significance. Examples include the man of whom Julia spoke, and the ‘little win’ she named as having eventuated from working closely and at some length to encourage this man to undertake an activity back in his workplace with the family of young people attending court. By her report, he returned later ‘mind-boggled’ at the effect that change in his behaviour had. Of course this might be an isolated act, he may never have entered into a similar situation in the same way again, he may be now retired, any number of things may have happened. But for that one moment, change occurred. He had heard the stories of the people with whom he was going to be working, he joined with them and a transformation (of admittedly small proportions) occurred. This can happen, in different ways, in different places, with different people, over and over again. The sites of change can be many and they can be accumulatively powerful. Hannah “lived” difference by participating in a programme for trainers where she experienced discrimination, and she subsequently re-arranged the ways of working in her own unit to put into practice some of the ways of working she had learned from working with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal colleagues responded positively to her and productive collegial relationships were born. Hannah worked at a different positional level from the man in Julia’s story. As a result there existed possibilities for extending change processes at different influential levels in the hierarchy. These possibilities, however, were not uniform or sustained.

The way the WWAP training has continued over the past few years has been largely according to organisational dictates, in part as a result of the refusal of non-Aboriginal people to engage with a process which requires them to commit time and action in sometimes difficult and contested circumstances. The Aboriginal
trainers have been inadequately provisioned with the necessary practical support and administrative procedures. Neither have they been awarded due recognition of the work they are doing. Realising this, some of them engaged in what can be understood as resistance practices. Ian, in particular, overtly took the fight to the ‘table’ of the people in power and demanded that he sit across that table to negotiate on the distribution of resources and other societal goods. That he succeeded to some degree is made manifest in the establishment of the Aboriginal Unit of which he is now a part. This activity took place outside the training room with people who were not trainees at the time of the negotiation but both he and they had participated in that process of learning and change. Training is contextual, it has immediate and direct links into and form the auspice, which can hinder or help. Ian’s experience of discrimination existed outside the training room, and that is where he took the fight.

Too often Aboriginal people are given ground and then bounded within those borders prescribed by others, given tasks to perform which they do not design and are judged for success according to some imposed standards. In the visioning of a training practice such as was the WWAP and I reiterate here, the central space for action must be one which is designed, chosen and performed by Aboriginal people. There was never any question but that was necessary. What happened was that that space, act and design was taken from Aboriginal people’s grasp and what they have remaining is not necessarily something that they would want to have for themselves. Some of the trainers make the best of it, others take what they want from the training process as their own acts of subversion. At present many of the trainers are pleased to be able to tell the stories. This may change in one year, two years, ten years. That is a choice they may and should make.

132 I remind here of the lengthy discussion earlier concerning diversity in cultural background, aspirations and allegiances that are present within what is often termed the “Aboriginal” setting. This is not to conflate all those wishes.
What has just been described is a very "modernist" presentation. It is one of the conclusions expected at the end of a thesis, which reflects on what has been and offers suggestions for the future. It captures what has been learned. It is at this point that I want to un-settle the fixed notions of what may be learned and progressed, although (contradictorily) I accept that it is useful and of value to name what has been learned.

It is within the tensions produced by contradictions and how we might work with them that I now want to end this thesis. Contradictions have accompanied me on this journey, the intertwining of people’s experiences and my own providing the always shifting un-settlement and impossibility of re-solution. There are no clear progressive politics, or ethical responsibilities which do not instantly re-centre the unmarked presences, one of the most significant (for me) being Whiteness.\footnote{Although I can accept there are others for others. The gender battles continue, and class struggles are the forgotten sites of pain, to name just two.} The most obvious contradiction I have faced throughout this process of earning a PhD (apart from that very notion of whose cost and whose ownership) has been being White, talking about Black as Other, struggling to find my centre in that, and re-learning that White is the necessary displacement to be undertaken. I have framed the explication of the WWAP training project as a problem created by White, but even this is from the White centre. The circle keeps re-turning. Contradictions are, by their very formation, also part of the modernist project, invoking the hierarchical and normative (White/Black is better than ...; we should be able to ...). This project, albeit attempted from an interpretive position and using an emergent process, commenced as unashamedly political, (re-inspiring the call to arms of “we should”). I take heart from the words of Derrida who (returning to his political project) announces his own “call to arms” by embracing an ‘emancipatory desire’ insisting that, despite the contradictions present in both the modern and postmodern projects, ‘it is necessary ... as the condition of re-politicisation’ (Derrida 1994, p.75). I was also to find the politicisation of the Other, offering further contradictions in asking what part White has in the political activity of Black, for it
is *against* White that Black resists and seeks to subvert. The acts of subversion and resistance present through the unfolding of the WWAP project signalled quite overtly the claiming of the places ‘across the table’, in our ‘back yards’, and the demands for negotiated points of rights and redress.

The flimsy ga(u)ze\textsuperscript{134} of Whiteness which hangs curtain-like between the acts, actors and audience as the troubling unmarked presence, intersects the (dis)engagements of the components of learning, feeling, seeing/thinking and acting with which the architects of the WWAP project tried to re-position the unequal and unjust practices of domination. The project and my study were unashamedly emancipatory. But emancipation comes at a cost, and for White the cost will be de-centring. The site I have named dialogical performativity\textsuperscript{135} (on the diagram above) is one of the places I imagine as one of the sites where Black resists White, but, contradictorily, is the most pertinent site for White to be (and not be).

“Dialogical” and “performativity” appear (as separate terms) with regularity in contemporary texts (Turner and Turner 1982; Fraser and Nicholson 1988; Conquergood 1992; Derrida 1994; Denzin 1997; Giroux and Shannon 1997, to mention a few). My merging them here to indicate the intersections between reconciliatory purpose, narrative process and action as product seeks to articulate something more than a speech act between people which results in new meaning (dialogic), and an action performed by people, producing in the witnessing change for the audience (performativity), or their union. I’ll explain.

A narrative process has been shown through the accounts, and by a Ricoeurian reading, to have contained within it the potential for transformation of the ‘world of

\textsuperscript{134} Such as is used in theatre performances. Placed strategically between actors on stage, the movements of this curtain can illustrate events as happening simultaneously, or unknown to some characters, but which illuminate meaning.

\textsuperscript{135} These concepts have been defined elsewhere (see the text). My purpose here is to describe how I think about the space I have labelled dialogical performativity and what I think may happen there.
the reader/actor,\textsuperscript{136} which, in concert with Ricoeur's own acceptance of Gadamer's fusion of horizons, extends to a communicative process between people, essentially a dialogue. Narrative, then, in this vein, becomes a dialogic process in which the making present one to the other who responds to the presence (Buber 1996) new understanding of the other is possible. The common sayings (variously situated) "walk a mile in my shoes" or "to see the world through the other's eyes", capture the expression manifest here. Learning from this interaction can lead to individual or joint acts of change. It is possible that these acts remain within the confines of this particular relationship, or, one of the individuals chooses to act independently. Either way, the change process remains a private event, albeit possibly very important.

A performative process has its roots in the critical perspective of Marxism or Critical Theory, a central tenet of which is to change the world, not merely to understand it. Performativity, here then, suggests either the act of watching, or observing, during which change takes place, is a received act, a one-way process of learning, or the determination of action is that done on receipt of new information or understanding. In either event, the recipient of the understanding undertakes new action apart from the author of the information, even though an essential element of a performative practice is its public ethic of action (Denzin 1997).

Bringing the understanding between individuals (which creates new meaning) together with the imperative to act (which has an element of transformation) publicly with an ethical purpose envelopes the term dialogical performativity, so that the action is the outcome of the understanding. It is the combination of a public ethics of action with an interpersonal ethics of relationship. It is clear that in one or two instances during the enactment of the WWAP project, (and not just the training activity in the training room - this has implications for the spaces outside the training room, its contextuality) the ethics of a relational interaction between individuals enabled a public ethics of action, separately (William, Hannah and

\textsuperscript{136} Recall Ricoeur's notion of meaningful social action as text.
Desmond) and together (Leslie, Vernon and Tanya). That is, learning through knowledge and feeling developed their ability to act, to act in a public way and to act for ethical purposes. This happened between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people and other Aboriginal people.

The unmarked presence which overlays this seemingly simple series of interactions, here, for this study, has been that of Whiteness. I have argued previously that Whiteness is inextricably interwoven with identity and belonging, enclosing the same and repelling but controlling the different (albeit Whiteness itself wears many faces and contains many experiences). The space in which sits a dialogical performative process as one of learning and change (for the purposes under discussion here) has also to engage with the displacement of a White presence, for, as we have seen, an (often) un-noted belief in the rightness of one’s own ways of being and doing are impositions of domination on people whose ways of being and doing are different.

There is a temptation to try and define the specific behaviours which might occur in a dialogical performative process to enable learning and action at the same time as it is constantly displacing Whiteness. And surely this is what is expected in the training manuals, and other “guides to practice”. Not only is this an impossibility, for the terrain is constantly changing shape in an effort to contain the threat, but it is also a contradiction. For if those of us who are White seek to prescribe the form and substance non-White acts should take, not only are we re-claiming the centre ground (albeit surreptitiously, perhaps, or un-wittingly falling into the same central position) we are again presuming we know what should be done for or to our Other. To those readers who might first turn to the back of this work hoping for a check-list of do’s and don’ts, such as those non-Aboriginal staff of DCS wanted those many years ago, I regret your disappointment and suggest you start, instead, at the beginning.
The associated privilege of choice to act (of many) that accrues to White can only be in this instance the privilege to choose voluntary obligation and sacrifice as Nealon finds in Levinas (Nealon 1998, p. 166), or as he quotes Bauman who has proclaimed the right ‘to make me responsible’. A responsible civics, citizenry, or individual, as suggested here, is again unmarked by but centrally implicated with a framing of discourse of responsibility, civics or citizenship from the White centre. The immobility produced by this realisation (for me, and possibly for others) needs re-activating. Responsibility, ethical politics of emancipation, or the discourse of inclusion are as empty promises without the project of action.

Eschewing, therefore, the reciprocity of expectations, a dialogical process is one in which White (in this case) chooses responsibility toward the Other, revealing another contradictory experience of uncertainty. This necessitates giving up control and instead accept the necessity of living with the Other. This Other, as we know, is constantly and forever changing and different, and so any recommended response can only be as Nealon concludes ‘Perhaps, in the end, the ethics of performativity is nothing other - but nothing less - than such a specific material affirmation of difference.’ (Nealon 1998, p. 177). The ‘specifics’ must be always decided contextually and relationally.

A performative ethics, or a dialogical performativity, is one which is not restricted to a training activity, although that is the focus for this thesis. The nature of a public ethics of performativity can and should extend across the spectrum of human activity. That is a matter for another thesis, as are the many issues to have been raised as a consequence of naming a space in the intersections of a training practice for an emancipatory transformation. Studying its practice, and exploring its possibilities might be one such task. Another might be to engage in a more thorough investigation of the impact and pervasiveness of a Whiteness project in
organisations such as described here. To further the project of de-centring White through a training project, I would like to see an Indigenous and White collaboration to such end - one which has a much more explicitly political texture than had the WWAP, and which could enter the wider realm of education, especially that of social workers and other welfare practitioners. The possibilities are numerous.

At this point in the writing, I am recalling some of the voices which have been present throughout and have taught me so much. Ian’s words, of ‘it’s not a bloody Black issue’, have resounded throughout this thesis, clarion-like, reminding me of the fact of Whiteness, and the imperative to act. Penny’s voice is vivid, reminding of the gifts she brings; herself, her caring and ‘the laugh and the joke’ – in the face of such threats in her past, to emerge with compassion. Voices too, of Leslie, whose ‘unarmed truth’ always humbles, and Keith, who continually encourages. Marian’s teachings are a testament to learning by doing, by obeying the invitation to engage in the crusade. These, among all the study participants have particular messages I have heard, without which I would be the poorer.

I am convinced that these are not isolated instances of learning for me, which I hope can be shared by others (although they may seem few and subject to temporary inattention). I am also certain that there are many people of good will trying as best they can in the face of difficult and entrenched systemic barriers to treat fairly people of different cultural backgrounds from themselves, who will find their own and different messages here and in their own interactions with Aboriginal people. However, I am equally convinced that this is not, on its own, sufficient. It is not enough that good people do something; it is vital that we insist that we all cease doing nothing.

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136 As well as the still necessary evaluation of the WWAP in the department, and what might be learned further from that.
137 An appropriate counterpoint to Fanon (Hall 1996a).
My final statement is what I might use to commence an Executive Summary (should I ever be so foolhardy as to write one) to a piece of work such as this. The matter of learning to work more appropriately with Aboriginal people in more culturally appropriate and respectful ways is not a problem for Aboriginal people to teach us Whites - it is a White issue.
EPILOGUE

If I revisit just one of the many puzzling encounters which led, so many years ago, to this place I am now, and ask the questions of it and myself regarding my better understanding of what that encounter, and my learning means I must own to myself that my learning is incomplete, and I could hope, but not guarantee that I would behave differently now given the same circumstances. Indeed, some events seem often to repeat themselves, and we, I, seem destined to occupy the same position on the wheel as it turns. My response to Stan as a worker in a remote and isolated welfare position might now be framed by understandings of his place in society, and more particularly his place in Aboriginal society where he could be revered, respected and trusted as one who had certain knowledges and understandings which he would have the responsibility to ensure were passed on to the next generations; as one who had the duty for guarding and propagating practices which were important; and as one whose quiet connection with a side of life of which I had no understanding could teach me different ways of viewing a world. He could provide some introductions to people and places which could serve to explain some problems, and provide some suggestions for how they might be solved. He could gently remind me that my pace could be tempered, and that the speed I set was not useful or necessary. Daily he could portray an adaptation to loss which could fuel my determination to get it right, just once, and then again, and again, showing him and his family that someone was listening, and would try to make a difference.

I could consider better the part the department and its history had played in what was going on now for Stan and other Aboriginal people, and, with this understanding, open a space for dialogue and representation as supporter rather than director, ever mindful of the difficult imperative of Freire that to say nothing is to side with the oppressor, but, after the multitudes of the oppressed, that to try to speak for another is potentially to become the oppressor.
I could listen to Stan and his hopes and wishes for himself and the other members of his family and with him design a working day that would help meet these wishes instead of becoming frustrated when his strategies were what he thought I wanted, and would then inevitably fail.

Instead, now he is gone, and in his place are the angry young men, who have given us the chance, but become impatient waiting. They would not be patient with me, teach me, allow me to make mistakes. I mourn his loss. I mourn the loss of the opportunities I squandered. I regret I learnt too late.

The work I do now with Aboriginal people is mainly assisting with organising cross-cultural training programmes, or, as they are most often called cultural awareness programmes. I have been with this process now for over ten years. I still find it problematic, troublesome and there are aspects of it which slip from my understanding and my awareness into tense and potentially damaging interactions. I often mentally kick myself for an unguarded word or impatient gesture, or for being too caught up in the moment to think through the consequences of an act. I have had to seriously question what I have learnt on occasion when setting students work to do which contravenes everything I know to be offensive to Aboriginal people. I have also found myself, like Harriet, in front of a group of people expectantly waiting for some performance or another only to have to tell them it's off, the worker with whom I was to present isn't here, and it's not appropriate that I talk for Aboriginal people.

What have I learnt from this process, which is indeed my story? For if I, who have been central to it, have not learnt anything, how could I expect any of the hundreds of other people who have come into contact with the learning opportunity, to have learned what is needed to be known? The identifying of the learning by intellect beckons. The temptation to hide behind the academic sometimes too strong, I retreat behind what so and so says, and quote the authorities on this or that.
But this has been a journey, through the swampy
dangerous territory occupied by emotion, by
knowledge, by identity, all of which are contested
entities. And being contested, they take on the
artefacts of war, fighting each other and trespassers.
The result is bloody, the survivors bloodied.

Bloodied but remaining, as a survivor I am left
predominantly with many extant emotions. I have
shared moments of euphoria, when it has all worked
and has left us breathless with success. I am grateful
that so many people have travelled this journey with
me, humble that they have done so forgivingly, and
satisfied that there are some rewards for them. I feel
proud of a job I value, relieved at its success, and
trustful that it has its own and separate future. I am
frustrated with my own impatience and intolerance,
resentful for perceived rejections, and shameful for
feeling so. I feel guilty for what feels like a
fraudulent occupying of space, anxious that I may be
found wanting, and tired that the same ground
seemingly requires revisiting over and over again.
There are many more, and there will be many more.
These are some of them, shared and identified by
others, some of them will surprise, some justify
oppositional feelings in others. This has been a
project overall infused with and embedded in
emotion. It is fitting that these final words are
presented as the project has been experienced,
personally and emotionally.
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Organisational Chart of the Department for Community Services
1989

Minister For Community Services

Director General

Assistant Director General

Policy Officer Aboriginal Services

Northern Metropolitan Directorate

Eastern Metropolitan Directorate

Southern Metropolitan Directorate

Northern Country Directorate

Eastern Country Directorate

Southern Country Directorate

All Regional Directorates contained: Field Officers, Clerical Workers, Managers, Training & Development Officers (TDOs) and Human Resources Officers (HROs).

Programmes & Research Directorate

Community Funding & Development Directorate

Management & Finance Directorate

Human Resources Directorate

Manager Training Services
Training and Development Officers
Human Resources Officers
Aboriginal Employment Officer

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APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY - A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

At this point I would like to examine more thoroughly, but briefly, the inquiry perspective. Having stated this is to be an interpretive ethnography, analysed through a critical hermeneutic application, I will expand these a little.

First the choice of interpretive ethnography as inquiry choice.

Ethnography sits somewhere between science and art (Geertz 1988; Gubrium and Holstein 1997). Contradictorily, though, it occupies what Clough terms a 'marginal' position in sociological methodology and at the same time is its 'productive icon', because of its role as storyteller (Clough 1992 p.2). Ethnography as a practice (Denzin 1997) and methodology (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) (these two describe ethnography quite differently) has undergone challenges in the recent decade (formally since 1986 (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986)) for its perceived location within the colonising project of anthropology. As such, it draws from and contributes to 'grand theory' (Rabinow 1986; Sangren 1988; Hammersley 1990; Rowse 1992). In particular critics cite the super-ordinancy of dominant discourses resulting in masking further the existing power relations; the erasure of difference; privileging the researcher; and their truth claims; all of which emerges from a lack of political grounding (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993, p. 237); reinforcing the academic authority (Sangren 1988) and reproducing a single dialogic. As the re-presentation of 'culture' through text the Western literary trope predominates, often in modes inaccessible to an increasingly forgotten audience (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993, p. 237); as the written product is controlled by the writer (Geertz 1988); usually operating from a Western anthropological disciplinary tradition (although see indigenous anthropology, and the recent work in research methodology by Smith (1999)). The practice of 'allowing the informants to speak' (Clifford 1988) has done little to disrupt a privilege accorded the writer. The formulation of different writing strategies as
response to these criticisms, has merely resulted in re-centring the writer (and thus author-ity) without necessarily posing the issues crucial to sociology. Challenging the ‘perceptions, representation, empiricism, and scientific authority’ does not necessarily lead to similar questioning of the process of gathering data, and the empirical endeavour (Clough 1992, p. 136). This is despite counter claims that the viewing of cultures as assemblages of texts (Clifford 1988, p. 41) has ‘contributed to the defamiliarisation of ethnographic authority’.

The controversy and angst created within anthropological circles by challenging the traditional ethnographic enterprise still provokes strong reaction. As chronicled in a reply to the ‘Writing Culture’ and ‘Anthropology as Cultural Critique’, volumes which gave a wider voice to the debate in the eighties, ‘After Writing Culture’ seeks to bring some constructive response to ethnography’s contemporary position. ‘A decade later’, James and colleagues say, ‘it is possible to see the ‘Writing Culture’ work as a crystallisation of uncertainties about anthropology’s subject matter (traditionally ‘the other’), its method (traditionally, participant observation), its medium (traditionally, the monograph) and its intention (traditionally that of informing rather than practice).’ (James, Hockey et al. 1997, p. 2). The particular difficulties which emerged from the ‘Writing Culture’ challenges relate epistemologically to the form, practice, politics and ethics, and underpinning humanism of the representational process, which now confront the writer of ethnography (James, Hockey et al. 1997, p. 3). Questions of a common humanity, but multiple voices, even from within the single person; the need for understanding through an evocative text, which must also have ‘authenticity’; and the use to which the representations may be made, quite out of the author’s intentions or control; or that of the ‘informant’; and for whose ends; are issues which in a social, political and moral sense are those requiring the author’s consideration. No longer can ethnography present a picture of ‘other’ without acknowledgement of the author-ity and interest that provides.
What is clear is that the days are now gone of ethnographies as “objective” windows onto an “other” world to fix and preserve traditions as exotic collections in the West’s museum. Even the dispassionate description of parts of our society which can, in the telling, reflect something of us to ourselves now command a more critical and reflexive treatment. ‘In this world, reflexive ethnography is no longer an option, and the right to study anyone can no longer be presumed. Anthropology’s foreign, strange lands have come home’ (Denzin 1997, p. 284).

Perhaps forgetting Willis’ seminal 1970’s work *Learning to Labour* (1977), Clough (1992) recommends a suitable project for ethnography as social critic. Less an introspective, apologetic position resulting in some self-indulgent critiques (Sangren 1988; Pool 1991), this project meets more the suggestion implicit in James and colleagues’ statements above.

An ethnographic project for the twenty-first century must address those previous taken for granted assumptions which are now coming back to confront ethnography’s positioning within a scientific world by acknowledging the gendered, postcolonial, self-reflexive and essential moral undertaking of writing for and with the ‘other’. Further, states Denzin, ‘ethnography is a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project’ (1997, p.xiv). This is a complete reversal of where ethnography has come from and how it has broached the world of scientific defensibility.

Imagining a new (Gubrium and Holstein 1997) or experimental (Clifford and Marcus 1986) ethnography, or ethnography in the postmodern world (Tyler 1986; Pool 1991; Johansen 1992; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993), writers and practitioners have formulated practices with the intention of overcoming those colonising, hegemonic and dominating effects (of anthropology as a Western artefact) mentioned above; acknowledging the constructed nature of cultural accounts; exploring new, more appropriate writing forms, such as acknowledging ethnography as allegorical, and evocative rather than representative (Tyler 1986); presenting the constructions; questioning the nature of author-ity; (re)presenting
multiple voices; recognising standpoint (see Smith 1992) and in particular the nature of Other as self; and moving from grand theory as synthesised allegory (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe et al. 1993).

These moves are not without their critics. Anthropology still wishes to maintain a scientific credence, with ethnography as its central method (Sangren 1988; Aunger 1995). I sought a methodology which would allow the possibility of partial and changing truths, incomplete understandings, negotiated representations and the changing nature of authority. A practice still wedded to an empirical objectivity, was not attractive or suitable, when my focus was on people's lived experiences.

No longer bound by anthropology, the ethnography of the late twentieth century embraces the interpretive turn (Rabinow 1986) a position locating it ontologically as accepting multiple socially constructed meanings, thus sharing, in varying degrees, foundations with such schools of thought as Critical Theory and Feminism; and epistemologically as believing that knowledge is derived from the everyday world (Blaikie 1993, p. 96).

The interpretive métier encompasses some quite different journeys using different signposts and landmarks. Even at the more expected viewing points or 'beauty spots' the gaze cast looks through different lenses and thus will represent differently what is seen there. The use of this as metaphor highlights one of the major features of the interpretive turn, especially as used by Gadamerian and Ricoeurian Hermeneutics, increasingly being adapted to ethnography, although largely within a named hermeneutic or phenomenological methodology (see later), with their main focus being the use of language (shared also with postmodernism).

In a warning note, Rabinow and Sullivan acknowledge that the interpretive 'turn' has been rather appropriated by the technical obsession of our society to organise knowledge in formalistic structures (1987, p. 2). Instead of enabling a challenge to ways of knowing, it has become another of the methodological tools to be chosen
seemingly at will, rather than the need for understanding to direct the choice of approach. Instead of allowing the subject matter of the inquiry to clear a path for understanding, we often choose the pathway and impose it on our questioning.

Selecting an ethnography suitable for the postmodern period now involves a dazzling array of possibilities, so effectively has the practice dispersed itself across disciplines other than anthropology. An ethnographic research inquiry barely rates a questioning as to the problems such a practice has had to overcome to reach what Denzin calls the sixth moment of 'historical moments' (1997, p. xi), in which what he terms interpretive ethnography may now lead to 'move people to action and works that promote[s] serious discussion about democratic and personal politics' (1997, p. 280).

While this call to a civic consciousness on the part of the ethnographer is perhaps an echoing of the strategic ethnography of Willis, whose project was decidedly political, some caution is warranted. Geertz (1988, p. 130) warns that the 'epistemological delica[cy]' of representation without acknowledging its political power is now even more visible. An awareness of the 'sources [anthropology, but ethnography as act would also do] of its power ... is no longer a side issue ... it ... is rather close to the heart of the matter.' (1988, p. 149). The recent project of ethnographers to present an examination of themselves, eschewing the representation of Other and thus possibly neglecting the concomitant issues of power (although see Clifford (1988)), is deftly dealt with by Geertz. It is clear there is a larger agenda for him, which is picked up by Conquergood (1991) who agrees with others (Johannsen 1992) that new ethnography is more rhetorical than scientific. I find the ethnographic journey moving inexorably towards the narrative turn of the performative or rhetorical manner so described by Conquergood, and used by Denzin to promote a critical performance of the telling of story. Such an ethnographic activity situates the ethnographer centrally in a temporal, spatial intersection of a political act (Nespor and Barber 1995; Villenas 1996) ((but also see Goodson 1995) for an opposing view). A political narrative as ethnography
moves towards the transformatory project of the grand narratives, an ironic twist in
a postmodern age, one no more ironic than to find one of postmodernism’s Grand
Masters – Derrida – standing alongside the barricades (1994).137

Having arrived at the political act of ethnography, with its moral imperative, albeit
with its difficulties (as mentioned above), I want to consider how this ethnography
might then be analysed. Again I depart somewhat from Crotty’s (1998) scaffold in
presenting this discussion here. A ‘paradigmatic fit’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985)
requires analytical tools to be consistent and emerge from the overall structure.
Hence this discussion here.

Trying to un-ravel the strands which inform the interpretive approach has been
lengthy, and necessitated a journeying through phenomenology and hermeneutics,
before arriving at a position I believe I can work with in ways that avoids meaning
collapsing into disorder (deconstruction) but keeping the ability to question what
exists in the spaces which gives body to the work; invoking essentialism and
foundationalism (transcendental phenomenology); reducing to objectivity (the
scientific method recommended by Husserl), or a psychologically centred subject

The interpretive ‘turn’ draws together, often in unspecified ways, disciplines which
construct portmanteau offerings, (see, for example, Rabinow and Sullivan 1987;
Blaikie 1993; Denzin 1997; Crotty 1998) with hermeneutic, phenomenology or
interpretive used as adjectives, or adjuncts to some ‘main’ discipline-based form of
inquiry such as is increasingly found in nursing (Leonard 1989; Benner 1990;
Thompson 1990; Smith 1992; Koch 1995; Annells 1996). All seem to be gathered
under the interpretive rubric, Giddens suggesting in ‘A Positive Critique of
Interpretative Sociologies’ (1993) that ‘I use the term [interpretative sociologies]
only because there is no other readily available one, to group together a series of

137 Although, some might say that Derrida has always been a political animal (Dews 1987; Boyne
1990).
writings that have certain shared concerns with 'meaningful action' (p.viii). Indeed, Giddens adds his own term to the list under the title 'double hermeneutic' (see Blaikie 1993, for a good overview). This adjectival approach to inquiry, especially in the matter of analysis, is of little assistance, especially as, on reading the more detailed accounts of studies which are conducted from a 'Heideggerian Hermeneutic' (Leonard 1989) a 'Husserlian Phenomenology' (Koch 1995) or a 'Schutzian Phenomenology' (see Hekman 1986) for example, demonstrate the dissimilar underpinnings. As mentioned above, some of the earlier forms of phenomenology, which charge a returning to the 'things themselves' have transcendentalism at their core, an Idea of essential Being that may be sought (but never found). For children of the postmodern age, the genie of a single foundation, much less the centrality of the knowing subject, has fractured into its many selves.

Herein lies a problematic, the very search for meaning that is knowable and not forever changing is disallowed by poststructural positions, which treat as acts of violence (Derrida 1976) the interpretive goal of reaching an understanding that might hold its shape for more than one reading. Allowing for this unstable and shifting ground, is one aim of an analytical project at this time. Another problematic is to be found in the dictum (from Heidegger, but from most philosophy) that phenomenology (in particular) doesn't act – it only affects the understanding of the interpreter (Burch 1989, p. 204). Phenomenology\textsuperscript{138}, although adopted by researchers (especially now in nursing) has still to find a 'method'; it remains more a philosophical undertaking on the route to understanding, but one which offers few inquiry signposts.

Hermeneutics suffers less from a generic application, being almost entirely (now) used in association with phenomenology (in which case it is affected by the same criticisms as above, or has moved into a poststructural mode, of which more later),

\textsuperscript{138} Literally, the study of 'appearances'. ‘Phenomena’, in other words, are both the objects of our consciousness and the way in which they 'appear' or are 'given' to consciousness (Mathews 1996, p. 60).
or applied in its most specific usage, that of the interpretation of texts (especially religious) (Spiegelberg 1960).

Of all the varied processes employed by the critical/hermeneutical/phenomenologists, in any combination of those terms, those which lend themselves most readily to an ethnographic project have been examined by Rabinow (1987), Clifford (1988), and Geertz (1988) (separately). Drawing mainly on Ricoeur's work, a conclusion they reach concerns the nature of the dialogic act.

Contemporary hermeneutics refocuses the project of understanding from Husserl's epistemological objective, with a trajectory through Heidegger's existential-ontological re-interpretation, arriving at a Gadamerian or Ricoeurian position. The extent to which either or both of these philosophers occupy a place within a modernist or poststructural framework is open for argument (Thompson 1990; Annells 1996). Nevertheless, their focus on language as a means of pursuing understanding is what engages attention by social scientists, who must extrapolate from the philosophy to arrive at a methodology.

Finding common threads which link positions together (especially hermeneutic-phenomenology and other interpretive processes, such as contemporary ethnography) is a task made slightly easier by a common focus on language as a means of investigation and, thereby, interpretation (or reading). Others include centring the subject in a historical context (for Gadamer), which serves as a point of interpretive departure, and confirms the role of dialogue (for both Gadamer and Ricoeur) as the interpretive act. Thus the poststructuralist 'turn' provides a site for a critical or contemporary hermeneutics (Bleicher 1980) or a hermeneutic phenomenology (Thompson 1990).

It might be expected, however, that this positioning would be vociferously rejected, and it is. Habermas and Derrida are just two of the dissidents, albeit from opposing
stances. Habermas criticises Gadamer’s fusion of horizons as not allowing the use of reason to provide critical analysis (Hekman 1986) and Derrida extends his dismissal of Husserl for his essentialism to Gadamer (Caputo 1989). On the one hand it seems, Gadamer, in particular, is not essential enough, and on the other too much so. Ricoeur has attracted less overt criticism, with some commentators considering his type of hermeneutics more able to entertain difference (although his is perhaps the position more steeped in tradition (than Gadamer) (Ihde 1995)). But the Derridean position still rejects the fundamental point of a central knowing subject from which Ricoeur does not depart.

These then are some of the tensions in a critical or contemporary hermeneutic position. Translating them into a coherent methodological practice for analysis is another matter altogether. Commonalties among the hermeneuticists (a label applied to Habermas with which he is not entirely comfortable - according to Hekman (1986)) include the interrogation of language, exploration of context, and identification and examination of dialogic acts, activities they share with the critical social theorists (Bleicher 1980; Thompson 1990). Working from within the humanist tradition, the subject is not abandoned, although in the poststructuralist Ricoeur (Moore 1990) the knowing subject as meaning maker is de-centred in favour of a linguistic mediation.

Methodologically Ricoeur possibly advances into the social sciences more than does Gadamer, for whom the entreaty for a methodology was missing the philosophical point (Hekman 1986) (although Gadamer has his following in nursing (Thompson 1990; Annells 1996)). Retaining his philosophical stance (publicly claiming a sociological ignorance –(see Moore 1990)), Ricoeur has provided some of the means for ethnographic (and other) interpretive endeavours. Possibly the first of these was made by Geertz whose adaptation of Ricoeur’s 1971 article ‘Model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text’ formed the basis of his interpretative venture (Geertz 1973). Using Ricoeur’s method of contextualising and re-contextualising meaningful action and discourse, Geertz
arrived at an interpretive process which permitted a textual approach to ethnography well in advance of it becoming an accepted genre (Silverman and Ihde 1985). Subsequently subject to critique (Silverman and Ihde 1985; Clifford 1988), Geertz’ articulating of culture through textual means was in itself no departure from the ‘writing of culture’ which is the custom of ethnography, it merely anticipated what has now come to be called the interpretive turn of ethnography in which the means of representation follow separate and different paths from early or traditional ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1986). While Geertz’ usage of the Ricoeurian approach to understanding might warrant the criticisms of cultural essentialism (Silverman and Ihde 1985; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986), Ricoeur’s method applied to the interpretation of social life has merit.

While Ricoeur does not solely direct his interpretive glance at the culture(s) traditionally of the ethnographers’ interest, (although he has found the work of Geertz particularly interesting (Ricoeur 1981; Ricoeur 1984), he might well be a cultural philosopher in that his work speaks directly of and to the construction of identity through the symbols of life as it is lived. Ricoeur brings together into a coherent framework a way of interpreting social life. Among his (many) propositions are the concepts which enable the translation of meaningful action into text (distanciation and appropriation (Ricoeur 1976)); and the inseparable link between narrative and time, which locates narrative selves in and of history.

Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology, or semantics of action (Reagan 1995, p. 331), is the point at which action and text, understanding and explanation merge. Arguing against the usual dichotomy through the connectedness of motive and causality, rejecting the closed system of causality, and through the narrative conditions of history, Ricoeur formulates a dialectic between explanation and understanding (Ricoeur 1976) to allow the consideration of meaningful human action as text which is thus able to be interpreted using the same means. Action as text-analogue thus brings into play literary formations, tropes and functions, which enable a “reading” leading to an interpretation. Ricoeur’s attempts to extend the
possibilities of interpretation from (written) word to (active) deed require an enlargement of the horizon of the text (Ricoeur 1971, p.559) to include the social structural world as the ‘referential dimension’ (p.560). If the action-event is the equivalent of the speech-event, then the fixation in writing and autonomation of action (that is the removal of self-reference) emancipates its meaning from the situational context in ways which enables the ‘open work’ to address an indefinite range of possible ‘readers’ (p. 543-4). As a particular aspect of this ‘literary’ turn, the use of metaphor to create new meaning (Ricoeur 1981) opens its own gateway to possible worlds. No longer a mere semantic ally, but freed from its opposing referent, literal realism, metaphor provides a ‘surplus of meaning’ and here occupies a creative space. ‘Metaphor, in short, tells us something new about reality’ (Ricoeur 1976, p. 53), and provides a view into a world into which we could live (Reagan 1995, p. 343, my italics).

It is the mediation by the three-fold character of preunderstanding of the narrative conditions of history which add substance to Ricoeur’s theory. Conceiving of the way time becomes human through narrative, and ‘narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence’ (Ricoeur 1984), the twin narratives of history and fiction are similarly symbiotic. As historical beings, immersed in a ‘present’ history and making history, humans engage in a ‘dialectic between the alien and familiar, the far and the near’ valuing the stories of the past at the same time as recognising them as being contained within an ‘inventory of difference’ (Thompson 1981, p. 295). Thus ‘by opening us to what is different, history opens us to the possible, whereas fiction, by opening us to the unreal, leads us to what is essential in reality’ (p.296). The nature of the narrative ‘language game’ (p.274) and meaningful action considered as text provide the contextual setting in which an ideology of the self as a group member is enacted. The multiple possible interpretations of action and the situatedness of the human experience is related to how social groups represent themselves, which engages the role of

140 There is a connected discussion to be had concerning the different usages of history (Ricoeur) and, say Foucault, as examined by Robert Young (1990).
ideology 'to perpetuate the initial energy beyond the period of effervescence' (p.225) of a group generating and supporting the identity of a group. As a mechanism by which humans understand themselves as members of their group and as historical beings, distanciation, the mechanism for considering action as text, provides the distance necessary for a critique of that belonging, an essential step in the interpretive process.

Ricoeur extends his interest in narrative and history to the narrative of life as its own story to be told, although noting the difference that life is lived and its story told (1986, p.126). However, Ricoeur's concept of appropriation, a central idea in his hermeneutics, which makes possible 'the revelation of new modes of being' and provides the wherewithal for 'new capacities for knowing' (1981, p192), is also applied here. 'Appropriating a work through reading it is to unfold the implicit horizon of the world which embraces the action, the personages, the events of the story told. The result is that the reader belongs to the both the experiential horizon of the work imaginatively, and the horizon of his [sic] action concretely.' (1986, p. 126). Bearing in mind the possibility of meaningful action read as text, if we substitute observing and observer for reading and reader, we arrive at a position of two (or more) actors participating in a meaning making event, which 'becomes the crucial moment of the entire analysis.' (p. 126). This, states Ricoeur is the point at which transfiguration of the experience of the reader/observer occurs. Anticipating the objections which may be laid against such a claim, that life is lived not told, Ricoeur shows the interpreted nature of experience, requiring the narrative propositions. Ricoeur follows the interpretation and thence understanding of self through the twin definitions of identity, the same and self, found in literary narratives to the narratives of life in 'Narrative Identity' (1991) and maintains that 'the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediations that already articulate action, among them the narratives of daily life' (p. 80). The importance of the structure of identity through narration, he states, cannot be underestimated. Drawing on Arendt's work, Ricoeur says 'it is in narrating that the
author of actions – the one who does things, the agent – finds an identity’ (Kemp 1985, p. 214).

Insofar as these short summaries of Ricoeur’s theory of action as text-analogue provide a basis for an analytical application to this thesis, I acknowledge the breadth and extent of writings and thought whence they come. I also acknowledge the difficulties such a set of propositions produce, discussed by his commentators (Thompson 1981; Clifford 1988; Moore 1990), and summarised here. Separating action/text from the circumstances of its production, and especially those historical or social conditions of producing meaning (for after all the subject is meaningful action) (Moore 1990) leans toward a tendency to generalise or develop an ‘englobing context’ (Clifford 1988, p. 39) and could result in the depersonalisation of actors. The separation of action/text from its intended audience also presents difficulties. People clearly act (often) with a specific aim and audience in mind. Such separation re-positions the interpreter, and returns what should remain in the field to the academy (Fernandez 1985). In the ethnographic context, ethnographer as expert chronicler becomes ethnographer as expert interpreter, eclipsing the intentions of the originators of the text-analogues. A third problem arises from the historical, social and political conditions which give rise to the ability of interpretations to be given equal weight. (Thompson 1981; Clifford 1988; Moore 1990). Finally, Kvale warns against the potential for reification of the text in the form of the transcribed interview. In keeping with a Ricoeurian approach, he recommends instead entering into a dialogue with the author through the transcript, (1996, p. 182), rather than focusing directly on transcripts as the data themselves.

Bearing these warnings in mind, not to substitute text for action in the first instance; to “see” action in action; and to participate in those active interpretations where they occurred, I return to Geertz’ claims that the notion of extending to action the possibilities rather than the constraints already possessed by the text, offer to the interpreter ‘readable’ modes more common to the translator than to the pollster (1993, p. 31). In the event, the inescapable outcome of an ethnography is
its written form. The message from Denzin is that the written form may seek to
incorporate the action as performance. In the end (Denzin 1997, p. 284) the
ethnographies now being written are acknowledged for their politics and their
practice. Ways which forward an ethical project demand attention. Devices such
as Ricoeur’s text analogue situate the task literally within the interpretive,
displacing the tendency towards a realist text.

The messiness (Marcus 1994, p. 567) of data and their unruly ways is not restricted
to ethnographic fieldwork, although, in some ways, the ethnography which relies
solely on participant observation is perhaps the hardest to capture in analytical
form. ‘Chaos’ and its metaphorical derivatives are to be found often in the
literature (Ely, Anzul et al. 1991, p. 141), implying lack of preparation, rigour, and
method. The discomfort produced by sitting surrounded by multiple voices and
experiences is one of the emotional consequences of such an approach, but one,
nevertheless, which seems necessary in order to emerge with a better understanding
of what the data mean.

I presupposed that there would be no substitute for my immersion in the data, as
Okely describes, and considered that a thematic reading of the data, generated from
an iterative/reiterative process, seeking patterns and inconsistencies in those data
would enable an initial categorisation. Themes suggested by Denzin (1989c, p. 91),
which range across biography, history, situations, relations, and interactions,
and include personal epiphanies, can be superimposed on any of the other
categorising frameworks, such as those of Spradley, to provide a thick description,
and contribute to the elucidation of themes, or patterns.

I have applied the hermeneutic reading proposed by Ricoeur [Denzin, 1989 #72;
Ricoeur, 1971 #14; Ricoeur, 1976 #566; Ricoeur, 1981 #689; Ricoeur, 1982 #520;
Ricoeur, 1984 #642; Ricoeur, 1986 #21; Ricoeur, 1991 #239; Ricoeur, 1971 #616]
and adapted by Geertz (1973) as described above, employing metaphoric and
narrative devices, as the necessary (to Ricoeur) means to achieving an explanatory understanding to the data.

These then formed the bases for my analytic interpretation: a thematic reading from the data, particularly the transcribed interviews and participant observation; a metaphorical analysis of the narrative discourse; and an analysis of people's stated epiphanies.
The Working with Aboriginal People Training Project and Departmental Committees

EXECUTIVE

DIRECTOR HUMAN RESOURCES

CORPORATE TRAINING COMMITTEE

MANAGER TRAINING

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL

ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ABORIGINAL POLICY UNIT

WWAP STEERING COMMITTEE

CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL STUDIES
APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM.

In 1989 the Department commissioned a Training Package called Working With Aboriginal People as one of its strategies to make services more acceptable and culturally appropriate to Aboriginal people. It was to be one of the ways of recognising the different cultural needs of Aboriginal people. It is now four years since the package has been introduced into the Department, and most Aboriginal staff have been trained in its delivery, and many non-Aboriginal staff have been trained in its content.

There are three distinct groupings of people who have had most contact with this process, as trainers, trainees and managers: the Aboriginal Trainers, the Corporate management who have had responsibility for its production, and the staff, mainly field and clerical, who have experienced the programmes. This study will examine the experiences of these people through their involvement.

The research process to be used includes participants as partners in the inquiry and explores their experience of the training through their reflections. While the underlying theme is the variety of relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, participants' own reflections and interpretations will guide the direction of the study which will follow the themes they identify.

One of the possible outcomes of the study might be a cross-cultural training model for use in the Human Services to assist in training staff to be more responsive to the needs of minority group clients.

The main form of investigation will be through individual interviews, with scope for group discussions. Interviews will be like purposeful conversations to allow the inquiry to follow the participant's interpretations of events and experiences. There will be a sequence of three interviews to encourage personal reflection and interpretation with each interview lasting no more than ninety minutes. It may be that a participant would be willing to be interviewed only once for a shorter period. This is acceptable, but the focus of the interview would be more on recollection of events rather than a reflection on experience.

Other forms of investigation, (known as participant and non-participant observation), will involve the investigator attending, and being present at, some of the Departmental activities involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, such as Training Programmes, training programme planning sessions and committee meetings to discuss training strategies in the Department. The purpose will be to both participate in the discussion and observe the way decisions and plans are made. Before attending, the purpose of my attendance will be discussed with all participants, who may choose to refuse to allow me to attend.

In addition, a search and analysis (known as non-intrusive written material scrutiny) of the relevant documents relating to the project and training strategies in the Department will be made. Both this material and the observations made by attending the meetings outlined above will be analysed by asking questions about the meaning intended by the written and spoken word (otherwise known as discourse analysis). These meanings will then be checked with the speakers and writers of the material.

All participation will be voluntary. Respondents may withdraw at any time, and choose whether or not to have all records destroyed.

Interviews will be recorded, either in the form of written notes or by audio tape. Written records will be coded to disguise identity, and audio tapes will be kept securely until completion of the project and then erased by me unless the respondent requests that they be handed over. In the case of taped group discussions, tapes will be erased by me.
Privacy will be respected at all times. In the eventual report, however, some personnel, particularly from Management groups, may be identifiable by people closely familiar with the Organisation during the time described by the study. While absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed to those people, this will be discussed in full prior to their participation, which will then proceed subject only to their express permission. Under no circumstances will any respondents be named.

I am willing to answer any additional questions prior to proceeding.

Please read and consider carefully this information before you sign the consent form.

Thank you for your attention.

Susan Young.
Investigator.
c/o School of Social Work and Social Administration,
University of Western Australia.
Nedlands.
W.A. 6008

Telephone no: 380 2992

20th April 1995.
Consent Form

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND NON-ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN A HUMAN SERVICE ORGANISATION – AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF A TRAINING STRATEGY

I ____________________________ of (address)___________________________

have read the attached information and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

I agree that the research data gathered for the study may be published providing my name is not used or other identifying information is not used without my permission.

Participant ____________________________ Date __________

Investigator ____________________________ Date __________