Culturally responsive pedagogies of success: Improving educational outcomes for Australian Aboriginal students

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Acknowledgement of Country

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WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that the following document may contain names and images of deceased persons.

Dedication

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Abbreviations and Terms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
AET	Aboriginal Education Team
AEW	Aboriginal Education Worker
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ATSIEAP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
CRP	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
CRPS	Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success
CRS	Culturally Responsive Schools
CRT	Critical Race Theory
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Observance Committee
NZ	New Zealand
SACE	South Australia Certificate of Education
SASTA	South Australian Aboriginal Sports and Training Academy
SES	Socio-economic status
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (subjects)
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
US/A	United States/United States of America

Aboriginal peoples	The term used in this research to refer to the First Peoples of Australia inclusive of the peoples of the Torres Strait Islands.
Indigenous	A term used to refer to First Peoples internationally.
Language Group or Country	Terms used to refer to the geographical location of specific Aboriginal peoples.
Nunga	A collective term for Aboriginal peoples of South Australia.
Torres Strait Islander	Indigenous peoples of the Torres Strait Islands located off the north-east coast of Australia. These islands are part of Australia.

Abstract

When Aboriginal students are spoken of, or heard of, it is frequently within a narrative of deficit, disadvantage and failure. It is rarely recognised that such a destructive and normalised story is borne out of two centuries of colonisation that sought variously to civilise and Christianise; integrate, segregate protect and assimilate; and ultimately to dispossess. My thesis sought instead to reveal and develop a counterstory of Aboriginal education success through an investigation of what successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students in metropolitan Adelaide looks like.

The study was framed by insights and approaches drawn from two interconnected theoretical frameworks. Firstly, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) that emphasises the privileging of student distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing in the learning space; the significance and meaning of student education success; and critical cultural awareness. Secondly, the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) was utilised, with its tenets being modified and infused into the former to problematise racism in the investigation.

My modified version of CRT, referred to as Colonial Critical Race Theory (ColonialCrit), responded to the distinct Australian story of dispossessing colonisation and racism that were revealed in the investigation as ongoing concerns. Additionally, while the investigation primarily focused on identifying the complex pedagogical practices of successful teachers of Aboriginal high school students, it also revealed what institutional and teacher characteristics contribute to improving Aboriginal educational outcomes and, in turn, what hindered such success.

Australia's problematic history of colonisation, justified through a diversity of raceologies, is shared by settler or colonised nations like Canada, the United States and New Zealand. Like Australia, Indigenous peoples of these three nations continue to be the most disadvantaged in terms of educational outcomes (Cotterell 2010). However, recognising this bleak situation, all three nations have made concerted efforts to redress this injustice. Recent national, state and provincial-level initiatives have repeatedly been informed by the expanding scholarship on cultural responsiveness and then modified to the local, geographical and cultural context.

So, to reveal the Australian counterstory of Aboriginal student success, the methodological frameworks of critical ethnography, culturally responsive research and Critical Race Theory methodology are adopted. The use of these three research frameworks enabled me to undertake research 'proper ways' (borrowed from Aunty Nangala). This involved, for example, the 'Aboriginalising' of established data gathering and data analysis methods utilised in the research project. Additionally, the CRT method of counterstorytelling was instrumental in revealing a counterpedagogy of Aboriginal educational success. Overall, these research strategies disrupt terra nullius styled research and oppose the perpetuation of dispossessing colonisation. Through my analysis a number of arguments were developed. First, that there are three overarching and interacting dimensions to cultural responsive pedagogies of success—the institutional, personal and pedagogical. These three dimensions are referred to in the research as culturally responsive schooling, culturally responsive teachers and, culturally responsive pedagogy. Furthermore, the research supported existing international scholarship which argues that successful teachers of marginalised or minoritised students possess the characteristics and pedagogical practice of being caring-demanders. That is, teachers can make higher demands of Aboriginal students due to their established caring relationships. It is an approach to teaching that privileges an Aboriginal ethic of care and argues that participating teachers have earned the role and responsibility of being 'classified kin' within the Aboriginal kinship network (Pattel 2007, p. 3)

My research argues that improving Aboriginal education outcomes will involve framing the current situation of Aboriginal education stress as a wicked problem. This is not 'wicked' as in evil, but rather wicked in the sense of being complex, difficult to understand and resistant to resolution (Ritter & Webb 1973). Furthermore, the research revealed that normalised narratives of 'intervention' and 'closing achievement gaps' secretly transmit (Harrison 2007) a racially based destructive narrative that needs to be critiqued and transformed. As a societal and community problem, the research revealed that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students will involve the re-culturing of schools, teachers and pedagogy as well as policy approaches. In this way, my research argues that Aboriginal students will then be able to get their education, stay as an Aboriginal person, and represent the Aboriginal peoples of Australia (borrowed from Uncle Pedro).

Declaration

This thesis presents work carried out by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.

Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes

[Signature] [Date]

CHAPTER 1 MAKING A STAND

1.1 Positioning myself within my research

The decision was ever so simple; it was for the 'best interest of the child'. I was 5 years old and no longer able to live with my aunt and uncle in Brisbane, where I had been living for almost a year following the death of my mother. So, my father's family had decided that I would move back south to live with my paternal grandparents who lived a half mile from a hospital—a critical factor for me considering my chronic asthma. This simple decision, however, had repercussions beyond anything anyone could have thought of at the time.

Bingara is located midway between Brisbane and Sydney in northern New South Wales. With a population of 1200, Bingara is nestled within the valley through which the Gwydir River runs. Twenty kilometres north-east lies Myall Creek, the site of one of Australia's most infamous massacre sites of Australian Aboriginal[1] peoples (Elder 1998). On 10 June, 1838, approximately 28 unarmed Kwiambal men, women and children were hunted down and killed by a gang of 11 convict and ex-convict stockmen led by a squatter (Elder 1998). Elder (1998) asserts that though massacres of Aboriginal peoples were commonplace at the time, the Myall Creek massacre stands alone in its historical significance, as it is the only time in Australia's history that 'white' men were arrested, charged and hanged for the massacre of Aboriginal peoples (Rowley 1970). The guilty verdict, however, was only reached at a second trial. All 11 men were found *Not Guilty* in the first trial; and at the second trial, seven men were found guilty and hung for the murders (Elder 1998). The British government hoped that the lesson was 'Don't kill Aboriginal people'; however, the trial and the executions meant that nearly all further massacres in New South Wales went unrecorded and, as commented on in

[1] Officially, the term 'Indigenous Australians' refers to Aboriginal peoples from Mainland Australia, the Torres Strait Islands and, more recently, the Tiwi Islands. However, for many the term 'Indigenous' has a painful history. Therefore, the term 'Aboriginal' is generally preferred as an overarching term of distinct cultural identification, using their language group for more specific identification. Throughout my thesis 'Aboriginal' is used in accordance with Elders' preferences. The term 'Indigenous' is used to refer to international Indigenous peoples. Indigenous will also be used when directly quoting scholarly work. This is discussed further in Chapter 3 of my thesis.

one Sydney newspaper, the whites turned to more devious means of ridding themselves of the 'black menace' (Elder 1998, pp.83-94). The consequences of this massacre, however, reach far beyond impacting just on those who were murdered or, those who were hung for their crimes back in 1838.

Since this time, relatively few Aboriginal peoples have lived in Bingara, with many understanding the town as a 'no go place' following the Myall Creek massacre. As a child living in this no go place my mother's Aboriginality was not discussed; visits to her family discontinued soon after my arrival. Consequently, I was in my mid-20s before I stumbled across the truth, a truth that continues to divide my family. Additionally, even though I am now aware of my Aboriginality, the previous decades of silence have contributed to significant knowledge being lost, such as my connection to family, community, language and my distinct Aboriginal culture. Bureaucratic red tape prevents me from discovering who my mother was, leaving me also with many unanswered questions. Was she, for example, a descendant of those who had survived the Myall Creek massacre? Or, as some have suggested, was her grandfather trucked in from further west during the 1930s for 'troublemaking'? No matter the truth, the Myall Creek massacre has had an ongoing impact in my life.

My interest in Aboriginal education has not therefore grown out of my own experiences of schooling as an Aboriginal secondary student. Instead, my interest began with my work in the criminal justice system where I primarily worked with Aboriginal offenders. I repeatedly heard stories of educational experiences that had resulted in attrition, suspension and expulsion. Each offender I worked with spoke of being in classrooms where they had felt disempowered and marginalised and where their frustration and anger led them to being disengaged from school. Their distinct Aboriginal identity, culture and history were largely ignored or refuted, being deemed of no value.

Many of the stories I heard echoed what I had experienced at school as a person living with the disability of vision impairment. On losing the majority of my eyesight to glaucoma at age seven, I was shipped off to institutional care hundreds of kilometres away from my home and family. As a 'handicapped' child I was assessed as 'mildly mentally retarded' at age 9 on entering the specialised institution. Though I was taught braille, typing, daily living skills and mobility, I was not expected to succeed academically. School was compulsory and so I attended. On turning 16, I got myself

expelled from the institution so that I would not undertake the career path planned for me—making coat hangers in a sheltered workshop. Why did I so passionately resist their plans for me?

A key reason was the care from my Year 9 History teacher, Miss Henry, back in 1981. From what I recall, she was young (I remember the boys being excited about the leather pants she wore!); she was possibly new to teaching. I had been mainstreamed since Year 7, as was the policy of 'sink or swim' in those days before the *Disability Discrimination Act* was introduced in 1992. Miss Henry had the audacity to make me do the same work as all my sighted peers. How rude! I'd been happy sitting in the back corner quietly reading. But she rejected my excuses and pushed me hard. At the end of that year I managed to come fourth out of over 100 Year 9 History students. Not only that, I had learned I *was* intelligent and maybe there was more for me than making coat hangers. To realise what that 'more' might be, I managed to get myself expelled from this 'institution for the handicapped' through a prolonged campaign of persistent delinquency.

What followed was an almost pass from my final year of high school in 1984. Through some fast talking and mild harassment of the university Head of School, I then got myself accepted into the Bachelor of Arts (Welfare Studies). Upon graduation, I was unsuccessful in over 100 job interviews because of my vision impairment. Eventually, I succeeded in securing my first paid position, and after a decade, began working for the Department of Corrective Services in 2001. My primary role was to develop and implement community-based projects that would reduce the reoffending rates of Aboriginal peoples who were, and continue to be, overrepresented in the offending and incarceration statistics (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991).

During my six years in this position (2001–2007), I worked extensively in many communities, and with Aboriginal peoples that the projects were intended to assist. The issues were complex and wide ranging; however, throughout my time in this role I kept being reminded of the 'problem' of education. I heard repeated stories of school expulsions, teaching practices that brought shame and provided no sense of belonging, and of generational disengagement from education. I also heard stories from parents and grandparents of their aspirations for their (grand) children to have a successful education, but not at the expense of who they are as Aboriginal children and youth.

So, in 2008 I returned once more to university to undertake a Graduate Diploma In Education (Secondary), motivated by both the profound impact of one teacher on my life, and to investigate the impact of deficit thinking on so many aspects of Aboriginal lives. My pre-service teacher practicums across four different schools soon exposed me to similar events to those shared with me by the Aboriginal offenders I had worked with. On one occasion, an Aboriginal student's low literacy and numeracy were excused because 'at least her father has a job'. Additionally, another student's poor school attendance and classroom behaviour was attributed to him being a 'mission kid'. I was also bewildered and mortified by the use of teaching practices in a remote community that seemed to have no cultural or community connection, or no respect for the learner. If not for their persistent reoccurrence I might have dismissed such pedagogical moments as unfortunate anomalies. I knew from experience, however, that these examples were not anomalies and I responded with a sense of rage that seemed to me to be almost out of control. I needed to understand this dominant narrative of deficit and where it came from and why it persists. As a result, in 2010 I undertook an Honours degree that exposed me to theories of oppression, 'race' and racism (Friere 1970, 2000; Giroux 1996; Shor 1992).

Ever-present in my mind is my Mother's Country, of Kamilaroi—its peoples, Dreamings and its Laws. More precisely, I think of how much I do not know because of what has transpired as a result of dispossessing colonisation or cultural genocide. And yet despite this deprivation I feel a powerful connection to both my Kamilaroi ancestral home and other Aboriginal nations in which I have lived, or whose Elders I have had the privilege of learning from. However, I often struggle with my Aboriginality. Growing up away from my distinct Aboriginal culture makes me regularly question, 'am I black enough?' An Elder said to me once when I expressed this concern: 'The spirits haven't forgotten just because some felah's came along and took away our knowledge. You may not know the spirits but they know you'. I was in crisis this day, well into my Honours thesis writing and feeling that I did not belong; that I had no right to be doing this 'cultural work' because I had not been raised within my Kamilaroi ways. On hearing this, this Elder in Residence at the university asked me if there was an animal or bird or something that was a constant in my life. Without hesitation I stated 'Crow, it's why I'm sitting outside; there's one that lives in that tree and he flies to that tree. He calms me down'. Uncle replied, 'Ah, the Trickster'. I'd never heard this term

before but have since learned that it is a character in most Indigenous cultures around the world (Archibald 2008; Chodakowski, Crowley & Fettes 2006; Kovach 2009). For example, while visiting Vancouver and Prince Rupert Island, Canada, in 2014, I was introduced to Crow's counterpart Raven, the Trickster of Northwest Coast tradition. Reid (1991) describes Raven as powerful and playful; as having multiple existences; Raven likes to be in control; she is insightful; Raven is the one who asks difficult, often unpopular, questions about where the journey is headed, for what purpose and whether we shouldn't look at things from an entirely different perspective. Raven also reminds each of us of our own untapped imaginative potential and the possibilities of transformation.

I have come to know Crow as a 'visitor' from the Ancestors, including my mother; Crow is a messenger that tells me, among other things, 'to get on with it', 'today is going to be a good day, listen for the message', 'you are going well, keep pushing'. Uncle told me on that day that I had knowledge of two worlds, the non-Aboriginal that I'd been raised in, and the Aboriginal world that I was now being raised in. That having Crow as my totem meant I had been given by the Ancestral spirits the tasks of provoking and agitating a new story for Aboriginal peoples; that through my research I had the potential to weave a new future; to bring together my two worlds of knowledge. Crow, then, is with me throughout this research journey, ever watchful of my progress, critical when I procrastinate, but supportive when I just want to give up. This may not be rational to some, but for me, my Ancestors present through the spirit of Crow, *Waagaan*, have not forgotten me and I will not forget them.

So, I come to my doctoral research with an awareness of my multiple positionings. I have attempted to explore this multiplicity by assuming that my sense of self, my subjectivity, is in process, a becoming, but in particular I recognise that it is my Aboriginality, and all the responsibilities that that entails, that drives my research.
I have attempted to position myself in my research (Shacklock & Smith 1998), not only with the aim of introducing myself, but also to share my intentions, motivations and passion for the research being undertaken (DuBois 1983). In addition, by introducing myself I also honour the Aboriginal protocols of: 'who are you' and 'where do you come from?' (Martin 2008, 2013; Yunkaporta & Kirby, 2011). The significance of explicitly introducing oneself and situating oneself culturally should not be disregarded. It is an important protocol in Indigenous worldviews and therefore, critical in

conducting ethical Indigenous research (see, for example, Archibald 2008; Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin 2013; Kovach 2009; Martin 2008; Wilson S 2008). The following of Indigenous protocols is a recurrent theme throughout my research and will be elaborated upon in my methodology in Chapter Three, and at varying points in my data analysis chapters. In the next section I outline the rationale, and discuss the central aim of my research investigation

1.2 The scope of the research

Numerous studies have investigated key factors that influence Aboriginal student educational outcomes. However, most research focuses on why Aboriginal students resist, reject and ultimately fail in the formal educational system. For example, most research concludes that Aboriginal students are not achieving on par with their non-Aboriginal Australian peers, particularly in areas of literacy, numeracy, and rates of retention and attendance (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014; Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014; Dreise & Thomson 2014). By way of an example, in the 2016 Prime Minister's *Close the gap report,* it was revealed that in 2015: the overall attendance rate for Aboriginal students nationally was 83.7%, compared with 93.1% for non-Aboriginal students; that the gap persists between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal numeracy and literacy attainment scores; that no progress has been made in closing the attendance gap within 5 years as was the added target in 2014; and, that while progress is noticeable in many areas with metropolitan areas of Australia, Aboriginal students in remote communities are progressing noticeably more slowly, if at all (Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet 2016, p.6). Ultimately, it is a bleak statistical portrayal of the lives of Aboriginal students and peoples.

Significant numbers of Aboriginal students, however, do stay at school beyond the compulsory years and succeed, but comparatively little research has been undertaken to identify the what, why and how of such success. One study that is illuminating for my research was conducted by Badimia[2] scholar, Kiara Rahman (2010) who used the theoretical framework of Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS) to investigate factors impacting on the school retention, attendance, learning and attainment rates among Aboriginal secondary students in South Australia. Her research concluded that regular

[2] In accordance with Aboriginal protocols, I will, where appropriate and available, use a contributor's distinct language group and/or culture when they first enter the thesis. In this way, the reader knows that the source has the authority to speak and inform with regards to the subject at hand.

school attendance; support from home, school and others; a comfortable happy home environment; well-developed and planned career aspirations; positive schooling motivations; positive peer and teacher relationships; a positive cultural identity and a culturally supportive school environment were significant factors influencing Aboriginal student school retention rates.

Additionally, there is only a limited body of Australian scholarly work that focuses on the complex pedagogical work of teachers. For example, Buckskin (2012) asserts the significance of teacher cultural competency, and knowledge of Aboriginal languages; Burges and Berwick (2009) focused on Aboriginal peoples' understandings of successful teaching; Byrne and Munns (2012, p.184) argued that teacher–student relationships need to be formed 'at both a personal and a pedagogical level to make an educational difference'. Furthermore, Perso and Hayward (2015) reviewed the scholarship on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy as a valuable tool for teacher practice. Finally, Chris Sarra (2005) developed the *Stronger Smarter* program; and, Tyson Kaawoppa Yunkaporta (2009) developed the *Eight-ways pedagogy* framework. Overall, such research and pedagogical approaches centre and privilege the distinct culture of Aboriginal students in the learning space to facilitate educational success. But the issue of racism and its impact on educational outcomes for Aboriginal students is seldom focused on explicitly in the research.

Finally, though not directly the primary focus of my research, there is relatively little knowledge about how the various interrelated factors of school, home, community and family impact on successful teaching. As illustrated by Gollan and Malin (2012), and Rahman (2010), the students' world beyond the school gate cannot be ignored if success is to become the norm for Aboriginal students, and therefore it is a theme that cannot be ignored within my research.

While I acknowledge the necessity of the data and literature that portrays the bleak story of Aboriginal inequality to be found in education, my aim for my research is *not* to continue to belabour the negative aspects of Aboriginal students in schools. In keeping with the principles of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and Critical Race Theory [CRT]), my research instead seeks to reveal the strengths of Aboriginal culture and how, when recognised and privileged in the learning space and, in turn, wider society, a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success can be portrayed. Subsequently, I am

motivated to investigate the pedagogical practices adopted by teachers who have been nominated as successful teachers of Aboriginal secondary students. Such teachers aim to enable Aboriginal students to succeed academically, socially and culturally, (Ladson-Billings 1994). In this way I am seeking to investigate, describe and theorise *pedagogies of success* rather than pedagogies of deficit, or in Lingard's (2007) terms, 'pedagogies of indifference'. That is, I am seeking to contribute to theories of pedagogy that understands cultural identity as an asset with immense potential for successful learning, especially for those students who are members of so-called minority cultures, such as Australian Aboriginal students. Specifically I aim to identify: educational strategies or practices; teacher characteristics; and, educational purposes for Aboriginal students that have the potential to contribute to sustainable positive transformative learning. To achieve my aims I have formulated an overall research question and three secondary research questions, which I outline in the next section.

1.3 Research questions

The primary aim of my research is to investigate, describe and theorise the question of: What does successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students look like and what challenges do successful teachers encounter? To facilitate the investigation, the following three research questions were explored:

1. How is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) evident in the pedagogical understandings and practices of six high school teachers in metropolitan Adelaide who are achieving educational success with their Aboriginal students?
2. How does the culture of a school, delivered through its values, procedures, routines and protocols, improve or impede Aboriginal educational success? and;
3. What knowledge, values, attitudes and characteristics do teachers need to possess to work successfully with Aboriginal high school students?

Overall, these three questions seek to identify, describe and theorise pedagogical practices if successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students is to become the norm rather than the exception in the Australian educational landscape.

In broad terms I have located my research within the scholarship of critical educational studies which strives to expose the many and varied ways schools reproduce social inequalities (McLaren 2015). However, I am particularly influenced by the pioneering work of two scholars. First, Judith Kleinfeld's (1975) ethnographic study of Year 9

Eskimo and Athabascan Indians in Alaska which found that successful teachers are characterised by personal warmth and active demandingness, while unsuccessful teachers are lacking in either or both of these traits. Second, is the groundbreaking work of African-American scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings who studied seven "excellent teachers" providing "exemplars of effective teaching for African-American students" in Chicago (Ladson-Billings 1994, p. x).

The research questions clearly locate the 'problem' in the work of teachers in classrooms, while remaining mindful of the significant influence of the distinct cultures of Aboriginal students, their families and their communities, as well as the world beyond the school gate. I am also aware that teachers' work and that includes their pedagogies, are also constituted out of the policy regimes they work in (Ball et al., 2012; Lingard 2007). My research has the potential to inform our understanding of what enables some teachers to achieve successful educational outcomes with Aboriginal high school students while others struggle or fail. Subsequently, my research is based on the premise that improving Aboriginal educational outcomes is a human right and therefore is a social justice issue and that teachers play a pivotal professional and ethical role in achieving equity in educational outcomes.

1.4. Thesis outline

Chapter Two provides a review of research on Aboriginal education, mapping the history from—pre-colonial and post-colonial; framing Aboriginal education stress as a 'wicked problem'; and the theoretical framework of CRP which is infuse with the modified tenets of Critical Race Theory, referred to as ColonialCrit, so as to problematise the persistent issue of racism in the education landscape.

Chapter Three illustrates the methodological approach and methods of the investigation. I discuss my use of Critical Ethnography, Culturally Responsive Research and, Critical Race Theory Methodology. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of a multi-sited school ethnography is explained. Moreover, I discuss the need to 'Aboriginalise' the research so as to fulfil my kinship responsibilities of reciprocity, respect and care. I describe the Aboriginalised methods used including community nomination of teachers (Foster, M 1994), interviewing storying, Shadowing (Stickybeaking) and, participatory observation.

Chapter Four provides an introduction to my data analysis chapters and maps the first overarching dimension, the institution of schooling which is referred to as Culturally Responsive Schooling. This dimension critiques the management and leadership of school systems, including the values developed and reflected in school department policies and practices. Additionally, the institutional dimension is inclusive of the embedded and normalised cultural fabric of the schooling process which is primarily of European and middle-class origins (Boykin 1986). Finally, the institutional dimension of cultural responsiveness, is the regular structures and rules that organise the work of instruction referred to as the "grammar of schooling" by Tyack and Tobin (1994, p. 454).

Chapter Five discusses the second dimension of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, *personal,* which is referred to as Culturally Responsive Teachers. This explores the significance of teachers' knowledge of self, knowledge of Aboriginal students and knowledge of teacher practice. I demonstrate that this collective knowledge is the cornerstone for successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students as it enables teachers to critique the majoritarian story of Aboriginal education failure and thereby transform their teacher practice.

Chapters Six and seven discuss the third dimension, *pedagogical,* which I refer to as Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success (CRPS), *'caring' and 'demander', respectively*. Together they provide an analysis of the complex pedagogical practices of teachers nominated as being successful with Aboriginal high school students. More specifically, they discuss the significance of teachers developing robust and caring relationships. Then, in Chapter Seven, the focus is on the teachers' practice of demandedness that strives for student success—educational, cultural and critical cultural awareness.

My thesis conclusion provides an outline and overview of the implication of the research and contributions to Aboriginal education and the ethical imperative that exists for improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

1.5 In closing

In this introduction I have sought to position myself in the research, explain my motivations and intentions, outline the research aims and highlight the potential outcomes. The next chapter provides a literature review which is organised into the overarching parts of: Aboriginal education—pre-colonial and post-colonial; Aboriginal education as a wicked problem; and the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). This literature review seeks to contextualise my research and establish my theoretical framework for the investigation into successful teaching of Aboriginal students.

CHAPTER 2 THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

The research problem of improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal high school students was outlined in the previous chapter. Additionally, in accordance with Aboriginal protocols, I position myself in the research investigation. This chapter provides a review of research on Aboriginal education and is organised into three broad parts: pre-colonial and post-colonial Aboriginal education and, the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) inclusive of my proposed modified theory of ColonialCrit, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP).

More specifically, to begin to understand the current landscape of Aboriginal education in Australia, this chapter begins with a description of the Aboriginal ways of educating their children and youth prior to European invasion. The racialised policies and practices implemented throughout almost two centuries of colonisation that have served to dispossess, segregate, assimilate and integrate are then discussed. Finally, the current educational landscape that primarily pathologises Aboriginal students by positioning them within a frame of deficit is explored. In this way the necessary context for the utilisation of the theoretical frameworks of CRT and CRP in the distinct Australian educational landscape is provided.

2.2 Pre-European Invasion

While it can never be known for certain, it is estimated that there were approximately 1 million ‘Aboriginal peoples’ when the British invaded what is now known as Australia in 1788 (Harrison 2011, p. 22). These 1,000,000 peoples consisted of approximately 260 distinct language groups and 500 dialects (Dudgeon et al. 2010, p. 26). Language groups are defined by the sources of their law or, in more popular terms, their Dreaming (Martin, 2005, p. 29). Each language group had custody over a particular area, such as Freshwater, Saltwater, Coastal, Mountain, Desert, Sand or Rainforest (Edwards 2005).

As shown in Figure 2.1 everything was interconnected and interrelated. Social structures were complex consisting of intricate kinship formations, law, politics, medicine and spiritual beliefs. The structures depended on reciprocity, respect and balance (Edwards 2005). This complex system was maintained and passed on between peers and down through generations by means of stories, dance, songs and art. Economies were of hunter-forager, with most groups being semi-nomadic moving with the seasons according to the availability of food resources; language groups were conservative, deeply sacred and non-materialistic (Malin 1989). The First Peoples were not, and are still not, a homogenous group, with Mark Rose (2012, p. 76) asserting that today's Aboriginal peoples "form a quilt of nearly five hundred separate and sovereign nations that cover the entire land". Despite such differences, however, similarities are to be found in, for example, educational systems.

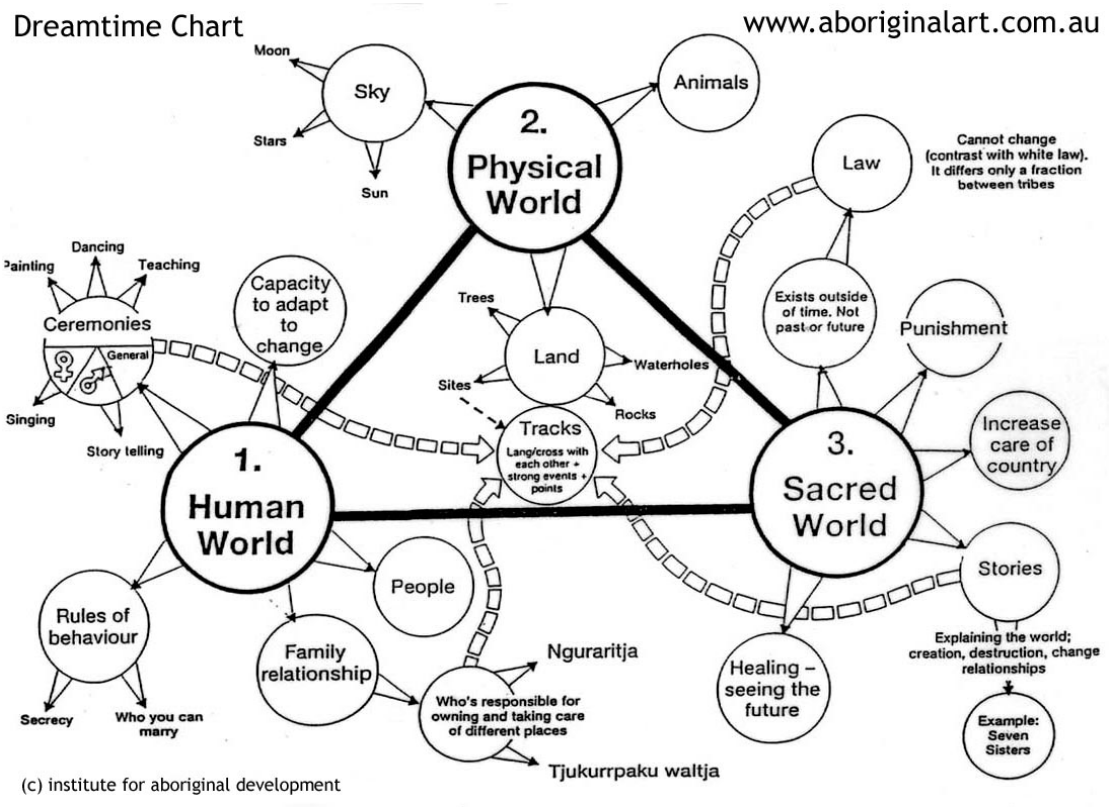

Figure 2.1: Dreamtime Chart

Source: http://aboriginalart.com.au/culture/dreamtime3.html

For thousands of generations, Aboriginal peoples have had their own systems of education and subsequent pedagogies. Price (2012, p. 4) explains:

> ...education began as soon as the child moved in the mother's womb, as soon as it was known that there was a new responsibility. The community would work together to develop the emerging skills of the young person, and these were nurtured and mentored, and their natural abilities developed stage by stage with knowledge given to a child only when the child was ready to receive it. Observation was central as the five senses were the means of learning, and the 'classroom' was the world in which they lived. Their masters, tutors and examiners were their Elders

With the arrival of western education, much of the ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing were radically disrupted and, in some cases, destroyed (Martin 2003).

The Aboriginal theoretical and methodological framework of *Ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing* was developed by Quandamooka scholar Karen Martin who explains:

> Essentially this describes three main constructs and their processes: first, establishing through law what is known about the Entities; second, establishing relations amongst Entities; and third, enacting ways for maintaining these relations. Elsewhere, I identify these as Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. (Martin 2003, p. 9)

Though writing of Quandamooka peoples, these three constructs provide a way of identifying and understanding the distinct cultural ways of Aboriginal peoples from across language groups. Of course, the specific characteristics would vary according to the individual Dreaming and law of the location but the framework itself is largely transferable. Throughout the investigation I refer to this framework as ways of knowing, being and doing that denotes the distinct cultural ways of Aboriginal peoples across the nation known now as Australia.

2.3 Early Colonial Times—The Beginnings of the Myth of Deficit

Prior to British invasion in 1788, Australia was visited by a number of peoples over many centuries. For example, since the 1500s, Makassan sailors (inhabitants of east Indonesia) traded with the Yolngu people of East Arnhem land (Pascoe 2010). The Makassans were seasonal visitors who came to trade but did not take up residence; it was a relationship that reportedly worked well, socially and economically, for both peoples (Pascoe 2010). On January 26 1788, the situation changed radically. Eleven

British tall ships under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip (first Governor of the new colony) anchored on the east coast of Australia at what came to be known as Sydney Cove (Harrison 2011, p. 21). Commonly referred to as the First Fleet, these ships sailed from England on May 13 1787, carrying 1,500 people comprising convicts, crew and soldiers (Ballyn, 2011, p. 16).

It is generally agreed that the reason for the British invasion of the southern continent was that the prisons in Britain had become unbearably overcrowded (Ballyn 2011). This situation deteriorated further with the refusal of America to take any more convicts after the American War of Independence in 1783 (Ballyn 2011). Crime rates were rising across the nation while large numbers of people were moving away from rural areas to the increasingly industrialised cities where unemployment ran high as machines replaced 'manpower'; an estimated one million people in Britain were below the breadline in 1788 (Ballyn 2011, p. 17). Britain was undergoing immense social and economic change that brought with it crises that required radical solutions.

Such a solution emerged in 1770, when Captain James Cook claimed eastern Australia for the British crown (Moreton-Robinson 2003). Under international customary law, colonies such as Canada, the United States and New Zealand were established under the doctrines of conquest or cession as well as appropriation through negotiated settlements and treaties with Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson 2003). Possession of Australia was instead accomplished through the doctrine of *terra nullius*, Latin for 'land belonging to no one' (Reynolds 1987). This declaration went against Captain James Cook's given instructions to 'negotiate with the native [*sic*] inhabitants' (Yarwood & Knowling 1991, p. 31). Captain Cook justified this by noting:

> We are to consider that we see this Country in the pure state of Nature, the Industry of Man has had nothing to do with any part of it. They seem to have no fix'd habitation but move about from place to place like wild Beasts in search of food. (James Cook quoted in Yarwood & Knowling 1991, p. 31)

Evidently, from the outset of contact terra nullius failed to recognise the validity of Aboriginal cultures, and even denied the existence of Aboriginal peoples. Parbury (2011, p. 69) contends: "The Crown takeover of all the lands of Aboriginal Australia as terra nullius has affected Aboriginal lives ever since". Yet, the outcome of this doctrine also impacted on non-Aboriginal people who were denied access to significant

knowledge of the land on which they now live (Rose M 2012). Supporting this assertion, Matthews (2012, p. 122) states:

> ... *terra nullius* not only devalued, dispossessed and marginalised Indigenous people it also created a population of non-Indigenous people who know little about Indigenous people. This dynamic has created a void in the psyche of mainstream Australia, which has been filled by stereotypes that misrepresent Indigenous people and their cultures.

Alongside the fiction of terra nullius, other myths regarding Aboriginal peoples readily emerged in the colonies. For example, among the newly arrived, a myth quickly developed that Aboriginal peoples were "uneducable" (Price 2012, p. 32) or "unteachable" (de Plevitz 2006, p. 48). With supposed good intentions, early official government policies sought primarily to civilise, Christianise and protect Aboriginal peoples. Subsequently, European ideas and values, perceived as superior, were forced upon Aboriginal peoples with the aim of replacing long-established ways of knowing, being and doing. Battiste (2002, p. 5) argues that:

> Eurocentric thinkers dismissed Indigenous knowledge in the same way they dismissed any socio-political cultural life they did not understand: they found it to be unsystematic and incapable of meeting the productivity needs of the modern world.

One particular means by which this process of dismissing Aboriginal knowledge was to be achieved in the colonies was through the implementation of the Eurocentric education system, which is now outlined.

2.3.1 Education as a colonising tool

The historical beginnings of formal Aboriginal education in Australia began with colonisers attempting to replace a complex system of education used by Aboriginal peoples for thousands of generations. Those in power denied or disparaged the existing pedagogies as being void and/or inferior to their own.

For example, in 1814, Governor Lachlan Macquarie launched a program for the 'civilising' of Aboriginal peoples. Macquarie asserted that although Aborigines [*sic*] appeared rude and uncivilised they could be trained as labourers to give the colony an exploitable labour force and therefore validate a niche for themselves at the lower order of colonial life (Clarke 1969, p. 120). Key to this program of civilisation was the establishment of the 'Native Institution' at Parramatta, west of Sydney, in 1815 (Parbury 2011, p. 40). This dormitory-style (lock-in) facility had the explicit purpose of

educating, Christianising and giving vocational training to Aboriginal children (Price 2012). In 1819, Mary/Maria Lock (aged 14), the daughter of Yarramundi, a member of the Boorooberongal Language, whose traditional lands were west of what is now known as Sydney, won the first prize in the Anniversary Schools Examination, ahead of 20 Aboriginal and 100 European children (Price 2012, p. 5). A reporter noted:

> ... a black girl of fourteen years of age between three or four years in the school, bore away the chief prize, much to the satisfaction of the worthy judges and auditors. (*Sydney Gazette* 17 April 1819, cited in Brook & Kohen 1991, p. 251).

Similarly, a boy given the name George Van Diemen, who was "found wandering close to new Norfolk" in 1821, was taken away and sent to Lancashire to be educated (Price 2012, p. 5). According to a report sent back to Tasmania, George was competent in arithmetic, "a branch of education that he was supposed to be incompetent in", and had an excellent memory (Price 2012, p. 5). John Bradley, reporting on the lad's achievements, recommended:

> Let us place indiscriminately all the shades of colour in the human species in the same climate, allow them the same means for development of intellect, I apprehend the blacks will keep pace with the whites, for colour neither impairs the muscles nor enervates the mind. (cited in Kneale 2000, p. 457-458)

It is evident that the persistent evidence of Aboriginal children being highly competent learners—both educable and teachable—was dismissed by the colonisers as being exceptional rather than the norm. It was the beginnings of the myth of Aboriginal children and youths' inability to learn to the same levels of the Europeans, that continued to dominate policies and practices across the colonies for generations.

The next section focuses primarily on the story of South Australia's dispossessing colonisation and particularly with regards to education.

2.3.2 European colonisation – Influences on early schooling in South Australia

In 1836,

> when official permission was given by the British Government to invade the area now known as South Australia, the large tract of the south central section of the recently 'discovered' continent was the home of 54 different language groups of Aboriginal peoples. (McBride 2000, p. 3)

Like elsewhere in Australia, each language group had custody over a particular region and had its own social structure involving exceedingly complex and interwoven kinship

organisations, law, politics, medicine and spiritual beliefs; through stories (The Dreaming), songs and art, these systems were passed on to peers and down through generations (Edwards 2005).

This highly sophisticated system of knowing, being and doing was severely disrupted in 1836 when the colony of South Australia was established. Unlike the colonies of New South Wales or Tasmania, South Australia was "... to be a moral and productive colony free of the scourge of the convict past of its colonial neighbours" (Malin 1989, p. 11). The legal assumption for the settlement of South Australia was consistent with that of the remainder of the continent, that it was a land waste and unoccupied, therefore an empty land referred to as terra nullius (Berg 2010). Though the land was officially declared to be empty, it is clear that English government officials planning the colony were aware of the Aboriginal population. For example, Governor Gawler was instructed by his superiors 'at home' to respect the rights of the Aboriginal population, and "cause them no harm" (Malin 1989, p. 12). This proved more difficult than those in England could possibly predict. In a speech to a crowd of Aboriginal people, Governor Gawler foreshadowed what was to come:

> Black men! We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate good white men. Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful. Above all things you cannot be happy unless you love God who made heaven and earth and all things. (*South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, 3.11.1838, p. 4)

In both theory and practice, the ways of Aboriginal peoples in South Australia were deemed inferior to that of Europeans. Like other colonies, the only accepted path to happiness was Christianity and so-called civilisation. However, when resistance to such a dispossessing plan emerged, the colonisers decided that the best way to achieve Aboriginal assimilation was through the children (Foster R, 1990).

So, in 1839 the 'Aboriginal Location' was established by the colonists on the banks of the Torrens River (Foster, R 1990). Though short-lived, it is significant as it represents South Australia's first organised attempt to "civilize and Christianise" Aboriginal peoples (Foster, R 1990). The Location sought to "instruct the Aborigines [*sic*] in the habits of civilised life and the virtues of Christianity"; instruction was in the vernacular and the children were taught the Bible, basic literacy and numeracy, gardening and needlework (Foster, R1990, p. 11). Though aimed at both Aboriginal adults and children, it soon became evident that the adults' attitudes towards the Aboriginal

Location ranged from indifference to contempt and even anger (Foster, R 1990). Adelaide's Protector of Aborigines wrote in 1840:

> Our chief hope now is decidedly in the children; and the complete success as far as regards their education and civilisation would be before us if it were possible to remove them from the influence of their parents. (quoted in Rowley 1972, p. 103)

After one year of operation, significant changes took place at the school: lessons were now taught only in English, falling attendance rates were combated by the creation of a boarding school system for children in 1843, and leave passes had to be obtained by the students to restrict their comings and goings (Foster, R 1990). Furthermore, in 1844, the Protector was made the legal guardian of all part-Aboriginal [*sic*] children and 'orphans' and the government was granted the power to separate Aboriginal children from their parents if they deemed it necessary (Malin 1989, p. 14).

By the mid-19th century the protectorate experiment had failed and the very survival of Aboriginal peoples was being questioned (Foster, R 1990). The Aboriginal population had been decimated by malnutrition, introduced diseases and deaths resulting from clashes with colonisers. Moreover, as discussed later in this chapter, theories like Chain of Being, social Darwinism and 'doomed race' were dominating official thinking and subsequent policy and practice.

As a result, between the period 1850 and 1915, 15 major missions were established in South Australia (Jones 2009, p. 40). Like in other colonies, South Australian missions were frequently purposefully located, geographically and otherwise, on the fringes of society. However, with Aboriginal peoples dispossessed of their lands, and access to traditional food sources disappearing with expanding colonisation, they had little choice but to move to the missions where protection from landowners and settlers could be sought (Malin 1989). But mission land only amounted to less than 10,000 acres of the colony of South Australia, with the Protector arguing that they did not need more, despite the fact that much of these acres were leased out to 'settlers' for revenue for the Aboriginal reserves, not for use by Aboriginal people (Malin 1989, p. 16). Government support amounted to an annual issue of a blanket to each Aboriginal person, and food rations for the elderly and ill, with remaining needs being the responsibility of the missions (Malin 1989, p. 16). In the late 1850s and 1860s missions emerged as the instruments for segregation (Malin 1989). This move was seen as taking "some responsibility for the so-called Aboriginal problem" (Parbury 2011, p. 69). One element

of this so-called ‘Aboriginal problem’ was the ongoing issue of educating Aboriginal children.

When compulsory education was legislated in the colony in 1875 and was then made free in 1891, it was segregated along racial lines (Grazul 1993, p. 14). The state assumed responsibility for the education of European children when the Legislative Council passed an Education Act that compelled children between the ages of 7 and 13 to attend primary school (Shorten 1996, p. 8). Responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children, however, rested, as it had done since 1839, with the Protector of Aborigines [*sic*] (Shorten 1996, p. 7). This meant that most Aboriginal children were educated through the mission school system. For those missions who had schools, teachers were predominantly untrained, facilities were substandard, and children were basically taught Christianity, and domestic skills for the girls and labouring/gardening skills for the boys (Malin 1989). Few children received more than three years of schooling (Miller 1986). In response to resistance by Elders in these communities to the civilising and Christianising of Aboriginal students, children were cloistered away by the colonisers in dormitories, away from the influence of their parents (Malin 1989).

In the mission school system, students were commonly taught to scorn and reject their distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. Moreover, they were led to believe that if they adopted the ways of the ‘superior’ ‘race’ they would be accepted as equals by the European community (Grazul 1993). At the same time that European students in the state school system were being taught to revere their European, ‘white’ culture. The curriculum[3] was dominated by: Notions of Empire—‘Britain Beyond the Seas’; admiring explorers like Charles Sturt as heroes; growing Australian nationalism as Federation grew and South Australia changed from colony to state (Grazul 1993). By contrast, Aboriginal people were portrayed as ‘other’, to be at first despised and then pitied (Grazul 1993, p. 18). In the teaching of history, the concept of terra nullius was established in the following way:

[3] John Hartley, South Australia’s first Inspector-General of Education, argued that the incorporation of working-class into the middle-class value system required a higher standard of education. Hartley founded *The Education Gazette* as a vehicle of administration and as a means of disseminating new educational ideas and techniques. In 1889 he launched the Children’s Hour, which was a monthly publication that was designed to be used as a lesson guide for teachers and as a recreational reader for children. Under Hartley’s guidance children in the state system were now taught History, Geography, elementary Natural History and Science and Poetry in addition to the three Rs. (‘Colony to State’ 1901).

> For long, long ages this vast island continent of Australia was unknown to any white people. Only black savages wandered over its hills and valleys or across those vast plains on which millions of sheep and cattle now safely graze, or where the sound of the reaper cheers the farmer's heart. ('Colony to State' 1901, p. 21)

The curriculum of the time gives a brief account of the 'settlement' of each colony with Aboriginal people receiving no mention ('Colony to State 1901, p. 22). Australian history begins, therefore, not with the pre-existing Aboriginal peoples of the continent, but rather with the proclamation of British sovereignty and the naming of New South Wales (Grazul 1993). With this proclamation, the British colonisers establish themselves as the 'legal' owners of Australia, and the question of the dispossession of the original inhabitants does not arise in the education of the European children (Grazul 1993).

In 1901, the Australian colonies and territories were federated into the nation of Australia, failing to recognise Aboriginal peoples as citizens, denying them voting rights (Grazul 1993). At the same time, the 'White Australia Policy'[4] was introduced, with white Australians beginning to view the preservation of their racial purity as necessary to ensure the quality of the nation (Miller 1986). However, the number of Aboriginal people of mixed descent [*sic*] was on the increase, confirming that Aboriginal peoples were not likely to 'die out' entirely as 'white' Australians had first anticipated (Broome 2010). An understanding of this, combined with a desire for racial purity, led to legislation that gave the South Australian government more power to enforce segregation, and then assimilation, of Aboriginal populations across the state, mirroring government policy throughout the nation (Shorten 1996).

Between 1911 and 1967, the South Australia government introduced a number of legal Acts that significantly impacted upon Aboriginal peoples (Dudgeon et al. 2010). First was the *Aborigines*[5] *Act, 1911*—its full title being: *An Act to make provision for the better protection and control of the Aboriginal and Half-Caste Inhabitants of the State of South Australia* (Cunneen & Libesman 1995, p. 31). The Act established an

[4] The *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 led to the restriction of non-European migration, which became known as the *White Australia Policy*. The legislation brought together a number of historical policies that sought to exclude people from Asia, initially China and the Melanesian Pacific islands. These policies had their inception in the goldfields where there was antagonism to Chinese miners who worked co-operatively and were perceived to be doing better than their white counterparts. The legislation, and the priority given to 'white' immigrants persisted until 1973(Grazel 1993; Shorten 1996).

[5] Various terms used to describe Aboriginal peoples within this, and the following paragraph, may cause offence. These terms have been used in their historical context to illustrate the attitudes of non-Aboriginal people towards Aboriginal peoples.

Aborigines (sic) Department, the position of Chief Protector and, a system of regional Protectors to administer the Act (Cunneen & Libesman 1995). The duty of the Department was to "exercise the general supervision and care over all matters affecting the welfare of the aboriginals (sic) and to protect them against injustice, imposition and fraud" (s.7 (7). The Chief Protector had wide powers over those defined as Aboriginal or half-caste [*sic*] (cited in Cunneen & Libesman 1995, p. 31). The Chief Protector became the guardian of 'every aboriginal [*sic*] and half-caste [*sic*] child to the exclusion of the rights of the mother of an illegitimate half-caste [*sic*] child' until the age of 21 (Cunneen & Libesman 1995, p. 31). He was also granted the power to decide "who was an aboriginal [*sic*] to be controlled: who might remove or confine them, and the penalties for 'enticing' them away (from the reserves)" (Rowley 1970, p. 211). Additionally, any town or city could be declared off limits to Aboriginal peoples.

A decade later the Aborigines (Training of Children) Act 1923 was enacted specifically to allow Aboriginal children to be 'trained' in a children's institution and sent out to work (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 121). accordingly, any Aboriginal child could be committed to any child welfare institution and once committed could be dealt with as if 'neglected' under the State Children's Act 1895, which meant that the child could be apprenticed (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 121). By comparison, removing a non-Aboriginal child required a court finding of 'neglect' or 'destitution'. The 1923 Act dispensed with this requirement for Aboriginal children, justifying this difference on the basis that it was "less traumatic for Indigenous children" (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 121).

In the 1930s government policy reverted to assimilation but the *Aborigines Act 1934-39* was even more restrictive and paternalistic than the 1911 Act (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 121). People of mixed descent came to be classified according to the percentage of Aboriginal blood they possessed relative to European peoples. Finally, in 1939 South Australia, *The Aborigines Act Amendment Act of South Australia* made the Aborigines Protection Board the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children (Cunneen & Libesman 1995, p. 31). It was not until the *1968 South Australia Aboriginal Affairs Act Amendment Act* that young people could no longer be forcibly removed to institutions (Cunneen & Libesman 1995, p. 31).

The intention underlying this series of legislation was clear. Under the pretence of for their own good (Haebich 1988), the effects were a form of cultural genocide of Aboriginal peoples, through the loss (i.e. dispossession) of language, family dispersion and the cessation of cultural practices (Dudgeon et al. 2010). This cultural genocide was finally acknowledged in 1997 with the handing down of the report titled: Bringing Them Home: the National Inquiry into the *Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families* (Commonwealth of Australia 1997).

Two years in its deliberations, this national report made public the intergenerational trauma suffered by Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families and communities sanctioned under legal jurisdiction for generations (Commonwealth of Australia 1997). Officials believed that forcibly removing mixed descent [*sic*] Aboriginal children from their families and sending them away from their communities to work for non-Aboriginal people, would in time result in them 'merging' with, or being 'absorbed' into the non-Aboriginal population (Commonwealth of Australia 1997). However, as stated in the report:

> When a child was forcibly removed that child's entire community lost, often permanently, its chance to perpetuate itself in that child. The Inquiry has concluded that this was a primary objective of forcible removals and is the reason they amount to genocide. (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 207).

This 'genocide', according to the extensive enquiry, was both spiritual and cultural as well as the literal 'dying out' of Aboriginal peoples (Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. 187). Today there would be few Aboriginal people who would not be affected by the decades of genocide implemented by governments, churches and welfare bodies (Dudgeon et al. 2010). Those stolen from their families and communities are today known as the Stolen Generations (Commonwealth of Australia 1997).

Though such destructive legislation was finally repealed in South Australia in 1968, following the changes in Australia's constitution with the 1967 Referendum, the damage was done (Dudgeon et al. 2010). Haebich's (2000) comprehensive analysis of the removal of Aboriginal children across the country describes the removal of children as not a single event but a process stretching from colonisation to the present, with very few Aboriginal people escaping the direct and indirect effects of the legislation and policies that controlled and governed their lives.

The next section discusses the 'damage done' to Aboriginal peoples with a focus on the 'discovery' of profound educational disadvantage beginning in the late 1960s.

2.3.3 The 'discovery' of the Aboriginal educational problem

In the 1967 Referendum, Australians voted overwhelmingly to change the Constitution to allow federal government to legislate for Aborigines [*sic*], and for 'Aborigines' [*sic*] to be included in the census (Dudgeon et al. 2010). This resounding outcome was perhaps one of the most powerful influences on Aboriginal education in the 20th century (Price 2012). For the first time, the Commonwealth Government had responsibility for Aboriginal education Australia-wide (Price 2012).

It was only at this time that "Australia 'discovered' the problem of profound educational disadvantage among its Indigenous people" (Gray & Beresford 2012, p. 197). After generations of segregated and second-class education, the first generation of Aboriginal attendees at mainstream government schools achieved high rates of failure across the nation. For example, in South Australia, only 71 Aboriginal students were enrolled in high schools; 58 in technical (vocational) high schools; 8 in technical college, 1 at art school, 2 at teacher's colleges, and 2 at university (Mattingley & Hampton 1988). Discovering the extent of Aboriginal educational disadvantage led to the introduction of special education schemes, aimed at redressing 179 years of denial and exclusion that had taken place since the arrival of Europeans. However, no attempts were made to consult with Aboriginal people or work with them to develop and implement relevant strategies leading to specific and effective programs (Gray & Beresford 2012). The ineffectiveness of this top-down approach is evident in the following two examples.

Firstly, in the 2005 commissioned government report, *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage*, the Chair writes:

> It is distressingly apparent that many years of policy effort have not delivered desired outcomes; indeed in some important respects the circumstances of Indigenous people appear to have deteriorated or regressed. Worse than that, outcomes in the strategic areas identified as critical to overcoming disadvantage in the long term remain well short of what is needed. (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2005, p. 19)

Almost a decade later, commenting on the results of the *2012 Programme for international student assessment* (PISA) Dreise and Thomson (2013, p. 2) conclude:

> Despite... a raft of... initiatives in Indigenous education, and Indigenous affairs more broadly, over the past decade and more, performance data across a range of sources point to little gain or 'mixed results' at best.

As evidenced in these reports: "... the best intentioned researchers are driven to tell us that things are in a bad way, as if it needed to be told again" (Harrison 2007, p. 1). Moreover, researchers are compelled to tell us that the cause of the problem is the students, their families and their communities (Sarra 2012).

In recent decades all kinds of societal problems and issues are being called 'wicked' by government policymakers (Australian Public Service Commission 2012). Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 160) contend that:

> The kinds of problems that planners deal with—societal problems—are inherently different from the problems that scientists and perhaps some classes of engineers deal with. Planning problems are inherently wicked. As distinguished from problems in the natural sciences, which are definable and separable and may have solutions that are findable, the problems of governmental planning—and especially those of social or policy planning—are ill-defined; and they rely upon elusive political judgment for resolution.

Figure 2.2 demonstrates that the concept of wicked problems is illuminating for the issue of improving Aboriginal educational outcomes. That is, Aboriginal education, viewed as a wicked problem means understanding that the situation is a societal problem, in that it is complex, difficult to understand and resistant to resolution rather than wicked in the sense of evil (Rittel & Webber 1973).

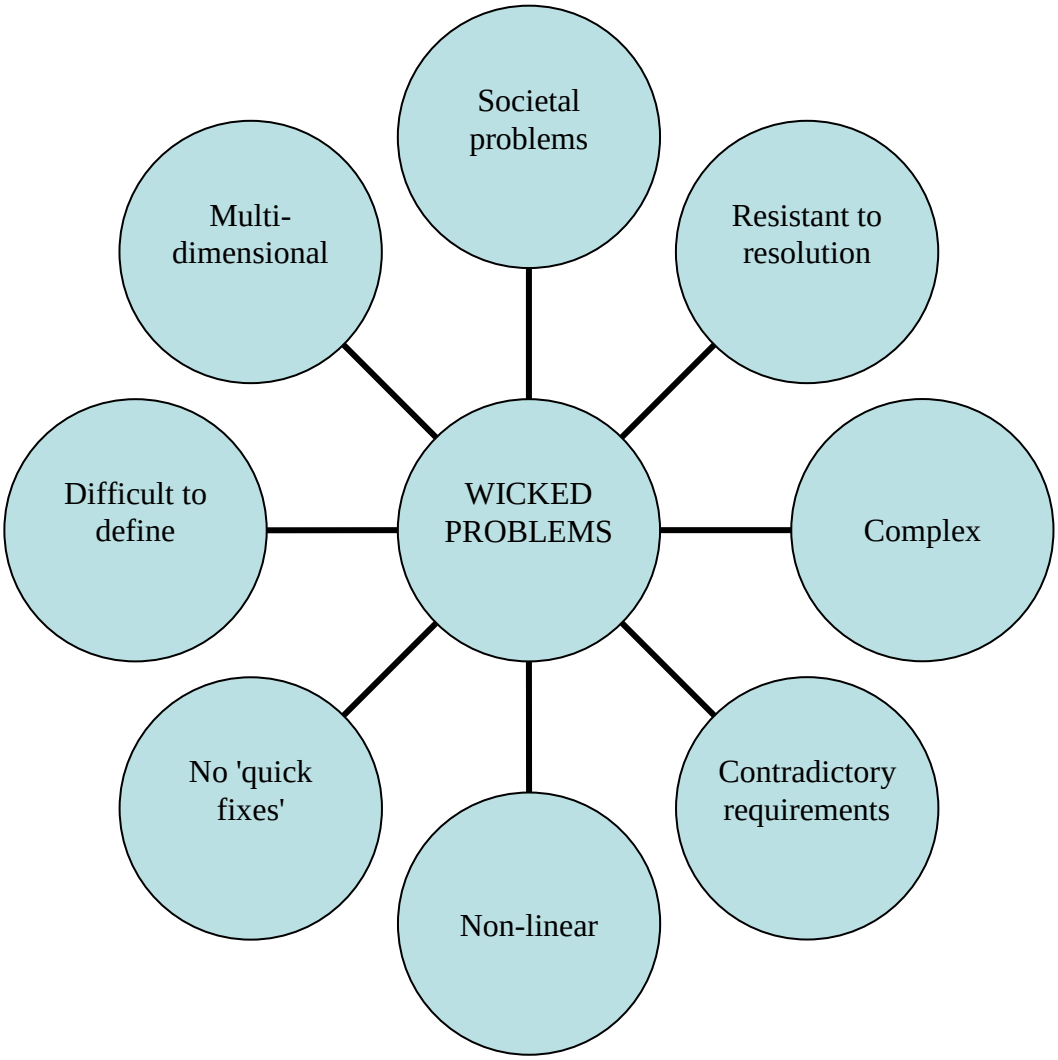

Figure 2:2 Problematising Aboriginal Education as a ‘Wicked Problem’

From the beginnings of formal, Eurocentric education, the Aboriginal perspectives—their distinct culture, and language—has not been included in the syllabus (Andersen, 2011, p. 98). Although there have been a few changes in the last decade, many schools are “alien institutions; monolingual and mono-cultural, in which foreign teachers offer their children foreign content in a foreign manner” (Parbury 1999, p. 65). This situation places Aboriginal students at a further disadvantage: “Aboriginal students can no longer be expected to learn in a curriculum that fails to include their background’ (Parbury 1999, p. 65). On this theme Connell (2009, p. 222) emphasises that: “[t]he educational task now is not to insert Aboriginal children more insistently into an unchallenged Eurocentric system it is to change the institutions of education to make them more culturally relevant to Aboriginal children”. Despite the bleak picture portrayed here, a

growing body of scholarly literature indicates that some educators are taking up the challenge of making the institution of schooling more culturally centred for Aboriginal students. Provided here are a brief overview of two key programs that have emerged in recent times to illustrate the potential of culturally centred schooling and pedagogy in the Australian context.

First is the eight-ways framework of Aboriginal pedagogy that brings indigenous ways of knowing and being 'out of the dusty corners of anthropology and linguistics' and into the Australian classroom (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2011, p. 206). It comprises eight interconnected pedagogies that see teaching and learning as fundamentally holistic, non-linear, visual, kinaesthetic, social and contextualised. The eight interconnected pedagogies are illustrated below:



Figure 2.3: The Eight-ways framework

The Eight-ways framework, originally developed in western New South Wales, centralises the Aboriginal cultural way of yarning, placing the image (Figure 2.3) at its centre of learning (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2011). Significantly, these characteristics are open to change when responding to the needs of the Aboriginal language group within which it is being developed. Yunkaporta and Kirby (2012, p. 207) explain that:

> We're learning *through* culture, not just *about* culture. We are studying outsider knowledge using our own ways – not studying our own knowledge using the ways of outsiders.

It is important to note that the Eight-ways pedagogy framework does not replace the standardised curriculum; nor is it exclusively for the teaching of Aboriginal students;, and, it can be taught by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers.

The second culturally centred initiative outlined here is *Stronger Smarter*. This initiative emerged from the work of Chris Sarra, the first Aboriginal school principal at Cherbourg State School, an Aboriginal community school located in Queensland. Work undertaken by Chris Sarra (2003, 2007) revealed that if students are told they are smart and that standards are maintained for them, their achievement will match the expectations. In essence, Stronger Smarter focus is on the strengths of students and teachers, with the program encouraging a strong sense of cultural identity, belonging and being valued (Sarra 2003). Improving educational outcomes for students is dependent on what is referred to as 'high expectation relationships' that go beyond the classroom (Sarra 2011b). Sarra (2011c, p. 1) describes high expectations relationships as being both firm and fair, stating that:

> A relationship is anchored by high expectations when we have the compassion to be fair, by engaging in acknowledging and enabling processes when we can, as well as having the courage to be firm, by challenging and intervening when we need to.

Overall, the Stronger Smarter Institute has developed a framework for high expectations relationships that include the domains of: self, student, peer, parents/carers and community. Additionally, it describes high expectations relationships through the fundamentals of understanding personal assumptions, creating spaces for dialogue, and engaging in challenging conversations (Sarra 2011b). Stronger Smarter is an approach to improving Aboriginal educational outcomes that recognises the complexity of the challenge and understands that the elements of culture, relationships and identity are significant for bringing about transformational change (Sarra 2003). Finally, while Stronger Smarter has become a national program, it recognises the significance of contextualising the program for the local setting (Sarra 2011b).

Both Eight-ways pedagogy, and Stronger Smarter, are examples of what can be accomplished when deficit constructions of Aboriginal students are challenged and rejected; when the student's distinct culture is centrally placed in the learning space; and when the solution is grounded in high expectation relationships. Furthermore, both of these examples demonstrate the need for pedagogy to be responsive to the location

within which it is being delivered, rather than adopting a one-size-fits all stance. Both of these culturally responsive approaches to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, suggest that solving this societal wicked problem is indeed possible despite what policy makers tend to advocate. Generally speaking, however, improvements are slow and incremental in nature with little or, it would seem, no apparent reliability or sustainability. In writing about the gains made in Torres Strait Islander education, Osborne (2003b, p. 61) asks: "Are we going around in circles or through spirals of improvement? Either way, improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students is a social imperative.

This section has described and critiqued Aboriginal education —both pre- and post-colonial—so as to provide necessary context for the current investigation. It has sought to establish the argument that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students is a wicked problem that will involve a multidimensional 'solution' (Rittel & Webber 1973). The next section discusses the significant role that racism, borne out of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation, continues to play in the Aboriginal educational landscape.

2.3.4 The social construction of 'race'

The term 'race' is usually used to refer to specific groupings of people who share certain characteristics that are typically genetic or biological in origin (Hollinsworth 1998). Such characteristics enable different groups of people to be distinguished from other such groupings. The existence in society of such categorisations or classifications have become almost normalised and taken for granted. Moreover, the process by which the defining characteristics of such categories are chosen and applied to place individuals within their racial group are uncritically accepted (Hollinsworth 1998). Hollinsworth (1998, p. 29) asserts:

> Significantly, such groups are usually understood in terms of their being unlike or other than 'us'. Often people are more able or more willing to name 'races' to which they do not belong. They, 'the others', are noteworthy, their existence needs explanation, their behaviour is highlighted and their presence problematic.

However, this normalised concept of 'race' is relatively new to human thought. With the global expansion of colonialism and the development of capitalism in Europe, the idea of 'race' developed from a generalised term for a group of people with some characteristic in common (appearance, language, culture, beliefs, technology), to a

highly elaborated concept used to explain fundamentals of human history and social arrangements in terms of fixed attributes of inferiority and superiority (Hollinsworth 1998).

With the end of the Renaissance in the 17th century, a new way of thinking emerged. In this ‘era of enlightenment’, the scientific method began to provide an alternate worldview to that of Christianity. More specifically, the field of natural history began to classify, categorise and compare plants, animals and other natural phenomena (Edwards 2005). Expanding colonisation necessitated the development of theories that could explain the difference between groups of people that were being encountered. Consequently, scientists constructed elaborate classificatory systems for human groups around the world. Such systems universally placed the group to which the scientist belonged at the top, with other groups being ranked according to how closely they compared to the superiority of the dominant type (Hollinsworth 1998). This hierarchy, based on a concept of Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, was referred to as the Great Chain of Being (Hollinsworth 1998 p. 36). Therefore, all visible and invisible creation was placed on a vertical chain of living or spiritual beings either superior or inferior to the links above and below (Edwards 2005). At the top of the chain sat God, the Creator. From God descended every other being. Australia's Aboriginal peoples were frequently described as only one link removed from the most intelligent animal, which was the ape. Needless to say, the ‘civilised’ Englishman was at the top of the human scale—closer to the angels than the apes (Lovejoy 1976).

As the 18th century progressed such classificatory systems gained further support when Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution of species, based on his observation of plants and animals, was applied by others to human societies. In essence, Darwin argued that different species evolved through a mechanism of ‘natural selection’ or ‘survival of the fittest’, by which favourable variations survived and developed to form new species with the previous forms becoming extinct (Edwards 2005). Many thinkers of the time, who believed in the superiority of the ‘white race’, argued that Darwinian thought, when applied to human societies, explained why the so-called primitive ‘races “seemed to fade away in the face of European colonisation” (Broome 2001, p. 96). Therefore the new theory of evolution functioned alongside the earlier theory of the great chain of being “... to interpret depopulation as a triumph of the perfectibility of ‘man’” (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 42).

By the 20th century, most European Australians were familiar with phrases like ‘white superiority’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ (Broome 2010). Beliefs about Aboriginal peoples were typically a reflection of the times and were therefore based on ignorance, a lack of sympathy, on fanciful racial theories and on the need to rationalise the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their land (Broome 2010, p. 97). Scientific theories, discussed above, enabled and justified the dispossession, oppression, segregation and genocide of Aboriginal peoples due to their supposed inferiority to Europeans. Put simply, Aboriginal peoples were constructed as primitive, and inferior—one link up on the chain of being above apes needing to catch up to western notions of civilisation (Osborne 1996).

Though for decades the concept of ‘race’ has been dismissed as false, there exists a myriad of prevailing racial theories (raciologies) which continue to do their destructive work as a means for identification and measurement of value (Ladson-Billings 2012). Consequently, the structures and processes that Australia has developed over the last 200 plus years as a result of dispossessing colonisation and ‘scientific’ theorising, continue to operate in today’s society, perpetuating inequalities along racial lines (Hollinsworth 1998). One way in which such structures and processes continue to operate is through the morphing of biological- or genetic-based classificatory systems of groups of peoples, to culturally based systems of comparison and classification.

The concepts of ‘cultural racism’, ‘racialisation of culture’, and ‘cultural determinism’, began to appear in scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s (Barker 1981; Cowlishaw & Morris 1997). The concept of ‘culture’ had now become the mechanism by which differences in human groups were to be understood rather than the historical concept of biology and ‘race’. “Yet, it is this very notion of culture which in some ways became the new mechanism by which individuals could be differentiated into ‘races’” (Jones 2012, p. 43). So, “to speak of culture is not to cease to speak of race” (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997, p. 5). That is, they are both forms of hierarchical comparison, classification and categorisation that enable peoples to be deemed inferior, to be excluded and, to be ‘othered’ (Gillborn 2006). Dudgeon et al (2010, p. 36) assert that: “Cultural racism is a part of the atmosphere of a society; it is just part of the tacit, assumed way of doing things”.

Therefore, be it biologically or culturally centred, racism is a "historically grounded social construction, which continues to be experienced by Aboriginal peoples (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997). As highlighted in the *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage report* (SCRGSP 2009), racism at individual and institutional levels continue to reproduce the impoverishment and disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal Australians. In short, "colonisation and racism are produced by, and reproduce, systems of power that marginalise particular groups, while privileging others" (Madden 2014, p. 2). Systemic racism forms the foundation for individual and institutional acts of racism. De Plevitz's (2006, p. 46) description of systemic racism is informative for my research and therefore I quote at length:

> Covert discrimination is sometimes called systemic or institutionalised racism, because it runs through the system of an organisation like a disease. It is the result of the unwitting application of criteria derived from the history and culture of the dominant group. It assumes that all people are the same and share the dominant culture. The policies and practices it generates are not intended to discriminate; their proponents believe the criteria are objective and of universal application. The effect, however, is an adverse impact on certain ethnic groups or races who are denied their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The advantage of the indirect discrimination action is that it can pick up cultural biases in favour of the dominant group by comparing the proportions of those who can comply with the criteria or norms.

This 'disease' of racism experienced by many Aboriginal students has been identified as acting as a hidden barrier to educational success (de Plevitz 2007). As such, the social constructions of 'race' provide necessary context for the investigation.

In the next section Critical Race Theory (CRT) is introduced as a means for problematising, and of interrogating, issues of 'race', racism and colonisation. It begins with a global perspective, outlining CRT's history, its central tenets and its application to education. A modified version of CRT that responds to the distinct Australian story is proposed, referred to as Colonial Critical Race Theory or ColonialCrit.

2.4 Theoretical Framing: Critical Race Theory, a Global Perspective

Research on racism provides a diversity of definitions and ways of interrogating 'race' and racism discussed in the previous section. Predominantly, such theoretical frameworks have originated in the United States, and then been modified and applied to other geographical and contextual settings, such as Australia.

One such theoretical framework is that of Critical Whiteness Studies which questions, for example, the privilege of whiteness. A significant US voice in the call to address 'white' privilege is black feminist scholar bell hooks (1990, p. 53), who asks "what does it mean when primarily 'white' men and women are producing the discourse around Otherness?" Hooks has been highly influential in her push for 'white' people to interrogate their privilege in their work towards anti-racism (hooks 1990, p. 54) and she has observed her 'white' feminist colleagues beginning to acknowledge the important intersection of 'race' and 'gender' in their work (hooks 1990, p. 53). She has also made contributions specifically addressing the area of education (hooks 2003, 1994), speaking mainly of experiences with tertiary education.

In Australia, scholarship concerned specifically with whiteness as an identity construct, first appeared in the 1990s. At this time, influenced by American and British scholarship, Australian researchers began to discuss and write about whiteness (McKay 1999, p. 3). Likewise, Aboriginal scholars began to apply whiteness scholarship when they began to question the focus on Aboriginal people in Australia's 'race' dialogue. At this time the primary focus was on 'Aboriginal' reconciliation (Grattan 2000). Within this scholarship the concept of 'white' privilege was absent and racial issues were instead firmly focused on Aboriginal people.

A significant voice by Quandamooka scholar, Aileen Moreton-Robinson (1998, p. 11) asserted that: "Whiteness confers both dominance and privilege; it is embedded in Australia's institutions and in the social practices of everyday life". Her collective works provide invaluable insight into some of the ways in which 'white' privilege and power impact identity formation, institutional practices and relationships and suggest that whiteness is an important concern in restoring justice to Aboriginal people in Australia (see, for example, Moreton-Robinson 1998, 2003, 2011). However, despite its prevalence and significance in Australian scholarship, Critical Whiteness Studies was found in this research to not adequately problematise 'race' and racism in the Australian educational system. Therefore, the alternate theory of Critical Race Theory (CRT), from which critical whiteness studies emerged, was deemed to be more fitting for the purpose of the current investigation.

The most basic argument of CRT is that 'race' and racism are a defining characteristic of society and CRT aims to expose the patterns of exclusion and what is taken for

granted regarding ‘race’ and privilege (Ladson-Billings 1998). Moreover, CRT contends that racism is permanent and endemic in society but typically goes unacknowledged and uncritiqued (Gillborn 2005). Additionally, Solórzano (1997, p. 122) asserts that: “... [a]lthough race and racism are at the centre of a critical race analysis, they are also viewed at their intersection with other forms of subordination such as gender and class discrimination”. As such, CRT explicitly focuses on social inequalities resulting out of racism but recognises too the intersectionality of other areas of inequality—gender, social class, generation cohort, ability and sexuality.

Originally developed by African-American scholars working in academic legal circles in the United States, CRT grew out of dissatisfaction with the extremely slow rate of real racial reform since the civil rights movement in the 1960s (Ladson-Billings 1998). The overall goal of CRT is to develop a theoretical, conceptual and methodological approach that accounts for the role of racism in perpetuating societal inequality (Solórzano 1997). Moreover, CRT works towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination (Ladson-Billings 1998). However, while CRT began as a movement in the field of law, its boundaries have been extended into a diversity of scholarly arenas including education.

To begin with, African-American scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT into the field of education with the publication of *Toward a critical race theory of education* in the *Teachers College Record* (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). They asserted that both ‘race’ and racism remain significant factors in society in general, and education in particular. However, despite the significance and persistence of the concept of ‘race’ in education, it remains, they argued, largely under-theorised when compared to areas such as class or gender (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). Additionally, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) found in their research that the racism experienced by Indigenous youth in their schooling experience, is seldom explicitly focused upon in educational research or teacher preparation. Finally, Lynn et al. (2002, p. 2) argued that educational researchers and practitioners still needed a language that will provide the necessary tools for critiquing the impact of racism on education. Since this time a myriad of scholars have taken up the challenge and used CRT as a way to analyse and critique educational research and practice.

CRT draws from the strengths of multiple disciplines, epistemologies, and research approaches to interrogate racism (Scheurich & Young 1997). Put simply, CRT confronts and challenges traditional views of education in regard to issues of meritocracy, claims of colour-blind objectivity, 'race' neutrality, and equal opportunity (Delgado & Stefancic 2000; Villalpando 2003). Critical race theorists argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in society (Solórzano 1997). CRT has been proven to be a valuable means for making sense of persistent racial inequities in schooling across cultural groupings and geographical locations.

For example, British scholar David Gillborn (2006) argues that CRT attempts to expose how racism functions in contemporary western society. Gillborn goes on to contend that the central focus of CRT is to contest how racism gets to be ingrained in society and becomes "normal, not aberrant" (Gillborn 2006, p. 20). CRT therefore aims to broaden our understanding of the functioning of racism as encompassing the more subtle "operations of power" as well as the "crude, obvious acts of race hatred" (Gillborn 2006, pp. 20–21).

However, as Rizvi (2009, p. 364) cautions, racism is experienced differently by different groups in places with different historical and political trajectories. Rizvi (2009, p. 366) goes on to caution that we need to be vigilant "... when theories are taken from the context of their development to another context" as their defining characteristics and overall purpose have often developed out of particular issues related to their original context. This is true of CRT, which is strongly linked to the African-American experience of slavery and its long-term effects, as well as a desire to extend the work of the civil rights movement in an effort to establish deep and authentic inclusion and participation (Rizvi 2009, p. 364). Furthermore, CRT has been criticised for romanticising 'blackness' and being US-centric (Gillborn, 2009) and, Rizvi (2009) critiques CRT as being African-American-centric at the expense of experiences in other parts of the world.

While CRT serves as a framework in and of itself, it was never meant to address the specific needs or experiences of Indigenous, nor Aboriginal, peoples. As CRT was developed as a response to civil rights issues being experienced by African-American people, its focus is towards an articulation of 'race' issues along a "black–white" binary

(Brayboy 2006, p. 428). This does not, however, prevent its modification and application to lived experiences of other cultural groups. For instance, there is Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) developed by scholars such as Solórzano (1998) who investigated 'race' and gender in the Chicana/o academic community; and, Villalpando (2003) who researched Latina/o college students. LatCrit emphasises issues that affect Latina/o peoples in everyday life, including immigration, language, identity, culture, and skin colour (Delgado Bernal 2002; Villalpando 2003). Additionally, there is Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) developed by legal scholar Chang (1993) and higher education scholar Liu (2009). AsianCrit critiques issues affecting Asian peoples in the US including the nativistic racism embedded in the model minority stereotype, immigration and naturalisation, language, and disenfranchisement. Each of these modified CRT frameworks responds to the distinct lived experiences of its identified cultural population.

Likewise, the framework of CRT has begun to be used as a theoretical, methodological and pedagogical tool in Indigenous scholarship. Most noticeably, Brayboy (2006) proposed Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) to address the specific needs of US Indigenous peoples. Brayboy (2006) asserts that while the contextualised theories of LatCrit and AsianCrit have developed to meet the specific needs of Latinas/os and Asian Americans, they largely maintain the basic premise of CRT that *racism* is endemic in society. In contrast, Brayboy (2001) argues that the basic tenet of TribalCrit emphasises that *colonisation* is endemic to society. While TribalCrit has its roots in Critical Race Theory, it also draws heavily on Anthropology, Political V Legal Theory, Political Science, American Indian Literatures, Education and American Indian Studies. Drawing from these fields of scholarship Brayboy (2006, pp. 429–430) proposes nine tenets of TribalCrit which include: colonisation is endemic to society; stories are not separate from theory and are real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being; and, theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. An alternate advocate of TribalCrit, Jeanette Haynes Writer[6] (2008, p. 2) contends that CRT and Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) offer the "... possibility of unmasking, exposing, and confronting continued colonisation within educational contexts and societal structures, thus transforming those contexts and structures for Indigenous Peoples". TribalCrit successfully modifies the framework of

[6] Jeanette Haynes Writer is a Tsalagi (Cherokee Nation) scholar and educator.

CRT to problematise the issues of 'race' and colonisation for US Indigenous peoples primarily within the educational system.

Additionally, CRT has emerged in New Zealand scholarship as a possible way for improving Maori educational success. Responding to the issues being encountered by Maori within the Aotearoa NZ educational landscape in 2014, a core group of approximately 60 Maori and non-Maori school principals, independent of the NZ Ministry of Education, created the Maori Success Initiative (MSI) (Santamaria et al. 2015). Santamaria et al. (2015, p. 95) states that:

> The ultimate goal of MSI is to establish a critical mass of effective school leaders and leadership practices which challenge status quo strategies that have resulted in inequitable educational outcomes for Maori.

MSI is underpinned by the research methodologies of Kaupapa Maori and Critical Race Theory (CRT). Put simply, Kaupapa Maori represents research that is "by Maori, for Maori and with Maori" (Walker, Eketone & Gibbs 2006, p. 333). This method or way of researching alongside and with Maori researchers and participants—when employed deliberately, appropriately and systematically—can yield excellent research (Smith, 2006). A CRT framework evidently partners well with the Kaupapa Maori approach. In the MSI, CRT has been utilised as a way to address oppression resulting from systemic and institutionalised colonisation in Aotearoa NZ (Ladson-Billings 1999). This partnership between Kaupapa Maori and CRT methodologies works to collect counterstories which are then developed and shared to add new and positive stories about leadership for Maori success, thereby disrupting racism and negative educational leadership and schooling (Santamaria et al. 2015).

In addition, by way of an example in Canada, the CRT framework was used to implement mandatory treaty education for all students in K-12 schooling in the Provincial Government of Saskatchewan in 2008. Tupper (2011, p. 39) asserts:

> To be clear, this mandate is not just teaching the "facts" of the numbered treaties; rather, it is about teaching through Indigenous worldviews and exploring the historical and contemporary relationship between First Nations and settlers.

In her investigation of 348 mostly 'white' teacher education candidates, Tupper (2011, p. 38) sought to first understand their "knowledge, (mis)understandings, and experiences with treaty education" in both grade school and university contexts. CRT is used to reveal types of discrimination that are unspoken in curriculum

> when only certain content and perspectives are included (Dixson & Rousseau 2006a; Solórzano & Yosso 2009). Treaty education is therefore a counterstory as it offers possibilities for settler students (and teachers) to understand how curricular stories of the history of Saskatchewan came to be representative and other stories were dismissed; treaty education is also a means for challenging and disrupting the role of curriculum in sustaining dominance and privilege of the settlers (Tupper & Cappello 2008).

Within Australia, CRT has begun to be utilised as a research framework in Aboriginal educational scholarship. For example, McDonald (2003) used CRT for her analysis of exemplary pedagogical practices with Aboriginal early years students in Australia's north; Rudolph (2011) utilised CRT to challenge us to re-think our understanding of Aboriginal educational disadvantage; Ford (2013) applied a CRT framework to her investigation of the Aboriginal achievement gap; and Vass (2014) used two tenets of CRT as a theoretical, methodological and analytic approach to improve our understanding of contemporary Aboriginal education. Utilising a CRT framework each scholar problematises 'race' in their respective investigations.

The international and national examples provided here each demonstrate how the framework of CRT can be modified to address the needs, experiences and histories of peoples in other parts of the world including Indigenous peoples. Each example, outlined above, demonstrates that CRT has developed beyond being African-American-centric, or legal-centric, at the expense of alternate experiences of prejudice, discrimination and oppression. The Indigenous scholarship from the United States, Canada and New Zealand have particular relevance to the current research as their experiences are descriptive of the colonisation enforced through educational systems for Indigenous peoples globally. However, as illustrated in the provided examples of modified CRT theory and pedagogy, CRT needs to respond to the narratives of those it is trying to include in the 'conversation'(Brayboy 2006, p. 429).

As noted by Brayboy, TribalCrit is an emerging theory designed '...to more completely address the issues of Indigenous Peoples in the United States' (Brayboy 2006, p. 427). It responds to the US First Peoples experience of colonisation, dispossession and assimilation that stretches back over 500 years (Brayboy 2006). While the story shares similarities with Australia, and indeed other colonised nations around the world like

Canada and New Zealand, the US nonetheless has different historical and political trajectories (Rizvi 2009). So while the US and Australia share stories of dispossession, colonisation, assimilation and so forth, how each of these was implemented and experienced, varies according to the place and context in which it took place. So the task in my research is not to simply supplant the existing CRT scholarship, or the valuable work of Brayboy and TribalCrit, into the Australian story, but rather to respond to the distinct trajectories of the Australian narrative. Like TribalCrit, and other modified versions of CRT discussed above, the task here is to draw upon the extensive body of scholarship but modify it to the distinct Australian story as others have already begun to do.

Like Brayboy (2006) I contend that the extensive CRT scholarship has the capability to provide new ways, and a new language for analysing the role of racism in education that challenges the pathologisation of vernacular cultures that are embedded in the following expressions: “intercultural problem”, “cultural deficiency”, “cultural handicap” and “cultural inadequacy” (Sefa Dei & Kempf 2006, p. 37). More specifically, CRT has the potential to challenge the long-held expressions of ‘deficit’, ‘disadvantage’ and ‘intervention’ frequently connected with Aboriginal education. The significance of such language is not innocent and the consequences are far-reaching, as evidenced by educators and those in authority who view the ‘other’ as somehow deficient and inferior (Sefa Dei & Kempf 2006). So, while the CRT framework is still relatively new to the Australian educational landscape, it offers generative explanations for the persistence of the so-called ‘achievement gap’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Australia. I therefore argue that the CRT Family Tree (Yosso 2005) needs to be expanded to include a theory of Colonial Critical Race Theory or ColonialCrit that utilises both raciologies and decolonising theories. This theoretical, methodological and pedagogical framework provides a means by which the ongoing impact of dispossessing colonisation and embedded racism in Australia can be unmasked and transformed.

2.5 ColonialCrit: The Australian Context

As discussed in the previous section, CRT scholarship provides a diversity of definitions and ways of interrogating ‘race’ and racism and in more recent times, colonisation. Critical Race Theory has at least seven themes that form its basic perspectives, research methods and pedagogy. For my research I provide here an

amalgam of these seven primary tenets of CRT drawn from across the literature. No priority status is intended in this listing, it is simply a heuristic to facilitate the discussion. They are: asserting the endemic nature and permanence of racism and/or colonisation; arguing for the social construction of 'race'; asserting an oppositional scholarship; privileging of stories and counterstorytelling; committing to social justice; elaborating the benefits of whiteness; providing a historical context and using interdisciplinary perspectives (see, for example, Brayboy 2001, 2006; Delgado 1984, 1992; Haines Writer 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995; Parker & Villalpando 2007). While these seven tenets will be instrumental to developing a framework of ColonialCrit, my aim here is not to reproduce this US-centric body of scholarship but rather to expand CRT to the Australian context and draw attention to the ongoing impact of dispossessing colonisation and racism in the critique of Aboriginal education and, specifically, establishing a framework of pedagogical success. However, the elements that characterise CRT are difficult to reduce to discrete descriptions as critical race theorists (Crits) are attempting to integrate their experiential knowledge into moral and situational analysis of systems such as the law or, as in my investigation, education. CRT provides an overarching framework within which accounts of racism can be located and interrogated though the situation in which the account occurs will likely vary markedly. Consequently, while there are elements that characterise CRT, they need to be situated in a way that responds to the singularity of individual experience and context.

Four tenets are proposed: recognising the social embeddedness of racism; asserting the social construction of 'race' as a tool of oppressive segregation; privileging stories and counterstorytelling; and committing to social justice and educator praxis: Incorporating activism. Each modified tenet responds to the distinct Australian story of dispossessing colonisation and racism. Taken together they form the foundation of my proposed modified Critical Race Theory, ColonialCrit, which is now expanded upon.

2.5.1 Recognising the social embeddedness of racism

The first theme of the modified Critical Race Theory that I argue as a basis for the study asserts that racism is embedded in Australian society. Since the declaration of terra nullius by Captain James Cook in 1770, Australia's Aboriginal peoples have been constructed in a myriad of destructive ways. Aboriginal peoples have, for example, been

dismissed as actually existing, in need of Christianising and civilising, in need of protection, disadvantaged and, generally a deficient people with little or no value (Craven & Price 2012; Moreton-Robinson 2003). The resulting racism has become so common and embedded into Australia's narrative that it is seldom questioned, with those of the dominant 'white' culture often being conveniently oblivious to its existence (DeCuir & Dixson 2004).

In the 21st century then, 'race' and racism are typically understood "to be irrelevant or, at best, a problem of racist individuals rather than a systemic condition to be confronted" (Leonardo 2009, p. 1). Alternatively, racism is understood to consist of explicit acts, with racism being perpetrated by 'bad people' who dislike others because of something as arbitrary and innocuous as their skin colour (Lopez 2003). Although this type of blatant, biologically-centric, racism certainly does occur, such a view incorrectly assumes that racism only occurs as individual and isolated acts and does not penetrate institutions, organisations, or ways of thinking (Delgado 1995). Thus, it is the racialised acts of an individual that are held to account while embedded institutional and structural racism remains uncritiqued. In writing about anti-racist education, St. Dennis (2007, p. 183) concludes that: "... racism in today's society has not changed much; it is just hidden behind our backs enabling those who don't experience racism to continue to argue that racism is of a by-gone era".

For Aboriginal students, racism may be experienced in a variety of ways and from a range of sources including harmful assumptions, paternalism, prejudice, low expectations, stereotypes, violence and biased curriculum materials (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist 2003). Alternatively, there is the covert racism of colour-blindness described by Neville (2000, p. 60) as the idea that "race should not and does not matter". In the landscape of education, this means "teachers not showing favouritism or discrimination to certain students based on skin colour–the 'does not matter' philosophy requires that teachers turn a 'blind eye' to racial [or cultural] differences" (Atwater 2007, p.1). Howard (1999, p. 53), writing of colour-blindness in education, argues that: "... we can erase our racial categories, ignore differences and thereby achieve an illusory state of sameness or equality". But colour-blindness serves only to protect and uphold the majoritarian narrative that 'race' does not matter and therefore racism does not exist and no critique is necessary (Castagno 2014). It is the intent of ColonialCrit to reveal

and disrupt these destructive embedded narratives in institutions—like education—that continue to oppress and segregate Aboriginal students.

2.5.2 Asserting social construction of 'race' as a tool of oppressive segregation

The second tenet of the ColonialCrit framework is *asserting the social construction of* 'race' *as a tool of oppressive segregation.* As described earlier, 'race' is a comparatively modern phenomenon, traceable to the beginnings of European colonisation and capitalist expansion in recent centuries (Leonardo 2009). Writing of South African education, Moore (1992, pp. 5-6) asserts that:

> [R]acism is not primarily about prejudices, ignorance, or fears. It is primarily about the use of the concept 'race' to organise society in such a way as to structure in the oppression of Black [*sic*] people systematically. What this means is that racism is perceived as the process of 'racialising' social formations in such a way as to impoverish, de-power, disenfranchise, divide, silence and exclude Black [*sic*] people and to ensure that they receive minimal services.

Likewise, Apple (2009, p. 652) contends that 'race' is a powerful construct that occurs in the everyday which determines the social processes and institutions by which and through which certain groups have consistently been denied human rights, whereas other groups are seen as fully the norm by which all groups are to be measured. 'Race', and I contend culture, is therefore employed as a tool to enable and justify one group possessing power over another group in society.

One way of attaining this power is through the construction of racially based stereotypes and myths of deficit—"... sometimes cultural, sometimes biological, sometimes moral, sometimes all three" (Gillborn 2005, p. 490)—that reinforce the superiority of one group (e.g. 'white', middle-class) and the inferiority of another group (e.g. Aboriginal peoples). Doctoral research conducted by Aboriginal educator Chris Sarra (2005 cited in Sarra 2012), shows that mainstream Australians' perceptions of Aboriginal people continue to be influenced by past stereotypical constructions. In the main, adjectives used by participants in Sarra's research to describe Aboriginal people, nearly always had a negative undertone and many were highly critical and derogatory. Descriptors included 'lazy', 'alcoholic', 'welfare-dependent', 'coons', 'boongs' and 'niggers' (Sarra 2012, p. 111). Racial insults conjure up the entire colonial history of racial discrimination (Delgado 1982 cited in Delgado & Stefancic 2012, p. 26) asserted in, for example, pseudo-scientific notions of the Chain of Being and Social Darwinism

discussed previously. Racially based insults serve to justify and uphold a system of oppression and segregation which continues to be experienced by generations of Aboriginal peoples that results in persistent disadvantage.

The term 'locked-in inequality' grew out of research that investigated the ways that African-Americans in particular are consistently and constantly disadvantaged in the systems of law and economics (Roithmayr 2004). According to Roithmayr (2004), poor health and housing, low educational opportunities and economic disparities derive from earlier locked-in monopolies, which continue to contribute to current inequality. The embedded nature of this systemic inequality means that change will only come from a radical overhaul of current policies and practices. Gillborn (2008, p. 45) asserts that: "Educational race inequality in England is an example of 'locked-in inequality' that is, given current circumstances, inevitable and permanent". The same can arguably be said for Indigenous people in general, and more specifically Aboriginal students in the Australian context.

Writing of the colonisation evident within educational institutions in the United States, Sahnish and Hidatasa scholar, Michael Yellow Bird (2005, p. 16) states:

> The U.S. educational system has been one of the most hostile and oppressive aspects of colonialism.... Colonised-based educational systems contributed significantly to the destruction of cultural knowledge, and the imposition of the belief that Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge and ideas were—and remain—less than those of mainstream peoples.

Although Yellow Bird's criticism focuses on US educational systems specifically, it is, I argue, readily transferable to the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. The history of Aboriginal education, discussed previously, clearly demonstrates how it served the interests of European colonists (Bin-Sallik 2003; Gray & Beresford 2008). As Osborne (1996, p. 4) states: "As a society, we pushed them (Aboriginal people) to the margins and we came to see that as their normal condition". That is, colonial policies and legislation have established a majoritarian story of Aboriginal peoples that lock them into persistent disadvantage and places them on the margins of society, both figuratively and literally.

For example, policies of segregated education that persisted for over a century was one of the clearest expressions of the belief in the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples (Beresford 2012). As Roithmayr (2004) and Gillborn (2008) have asserted, earlier

policies and practices that excluded Aboriginal peoples from legal, economic and education systems, continue to contribute to current inequality as do so-called new approaches and solutions that continue to pathologise (Sefa Dei 2006) Aboriginal peoples by upholding a narrative that is embedded in a myriad of raciologies.

Unlocking embedded inequality will take a radical overhaul of our embedded understanding of the cause of, for example, Aboriginal disadvantage. Ford (2013, p. 83) asserts that: "... locked-in inequality has its roots in a third rate education of the past and the struggles to adequately provide a first rate education in the present". Complicating this situation, Sarra G et al. (2011, p. 177) assert that most educators have difficulty viewing themselves as part of the problem, and are therefore unlikely to seek solutions from within their pedagogical practices or, willingly challenge their deficit perceptions of marginalised or minoritised groups. Many teachers possess a non-reflective and non-critical mind, accepting in the main the existing status quo of domination and oppression. Consequently, the teacher's focus is on what is wrong with the student rather than questioning what is wrong with the system from within which they teach. Narungga scholar Peter Buckskin (2013, p. 4) writes:

> In Australia, there is a lack of analysis on the impact of racism in Indigenous educational outcomes; and while there is a lack of evidence, White Australia can continue to argue that racism is not the issue that results in poor educational outcomes. So I argue that race and racism is the elephant in Australian staffrooms and classrooms.

I would further argue that this 'elephant' is to be found in the wider sphere of education. This is evidenced by the language to be found in embedded social constructions that include unteachable and uneducable, intervention and close the gap, utilised so extensively in Aboriginal educational scholarship.

This language serves to pathologise (Sefa Dei 2006) Aboriginal students and perpetuates the "disease" of covert racism in society and its institutions (de Plevitz 2006, p. 46). While it is important to recognise disadvantage and inequality, there is a danger of falling into a narrative too focused on the 'victim', and how *they* are to improve their situation, exonerating all others of responsibility. My thesis seeks to develop a counterstory of Aboriginal success and thereby disrupt the social and historical constructions that lock Aboriginal students in to a persistent position of disadvantage and inequality. Following (de Plevitz 2006) I focus on the disease of

systemic racism resulting from dispossessing colonisation to instead acknowledge the injury that is awaiting "... collective action to address the systemic neglect" (Sefa Dei 2006, p. 5).

2.5.3 Privileging of stories and counterstorytelling

The third tenet of my expanded theory of Colonial Critical Race Theory or ColonialCrit modified from CRT is the *privileging of stories and counterstorytelling*. The task of challenging the majoritarian narrative that is underpinned by racism, involves making the invisible visible, illuminating the privileges and in some cases recasting previous versions of history and social issues (Malin & Ngarritjan 1999, p. 9). For this to be achieved, Aboriginal stories and knowledge systems need to be regarded as real and legitimate sources for understanding racial oppression (Brayboy 2006; Parker & Villalpando 2007). However, colonisation has largely meant that Aboriginal distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing alongside their experiences of dispossession have been ridiculed, ignored or oppressed. Critical race theorists argue that counterstorytelling is a valuable tool for critiquing and changing racial dominance (Solórzano & Yosso 2002; Tate 1995). ColonialCrit attempts this by centring and privileging the experiential knowledge of Aboriginal peoples, understanding that such lived experiences are a valuable knowledge resource. This process is referred to as the privileging of stories and counterstorytelling, which challenges the long promoted narrative of non-existence or value of Aboriginal peoples as denoted in the fictional doctrine of terra nullius.

According to Delgado (1989), counterstorytelling is both a method of telling stories of experiences that are not often told as well as a tool for critiquing the stories of those in power and whose story is a normalised part of the dominant narrative—the majoritarian story (Delgado 1993). For example while a narrative can support the majoritarian story, a counternarrative or counterstory, by its very nature, challenges the majoritarian story or that: "... bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings" persons in the dominant 'race' bring to the discussion of racism (Delgado1989, p. 2413). Therefore, counterstorytelling in ColonialCrit seeks to undermine and disrupt racist (and classist, sexist, disablist) narratives that have become normalised and embedded in Australia's societal narrative (Delgado & Stefancic 2012).

Counterstories can serve several theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical purposes including:

> (a) They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice.
>
> (b) They can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center.
>
> (c) They can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and to show that they are not alone in their position.
>
> (d) They can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone.
>
> (e) They can provide a context to understand and transform established belief systems. (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal 2001, pp. 328-329)

Indigenous cultures around the world have been using stories as teachers, as lesson makers, for thousands of years, down through thousands of generations. As outline earlier, prior to colonisation Aboriginal peoples had a complex system of kinship, respect and reciprocity that was maintained through the stories of The Dreaming (Edwards 2005; Martin 2008). However, dispossessing colonisation deemed such wisdom invalid, instead placing their own European knowledge at the centre of society, thereby becoming the majoritarian, normalised and often destructive narrative. As Delgado and Stefancic (2012, p. 105) point out, CRT is concerned not with objective truth, but with truth as a "... social construct, created to suit the purposes of a dominant group". Privileging Aboriginal stories and knowledge is therefore oppositional to the denial of Aboriginal knowledge systems, established as the norm by the early colonisers (Matthews 2012). However, for counterstorytelling to be successful, participants will need to engage in "courageous, truthful conversations" (Burns, Keyes & Kusimo 2005, p. 19). Like CRT, ColonialCrit provides a framework and language to facilitate such truthfulness and subsequently develop a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success by privileging the voices of segregated and oppressed Aboriginal peoples who have historically and routinely been pushed to the margins (Osborne 1996). ColonialCrit is an attempt to address the ongoing Aboriginal struggle for recognition, for equity and, for social justice.

2.5.4 Committing to social justice and praxis: incorporating activism

A fourth tenet of my alternative Australian focused ColonialCrit is a *commitment to social justice and praxis: incorporating activism.* Brayboy (2006, p. 428) contends that: "CRT in education is activist in nature and inherently must contain a commitment to social justice". Though education is commonly identified as a key factor in overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage, few sustainable improvements are evident for Aboriginal students, their families or communities (Ockenden 2014). Schools continue to play a major role in reproducing structures of inequality and oppression (Cochran-Smith 2004; Connell 2009).

For example, Cochran-Smith (2004) argues that market approaches to education support generally invisible, inequitable practices, policy and structures that serve to reinforce privilege and disadvantage around 'race', gender and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, Connell (2009, p. 22), argues that current mainstream curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices, are constructed predominantly around the model of an academically engaged pupil, who will 'succeed' on the tests and is much more likely to attend schools serving economically and culturally privileged students. It is therefore unlikely that schools are an institution in which Aboriginal students are encouraged or expected to succeed.

Yet the achievement patterns of Aboriginal students are too persistent to be solely attributed to the individual. Instead, the responsibility is embedded strongly within institutional structures, procedures, stereotypes, assumptions and operational styles of schools, classrooms, and the society at large (Connell 1994, 2009; Gay 2010). It is a situation that requires both individual personal change as well as collective social change (Malin & Ngarritjan 1999). Overall, ColonialCrit has a fundamental commitment to transforming the institution of schooling into a space that is of advantage and benefit to all students and not just those who belong to the mainstream, majoritarian culture. Howard and Perry (2007, pp. 402-403) argue that Aboriginal students "[N]eed to feel that schools belong to them as much as any child... and that to... move towards the achievement of potential of Aboriginal students, it is important that Aboriginal culture and language are accepted in the classroom".

I argue that while schools continue to operate within a framework underpinned by racialised constructions of individuals and communities they cannot be spaces of

belonging for Aboriginal students. Likewise, while Aboriginal culture continues to be absent from the majority of classrooms and pedagogical practices of teachers, Aboriginal student learning will continue to be put at jeopardy. Novick (1996, p. 62) believes that: "... at the heart of the argument about the means and ends of schooling is the question: What kind of society do we want?". The social construction of 'race' is rarely problematised within discourses on education because it assumes a status of normalcy and is therefore rendered unimportant (DeCuir & Dixson 2004; Tate 1997). CRT, and more specifically, ColonialCrit, provides a framework and language that enables schools and educators to transform their pedagogical practices, thereby cease being colonising or dispossessing spaces. By placing socially constructed racism and culture at the centre of teacher critical reflection, or praxis, a counterstory of educational success for Australian Aboriginal students has the potential to emerge.

Praxis can be described as a highly complex practice. Friere (1970, p. 53) argues that: "... knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other". Embedded in ColonialCrit's commitment to social justice and praxis is the critique of neoliberalism, neutrality, objectivity, colour-blindness, and meritocracy as a camouflage for the self-interest of powerful entities of society (Tate 1997). According to Friere (1970) the act of praxis enables us to understand that culture and society are created and therefore are in need of being critiqued and transformed for a just society to emerge. By applying a CRT framework, racially based embedded and normalised barriers to success can be identified, confronted, challenged and transformed (Delgado 1999; Lynn et al. 2002). In this way, ColonialCrit fulfils its activist commitment to social justice for Aboriginal students, families and their communities.

2.6 Critical Race Theory and ColonialCrit: Utility for Australian Aboriginal Schooling

Educational success is currently heavily influenced by the capacity of the student to assimilate into a system of education originating in colonial times. I contend that applying CRT to Aboriginal education provides a means and language for educators to talk about Aboriginal students, families and communities outside a deficit construction (Harrison 2007). ColonialCrit draws upon the framework of CRT including the modified family members of LatCrit, AsianCrit and US Indigenous TribalCrit discussed

earlier. While such scholarship has a set of generally agreed upon characteristics, application to the Australian context needs to proceed with caution, ensuring that it accounts for the localised, distinct context Rizvi 2009).

In the next section the theoretical framework of CRP is discussed and critiqued. Moreover, the relevance of CRP for the Australian context is investigated.

2.7 Theoretical Framing: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The previous section introduced Critical Race Theory (CRT) and ColonialCrit as a method of problematising racism in my research. This part discusses Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) as an approach to teaching that partners well with CRT, and responds to Colonial Critical Race Theory's call for a new story, a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success. "The delivery of CRP is, in part, the acknowledgement of who children are, how they perceive themselves, and how the world receives them" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper 2012, p. 71). Central to this student self-perception is both their distinct culture and how the social construction of 'race' plays out in their everyday, both at school and in the wider society. Rarely acknowledged in the extensive body of culturally responsive education is the presence and impact of racism in schools. While a few scholars highlight the important role racism has played and continues to play in academic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, the concept of racism is rarely integrated with critiques of culturally responsive schooling (Castagno & Brayboy 2008). As such, CRT informs and can be infused into CRP, revealing normalised destructive narratives that serve to perpetuate Aboriginal educational stress (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper 2012).

The next section introduces and critiques the concept of CRP and its utility for the Australian story.

2.7.1 The evolution of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

CRP has evolved from critical theory scholarship. It is, in short, one approach to critical pedagogy that has responded to concerns about traditional pedagogical approaches that ignore the role schooling plays in the (re)production and distribution of power in society (Gore 1993, p. xiv). McLaren (1998, p. xiv) asserts:

> Why is a critical pedagogy so necessary? Part of the answer is that mainstream pedagogies generally avoid or attempt to obscure the question that should be

> central to education: What is the relationship between what we do in the classroom and our effort to build a better society.

Though critical theorists challenge the distribution of power within the institution of schooling, they do not adequately examine the special historical, social, economic, and political role that the social construction of 'race' continues to play in the education of marginalised or minoritised students (Ladson-Billings 2009). Recognising this situation, some important new theories have been emerging in the fields of Indigenous and multicultural education.

By way of an example, the theory of Critical Race Pedagogy is a significant development in educational scholarship. According to Critical Race Pedagogy, teachers place their constructions of 'race' at the centre of their critical reflections of practice. Jennings and Lyn (2005, p. 25) have identified three very broad yet closely interwoven characteristics that form the basis of this relatively new theory: the negotiation of power; the critique of self; and the need to be counter hegemonic. As such Critical Race Pedagogy requires teachers to recognise and understand the social embeddedness of racism in society so that unilinear (Lusted 1986) or banking education (Freire 1970) can become disrupted and transformed.

In the Australian context, critical race pedagogues would recognise and understand the embedded nature of racism that underpins the educational system borne out of two centuries of colonisation. This knowledge would enable teachers to enact change that works towards realising social justice and equity in wider society. Like Critical Race Theory, Critical Race Pedagogy is the recognition of the everyday, ever-present phenomenon of the social constructions of 'race' and its impact in the classroom and wider school environment. However, for my research, I opt to utilise Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and not 'race' that privileges student culture, as my primary pedagogical framework, which is now explored.

The terminology used to refer to cultural responsiveness varies greatly within, between and across disciplines and countries (Dunbar & Scrimgeour 2009) (see Appendix 1). The concept of 'culturally responsive' first emerged in scholarly educational literature in the late 1970s (see, for example, Cazden & Legget 1976; Escobedo 1978). According to Pewewardy and Hammer (2003, p. 2) interest in culturally responsive teaching further "grew during the late 1980s and early 1990s as a result of rapidly rising

diversity" and "concern over the lack of success of many ethnic/racial minority students despite years of educational reform". Contributing to this situation was, perhaps, the focus of the educational policy, research and pedagogy that dominated the literature and narrative at the time.

This is illustrated by the work of African-American scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings who, when she began her research on successfully educating African-American students, she found a void in the scholarship (Ladson-Billings 1994). While there was an abundance of research on African-American education, the dominant themes were 'deficiency', 'at-risk', 'deprivation', 'disadvantaged', and 'underachieving'; there was no language of academic excellence associated with the educational outcomes of African-American students (Ladson-Billings1994).

Like Ladson-Billings, a language of academic excellence or success associated with the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students is conspicuously absent in Australian literature. Sefa Day and Kempf (2006) make the point that the focus instead is predominantly on the pathologising of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal students are constructed as failures and what they "could become", when the becoming standard is set against the comparison of a non-Aboriginal standard in areas such as numeracy and literacy (Harrison 2007, p. 43). Students are therefore portrayed as in need of attaining success, which is something in the future that can never be achieved in the present.

Furthermore, academic success for Aboriginal students has historically been measured by the degree to which an individual has become assimilated into the European, middle-class culture as a result of a series of policies and programs. According to Brayboy, Castagno and Maughan (2007, p. 167) assimilation is: "... an act or series of policies that force those who are not like those in power to become more like them or to model themselves after the 'norm'". They go on to state that: "Programs or policies of assimilation rarely (if ever) take into account what marginalised groups desire or want and, therefore, deny their right to self-determination" (Brayboy, Castagno & Maughan 2007, p. 167). For Australian Aboriginal students, this equates to a dispossession of their distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing.

The alternative is a system of education and learning that responds to the distinct culture of the marginalised or minoritised student; that does not equate equity and equality with sameness in a colour-blind manner (Brayboy, Castagno & Maughan 2007). As a

counterpedagogy, CRPS challenge the long-held majoritarian narrative that assimilation into the dominant culture is a prerequisite for Aboriginal student (and life) success. It is, I argue, a promising theoretical framework for revealing and developing a counterstory of Aboriginal educational achievement.

While CRP has its foundations predominantly in the United States, the scholarship has rapidly grown and expanded into the international realm. Research has been undertaken by a wide diversity of scholars across many countries and cultural groups. It is an approach to teaching that has been proven to be an effective framework of pedagogy for students of a diversity of Indigenous and minoritised groups across the Pacific Rim such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands (Castagno & Brayboy 2008; Nichol, Archibald & Baker 2010).

The growing interest in Indigenous-centred culturally responsive education is exemplified by the publication of an extensive review of culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth undertaken by Castagno and Brayboy (2008). Additionally, the Journal of American Indian Education (Aguilera et al. 2007) published a special issue on Culturally Responsive Education for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. Yet the privileging of culture in formal education with Indigenous people is "not a new phenomenon or a passing fad; instead, it has been central to tribal nations' calls for improved schooling since at least the early part of the 20th century" (Castagno and Brayboy 2008, p. 944).

Indeed, one of the earliest documented calls for culturally centred education with Indigenous students is to be found in the *Meriam Report* (1928) (Demmert & Towner 2003). This report critiqued US policy and relations with Indigenous nations and described Indigenous education as "one of the most deficient areas with the most negative consequences for tribal communities" (Castagno & Brayboy 2008, p. 945). Recommendations of the *Merriam Report* included: the hiring of more Indigenous teachers; the formation of early childhood programs; and the inclusion of Indigenous languages and cultures in educational material and programming. Despite this early recognition of the significance of culture to educational success, not much changed in Indigenous peoples' education for almost thirty years (Castagno & Brayboy 2008).

One region in which CRP has become embedded in schooling is that of Alaska. The Assembly of Alaska Native Educators conceptualise CRP as a system "to provide a way

for schools and communities to examine the extent to which they are attending to the educational and cultural wellbeing of the students in their care" (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, 1998, p. 2). CRP involves strategies that include an:

> [I]n-depth study of the surrounding physical and cultural environment in which the school is situated, while recognising the unique contribution that indigenous people can make to such study as long-term inhabitants who have accumulated extensive specialised knowledge related to that environment. (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators 1998, p. 3)

Such an approach is underpinned by the belief that a focus on local environment, language and culture can support culturally-healthy students, educators, schools, and communities.

Within Australia, the significance of cultured-based learning for Aboriginal students is an increasingly important issue within the education landscape (Krakauer 2015). It is now recognised that culturally responsive pedagogies can improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. But understandings of what culturally responsive pedagogies are, varies widely (Perso & Hayward 2015). This diversity is due in part to the fact that there is no one way of being Aboriginal (see section 2.2). Thus, one approach to CRP that works with one Aboriginal student may not necessarily work with another (Krakauer 2015). Consequently, any framework for CRP with Aboriginal students' needs to take into account the individuality that rests within all students as well as within and between Aboriginal language groups.

An example of culturally responsive research is the doctoral study of Kiara Rahman, a Badimia Woman from Yamatji country in Western Australia. Her thesis was titled: *Indigenous student success in secondary schooling: factors impacting on student attendance, retention, learning and attainment in South Australia (Rahman 2009).* Her research centred the theoretical framework of culturally responsive schooling. Furthermore, in 2015 two publications emerged that reviewed the literature on cultural responsiveness. First, is the publication by Perso and Hayward (2015) titled: *Teaching Indigenous Students: Cultural awareness and classroom strategies for improving learning outcomes.* Second is the publication by Jacynta Krakauer, a Noongar woman originally from Southern western Australia, that focused on scholarship pertaining to improving Aboriginal learning outcomes through teacher cultural competency and responsiveness.

These examples of culturally responsive pedagogies for marginalised or minoritised students around the world are not exhaustive of the possible options. They are instead intended to represent the vast body of available international and national scholarship found in my literature search. Overall, this growing body of literature points to the reality that community- and culture-based pedagogies best meets the needs of Indigenous students (Brayboy, Castagno & Maughan 2007; Rahman 2013). Moreover, the research highlighted here demonstrates that culturally responsive pedagogies are particularly effective with students who are not of the majority culture (Krakauer 2015, p. 9). CRP does for marginalised and minoritised students what traditional pedagogies do for middle-class European Australians. That is, CRP filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through student cultural frames of reference, making them more personally meaningful and easier to master (Gay 2013).

But, as shown above, the language and terminology adopted by scholars varies widely, methodologies vary and areas to focus upon change as different research questions emerge. As a result there is no one agreed upon term, nor one definition. However, within this extensive body of scholarship, many commonly occurring principles and characteristics are to be found. My aim here is to attempt to unpack this theoretical framework and illustrate its relevance to the current investigation.

2.7.2 The concept of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

To begin with, cultural responsiveness is defined by Perso and Hayward (2015 p. 1) as "enacted cultural competence". Cultural competence is most effectively understood as a process that exists on a continuum, with cultural destructiveness located at one end and cultural proficiency placed at the opposite end (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2011). Fitzgerald (2000, p. 184) contends that at the individual level, cultural competence may be regarded as:

> the ability to identify and challenge one's cultural assumptions, one's values and beliefs. It is about developing empathy and connected knowledge, the ability to see the world through another's eyes, or, at the very least to recognise that others may view the world through different cultural lenses.

Thus, cultural competence is more than the simple recognition of cultural difference but rather is a set of complex values, knowledge and skills that impact on a teachers' pedagogical practices. Overall, with cultural competence, teachers are in a better position to enact the complex task of CRP.

At its very simplest, Gay (2010, p. 31) writes that culturally responsive teachers teach to and through the strengths of their students. Enriching this understanding, Lewthwaite et al. (2015, p. 135) contends that CRP is an approach to teaching and learning where the educational experiences provided for students should "reflect, validate, and promote their culture and language and be cognizant of students' socio-political histories and future aspirations". Moreover, it is "... a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically" (Ladson-Billings 2009, pp. 17-18). Additionally, CRP recognises, analyses and rejects deficit thinking through critical cultural awareness so that teachers (and in turn students) can become agents of change (Villegas & Lucas 2002). Finally, Ladson-Billings (1995, p. 160) goes on to assert that:

> Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order.

This collection of understandings of CRP challenges the neoliberalist discourse that defines teaching in narrow and technical ways (Connell 2009), and depicts teachers as needing to be rational and emotionally detached to succeed in their classrooms (Rich 2001). Above all else, Gay (2000, p. 45) asserts that CRP involves teachers caring for their students, and this care takes "... the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviours about students' human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities". It is not, therefore, about teachers distancing themselves from their students but rather teachers coming to know and care for their students (Gay 2010).

Illustrating this stance of caring for students, are the teacher characteristics of 'Warm-demander' (Kleinfeld 1975), or 'Caring-insistence' (Bondy et al. 2007; Irvine & Fraser 1998; Ware 2006) embedded in the scholarship on cultural responsiveness. Firstly, Kleinfeld (1973) coined the phrase warm-demander to describe the type of teacher who was effective in teaching Athabaskan Indian and Eskimo 9th graders in Alaskan schools. She identified four primary types of teachers: sentimentalists; traditionalists; sophisticates; and warm-demanders (Kleinfeld 1975). Essentially, these four types of teaching are measured according to the effectiveness of teaching Indigenous students and ranged along a continuum from ineffective to highly effective. Those found to be most effective were the warm-demanders described by Kleinfeld as:

> The first and most important characteristic was whether the teacher was able to dissipate village students' fears in the classroom by creating a climate of emotional warmth. The second was whether the teacher resolved his [*sic*] own ambivalence about educational goals and expressed his [*sic*] concern for the village students, not by passive sympathy, but by actively demanding a high quality of academic work. (Kleinfeld 1975, p. 27)

The warm-demander pedagogue establishes rapport with students in culturally competent ways, recognising however, that rapport alone is not enough to achieve educational success. As a result, warm-demanders ensure that students know what is expected of them and then work hard to push students to succeed. The learning space consists of care and respect coupled with demand and academic rigour (Kleinfeld 1975). Such teachers use an instructional style Kleinfeld (1975) called 'active demandingness'.

This concept of the warm-demander pedagogue emerged in scholarly literature on successful teaching of African-American students a decade later. For example, Vasquez (1988) used the term of warm-demander to describe teachers of 'minority' students who refused to lower their expectations for success and provided their students with the assistance they needed to succeed; who provide a tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured and disciplined classroom environment for kids whom society has psychologically and physically abandoned. A decade later Irvine and Fraser (1998, p. 56) explained that warm-demanders use the practices promoted by CRP in a partnership with a tough-minded, no-nonsense authoritative teaching style with African-American students because of their commitment to "... give them a future" and belief that their students "... not only can learn but must learn" (Irvine & Fraser 1998, p. 56).

In 2013, African-American scholar Lisa Delpit wrote: "Warm-demanders expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential in a disciplined and structured environment" (Delpit 2012, p. 77). In other words, the central purpose and core foundation of the warm-demander stance is a social justice imperative that seeks to improve the lives of all members of the community, both within school and beyond the school gate (Delpit 2013; Ware 2006). Finally, Bondy and Ross (2008, p. 58) succinctly state that warm-demanding is "... approaching students with unconditional positive regard, knowing students and their cultures well, and insisting the students perform to a high standard". There is no room for a pedagogy of deficit in the warm-demander's classroom.

Evidently, in both warm-demander and caring-insistence scholarship, teachers are caring and hold high expectations for their students. 'Caring' is not a synonym for 'nice' or 'kind', but rather is a descriptor for teachers who are unwilling to tolerate underachievement (Rhychly & Graves 2012, p. 45). Gay (2002) describes culturally responsive caring as those teachers who care so much about their culturally marginalised or minoritised students, that they insist on holding them to the same standards as their non-Aboriginal peers, insisting on high quality academic, social, and personal performance, and ensuring that this occurs. Moreover, Gay 2010, p. 48) asserts: "teachers who really care for students honour their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfil their expectations". When combined with praxis and cultural/teacher competence, caring becomes a powerful pillar of CRP (Gay 2010).

CRP is not free from criticism though, and this is an issue to which I now turn.

2.7.3 Is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy just good teaching?

A question that emerges in the literature is: is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy not just simply good teaching practices or educational strategies for all students? (Au 2009; Jordan 1995). Such questioning is answered well by Au (2009, p. 180) who contends that many still subscribe to the idea that good teaching transcends place, people, time, and context with class, 'race' gender, ethnicity, or culture of students and teachers having no consequence. Au (2009, p. 209) goes on to assert that such individuals fail to realise that their standards of 'goodness' in teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all cultural groups. Similarly, Pai, Adler and Shadiow (2006, cited in Gay 2010, p. 23) state:

> Individuals who subscribe to this belief fail to realise that their standards of 'goodness' in teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all ethnic groups. The structures, assumptions, substance, and operations of conventional educational enterprises are European American cultural icons.

Within the Australian context, advocating a universal Australian concept of good teaching may in reality be advocating teaching from a coloniser, majoritarian narrative that does not privilege an Aboriginal students distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing, but rather works towards dispossessing Aboriginal students of such knowledge.

Knowing what and how to teach culturally diverse students depends heavily on teachers understanding their students' learning needs and recognising how and when those needs are different from and/or similar to the needs of students from the dominant cultural majority. Likewise, successful teaching of culturally diverse students requires teachers to recognise when their cultural values and beliefs are different from and/or similar to the values and beliefs of their students. Delpit (1995, p. 183), writing of teaching in multicultural contexts, contends that it is essential "to really see, to really know the students we must teach". Really seeing and knowing Aboriginal students involves teachers acquiring knowledge of their students' distinct cultural identities. It requires replacing racially based pathological and deficient constructions of Aboriginal students and communities with more informed knowledge of Aboriginal culture and lived experiences (Gay 2013; Sefa Day & Kempf 2006).

However, "... culture is [a] variable that is often overlooked as a function of student success" (Ware 2006, p. 428). Supporting Ware's assertion is the current national dialogue in Australia on how to address educational disadvantage which has an abundance of competing approaches and priorities. Few privilege students' distinct Aboriginal cultural heritage as a determinant for influencing mainstream educational success (Sarra 2011a). By way of an example, internationally recognised educational researcher, John Hattie, synthesised more than 800 meta-analyses which identified the effect of an extensive list of variables on educational success. Hattie (2003, 2009) argues that teachers and their teaching practice are a major source of difference in students' success. Consequently, Hattie (2003) asserts that national attention needs to focus on the specific actions of teachers that influence student educational outcomes. Conspicuously absent in Hatties' meta-analysis, however, is any recognition of the significant role culturally located teaching practices and, more broadly, Aboriginal culture in general are likely to have in improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. While Hatties' meta-analysis may make a significant contribution to the characteristics of effective teaching in general, the complete absence of culture implies that so-called good, effective or quality teaching practice can simply be uniformly applied to all students.

Undeniably, certain general principles of good, effective or quality teaching appear widely relevant to CRP. Monica Brown (2007, p. 4) states that "culturally responsive teachers use the best of what we now know about good teaching". But while culturally

responsive teaching is good teaching; good teaching is not necessarily culturally responsive (Byrnes, Keyes & Kusimo 2005, p. 27). By dismissing the potential context- and culture-bound nature of learners and learning (Perso 2012) Hatties' meta-analysis is arguably advocating teaching from a majoritarian or 'whitestream' (Milne 2013) stance.

Hawaii's Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) is an illustration of the limitations of John Hattie's proposal of a culturally neutral learning space. KEEP was established in 1970 as:

> An applied research and development effort charged with the mission of discovering, developing and disseminating ways of more effectively educating native Hawaiian children in public school settings, where, as a group, they were not faring well educationally. (Jordan 1995, p. 83)

By 1981, KEEP had developed a set of educational practices and strategies which appeared to be successful for Hawaiian children. These practices and strategies were designed to be compatible with Hawaiian child culture. However, lively debate emerged around one key question: To what degree were the educational practices and strategies that had been developed by KEEP culturally specific? (Jordan 1995, p. 83-84). Moreover, could the success of KEEP be instead attributable to just good education or teaching, and therefore transferrable to all children no matter the children's culture?

To answer these concerns, KEEP was rolled-out at Rough Rock Demonstration School, a community-run school on the Navajo Reservation in north-eastern Arizona. Rough Rock children were both relatively culturally homogeneous and culturally distinct from Hawaiian children, but faced the same or similar educational challenges. KEEP practices and strategies were consequently implemented in one third-grade classroom. The basic method of the investigation was to install the major elements of the KEEP language arts program and then "watch what the Navajo children did to it" (Jordan 1995, p. 91).

Within six weeks participating teachers realised that three key elements of KEEP, which had worked successfully for Hawaiian children for over a decade, needed modification. One example of what happened in this process can be seen in how the learning centres were organised. The classroom organisation used by KEEP in Hawai'i involved learning centres populated by small groups of coeducational children who would provide peer assistance (Jordan 1984). Direct teacher supervision was limited as students had previously received instruction on the required task.

This approach at Rough Rock (Particularly peer assistance) was not as successful as it had been in Hawaii. Unlike Hawaiian children, Navajo children largely ignored each other, providing little peer support or assistance. Extensive consultation revealed that unlike Hawaiian culture, Navajo culture has a separation of the sexes both in roles and for purposes of interaction. So, the children of Rough Rock were placed into smaller, same sex pairs in the learning centres. Responding to this cultural specificity resulted in improved educational success for Navajo children at Rough Rock. The KEEP/Rough Rock study clearly demonstrated that cultural compatibility between the student and educational practices and strategies is significant for educational success. While one study cannot provide definitive proof that CRP is more than just good teaching, the study does demonstrate the significance of cultural specificity in academic achievement. Such evidence is also apparent in the Aboriginal educational programs led by Sara, of *Stronger Smarter* and *Eight-ways learning framework* programs discussed previously. Both of these Australian-based programs initially responded to a local learning environment and the children's culture before being expanded to other geographical locations where the programs were modified to meet the cultural needs of the students within those settings.

Despite the long history of poor educational outcomes for Aboriginal students there continues to be relatively little scholarship that addresses their culturally specific educational needs. Writing of a similar situation in the US Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 12) asserts that: "One reason is a stubborn refusal in American education to recognise African-Americans as a distinct cultural group". Similarly, while it is recognised that Aboriginal peoples make up a distinct racial group in Australia, the acknowledgment that this so-called racial group has a distinct culture still struggles for recognition. Generally speaking, it is presumed that Aboriginal children and youth are exactly like 'white' children and youth but just need a bit of fixing that amounts to Aboriginal students being assimilated into the majoritarian culture. Rarely investigated are the possibilities of distinct cultural characteristics—requiring specific consideration—or the detrimental impact of systemic and prolonged racism as well as the potential to be found within Aboriginal students distinct cultures.

As can be evidenced in the vast array of statistics many Aboriginal students are not succeeding at school despite the focus on good or quality or effective teaching. The fact remains that good teaching that does not centre and validate the students' culture, value

student experiences or affirms their distinct cultural identity, is not culturally responsive (Ladson-Billings 1994). Gay (2010, p. 9) states that: “Even without our being consciously aware of it, culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, and these, in turn, affect how we teach and learn”.

Defining the concept of ‘culture’ is itself a problematic issue. Nieto (1992, p. 306) defines culture as “... the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and world view shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion”. While such a definition goes beyond the “... food, fun, festivals, and foolishness form of multi-cultural education that maintains or propagates colonisation” (Haynes Writer 2008, p. 1), it does not, for me, go far enough in capturing the more centralised purpose of culture in human existence. An alternate definition is offered by Saravia-Shore and Arvizu (1992, p. xxvii) who capture the deeper purpose of culture writing that it is to:

> [G]uide people in their thinking, feeling, and acting... [and serving]... as a road map in an evolving journey of survival or as a river bed that creates its own form and direction over time due to a variety of influences.

Similarly, Bishop et al. (2007, p. 2) argue that:

> ... culture goes beyond the visible elements and includes the values, morals, communication styles, decision making and problem-solving processes along with the world views and knowledge-producing processes that assists individuals and groups with meaning and sense-making.

Both these definitions emphasise the significance of meaning making and survival embedded in a culture or peoples.

A ‘culture’ or ‘peoples’ such as Aboriginal peoples, are not, however, a homogenous group—we are Freshwater (like me), Saltwater/Coastal, Rainforest, Mountain, Hill and Desert. We do not all speak the same Indigenous language or share the same Dreaming and are frequently referred to as belonging to a language group rather than a tribe or clan. Each Aboriginal language group has a responsibility to sustain “its ancestral state—also referred to as Country” (Klenowski 2009, p. 3). Aboriginal groups, although autonomous, are also “... interconnected for the purpose of looking after Country, the elements and each other” (Martin, 2008, p. 60). Additionally, there are those whose cultural heritage gives them a belonging to more than one language group or Country

(as well as other non-Indigenous cultures). Finally, the ways of knowing, being and doing of each language group are diverse and specific to The Dreaming of a particular geographical location (Martin 2003). There is, quite simply, no one way of being Aboriginal. However, as Ortner (1991, p. 187) contends:

> However much we now recognise that cultures are riddled with inequality, differential understanding, and differential advantage, nonetheless they remain for the people who live within them sources of value, meaning, and ways of understanding and resisting the world.

Writing specifically of the significance of culture in education, Phuntsog (1998, p. 3) states that: "... one can no longer ignore its powerful influence on student learning under the pretext of maintaining high academic standards or treating everyone alike in a colour-blind approach". So, like Gay (2013) within my research, I shift between using the term itself and its equivalent meanings. I use, for example, ways of knowing, being and doing interchangeably with Aboriginal ways or distinct Aboriginal culture as well as attitudes and beliefs, lived experiences and perspectives, all of which are considered as equivalents of "culture" in my investigation.

2.7.4 Culturally responsive schooling

While the primary focus of my research investigation is upon pedagogy that is culturally responsive, the culture of schooling within which this complex practice takes place is key for overall understanding of how the wicked problem of Aboriginal education outcomes can be improved. Nichol, Archibald & Baker (2010 p. 8) get to the essence of the issue when they assert: "Educational systems worldwide have failed Indigenous students". Furthermore, Brayboy, Castagno and Maughan (2007, p.171) assert that "the US school system and society is well organised for the production of failure for many racialised students". The Australian school system, born out of two centuries of colonisation and terra nullius constructions, has similarly been well organised to fail Aboriginal students and in large measure continues to do so.

In Rahman's (2013, p. 666) research she argues that the learning 'rules' or 'hidden curriculum' evident in Australian schools are based on the values, practices and worldviews of the majoritarian culture, thus disadvantaging Aboriginal students who have not had exposure to the norms of western culture. Rahman (2013, p. 666) goes on to assert : "... the domination of western culture in Australian education has largely shaped Indigenous people's expectations and schooling outcomes, [leading to] many

Aboriginal children [having] to relinquish their distinct ways of learning and abandon their cultural heritage to receive a formal education. For many marginalised and minoritised students—like Aboriginal students—the traditional culture of a school that seeks to assimilate students into the dominant culture, is simply unsuccessful in engaging Aboriginal students in the learning space.

The culture of a school consists of several elements: 1) how the school makes sense of itself, 2) the nature of relationships fostered in the school, 3) how decisions are made, and 4) how it challenges the notion of what passes as 'common sense' (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam 2003, p. 187). Boykin (1994, p. 244) contends that there has always been a profound and inescapable cultural fabric of the schooling process which is primarily of European and middle-class origins, and is so deeply ingrained in the structures, ethos, programs, and etiquette of schools that it is considered simply the 'normal' and 'right' thing to do.

By contrast, Castagno and Brayboy (2008), advocate that culturally responsive schooling shares the following characteristics: 1) contextualising and localising curriculum and pedagogy so that it resembles the knowledge and learning of local communities; 2) the knowledge, norms, values, resources, and epistemologies of communities are viewed as legitimate and are intimately integrated into schools; and 3) students are engaged and learning "school knowledge" at the same time and through experiences that also facilitate the learning of local community knowledge. Consequently, CRS disrupts the normalised fabric of schooling and seeks to re-culture the learning space. School re-culturing entails challenging existing ideas about school culture and pedagogical approaches through teachers critically questioning their educational beliefs and practices "... in order to reveal not only what they think about their work but how they make sense of; understand, describe, interpret and structure the reform context" (Smith-Maddox 1999, p. 285). The re-culturing of a school so that it is culturally responsive for all students, and not just those affiliated with the dominant culture, is vital for improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

As a form of critical pedagogy, cultural responsiveness questions where 'power' is positioned and subsequently aims to unmask, confront and break down institutions and pedagogical practices that have historically marginalised, minoritised, segregated, assimilated and oppressed so that power may be shared (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin

2013; Bishop & Glynn 1999; Friere 1972), and therefore re-culture the institution of schooling. Breaking down the power that exists within the educational institution involves being aware of, and understanding the culture of the school itself. For Aboriginal students to overcome Aboriginal locked-in disadvantage, borne out of two centuries of colonisation, involves educators challenging embedded systemic and institutional racism so that cultural responsiveness with students who are not of the dominant culture can be made possible.

2.8 In Closing

This chapter has mapped out the scholarly literature that provides both context and theoretical framing relevant to the investigation. It has been organised into three main sections: to provide context, pre-colonial and colonial Aboriginal education has been outlined; Critical Race Theory has been used to problematise ‘race’ in Aboriginal education; and, CRP has been presented as a means for improving Aboriginal educational outcomes. More specifically, this chapter has demonstrated that two centuries of colonisation that sought variously to civilise and Christianise; integrate, segregate protect and assimilate; and ultimately to dispossess Aboriginal peoples, continue to impact on Aboriginal educational success. It was argued that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students can be understood as a 'wicked problem'. That is, Aboriginal education is a complex societal problem, that while resistant to resolution, the task of change is not impossible. The chapter argued that a key barrier to bringing about sustainable improvement is the embeddedness of racism in everyday Australian society, and more specifically, in Australia's educational system. Critical Race Theory (CRT), originating from the civil rights movement in the US was modified so as to respond to the distinct Australian story. This modified CRT framework was coined Critical Colonial Race Theory or ColonialCrit and has the following four tenets: recognising the social embeddedness of racism; asserting the social construction of ‘race’ as a tool of oppressive segregation; privileging stories and counterstorytelling; and committing to social justice and educator praxis: Incorporating activism. At the core of these tenets is the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples through the declaration of the fictional doctrine of terra nullius. The chapter then introduced the extensive body of scholarship on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) both nationally and internationally. CRP, by centring a students' distinct ways of knowing, being and doing, is a promising theoretical framework for improving Aboriginal educational outcomes.

However, CRP does not problematise the impact of racism in education. So, for the purpose of this investigation, the theoretical framework of CRP infused with the tenets of ColonialCrit is used to reveal a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success.

To do this ethical and equity work, I propose in the following chapter a research methodology which can explore the connections between my theoretical framing of CRP and successful schooling for Australian Aboriginal high school students. More specifically, to do research 'proper ways' (borrowed from Aunty Nangala) the intersecting methodologies of Critical Ethnography, Culturally Responsive Research and, Critical Race Theory Methodology are utilised. Within this framework, the methods used to gather and analyse data have been 'Aboriginalised'

CHAPTER 3 DOING RESEARCH 'PROPER WAYS'

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a brief map of the scholarship on Aboriginal education, from before European arrival to the present day. Additionally, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was introduced as a conceptual framework for analysing the social construction of 'race' and racism, globally and in a colonised Australia. In particular, I argued for a modified Colonial Critical Race Theory (ColonialCrit) as my contribution to the ongoing rejuvenation of Critical Race Theory scholarship. Finally, CRP was offered as a potential pathway for solving the wicked problem of improving Aboriginal educational outcomes.

In this chapter the methodology is mapped out, referred to as doing research 'proper ways' (borrowing from Aunty Nangala). This chapter is organised into four broad sections which are now briefly outlined.

Firstly, the three intersecting theoretical frameworks of: critical ethnography; culturally responsive research; and, critical race theory methodology are explained. I argue that each builds on the former and provides a useful way of undertaking my investigation into what successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students looks like. The metaphor of 'research as a pathway' *(*Fredericks 2007) is used *to explain the meandering and complex progression of the study.* Finally, in this section the concept of 'insider' and 'outsider' status as an Indigenous/Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher is discussed.

Second, the need to develop an accessible Aboriginal research vernacular is explored. More specifically, it is illustrated how language can be used to converse and learn but so too used to discriminate and exclude. I contend that within my research three genres of English are used: Standard Australian English; Aboriginal English (AbE); and, Academic English and how these three languages were navigated, often through the use of metaphor. The principles of the Indigenous storying methods of yarning (Bessarab &

Ng'andu 2010) and Storywork (Archibald 2008), which provided a framework for doing my research 'proper ways', are then explored.

Thirdly, the research design which consisted of three interconnected phases: immersion; ethnographic; and, data analysis and theme bundling, are discussed. For Phase One, I discuss my choice to undertake the investigation as a multi-sited school ethnography, and the identified schools and nominated teachers are introduced. For Phase Two, I discuss the 'Aboriginalised' methods used in data gathering. For Phase Three, how data was analysed and bundled is explained, and an outline of the themes revealed is provided. The issues of voice and representation are then addressed. Finally, the significance of CRT's and ColonialCrit's counterstorytelling as a method for developing an account of pedagogies of success is demonstrated.

The task of outlining the methodological frameworks is undertaken in the following sections.

3.1.1 The culturally responsive critical ethnographic framework

The methodological approach taken in my thesis is informed by several key and intersecting frameworks of analysis: critical ethnographic methodology, cultural responsive research and, Critical Race Theory methodology. Additionally, some of the cultural and ethical issues encountered during the course of my research are critiqued which elucidate my way of working as a researcher.

3.1.1.1 Critical ethnographic methodology

My research adopts a critical ethnographic methodology to document what successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students looks like. Put simply, critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose (Thomas 1993). In other words, critical ethnography is a qualitative research approach that enables the researcher to not only investigate and understand society, but also to critique and potentially transform that society as a result of the research.

'Conventional' ethnography is a qualitative methodology in which a cultural group or particular phenomenon is studied by researchers in a naturalistic setting, using primarily observational data to gather information over a period of time so that the more nuanced story of what is happening can be revealed (Madison 2005). Practiced by early anthropologists as a form of fieldwork, ethnography differs from other methodologies

by its focus on a particular culture; its exploration of aspects and meanings of a group's culture including values, beliefs, practices and behaviours; and, in its aim to reveal what happens in that culture (Dunbar 2009). Castagno (2011, p. 395) asserts that: "Although all ethnography studies culture, critical ethnography explicitly assumes that various cultures and groups of people are positioned unequally within society and have varied access to power and resources". This is particularly relevant to the current investigation as it researches colonised and dispossessed peoples.

3.1.1.2 Critical ethnography

Ethnography is researching through participation in, or engagement with, peoples' daily lives, utilising a variety of methods to generate rich data over an extended period of time (Basit 2010). One advantage for ethnographers is that research is fairly flexible, sanctioning the lived realities of participants to evolve in their natural context thereby avoiding contrived results (Creswell 2007). In other words, ethnography recognises the humanness and complexity of peoples' lives, understanding that flexibility is needed to accommodate lived reality. In the words of a 'wise Maori woman researcher', "[T]he point of entry starts with their lives, not my needs as a researcher: (SooHoo 2013, p. 213). Additionally, the reality of peoples' lives continues to impact upon the research as it progresses and concludes with each contact being an entry into the participants' lives with all their potential messiness.

Expanding on the ethnographic methodology, the critical ethnographer examines the reality and lived experience of the cultural group through the lens of power, prestige, privilege, and authority (Creswell 2003). The term critical here invokes a specific epistemology that brings a scepticism towards common sense (Butler 2000) and 'official knowledge' (Apple 1993), a sensitivity towards how power works on and through knowledge and subjectivity (Foucault 1980) and is committed to more socially just social arrangements, and in my case in schools. In this way, critical ethnography is responding to an ethical responsibility to address unfairness or injustices and working towards enacting positive social change as an outcome of the research (Madison 2005). So, critical ethnography goes beyond the intention to gather knowledge about a particular phenomenon for the sake of understanding, and instead, seeks to inform political action that can redress the injustices found or constructed during the research process (Kincheloe & McLaren 2005). Madison (2012, p. 6) asserts:

> Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain... The critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control.

Critical ethnography then, is a research approach that aims to reveal the lived experiences of a cultural group and is motivated by an ethical responsibility to facilitate transformation. There have been several key research investigations that have adopted the methodology of critical ethnography that are illuminating for my own research undertaking.

First, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) carried out a landmark two-year observational and critical ethnographic study of the pedagogical practices of eight successful teachers of African-American students. Her respectful and careful analysis led her to identify three pedagogical principles that clearly underpinned the work of her nominated teachers. Second, Patricia Cooper (2003) used critical ethnography and case study methodology to investigate the beliefs and practices of three White [*sic*] of mostly Black [*sic*] children in a public primary-grade school. Themes of discipline, view of teaching self, literacy education and, racial consciousness emerged from interviews and classroom observations over a period of 20 weeks. Finally, Peggy Wilson (1991), undertook research with Sioux Indian high school students in Canada. She used critical ethnographic methodology to examine the factors that impact on First Nation student academic performance. Through her unique insider-outsider perspective as a researcher who has spent the major part of her adult life living and teaching on Canadian Indian reserves, and as a member of an Indian Band (Wilson P 1991, p. 371), Wilson's research provided insight into issues affecting secondary persistency or educational success. Through the data gathered from observations of teachers and students, from interviews with students and teachers, and from the background knowledge of both communities, Wilson (1991) concluded that the students were dealing with the consequences of cultural conflict during the months of transition from the reserve elementary school to public, mainstream high school education.

Critical ethnography is therefore well suited to my research investigation as an overarching methodological framework. However, critical ethnography alone is insufficient to get to the nuanced story of what is taking place within the wicked

problem of improving Aboriginal educational outcomes. In the next section the applicability of culturally responsive research to my investigation is explained.

3.1.1.3 Culturally responsive research

Traditional research has developed methods of initiating research and recruiting participants that are located within the cultural preferences and practices of the 'western' world rather than the distinct cultural ways of the peoples being investigated (Bishop 2011). In other words, traditional research is an effective tool for perpetuating colonisation. Indigenous Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 1) asserts that the word research is "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories" (Smith 1999, p. 1). Similarly, writing from a New Zealand perspective, Bishop (2011, p. 19) asserts that:

> Maori people, along with many other minoritised peoples, are concerned that educational researchers have been slow to acknowledge the importance of culture and cultural differences as key components in successful research practice and understandings. As a result, key research issues of power relations, initiation, benefits, representation, legitimisation, and accountability continue to be addressed in terms of the researchers' own cultural agendas, concerns, and interests.

Likewise, Aboriginal peoples of Australia are concerned about how their distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing are to be not only recognised in research, but centrally positioned within the research process and outcomes (Rigney 2006). Additionally, Aboriginal peoples are concerned about power relations, values, accountability, ownership, dissemination and benefits of the research (Fredericks 2008; Gower 2012).

Recognising these varied concerns, provides some specific inflections to being 'critical', and the primary focus of culturally responsive research then, is to respect and privilege culture, and position culture as central to the research process (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevan 2013). So, when research is approached from a culturally sensitive stance, the varied aspects of a distinct culture as well as the varied historical and contemporary experiences of a peoples are recognised. In this way, the shared knowledge and understandings of the phenomenon under study are privileged and the individual and collective knowledge is placed at the centre of the investigation. It is, as expressed by Aboriginal Elder Aunty Nangala, "Aboriginalising research" (pers. comm, 23 June, 2013).

As for critical ethnography, culturally responsive research is socially and ethically responsible in its approach to research. More specifically however, culturally responsive research emphasises cultural responsibility. Consequently, the distinct cultural accountabilities embedded within Aboriginal kinship structures, when embarking on, and undertaking, research are acknowledged and respected and guide my investigation.

For example, embedded within Aboriginal culture, is the concept of kinship to both land/country and to the family/extended family. Aboriginal kinship systems are based on "the principles of reciprocity, obligation, care and responsibility" (Groome 1992, p. 42). In Martin's (2008, p. 78) distinct Aboriginal cultural *Ways of Being*, she explains that:

> Ultimately, Ways of Being hold for us processes for fulfilling relatedness with respect, responsibility and accountability. Where Ways of Knowing contextualise the Stories, Ways of Being ground these to ensure what we have learned and know is applied with respect, responsibility and accountability in a range of contexts and situations.

Furthermore, as a culturally responsive researcher, and more specifically as an Aboriginal culturally responsive researcher, there are protocols to be observed (ways of doing). For example, Moreton-Robinson (2000, p. xv) writes in her work:

> The protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connection can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established.

Positioning myself in my research, as observed in Chapter 1, is therefore the observation and enactment of cultural protocols. Likewise, introducing myself to those participating in my research, along with my intentions and motivations for the research, inviting participants to contribute, clarifying the gathered data, and negotiating how participants and their stories will be represented, are all part of observing Aboriginal protocols and, fulfilling kinship responsibilities. It is what Margaret Kovach (2009, p. 13), from the First Nations of southern Saskatchewan, refers to as "relational work". All of these protocols, and more, are at the heart of an Aboriginal culturally responsive research approach.

Moreover, I am ever-mindful of Indigenous researcher Shawn Wilson (2001, p. 179) (Askwayak Cree from northern Manitoba, Canada), who asserts that "Research is not just something that's out there: it's something that you're building for yourself and for your community". Similarly, Brayboy and Maughan (2009, p. 12) state that:

"Indigenous Knowledges requires responsible behaviour, and this is often achieved by considering the ramifications of actions before they are taken". Finally, educator and scholar, Tyson Kaawoppa Yunkaporta, Bama man of Nunga and Koori descent, proposes "The protocol we follow in this work is, 'If you take something, put something back'" (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2011, p. 205). So, as an Indigenous/Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher, I seek to put back more than I take when engaging in research.

Overall, a culturally responsive research approach seeks to counteract the devastating legacy of traditional western research so that new knowledge and understanding can be acquired through listening to the stories of the research participants (Martin 2005; Rigney 2006). In culturally responsive research, both the participants and researchers cultural lives are regarded as indispensable in the research design as both sides bring their collective assets and wellbeing together to construct a process of relevant and significant meaning making (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevan 2013, p. 5).

While culturally responsive research foregrounds the distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing in the same way as CRP, it does not however, problematise racism. In the next section the applicability of CRT to my investigation is explored.

3.1.2 Critical Race Theory as methodology

While culture and 'race' share some similarities, focusing solely on culture negates the reality of racism in society (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper 2012). CRT, and more specifically my modified version of ColonialCrit developed in the previous chapter, is more than a theoretical framework. Instead, the tenets of CRT are also generative for methodology and method. ColonialCrit has four modified tenets for the distinct Australian story: 1) that racism is embedded in society; 2) 'race' is a socially constructed tool of oppression; 3) privileging stories and counterstorytelling; and, 4) is committed to social justice and activism. These CRT tenets and the themes that flow from them challenge the normalised western ways of knowing, being, and doing that dominate research theoretically, conceptually, methodologically and pedagogically (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper 2012).

Aboriginal scholars such as Martin (2003), Rigney (2006) and Gower (2012) contend that the extent of research in Aboriginal lands and on Aboriginal peoples since colonisation in the late 18th century, "is so vast it makes Aboriginal peoples one of the

most researched groups of people on earth" (Martin 2003, p. 1). Research has been conducted by all manner of natural and social scientists, usually without permission, consultation, or involvement of Aboriginal peoples Bourke 1995). Martin (2003, p. 1) writes of 'terra nullius' research:

> In this research, we are present only as objects of curiosity and subjects of research. To be seen but not asked, heard nor respected. So the research has been undertaken in the same way Captain James Cook falsely claimed the eastern coast of the land to become known as Australia as terra nullius.

This legal doctrine of terra nullius discussed in Chapter 2, not only devalued, dispossessed and marginalised Indigenous people but also set the scene for how relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples within Australia were to operate (Matthews 2012, p. 122). Moreover, Hart and Whatman (1998, p. 3) state that for over two hundred years:

> The premise of most [western] research and analysis has been locked into the belief that Indigenous Australians are anachronisms and, in defiance of the laws of evolution, remain a curiosity of nature, and are 'fair game' for research. The overt and covert presumptions underwriting all [western] research and analysis into Indigenous Australian cultures is the inherent view of the superiority of Non-Indigenous society's cultures.

Colonisation both dispossessed Aboriginal peoples of their humanity, lands, skies and seas as well as their distinct ways of knowing, being and doing. As a result, Aboriginal peoples became the researched by the colonisers, objects of curiosity and investigation.

Such an approach is embedded in the majoritarian narrative of racism discussed later in this Chapter, which excluded Aboriginal peoples from knowledge construction as defined by western thought (Kovach 2009). Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing were not—and in many circles are still not—valued or seen as legitimate ways of producing knowledge. Therefore, there is a long history of intrusive study on Indigenous peoples (Hart & Whatman 1998).

Qualitative researchers, especially with their legacy of complicity with colonisation, therefore need to engage in research that seeks to counter the colonising impact of research (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin 2013). Critical Race Theory enables researchers to identify and challenge the embeddedness of racism when it arises in their research thereby contributing to a new narrative, a counterstory of the culture under investigation.

3.1.3 Ways of working ethically, socially and culturally

In the preceding three sections the intersecting methodologies of critical ethnography, culturally responsive research and, Critical Race Theory methodology have been introduced. Each one in turn is updated by its predecessor. That is, critical ethnography is updated by culturally responsive research which is then updated by the Critical Race Theory framework. What emerges from these three theoretical research frameworks are several principles that guide my research:

- Research has a social, cultural and ethical responsibility;
- Research has a political purpose;
- Research critiques power, prestige, privilege, and authority;
- Research aims to generate positive social change;
- Research is located within the cultural knowledge, preferences and practices of participants; and
- Research privileges the lived experiences of research participants so as to reveal and develop a counterstory.

So, my research methodology involves going beyond interpretivist ethnography that aims to simply advance knowledge with no further purpose. My research demands that I am socially, culturally and ethically responsible. If I undertake my research without being relationally accountable to both the research participants, and to the wider community, I, like colonising researchers of the past, could do more harm. My research is not just about getting a PhD and moving on with my life, it is about doing it "proper ways" (Aunty Nangala pers. comm., 23 June, 2013). That is, my research needs to be of some tangible value to the Aboriginal community and not just using their stories for my own advancement as in terra nullius research styled investigations. Likewise, as a culturally responsive researcher, my research is formed and shaped by those consulted, a process that is repeated throughout the length of the project. Finally, a practice of continual self-reflection upon the research pathway plays a pivotal role in the success of the project. Therefore, the following questions are frequently referred back to as the research develops:

- What is my purpose, intentions, and frames of analysis?
- How am I fulfilling my role in this relationship?
- What are my responsibilities in this relationship?
- How may I avoid doing harm?
- Does this method help to build a relationship between myself as a researcher and my research participants?
- Does my method build respectful relationships with the other participants in my research? and
- What will be left behind after I have completed my research? (Adapted from Wilson (2008 p. 178)

Overall, critical ethnography, culturally responsive research and Critical Race Theory methodology, which are embodied in the guiding principles and questions above, enable me to fulfil my kinship responsibilities of reciprocity, respect and relationality. The three frameworks discussed also inform a relational ontology, epistemology and axiology (Martin 2008; Wilson 2008) and captures the 'self-in-relation' (Graveline 1998) quality of Indigenous knowledge. My research methodology, understood through the framework of ColonialCrit, is 'proper ways' research, as Aunty Nangala states, in that it observes social, ethical and cultural responsibilities. Kovach (2009, p. 60) asserts: "Indigenous researchers are grappling with ways to explain how holistic epistemologies inform their research design in ways understood by western academic minds". In the next section the concepts of research as a pathway and, the tension of researcher as 'insider' and 'outsider' are discussed.

3.1.4 Research as pathway

According to Murri scholar Bronwyn Fredericks, the research design can be thought of as laying out a pathway, as a well thought out configuration or the map for the research (Fredericks 2007). This concept draws on the work of Gregory Cajete, a Tewa Indian of the Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, who describes the concept of pathway as it relates to Aboriginal learning and education:

> The concept of Pathway, revealed in numerous ways in Indigenous education, is associated with mountains, winds, and orientation. Learning involves a transformation that unfolds through time and space. Pathway, a structural metaphor, combines with the process of journeying to form an active context for learning about spirit. Pathway is an appropriate metaphor since, in every learning process, we metaphorically travel an internal, and many times external, landscape. In travelling a Pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognise and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves anew Path denotes a structure; Way implies a process. (Cajete 1994, p. 55)

Consequently, the research pathway is both an external and internal path. My research involves critical reflection, building relationships, making stops along the way, overcoming hurdles, checking my bearings, doing U-turns and asking for direction. In this way, I came to understand the landscape within which my research was being undertaken with all its components but also came to understand myself as an Aboriginal researcher passionate about my topic and the people the research could potentially impact on.

I have needed to bring to the ethnographic process my epistemology; my understanding of how things are done. My evolving understanding of epistemologically infused ethnography was influenced by the Ojibway writer Armand Ruffo, who explained a limitation of ethnography that has strongly influenced my thinking and subsequent doing. That is, in his analysis of the story *Tracks*, written by American Indian writer Louise Erdrich, Ruffo (1993, p. 163) asks these questions: "How much goes unnoticed? How much is left unknown? How much can the 'outsider' really know and feel?"

As Merriam et al. (2001, p. 411) suggest it has "commonly been assumed that being an insider means easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and read non-verbal cues, and most importantly be able to project a more truthful, authentic understanding of the culture under study". Alternatively, there are also the concerns that insiders are inherently biased, too close to the culture to ask critical questions (Bishop 2011, p. 4.). However, such assertions assume a homogeneity that is far from the reality of the diversity and complexity that characterises Indigenous people's lives around the world. Furthermore, there is, quite simply, no pan-Aboriginal identity in Australia (see section 2.2). Nor do such assumptions take into consideration that I grew up away from my culture and language. Moreover, such suppositions do not take into consideration the influence that age, class, gender, education and ability—among a myriad of other

variables—might have upon the research relationship. Finally, though the researcher may consider themselves to be an 'insider', research success is not guaranteed.

Studies by researchers who had initially considered themselves to be insiders speak to this problem (see, for example, Archibald 2008; Martin 2008; Nakata 2007; Smith 1999). Additionally, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts, even western-trained Indigenous researchers who are intimately involved with community members will typically employ research techniques and methodologies that will likely marginalise the communities' contribution to the research. Overall, the research suggests that being an Indigenous researcher does not automatically mean that research will be undertaken in a culturally responsive way when researching in or with their own community.

When considering who should conduct research in African-American communities, Tillman (2002, p. 4) contends that it is not simply a matter of saying that the researcher must be African-American, but "Rather it is important to consider whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences of African-Americans within the context of the phenomenon under study". Similarly, Rigney (2006, p. 42) notes that "Indigenist research principles can be drawn upon by non-Indigenous researchers who uphold its principles for Indigenous self-determination". So, instead of the focus being on insider and outsider, Narayan (1993, p. 672) proposes:

> What we must focus our attention on is the quality of relations with the people we seek to represent in our texts: are they viewed as mere fodder for professionally self-serving statements about a generalised Other, or are they accepted as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas- people to whom we are bonded through ties of reciprocity...?

Therefore, as an Indigenous/Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher, I do not expect to be bestowed with automatic 'insider' status; quite simply, I am not. I belong to a freshwater language group, far distant from the Aboriginal Country my research is located in or, in some cases, to the Countries of my research participants. Additionally, my age, gender, class, education and ability, among other things, influence significantly on my position within the community. Rather, I am expected to undertake research in 'proper ways' (Aunty Nangala) by communicating with individuals and groups, and by learning and participating in appropriate Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing relevant to the community with whom I am engaging. Furthermore, I am expected to

work respectfully, reciprocally and relationally, observing the dynamics of kinship structures present in the community. Quite simply, I cannot do this without language, or as I refer to it, accessible language, to which I now turn.

3.2 Developing an Accessible Aboriginal Research Vernacular

Language is used to discuss, debate, exchange information and to communicate ideas. However, language is also a means for the enactment of exclusion, discrimination and prejudice, as cultural values and attitudes are reflected in the structures and meanings of the language we use (Flinders University n.d.). Therefore, language is not neutral or unproblematic. Wilson (2008, p. 279) writes that "(l)anguage mastery can be used in a bad way to make people feel small, or it can be used in a good way to explain concepts". Similarly, Basil Johnston, an Ojibwa storyteller and author, writes that "Words are medicine that can heal or injure" (cited in Archibald 2008, p. 19).

One reason for this tension is that words have multiple dimensions, and meaning is difficult to discern without contextualisation. A word like 'bark' may be the bark of a tree or, the bark of a dog. So, meaning becomes more accessible within the context of a sentence, and that sentence within a paragraph and so on. But the sentence or paragraph are, in turn, influenced by the values and assumptions embedded in the culture of the society within which they are spoken.

Language is used to convey the purpose of my research, it is the means by which my research participants share their stories, and, language is used to interpret and represent the narratives shared. But what words, sentences and paragraphs do I use to make the research accessible, and therefore, valuable, to the research participants and the wider community? Within my investigation I identified and used three genres of English—Standard Australian English (SAE), Aboriginal English (AbE) and, Academic English (AE)—which are now briefly explained.

Colonisation, through a process of dispossession, has had a detrimental effect on the survival of many Australian Aboriginal languages and influenced the development of creoles and AbE dialects (Berry & Hudson 1997). Historically, education policies repressed Aboriginal peoples' languages and distinct culture, ranging from denial, to segregation, then assimilation and onwards to integration (Beresford, Partington & Gower 2012). Viv Edwards (2004, p. 6) states that the "social, political and economic

pressures to abandon traditional languages was enormous, and the fact that languages survived at all is a remarkable testimony to the cultural integrity of these peoples". In my research, participants—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—spoke a variety of languages. Most Aboriginal participants, and some non-Aboriginal participants, spoke a form of Aboriginal English (AbE) (Davis 2014) as well as, or rather than, the dominant standard language of Standard Australian English (SAE) (Troy 2012).

A third genre of English spoken in my research is that of Academic English. Academic English is that genre of language that in a few syllables a whole body of scholarship and knowledge is identifiable. It is discipline-based, loaded with jargon and rhetorical conventions. It enables students to acquire knowledge and academic skills while also successfully navigating school policies, assignments, expectations, and cultural norms (Great Schools Partnership 2013). Moreover, terms like 'justice', 'equality' and 'pedagogy', have complex, abstract and multiple meanings. It is, therefore, a language rarely known or understood by society in general. For Aboriginal peoples—whose access to education at all levels has been limited for generations and, for whom Standard Australian English is not always the first language spoken in the everyday—Academic English is often a highly inaccessible mode of communicating their lived experience. As such, there can often be a void between the researcher who speaks Academic English, and the 'researched' who speak Aboriginal English and/or Standard Australian English.

As a culturally responsive researcher, my task is to draw on the language strengths of participants so as not to exclude or discriminate, nor ultimately to alienate. Additionally, drawing on, and respecting the cultural concepts and perspectives the language/s reflect, is privileging the voices and stories of those choosing to participate in my research. It is not, quite simply, terra nullius research. Consequently, a key task of my research was to develop and utilise an accessible Aboriginal research vernacular, and infuse it into the research process. There are many possible examples to illustrate how this was achieved in my research, however, due to word limits, I will provide some select examples to demonstrate the research process undertaken.

In researching Aboriginal women's perceptions and experiences of health and health services, Fredericks (2007, p. 18) writes of being "asked to 'talk up'—throw my ideas out, let the women in the community hear what I was thinking and let them question me

about what I was thinking about doing". Similarly, in my research I would be asked to "come and yarn" which included talking about me, them, the research and, life in general. Yarning is an Aboriginal cultural form of conversation through which both the researcher and participant journey together, visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 39). Different rules or protocols, techniques and purposes exist for the carrying out and maintaining of the discussion, depending on the knowledge being sought. It involves deep discussion about a particular issue (Adams & Faulkhead 2012; Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010) and has been described as "a transactional activity that involves negotiation and trust" (Imtoual, Kameniar & Bradley 2009, p. 27). Moreover, yarning is 'a process that requires the researcher to develop and build a relationship' (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 38).

This method of yarning was then partnered with that of Indigenous Storywork developed by Jo-ann Archibald from the Sto:lo Nation of British Columbia, Canada. I was introduced to this Indigenous method while visiting Canada in 2014 and found it to have similarities to yarning discussed above. Archibald (2001, p. 1) explains that stories capture our attention and ask us "to think deeply and to reflect upon our actions and reactions"—a process she calls 'Storywork'. In Archibald's methodological framework, the 4Rs of respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity relate to ways of working with people and with Indigenous Knowledges; the remaining principles of holism, inter-relatedness, and synergy refer to how Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous stories are used in the research process (Archibald 2008). It is a framework for understanding the characteristics of stories which include appreciating the process of storytelling, establishing a receptive learning context, and engaging in holistic meaning making (Archibald, 2008).

Together, the principles of these two Indigenous storying methods provided the guiding framework for how I approached the research, the participants and, the university to which I am affiliated. Skilful and respectful questioning and active listening are key tools in these methods. Active listening forces people to listen responsively to what is being shared. It avoids misunderstandings, as people have to confirm that they do really understand what another person has said rather than assuming that they have got it. Language barriers are no excuse: such challenges just need to be worked through by rewording, restructuring, retelling and, at times, telling another story to illustrate the

point being conveyed. At times the journey is difficult for all involved; at other times it is incredibly revealing.

Early on in the research, for example, it was established that the word *Aboriginal* would be used instead of *Indigenous.* In my initial yarning session at one school site I was told in no uncertain terms that Indigenous when referring to them and their community would not be acceptable. This is not uncommon, and I too prefer the term Aboriginal as a means of identification. Colonisation has had a long legacy of using pseudo-scientific race-based terms such as 'half-caste', 'quarter-caste' and 'octeroon' to describe Aboriginal peoples of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent (Kinnane 2015). Such terminology was used in legislation to manage and control Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Additionally, until the *1967 Referendum*, which effectively gave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people final Australian citizenship status under the Australian Constitution (Attwood & Markus, 1997), Aboriginal peoples were 'protected' under the myriad of indigenous flora and fauna legislation, thereby implying that Aboriginal peoples were plants and animals. So, when I was born in 1966, I was born as a plant or animal according to the legislation at the time, dispossessing me of my humanity and, Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

According to the Elders participating in the research who had lived through this era as well as their parents and grandparents, Indigenous is an "offensive and painful term" (Aunty Nangala) and "a disgusting word" (Uncle Pedro). So, a joint decision was made to use Aboriginal for Australia's first peoples inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders, use Indigenous when referring to international first peoples or, to use Indigenous when directly quoting someone. This is but one example of the negotiated, accessible vernacular, developed in the research but illustrates well the principles of culturally responsive research.

Additionally, I have sought to use language that is straightforward and not academic or jargonistic without disrespecting the contributors' 'smarts'. I therefore, traversed the three genres of English discussed above in a way that was respectful of the context in which the research was being undertaken. By way of an example:

> At Nunga Tag Day today I got to wander through the many spectators and student players. Aboriginal people and communities had come from far and wide across Adelaide to watch this annual day of football. Predominantly those attending were from one Aboriginal community or another including the local peoples. Inevitably I would be asked *'What you doing here?'* (or something to that effect). By now I had realised that saying I was a *'PhD researcher'* shut people down and turned them off talking with me. So, my reply became *'I'm a professional stickybeak*[7]*, like to stick my nose in things and find out what's going on!'* At this day I would say this to Aboriginal Elders, community leaders and students in a conspiratorial tone. In the main, the response was an equally conspiratorial tone *'let me tell you something'* or *'have you spoken to...?'* or something similar and the stories would come flooding out. (Field notes: 5 March 2014)

In other words, both Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English were used in a yarning or Storywork way. As a result, stories that contributed to my understanding of Aboriginal education success and, most significantly, names of teachers to both approach and potentially avoid in the enactment of my research, were provided.

Finally, metaphor and imagery located within the research participants' worlds was a vital research tool in the investigation. The use of metaphor in Indigenous research is prominent (see, for example, Archibald 2008; Martin 2008; Wilson 2008). Metaphor is a visual story (Martin 2008) that compares two unlike objects, concepts or feelings, to establish mutual understanding. The visual story provided through metaphor enables "listeners to walk inside the story to find their own teachings" (Kovach 2009, p. 63). The use of metaphor in the research was a common method in working with research participants to build knowledge of new or complex ideas, particularly relating to academia. The following story is illustrative of this point:

> Lesson learned today. I gave Uncle 'Pedro' the transcript of his interview today, printed out as he doesn't like computers. An hour later I asked him what he thought. Put simply he didn't like it.
>
> I recall holding my breath and asking, "Tell me more?" Uncle Pedro responded that reading it he "sounded like an idiot". Through skilful questioning and careful listening I learned he didn't believe he spoke "like that, with the 'ums' and 'ahs'." We yarned further, and I used the following metaphor to teach Uncle Pedro about raw data:
>
> Sheelagh: OK, let's think of raw data as a pumpkin you buy in the shops. You wouldn't eat it off the shelf?

[7] *Stickybeak* is a slang term that basically means: an inquisitive, prying or meddling person. It is a metaphor for sticking ones' nose into other peoples' business. This is a term I took for granted as being known globally until visiting Vancouver and Prince Rupert Island where the term was unfamiliar to them. I then researched the term to find that it has its origins in Australian and New Zealand. Lesson learned!

> Uncle Pedro: No.
>
> Sheelagh: You'd take it home; peel it; bake it; steam it; mash it; you might add some herbs and spice or just salt?
>
> Uncle Pedro: Salt and butter?
>
> Sheelagh: Yeah, sounds good. So, this transcript is like the raw pumpkin; doesn't taste too good right now. But what I do now, with your help, is prepare it and spice it up. Take out the 'ums' and 'ahs'. Come back to you for regular tastings until it tastes good?
>
> Uncle Pedro: OK. But do I really sound like that?
>
> Sheelagh: Yeah, most of us do. Let me show you the transcript of another participant, a whitefellah teacher.
>
> Uncle Pedro: (after reading through a couple of paragraphs) He's gonna need some serious spicing up. (Field notes: November 25, 2014)

In this encounter, Uncle Pedro went from being a reluctant research participant, ready to withdraw, to one willing to participate and assist in the future development of the research. Additionally, Uncle Pedro learned new language, Academic English. Moreover, through this transactional activity, I further built my relationship with Uncle Pedro which resulted in further yarns and invites to Aboriginal gatherings.

This encounter reminded me that like Gumbaynggirr Elder Tony Perkins, I wanted the written text used in my writings to "[b]e as close as possible to the way [research participants] speak so [their] words as they appear on the page reflect the meanings of the stories and places that [they] wanted to convey" (Somerville & Perkins 2010, p. x). It is important to note though, that I did not just extend this courtesy to Aboriginal participants in my research, but to all participants understanding that they knew the meanings of the stories being shared, and therefore what was to be learned from them. At times, some 'spicing up' was involved in the writing up of the stories to avoid participants being portrayed as, for examples, 'idiots' as was Uncle Pedro's initial interpretation of the raw data.

In his essay, *Tradition, truth and tomorrow*, Yolngu Elder and scholar Galarrwuy Yunupingu (2008) raises the problems of how and whether policies and laws can bridge the gaps between Yolngu and non-Aboriginal peoples in education, health, and standard of living. He asserts that "the 'gap' that politicians now talk of grows larger as we speak" (Yunupingu 2008, p. 37). The gap, according to Yunupingu is made wider when the people in power are predominantly monolingual and do not speak Aboriginal languages.

Consequently, those in power have little understanding of the culture or the concepts or the stories that accompany the language of the Yolngu, or for that matter, any other Aboriginal language group. In the same way, I contend that those in power as researchers widen the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples when they do not possess the language, or at the very least, work with an accessible Aboriginal research vernacular. However, I stress, that proper ways of working through accessible language is not about compliance or manipulation. Instead, it is a matter of having the consideration to attend to how access to so-called privileged knowledge, often disguised in unfamiliar language, can be achieved.

In the next section the research pathway and its implementation through several phases is discussed.

3.3 Research Design and Phases

The study consisted of three interconnected phases–immersion; observation and 'ethnographic'; and data analysis and theme bundling–which I will expand on below. They are represented as a neat serial progression; but in reality the various phases progressed according to the metaphor of pathway discussed above. That is, the three phases overlapped with each other, took place simultaneously, were revisited and, at times, occurred throughout the life of my research. However, presenting them as a linear progression is my way of organising the research design and methods used.

3.3.1 Phase one: Immersion

The immersion phase put in place people and processes for establishing the research. A critical component of this phase was the development of relationships with the schools, research participants—teachers, Aboriginal students and, by extension, the families and communities of the students. Relationships were developed by being immersed in the identified schools, enabling me to make connections and to explore what they experience as meaningful and important (Vaught 2006). With immersion, the "field researcher sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so" (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995, p. 2). By immersing myself, and subsequently building relationships, I was fulfilling my distinct cultural responsibilities in the research process. Immersion also gave me the opportunity to share my research purpose and

motivation; to share my views and understandings; and to share my story of being an Aboriginal woman, a teacher and someone whose own schooling was less than satisfactory. In this way the protocol of relational work was observed.

More specifically, during this time of immersion at the identified schools, I attended, for example:

- staff and curriculum meetings;
- school assemblies;
- professional development;
- student Individual Learning Plan (ILP) meetings;
- Aboriginal parent meetings; and
- sporting and fundraising events.

Additionally, I reviewed relevant school policies, strategic plans, and assessment and curriculum documents. In this way I gained a knowledge of the cultural fabric of the schooling process (Boykin 1986) as well as the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Tobin 1994, p. 454) discussed further in Chapter 4.

A key task in the immersion phase was to first convince Aboriginal peoples of the value of research for Aboriginal peoples, and in particular, their children and youth (Bishop 2011). As noted previously, research has a long legacy of being conducted in a terra nullius way, without permission, consultation, or involvement of Aboriginal people (Bourke 1995). Nor does traditional research typically take into account transgenerational trauma that is a legacy of more than two centuries of colonisation (Atkinson 2012; Zembylas 2007) that can be triggered by research participants being asked to recall their stories. The words of Aboriginal poet and activist Lisa Bellear[8] (2001, p. 5) are most illustrative of this point:o

[8] Lisa Bellear was Geompil/Noonuccal of the Quandamooka Nation and was of the Stolen Generations. In 2001, Lisa was completing her PhD (English) at La Trobe University entitled 'Contemporary Indigenous issues through radio and photographic texts'.

A SIGNIFICANT LIFE

A life story: my history placed
within artificial boundaries of colonial
discourse. Hey what do these hackademics
anthros, researchers, archivists want
for nothing?

Authorisation is signed. The standard ethics
agreement between researcher and subject
is politely referred to. tape recorder is
switched on. How difficult for me to recall
events of social, cultural and political
significance.

Memories bring on over whelming grief
Yet we sit drinking sugary tea discussing
a life which is no more or less significant
or distinguishable from others who have
survived to this point.

For the future I release this silenced
voice. For the future I will go beyond
my hidden pain and expose a snapshot
insight into an urban/rural Indigenous
survivor. For the future, If there is to be one
we must listen, talk and share. For the future.

As a culturally responsive researcher, I am ever-mindful of the dualisms of fragility and strength in my research participants and therefore greatly respect and appreciate their involvement in the investigation. I understand too, that their involvement is oftentimes about the emerging leaders to be found in our Aboriginal youth. Consequently, I actively sought for my research project to be, in actuality, our research, with me as the tool for bringing their stories to the foreground. Participating in the everyday lives of participants, and the schools with which they interact, enabled the purposes for the research to become evident and for trusting and respecting relationships to be built.

The next section discusses more specifically how the research was designed and the reasoning behind decisions and choices made.

3.3.1.1 Multi-sited school ethnography

Schools tend to operate in ritualistic ways (McLaren 2015) that are underpinned by the traditional purpose of education itself (Schofield 2010; Sellar 2015). Within this setting, the cultures of classrooms are being constructed on a daily basis determining the kind

and quality of learning that occurs (Florida Literacy and Reading Excellence n.d). Over time teachers and students create rituals about how they are to interact, about power and, what is expected (Gutierrez 1993). Often these patterns are so embedded in the everyday that they become invisible and routine. I wanted to reveal these patterns of teacher and student interaction. In other words, I wanted to access the practice of teachers and the work of students in their 'natural' setting—that is, the school (Denzin & Lincoln 1994).

Recognising however, that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal high school students is a wicked problem (discussed in section 2.3.3), I chose to undertake a multi-sited investigation (Castagno 2006; Vaught 2006) framed within culturally responsive critical ethnography (CRCE) discussed above. The focus was twofold: to reveal the embedded rituals and patterns of teacher–student interaction that have become invisible; and secondly, to reveal the reinforcing processes between individual actions and expressions and societal structures that are not unique to an individual or organisation, but rather a cultural system which is played out in society's institutions—for my research purposes, schools (Lawrence 1993).

Multi-sited ethnography provides a way to understand complexities, discrepancies and differences across sites while also providing the chance to note similarity and shared experiences (Castagno 2006). Additionally, "'multi-sited place-focused ethnographic' studies have benefits for theory building, as multi-sited studies enable a continual checking out, critiquing and revising of provisional findings from multiple sites" (Marcus 1995, p. 53). Moreover, while ethnography tells the story of a particular, local setting, it also has implications for the larger, national, cultural system from which the localised practices emerge (Vaught & Castagno 2008, p. 98).

Multi-sited school ethnography, therefore, was deemed to be the most appropriate research approach to meet the research aim and to answer my research questions. Subsequently, the research investigation took place across two high schools in metropolitan Adelaide, which are now discussed.

Site/s Selection

Participating schools were chosen through investigation and recommendation from the Aboriginal communities of Adelaide and, through nomination from my dissertation supervisors. Specifically, I wanted at least two mainstream schools in metropolitan

Adelaide which were defined as a school with a Significant Number of Aboriginal Student Population (SNASP) (Rahman 2009). More specifically, I was looking for schools whose Aboriginal student population was at least 10% of the overall student population which is three times the national average (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010).

This student population demographic varied from the majority of the international scholarship on CRP. For example, in the research of scholars like Ladson-Billings (1994), Delpit (1995) and Cooper (2003), the students under investigation belonged to a majority cultural group in the school itself but in the wider society they belonged to the minority African-American population. Likewise, in the works of scholars such as Gay (2000), Villegas and Lucas 2002) and Banks (2000), which focused predominantly on multicultural education, students again were a majority population at school but belonged to a minority culture beyond the school gates. Additionally, in the work of scholars like Au and Jordan (1981), Au and Kawakami (1994) and Erickson and Mohatt (1982) the Indigenous students participating in their research projects were the majority at school but not in the wider population. I wanted to know how this population demographic differentiation functioned in the Australian context.

In addition, in my search for schools, I borrowed from the work undertaken by Mulford (2011, p. 2) who, writing of 'what works' for Aboriginal schooling, notes that schools are most effective when they:

- understand what is happening in the broader community and the implications this has for schools (being contextually literate);
- run their schools in ways that respond positively to their community (being organisationally savvy); and
- act with others, pursue a consistent vision over time, focus on areas they can influence, use evidence to support change and use a range of leadership styles (being leadership smart)

Four schools were subsequently identified as fulfilling the parameters of my research investigation. However, one school was not in a position to participate due to an "overload" of commitments at the time and, another school had insufficient Aboriginal student numbers in that particular school year. So, two schools were finally identified

referred to in my research as: 1) Southern High School (SHS) and Metropolitan High School (MHS).

The research project was granted ethics approval from University of South Australia and Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) in 2013. This meant I was able to undertake my research activities between 2013 and 2016 with a broad range of people who were intimately connected to teaching Aboriginal high school students. Once ethics approval was received, schools were contacted, providing school principals with a Consent Form (see Appendix 2) that scoped the research project and its potential outcomes. Accessing schools however, took over one year to resolve due to the complexities of schools, availability of Aboriginal Education Workers and/or teachers. Negotiation with schools involved numerous phone calls, emails and meetings before consent was provided and the research could progress.

In undertaking such negotiations, which mostly involved ensuring that I would 'do no harm' to school, teachers and students, is culturally responsive research in action. That is, it was a process of schools, staff and at times, community, getting to know me, learning of my intentions and motivations for the research and how they would be involved, and what I intended to happen with the research once completed. In keeping with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, I shared my Kamilaroi heritage, my history of being estranged from my Aboriginality, my disastrous education, the story of my Year 9 history teacher Miss Henry, my career to date and how I came to be undertaking the current research project (discussed in Chapter 1). This relational work (Kovach 2009) was reciprocated by the schools and individuals. Moreover, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the dimensions of the research and how it could proceed were negotiated. As Rigney (2006, p. 43) asserts "Mutual respect and power sharing in methodological negotiation and collaboration is essential" as it is the foundation upon which all future research processes are built.

In the next section a snapshot of both schools and the participating teachers is provided to better contextualise the research.

School One—'Southern High School' (SHS)

School One is referred to as *Southern High School* (SHS) and has an Aboriginal student population of 10% (well above the national average of 4%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). Additionally, this school has a Category 2 Index of Educational

Disadvantage[9] and is a recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (ATSIEAP) focus school and a Stronger Smarter Hub School. Finally, the school is a Member of the South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA, a program that is school-based education program designed to support young Aboriginal students to achieve their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Students attending SHS are from the local school catchment area and therefore live within the surrounding community with extended family or, for many senior Aboriginal students, independently.

School Two—'Metropolitan High School' (MHS)

School Two, referred to as *Metropolitan High School* (MHS), has an Aboriginal student population of 10%, well above the national average of 4% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). This school has a Category 2 Index of Educational Disadvantage and is a recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (ATSIEAP) focus school (Government of South Australia 2012). The program where I was located within the school is a multi-campus secondary initiative that has operated since the 1970s. It primarily provides an educational pathway for secondary students from South Australian remote communities to mainstream education.

The students are from more than 20 remote communities and are comprised of four related language groups and the students speak English as a second or third language. Most students experience begins as a participant in a short-term program to enable their academic and social abilities to be assessed, and skill development accelerated for inclusion in the program in the longer term. The program is governed by the communities from which the students belong.

3.1.1.2 Participant selection

My investigation primarily focuses on the complex pedagogical work of successful teachers. Identifying and selecting the participants was an intense and complex task, involving an extensive time commitment. While schools possessed similarities, likewise they differed in significant ways as is to be expected in multi-sited research (Marcus

[9] The Index of Educational Disadvantage is a socio-economic index, used by the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) to allocate resources to schools to address educational disadvantage related to socio-economic status. The Index is calculated using measures such as: Parental economic resources, and Aboriginality. These measures are combined and placed into seven categories. Schools in category 1 serve the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities, category 7 the least disadvantaged. (Government of South Australia 2012)

1995). Consequently, the process of identifying participating teachers varied from site to site.

To begin with, I undertook an extensive review of the literature on CRP and more generally, on successful teaching. This provided an image of what characteristics successful teachers may possess. At both school sites I was asked for an overview or summary of the literature, and to share my understanding of CRP. The following was thus developed and provided and used as a template for discussion.

Defining Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

There is neither one definitive term nor definition for this school of thinking. I choose to use the above term because it is the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people I am focused on; and it is the teachers' response to culture through their classroom practice that I am investigating in the main.

Below are some dot points that describe the key elements of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy that I have found in the available literature:

- it has high expectations of students;
- it sees culture as a tool for learning and not a problem to be solved;
- it connects students life learning beyond the school with that of the learning in the classroom;
- it is about relationships between teacher, student and parent/guardian;
- it is about the individual learner and their community;
- it is about student diversity;
- it is about sociocultural consciousness (i.e. a knowledge and understanding of the ongoing impact of social and historical events/issues);
- it is about social justice;
- it is transformative;
- it is reconciling;
- it is anti-racist;
- teachers are agents of change; and
- it is dynamic.

These dot points are drawn from a vast body of literature from the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and, to a lesser extent, other countries across the world. It is a body of literature that continues to grow.

As yet, I am to find or develop an Australian definition of culturally responsive pedagogy and this is a large part of my research aim and where I need your help. The literature tells me, for example, that although there is no single way of being Aboriginal, the research reveals some common characteristics that teachers possess, and the pedagogies they employ, to be effective with Aboriginal students.

For example, Santoro et al. (2011) stress the importance of:

- understanding Aboriginal worldviews and ways of knowing, being and doing;
- the value of knowing about Aboriginal students' lives beyond the classroom and school gate; and
- building relationships with Aboriginal students and communities.

To this I would add from literature on culturally responsive pedagogy already discussed:

- teachers are able to recognise and reject deficit thinking.

The above information was disseminated and discussed. There was lively debate about the nuances of the criteria and if it related to Aboriginal students. However, the preference overall was not to predetermine the characteristics of future participants nor devise a checklist against which I was to judge.

Instead, I relied on a community nomination process (Foster, M 1994; Ladson-Billings 1994; McDonald 1993). Here the researcher relies on community members to judge people, places and things within their own setting (McDonald 2003). Researchers such as Delpit (1995), Foster, M (1994), and Siddle Walker (1996), have written of the dangers of defining successful or good teaching without accounting for the emic perspective. That is, who or what is valued by the community the teachers are intended to serve or, the insiders.

With this in mind my research design recognised and privileged Aboriginal students, parents and community leaders as insiders or, expert knowers in their own education. Additionally, my research design recognised the experience and knowledge of key school stakeholders such as the principal, fellow teachers and, significantly, staff and visitors of the Nunga[10] Room, discussed further in Chapter 4. Put simply, I relied upon their knowledge of Aboriginal educational success to identify successful teachers rather than asking them to nominate teachers who fitted a predetermined checklist. As will be seen below, however, the nomination process varied between the schools, needing to respond to their individual stories. However, no evident impact on the research as a result of this variation was found. In both cases, teacher nominations were understood to be endorsed by the communities to whom they serve. As the teacher nomination process varied between the two participating schools, their stories are presented here individually.

Southern High School (SHS)

Southern High School had been nominated as a school site for participation by members of the Adelaide Aboriginal community. Initially, I met with the school principal to discuss the research beyond the introductory letter that had been sent. I was then invited to meet the Aboriginal Education Team (AET) in the Nunga Room to present the research and ask permission to undertake the research. This meeting was robust and AET members were keen to participate and assist where they could. Team members

[10] Nunga is a term used by Aboriginal people in some parts of South Australia to identify as a collective.

were highly receptive to the aim of the research being focused on ‘success’ and what is working rather than ‘failure’ and where education (and students in particular) are going wrong. I was invited into the Nunga Room, which became my base for the duration of the research at SHS.

Over a period of several months, interviewing referred to by Burgess (1988) as ‘conversations with a purpose’ were used. As such, these purposeful conversations are a “non-standardised interview [which] does not include identical questions for all those interviewed with the result that information cannot be summarised in a statistical form” (Burges 1988, p. 138). However, each purposeful conversation, embedded with the principles of Storywork and yarning discussed previously, asked the core question of: Who do you think is a successful teacher at this school?

As discussed above, there was debate—sometimes heated—about the language to be used in my research. For example, during these early months, the term ‘successful teacher’ was agreed upon as the preferred term by Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW), Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal community members consulted. The alternate terms of, for example, ‘quality teacher/teaching’, ‘effective teacher/teaching’ or ‘good teacher/teaching’ were understood to be too ‘departmental’ or ‘government’; the term ‘successful’ or ‘success’ were understood to have an emotional characteristic as well as implying celebration of educational success. Consequently, the terms ‘successful teacher’ and ‘successful teaching’ became commonplace in the investigation and were used interchangeably with CRP.

Conversations with a purpose conducted for my research investigation lasted anywhere from three minutes to 1 hour. These purposeful conversations were undertaken with individuals or small groups as the opportunity arose. Such moments occurred at, for example, community events, while walking down a corridor, at a staff meeting, at a football match, or, in the Nunga Room. After providing a brief ‘who am I’ and ‘what am I doing here’ I asked my core question: “Who do you think is a successful teacher at this school?” or, to put it another way, “Which teachers are doing good with our [Aboriginal] kids?”

I asked this sort of question of a Year 12 female student in the Nunga Room. Her response came without hesitation:

> Cathy: Mrs Knight, she's really good.
>
> Sheelagh: What does she do to be soo good?
>
> Cathy: It's like when we had to do Shakespeare, she was really passionate about it? When we didn't get it, she acted it out (laughs). It just made it real and I could understand it. She does that sort of thing ALL the time. (Cathy, aged 17, Feb. 25, 2014)

Additionally, when I asked grandparents, Aunties/Uncles, AEWs at Nunga Tag Day, these are the common responses given:

> Ah, you need to talk to...
>
> Let me tell you about...
>
> Ah, Mr/Mrs has really got it going.
>
> The kids really rave about.
>
> My kid did really well with...

Moreover, when I asked an Aboriginal Education Worker for their suggestions, they emailed me three names without hesitation along with two names to avoid. By comparison, when I asked a non-Aboriginal team leader I got this response: "Oh boy, I can tell you who to avoid! I'll have a think about who the kids respond well to and get back to you".

When a name was provided I would simply nudge for more information by asking questions like: How come 'Mr/Mrs'...? Or, what does Mr/Mrs do to get nominated?" Overall, nominations were based on a variety of elements. These included those characteristics that matched with the international and national literature already reviewed including: student academic performance, high attendance rates, participation in the lesson and, a high willingness to get homework completed on time. Most common though was the positive stories individuals shared with me about the caring, passionate and determined nature of the teacher with regards to the student. Also disclosed to me were classroom placement requests with particular teachers by students, parents/caregivers and AET staff, based on the positive educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in their specific classrooms.

Once all nominations were received, the lists were cross-referenced to look for recurring names. Those with two or more votes were sent an email inviting them to participate in a research project on successful teaching of Aboriginal students. In all eight teachers

were contacted. Three responded favourably and subsequently they were requested to meet for an initial interview and reciprocal exploration.

Metropolitan High School (MHS)

MHS primarily provides an educational pathway for secondary students from remote South Australian communities. As such I did not have contact with student parents or communities for their nominations. Instead, significant time was spent with the Principal discussing the proposed research and its aims. The school was established in the 1970s by the women of the remote communities and remains governed by the students' communities. Students undertake their secondary education at MHS solely on the basis that they and their families actively wish for them to participate in the program. Therefore, I surmise that in turn the teachers of the program are supported by the communities as providing a successful education (i.e. academic and social) to their youth. The principal therefore, was the one who nominated participating teachers on behalf of the communities. Being a specialised program all teachers could potentially have been nominated. However, having acquired a working knowledge of this particular research project, literature on CRP and successful teaching, and the principals' years of experience, the principal selected those teachers who would best provide representation of successful teaching at the school.

3.1.1.3 Participating teacher snapshots

In this section I introduce the participating teachers who were identified through variations on Foster's (1994) community nomination process. I characterise my description of my six participating teachers as a 'snapshot' (Grant & Secada 1990). It is a brief, candid glimpse at the personal and professional life of each participating teacher at specific points in time. I would like to take the time to thank each participating teacher for inviting me into their classrooms and pedagogies, understanding well their heavy workloads.

I identified a total of six teachers: three at each school site; three male and three female; five European-Australian and one Aboriginal; ages ranged from 24 years to 60 plus; years of teaching experience ranged from two years to over three decades; subject areas being taught ranged across all disciplines—Humanities and STEM; and, students being taught were in Year 8 through to Year 12 (i.e. ages 13 to 19 years). Finally, reasons for becoming teachers ranged from "accidental" to "the only thing I wanted to do". To

maintain privacy and anonymity, I use pseudonyms chosen by participating teachers rather than the teachers' real names. In response to participating teacher requests, each is referred to as 'Mr' or 'Mrs' in deference to their profession. Despite my attempts at confidentiality however, it is also acknowledged that because every school is in many ways idiosyncratic, some details reported herein may actually be recognisable by those who are familiar with the site and participants. Despite this, teachers and AET members consented to the submission of the research.

The following snapshots are compiled from a combination of purposeful conversations (Burges 1998), interview storying (discussed later in this chapter) and, through data gathered in the completion of the Teacher Profile Form (see Appendix 3).

Mrs Knight is a teacher with three decades of teaching experience—with the last 15 years being at this same school. Mrs Knight majored in history at university and currently holds the position of Leader English/LOTE as well as teaching Women Studies. As a student Mrs Knight describes herself as an above average, studious and sporting student. She describes her reasons for becoming a teacher as, "It is always something I wanted to do. I am a social and caring person and love learning, so teaching it was!" Mrs Knight describes herself as being naturally nosy, it's just who I am". (Mrs Knight). Mrs Knight is a member of a performing group, with the moneys raised being used for the purchase of, for example, student glasses or laptops or formal dance tickets.

While Mrs Knight does not recall any university courses relating to Indigenous studies, she actively seeks out professional development opportunities. Additionally, Mrs Knight describes herself as having "a passion for the injustices of the world" (Mrs Knight); she reads biographies and social history like *Blood on the wattle* as well as participating on the *Black steam train* web blog.

Mrs Knight is intimately connected to the Aboriginal community through her son-in-law who is Aboriginal. Consequently, Mrs Knight has grandchildren who are Aboriginal. Mrs Knight was nominated for my research by her peers, AET and Aboriginal students, an indication of her success in teaching.

Mrs Sullivan teaches English in the mainstream school as well as fulfilling a teaching role in the Behavioural Unit. Additionally, Mrs Sullivan holds a leadership position within the school as the Year 10 Coordinator. She has been teaching for two years, is

aged 24 and identifies culturally as being Croatian-Australian. At school Mrs Sullivan was a studious, sporting and rebellious student. Her reasons for becoming a teacher were described as;

> My class teachers really engaged me. I was not a good student for all of my high school years but after they helped me I saw that I could achieve really high results and I got a high TER[11] so I went for teaching. (Mrs Sullivan)

Mrs Sullivan does not recall undertaking any Indigenous specific courses or assignments while at university. For Mrs Sullivan her knowledge of Aboriginal students' culture was greatly enhanced during her two years as a private tutor for Aboriginal students in a private boarding school where Aboriginal students (predominantly from remote communities) made up 10% of the student population.

Mr Banks is both the Team Leader of the AET and head teacher of the school's South Australian Aboriginal Sports and Training Academy (SAASTA) program with Aboriginal students in Years 10, 11 and 12. He describes himself as someone who liked school a lot and was both studious and sporting. Mr Banks reasons for becoming a teacher were stated as, "I wanted to have a career that coupled working with children and being able to be fit and active and constantly apply my love of sport"; his current position fulfils this desire. At university Mr Banks recalls undertaking an elective course called Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Education which enhanced his cultural knowledge and abilities.

Mr Scott has been a maths and science teacher at his school for 15 years and more recently has taken on the additional role of Deputy Principal. He stated that he himself did not like school (mostly related to bullying but also some teachers) and described himself as a "Capable (student) but had poor work habits". He states that becoming a teacher was,

> An accident—I finished my B.Sc. then enrolled in a B.Ed. to give me time to work out what I really wanted to do. I gained contract employment then permanency and decided it would be a worthwhile career. (Mr Scott)

Mr Scott does not recall undertaking any Indigenous specific courses or assignments while at university. Instead, he had teaching experiences that transformed his attitudes,

[11] Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) was a tertiary entrance score used in several Australian states and the Northern Territory as a tool for selection to universities in Australia. As of 2010, it has been replaced by the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) in all states and territories except Queensland.

beliefs and knowledge about Aboriginal students and their culture. For example, Mr Scott notes that while working at Traeger Park School in Alice Springs he was exposed to the Accelerated Literacy Program (ALP) where he gained an understanding of western academic discourse.

Mr James teaches Humanities for Aboriginal students for Years 8 and 9 including: Geography, Aboriginal Studies and Information and Technology Futures. He shared that his "father's side has a Ngarrindjeri/Kaurna Aboriginal cultural heritage. So I'm Ngarrindjeri" (Mr James). His educational biography is one of disruption; changing schools three times in high school and finally dropping out completely at the beginning of Year 11. Mr James has worked in schools for 15 years—his first "proper job" (Mr James) being an AEW—and he has been a practicing teacher for the past three years. Most of his teaching time has been at the same school. Mr James graduated from university as a teacher four years ago. At university assignments and subjects pertaining to Indigenous culture and issues was prominent as he completed a Minor in Indigenous Studies. He recalls completing assignments that ranged from suggested effective ways to teach Aboriginal students, incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in all aspects of the curriculum as well as around sociopolitical issues such as the concept of 'race', discrimination and concepts of Australian history.

Mrs Munroe teaches English, Literacy, Maths, Science and Health in the Bridging program which focuses on preparing students academically and socially to participate in mainstream education. Mrs Munroe admits she herself liked being at school a lot – "for social reasons" (Mrs Munroe) and that her grades were average. Mrs Munroe has been a teacher for 10 years with the majority of this time being in her current position. She explains her reasons for becoming a teacher as:

> During my high school years I had a few very passionate and amazing teachers. Volunteering at Mother Theresa's Orphanage and teaching children to read, write and spell. These experiences inspired me to become a teacher. I have also always been caring and nurturing of children and their wellbeing. (Mrs Munroe)

At university Mrs Munroe undertook Aboriginal Studies in all three years of her course and recalls completing assignments on topics such as: life in communities; family; Networks; health and wellbeing; education and support networks available; and, Law/police/ courts and jail (Mrs Munroe). This variety of topics that cover a myriad of

social issues have significantly broadened Mrs Munroe's understanding of social justice.

This snapshot of teachers demonstrates the diversity of the participating teachers in the research investigation. It reveals more than "surface knowledge of them and their pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings 2009, p. 32). However, my aim in retelling their collective stories is to illustrate their CRP and critical awareness rather than their idiosyncrasies. Instead of showing how different they are as individuals, I intend to pull together the commonalities in their philosophy, pedagogy, and personal commitment (Ladson-Billings 2009).

3.1.1.4 Snapshot of Aboriginal participants

My thesis frequently makes reference to Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWS), Elders, and community leaders. As noted above, doing research proper ways means observing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Consequently, my research could not have taken place without the wisdom, guidance and knowledge of numerous Aboriginal peoples represented in my research. After discussing whether biographical snapshots of people such as Aunty Nangala, Uncle Pedro or, Aunty Rose the community decided against it for two reasons. Firstly, as an attempt to provide anonymity though it is understood that in such a 'small' community they will be recognisable to those in the know; and secondly, the preference was to provide a collective or community understanding of what successful teaching of Aboriginal students looks like. I respect their decision, and thank them for their wisdom and time.

3.1.2 Phase Two: The 'Ethnographic' phase

Despite significant differences between critical ethnography, culturally responsive research, and Critical Race Theory methodology, all of these approaches generally agree on the basic methods used to collect data in ethnographic research. As a culturally responsive ethnographer working within a framework of ColonialCrit, I have Aboriginalised these more traditional ways of investigation.

The 'ethnographic phase' can simply be thought of as the 'up close and personal' phase of the research, where I spend extended periods of times within the nominated schools, with participating teachers and AEWs and, at times, with the community at large. So that a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success can be generated, a diversity of

methods—not strictly Aboriginal but always culturally responsive—were employed and each is now discussed.

3.1.2.1 Interview storying

Commonly used in ethnography, research interviews are 'specifically designed to collect research-relevant data on a particular issue and to illuminate certain phenomena' (Basit 2010, p. 100). Unlike conversations with a purpose (Burges 1998) undertaken in Phase One, the interviews in Phase Two adhered to Bishop's (1996) concept where the formal interview is more of a conversation, while the informal interview is more of a chat. That is, interviews with participating teachers, AEWs and Principals, were undertaken in a semi-structured style. Additionally, the protocols and methods of Yarning were employed, an Aboriginal cultural form of conversation (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010) alongside the principles of Storywork developed by Archibald (2008). This interview storying enabled me and participants to journey together, visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 39).

Each participating teacher, and AEW, was invited to spend approximately one hour to 'have a yarn about their teaching or work' that would be recorded for transcription (see below). Remembering the words of a wise Maori woman researcher, "[T]he point of entry starts with their lives, not my needs as a researcher" (SooHoo 2013, p. 213), I was mindful of the interviewees needs, their mindset of the moment (i.e. good or bad school day) and, their lives beyond the school gate. As such, the interviews started with a general 'catch up' yarn about how their 'life was travelling'. Interviews often happened over a 'cuppa' (tea or coffee) and, I would often bring something 'to munch on'—with my home-baked gluten-free chocolate brownies being the most well received! In this way, I fulfilled the protocols of yarning, respected kinship rules of reciprocity and, set the scene so that the relationship developed in Phase One could be furthered.

While I went into the research with a list of five key themes that I sought to cover, they were not necessarily presented as questions that needed to be answered in sequence. Instead, the five questions (see below) acted as touchstones for the yarn.

> **Interview Storying 'Questions'**
>
> Do you recall a teacher, good or bad, at your school? What stands out for you? Does this impact on your teaching today?
>
> How would you define educational success for Aboriginal students?

> What, if any, university courses, subjects or assignments did you do at university regarding Aboriginal issues or studies?
>
> How do you define racism? Do you see that in this school?
>
> Do you think it's more important for Aboriginal kids to have an education than non-Aboriginal kids?

At times, there was deep discussion about a particular issue (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010). At other times there was great hilarity and wandering between our mutual stories. I had, by this stage, already learned a great deal about the participants through both the Teacher and AEW Profiles circulated and collected in Phase One as well as through the purposeful conversations being undertaken for the past several months during immersion. The stories shared in these semi-formal interviews captured our attention and assisted teachers and AEWs to "to think deeply" and "reflect upon our actions and reactions" (Archibald 2001, p. 1).

3.1.2.2 Shadowing (Stickybeaking)

Shadowing, or 'stickybeaking' (Aunty Nangala) involves the researcher following a participant (e.g. teacher) closely over a period of time to investigate what they actually do (Quinlan 2008). One benefit of shadowing was the generation of first-hand descriptive data which provided insights into behaviours, opinions, actions and explanations behind actions which are not reliant upon second-hand reconstructions, as is the case for interviews (Quinlan 2008). In this way, the more informal interactions between teacher and student in the classroom and wider school, were observed. This enabled me to gain a more robust understanding of culturally responsive practices such as relationship building and community connection. Furthermore, stickybeaking enabled me to observe the interactions of the participants with fellow teachers in the everyday of the school. So, over the months of being immersed in the identified school sites, I spent time with participants in the school yard, at staff meetings, at assemblies, in the school kitchen gardens, at gatherings and celebrations, at professional development and, during student detention.

3.1.2.3 Participatory observation

Observation is a method of data collection which requires a researcher to train themselves to see, as opposed to just looking at, what is happening in a given situation to reveal the underlying factors involved (Basit 2010). However, I did not enter participating teachers' classrooms with a checklist or preconceived agenda. I recorded

each lesson for later transcription. This semi-formal approach to observation enabled the "record[ing of] other interesting and pertinent phenomena" taking place in the classroom (Basit 2010, p. 126). However, being solely an observer means that I am not being relationally accountable. I noted in my field notes:

> It's like being on a continuum though, I'm never solely an observer or a participant, I need to choose my role according to the event at hand otherwise I am not being relationally accountable in the eyes of the Aboriginal staff members, I am simply just taking (Yunkaporta & Kirby 2011). (Field notes 10 February, 2014)

By way of an example, during the course of the fieldwork I was invited to attend *Gathering* with Aboriginal students, invited non-Aboriginal students, teachers and AET members. Instead of simply attending and observing I buttered loaf after loaf of bread; I contributed gluten-free brownies and damper, and help wrap fish in paper bark. I circulated among those attending, sitting and yarning, organising cups of tea. I stood by the campfire and just quietly listened, joining in when invited. Overall, this process of participatory observer enabled me to view teacher practice in light of what was disclosed in both the purposeful conversations and interview storying sessions already undertaken.

Being located at two school sites, and with the research progressing along a pathway that varied at each identified school, it was not possible to observe all of the activities and interactions that took place. Consequently, my primary focus was on the classroom and the pedagogical practices therein. However, where possible, I, as a culturally responsive researcher, continued throughout the investigation, to be involved in the wider happenings of the schools.

3.1.2.4 Field notes

Data was collected through field notes while observing in the two schools in addition to recording lessons and interviews. Using a laptop computer, field notes were taken that included: my hunches; my questions for follow-up; key words or phrases used by participating teachers, AEWs, principals and students; impressions; stand out events and incidents; my feelings about what was going on; descriptions of others' feelings and interactions; and variations and exceptions to emerging patterns (Vaught 2006). These field notes were referred back to as I transcribed the lesson recordings and, at times, merged the two documents for clarity and context. These typed field notes were then combined with more extensive critical reflections and preliminary analyses of the data.

3.1.2.5 Day diary

A *day diary* is described by Hayes, Johnston and King (2009, p. 155) as a "[C]ollaborative retelling of the classroom practices experienced by a class over the course of a single day". Such diaries are not written retrospectively for the purpose of reflection but rather are written as they occurred for the purpose of recounting practice. In the research I undertook this process on several occasions to capture, as it happened sequences, in participating teacher classrooms or in culturally safe spaces located within the school by noting in dot form the events happening within the space as they happened. This enabled the focus to be on "practice as it happened, rather than practice as desired and represented in spoken and written reports, or practice as interpreted by various constructs such as intellectual quality or student engagement" (Hayes, Johnston & King 2009, p. 155). These day diaries were then shared with participants and AEWs, who then shared further stories for meaning making. The day diaries therefore enabled me to gain in-depth knowledge of the diversity and layering of practice within the institution of schooling. The day diary is returned to in Chapter 4.

3.1.2.6 Recording and transcription

Throughout the study all semi-formal interviews, or yarns, were audio recorded. On each occasion permission was sought despite formal consent having already been provided at the outset of the investigation. I wanted to demonstrate to participants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, that I respected the value of the stories being gifted to my research. I explained that notes could be taken but that recording the interviews enabled me to capture their complete story without relying on my interpretation or memory. The recordings were then transcribed soon after the interview was completed. I opted to undertake the transcription myself as I felt a retelling and re-experiencing of the conversation as I typed (Archibald 2008; Kovach 2009). I feared that a stranger to the research would not capture the "in-depth perceptions of the interviewees" (Basit 2010, p. 114). Additionally, as I transcribed, I began to recognise patterns that might otherwise have been lost. All participants were then given the opportunity to read the interview transcripts. This allowed participants to clarify and add to, or omit, sections of the interview to ensure that it was an honest reflection of their opinions and beliefs which they are comfortable to share. Additionally, when cultural, and sometimes sacred stories were shared such as those from The Dreaming, I sought permission for their use and asked how these stories were to be presented. In this way, the transcript became a

collaborative process of knowledge sharing and transformation as participants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, began to understand more and more that this was their story and I was not there simply to do terra nullius styled research.

3.1.3 Phase three—Data analysis and theme bundling

3.1.3.1 Theme bundling

Analysis of the data occurred at multiple points along the research pathway. I searched through data looking for patterns, themes, and examples of the concepts being revealed in the research. I looked for themes within individual school sites, across school sites, within and among various groups of people, and across time, in addition to looking for counterexamples and disconfirming evidence (Vaught 2006). I then bundled these themes according to emerging patterns (Kovach 2009) that aligned with the primary research question.

As the research occurred across two school sites, some of the analysis involved identification of themes within single school ethnographic accounts (Marcus 1995). However, as the research progressed, some of the analysis involved contrasting data across the sites. Additionally, the analysis phase involved some tentative theorising that drew on the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter. The overall aim was to reveal a story of what successful teaching of Aboriginal students looked like.

On the whole, the data was bundled into several categories that included the significant role that the institution of schooling plays in either enabling or disabling Aboriginal student educational outcomes; teacher knowledge of self, students and practice; the significance of teacher–student relationships as caring action; and, teacher demanding success for the good of the student and their community. Infused into each of these themes was the persistency of racism borne out of two centuries of colonisation that continue to impact on constructions of Aboriginality.

Theme identification and bundling are both an organising tool and facilitate theory building (Kovach 2009). However, while a useful and necessary step in the research, like Kovach (2009) I at times experienced some uneasiness in the coding process because it felt like I was extracting the findings from the context of people's lives and stories rather than working in partnership with participants. Consequently, I was forever

mindful in the research to ensure participant voice and representation, which is now explored.

3.1.3.2 Voice and representation

Like Somerville and Perkins (2010, p. ix) I am "acutely aware of the politics of representation; that writing from the space in-between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices and identities is a risky business". Traditional research methods have a long history of simplifying Indigenous knowledge for consumption by the colonisers and thereby misrepresenting experiences and knowing as well as denying the colonised a voice (Kovach 2009; Martin 2008; Smith 1999). So, to show community accountability and avoid conducting 'terra nullius' research, I sought both formal and informal ways to consult with the various communities concerned, being mindful at all times of the principles of yarning and Storywork (see section 3.2).

Firstly, emerging themes were taken back to the research participants for discussion and negotiation, for checking and clarification. The original handout on *Defining Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* (discussed above) was revisited and deconstructed, reworded and checked against the Australian story. Language and terminology was debated, sometimes heatedly and sometimes with evident grief and pain.

Secondly, emerging themes were discussed with fellow post doctorate students—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—who were both undertaking their own research projects into a diversity of issues as well as deemed 'Aboriginal savvy' due to their diverse and extensive experience with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

Finally, during the writing up of the thesis at the end of 2015, I was asked to be a guest speaker at a South Australian Aboriginal education conference, after being nominated by one of the participating teachers. There were approximately 70 Aboriginal professionals—teachers, AEWs, program managers, policy officers—from across South Australia located both within all levels of schools and government departments. I started my presentation not with my findings, but with a question: *In your experience, professional and personal, what does successful teaching of Aboriginal students look like?* I asked the question with trepidation, because what if their answers differed from what my research had found? But this was a way of checking back with Aboriginal communities to ensure I was getting the story right and therefore representing the lived experiences of those concerned. Each small group table discussed the question and then

reported back to the wider group. As we got to the last table of participants, I was excited and breathed a sigh of relief because the answers provided by the attendees, the insiders with the emic perspective (Delpit 1995; Foster, M 1994; Siddle Walker 1996) aligned with the research findings and bundling of themes. I then presented my research. They were quick to note the similarities between their own answers and what I was presenting.

Through these measures I was able to feel confident in the research, its processes and outcomes and, how I was valuing and representing the stories shared. In other words, I was not a 'hackademic' (Belair 2001, p. 5) but a culturally responsive critical ethnographer who was fulfilling my distinct cultural kinship responsibilities.

In the next section the use of the tenets of CRT, and more specifically counterstorytelling, is described as a way of analysing the gathered and bundled research data.

3.1.3.3 Counterstorytelling as a tool for data analysis

Critical Race Theory frames what we do, why we do it, and how we do it (Solórzano & Yosso 2001, p. 478). CRT, and more specifically counterstorytelling, is therefore a powerful method for analysing my bundled themes of gathered data. As noted in Chapter 2, counterstorytelling is used by Delgado (1989) as both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told—by, for example, Aboriginal peoples—and a tool for analysing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story has become a natural part of the dominant societal narrative—the majoritarian story (Delgado 1993) (see section 2.5.3). Therefore, counterstorytelling, undertaken within a framework of ColonialCrit, has the potential to disrupt the standardised script of racism that has become the norm in a colonised Australia.

Storytelling has a rich and continuing tradition in Aboriginal culture through The Dreaming. As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2), prior to colonisation, Aboriginal peoples had a complex system of kinship, respect and reciprocity that was maintained through the stories of The Dreaming (Edwards 2005; Martin 2008). However, colonisation deemed such wisdom invalid, instead placing their own European knowledge at the centre of society, thereby becoming the majoritarian narrative. Privileging Aboriginal narratives is, therefore, oppositional to the denial of Aboriginal knowledge systems, established as the norm by the early colonisers (Matthews 2012).

As Gumbaynggirr Elder and scholar Tony Perkins asserts: “[we as researchers have] both the privilege of listening to the story and the responsibility to respond” (Perkins in Somerville & Perkins, 2010, p. 43). Perkins’ idea captures the importance of listening to ‘voices’, whether they are spoken or otherwise, and our responsibility to respectfully and coherently respond to them. For, “if the listener does not respond to the story and pass the story on, the teller is rendered silent” (Perkins in Somerville & Perkins 2010, p. 44). Counterstorytelling is a means for listening to, and passing on, the normally silenced stories of Aboriginal voices. Delgado (1989, p. 2436) has stated, “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation”.

Critical race method overall, and ColonialCrit counterstorytelling in particular, begins with a critique of a set of concepts, ideas, and experiences. To develop the concepts, data from diverse sources is sought out and analysed. The scholarship of Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 41-42) and Delgado Bernal (1998) are useful for explaining my approach to data analysis. To begin with, Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 41-42) promote a concept referred to as theoretical sensitivity which they describe as:

> (A) personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. One can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending upon previous reading and experience with or relevant to the data. It can also be developed further during the research process. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t.

Alternatively, Chicana scholar Dolores Delgado Bernal's (1998, pp. 563-64) concept of “cultural intuition,” differs slightly from theoretical sensitivity in that it “extends one’s personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants’ engaging in the analysis of data”. She goes on to explain that:

> A Chicana researcher’s cultural intuition is achieved and can be nurtured through our personal experiences (which are influenced by ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition), the literature on and about Chicanos, our professional experiences, and the analytical process we engage in when we are in a central position of our research and our analysis. Thus, cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic. (Delgado Bernal 1998, pp. 567-568)

Both theoretical sensitivity and intuition align well with culturally responsive research, where the researcher and participants' cultural lives are regarded as indispensable in the research design as both sides bring their collective assets and wellbeing together to construct a process of relevant and significant meaning making (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevan 2013, p. 5).

So, I use in my data analysis my own theoretical sensitivities and intuitions, the tenets of CRT, and in particular the modified tenets of ColonialCrit developed in the previous chapter, as well as the principles of culturally responsive research and pedagogy. It is important to note too, that while I sourced and analysed a vast body of literature from a multitude of disciplines, I sought to privilege the research and voice of marginalised or minoritised scholars. That is, I sought and privileged the voices of Aboriginal or Indigenous scholars; alternatively, I used the works of culturally marginalised or minoritised peoples such as African-American, Latino, Hispanic, Chicana, Brazilian, Puerto Rican or Argentinean. I wanted to use the works of such scholars as they too shared a lived story of segregated oppression, at times through colonisation, and therefore spoke well to the counterstory being developed in the research. I avoided scholars that I referred to as 'dead white guys', stating that as excellent as they could be, enough people had given *their* voices privilege in their scholarly literature.

Overall, the research seeks to develop pedagogies of success rather than a pedagogy of deficit. Employing the analytical method of counterstorytelling, infused with the tents of ColonialCrit, enables these pedagogies of success to emerge as a counterstory to the majoritarian narrative of Aboriginal educational deficit, disadvantage and failure born out of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation and cultural genocide. The "transformative potential in authentic counterstorytelling lies in complexity, in uncertainty and multiplicity, in unmasking the steel face of domination" (Vaught 2006, p. 22).

Counterstorytelling was adopted in the research as a methodology for a number of purposes: first, in the hope that well-told stories describing the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples can help in bridging the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Second, it provides Aboriginal peoples a means by which to "name their own reality" (Ladson-Billings 1999); third, counterstories can disrupt and challenge the totalising, erasing discourse of dominant 'white' society in transformative

and liberatory ways (Parker & Lynn 2002). However, acknowledging that Aboriginal education is a wicked problem (Rittel & Webber 1973), resistant to resolution, counterstories are not offered as a singular solution but rather as a means to promote dialogue, to challenge embedded narratives of racism, and to provide a language of possibility so that a counterpedagogy can emerge.

3.2 In Closing

In this chapter the three intersecting theoretical frameworks of: critical ethnography; culturally responsive research; and, critical race theory methodology have been mapped out. Most importantly they honour "proper ways" (Aunty Nangala) research for, and with Indigenous peoples. The concept of 'insider' and 'outsider' status as an Indigenous/Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher was discussed. Next, the need to develop an accessible Aboriginal research vernacular was explored. To this end, three genres of English were used in the research: Standard Australian English; Aboriginal English (AbE); and, Academic English. Furthermore, the principles of the Indigenous storying methods of yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010) and Storywork (Archibald 2001, 2008), were introduced. Finally, the three research phases of immersion, observation and the ethnographic, as well as data analysis/theme bundling were presented. Overall, the chapter demonstrates how Aboriginal/Indigenous research can be undertaken in a way that avoids racially-based terra nullius styled research.

The following chapter takes the methodological framework and opens up into four data analysis chapters. The theoretical frameworks of Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS), Culturally Responsive Teachers and, CRP are used to organise the findings. Additionally, CRT, and the modified tenets of Colonial Critical Race Theory, are infused into the dialogue as CRP does not problematise racism.

CHAPTER 4 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOLING

4.1 Introduction

Data gathered in the research by culturally responsive critical school ethnography support theorists who contend that CRP consists of three overarching and interacting dimensions: 1) *institutional*, 2) *personal*, and 3) *pedagogical* (see, for example, Brayboy 2009; Delpit 2013; Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994). All three dimensions are foundational to the establishment of a culturally inclusive and culturally wealthy school culture (Richards, Brown & Forde 2004). Consequently, these three overarching dimensions form the framework of the four data analysis chapters.

The focus in this first data chapter is primarily on the institution of schooling and has three main themes: the purposes of education, the challenging of racism, and the counternarrative of Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS).

4.2 The Purposes of Education

The purposes of education varies with both time and place depending on the dominant political, economic, social and cultural circumstances. However, according to Schofield (2010, p. 7) education is generally understood to be an essentially optimistic human enterprise characterised by goals of progress and betterment. Prior to colonisation Aboriginal peoples had their own systems of education which began as soon as the child moved in the mother's womb, as soon as it was known that there was a new responsibility (Price 2012). Each day the child was watched to see what their contribution to the world was going to be (e.g. a hunter, a leader, a scholar, a doctor, a linguist an astrologer (Eileen Lester cited in Price 2012, p. 4). However, with colonisation came a new educational system that in contemporary times promises the individual economic growth and social mobility (Sellar 2015, p. 202). In other words, contemporary education is generally understood to be a means of achieving greater equality, and acquiring wealth and social status. So, the normalised majoritarian story of

schooling, is that individual progress and betterment comes from attending school, engaging in learning and working hard.

The potential significance of gaining an education for Aboriginal peoples was noted by Aboriginal Mentor and Elder, Uncle Pedro, who stated that the first element for success for Aboriginal students as being "No. 1: they got their education" (Uncle Pedro). Similarly, Aboriginal Education Worker and Elder, Aunty Nangala, noted that: "Our kids won't get far without their education" (Aunty Nangala).

Schooling, however, is not working for increasing numbers of young people, particularly for many living in disadvantage (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam 2003, p. 178). Within educational scholarship, this "not working" For Aboriginal students is commonly attributed to the mismatch between the culture of the students and, the cultural fabric of the institution of schooling (Rahman 2013). Put simply, schooling is founded on western, 'white' values. More specifically, In Australia education has evolved out of a colonialist past that actively excluded, segregated, oppressed, assimilated and dispossessed Aboriginal peoples in their aim to civilise and Christianise (see Chapter 2). Accordingly, Rahman (2013) argues that the learning 'rules' or 'hidden curriculum' evident in Australian schools are based on the values, practices and worldviews of the dominant culture, thus disadvantaging Aboriginal students who have not had exposure to the norms of western culture. Consequently, marginalised and minoritised students, like Aboriginal students, are frequently not free to be who they are when they go to school (McFarlane et al. 2007). Therefore, for many Aboriginal students, the traditional culture of a school, whose purpose is to assimilate students into the dominant culture, is simply unsuccessful for many. Supporting this assertion, writing of First Nations American students, Brayboy (2008, p. 1) asserts that: "the research is quite clear: there is no evidence that the assimilative model improves academic success".

My fieldwork revealed that school-based policies (e.g. school attendance, behaviour management, school uniforms) and procedures (e.g. the implementation of attendance and behavioural management, and school uniform policies) were all areas of contention within participating schools. Additionally, participating teachers spoke extensively of the embedded destructive narratives regarding Aboriginal students, noting in particular the racial underpinnings of these assumptions that serve to perpetuate oppression and

failure of Aboriginal students. These identified themes are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Challenging Racism

The delivery of CRP is, in part, the acknowledgment of who young people are, how they perceive themselves, and how the world accepts them (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper 2012, p.71). In other words, the racially based constructions of students that hinder their educational success requires a response that centres the students' culture, an asset for learning and not a problem to be solved (Gay 2010).

Racism was identified as a persistent issue by participating teachers as well as in conversations with Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs). Stories of personal and professional racism, both within and beyond the school, were frequent. Likewise, stories of racism experienced by Aboriginal students dominated conversations at times and therefore could not be ignored in my analysis. Mrs Knight summed it up this way, "Regardless of what people say racism is extremely embedded in many, many aspects of our society". (Mrs Knight) This 'embeddedness' of racism was illustrated by Mrs Tyler, a relatively new non-Aboriginal AEW. As we were walking up the hallway to the front office after I had just finished interviewing her, she shared the following story, in a way that implied it was of no real significance:

> My father is of German descent and he says that 'Aborigines [*sic*] should know by now that they've been conquered; it would have been better if we'd shot them all when we had the chance'. But that's how he is and we don't take him seriously [laughs]. (Mrs Tylor)

This story eloquently illustrates the point that many Aboriginal students continue to be pathologised (Sefa Dei & Kempf 2006); believing that all Aboriginal students are lacking and in need of intervention programs. As such, Aboriginal students are largely understood as being in deficit, and that overall, Aboriginal students are coming from a position of inferiority and are subsequently in need of fixing. This majoritarian story of all Aboriginal students being positioned in a frame of deficit is further illustrated by Mr Banks:

> That general deficit talk like 'I didn't ring the family because they're not gonna pick up the phone anyway' or 'I didn't bother with that kid because even if he came to class he wouldn't get it'. That sort of stuff is common place everywhere across the school; no thought processes that this is the baggage that the kids bring into the classroom. (Mr Banks)

Such destructive narratives of Aboriginal students and their families is not unusual. By way of an example, Sarra (2011, p. 109) poignantly writes of the excuses provided by teachers for their students' chronic educational failure:

> 'The social and cultural issues of the children are too complex'; so it was the children's fault. 'The parents just don't value education'; so it was the fault of the parents. 'The tests are not culturally appropriate'; so the tests are to blame. 'We are not getting the right professional development from the department'; so let's blame the department.

Consequently, the focus is on what is wrong with the student, and their cultural affiliation, rather than questioning what is wrong with the system from within which education is delivered. Aboriginal student culture has become the mechanism by which they are being understood and measured (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997). However, many schools and educators have difficulty viewing themselves as part of the problem, and are therefore unlikely to seek solutions from within the education system (Sarra G 2007). In short, solutions that are framed in a deficit model of thinking that constructs Aboriginal students as being the cause of their own persistent and expected failure are unlikely to result in educational improvement.

Sarra, et al. (2011, p. 177) writes that the challenge for school staff "is to move beyond what is often an entrenched mindset about Aboriginal identity and to reject collusion with poor performance". When I discussed the issue of apparent tensions in the school with Elder and AEW Aunty Nangala, she asserted:

> They [teachers and school leaders] just don't get how racist they are. They don't see the damage they are doing to our kids when they talk about them (student) being 'hopeless like their brother' or, 'not worth our time'. They just lump them together as being Aboriginal equal's trouble and more work. (Aunty Nangala)

Embedded within this story of Aboriginal students being understood as "hopeless" or "not worth our time", is the dismissal of the potential of Aboriginal students. As noted by Sellar (2015, p. 202) "Contemporary education policy makes promises to people about the relationship between education, economic growth and social mobility". However, as evidenced in the above statement by Aunty Nangala the potential of many Aboriginal students is not being recognised, let alone realised, within the institution of schooling. Instead, many Aboriginal students' abilities, talents and potential—and therefore educational success—are being hindered by the prevailing myth of deficit and subsequent low expectations perpetuated by the majoritarian story.

By way of an example, one of the more common complaints of participating teachers involved a number of their colleagues not pushing Aboriginal students to succeed, of not reaching out to specialist Aboriginal education staff when problems were identified, or either completing the students work for them, or not pushing the student to complete assessment tasks to a high standard if at all. The following passage provided by Mr Banks is a demonstration of the potential devastation such actions can have upon students' lives. In this instance, a Year 12 Aboriginal student "desperately" wanted to join the army but ultimately failed in his application:

> He didn't pass the testing. Wouldn't explain why; wouldn't tell us anything. It took months of me harassing him and then finally I just took his paperwork and found the recruiting person and rang them. He failed the literacy test. He did this eight-week Indigenous recruitment course, they loved him: 'Ah, we know him, he was brilliant. He just needed some help with his literacy'. (Mr Banks)

With this information in hand, Mr Banks had the student's literacy ability formally assessed and the student was found to be below the Year 7 level. Mr Banks went on to add:

> But funnily enough in his Year 12 he got an A minus for his research project and it was borderline university standard from what I've been told and those little bits that I've read. And I thought that's really interesting for a kid who, the army said he had to be at Year 10 standard to get into the army and he wasn't even at Year 10 standard yet he had got an A minus research project—was borderline university level—who did that for him? It certainly wasn't him. (Mr Banks)

This story is a demonstration of what is referred to as a collusion with poor performance, explained by Chris Sarra (2003, p. 15):

> Having low expectations of Aboriginal children in schools and tolerating things like absenteeism and bad student behaviour contributes significantly to the process of engineering a negative Aboriginal identity. Many schools, and many teachers within schools, without realising, are guilty of playing a part in such a process, and such processes will not be reversed until mainstream Australians in our schools and communities understand, develop and respond to the Aboriginal perceptions of being Aboriginal.

While this student has not exhibited bad behaviour or been absent from school, not demanding excellence from this student is nonetheless a collusion with poor performance. That is, excellence is not demanded from this student, described by Mr Banks, because it is perhaps believed that the student (and likely others like him) are incapable of meeting standardised benchmarks as evidenced in the story above regarding the newly introduced literacy program at the school. Alternatively,

completing the required research project for the student may invoke good intentions, believing that the student is incapable but likeable and therefore worthy of a 'helping hand'. In either case, scant regard is given to how the teachers' low expectations of student performance potential impedes the students' overall academic progress. Mr Banks contends that the actions of this teacher "crippled that kid". Instead of seeking readily available literacy support that would have potentially enabled this student to achieve his chosen career path, they had instead hindered him academically and, ultimately, socially.

As discussed earlier, low expectations of Aboriginal students' abilities and potential is a breach of the promise made to people about the relationship between education, economic growth and social mobility touted by contemporary education policy (Sellar 2015, p. 202). That is, education is advertised as the pathway to expanding one's opportunities, and improving one's economic status; of breaking free from locked-in inequality (Gillborn 2008). The Australian government's message to young Aboriginal peoples (and their mentors) is "*Learn Earn Legend!*" which "encourages and supports young Indigenous Australians to stay at school, get that job and be a legend for themselves, their family and their community" (Australian Government 2015 p. 1). However, if the potential of Aboriginal students is to be routinely underestimated within schools, then investment in such grandiose promises will constitute, for many, a condition that Berlant (2011, p. 24) refers to as "cruel optimism". Berlant (2011) explains that cruel optimism is ".... a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realisation is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic".

The promise of contemporary education policy involves an optimistic attachment to something that is promised; one can "get ahead" through intense investments in education (Sellar 2015, p. 213). However, if schools are not invested in the potential of Aboriginal students, then the return of investment by the student themselves is likely low and arguably toxic. The message of *Learn Earn Legend*, for example, is highly optimistic. But how does a student learn if the school deems you unlearnable? How do you earn if beyond the school gate and education does not necessarily mean employment as society grapples with its embeddedness of racism and discriminates against your employment? The policies and practices of schooling, arguably, play a significant role in evoking and realising educational optimism or educational cruelty.

Participating teachers and AEWs shared numerous stories of how school policies and practices, underpinned by raciologies, work against Aboriginal students succeeding at school. By way of an example, Mrs Harris tells of timetabling issues at her school three years earlier. Mrs Harris explains that when students are academically and socially ready they progress into the parallel mainstream school. This school is a focus school with the timetable being split between the music stream and the remaining subjects. She noted that her students were being invariably streamed in to the non-specialty stream and, in addition, were being placed in the more generic classes. When she brought this to the notice of the school principal Mrs Harris was simply told, "We thought they'd want to stay together". With over three decades of teaching practice Mrs Harris was troubled and dismayed by the lack of awareness of the "true meaning that underpins such thinking" (Mrs Harris).

Additionally, participating teachers contended that the classroom and school behaviour of Aboriginal students is frequently interpreted and responded to by schools and teachers differentially based on the students' distinct Aboriginal culture. In many circumstances, teachers have discretionary power whether to enforce the disciplinary policies of the school. When students—be they Aboriginal or not—reach the maximum warnings and/or suspensions they are excluded from the school. Participating teachers shared numerous stories of disciplinary practices as illustrations that punishments were often unequally and unfairly administered.

For instance, from his unique position of being in the dual roles of being both team leader and teacher for senior Aboriginal students, Mr Banks is made aware of the myriad of issues and incidents involving Aboriginal students throughout the school. In his two-year history with the school Mr Banks disclosed that he has witnessed or been involved with numerous accounts of what he interpreted as "disciplinary bias" metered out by teachers (including lead teachers). He spoke passionately about a variety of incidents where Aboriginal students appeared to be targeted for punishment or receiving disciplinary action that was disproportionate to that metered out to non-Aboriginal peers. He summed it up this way:

> We've got so many teachers that just are on the war path and are looking to shoot these kids down; and I really feel like there's teachers who are happy to find any excuse to get rid of some of the [Aboriginal] kids. (Mr Banks)

Supporting this assertion, Mr Banks shared with me a selection of stories related to disciplinary actions taken at the school in recent times which are illuminating for the research. For example, one student received a three-day suspension for stealing a teacher's USB. On investigation by Mr Banks and AEWs it was discovered that the student had found it on the floor behind the teachers' desk, picked it up and instead of placing it on the desk had placed it in his pocket, left class and lost it on the oval at lunchtime. Mr Banks stated:

> He's not deliberately gone through your bag and stolen it; they've just jumped at it straight away because it's easier to say three days suspension, then we don't have to deal with it. Because perhaps he wasn't on track in class or something like that, it's easier to do that. (Mr Banks)

This apparent tendency to jump at the option of punishment is further illustrated in a story referred to as the "classic" by Mr Banks. In this incident, two students kick a ball around in the senior courtyard (a potentially dangerous act). The Aboriginal student is given "suspension pending expulsion". One week earlier a non-Aboriginal student committed the same act and received five days exclusion, "So, what's the difference?" Mr Banks asked me with a cynical tone in his voice.

Furthermore, Mr Banks spoke with great passion and dismay about a "young lad" of 18. Despite having had an extremely tragic life that had resulted in him now living independently, he was still managing to come to school (be it sometimes late)

> And it was like, 'you expect him to be here on time?' He was one of those kids who would walk through the front gate and he'd have a bright pair of shorts on with his school top on and the Deputy would meet him at the gate and send him home because he had the wrong coloured shorts on. (Mr Banks)

Mrs Knight had worked closely with this same student for five years. Over this time Mrs Knight had become his confidante and ardent supporter, being instrumental in him staying on and completing Year 12. Like Mr Banks Mrs Knight noted in her interview the negative differential treatment he received by some teachers and with great passion and frustration in her voice, stated:

> This school was just giving him a hard time. He was just stopped in the school yard if he was late. It was just astounding. I would think 'geez, if I was in that position would I even bother?' (Mrs Knight)

All of these stories of behavioural management are reflective of an assimilationist teaching stance. In none of the stories shared by Mr Banks or Mrs Knight are the

teachers being intentionally bad or malicious. However, by failing to question or investigate the circumstances or context of the situation, they are contributing to the exclusion that Aboriginal students often experience at school.

By contrast, viewing behavioural policies and systems from a culturally responsive perspective means asking questions about what rules are being set, by whom and for what purpose. Participating teachers undertook such questioning when working with Aboriginal students. Instead of policing standardised policies, they look for the whole story or the context of the event. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers look for ways to enable their Aboriginal students to be successful, while negotiating the rules and standardised policies and procedures of the institution. In this way, participating teachers, where deemed appropriate, are creating a counterstory of Aboriginal student success by working in opposition to the dominant assimilationist and dispossessing culture of the institution (a theme returned to in Chapter 6).

Overall, participating teachers shared numerous stories of school policies and practices that served to exclude Aboriginal students from the learning space. Consequently, for many Aboriginal students, schooling is a process that ultimately restricts educational success and, in turn, achieving greater equality with their non-Aboriginal counterparts is severely impeded.

4.4 Culturally Responsive Schooling

By contrast, cultural responsiveness within the institutional setting of schooling seeks to create a new story, a counterstory of Aboriginal education success. CRS includes the elements of: respect for cultural heritage and diversity; creation of a safe, inclusive, respectful environment; integration of responsive teaching practices in all disciplines; and transformation of curriculum to promote social justice and equity in society (Phuntsog 1998, p. 1). It is a student-centred approach to schooling that educates to and through a student's personal and cultural strengths, their cultural frames of reference, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments (Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994). It is, therefore, an approach to education that is oppositional to the normalised, majoritarian, Eurocentric, assimilative and dispossessing model of schooling that persists through school policies and procedures. CRS therefore works towards students achieving academically while not jeopardising or sacrificing their cultural selves.

As has been discussed, the research identified problems and barriers that participating teachers and AEWs considered problematic if educational outcomes are to improve for Aboriginal students. The examples of how racism plays out in the schools, illustrated in the previous section, are not intended to denigrate, but rather reflect the complex, situated and ongoing professional nature of successful teaching practices (McDonald 2003). Castagno (2014, p. 1) asserts that:

> Most educators are nice people with the best of intentions regarding the schooling they provide to students every day. Despite their good intentions and the general niceness among educators, most schools in the United States contribute to inequity every day.

Likewise, I contend that there are many well-intentioned, 'nice' teachers within Australian schools. But being nice can "...encourage us to gloss over ugly, tense, or otherwise hurtful things—and to do so carefully and precisely (Castagno 2014, p. 17). However, left uncritiqued, such niceness can become normalised with racialised narratives being rendered invisible. Thus, as Castagno (2011, p. 393) asserts: "... we all need to recognize the role we play in creating and sustaining oppressive systems" and this can best be achieved through critique of self and society's institutions.

An institution is culturally responsive, and free of racism when people, policies and practices permit culturally responsive action. Therefore, if teachers' work within a space (i.e. the institution of schooling) that is underpinned by racialised thought then their ability to achieve cultural responsiveness—and in turn successful pedagogy—is severely impeded. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2012, p. 3) assert that:

> [T]heories which focus on the problem as originating within the schools will look to the schools for resolution. Theories which focus on home community factors such as racial/ethnic heritage, family composition and socioeconomic status as the causes of failure will look for solutions there.

CRS seeks to transform the cultural fabric of the school while understanding the historically constructed barriers that Aboriginal students often are confronted with.

The Australian educational system, borne out of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation, has historically favoured students from dominant 'white', middle-class backgrounds. Although there is an emphasis on 'school readiness' for Aboriginal children and youth in government policies, it is rare that there is evidence of schools being ready for Aboriginal children and youth (Price 2012). This knowledge of schools being in deficit for many students is not a new phenomenon. Almost four decades

earlier, writing of the situation in US schools for African-American students, Ryan (1976, pp. 61-2) observed:

> We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally deprived schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, and amend, and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. Only by changing the nature of the education experience can we change the product. To continue to define the difficulty as inherent in the raw material, the children–is plainly to blame the victim and to acquiesce in the continuation of educational inequality.

A culturally deprived school, with its grammar of policies, procedures and rules (Tyack & Cuban 1995, p. 85; Tyack & Tobin 1994, p. 454) can, however, be transformed to be a culturally wealthy and safe learning space.

Writing of Indigenous higher education, MaryAnn Bin-Sallik[12]—a Djaru woman and scholar—has highlighted the significance of cultural safety in the learning space. She argues that cultural safety "extends beyond cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity" and is an issue "that has not received adequate recognition" (Bin-Sallik 2003, p. 21). One definition of cultural safety is provided by Williams (1999, p. 213):

> [A]n environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together

In such an environment Aboriginal students are able to more fully participate in the learning space, which in turn facilitates improved educational outcomes.

However, changes in the basic organisation, rules and procedures of the institution of schooling are so gradual that little benefit is experienced by Aboriginal students in the short term (Tyack & Tobin 1994). So, while schools work towards being school-ready for Aboriginal students, Aboriginal students can become school-ready by becoming literate in the grammar of schools as they currently operate. One way in which this is being achieved is through the provision of dedicated culturally safe spaces within the school grounds. By way of an example, within 'Southern High School' (SHS) there exists the Nunga[13] Room which is now explained.

[12] MaryAnn Bin-Sallik is an Indigenous Australian who identifies strongly with her mother's Djaru people of East Kimberley, as well as with the Indonesian heritage of her father (Bin-Sallik 2003, p. 28).
[13] Nunga is a term used by Aboriginal people in some parts of South Australia to identify as a collective.

4.4.1 The Nunga Room

The Nunga Room is the office space of the Aboriginal Education Team (AET), a tutoring room, a meeting room and a gathering space. The space is divided into two halves with the AET working in a U-shape on one side and a group work table and storage space existing in the other half. The walls are covered in Aboriginal art, often painted by students themselves; there are boxes of t-shirts from numerous Aboriginal-focused events; and, oftentimes, there are boxes of food ready for gathering or camping or a day's activity. Aboriginal students use this space for support, for studying or, just to hang out. It is into this space that I was welcomed upon my arrival at SHS and invited to use the space as my base for the duration of the research.

During my many months spent in the Nunga Room I kept what Hayes, Johnson and King (2006) refer to as a 'Day Diary' (discussed in section 3.1.5.2). My purpose was to recount events in the Nunga Room as they occurred to provide a snapshot of the ebb and flow of this culturally safe space. What emerged was an understanding of the diversity, unpredictability and complexity of the Nunga Room in what it provides on a daily basis to support Aboriginal students as they gain their education. In one mornings entry in to the Day Diary I noted the following happenings: a student grappling with their Aboriginal identity—("Am I Nunga? Who's your mob?"); food is distributed to several students; another student is struggling with his desire to stay at school without his mates; and the planning of an event that will celebrate Aboriginal youth during Youth Week in 2015 (Field Notes: 5 November, 2014).

This Day Diary entry is typical of the kind of happenings that take place within the Nunga Room. I have witnessed art projects developing, sporting events being sorted, and discussions of racism and Aboriginal cultural identity taking place. Furthermore, with a high percentage of the senior students living independently, away from a supportive family, the AEWs are often to be found sorting out the payment of bills, buying eye glasses, negotiating with Centrelink on behalf of students, making medical appointments for students with AET staff often accompanying students to appointments, and providing breakfast and/or lunch to students as needed.

By way of a more specific and illuminating example of the going-ons of this culturally safe space, I will retell the story of a student who I will call Nichole. She had had an outburst in class. Her reason for this outburst was that she was responding to a racist

comment directed at her from a fellow non-Aboriginal student. The teacher had missed the comment, only hearing Nichole's angry outburst. Nichole has a history of classroom eruptions and in accordance with past practice was sent straight to the Nunga Room without the incident being first investigated in the classroom by the substantive teacher. At the time of the incident two AEWs were present as Nichole stormed into the room. I will call these AEWs Lucy and Adam*:*

Nichole: The stupid bitch threw me out!

Adam: Hey, watch the language. What's goin' on?

Nichole: I get called a 'stupid Black c---' by [student name]; so I told her to 'F---- off!' And then the teacher throws me out; tells me to come up here. I want to call Dad?

Lucy: Sure.

The phone call is made and Dad is due to arrive in 15 minutes. Nichole is asked to sit at the work table and wait for her Dad to arrive from work. On Dad's arrival the following dialogue took place around the work table:

Dad: What happened?

Nichole gives her version of events.

Lucy: The problem is, because you raised your voice and verballed a fellow student, you're in the wrong according to the school rules.

Nichole: But...

Dad: What she supposed to do? She's gotta stand up for herself?

Adam: Sure but when this happens she needs to tell the teacher so they can deal with it. By doing it this way we've got nowhere to go. Nichole has broken the school rules. Yelling and swearing ain't OK. If you'd told the teacher or, asked to leave and come up here and tell us, then we can deal with it without Nichole coppin' it.

Dad: OK. I can see that. How about you Nichole?

Nichole: (shrugs her shoulders and grunts).

Dad: So what do we do now?

Lucy: Now? Now we go see the teacher and try and work it out.

Dad: Can I come too?

Lucy: Sure. You right Nichole?

In this encounter, the AEW team members in the Nunga Room provide Nichole with guidance on how she might deal with any future incidents that perhaps will not see her thrown out of class. Delpit (1995) argues that students who are not part of the "culture of power" must be explicitly taught the rules and codes of that culture to be able to negotiate it successfully and make decisions about how and when they will negotiate it. Teachers and AEWs are the direct link between students and the institution of schooling. Through their awareness of the historically constructed power dynamics that persist in the present day as well as their knowledge of how schools operate, they are in a pivotal position to transform Aboriginal student learning experiences. Students like Nichole are being explicitly taught the "culture of power" so as to expand their opportunities for educational outcomes. However, Nichole is not expected to surrender her distinct Aboriginal culture but instead is taught how to redress the power balance—seek assistance from the culturally safe Nunga Room and, involve her father in the resolution process.

4.4.2 Metropolitan High School (MHS)

Another way in which Aboriginal students are being explicitly taught the grammar of schooling and being made school-ready was observed at MHS. Metropolitan High School aims to prepare Aboriginal students from remote communities, both academically and socially, to participate in the mainstream school within which it is situated. MHS provides a culturally safe learning space for students where they are able to learn how to negotiate schooling while achieving academically and culturally. Key to the success of the program is having "[F]airly good information about what the background of kids are. Just generally in terms of, socially and family situations and things like that" (Mr Scott). Generally speaking, regular student assessment of strengths and "gaps" (Mrs Harris) are a valued characteristic of the MHS program.

During the duration of my research, MHS responded to assessed student needs by becoming a mixed-ability educational program. That is, students are grouped into classes based on assessment data, regardless of student age. Assessment data therefore allows the school to place students across classes, based on academic and social needs. Furthermore, instruction is tailored to individual students assessed abilities and gaps. Essentially, each year level has three steps of ability through which students are able to progress. School principal Mrs Harris explains:

> It is important to have good assessment data about each student in order to plan the next step. This is really true for all students, but I have only appreciated the value more recently. (Mrs Harris)

Speaking of the impact of this timetabling change within the school, Mr Scott spoke of the benefits for the students:

> Like there's a kid who's reasonably capable, that maybe they, you know, it could be the effort or the, sort of, that is holding them back a bit. So they might go into the lower group and then see how they go, they're sort of middle range, sort of the borderline kids who might sort of, could go either way. So I think we have the flexibility to do that. I always say flexibility is really important in terms of being able to make changes in the best interest of the students. What their needs are. (Mr Scott)

However, this somewhat radical departure from the accepted grammar of the traditional practice of schooling came with its challenges. Mr Scott revealed that initially some teachers within the team showed resistance. Additionally, staff numbers and timetabling clashes caused problems for the implementation of the proposed change. Mr Scott explained:

> So we don't have the sort of two way split for each year level. We just don't have the staffing to do it. That's been working reasonably well. The higher level Year 9s and the higher level Year 10s can be extended pretty well and the Year 9s and Year 10s can get more of an intensive, much more focused on spelling and text analysis and stuff like that. So from my point of view I think it's been pretty good. (Mr Scott)

The timetabling modifications at MHS have occurred in response to the specific individual and collective needs of the students. Assessment places the student at the centre of learning with their 'gaps' and strengths being used to plan their educational pathway rather than adhering to the standardised grammar of graded schools (Tyack & Tobin 1994). Moreover, student assessments are delivered in a way that is responsive to the student as illustrated in the following story.

'Noah' is visiting MHS for a period of two weeks from his remote community. The purpose of such a visit is to introduce Noah to the program; to assess his readiness; and, enable him to make a decision as to whether he wants to sign up more permanently. During his visit he participates in all aspects of the program and lives at the dedicated residence discussed in *site selection* in Chapter Three. On this particular day Mr James needed to assess Noah's literacy levels which Stefan was not particularly interested in doing:

> Mr James: So, we just need to check your reading and writing.
>
> Noah: (groans). Wha' for?
>
> Mr James: We need to find out what you already know so we don't waste time teaching you the same stuff that you've already learned.

In this encounter between Mr James and Noah, it is obvious that Stefan is being assessed against standardised benchmarks for literacy. Mr James is seeking to understand Noah's literacy abilities and overcomes his resistance by credibly persuading him that the assessment is about not wasting Noah's time; to investigate what it is that Noah already knows sends a message that this assessment is not about seeing "How stupid he is but, finding out how smart he is so we can get on with his learning" (Mr James).

In both stories provided above, participating schools are enacting the principles of CRS. Students are expected to attend class and adhere to the rules of behaviour; so too they g170

are assessed against standardised literacy benchmarks. In other words, students are adhering to the well-established grammar of schooling. However, such activities are being conducted in a way that disrupts the culture of power within the institution. In their own way participating schools—with varying degrees of success—are engaging in acts of refusal (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam 2003). That is, participating schools are not following the majoritarian grammar of schooling that in large measure hinders their students. Instead, they are creating culturally safe learning spaces within which the academic, social and cultural needs of the students are being privileged and responded to. CRS is about transforming the cultural fabric of the school itself (Boykin 1986) by privileging the lived experiences of students.

A transformed school cultural fabric would mean, for example, that the learning space would "makes sense" to students who are not members of, or assimilated into, the dominant social group (Klug & Whitfield 2003, p. 151). Similarly, a culturally responsive school fabric would mean that a bridge is built between a child's home culture and the school to effect improved learning and school achievement (Pewewardy & Hammer 2003, p. 1). Brown-Jeffy and (Cooper (2012, p. 88) explain:

> Culturally compatible education involves not trying to make schools and classrooms isomorphic with home culture, but rather using knowledge of students'

> cultures to inform the selection and adaptation of educational practices that are likely to elicit behavioural and cognitive repertoires appropriate to school goals and avoid eliciting those that are not.

Simply put, CRS advocates that Aboriginal students are more likely to experience educational success when their distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing—including the students' home language's to be further discussed in section 7.3.3—is part of the grammar or cultural fabric of the institution of schooling.

4.5 In Closing

In this chapter the focus has been on the first overarching dimension of cultural responsiveness, the institution of schooling. Three main themes were discussed: the purposes of education, the challenging of racism—societal and institutional, and the counternarrative of Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS). The narratives provided illustrate both the difficulties and possibilities for each theme. More specifically, the purpose of schooling and the need for its transformation for improving Aboriginal educational success was examined. Additionally, the persistent theme of embedded racism, and the need for it to be challenged, was presented. The concepts of student potential, low expectations and cruel optimism were revealed as dominant racialised narratives in the current educational landscape. Finally, Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS) was presented as an oppositional approach to assimilationist schooling. CRS is shown as being student-centred, focused on transforming schooling and, in the absence of quick solutions, teaching marginalised students to negotiate the power of schooling without sacrificing their cultural selves. To this ends, safe spaces within the schools were highlighted.

The next chapter moves in to the second overarching dimension of CRPS: *personal*. It explores the significance of teacher knowledge of self through critical reflection, teacher knowledge of students and their diverse culture, and teacher knowledge of practice through praxis. This dimension is referred to as Culturally Responsive Teachers.

CHAPTER 5 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter mapped the significant role that the institution plays in either impeding Aboriginal educational success or, through culturally responsive schooling, supporting Aboriginal student success. In this chapter the focus is on answering the second research question: *What knowledge, values, attitudes and characteristics do teachers need to have to work successfully with Aboriginal high school students?* I strongly agree with Geneva Gay (2013 p. 49) when she asserts: "… whether positive, negative, or ambivalent, beliefs and attitudes always precede and shape behaviours. Therefore, in explaining culturally responsive teaching it makes sense to examine teacher beliefs before instructional actions". Considering that Aboriginal students, families, community members and many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working in schools single out the work of teachers as the 'make or break element' contributing to Aboriginal student success, the dispositions of teachers is a significant factor for improving educational outcomes (Burges & Berwick 2009 p. 1).

Consequently, the 'knowledge' of teachers is analysed prior to discussing the complex pedagogical practices of participating teachers. The discussion in this chapter is organised into three main parts: knowledge of self; knowledge of students including their distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing; and, knowledge of teacher practice and praxis and how this involves teachers being explicitly taught to be culturally responsive pedagogues.

5.2 Teacher Knowledge of Self

Teaching is commonly understood to be a neutral, objective and apolitical act (Gay 2010). Moreover, for many teachers successful teaching "transcends place, people, time, and context" (Au 2009, p. 180). In keeping with this thinking, many teachers contend that successful teaching has nothing to do with the class, gender, or culture of students and teachers (Gay 2010). However, as Maxine Greene (1978) notes, every individual connects with the world from a unique vantage point, in terms of a particular life story. Similarly, Freire (1994, p. 31) contends that people carry with them the "memory of many fabrics" in which they are enfolded. For most, these vantage points or enfolding memories are shaped by the normalised, often destructive, majoritarian story of the

dominant culture. Problems can arise when the teachers' narrative differs significantly from their students' life narratives.

Within Australia, the teaching profile continues to be dominated by those who are non-Aboriginal, middle-class, are European/Anglo in their cultural heritage and, are monolingual (Buckskin 2012; Perso & Hayward 2015). This situation is reflected in the profile of participating teachers, with only one teacher identifying as being of Aboriginal cultural heritage. As a result, Aboriginal students are frequently entering schools from a life story—social and cultural—that differs significantly from the cultural and social background of their teachers.

Through previous socialisation and life experiences, teachers gain hegemonic understandings about culture and difference which results in complexity and leads to misunderstandings (Sarra 2011a, p. 108). However, while such teacher–student differences make the experience of teaching and learning more complex, it is not impossible to learn how to teach successfully across cultural differences (Sarra 2011a). By way of an example, in Osborne's (1996, p. 6) construction of *9 Signposts for teacher engagement with Torres Strait Islander students*, he notes that while "not all teachers from the dominant culture teach students from marginalised groups well, others do".

To successfully teach all students, not just those who most closely reflect the majoritarian culture, "[i]t is important for teachers to realise that they are inherently and consistently engaged in cultural production and reproduction" (Brayboy & Castagno 2009, p. 37). Participating teachers are disrupting the 'normal' process of cultural reproduction by challenging and transforming their understandings of the world through a critical questioning of their beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices to understand the cultural perspectives of others (Mitchell 2015)., This opens teachers to a new desire of knowing and understanding others including their students, and the cultures and communities to which they belong (Hale, Snow-Gerono & Morales 2008). The critical self-reflection that I am interested in involves developing a new story, a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success through the validation and privileging of Aboriginal student culture.

One way in which participating teachers develop a counterstory, is through the attainment of the knowledge, dispositions and skills necessary to effectively implement and assess Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success (CRPS). Critical reflection

upon their unique life stories enable participating teachers to understand how their socialisation—familial events and life experience—influence their attitudes, dispositions and values. By way of an example, Mrs Knight shared that she "didn't have pen and pencils at school and my friends would often lend me theirs and give me theirs" (Mrs Knight). She went on to speak about the horror of discovering that she was working class while still at school:

> I say I'm middle class; my father was a worker, a tradesman, so I'm working class even though my mother was from a quite wealthy family, my father was from a poor family. I remember when I did Australian history and our teacher asked us what class we were and I put my hand up for middle class. Then she defined what they were and I came home from school and said, 'Dad I'm working class!' He said, 'Yes, and be proud of it!' I was horrified and said, 'Hold on Dad. I don't want to be working class!' (Mrs Knight)

Despite now being firmly positioned as middle class, within the majoritarian story, Mrs Knight clearly has not forgotten her crisis of identity relating to her class location. She recognises that her upbringing, her emerging class consciousness, and not having the same resources as her school peers, contributes to her "passion for the injustices in the world" (Mrs Knight); that living between two worlds—one wealthy, the other poor—provides her with an ability to empathise with those whose vantage points differ from her own.

Additionally, Mr James disclosed that his "father's side has a Ngarrindjeri[14] /Kaurna[15] heritage. So I'm Ngarrindjeri" (Mr James). Mr James talked openly and passionately of the times his Aboriginality has been challenged or dismissed:

> Based on my olive appearance and darkish features, occasionally people thought I was south-western European (Greek, Italian, Spanish, etc.). Granted I have a Spanish heritage so the assumption was somewhat true but as far as my identity goes, or rather how I identify myself with my history and other aspects of my cultural identity, it's a little off. In some cases, when I verbally identified myself as being Ngarrindjeri (usually done when asked), people would boldly disregard it and say things like 'Oh you definitely look Spanish' or 'But you have a Spanish background, right?' dismissing my Indigenous identity claim as if it were something to be ashamed of or as if I were perhaps a little delusional. (Mr James)

Furthermore, Mrs Munroe spoke of the impact that her early life experiences have had on her life:

[14] The Ngarrindjeri (literal translation "the people who belong to this land") are an Aboriginal language group of the lower Murray River, western Fleurieu Peninsula, and the Coorong of South Australia.
[15] The Kaurna peoples are a language group whose traditional lands include the area around the Adelaide Plains of South Australia.

> My father worked for Foreign Affairs so we lived in Jakarta, Indonesia for 2.5 years, Warsaw Poland for 3.5 years then New Delhi India for 4 years. I attended the American International Schools in each of these countries. The schools had a majority of American students but also students from many nationalities/cultures and religions as parents were with the different embassies. Students were very accepting of each other and differences-this is due to all Foreign Affairs kids upbringing and life style—being immersed in different cultures, religions etc. (Mrs Munroe)

Mrs Munroe went on to explain that:

> When I moved back to Australia and had to complete Year 10 again many students teased me, excluded me and did not want to be my friend as I sounded and behaved American. This did have a big impact on me as I was very unhappy in Australia, at the school and with Aussie people and cried for 6 months. I was 16 so a difficult time for my world to change so dramatically. (Mrs Munroe)

Finally, when describing her reasons for becoming a teacher, Mrs Harris noted that: "In the 1960s it was one of the few more academic jobs that women were welcome to do" (Mrs Harris).

Each shared life experience, though not always directly linked to the participating teachers' cultural heritage, has meant that participating teachers have engaged in a process of critiquing their understandings of difference, of power and privilege (Mitchell 2015). This has enabled teachers to develop as culturally responsive pedagogues (Villegas & Lucas 2007). Each transformative moment (Ladson-Billings 2009, p. ix)—be it through the questioning of their socioeconomic status, distinct culture or gender—has enabled participating teachers to engage in a process of challenging their often taken-for-granted positions in society. But it would be unfair to imply that teachers are solely a product of socialisation and life experiences, likewise it would be naive to assume that teaching is impervious to these influences (Irvine 2003).

By critiquing their unique life stories, and the "memory of many fabrics" in which they are enfolded (Friere 1994, p. 31), participating teachers have been able to discover why they are who they are, and the power and privileges afforded to some in society and denied to others (Villegas & Lucas 2007). Such a process of critical self-reflection enables participating teachers to continue to transform their beliefs and attitudes and this subsequently impacts on their behaviours and their teacher practice (Gay 2013). Their pedagogy can transform from one of mindless reproduction of 'white' domination to a counterpedagogy that aims to be one where power between the agencies of teacher–student and knowledge is negotiated (Lusted 1986). Thus, critical self-reflection is a

way for participating teachers to develop knowledge of how their life stories differ markedly from their Aboriginal students, and how then to bring this knowledge into the learning space, and into teacher–student relationships. This expanding knowledge base contributes to the development of a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success.

The significance of relating to Aboriginal students on an emotional, personal and pedagogical level was highlighted in the Research of Rahman (2009). In her research on factors impacting on Aboriginal student school attendance and retention Rahman (2009, p. 131) found that teachers who were able to relate to students resulted in "... improve[d] student interest and value in school and in school subjects, their school attendance, schooling motivations, desire to stay on at school and their academic success". As teachers' values and attitudes, beliefs and values impact on their relationships with students, critical self-reflection is one way in which a teacher–student relationship based on respect and trust can be built (Ladson-Billings 1994).

One illustration of the significance of teachers building a relationship based on respect and trust was provided by Mrs Knight. Speaking of a student whose life had been filled with family tragedy she noted:

> And that relationship I built with him, you know, and when he came in (to school) he would come to my office and tell me these things, not many teachers knew that. Why? I had him come in and tell me all about his life because he felt comfortable enough to come. (Mrs Knight)

Mrs Knight's relationship with this student, built up over a number of years and in consultation with the staff in the Nunga Room (see Chapter 4), was cited by Mr Banks and AEWs as being instrumental in this student going on to successfully complete Year 12. In attempting to understand why many of her colleagues do not have similar relationships with students Mrs Knight suggested:

> Teachers come mainly from dominant white culture. Right? Middle class, wealthy. They don't tend to have the ability to empathise and put themselves in the students' position; It's a lack of understanding whether it's racist or just because they can't step outside there dominant white culture and empathise—or middle class as well—and empathise with students who are very different and who are dealing with very, extreme conditions and living conditions and family structures, dysfunctional families. (Mrs Knight)

Here, Mrs Knight highlights the value of developing understanding so that teachers, generally speaking, are better positioned to "empathise" (Mrs Knight) or relate to and with Aboriginal students. Without critical self-reflection teachers have the potential to

"be rigid, narrow, and unforgiving to different ways of engaging the world" (Brayboy & Maughan 2009, p. 4). In this way, teachers create barriers between themselves and their students. Mrs Knight, for example, is receptive and respectful of this students' exceptional life story, and is therefore able to support his engagement in the learning space.

Gaining knowledge of Aboriginal student's unique life stories, and the "memory of many fabrics" in which they are enfolded (Friere 1994, p. 31), is another way in which teacher understandings can be transformed. The next section outlines how participating teachers actively acquire knowledge of their students including their distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

5.3 Teacher Knowledge of Aboriginal Students

The fictional doctrine of terra nullius—Latin for 'land belonging to no one' (Reynolds 1987)—declared by Captain James Cook in 1770, continues to impact upon both Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples (see Chapter 2). Craven and Price (2011, p. 44-45) assert:

> Many Australians still do not know the truth about their country's history. Historical events and experiences are often the beginnings of racism. Many such events serve to reinforce Eurocentric attitudes and White Australia frames of reference. The attitudes towards subordinate groups in history can continue in today's society, transmitted from one generation to the next. Often these inherited views go unchallenged generation after generation, as the historical basis for such views is not examined.

Scholarship on CRP emphasises the significance of teachers having knowledge about their marginalised or minoritised students so that teacher–student relationships can be established. Terra nullius however, has resulted in a lack of knowledge of Aboriginal peoples that continues to be passed down through the generations. While Aboriginal students tend to be readily recognised as a distinct racial group—with all negative and harmful implications—they are less readily recognised as a distinct cultural group (Ladson-Billings 2009). Yet, as noted by Ware (2006, p. 428), "culture is [a] variable that is often overlooked as a function of student success". Moreover, as stated by Gay (2013, p. 67), "culture and difference are natural attributes of humanity, and, therefore, should be normative features of teaching and learning".

Supporting this assertion, Parbury (1999, p. 66) writes that: “Teachers need to know about the cultural background and history of Aboriginal students as well as how to effectively teach them.” Similarly, Sarra (2011, p. 110) contends that teachers need to acquire a knowledge: “... of the student’s history, school experiences, knowledge, skills, relationships with peers, values, beliefs, interests, family, and language”. Acquiring such knowledge enables teachers to understand that there is no one way of being Aboriginal. Sarra (2011, p. 110) stresses that:

> There will be differences between Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children; between Indigenous children in remote schools and Indigenous children in metropolitan, or rural, schools; between Aboriginal children from one language group and Aboriginal children from other language groups; between saltwater children and freshwater children and desert children.

Additionally, embedded into the life and cultural worlds of Aboriginal students, is the legacy of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation founded on the destructive majoritarian story of terra nullius. Today there would be few Aboriginal families who would not be affected by the policies and informal practices implemented by governments, churches and welfare bodies of the past two centuries discussed earlier in section 2.3.2. Gray and Beresford (2008, p. 208) assert: “The impact on education from the historical legacy of Australia’s racist past is impossible to overestimate, it is clear these effects are still being felt today”. In other words, Aboriginal students’ lives are complex and dynamic; they are embedded in a rich and diverse culture while simultaneously grappling with the ongoing effects of oppressive segregation enacted through dispossessing colonisation. Mr Banks observed that:

> Perhaps my allowances for certain issues (lateness, absences, etc.) are higher due to cultural knowledge of their lives at home, as well as the responsibility that I place on some students knowing that they often have these high level roles within their home—single parent families, eldest of multiple children, etc. (Mr Banks)

Here, Mr Banks illustrates the significance of understanding his students’ complex and multidimensional lives. By having knowledge of his students Mr Banks is able to transform his teacher practice and, re-grammar schooling (Tyack & Tobin 1994) (discussed in section 4.2). As such, Mr Banks is responsive to students’ lifeworlds. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers recognised and responded to students as social and cultural beings, connected to a complex social and cultural system that significantly influences students’ educational success.

Participating teachers view students, their families and their communities, as experts of their own lives. They are primary sources of information about their ways of knowing, being and doing. A mixture of home visits, conversations with community members, consultation with other teachers, observations of students in and out of school, or conversations with students as ways of learning about and privileging students and their diverse culture are all embedded in participating teachers' practice. Acquiring such student knowledge enables teachers to more successfully relate to their students and work towards ameliorating teacher–student differences, thereby improving the opportunities for educational success. Mr Scott explained some of the various ways in which he gained knowledge of his students:

> I have visited all schools on the remote communities and therefore I know their (students) home communities. Additionally, whilst they are here at school I go to some events held at the boarding program. (Mr Scott)

Additionally, Mr Scott spoke of his practice of using Yard Duty time to "wander around and talk to students" (Mr Scott). As a result, Mr Scott has acquired significant student knowledge that influences how he relates to students as well as his pedagogical practice:

> There are fairly unique cultural factors when working with students from remote Aboriginal communities, like 'shame'. These need to be taken into consideration when planning activities, in how relationships with students are developed and in how teachers interact with students—one-on-one and in front of peers. (Mr Scott)

The significant role that such student knowledge can play within the everyday of the school is illustrated by Mr Scott: "I had a boy today and he got really angry and wanted to punch someone because this boy had said (to him) 'Ah you're 13' when he's 14" (Mr Scott). While on the surface this incident could just simply be dismissed as "that teasing stuff" (Mr Scott), another meaning of this anger is understood instead. For these young men, who come from remote communities that continue to practise Men's Business,[16] being teased that you are younger than is true is highly offensive and hurtful. Mr Scott continues:

[16] 'Men's Business' was explained to me as Aboriginal ceremonial business connecting to the language group of the student, and their Dreaming or Songlines. It is a ceremony that marks when a boy becomes a man and usually takes place some time in the teen years when the senior men deem it the right time. It is considered the most significant time in a man's life and has a number of sensitivities.

> You can set very rigid rules of how 'if a kid does this then you do this' sort of terms of behaviour management all that sort of stuff, but I think having a more individualised sort of approach does help and that does involve knowing about where the idea is coming from. So you can sort of make those adjustments in your approach. (Mr Scott)

In this instance, the normalised institutional policies of behaviour management discussed in Chapter 4, are not strictly enforced. Instead, possessing knowledge of the distinct cultural practices of the students means that a more informed, culturally responsive, course of action is decided upon by Mr Scott. Mr Scott does not condone the students' behaviour, but neither are the institution's policies, rules and procedures that are a normalised part of the grammar of schooling uncritically enforced.

The significance of possessing knowledge of Aboriginal distinct ways of knowing, being and doing, was further highlighted by Aunty Nangala. When interviewing Aboriginal Elder Aunty Nangala I sought to understand why she, and everyone else consulted AEWs, community members, students and principal—had so readily nominated Mrs Knight for my research investigation:

> You know she's got a son-in-law who's Aboriginal? So that means she knows what we're about. It's personal for her. She's got grandchildren growing up in our community. (Aunty Nangala)

In other words, Mrs Knight possesses "insider knowledge" (Aunty Nangala) which enables her to relate to students through understanding and respect.

Besides her personal connection with the Aboriginal community, Mrs Knight is well known for working and consulting with the school's Aboriginal Education Team. As a Humanities teacher for senior students within her school, Mrs Knight has been part of the SAASTA program almost since its beginning four years ago. Mrs Knight explained that being part of this program has enabled her to not only have "understanding but a very good relationship with the students I teach" (Mrs Knight). Additionally, Mrs Knight has established professional relationships with the Aboriginal Education Team, improving her abilities to engage successfully with Aboriginal students. In turn, such involvement in student "extra lives" by all participating teachers sends a clear message that Aboriginal student lives matter.

5.3.1 Student cultural pride

The concepts of cultural 'pride' and 'proud', are commonly overheard at both schools, and terms used in interviews with participating teachers and AEWs. According to Aboriginal Elder Uncle Pedro, who has been an Aboriginal Mentor at the school since 2008, success for an Aboriginal student includes, "Aboriginal students stay as an Aboriginal person, and represent the Aboriginal people of Australia" (Uncle Pedro). Central to Aboriginal student educational success then is a sense of pride in their cultural selves rather than of shame or alienation.

Mr James, being of Aboriginal heritage himself, finds it "quite easy" to incorporate his distinct Aboriginal cultural experiences and knowledge in to the learning space, stating that, "I'm comfortable with my knowledge, my experiences". Following is an example of how Mr James works towards instilling pride in his students:

> Well I've got a timeline on the board and it goes to just beyond 2,000 years in the CE direction and 4,000 years in the BCE direction but then I get them to imagine, 'Well, what would 10,000 years be? Maybe that's the building out the window? What's 20? What's 30? What's 40? OK, well archaeologists say that's a safe bet but we could probably go further to 60, maybe 80 [thousand years]? Some even *dare* to go to 100 [thousand years]. It's a bit shaky but it could be a possibility. And by the time we get to a hundred [thousand years] we're looking out the window across the road, past the garden area, to the gym which is over on another oval.' (Mr James)

This timeline, used by Mr James with his students, does not start at the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788; nor the arrival of Captain Cook in 1770. In fact, the timeline does not look at Aboriginal peoples in comparison to the beginnings of what is now known as Australia. This timeline exercise is placed comfortably alongside the Egyptians, the Vikings and the Romans taught in Mr James' Humanities classes. Mr James illustrated,

> What I tend to press when we're say looking at things like timelines, is to create a perspective for them where they can think 'well, you know Ancient Egypt started around 4,000 BCE; well, where's that in relation to Aboriginal people? That's, you know, Aboriginal peoples of Australia far exceed that; by thousands of years' (Mr James)

By using this timeline framework, Mr James portrays that Aboriginal peoples (inclusive of teacher and students) are part of a long history where Aboriginal peoples were living long, long before the pyramids that they have been studying were even built or conceived of.

Additionally, Mr James is conscious of the language used in the lesson. That is, many Aboriginal people believe that they are autochthonous—that is, they have always been here—and that their life began thousands of years ago when their ancestors gave life and form to the land, the animals and the people (Harrison 2011, p. 19). However, most non-Aboriginal people (and some Aboriginal peoples) believe the western scientific explanations of evolution and migration from south-east Asia. Mr James is conscious of both arguments and states that: "archaeologists say that's a safe bet but...", denoting that there is more than one way of understanding this concept of time. Mr James avoids words that could be disengaging and dispossessing for his students because their Aboriginal cultural knowledge differs markedly to western knowledge. He does not, for example, say: 'We know that Aboriginal people have been here for 60,000 years'; this implies that Aboriginal people, like Mr James and his students, have not been here since the beginning of time as they are most likely to deem true in accordance with their Dreamtime.

One purpose of this exercise undertaken by Mr James is to instil student pride in their culture. He tells his students:

> 'Hey, you're connected to the oldest living culture in the world'. I mean that's something to be proud of and in light of the media spin on Indigenous affairs and how it paints Aboriginal people in such a negative way, it's nice to get some validation, some acknowledgment of 'hey I'm connected to something deeper and it's good and I should be proud of that and not just not me but every Australian should be proud of the rich history of our country'. (Mr James)

While Mr James is conscious of the pride he aims to instil in his students, he is, perhaps, not aware of the validation he gives his students by not using disengaging or dispossessing language. Through his own teacher knowledge, and knowledge of his students' cultural heritage, Mr James is able to illustrate a challenging concept through a vivid, tangible and inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogical strategy.

As Villegas and Lucas (2002, p. 27) observe about culturally responsive educators, "[T]hey use what they know about their students to give them access to their learning". This is exceedingly evident in the pedagogical practices of participating teachers who, in various ways, have come to know the lives and the complex distinct Aboriginal cultures of their students as well as historically constructed racialised understandings. However, participating teachers do not fall into the trap of believing that Aboriginal students are less able to learn than their non-Aboriginal counterparts because of their

external situation, a belief so frequently held by the wider community within and beyond the school gates (Sarra 2008). Stanley (2000, p. 57) writes that it is important that learning-centred environments attend to:

> ... the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs that learners bring into the classroom. Teachers need to recognise the importance of building on the conceptual and cultural knowledge that students bring with them. From this understanding of where students are 'coming from', the teacher can build bridges to where the students need to 'go' in their journey towards improved knowledge and understanding.

By being aware of, and understanding of, the complex "extra lives" (Mrs Knight) that many Aboriginal students come to school with, teachers are enabled to build bridges that enable students to fully participate in their education.

Culturally responsive teaching is both a personal and a professional undertaking (Gay 2013, p. 57). The knowledge and skills entailed are cumulative and acquired gradually over time instead of being mastered all at once, such as through a university course or definable moment. Participating teachers actively seek out learning opportunities to further their knowledge base of Aboriginal distinct culture and history. For example, Mrs Knight is a regular on the blogging site of '*The black steam train'*; Mrs Sullivan is reading Indigenous biographies; Mr Banks attends offered professional development programs; and, most participating teachers have completed the Chris Sarra initiated program of '*Stronger smarter'* (Sarra 2003). Participating teachers understand that knowledge is ever evolving and that acquiring knowledge of Aboriginal students and their distinct cultures is a "never ending journey" (Mr Banks).

By actively seeking out knowledge of their Aboriginal students, participating teachers avoid seeing all Aboriginal students as being 'the same' while also not pigeonholing all Aboriginal students into the same 'difference' category (Gollan & Malin 2012, p. 183). It is recognised that Aboriginal students come from diverse backgrounds and enter school with a diverse range of knowledge, experience and skills. Nevertheless, it is likely that many Aboriginal students will share some common Aboriginal cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. Acquiring knowledge of their students, on a personal and cultural level, enables participating teachers to work with both student difference and student commonality; and to avoid destructive stereotyping. Moreover, participating teachers recognise that the complex cultural identities of students are an asset to learning and educational success. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating

teachers use their acquired knowledge of students to give students access to their learning.

However, no participating teacher would contend that they are experts in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being or doing. Instead, each participating teacher recognises, privileges and supports Aboriginal student cultural identity knowing its significance for student educational success. By centring the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of culturally diverse students, CRP validates a student's cultural identity (Gay 2010). In the next section how participating teachers place their knowledge of self, and knowledge of students at the centre of their praxis and activism is explained.

5.4 Teacher Knowledge of Practice

Evident in participating teachers is a persistent willingness and desire to reflect critically and engage in a process of praxis. This act of praxis is the means by which teachers are able to critically question their social constructions in order that it is transformed and deeper understanding of key issues is gained; in turn teachers are able to understand how they build and act within relationships (Freire 1970, p. 35). It is through the act of praxis, Freire further argues, that culture and society are created; and in this way, constructions of society are actively transformed and people (i.e. teachers) become critically conscious human beings (Freire 1970, p. 58) committed to activism.

By placing the historical and social construction of 'race' and culture at the centre of teacher critical reflection, or praxis, a counter story of educational success for Aboriginal students has the opportunity to emerge. Freire (1970, p. 35) argues that the more we are able to uncover the challenging social constructs, which is to be the focus of our transforming action, the more critically we enter that reality. In this way we are "consciously activating the subsequent development of [our] experiences". This performance of praxis is the means by which we are able to critically question our constructions in order that it is transformed and greater understanding of key issues is gained; in turn we are able to understand how we build and act within relationships.

After completing my initial semi-structured interview with Mr James, for example, he asked if I was going to give him feedback about his teaching practice once I had observed him, as he wanted to learn and would appreciate any observations. The

possibility of learning being a major reason for him agreeing to participate in the research. Mr James has worked in schools for 15 years—his first "proper job" (Mr James) being an AEW—and he has been a practicing teacher for the past three years. Most of his teaching time has been at the same school. Mr James expressed a yearning for peer supervision and mentoring from his colleagues, a sharing of ideas for lessons, a sharing of teaching practices which Mr James felt were not occurring frequently, or readily, enough at the school. On this theme, Andersen (2011, p. 100) writes that "Teachers need to share what works and continue to develop professionally in this area in order to truly meet the needs of the children". Additionally, it is evident from my research that this sharing meets the needs of teachers as well.

By way of an example, one area that Mr James reflected upon extensively was the way he "comes across to students" (Mr James). For Mr James, who changed schools three times in high school and dropped out completely at the beginning of Year 11, relationships with teachers is significant. He describes one of his early teachers as being "happy one second and then furious the next" (Mr James). He went on to state:

> I didn't like that. To me it seemed false or in genuine or it just somehow didn't allow me to connect with those sorts of teachers and I found the more I went along my learning journey the more I experienced these types of teachers And I kind of said to myself (when I finally decided to be a teacher) that 'I don't want to be that teacher, I don't want to be the on and off, cold and hot kind of teacher'. (Mr James)

Mr James concluded with: "It would be interesting to put a camera on and look and go 'Mmm how well did I do? How can I improve?'". (Mr James)

Similarly, Mr Scott who described himself as a student who "was capable but (had) poor work habits" and went on to the Army Reserves after school, shared a myriad of stories about both good and bad teachers in his own schooling years. For example, he spoke of his Modern European History teacher who really engaged him, "just making the connections I suppose and telling stories about it" (Mr Scott). By comparison, Mr Scott shared an account of what he considered to be bad teaching: "In primary school I had one lady twice and she was horrible (laughs)" (Mr Scott). Additionally, Mr Scott shared the following illustrative story from his own educational biography:

> My Year 7 teacher stands out to me and I think that was mainly about a few issues, [like] perhaps feeling like being picked on unfairly, and also not getting recognition when you see other kids getting recognition for things and you feel like 'well I've done that too and why isn't my effort being acknowledged?' sort of thing. One example is in the hockey team, they made a big deal about the top

> scorer in the girls' hockey team but, I think I was the top scorer in the boys, and there was no mention of it and that sort of thing [laughs embarrassingly]. (Mr Scott)

Additionally Mrs Sullivan, who described her childhood as "rather idyllic in a country town", admitted nonetheless that she was a bit of a rebellious student. She spoke of the horrors of getting a D grade off her science teacher in Year 9: "I questioned that result because I knew I was better than that. He was 'old school', he'd give you a text book and tell you to 'get on with it'" (Mrs Sullivan). She went on to receive A grades in years 11 and 12, and received a high Tertiary Entrance Ranking Score (TERS) which she could have "done anything I wanted with but I really wanted to be a teacher" (Mrs Sullivan). However, Mrs Sullivan now strives in her classrooms not to be "old school" with her students.

Furthermore, Mrs Harris simply but poignantly stated that one of the reasons for becoming a teacher (besides it being one of the few academic options for women at that time in the 1960s) was, "I enjoyed school, (I) wanted to bring similar to others" (Mrs Harris). In other words, Mrs Harris works towards sparking a passion for learning in her students just like she had felt in her school years.

Finally, Mr Banks shared that he grapples with his teaching practice, speaking of the challenges of providing quality teaching to each student. Having himself experienced schooling where he was not academically "stretched" (Mr Banks) he is now aware of a similar, ongoing struggle within his classroom:

> Not to generalise, but I find the kids I work with so often there is 90 per cent that are in the realm of the lower end of the spectrum that need high, high, high levels of individualised support to get them to do anything... Then I have compassion and I feel for the kids that are at the other end and sometimes I feel bad that I probably don't extend them enough because I know I was in that position and I look at them and see them sitting there twiddling their thumbs and I think what can I do to help you but so engrossed in helping the 20 other kids that are desperately needing every second of my time; how do I find time? (Mr Banks)

Mr Banks went on to describe his efforts to address this situation: "So what I'll do is I might get that 1% of the time where I'll say 'Right, this is what you need to do. I'll set up an individualised task for you; off you go'" (Mr Banks). However, Mr Banks is aware that this approach too is largely failing as individualised tasks are not being completed by students for two primary reasons: 1) just because they know they can fly under the radar because "I've done enough work to get through and he's busy with other

people and he won't check on me"; or, 2) some of it is that, "I didn't quite know how to do that so I just watched a movie instead" (Mr Banks). This challenge of attending to the academic needs of each student in class is an ongoing concern for Mr Banks who feels the situation is: "More obvious to me because I've come from a background where it happened to me". (Mr Banks).

This readiness to critically reflect on their pedagogical approach, was evident in a comment shared by my youngest participant Mrs Sullivan who regularly asks herself the question of, "Would I want to be in my class?" Mrs Sullivan's reflection upon the Year 9 English class she'd just taught illustrates the process she undertakes:

> [Y]ou know I'd generally write lists on the board for the kids that need the lists. Like today we're doing this, this, this. I didn't do that this morning in English because I thought 'well they're just going to be working on their task'. But in hindsight I could have said to them 'I want you to achieve questions 1 to 6' or whatever. I could have done that differently but I'm still happy with the amount of work they did. That's my reflection for that lesson. (Mrs Sullivan)

While this reflection on the success of Mrs Sullivan's Year 9 English class could appear simplistic, its context is not. She explained that the school has a *No homework* policy as students are predominantly from low socioeconomic homes and frequently do not have access to computers or internet outside school. So completing the set task, a major assessment task, in a timely fashion is crucial for attaining student grades. Therefore, by being explicit about the task and her expectations for the lesson, is a key element in giving students the best opportunity to succeed. In future lessons, I observed Mrs Sullivan placing a lesson plan on the whiteboard for each class. The lesson plan was referred back to several times to keep students on track and to ensure students had clarity about the task and, had clarity about her expectations.

When undertaking praxis, it is common for participating teachers to centre their lifeworlds, their transformative moments, their educational experiences both as students and teachers, and on their acquired knowledge of Aboriginal cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. By reflecting upon their own experiences of schooling participating teachers were able to identify what teacher actions and dispositions provided them with educational success, personally and professionally. Moreover, participating teachers are also able to identify what teacher actions contributed to their disengagement from schooling. As a result they have become conscious of their own actions and dispositions, seeking to make the learning space for their students one of belonging and

success rather than one of holding power over their students. In the main however, such praxis has been largely haphazard in its delivery or self-taught rather than an outcome of coordinated professional teacher training, which is now discussed.

5.4.1 Pre-service and professional teacher training

Not all participating teachers undertook university courses that would have prepared them to not only be teachers, but culturally responsive pedagogues for Aboriginal students (Castagno 2012). For Mr James, who graduated from university as a teacher four years ago, assignments and subjects pertaining to Indigenous culture and issues was prominent as he completed a minor in Indigenous Studies. He recalled completing assignments that ranged from suggested effective ways to teach Aboriginal students, incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in all aspects of the curriculum as well as around sociopolitical issues such as the concept of 'race', discrimination and concepts of Australian history.

Similarly, Mr Banks recalled that at university, where he completed dual degrees in education and health sciences, that:

> In groups we had to prepare a presentation that explained a particular aspect of the differences experience by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students. I remember the topic that my group did was racism experienced in the classroom by students. (Mr Banks)

Both Mr James and Mr Banks agreed that such studies have helped put "things in perspective" (Mr James) with regards to Aboriginal students. Likewise, both Mr James and Mr Banks noted the value of undertaking such "in-depth" (Mr Banks) research tasks.

By comparison, neither Mr Scott nor Mrs Sullivan recalled undertaking any Indigenous or Aboriginal specific courses or assignments while at university. Instead, both teachers described transformative moments (Ladson-Billings 2009) resulting from teaching experiences. For example, Mr Scott noted that while working at Traeger Park School in Alice Springs he was exposed to the Accelerated Literacy Program (ALP) where:

> Many case studies were related to Aboriginal students in this and other schools. ALP was promoted as a good methodology for helping Aboriginal students to gain a better understanding of western academic discourse and make gains in their literacy skills. (Mr Scott)

Alternatively, for Mrs Sullivan her knowledge of Aboriginal students and their culture was greatly enhanced during her two years as a tutor for Aboriginal students in a private boarding school, where Aboriginal students (predominantly from remote communities) made up 10% of the student population:

> I was a bit overwhelmed at first. I wasn't sure what to expect or how to act. You know, not looking her (student) in the eye, for example. I didn't want to offend. It didn't take long though to build relationships with them; just listening, getting to know them and their families and where they're from. I still go back there and visit the girls. (Mrs Sullivan)

Furthermore, as a veteran teacher, Mrs Knight argues that pre-service, or new teachers to the school, which has a high percentage of Aboriginal students, would benefit from reading books such as Bruce Elder's *Blood on the wattle* and, "things like that". Mrs Knight went on to state that teachers:

> Need To understand that Aboriginal people were killed and slaughtered because they took sheep while their whole lands were being destroyed and the belief that they might be bred out. (Mrs Knight)

By learning about the historical context of Aboriginal peoples, Mrs Knight is arguing that her colleagues will be better positioned to work with Aboriginal students, rather than "judging them" (Mrs Knight) from an uncritiqued majoritarian stance. Such knowledge acquisition is not about excusing Aboriginal students because of past events but rather a way to understand instead of "judging or punishing" (Mrs Knight) Aboriginal students.

Very few studies have been undertaken in relation to pre-service education and Aboriginal students' educational outcomes (Price and Hughes 2009). For some time though, the Australian Education Union has advocated that all teachers employed in the public education system in Australia should complete a comprehensive sequence of Aboriginal Studies as a minimum requirement for their employment (AEU 2002). Writing of pre-service teacher training that prepares teachers to successfully educate Aboriginal students, Price and Hughes (2009, p. v) contend: "Australian students need teachers with the education and confidence to be effective and successful". The *What Works* case studies, that cover a wide range of topics illustrating ways in which Aboriginal students have been assisted to achieve success in their education is a valuable resource for pre-service teachers (Price & Hughes 2009).

Further to this, in their report *Learning the lessons? Pre-Service Teacher Preparation for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students*, Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) highlight several key points regarding pre-service teacher training for Aboriginal student success. First, in Australia, the "preoccupation within the literature is with teaching Indigenous studies to pre-service teachers"(Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012, p. 1). Second, the curricula focus is on the transfer of knowledge and understanding rather than pedagogy and teaching. Third, is the absence of problematising 'race' and racism with Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012, p. 1) stating: "...the range of subjects on offer are designed to transfer knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture absolving the role that race plays in structuring disadvantage and privilege". Finally, the report found clear consistencies between universities charged with the responsibility of preparing teachers to teach Aboriginal students. For example, universities either embed Indigenous content into their overall curriculum or, offer Indigenous elective courses. These findings are mostly consistent with the pre-service training provided to participating teachers whether they graduated recently or three decades ago.

In the preceding year, 2011, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) released the National Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL 2014). The Standards recognise the key role the teacher plays in student success. Overall, they provide standards that articulate what teachers are expected to know and be able to do at varying stages of their professional development (AITSL 2014, p. 1). There are seven Standards in three domains: Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement. Each of the Standards has a number of focus areas, as shown in (Appendix 4). Supporting Aboriginal students by attending to their distinct cultural needs is intended to be embedded in each of the Standards (Perso & Hayward 2015). However, there are only two standards that specifically mention Aboriginal students. Writing of teacher pre-service programs for Navajo students in the US, Castagno (2012, p. 3) asserts that: "The preparation of culturally responsive Indigenous teachers for schools serving Indigenous youth is clearly needed, but this is difficult work given the larger context of imperialism, White supremacy, and assimilation that still structures our educational institutions".

Writing of the 'multicultural paradigm' Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006, p. 25) argue that: 'Instead of creating radically new paradigms which ensure justice, multicultural reforms are routinely "sucked back into the system". In the context of this research,

"multicultural paradigm" can be replaced with "teacher preparation paradigm" (Castagno 2012). That is, teacher preparation programs delivered by commonwealth funded, mainstream, predominantly 'white' universities, borne out of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation, run the risk of being 'sucked back into the system'. Consequently, pre-service teacher programs intended to prepare teachers to successfully teach Aboriginal students (and Aboriginal Studies) become more of the normalised majoritarian narrative instead of a means for disrupting and radically transforming the educational landscape.

The preparation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers is clearly needed for the improving of Aboriginal educational outcomes in Australia. But as revealed in the interviews of Mrs Munro and Mr James—recent graduates from pre-service teacher programs—the degree to which teachers are being taught to work with Aboriginal students varies widely. Moreover, the degree to which teachers are being taught to engage in the practice of praxis and activism, according to participating teacher interviews, noticeably differs. To be successful teachers with Aboriginal students involves explicitly teaching educators how to be culturally responsive pedagogues and not just prepared general purpose teachers (Castagno 2012). As stated by Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012, p. 1): "Unless the relationship between racial privilege and racial disadvantage is understood the development of an effective Indigenous pedagogy remains beyond the scope of the national standards".

For participating teachers, their ability to achieve success with Aboriginal students has not always come from their professional training. Instead, it is a combination of life experience and transformative moments, of immersion in Aboriginal student lives, of a willingness to learn, and, a commitment to social justice. Moreover, while participating teachers 'fitted' the definition of being culturally responsive pedagogues, they in effect had not been taught how to integrate Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing or Aboriginal languages into their practice. Finally, each participating teacher advocated for enhanced professional training either at the university level or, at the graduate level, citing this as being of utmost importance for achieving sustained improvements in Aboriginal student outcomes.

5.5 In Closing

This chapter examines the second major research question: "What knowledge, values, attitudes and characteristics do teachers need to have to work successfully with Aboriginal high school students?" The three areas of knowledge of self, knowledge of students (culture, ways of knowing, being and doing) and knowledge of teacher practice and praxis are developed through participants' understandings and the scholarly literature. The chapter also addresses the significant topics of pre-service and teacher professional development. This chapter has illustrated that participating teachers have become aware of their differences through a myriad of life, school, familial and professional “transformative moments” (Ladson-Billings 2009, p. ix). Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted that being successful culturally responsive pedagogues, means being explicitly taught how to teach Aboriginal students in a comprehensive and collaborative way.

In the next two data chapters the focus is upon CRP in the learning space. Firstly, in Chapter 6 the significance of the caring teacher–student relationship is investigated. Then in Chapter 7 the concept of high expectations for student success—academically, culturally and socially—is explored.

CHAPTER 6 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGIES OF SUCCESS, *CARING*

6.1 Introduction

While Chapters 4 and 5 focus on important and necessary dimensions of cultural responsiveness, the following two chapters focus on the fundamental dimension—that is, the pedagogy (Gay 2010). Pedagogy combines all the other dimensions—institutional and personal—and puts them into action to further student learning. The pedagogical dimension is the engagement, the participation, interaction, and the language of possibility between teacher and student in the learning space (Phuntsog 1998). According to the data gathered in my research, the teacher characteristics of Warm/Caring and Demander/Insistence were dominant. In consultation with research participants the term to be used in my research investigation is caring-demander. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of finding an Aboriginal language name; however, due to the diversity of language groups represented in my research, it was generally understood that this would be a breach of Aboriginal protocols.

So, in my investigation I argue that Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success (CRPS) consists of two interdependent teacher characteristics: caring and demander. That is, successful enactment of pedagogy involves the building and safeguarding of caring relationships between teacher and student which in turn enables teachers to demand educational success of their students. In this chapter the focus is primarily upon the first teacher characteristic of **'C*aring',*** which forms the foundation upon which Aboriginal educational success heavily depends. Caring, as will be shown, is most often demonstrated in the supportive teacher–student relationship that promotes a safe learning space. Furthermore, the concept of an Indigenous ethic of care is investigated.

Finally, given that behaviour management arose as a persistent theme in the research, the role of caring relationships in student proactive behaviour management will also be explored in this chapter.

6.2 Teacher–student Relationship Building

One long-accepted characteristic that is often repeated in the scholarship of what a successful teacher is, is the ability to cultivate and maintain strong interpersonal relationships with students (see, for example, Burges & Berwick 2009; Kleinfeld 1975; Ladson-Billings 1994). In essence, this literature found that certain kinds of relationships, such as those promoting an 'ethic of care' between teachers and students (Macgill, 2008;Noddings 1984, 1992) lead to higher levels of student engagement and educational success (Delpit 2013). Furthermore, research documenting successful practices for traditionally marginalised or minoritised students, such as CRP, emphasises that care is an integral component of these practices (Gay 2010). Culturally responsive caring relationships develop out of teachers' expanding knowledge of students and their cultures beyond the normalised majoritarian narrative.

The concept of 'relationship' between teacher and student was extensively discussed by participating teachers throughout the research investigation. For example, Mr Scott declared: "Definitely relationships for our kids are very important. If there is no relationship then it's very hard to sort of bring kids along" (Mr Scott). Similarly, Mrs Knight stated: "I can't emphasise enough that relationships and the tone you talk to students in, is the beginning of getting them (students) to work and want to work because then they want to please you". (Mrs Knight). Additionally, Mr James (my only Aboriginal teacher participant) raised the significance of teacher–student relationships: "Relationships are really important for success. You'll get the most out of the students if they like you, respect you, and enjoy the content." (Mr James)

Teacher–student relationships are understood by research participants to be one of the most powerful elements within the learning space (Liberante 2012, p. 2). In the CRP scholarship, the building of caring teacher–student relationships is just as important as the subject matter being taught (Gay 2010; Kleinfeld 1973; Ladson-Billings 1994). Noddings (1984) modified and expanded the pioneering work of Carol Gilligan (1982) on care theory, considering its application to education (Noddings 1992). Care theory, in part, contends that the development of caring teacher–student relationships is central to supporting students' academic achievement (Noddings 1984, 1992). Caring is necessarily relational, requiring both the teacher and the student to contribute to the formation of a caring relationship (Noddings 1992). Such relationships involve the

caregiver (e.g., the teacher) understanding the cared for (e.g., the student) from the perspective of the cared for (Noddings 1992).

However, while Noddings' work brings the concept of care into the educational realm, her understandings of an ethic of care is limited by her own distinct cultural positioning. That is, Nel Noddings is a 'white' American ethics of care and educational philosopher and therefore her work is based on relationships that are shaped by majoritarian 'white' constructions of ethics of care practices (Noddings 2001). As Thompson (1998, p. 530) argues, ethics of care is not "a freestanding set of domestic values uncontaminated by the oppressive values of the public spheres". Likewise, Rolon-Dow (2005, p. 86) argues against Noddings' colour-blind ethics of care model due to her neutral focus on interpersonal relationships. As MacGill (2008, p. 160) states, Noddings' ethics of care is defined within a nuclear archetype that fails to acknowledge an ethics of care that is based on a communal approach to growing-up children and youth.

An Aboriginal ethic of care, by contrast, is generally based on land-based ethics of care and the extended family model of care (MacGill 2008). Firstly, Moreton-Robinson (2003) describes Aboriginal peoples' relationships with land as forming an 'ontological belonging'; Aboriginal peoples spiritual beliefs are based on systems that tie one into the land, to other members of the group, and to all things of nature. Moreton-Robinson (2003, p. 31) continues:

> Our ontological relationship with the country means that there is an incommensurable difference between sense of self, home and belonging to place. Our ontological relationship to land, the ways that country is constitutive of us, and therefore the inalienable nature of our relation to land, marks a radical, indeed incommensurable, difference between us and the non-Indigenous.

Reinforcing the significance of land to Aboriginal peoples, Watson (2002, p. 20) asserts that: "Aboriginal people are a part of the land and they must protect the land as they protect themselves".

For my research it is, however, the extended model of care, centred on kinship, that is of most consequence—though, of course, relationship to land cannot be neglected or understated in its significance. According to Pattel (2007, p.3), Aboriginal peoples of Australia had the most complex kinship structure known to the western world. This sophisticated kinship system placed each person in relationship to every other person

and determined the behaviour of an individual to each person (Dudgeon et al. 2010). More specifically, Pattel (2007, p. 3) explains that:

> An Indigenous family is composed of immediate and extended family members, each having equal importance within the family as multiple different roles. A family can be made up of biological kin (blood relation), affinal kin (related through marriage) and classified kin (someone who has earned a particular role within the family).

Aboriginal kinship systems are based on "the principles of reciprocity, obligation, care and responsibility" (Groome 1992, p. 42). Kinship systems throughout Australia have, however, been disrupted and negatively impacted upon by the policies and practices of dispossessing colonisation that, for example, institutionalised children away from their families (see Chapter 2). But kinship is something that has been able to survive the European invasion and can best be described as *familial culture* (Edwards WH 1998). It is the way in which families work and how they interact with one another, maintaining balance for both the collective and the individual within. This collective and individual 'balance', in fact, has been particularly important for responding to the devastating impact that dispossessing colonisation has had upon Aboriginal communities. Moreover, dispossession has created a need in itself for Aboriginal peoples to be able to rely on the support of extended kin networks to care for children and youth (Pattel 2007).

Within Pattel's (2007) categories of kin discussed above, is the concept of 'classified kin' who are people that have earned their place within a family. Classified kinship can be earned through helping to raise and support children through hardships (Pattel 2007). Because there are a range of carers to call on inside an extended family, children and youth have more opportunities to develop a broad section of relationships to fulfil their needs. That is, Aboriginal children and youth have multiple caregivers that they can, and are expected, to call upon as they grow to adulthood.

The Aboriginal ethics of care model—enacted through an Aboriginal extended family—starkly contrasts with the Noddings' white ethic of care model that is standard within schools. The structure of Aboriginal ethics of care models, that is, in relation to a basic acceptance of multiple caregivers and adopted children, does not match 'white' middle-class models of care legalised through the 'Primary Care Giver' model (Boyd, Rhoades & Burns 1999). As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers challenge

the normalised primary care model of the ‘white’ ethic of care by connecting with Aboriginal students’ extended families. In effect, through their commitment to Aboriginal student success, participating teachers are earning the role of becoming “classified kin” (Pattel 2007). That is, I argue, participating teachers are raising Aboriginal students through their pedagogical practices and, supporting Aboriginal students through the hardships of schooling.

As classified kin, participating teachers work to find ways to enable their participation or involvement in out-of-school (or at least out-of-the-classroom) interactions with their students. These beyond the school gate or classroom interactions enable participating teachers to attain knowledge about their students (Delpit 2013; Ladson-Billings 1994; Perso & Hayward 2015). Such knowledge of students enables participating teachers to build connections between themselves, their students and, their students’ families and communities.

For example, at MHS all teachers are regularly involved with activities at the school residence where most students reside during school terms; after-hours events such as award nights or barbecues are frequently attended. In the staffroom teachers frequently noted how important it is to get to know students, to interact with students, on a less informal front (Field Notes: 24 November, 2015). By way of an example, a Touch Football match—students vs teachers—was deemed a success and not just because the teachers won! “The kids love it when we teachers make fools of ourselves” (Mrs Harris). This more informal interaction provides an opportunity for relationships to be built with new students and, for existing teacher–student relationships to be further strengthened. Overall, it is evident that participating teachers understand how important the teacher–student relationship is in successfully engaging their students in the learning space.

At Southern High School (SHS), the knowledge of students’ lives beyond the school gate needs to be gathered in very different ways. Aboriginal students do not live in a residential home but rather reside in their local community with family, friends or, independently. One way in which knowledge of students is gathered is through the accessing of the Nunga Room, discussed in section 4.4.1. The Nunga Room is promoted as a resource for teachers throughout the school. Teachers are encouraged to access and connect with this culturally safe space to learn about Aboriginal students, community

and culture. Through this involvement teachers have the opportunity to build and strengthen teacher–student relationships. For example, Mrs Knight has accessed and consulted with the Nunga Room staff for over four years. Mrs Knight stated that this connection assists her in having "A very good relationship with the students I teach" (Mrs Knight). She went on to explain that by being involved in the school's Nunga Room and teaching in the SAASTA program, she has become "one of the most favourite teachers" (Mrs Knight) among students and teachers alike. This connection has enabled her knowledge of Aboriginal students, culture and community to grow extensively. Mrs Knight is able to confidently bring this knowledge to the learning space of her classroom. Furthermore, Mrs Knight has become a familiar figure to students within the school. Students see and interact with Mrs Knight in the Nunga Room, at events and the school yard. In this way, there is a building of tangible connections between herself and students, resulting in Mrs Knight being perceived as accessible and safe both personally and academically.

However, according to AET Team Leader Mr Banks, the Nunga Room is an under-utilised resource by the majority of teachers within the school. Mr Banks explained:

> A lot of people don't quite understand what it (Nunga Room) is as well. Like I've tried to email and ask people to come and have a look at what they're doing and things like that. The odd one has but they don't really care what happens in this room. (Mr Banks)

Illustrating further the value of possessing knowledge of students for educational success, Mr Scott explained:

> We (MHS staff) have fairly good information about what the background of the kids are? Just generally in terms of social and family situations and things like that. So I think sometimes that can help inform how you approach particular students as well as in terms of how they might react to particular interactions with them. (Mr Scott)

Another way in which knowledge of—and therefore understanding of—students is gathered by participating teachers, is through deliberative activities in the classroom. Mrs Knight illustrated one such practice when she stated:

> I always start off new classes with five things about you (students) and I tell them 5 things about me. It is them getting to know me as a person within boundaries and certainly I try to get to know them. (Mrs Knight)

This process of self-disclosure (within boundaries) is undertaken by Mrs Knight with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students at the beginning of each school year or,

with the commencement of a new class. This “robust knowledge of students” (Bartell 2011, p. 52) drives the development of supportive teacher–student relationships that have been found to be fundamental for Aboriginal student success.

Similarly at a transition to high school program for Year 7 Aboriginal students, a ‘getting to know you’ activity was undertaken at the outset. All present—students, teachers, AEWs—introduced themselves by sharing their name and where they were from. AEWs identified themselves according to role but prior to this identified their language group through identifying the Aboriginal Country they belonged to (see below for further discussion). The knowledge gained through this getting to know you exercise was followed up by a more generic activity which asked all present to find someone who fitted the descriptor on an activity sheet provided to them such as: ‘Do you speak more than one language?’ ‘Have you been overseas in the past year?’ ‘Do you like chocolate?’ Such an exercise allows for a personal ‘getting to know you’ that results in a “sense of belonging and knowing” (Aunty Nangala). Moreover, such getting to know you activities are in keeping with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, where often extensive time is taken to establish relationships prior to getting down to the business at hand, which in this situation is educational success.

On occasion the gathering of student knowledge through classroom practice is not so deliberative as the exercise undertaken in Mrs Knights’ classroom. For example, in one Year 8 English class, Mr James explained to the students that he loves *He-man Masters of the Universe*, and wanted to share an episode with them, “If that is OK with you guys?” (Mr James). Why share He-man with them? The task at hand was to teach students about narrative, storyline, and plot. Obviously this could be done with a set text but Mr James opted to use a cartoon close to his own heart that allowed him to explore with his students the necessary concepts with great passion and joy, which then promoted student engagement with the topic that might not have emerged if a standardised text had been used.

Interestingly a by-product of sharing *He-man* came at the end of class when students had free time on the computers as a reward for getting down and completing their work following the video. Usually students would go on to the internet and pursue their personal interests with little or no interaction with Mr James or fellow students. However, on this occasion ‘Carol’, a usually introverted student, shared with Mr James

a website she enjoyed immensely (Desert Pea Media n.d.). This Aboriginal website features music videos with messages of, for example, social justice, health and cultural identity. Many of the videos chosen by Carol to show us contained her friends and family from "back home" (Carol).

This is a teacher–student moment of connection. Carol normally sits quietly, often appearing disengaged from the lesson. Mr James noted to me that he had rarely seen her this "animated" or "engaged" before. I noted in my field notes: "Would this connection between student and teacher have taken place if the standard text on narrative, plot and character been used rather than *He-man Masters of the Universe*; perhaps not as Mr James would potentially not have been so animated, so excited about a textbook to which he had no personal attachment" (Field Notes: 6 March, 2015).

The benefits of 'blurring' the lines between the learning space and the students beyond the school gates was further illustrated by Mrs Knight who stated that a major contributing factor to her success (and popularity) with her students, and fellow teachers, is her self-proclaimed "nosiness". Mrs Knight describes herself as being "naturally nosy, it's just who I am". This nosiness or sticking her nose into students' personal lives beyond the school gate—the "extra life" as Mrs Knight referred to it—is central to her pedagogy of success. The robust relationship between Mrs Knight and her students is further evident in many of her self-proclaimed "meddlesome actions" (Mrs Knight). By way of an example, on one occasion, an Aboriginal student had had a death in the family with the funeral happening in Western Australia. Understanding the significance of Sorry Business for Aboriginal peoples, Mrs Knight initiated a fundraising effort among her colleagues who are part of a performance group where the funds raised are deposited into a student general purpose account to be used for a variety of reasons. So, Mrs Knight's knowledge of her student, used to establish a caring relationship, enabled this student to confide in Mrs Knight and, in turn, for a solution to be found.

Evidently, Mrs Knight, as with all participating teachers, exemplifies the words of (Rolon-Dow 2005, p. 103) who asserts: "You have to understand from where they come". Mrs Knight is that teacher who gets where the students are coming from, and is willing and able to go that bit further without being intrusive or coming across as a 'do-gooder' or rescuer. Mrs Knight is not seeing her students through a lens of "charity" but rather through a lens of "justice" and is therefore not patronising in her meddlesome

actions or activism (Bartell et al. 2013, p. 14). Nor is Mrs Knight glossing over the ugly history of students' lives, thereby perpetuating inequity and injustice (Castagno 2014). Rather, Mrs Knight recognises the difficult circumstances of her students, and demands that they can and will rise above them (Delpit 2013, p. 78).

Embedded in the actions of participating teachers is the concept of empathy which, according to McAllister and Irvine (2002), is a refined element of caring rather than a separate teacher characteristic. Specifically, empathy refers to the teacher's ability to understand the classroom from the students' perspectives. Likewise, I argue, participating teachers understand the power dynamics of the institution of schooling (and to some extent, society) from the students' perspective. The "caring" teacher is therefore more likely to succeed if they approach their goal of holding all students to the same rigorous standards by seeking first to understand where the students are coming from (Rhychly & Graves 2012).

Similarly, Bartell (2011, p.65) writes of the "complex, nuanced, and, at times, overwhelming" concept of teachers "caring with awareness". Teachers who care with awareness possess knowledge and dedication that promotes successful learning and, ultimately, equity (Bartel 2011). Bartell (2011, p. 65) asserts that teachers who care with awareness:

> [W]ork to understand and make connections with students' cultures and communities; help students develop positive racial, cultural, and political identities; reflect critically on their own assumptions and practices about students' cultures and communities, including rejecting and confronting deficit and colour-blind perspectives; and labour to neutralise status differences within and beyond the classroom walls.

Caring with awareness has, for example, resulted in Mrs Knight becoming a confidant for her students, with her having an 'open door' policy well known to all students, both in her classes and beyond. This position of confidante was noted by AET members as a significant contributing factor in the retention of Aboriginal students at the school. By way of an example, for over five years Mrs Knight worked closely with one Aboriginal student who had more than the usual number of challenges and traumas in his life. Mrs Knight explains:

> That relationship I built with him. When he came in he would come to my office and tell me these things. Not many teachers knew that. Why? I had him come in and tell me all about his life because he felt comfortable enough to come. (Mrs Knight)

With regards to this student, AET Team Leader and teacher Mr Banks, adamantly stated that Mrs Knight was “instrumental” in him going on to successfully complete Year 12. Likewise, Aunty Nangala states that Mrs Knight “stepped up for him. She kept him coming back to school by caring, by being interested”. As such, Mrs Knight has fulfilled her responsibilities of being classified kin outlined above.

Similarly, participating teacher Mrs Munroe, when asked to explain how Aboriginal student success is achieved, stated that, “By fostering relationships where students feel safe to take risks in their learning” (Mrs Munroe). She went on to explain that risk-taking is only made possible by, “Establishing strong bonds of trust and rapport” (Mrs Munroe). Her educational success is evidenced by her statement that: “Past students always come back to me for support and guidance and students feel safe and are therefore successful in achieving learning outcomes” (Mrs Munroe). She “fosters” relationships with students through, for example, attending events at the students’ residence, involving students in sporting activities beyond the school gate and, being hands on with events such as the school formals. Through such activities Mrs Munroe is able to gain robust knowledge of the students for whom she is charged to care for, thereby fulfilling her role as classified kin with her students.

Furthermore, understanding the difference between knowing about students and knowing the students emerged as significant in the building of caring teacher–student relationships. To begin with, knowing about someone results from an intellectual task of gathering information; by contrast really knowing someone relies upon a relationship based on mutual respect (Perso & Hayward 2015). As can be seen in the accounts presented above, participating teachers *really get to know* their students; going beyond the intellectual task of gathering information, opting instead to invest emotionally, respectfully and mutually in the teacher–student relationship (Perso & Hayward 2015). One consequence of participating teachers knowing their students in such a way is that they are able to employ that knowledge in the learning space. The next section is a demonstration of how Investing in the teacher–student relationship enables teachers to utilise the pedagogical practices of humour and creative nagging.

6.3 The Use of Humour and 'Creative Nagging'

Humour and 'creative nagging' emerged in the research as significant elements in realising educational success. In the literature on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal pedagogies, the use of humour has featured highly (Byrne & Munns 2012; Ngarritjan-Kessaris 1994). For instance, Terry Ngarritjan-Kessaris, of the Alawa and Mara peoples of the Northern Territory, observes that "we [Aboriginal Australians] are generally encouraged to see the funny side of things and to laugh at ourselves, and we like teachers who laugh at themselves" (Ngarritjan-Kessaris p. 121). Supporting this, Byrne and Munns (2012) advise teachers that having a sense of humour in the classroom can assist in the building of relationships between teachers, students and their families. Byrne and Munns (2012, p. 317) go on to state "An important lesson for teachers is not to take themselves too seriously and be prepared to have a laugh and be made fun of". For participating teachers, humour had a persistent presence in the interactions between themselves and their students. Humour, as illustrated below, serves a multitude of purposes within the learning space.

Firstly, in Mr Scott's Year 10 Science class on animal classification humour was observed as a means of checking for understanding of what a mammal is. The students were asked to provide examples of mammals that they could find in the Australian outback where they are from. Each example is repeated by Mr Scott as he scribed them on the whiteboard:

> Mr Scott: So mammals...
>
> Female Student: Mammals.
>
> Mr Scott: they give birth to live young; they feed their young with milk; and they're covered in fur hair. So can you think of, out in the desert...?
>
> Students: Dogs.
>
> Female Student: Cats
>
> Male Student: People
>
> Students: Dingo
>
> Mr Scott: So, alright, there are some examples of mammals you might find out there.
>
> *(Mr Scott pauses as if to think of more examples)*

Sheelagh: Camels.

Students: They're everywhere.

Mr Scott: Camels. Yes, there's a few pest ones as well.

Students: Donkeys, horses, cows, horses...

Mr Scott is repeating each example as students rapidly call out more possibilities, trying to keep up as he writes them on the board.

Mr Scott: Bullocka, yes?

Students: *(whispering to each other in language)* Lama! *(While laughing)*

Students continue to nominate more and more ridiculous examples while Mr Scott writes on the board 'sheep', 'lamas' to hilarious laughter.

Mr Scott: *(joining in with his ridiculous offerings)* Giraffes and hippopotamus?

Female Students: No! No giraffes or hippopotamus' out there!

Mr Scott (laughing) None in the desert?

All students laugh along with Mr Scott.

Students: NO!!NO!

This teacher–student interaction appeared to be just some classroom silliness with little or no purpose. However, from the dialogue Mr Scott was able to ascertain 1) that students know what a mammal is; and, 2) which mammals might live in the desert ('not giraffes and hippopotamus'). It is a non-intrusive informal assessment of knowledge occurring between 'comrades'. The hilarity moves into high gear when Mr Scott uses the student's own language 'bullocka'—meaning cow or bull. This use of their language brings a camaraderie to the learning space for the students know that their teacher has indisputable knowledge about them, and this is responded to favourably and with good humour. Brayboy and Castagno (2008) found in their research that in the United States many Indigenous youth avoid undertaking science education, because of the learning challenges and specialised language involved. Therefore, humour and use of student language (discussed further in section 7.3.3) is one way in which science is made to be an accessible subject for Aboriginal students.

Likewise, humour is employed by Mr James. Let's return to the story of 'Noah' who is visiting MHS for two weeks to assess whether he will take up the program full-time next term (see p. 123). Noah's literacy level is being assessed through a variety of tests.

Mr James is sitting beside the student as he prattles through the long list of words, which Noah is clearly more than keen to get over and done with. We enter at item number 18:

> Mr James: Do.
>
> Noah: Do
>
> Mr James: DO you like chocolate?
>
> Noah: Yes!
>
> Mr James: Who, who are you?
>
> Noah: Who are you?
>
> ...
>
> Mr James: Food, give me some food.
>
> Noah: Yep
>
> Mr James: Fire, put out the fire.
>
> Noah: Yep, fire
>
> Mr James: No. 25 thin; the lady was tall and thin;
>
> Noah: What?
>
> Mr James: Thin; not fin, thin as in very skinny.
>
> Noah Yep
>
> Mr James: No. 26: date, what is today's date?
>
> Noah: 24
>
> Mr James: No. 24 was Thin; No. 25 is, ah hang on... Ah yes, the date is the 24th. (*laughs)* You mucked up my flow, aye?
>
> Noah: *chuckles.*

The test continues on to No. 40 completed. Noah is encouraged with comments like: "just give it a go", "we just want to see where you are at not how smart you are" and the like. Humorous banter continues with Noah, for example, paying out on Mr James pronunciation of words like 'answer' which Mr James pronounces rather poshly as 'arnser'. The assessment finishes with this:

> Mr James: No. 40:

Noah: Read book?

Mr James: Hang on, one more. Beautiful. It is a beautiful day to do a spelling test inside, with someone who doesn't want to do a spelling test!

Noah: I WANT TO READ A BOOK MAN! *(smiling and twitching in his seat).*

Significantly, Noah has spent most of the day asking when he is due to return home, an indication of homesickness that often results in students not participating in the program. In the following school term however, Noah accepted the invitation to return.

In another example, SAASTA teacher Mr Banks responded with quick-thinking humour when a student's mobile phone goes off during preparation time for a Year 12 final exam, on the last day of school. Throughout the year, Mr Banks has established the clear expectation that phones ringing in class are not acceptable, that anything which distracts students from learning is frowned upon; "it is not just the student whose phone that rings that is distracted but everyone and therefore everyone loses out" (Mr Banks). On this final occasion, when the phone rings, he commented "No! No more of your dating woes in here!" (Mr Banks) All students laugh and reach for their phones and switch them off before getting back to their preparation. It is a simple, light-hearted interaction that reinforced the rules while simultaneously expressed to the students how important their work is, far more important than their ringing phone.

Furthermore, for Mrs Tylor, humour was used to motivate students in her Year 9 English class. The students were completing an assessment task where they needed to choose a poem and analyse it according to the criteria provided. However, many students were disinterested in the subject of poetry. Mrs Tylor stated: "Come on guys, I don't like poetry either and you are doing my head in even more!" I noted in my field notes: "Students laugh and concede: 'OK Miss, we'll do it for you!'" (Field notes: 20 October, 2014).

Finally, in Mr Scott's Year 9 Maths class the students have been acting concerned about having my guide dog in class. Reassurances of her gentle nature and purpose have generally resolved the drama. However, two female students are using my guide dog's presence as an excuse for not focusing on the lesson at hand. Mr Scott stated:

Mr Scott: I don't have to move you do I?

Ivy: No.

Mr Scott: Move you right over next to the dog?

Ivy: NO! NO!

Mr Scott laughs along with all the students.

The students giggled, the tension was broken and the humour had worked its magic as students got back to work with no further concerns regarding the unusual circumstances of a dog being present in the classroom.

In my interview with Mrs Knight, we were discussing the significant factors of successful teaching of Aboriginal students (and students in general). After telling me of the critical need for being a confidante to students, Mrs Knight stopped and thought and then shared the following:

> ... and joking with students... and also, I always laugh because they always say don't use sarcasm. Well I use sarcasm a lot but it's a friendly sarcasm and it's the tone it's done in and they know that. A conspiratorial sarcasm? They (students) will laugh with you about it you know? (Mrs Knight)

Successful teachers—such as participating teachers—use humour in very specific ways to create a "co-membership" (Malin 1989, p. 153). They do not, for example, use humour to belittle students; deprecating humour is directed at themselves and not at students and, typically, humour is directed at the whole class and not at an individual student (Boon 2016). Harrison 2011, p. 163) argues that "[E]ach attempt to personally denigrate a student plays into the hands of history". That is, humour used by teachers in a nasty or inappropriate way, simply confirms to students the power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples which they are already aware of in their daily lives (Harrison 2011). In short, the research illustrated that respectful use of humour does have a significant influence in the establishment of a supportive classroom environment (Hudspith 1994). As can be seen, humour was used by participating teachers as a pedagogical tool—for assessment, and even for proactive classroom management.

Another, but connected, pedagogical approach used by participating teachers is that of "creative nagging" (Kleinfeld 1975, p. 327). This phrase was used by Kleinfeld's research participants as she investigated successful teachers of Eskimo and Athabascan

Indian Year 9 students in Alaska. It is described as a "cajoling pressure" (Kleinfeld 1975, p. 27). This cajoling pressure or creative nagging was highly visible within the pedagogical practices of participating teachers. By way of an example, Mr Banks illustrated this teaching approach with one of his Year 12 students who I will call 'Kathy'. The task was a major essay in the Personal Development syllabus of the SAASTA program. Mr Banks noted that the concept of 'efficacy' "was probably the one students spent the most time on, and trying to explain that concept was really, really difficult to get them to understand" (Mr Banks). Mr Bank's approach with one of his students, Kathy, was to connect the concept of efficacy to her real life:

> Mr Banks: if you fail an assignment, why is that?
>
> Kathy: *Shrug and silence*
>
> Mr Banks: 'Cos you're stupid?
>
> Kathy: No, I'm not stupid.
>
> Mr Banks: So why do you fail it?
>
> Kathy: I'm probably lazy and I don't put enough in.
>
> Mr Banks: So it's about how much you're putting into the task isn't it? It isn't about your intelligence or how you were born it's the fact you didn't put enough work into that assignment?
>
> Kathy: OK, I get it. So efficacy is my effort, my hard work. Not my being dumb?
>
> Mr Banks: Right! I know you are smart. I know you can do the assignment. You just don't believe it yourself and you show that by not putting in the hard work.

What makes this teacher–student interaction significant, is the reaction of Kathy to Mr Banks. Kathy looked at Mr Banks with respect while he spoke, despite the almost aggressive tone in his voice. Teacher and student sat side-by-side; occasionally Kathy would place her head on the desk at which time Mr Banks would use his elbow to nudge her, focusing her attention once more on the task. While Mr Banks appeared to be at times overly assertive in his interaction with Kathy, he balanced this out with statements like, "I know you are smart" and "I know you can do the assignment" explicitly demonstrating to Kathy his high expectations of her and her actual ability to fulfil his expectations. This encounter suggests that teacher and student have established a caring and robust relationship or, as Michelle Foster (1993) portrays, a connectedness. Accordingly, the student's responsive behaviour seems to reflect the attitude that Mr

Banks was overly assertive in his approach with her because of his concern for her not because he expected compliance or conformity.

In her research with African-American students, Michelle Foster (1991, p. 56) found that students were "proud of their teacher's meanness" and thought that the teacher pushed them to achieve, limited the amount of disruptions, and ran the class in ways that contributed to students' achievement. It would seem that in this encounter between Mr Banks and Kathy, described above, that the 'mean', creative nagging or cajoling pressure approach to learning was likewise well received by the student concerned.

Being a caring-demander begins with establishing a caring relationship that convinces students that you believe in them (Bondy & Ross 2008). Bondy and Ross (2008, p. 3) continue: "The saying goes, 'It's not what you say that matters; it's how you say it.' Kathy believed that Mr Banks cared about her and she interpreted Mr Bank's harsh-sounding comments as statements of care as she believed, as a result of their shared history, that he has her best interests at heart as Mr Banks has become 'classified kin' in her kinship network.

Furthermore, this encounter between Mr Banks and Kathy is an example of what Noddings (1992) refers to as 'confirmation', which involves caring teachers encouraging or affirming the best in others, and confirmation of students comes as a result of establishing trust. As in the case of participating teachers, caring teachers accomplish confirmation by developing relationships with students by knowing their students and their distinct cultural selves well. To know students well in this context means to realise what they are trying to become or to see what they are really striving for (Bartell 2011, p. 54) and privileging this knowledge in the learning space. These kinds of teacher–student interactions is rarely described in the 'good' 'effective' or 'quality teaching scholarship that dominates the current educational landscape.

But for Kathy, whose aim it is to become a physical education teacher, such interactions play a significant role in her being engage in her learning and subsequent attainment of her SACE. This knowledge of Kathy's career goals means that teachers and AEWs are able to encourage Kathy and, at times through humour and creative nagging, cajole her into striving for what she wants. Nonetheless, participating teachers and AEWs, recognise that Aboriginal students in their care need more than classroom-based pedagogical approaches for success. With their complex extra lives known to

participating teachers and AEWs, day-to-day caring is, as will now be discussed, also necessary pedagogical practice.

6.4 Caring for Student 'Basics'

Both schools have high numbers of students who bring with them to school a complexity of issues to which teachers respond with respect and understanding. The following extract from Mr Banks demonstrated well the broad range of complex issues that regularly arise:

> Constant flow of kids in here [Nunga Room], got to be-all and end-all—'I got no money', 'I got no house', 'I got this... ', 'I got that... '—I think sometimes people just don't understand the level of basic need of some students. (Mr Banks)

As demonstrated previously, participating teachers spend extensive classroom and non-classroom time developing robust relationships with their Aboriginal students. In this way, participating teachers use what they know to facilitate the building of connections between student and school and, between teacher and student. Such a connection enables students to seek the assistance they require be it social, emotional, academic or physical. In short, the characteristics of caring and demandedness is manifested as a teacher–student connectedness (Foster M, 1993; Ladson-Billings 1994; Ware 2006). Teacher beliefs in students' ability to succeed, responsiveness to students, and refusal to give up on them communicate the culturally responsive pedagogues abiding care of students (Bondy et al. 2012). Through teacher caring action, or culturally responsive caring, students are able to clearly identify those teachers who are 'on their side'—classified kin—such as the teachers participating in the research.

The concept of caring is identified as a value and responsibility of utmost importance by participating teachers, and is a fundamental tenet of the theory of CRP (Gay 2010). Gay (2010, p. xvii) explains that the concept of caring "is often limited to emotional feelings without due consideration to connected actions". As a result culturally responsive teachers care *for* rather than *about* their students. Gay (2010, p. 48) writes:

> While caring about conveys feelings of concern for one's state of being, caring for is active engagement in doing something to positively affect it. Thus, it encompasses a combination of concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action.

While all participating teachers shared accounts of 'caring for' Aboriginal students, I opt here to illustrate this culturally responsive pedagogical characteristic by returning to

Mrs Knight. Mrs Knight stated: “I’m naturally caring and I actually care about these students, genuinely” (Mrs Knight). Mrs Knight went on to describe one act of caring for a student:

> One of our Indigenous students last year was depressed. She’d come from Western Australia; there had been a suicide in the family. You know she came to me and I said ‘Can you get home?’ She had no money to get home. I put out an email to the teachers straight away—‘Can we get some money together? For however many teachers in this school? Email me back, I’m not asking much, $5 bucks’. (Mrs Knight)

This act of caring for a student undertaken by Mrs Knight goes beyond classroom-based pedagogy. Her knowledge of the student involved, her knowledge of the significance of Sorry Business for Aboriginal peoples when a death occurs within their community, enabled Mrs Knight to actively engage in resolving the situation. Mrs Knight’s caring for is not a charitable act but rather an act of social justice (Bartell et al. 2013, p.14), motivated by concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action (Gay 2010, p.4). This same kind of caring for Aboriginal students was evident in the disposition of all participating teachers both within the classroom and the broader learning space.

Moreover, participating teachers recognised that the act of caring for students varied according to individuals and situations: “Two students in the same class are roughly in the same situation, but they may need very different forms of care from their teacher” (Noddings 2002, p. 20). In other words, care and caring will look differently for each teacher and for each student. Therefore, participating teachers employ a multitude of approaches which respond to the students’ culture and individual selves and situation. These individualised approaches privilege the lived experience of students that teachers have come to know.

In her research into the experiences of caring by Puerto Rican girls in an urban high school in the United States, Rolon-Dow (2005) coined the phrase critical care praxis. Finding Nel Nodding’s care theory (discussed above) of limited value, she instead employed the tenets of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit theory as her primary theoretical frameworks. Put simply, Puerto Rican people are a colonised people living within a colonising country and experience barriers to educational success (Rolon-Dow 2005, p. 79). By centring racism in her research and data analysis, Rolon-Dow (2005, p. 106) highlighted three key findings: 1) critical care is grounded in a historical and political understanding of the circumstances and conditions faced by minority

communities; 2) critical care seeks to expose how racialised beliefs inform peoples standpoints; and, 3) critical care translates race-conscious historical and social understandings and insights from counternarratives, or majoritarian stories, into robust relationships, pedagogical practices, and institutional structures that benefit Latino/a students. Therefore, a critical care praxis begins by acknowledging that caring for racially and culturally marginalised or minoritised students involves understanding the role that 'race' and culture has played in shaping and defining the sociocultural and political conditions of their communities (Rolon-Dow 2005, p. 106). In this way educators become "students of the community" (Rolon-Dow 2005, p. 107), privileging the stories of those with lived experience of being Puerto Rican. "Otherwise, we risk missing opportunities to care for Latino/a students in ways that will create the potential for education to be transformed in ways that critically matter" (Rolon-Dow 2005, p. 109).

Likewise, as has been explained, Aboriginal students are a colonised and dispossessed peoples who continue to encounter barriers to educational success. Applying the tenets of CRT and, more specifically, ColonialCrit, several key points are highlighted with regards to caring teacher–student relationships in the research. First, participating teachers understood that racism is embedded in society and persists as a barrier for educational success. Second, participating teachers recognised and rejected racially based deficit constructions of students by acquiring counterstories of students. Third, by personally interacting with students and getting to know about their often complex "extra lives", participating teachers were creating a counter story which privileged the lived experiences of Aboriginal students. Finally, participating teachers, as culturally responsive pedagogues, are committed to social justice and equity, enacting their pedagogy through a lens of social justice rather than through a lens of charity (Bartell et al. 2013) enabling them to incorporate activism into their pedagogical disposition. In this way, participating teachers and AEWs, have attained the status of classified kin, fulfilling their responsibilities of reciprocity, trust and balance by being multiple caregivers for their Aboriginal students (Pattel 2007). Participating teachers caringly responded to Aboriginal students complex lives without pathologising—or victimising or blaming—their students. Moreover, participating teachers shared the belief that Aboriginal students "not only can learn but must learn" (Irvine & Fraser 1998, p. 56)

and therefore actively work towards creating a learning space within which this can take place.

Participating teachers are caring about their students in accordance with the definition found in the literature on CRP. That is, they are not caring as a synonym for "nice" or "kind," but as a descriptor for teachers who are unwilling to tolerate underachievement (Rhychly & Graves 2012, p. 45). Gay (2002) describes caring teachers as those who "care so much" about their culturally marginalised or minoritised students, that they insist on holding them to the same standards as their non-Aboriginal peers insisting on high quality academic, social, and personal performance, and ensuring that this occurs. "You teach our kids the same you'd want your kids taught. Our kids are strong, they have to be. But we need teachers to step up" (Aunty Nangala).

A final component of caring, is participating teachers using their acquired knowledge and established relationships, to hold students to high behavioural standards. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers used proactive classroom management strategies, which are now discussed.

6.5 Proactive Behaviour Management

In most classrooms what counts as legitimate knowledge in the learning space and who has access to this learning is largely determined by the values upheld by the broader society and by the particular beliefs and practices evident in the social spaces of the classroom (Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson 1995, p. 445). Similarly, Hickling-Hudson (2005) asserts that what happens in any given classroom is a social and cultural construction where power between teacher and student is negotiated and, at times, fought over. What happens in the classroom then, generally mirrors the values and perceptions of society at large which have been socially and historically constructed, often along racial lines that construct Aboriginal students as being in deficit. This destructive majoritarian narrative arguably puts at risk Aboriginal educational success as Aboriginal students disengage from the learning space that understands them as being inferior, disadvantaged and in need of fixing, when compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Consequently, there exists an embedded social construct of power and privilege within the classroom and wider school environment that is most evident in the behaviour management strategies teachers utilise (Perso & Hayward 2015).

As discussed in Chapter 4, being authoritarian with students, suspending or expelling more students, putting disruptive students on detention, withdrawing students, applying more punishments and rewards, and students and teachers training each other to disengage in the classroom have all had disastrous effects on Aboriginal student attendance, retention and outcomes (Harrison 2011, p. 148). By contrast, extensive research demonstrates that supportive and caring relationships between teachers and students are associated with fewer behaviour problems (Adkins-Coleman 2010; Bondy et al. 2007). Arguably then, unacceptable student behaviour is a consequence of poor, 'uncaring for' teacher–student relationships. As such, cultural responsiveness advocates that it makes sense that schools and teachers invest in establishing caring relationships with students and their communities as a first step in improving school engagement, reducing behavioural conflicts and, ultimately, improving educational outcomes.

This is particularly pertinent for the successful teaching of Aboriginal students due to the high value placed on kinship and relationships in their distinct Aboriginal cultural ways (Perso & Hayward 2015). Culturally responsive behaviour management involves teachers being able to recognise that "student culture is a factor and that 'treating all students the same' is in fact discriminatory" (Perso & Hayward 2015, p. 62). As Gillan (2008, p. 291) asserts in his research into the discipline of Aboriginal primary school students:

> The daily tension for many Aboriginal students is the maintenance of their Aboriginality in the face of school policy that disregards many of their regular cultural and behavioural practices that are socially acceptable at home and in their community, but threaten the 'good order' of the institution when brought to school.

Likewise, as has already been extensively discussed in my thesis, the daily tension for many Aboriginal students' results from historically based conflicts that are not understood or recognised by many teachers and schools. By contrast, proactive gathering of student and cultural knowledge means that participating teachers practice instead proactive behaviour management. For example, Mr Scott understood that tension between male students is a result of teasing about Men's Business. Furthermore, Mr Banks spoke extensively of the tension between many teachers and Aboriginal students: "they (teachers) have no thought processes that that's what the baggage is that the kids bring into the classroom" (Mr Banks).

In the following encounter, Mrs Knight clearly knows about the 'baggage' that many Aboriginal students come to school with. She recognises the complex lives of many

students and therefore, while acknowledging the lateness of a male student she simultaneously expresses her disappointment in the lateness:

> If they come in angry don't ever try and react angrily. If they come in late, it never ceases to amaze me that they are then told, you know they are punished and things like that, 'Great to see you at school. Maybe next time try and get here early'. Because we don't know what's happened in the morning. And the fact that these students have made the effort to get here despite all the goings on in their life, it just astounds me how anybody can... it's a punitive approach of some teachers and that's not me. (Mrs Knight)

Here, Mrs Knight has described a way in which student poor behaviour (i.e. lateness) is managed without punishment; that allows the student to commence his learning; and, to know what is expected of him in future. Arguably, the student in this incident knows too that his teacher cares for him, including his learning success. Mrs Knight is that teacher who, "Melts the shit away" (Aboriginal Education Worker) so that students can get on with the task of learning and get their education.

What is advocated for by participating teachers, is an approach to behaviour management that balances the requirements of school discipline policies while simultaneously responding to the collective and individual needs of the student. As such, participating teachers are responding to Connell's (2009, p. 222) call that: "[t]he educational task now is not to insert Aboriginal children more insistently into an unchallenged Eurocentric system it is to change the institutions of education to make them more culturally relevant to Aboriginal children". That is, participating teachers, through the privileging of Aboriginal student's extra lives and all the complexities that that entails, are enacting acts of refusal (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam 2003). Participating teachers are not strictly enforcing the behavioural policies to be found in the majoritarian grammar of schooling (discussed in section 4.2). Instead, they are creating a counterstory of student success where standards of behaviour remain high, while students are simultaneously being responded to in a way that makes learning possible.

As can be seen in the above narratives, for many Aboriginal students life as a whole is complicated and their lives beyond the school gate cannot be disregarded in the institution of schooling if Aboriginal students are to succeed. Aboriginal students often live with the long-term consequences of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation—family breakdown, domestic violence, substance abuse, cultural genocide—referred to

as transgenerational trauma (Atkinson 2002). Zembylas (2007, p. 209) states that "[T]auma stories create a social and political space in which victims can reconstruct memory and may heal or perpetuate their pain". The privileging of trauma narratives of Aboriginal students, where relevant, is a pillar of CRPS for Aboriginal students being developed in my research.

Proactively acquiring knowledge of self, students and praxis (discussed in section 5.4), means that participating teachers are better prepared to understand the students' in-school behaviour and respond to it rather than react to it. For example, when interviewing Mr Banks he shared the following incident that took place with one of the Aboriginal students in his care:

> The first thing you [teacher] expect me [student] to do is when I walk into class is say: 'Good morning sir', then put my bag on the rack and when I forget to do it, I'm suddenly evil. Well, you're talking about Napoleon in the war, and this, and that, and I wasn't paying attention because I was thinking 'God if I go home tonight I'm gonna get beaten tonight or, you know?' That's day-to-day for these kids but they (teachers) don't recognise that. (Mr Banks)

In her discussions of care Noddings (1992, p. 3) points out the difficulty of "knowing another's nature, needs, and desires when one party holds power over the other or is a member of a group that has historically dominated another". According to both CRP and the tenets of ColonialCrit, getting to know those who do not belong to the majoritarian story is the first step in achieving transformational ways of knowing, being and doing. Personally and professionally knowing Aboriginal students and their extra lives, means that participating teachers are able to take a proactive approach to behaviour management. Participating teachers, in their approaches to student behaviour management, illustrate the concept that student behavioural infractions are at times a "puzzle to be solved" (Ross, Bondy& Hambacher 2008, p. 7) with the answer often being found in the caring relationships of teacher and student. However, as discussed in section 4.2, through their policies, rules and behaviour codes, schools aim to socialise Aboriginal students into western norms (Perso & Hayward 2015, p. 62). Moreover, the historical, social and cultural construction of Aboriginal students, creates a power dynamic that devalues Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, often leaving Aboriginal students oppressed and humiliated (Perso & Hayward 2015).

For many Aboriginal students, navigating the learning space while maintaining their Aboriginal identity is fraught with challenges and barriers. Therefore, as Delpit (1995)

argues students who are not part of the "culture of power" must be explicitly taught the rules and codes of that culture to be able to negotiate it successfully and make decisions about how and when they will negotiate it. CRPS establishes high expectations for behaviour alongside high expectations for academic success. Enabling students to meet these standards involves teachers being explicit about their high academic and behavioural expectations, and how students can fulfil these expectations. One way in which participating teachers achieved such a learning space is by dividing codes of expected behaviour into two categories: rules and procedures (Bondy et al. 2007).

Firstly, 'rules' refer to general norms for behaviour, such as be respectful, follow instructions in a timely manner, be responsible for yourself, show respect for school and personal property, respect teachers and each other, and work and play in a safe manner. By way of an example, in Mr James' Year 8 Humanities class the following incident was observed:

> Something bad is spoken by the boys in Aboriginal language which is aimed at the girls; Mr James pulls them up on it, noting that while he doesn't know language he got the gist of what they said and it was not acceptable. (Field Notes: 24 February, 2015)

Secondly, procedures are the explicit routines for how to accomplish school tasks, such as gathering the items needed for the next lessons during dedicated breaks, how to line up for class and the school bus, how to move about the school grounds, and how to borrow technology. Returning to Mr James' Year 8 Humanities class I observed:

> Students line up at the classroom door to leave; Mr James explains to students that there is 'big' problem when students leave classrooms; too much noise, kicking and pushing each other; this behaviour is not acceptable and has been reported by teachers within the wider school; they are asked to go quietly up to the recess space; Mr James walks with them modelling how to proceed through the school. (Field Notes: 24 February, 2015)

As can be seen in this example, participating teachers provided a rationale for the school or classroom rules and procedures, thereby avoiding what can become for students a tedious, didactic litany of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" so often embedded in the grammar of the learning space (Bondy et al. 2007, p. 339).

At times, however, students continue inappropriate behaviour despite explicit and repeated reminders by teachers and school staff. Participating teachers do not let students continue behaviour that fails to meet the established expectations. However, in

their ‘demandingness’ (Kleinfeld 1975) teachers maintain respectful and caring relationships with each student. Through modelling and repetition, participating teachers communicate that they mean what they say and enact what they expect through their own actions. Delivering consequences is a more intense way of conveying this message. Behaviour management is delivered in a caring and respectful manner with teachers remaining calm and decisive, never sounding sarcastic, punitive, angry, demeaning, or threatening in their teacher–student interactions. It is not, therefore, about oppression or humiliation nor is about the loss of student cultural identity. Nor is it simply about student compliance to institutional rules and procedures.

Successful teachers of marginalised or minoritised students are characterised in the CRP scholarship as warm/caring demanders who are strong yet compassionate disciplinarians (Delpit 1995; Ware 2006). An example of this caring demandingness was provided by Mrs Munroe. It has been noticed by the teaching team that some teasing had been occurring between some students in the younger student group. While attempting to get her Maths lesson started Mrs Munroe said to a female class member: “You know what, let’s not worry about the teasing, talk to us—teachers—about it, ok? But don’t talk to (him) about it. If there’s a problem you will let us know ok?” (Mrs Munroe).

Here Mrs Munroe has demonstrated care to her students while simultaneously maintaining and demanding academic pace and focus (Bondy et al. 2012). Without this comment by Mrs Munroe, the negative behaviour between the two students would likely have continued and have disrupted the lesson. Mrs Munroe however, is not just simply dismissing or ignoring the problem but gives the affected student a way forward by encouraging her to come to her and the other MHS team members. Additionally, by addressing the issue explicitly Mrs Munroe is assuring the student that teachers are aware of the issue, that the teasing is not acceptable behaviour and, as a team teachers are working towards its resolution. In this way Mrs Munroe strikes a balance between caring for the student and needing to move the lesson forward; and thereby demanding both academic and behavioural expectations be met.

Within the framework of caring demandedness, power struggles and any overt assertion of power over the students, is mitigated through negotiation and shared purpose. Delpit (1995) refers to this teaching approach as authoritative with teachers exhibiting personal power, earning respect rather than demanding it, setting standards and pushing students

to meet them, and believing all students can learn. As such, any respect given to the teacher is earned rather than simply expected because of the teacher's status. This is well illustrated by Mr Scott who spoke of the "relationship cred." That he needs to establish with students at the school:

> Because I'm both a teacher and the one who does the disciplining I need to build 'relationship cred.' with students. I do this during Yard Duty time; wandering around talking with students. If it's a new student I will talk to them about having taught their sister, or that I've been out to their community. That's crucial in my dual roles. (Mr Scott).

The term relationship cred. used here by Mr Scott illustrates his knowledge of the significant role caring relationships have with students. Caring relationships are not just a sentimentalist approach to teaching (Kleinfeld 1975) but also fulfil the role of establishing a grounds for toughness when required. Mr Scott realises that to fulfil his two roles successfully—teacher and disciplinarian—he needs to first have an established relationship based on connection and mutual respect. Mr Scott is keenly aware that respect is earned through his actions and words and not just simply acquired due to his status as a teacher. So, when Mr Scott needs to fulfil the role of Deputy Principal and implement sanctions for unacceptable behaviour, his relationship cred enables him to become the teacher in the classroom without the student holding a grudge that would disrupt learning for the student. Students have an explicit understanding of Mr Scott's two roles as well as knowing that he cares for them and their success through his efforts to get to know them. In this way, Mr Scott is seeking a balance between 'relationship strategies' and 'management strategies' (Bondy et al. 2012) with care and respect of the student placed at the centre of action.

Furthermore, rules and procedures play a major role in creating a predictable and safe learning environment. Students are made explicitly aware of the positive and negative consequences of adhering to, and the violation of, teacher and school behavioural expectations. At the core of established rules and procedures is the nurturing of teacher–student and student–student respect. In the Pitjantjatjara language *Kunpu ninpiringkunpjaku* refers to strong learning ensuring everyone is on the same page in regard to learning, behaviour, respect and treatment of others. In other words, in the learning space of participating teachers at both schools, educational success is expected of all students which at times involves teachers being compassionate disciplinarians to ensure respect between teachers and students and, between students and students is

upheld (Delpit 1995; Ware 2006). In the classrooms of culturally responsive pedagogues, students realise that the teachers are the clear authority, and the teachers push students to succeed because they want students to succeed and know that they can (Adkins-Coleman 2010). While these teachers may appear to be mean to some, they assert their authority without anger or malice (Ware 2006), at times employing culturally informed humour or creative nagging. Marginalised or minoritised students acknowledge that caring teachers not only build robust relationships with them, but also assertively insist on high behavioural expectations that include completing all assignments, actively participating in the class, working hard, and treating others and themselves with respect (Ware 2006).

Additionally, writing of Indigenous peoples of North America and Australia, Osborne (1996) contends that culturally responsive pedagogues have a tendency to avoid using direct, overt management strategies in their classrooms and instead use indirect, private forms of control. By way of an example, Mr Scott when seeking the attention of his students, who are distracted with their iPads, stated: “So everyone should have [pause]; Can you just put the iPads down. Make sure the screen is locked so we’re not distracted” (Mr Scott). Here the focus is placed on the iPads of all students present and not just the few that have continued to use their iPads. Additionally, Mr Scott uses the words “so *we* are not distracted” as opposed to “so you are not distracted”. It is a subtle change that conveys the message that we are in this together, we all need to focus rather than the students are doing the wrong thing and need to comply and behave and exemplifies well the concept of proactive behaviour management.

Likewise, in his bid to have students turn off their mobile phones while working, Mr Banks takes out his own mobile phone, holds it up for all to see and switches it off. It is then placed on his desk. Mr Banks will then stand quietly as each student brings out their mobile phone to be switched off. If a student does not participate he simply looks in their direction with a questioning raising of the hand or move of the head. No one student is singled out, no action is demanded and, if a student does not comply they are approached individually later in the lesson and are encouraged to switch off their phone for the sake of everyone in attendance.

According to scholarship on CRP, teachers are encouraged to scan the classroom, to use antecedent behaviour management strategies such as effective body language, making

eye contact, using physical proximity, displaying confident demeanour and assertiveness (Brown DF 2003). Similarly, writing of Torres Strait Islander students, Osborne (1996, p. 15) contends that there are five primary strategies: 1) using group work; 2) controlling indirectly rather than confrontationally; 3) avoiding "spotlighting,"; 4) using an unhurried pace; and, 5) using the home participation structures of the students. Such proactive approaches to classroom management are far more successful than relying on authoritarian strategies (e.g. "because I said so" or expulsion from the learning space). Each of these approaches to classroom management were repeatedly witnessed in participating teacher classrooms.

At times though, participating teachers are annoyed and frustrated with student behaviour. Yet a tone of anger or frustration was almost never heard in the classrooms of my teachers. Nor can I recall hearing a raised voice in the classroom as I have witnessed in other teaching spaces beyond my research investigation. In fact, the pervasive tone in each classroom was one of respect and care for each other. As Hall and Hall (2003) assert, a successful management system is grounded in gentle intervention that is respectful of student dignity and therefore "interrupts" misbehaviour. In contrast, they noted, anger escalates inappropriate behaviour.

Returning to my interview with Mrs Knight, she stated: "the tone you talk to students in, is the beginning of getting them to work and want to work because then they want to please you." (Mrs Knight). She went on to add:

> [Y]our approach should always be to build strong relationships, to try and stay calm because often these students come with a whole range of issues, and be understanding rather than judgmental; and always try and stay calm with students who come back at you angry because they are often role modelled that anger is the way you deal with something, the more you can stay calm the better. (Mrs Knight)

Participating teachers demonstrated in their different approaches to Aboriginal student behaviour management, the concept of teachers who care with awareness (Bartell 2011). That is, participating teachers possess knowledge and understanding that enables the forming of caring relationships that in turn promotes respectful behaviour within the learning space. Teachers who have a personal understanding that they can bring about change, and are responsible for bringing about change in terms of interaction patterns in classrooms, are likely to have much more success than those whose aim is compliance or assimilation of students into the dominant culture (Lewthwaite & McMillan 2010). In

the classrooms of participating teachers, power is shared and rules and procedures are made explicit. A predictable and navigable learning environment is therefore established, and in the main students are respectful of the authority that teachers bring to the learning space.

6.6 In Closing

This chapter begins to discuss the third overarching dimension of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, *pedagogical.* More specifically, the focus is on the teaching characteristic of caring. There is extensive evidence in the investigation that participating teachers are achieving educational success with Aboriginal students by using a culturally privileged, caring-demander pedagogical approach. More specifically, in the beginning of this chapter the research illustrates that warm/caring and demander/insistence were dominant participating teacher characteristics with the term 'caring-demander' being the preferred term for the research. Caring is purported to be the foundational principle and action for Aboriginal educational student success. Participating teachers demonstrate caring through establishing robust relationships with their students so that students and teachers know something about each other; and teachers learn to understand the family/community relationships—teachers care with awareness." Fundamental to teacher caring is the concept of an Aboriginal ethic of care with participating teachers becoming classified kin within the Aboriginal extended family structure. Additionally, use of humour that is not negative but may be directed at the teacher, by the teacher, or used in a collective sense, and not directed to an individual helped to develop student-teacher relationships and facilitated student learning. Creative nagging is another key teacher action. Moreover, "Caring for Student 'Basics" was discussed to demonstrate that caring beyond the classroom is not an act of charity but rather an act of social justice. Finally, "Proactive Behaviour Management" demonstrates how teachers are able to address both school 'rules' and expectations and individual student circumstances, which is dependent upon a good teacher-student relationship Overall, such pedagogies are substantively different from the pedagogical approaches described and prescribed in the good, effective or quality teaching research that currently dominates the Australian educational landscape and as such have the potential to speak to improving Aboriginal educational outcomes as a wicked problem.

Though the research found that establishing caring relationships is non-negotiable for successful teaching of Aboriginal students, caring alone was revealed as not being enough. The next chapter moves in to the second component of the pedagogical dimension of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, referred to as demander.

CHAPTER 7 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGIES OF SUCCESS, *DEMANDER'*

7.1 Introduction

In this final data chapter, the focus is on the second teacher characteristic of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, the 'demander', which is intimately connected to the first teacher characteristic of 'caring' introduced in Chapter 6. This chapter continues to answer the first research question: *How is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) evident in the pedagogical understandings and practices of six high school teachers in metropolitan Adelaide who are achieving educational success with their Aboriginal students?* This chapter is not so much a description of the characteristic of 'demander', but rather an exploration of its implementation and significance in achieving educational success for Aboriginal high school students. The focus then is the three identified purposes of CRPS.

According to the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, pp. 3–4), CRP consists of three key purposes: students must experience success; students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and students must develop a critical cultural consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the existing order. These three principles closely align with the three purposes of Aboriginal student success provided by Aboriginal Elder and School Mentor Uncle Pedro: "They [Aboriginal students] got their education; stayed as an Aboriginal person; and, represented the Aboriginal people of Australia" (Uncle Pedro). In this chapter, these intersecting purposes of education provide the framework for discussing how participating teachers demand educational success for Aboriginal students and their motivations for doing so.

7.2 Students Must Experience Success—"They Got Their Education"

Without clarity on what 'educational success' means for Aboriginal high school students, the pedagogical practices adopted by teachers is likely to be haphazard, and at

times conflicting. Therefore, this section begins with an articulation of participating teachers' understandings of what educational success for Aboriginal students is, so as to provide a context for the following discussion.

Each participating teacher was asked the question: "What does educational success mean for Aboriginal students?" Answers varied widely from the simplistic to the more complex. For example, the most inexperienced teacher, Mrs Sullivan, stated: "When students are intrinsically motivated to complete and achieve tasks" (Mrs Sullivan). In comparison, Numeracy and Literacy teacher Mrs Munroe stated that educational success is when: "Students feel safe to take risks in their learning" which is facilitated by "Fostering relationships" (Mrs Munroe).

By contrast, more experienced participating teachers offered more complex definitions of Aboriginal educational success. For instance, Mr Scott contended:

> Students make good improvement [in] their academic/social skills and personal wellbeing in order to give them the best chance of reaching their potential and having a successful work/family life beyond school. (Mr Scott)

Similarly, my most experienced teacher Mrs Knight, offered the following definition of student success: "The student has the ability and skills to function fully in society, the ability to pursue a career of choice and be a person who has empathy and simply enjoys life. A well –adjusted, resilient student who can read and write well and has the love of learning and reading!" (Mrs Knight)

For Mr Banks, the answer provided is quite complex:

> Success overall to me is about achieving and/or exceeding the goals that YOU (the student) set for yourself within the educational context; not just good grades or university, nor doing what a parent or teacher says you are good at/should do. Choosing your own educational path, setting goals, and achieving as much of these goals as possible is how I define success. (Mr Banks)

For my only Aboriginal teacher, Mr James, Aboriginal educational success is stated adamantly as being:

> Beyond the institutional expectations laid down by the government... The development and growth of confidence, independence, resourcefulness and a certain determination toward lifelong learning and personal achievement, however that individual chooses to define this for themselves (and the ability to make that definition). (Mr James)

The theme of having students choose and define their own success dominated participating teacher responses. Illustrating this point, Mr James expanded upon his definition of Aboriginal educational success during his first interview storying session which I quote here in full:

> Success is really up to them to define it for themselves. But I would hope that as teachers we've helped them [to] be able to create a definition of success that they can cultivate beyond school. Because, you know, we can say 'well we want to create the first Anangu doctors or nurses, lawyers or whatever' that's just us pushing our own thing. It's really up to the kids, they might want to create a family as soon as possible; that might be successful, creating a new generation, an ongoing generation or whatever doing whatever; that's not for me to say. I would just hope that whatever, however they choose to define their future success that they do it in a healthy way, themselves? And in a way that they can reflect on and be proud. (Mr James)

Embedded in participating teachers' articulations of Aboriginal student educational success is a rejection of the dominant and persistent narratives of deficit and failure. Having high expectations for student success is, however, more than a belief held by participating teachers. They recognise that Aboriginal students frequently understand 'themselves at school as 'the underdog' and 'not as good as everyone else' as a result of how they are positioned as a people in history (and sometimes in their current context)' (Perso & Hayward 2015 p. 146). Through culturally responsive caring relationships (discussed in section 6.2) participating teachers position their students as both educable and teachable. However, as found by Kleinfeld (1975) that while the first and most important characteristic of successful teaching is the ability to create a climate of emotional warmth that dissipates students' fears in the classroom, emotional warmth on its own is not enough to attain success; educational success also involves teachers possessing high expectations of students and demanding success.

Being a *'demander'* means teaching with authority. But this authority is not automatically bestowed because of the teacher's position. Instead, such authority is earned through caring relationships that develop trust and respect (Bondy & Ross 2008; Irvine & Fraser 1998). Thus, when students know that teachers care about them personally, and are concerned about their academic progress, they are more willing to learn (Burns, Keyes & Kusimo 2005). As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers believed that all students can succeed. For some, this notion that all students can succeed may seem pedestrian and insignificant. However, as Bishop et al. (2003) contend, success for Indigenous students is typically defined by the dominant

culture in accordance with the majoritarian story. For participating teachers, however, educational success is about choice, and about taking risks, it is about a counterstory of successful Aboriginal education.

The following section discusses the complex pedagogical practices that participating teachers employ in their aim of achieving educational success for Aboriginal students.

7.2.1 Safety and resilience in the learning space

Participating teachers spoke persuasively about the need for students to have a "safe learning space" (Mr Scott). They are keenly aware that for many Aboriginal students, learning can be a high-risk enterprise. In which case, student safety and resilience are paramount. One explanation of this situation was provided by Mr Scott:

> Well there is that sort of cultural thing; they [the students] don't want to get things wrong and you'll see them [other teachers] just getting the kids writing because the kids, they're worried if it's going to be neat or spell the words right; things like that and they'll write and they'll rub it out and they'll write and rub it out and rip it out and scrunch it up and just getting them comfortable with giving it a go and not worrying about it being wrong? I think that's definitely an issue for our kids is that they don't want to stick out, they don't want to be put on the spot. (Mr Scott)

Another explanation of why learning is a high-risk enterprise for many Aboriginal students was offered by SAASTA teacher Mr Banks:

> We tell them that we know they have a brain and they need to use it. For most of our kids they're not used to hearing that. It's a lot easier when people think you're dumb because then they leave you alone. No chance of stuffing up. (Mr Banks)

Understanding that educational success for many of their students is fraught with a range of perceived risks, participating teachers respond with a diversity of pedagogical strategies.

To begin with, it is understood by participating teachers that students are more likely to succeed in a learning space that is understood and experienced as 'safe' by students. Safety through predictability was identified as being of particular significance for Aboriginal students and was highly evident in the classroom culture of participating teacher classrooms.

Predictability is one of the key principles promoted in *The Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma* (SMART) program (Australian Childhood Foundation 2013) utilised by teachers at MHS. Mr Scott explains: "so you've got 'Predictable' that helps

kids to be able to focus more on what you want them to focus on rather than what's going on, rather than the routine changing." Mr Scott went on to explain:

> We know we have to be very, very explicit in terms of literacy, and very explicit in terms of routines and getting them [students] used to how you want them to work in a particular way, the stuff about the familiarity, the predictability, and also talk about accelerated literacy, a lot of that is about routine and then it's like the kids know the routine so they can focus on what you actually want them to learn rather than 'Ah, what's the new rules about how we're going to do this?' (Mr Scott)

One way that teachers explicitly established predictability was through the establishment of classroom routine. As such, participating teachers provided a lesson plan at the start of each lesson, which was both written on the whiteboard for all to see and, once seated, the students were taken through the plan step-by-step. For example, in Mr James' Year 8 Futures/Information Technology class on Cyber Safety, the following was a typical and standardised occurrence at the start of each lesson:

> Mr James: OK guys, have a look up here please. This is the plan for today. So we started to look at personal information and what that is; we're gonna talk about the rules and they're really simple. Three simple rules that are going to keep you safe if you choose to go online. Any questions so far? (Pauses and looks at each student).
>
> Students: No.
>
> Mr James: No?

Likewise, Mr Scott wrote on the whiteboard a plan for each of his lessons and goes through it step-by-step with his students. By way of example, the following took place in Mr Scott's Year 9 Maths class:

> I'm just writing up here (whiteboard) what I want to do today. I'm not sure how far we'll get through it; so just while we're waiting for everyone to come I'm just getting everyone to do this times 5 practice sheet. (Mr Scott)

Mr Scott went on to explain the practice sheet and its purpose. Mr Scott then moved point by point through the lesson plan he had placed on the whiteboard, watching students' responses for understanding as he progressed through the list.

The aim of the routinised classroom, however, is not student compliance or unilinear learning (Lusted 1986). Nor do teachers employ the 'banking education' pedagogical strategy described by Friere (1970). Rather, participating teachers speak of the significant impact that predictability has upon students' readiness and willingness to learn. By providing a lesson plan, participating teachers establish a sense of safety which enables students to more fully participate, to ask questions, safe to make a

mistake, and safe "to give it a go" (Mr Scott). Participating teachers use lesson structure, to improve the chances of student educational success. This strategy has been highlighted in research into middle schooling, that argues that "goal oriented teaching where students are clear about the goals of instruction is one of the key characteristics for fostering high student engagement" (Commonwealth of Australia 2003, p. 39). Moreover, "There is less time spent on classroom management and more time spent on the business of learning" (Mr Scott).

Additionally, the provision of a lesson plan conveys to students a message of high expectations. Mr James noted:

> By putting the plan up and going through it with the kids, I'm telling them not only what I expect to get through today with them but I'm also telling them that they can do it. Why else would it be up? (Mr James).

Consequently, the lesson plans of participating teachers are woven into the cultural fabric of the learning space. It serves not only to prepare students for the lesson but sends a message to students that they are capable learners and as capable learners, students are encouraged to contribute to the plan by making suggestions which are negotiated with teachers.

Overall, a predictable learning space enables students to contribute, that they can ask questions without fear of being laughed at or ignored, and they can get down to the business of learning (Ladson-Billings 1994). By way of an example, Mrs Knight explained: "I create a classroom where asking questions and being wrong isn't a negative, it's a pathway to learning, it's a step to learning". (Mrs Knight). Mrs Knight went on to explain that: "If I get something wrong I'm the first to admit and say 'I don't know that, I must go and find that out'" (Mrs Knight).

The act of risk-taking in a safe learning space is further illustrated in Mr James' Year 8 Geography class on the subject of continents:

> Mr James: Now, what's special about Africa when it comes to the different kinds of languages spoken. There's a word we talked about. They spoke many different languages and the most of any continent. [Silence] Do you remember this one [writing on the whiteboard and sounding out] multiligual.
>
> Male student: Ligual?
>
> Mr James: You know what?

> Male student: Got ‘n’ missing.
>
> Mr James: Very good. I just realised too but you got there quick. I’m missing an ‘n’ aren’t I? I’ve got ‘multiligual’! More than one language. Many languages. The most in the world. So many African languages. Now we also found the geographic centre, the middle of Africa which was where?

Two elements are significant in this teacher–student interaction. Firstly, the student was engaged in the lesson and knows how to spell; and secondly, the student was confident enough in the learning space to take the risk of correcting his teacher. Additionally, Mr James congratulates his student—“very good”—reinforcing that being corrected is the right learning procedure. Mr James’ pedagogical actions demonstrated to his students that mistakes happen, there are no negative consequences and, once corrected the lesson continues. Being able to model risk-taking can have a powerful impact on students’ willingness and ability to engage with the learning experiences in the classroom (Byrne & Munns 2012).

The value and use of persistency alongside risk-taking is further illustrated in the classroom of Mrs Munroe. In her Year 8 Maths class, students are working towards being academically and socially ready to transfer into the mainstream school. The topic for the lesson is working in groups of 10. I observe:

> Students are encouraged to use a combination of methods to work out Maths problems. for example, write the number down on the piece of paper supplied and then put down ten lines/strokes next to it then count from the number through the strokes to the answer (e.g. 210 + lllllllll =?); or they count on fingers; or they count out loud from the whole number on the Maths problem to reach the correct number. (Field notes: 17 February, 2015)

After observing Mrs Munroe for a further 20 minutes I wrote:

> The tone of Mrs Munroe is caring; there is no sign of frustration; if one method doesn’t work then another strategy is tried; keeping students on track can be challenging but Mrs Munroe is practiced at this; when answers are given correctly this is praised; when students don’t answer they are encouraged; students are expected to be able to do the task at hand with an understanding that this task could be challenging. (Field notes: 17 February, 2015)

Mrs Munroe was able to teach students that mathematics has conventions through which ideas can be communicated readily but is also flexible in how it is approached (Matthews 2012, p. 118). Her class of students were a mixed-ability group but it was evident that no student felt that they were incapable or underperforming. Maths problems were worked through orally (e.g. Mrs Munroe: 90 is 10 more than 80, yes,

good); the language of symbols (Matthews 2012) were taught explicitly (e.g. Mrs Munroe: OK, you have a look at that because I don't think you are looking at the symbol. It's taking away? So you're working backwards aren't you? 50 take away 10); the flexibility of Maths was taught by emphasising that there are a multiplicity of ways of working through a Maths problem (e.g. Mrs Munroe: So, the easiest way to do this one?); Mrs Munroe demonstrated clearly that Maths problems can be worked through with the use of fingers, pencil and paper, in the head or whatever means work to successfully resolve the problem.

Mrs Munroe demonstrated that mathematics is more than the conventional content areas of, for example, fractions and decimals, algebra or calculus. As Howard and Perry (2011, p. 135)note, while these content areas are important in Aboriginal students' learning, there is more to mathematics than mere content. Howard and Perry (2011, p. 135) continue:

> The notion of 'working mathematically', or considering the processes of mathematics, is of critical importance to enabling Aboriginal children to become powerful mathematicians because these are the processes that allow them to make sense of the mathematics content in their particular context.

Teaching Aboriginal students to work mathematically enables Aboriginal students to make sense of mathematics, and see how it is relevant to their lives. Additionally, Mrs Munroe's pedagogical approach challenges the normalised narrative that mathematics is for those who are affiliated with the majoritarian culture which serves to exclude students who belong to marginalised or minoritised cultures (Bishop AJ 1988). Instead, Mrs Munroe, as a numeracy teacher with students of varying abilities and varying ways of understanding and operating mathematical processes, was enabling students to become powerful mathematicians. Mrs Munroe skilfully scaffolded the students' learning, first determining what the students are capable of doing independently and subsequently, designs learning experiences in small steps so that the students achieved success with support, eventually being able to do everything on their own (Perso & Hayward 2015).

Moreover, students are expected to learn with Mrs Munroe holding high expectations, and insisting that work be completed. In this way, Mrs Munroe is challenging and rejecting the destructive majoritarian story that Aboriginal students are incapable of mathematical success. Through her caring-demander stance, Mrs Munroe begins to unpack the invisible knapsack of mathematics education privilege (McIntosh 2011).

That is, students who have historically been underserved by the educational system are not expected to succeed in subject areas such as Maths. By contrast, students who belong to the dominant, 'white' middle-class—have the necessary but unseen backpack of unearned assets that expect them to succeed mathematically (McIntosh 2011, p. 121). Mrs Munroe 'packs' her students invisible backpacks, ensuring that students know they are capable of Maths once they have acquired the necessary knowledge, ideas and conventions that is the language of Maths (Howard & Perry 2011, p. 139). Mrs Munroe, through her pedagogical strategies, is contributing to a counterstory of Aboriginal students being powerful mathematicians.

A further significant element for success of Aboriginal students in the mathematics classroom, "is feeling valued and respected in the mathematics that they do, and this respect is much more forthcoming if people know each other, know what each other is interested in" (Perry 2007, p. 285). Mrs Munroe clearly knows her students, their individual abilities and their personal challenges. She constantly circulated around the classroom going from student to student to ensure that they were completing their work. When Mrs Munroe is sure a student has the mechanics of solving the problem, she moved on to another student in need but kept checking back for certain that indeed the student was accomplishing the task. Mrs Munroe was unhurried, assertive, praising and encouraging; conveying the message that she believed in their abilities and students worked hard to ensure her belief is realised. On the occasions when students go off track from the lesson, Mrs Munroe pushed her students to get on with the task and not, for example, wander around the classroom looking for scissors or tissues as was the recurring theme of one lesson. Learning is a process of trial and error, where the teacher–student relationship assisted students to cope with the disappointments that comes from trying and not quite succeeding.

7.2.2 Repeated opportunities for learning

In addition to predictability in creating a safe learning space, participating teachers understood the importance of providing students with repeated opportunities for learning as well as the time necessary for students to acquire the knowledge and skill needed for mastery of the task at hand (Gay 2000, p. 32). When students struggled with work, participating teachers provided initial support to alleviate possible anxiety, fear or frustration, instead increasing student confidence to "give it a go" (Mr Scott). In

addition to routinised classrooms, lowering the risk associated with learning was achieved by strengthening students' morale, providing resources and personal assistance, developing an ethos of achievement, and celebrating individual and collective accomplishments (Gay 2002, p. 32). By way of an example, in Mr James' Year 8 Humanities class I observed in my field notes:

> Mr James is constantly on the move between students checking on their work and on the student themselves; a student is praised for contributing and helping their classmates; other students who have not contributed greatly to the lesson are informed that he would appreciate their input; as students finish their assigned lesson summaries they are praised and their name is noted on the whiteboard; Mr James pulls one student up on their poor behaviour but Mr James assures them that they can do better and get their name up on the whiteboard with the other students if they get the work done. (Field Notes: 24 Feb. 2015).

Additionally, with 10 minutes left in the lesson, I heard Mr James utilise creative nagging discussed in Chapter 6. He state: "Who's going to be the next to finish? I'm going to predict... (he looks around the classroom, making eye contact with each student)" (Mr James). As students would get to leave for recess in order of their name appearing on the list, students were motivated and hurried up with the completing of their assigned task.

Moreover, Mr James was aware of his students various abilities and while most students were progressing well through the set task, Mr James noted: "Try and get it finished but if you don't, don't worry, there will be some time next lesson" (Mr James). The emphasis was on the task being completed, not on the students' ability or inability to finish in the current lesson. The aim was to work and try hard, to focus, with students being expected to complete the set task, be it now or in the next lesson.

Finally, embedded in the pedagogical practices of participating teachers, was persistency. If one instructional method does not work for the student, then another was attempted. However, Mr Scott did acknowledge that this approach to learning does take time:

> Like in Maths I might try doing something a different way. The first time might be a complete disaster and you could just say 'ah, I'll never ever do that again' but it does take the kids, I find that the more practise they have just in the routine of what they are actually doing the easier it gets. (Mr Scott)

In other words, through teacher persistency, students were able to move from a learning space defined by confusion and resistance to one that fore grounded gaining new

knowledge and skills. In a casual conversation after class one morning, Mr Scott used the following metaphor to explain the concept of persistency:

> Teaching is like going down a wombat[17] hole and trying to drag out the wombat—sometimes backwards—an apparently impossible task but you keep at it. You know the kids can do it; you just need to get down in the tunnel with them. (Mr Scott)

Mr Scott went on to explain that persistency enables students to "get more familiar" (with the task) and having to think less about "how do we do this?" and they can think more about "what is it they're actually learning" (Mr Scott).

In the classrooms of participating teachers, culturally responsive caring-demander (Kleinfeld 1974) strategies were used to establish a supportive environment that bolsters student resilience and achievement (Bondy et al. 2007). By understanding the significance of lowering student risk through predictability, structure, routine, and ample opportunities to master the subject material, Mr James—as with all participating teachers—were creating enabling opportunities in their classrooms (Hayes, Johnston & King 2009).

Student safety in the learning space, developed through participating teacher culturally responsive pedagogical practices, is fundamental to the development of student resilience which in turn is fundamental to overall educational success. In early research on resilience, efforts were aimed at defining the traits of resilient children (Bempechat 1998). Researchers found, however, that resilience is not the result of innate abilities but rather a capacity available to all children that is strengthen by supportive factors (Benard 2004). In an extensive review of the literature on resilience, Benard (2004) identified four categories of overlapping strengths in children who overcome adversity: social competence, problem-solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose. Social competence entails children's strengths in communication, empathy and caring, as well as the capacity to positively connect with others. Problem-solving includes many skills connected to academic success: planning, resourcefulness, and flexibility in thinking, critical thinking skills, learning how to learn skills (Bernard 2004). Strength in the category of autonomy involves development of a positive identity including cultural identity, internal locus of control, and a belief in one's capacity to succeed.

[17] Wombats are short-legged, muscular quadrupedal marsupials that are native to Australia. They are about 1 m in length with small, stubby tails.

Significantly, Bempechat (1998) found that students' belief in their capacity to succeed is a stronger predictor of success in school than IQ or test scores. Finally, a sense of a bright future encompasses the development of achievement motivation, educational aspirations, and optimism and hope about one's life.

Illustrating the complexity of student resilience, Mr Scott noted: "Our kids are amazingly resilient in some situations in terms of their home life and things like that; and they are incredibly not resilient when it comes to some other things". Mr Scott continues:

> Well there is that sort of cultural thing, they don't want to get things wrong. just getting them comfortable with giving it a go and not worrying about it being wrong? Because that's quite, I mean, I think that's definitely an issue for our kids; is that they don't want to stick out, they don't want to sort of be put on the spot. (Mr Scott)

Here, Mr Scott eloquently highlights that students' safety—that is, "comfortable with giving it a go"—is fundamental to student resilience —that is, "not worrying about it being wrong". As noted in the literature on resilience, problem-solving in resilient children includes resourcefulness and learning how to learn skills. Mr Scott's pedagogical practice assisted his students to develop a positive identity that includes an understanding that students have the capacity to learn and succeed educationally.

Like Mr Scott, participating teachers explicitly work towards building the resilience of their Aboriginal students. They did this in a variety of ways, including: familiarising students with getting things wrong; expecting participation in learning; and, demonstrating that students have the ability, capacity and right to learn and gain knowledge (Adkins-Coleman 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994). In other words, as culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers were committed to counterpedagogies of success rather than a majoritarian pedagogy of deficit and failure. However, success is severely impeded if, for example, students are not engaged in learning. The next section discusses how participating teachers recruited student interest so that they are engaged in the learning space.

7.2.3 Recruiting student interest

Student engagement, participation, and interaction, and a language of possibility (Phuntsog 1998) is highly dependent upon students being interested in the subject. Participating teachers actively worked towards creating a learning space that engaged

students in learning. Burns, Keyes and Kusimo (2005, p. 35) refer to this process as recruiting student interest in the task. This is achieved by: building on prior knowledge and experience; connecting the lesson to students' lives; or having students tell or write stories about their experience with the topic (Burns, Keyes & Kusimo 2005 p. 35). They go on to argue that by recruiting student interest in the subject and the subsequent tasks to be undertaken, students become motivated and engaged in the lesson.

Recruiting student interest through a diversity of strategies is evident in the classrooms of participating teachers. For example, Mr James was teaching the topic of continents in Year 8 Geography. Over the previous two lessons Mr James had taken students through a task illustrating to students how to profile the continent of Africa. At varying points Mr James asked students to draw on their prior knowledge and lived experiences, by asking students how such geographic details compare with Australia (e.g. rivers, deserts, mountains and cities). After scaffolding the expected learning outcome with the whole class, it was the students' turn to create their own continent profile as they had now completed a "practice one" (Mr James) which would continue to be displayed on the whiteboard as students undertook the task. Students' interest in the task was recruited by asking each student to select their preferred continent:

> Mr James: Over here guys I've got everyone's names (5). How many continents are there?
>
> Students: Seven
>
> Mr James: There's seven. We've looked at one together, that leaves six continents. You each are going to choose a continent—that isn't Africa—to write a profile on. OK? Then we're going to turn that profile into a poster that we can put at the back (of the classroom) because the back is looking a bit bland and empty, alright?
>
> [Students nod]
>
> Mr James: [lists student names] Forget about Africa. What continents are left?
>
> [Students call out names and are thanked for their contributions.]
>
> Mr James: So I want you to take a second; I want you to choose a continent to do a profile on; once you choose it's yours and no-one else can do it.
>
> [Two students choose Europe and South America respectively quite quickly. Others are a bit slower in choosing. Within 3 minutes however, there is one student left who has a choice of Antarctica or Asia.]
>
> Mr James: [looking at the student] That leaves Antarctica or Asia
>
> Male Student: Asia

Mr James: Asia. Yeah? You won't be disappointed.

In Mr James' class the students knew explicitly what the task was, how it was to be completed and what would happen with it once finished. They had taken control of the task by selecting their own continent according to their own personal interest. The energy was high and students were excited as they got on with creating their individual continent profiles. As some students found information (e.g. number of countries in Europe) it was shared with the teacher and class. I thought to myself, "It's a bit like a treasure hunt" (Field notes, 17 February, 2015). If a student was stuck assistance was readily sort from Mr James. When the bell rang for the next lesson there were groans of complaint as students wanted to keep working. They were assured by Mr James that continent profiling would continue tomorrow.

A similar method of recruiting student interest was used by Mr Scott in his Year 10 Science class that was studying Animal Classifications. Students were given the choice by Mr Scott of working individually or in pairs; after a bit of chatting in student Australian languages[18] (a theme I will return to) students moved into pairs with minimal input from Mr Scott. The task involved each pair completing a report on one animal classification (a task which has been explicitly scaffolded by Mr Scott) both today and in recent lessons):

> So we've got five groups and six things to find out. I will assign, has anyone got one they want to do? One of these each. So does anyone have one they want to find out on this list? (Mr Scott)

As can be seen in the following extract, students enthusiastically selected their choice:

Mr Scott: [pointing] You doing birds?

[Student: nods]

Female Student: Mammal?

Female Student: Marsupial?

Mr Scott: Yes. Marsupial.

Mr Scott: Reptile here [pointing to a raised hand].

Mr Scott: Two choices left fellahs, amphibian or arthropod?

[18] The term 'Australian languages' refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages of Australia, the original languages of the country. This is not to diminish the importance of the other languages, including English, which are now languages of Australia brought to the country by colonisers and immigrants from other countries (Troy 2012, p.136).

Male Student: Um, arthropod.

Mr Scott: Arthropod? So I'll do amphibian.

The process of selection was complete within two minutes. Students were busy working to complete the assigned task. There was a great deal of chatter in Australian language. This enthusiasm has been hard earned by Mr Scott from some students. One possible reason for such resistance to the subject is provided by McKinley (2000) who argues that the science curricula has a tendency of focusing on western science, thereby ignoring and excluding Indigenous epistemologies and aspirations. As proposed by Ezeife (2003), science instruction often fails to give priority to harmonising the science being learned with students' life-world culture, including their first language and culturally appropriate learning strategies. McKinley (2000) argues that mandated science curricula are largely expressions of the dominant culture, and that the intentions of these curricula are not adequately grounded in the priorities of and ways of knowing, being and doing of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, in the United States, Brayboy and Castagno (2008) found that many Indigenous youth avoid undertaking science education, because of the learning challenges and specialised language involved.

In Mr Scott's classroom, traditional scientific curricula was being challenged with student lifeworlds being included in the learning space. Students were required to : 1) provide an example from their selected classification with this chosen animal being found in the desert where student home communities are located; 2) provide the scientific and Pitjantjatjara words for the selected animal using online dictionaries; 3) attend a class excursion to a local conservation park that enabled students to apply their newly acquired knowledge; and, 4) think about how these skills and knowledge would be useful if they were interested in working in land management, possibly in their own communities.

By grounding his teaching in what students were familiar with—actualities rather than abstractions (Lewthwaite & McMillan 2010, p. 9)—Mr Scott was able to increase the opportunities for students to participate and have academic success. The strategies employed by Mr Scott were a demonstration of pedagogy that harmonises the science being learned with students' life-world culture and experience. As a result, most students are motivated to participate fully in the lesson. For those students whose interest hasn't been captured and therefore the work is not being completed, Mr Scott

sits with these students, working through each element of the worksheet, step-by-step. I note in my research journal:

> The bell is gone for recess. Two students have not completed the set task. While Mr Scott sounds frustrated and disappointed, he does not let the students leave. Instead, he sits with each student and works through each element. On completion I hear the student say, 'Ah, is that all?' Mr Scott responds with, 'See, it wasn't that hard was it? I knew you could do it.' (Field Notes: 24 February, 2015).

As illustrated here, Mr Scott expected students to succeed and he works hard to accomplish this outcome. Therefore, a high expectation for student learning means that Mr Scott does not allow students to fail the task. Instead, successful completion is demanded of all students and time was taken to accomplish this outcome. In other words, Mr Scott was challenging the majoritarian, secretly transmitted message of Aboriginal student failure (Harrison 2007) by pushing his students to be academically successful.

Additionally, when my most experienced teacher, Mrs Knight, was nominated to participate in my research, one Year 12 Aboriginal student stated that they hated Shakespeare until they got into Mrs Knight's English classroom. I asked Mrs Knight how she "brought it (Shakespeare) to life":

> With Shakespeare I would explain to the students that Shakespeare, when he wrote these plays, never meant students to pick the words and analyse them; Shakespeare is about performance; I don't really know why, I just try and engage students whenever I can with the role plays and yes establish that positive [space]. I think it's just listening to the students and doing what they want to do. When they don't understand things, explaining it to them then and there; clarifying further when they need understanding. (Mrs Knight)

In this way, Mrs Knight created a learning space where students know that the topic of Shakespeare can be a struggle for anyone, and that they need to work together to ensure that understanding and substantive learning has taken place. A cornerstone of Mrs Knights' pedagogical approach was to clarify—on the spot—anything that was not being understood. Mrs Knight's awareness of her students' struggles with Shakespeare comes from her three decades of teaching, her extensive knowledge of the topic, her employment of multiple pedagogical strategies (i.e. role plays, contextualisation) and, having extensive knowledge of her students. Furthermore, Mrs Knight actively created a safe learning space where students had the opportunity to learn, are expected to succeed, and are able to seek assistance and clarification when needed. Overall, Mrs Knight's

classroom was a safe learning space where students learnt of their capacity to succeed with a subject area that many students struggle with.

All examples of participating teacher pedagogy provided here are demonstrations of recruiting student interest in the task, as described by Burns, Keyes and Kusimo (2005). Teachers were building on students' funds of knowledge (Molls & Greenberg 1990). They were connecting the lesson to students' "extra lives" by telling students to look for examples of the topic in their own culture and worlds (e.g. animals in the desert where student communities are located; knowledge of deserts and water for learning of geographic landmarks). Explicit scaffolding of the tasks to be undertaken provided "predictability"(Mr Scott) for the course of the lesson and subject which facilitated student engagement and thereby educational success. Additionally, In Mrs Knight's classroom Shakespeare was made accessible to all students by bringing it to life through performance and contextualisation. Overall, students' invisible knapsacks of education privilege (McIntosh 2011) were being filled by participating teachers across subject areas and a counterstory was being revealed.

Furthermore, all participating teachers did more than state what the students were to complete. Instead, they made sure students had heard them and understood what has been said. For example, when teaching poetry, Mrs Munroe stated that, "When discussing stanzas I will also use the word paragraph". Consequently, students were not left mystified as to what a stanza is, but were also having their funds of English knowledge expanded or, their invisible knapsack further filled. In this way, students could fully participate in the poetry lesson at hand as well as draw upon this new knowledge in future lessons.

Taken as a whole, participating teachers used a diversity of strategies so that students stayed engaged. For example, participating teachers created a sense of community learning by each member taking ownership and responsibility for one piece of the overall learning 'puzzle'. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Mr Scott's and Mr James' classrooms, they made full use of student's prior learning and knowledge, language and interest. On the whole, teachers were enacting the characteristic of *demander* through expecting student's to successfully undertake the set task. However, the teachers were not punitive in action or word when getting the work completed. Rather they encouraged students to succeed; student confidence was bolstered by the provision of

numerous opportunities for attempting and successfully completing the assigned task; classroom routines enabled students to focus on the learning; and, ultimately, learning as a high-risk enterprise is mitigated.

Furthermore, throughout lessons observed participating teachers were repeatedly using words or phrases that positively reinforced the student's efforts. I constantly heard comments like: "absolutely", "excellent," "Good thinking," "that's right guys", "and, keep going". Participating teachers also rewarded class effort and behaviour on a regular basis with, for example, free time on the computers, sorbet in the school vegetable garden and, leaving class a little early for lunch. Furthermore, at MHS, individual effort was rewarded with *Student of the Week* at school assembly, thereby reinforcing the message that they are a community of learners and their successes and efforts are being recognised by the staff and by their peers. Overall it was a system of positive reward that was contributing to student participation in the learning process.

It is evident from the above extracts that a central task of participating teachers was to ensure that students knew they could succeed educationally so that students in turn could define their own success. Participating teachers, in demanding educational success of their students, do not however compromise their students' distinct Aboriginal cultural identity in the pursuit of this success. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers drew upon their acquired knowledge of students and their distinct cultural identities, their knowledge of self and, knowledge of practice (see Chapter 5) to engage students in the learning space. Participating teachers therefore do not engage in 'cultural racism', 'racialisation of culture', and 'cultural determinism' (Barker 1981; Cowlishaw & Morris 1997).Instead, culture is a variable that was not overlooked as a function of Aboriginal student success (Ware 2006, p. 428). Student academic achievement was instead partnered and interlocked with student cultural success and competency which is now explored.

7.3 Student Cultural Competence—"stayed As an Aboriginal Person"

Teachers, who focus on developing cultural competence, encourage students to learn to maintain their "cultural integrity" (Ladson-Billings 1995, p. 160). Or, in the words of Uncle Pedro when defining Aboriginal educational success, Aboriginal students "stay as an Aboriginal person". While it is now recognised that students come to school with a

set of beliefs, experiences and values based on their own culture (Lewthwaite et al. 2014), this insight has not always been taken up by educators in ways that productively acknowledge cultural difference. Indeed, many distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing were severely disrupted or forbidden as a result of colonisation. By way of an example, Aboriginal students were taught—up until the 1970s—to disregard their distinctive Aboriginal culture in exchange for a western education (Commonwealth of Australia 1997) (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, for many Aboriginal students, their education continues to be undermined by embedded racially based narratives of failure and deficit. Therefore, it is important that, rather than subscribing to or colluding with the destructive majoritarian stories of 'mainstream' Australia, Aboriginal students are immersed in a school culture that creates a learning space that will explicitly challenge them and enable them to create a counterstory where they think positively about themselves and their Aboriginality (Sarra G et al. 2011). This challenging of Aboriginal students' understanding of what it is to be 'Aboriginal' was undertaken in a variety of ways by participating teachers including: grounding students in their Aboriginal identity, supporting the teaching of values and morals through Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and, teaching and respecting Aboriginal student languages. Each of these components are now explored.

7.3.1 A 'grounding' in Aboriginal culture

Though the specific pedagogical practices of participating teachers may have varied from classroom to classroom, and lesson to lesson, they each expressed that it is important that students are well grounded in their own distinct Aboriginal culture. This grounding is understood by participating teachers to be a prerequisite to becoming versed in what is generally considered to be mainstream culture. Gay (2000, p. 47) writes that CRP "[T]eaches to and through the strengths of these students; it is culturally validating and affirming". It is an approach to teaching and learning where the educational experiences provided for students reflects, validates, and promotes their culture and language (Lewthwaite et al. 2013).

However, many Aboriginal students have bought into the destructive majoritarian story of failure and deficit promoted by mainstream society and therefore there is a need to change the mindset of Aboriginal students about what they can achieve (Sarra G et al. 2011, p. 177). Participating teachers are involved in a continual process that informs

students about their potential, their abilities, and their responsibilities to self and community. Simply put, participating teachers are teaching Aboriginal students that they can do more than conform to the very negative construction of an Aboriginal cultural identity in school held by so many (Sarra G et al. 2011).

One way in which this change of student mindset, and therefore a counterstory of Aboriginal identity, is achieved by participating teachers is by learning from and about their Aboriginal students' distinct culture and language, to make instruction more meaningful and applicable to their students' lives beyond the school gates (Lee, Cosby & deBaca 2007). This knowledge of students (discussed in section 5.3) enables participating teachers to understand that there is no one way of being Aboriginal. For example, Mr Scott explained:

> I guess our kids can be quite different to the mainstream Nunga kids. A lot of [Aboriginal education and programs] are about connecting [Aboriginal students] with culture because a lot of kids don't have, are completely disconnected from [their] culture. Whereas for our kids, they are not, they are, back home they're living in it and you know there's the Men's Business and all that sort of stuff that still goes on so that the connection with culture is not so much of an issue for us. (Mr Scott)

In other words, Aboriginal students' connection to, and practice of, their distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing varies widely. Put simply, Aboriginal peoples are a heterogeneous group, with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and ways of operating within the classroom (Krakouer 2015, p. 3). This is highlighted by Mr Scott above who recognised that the cultural experiences of Aboriginal students from remote communities varies significantly from their metropolitan counterparts.

As described above by Mr Scott, Metropolitan High School (MHS) students are "living their culture" in their respective remote communities. Therefore the task of the school is not to connect their students to their culture; nor is the school's role to disconnect or dispossess students of their Aboriginal culture through its' devaluing, rejection or by ignoring it. The school has two key, identified cultural tasks: 1) up skill students so that they acquire a working knowledge of the mainstream, 'white', dominant culture; and, 2) reinforce and privilege the value of students' own cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. In this way, as the School Principal Mrs Harris explains, the objective of the program at MHS, is to achieve the expressed desire of students' communities—that their children are empowered by their educational experience to be "able to walk in two

worlds" (Mrs Harris), a theme returned to later in this chapter (section 7.4.1). Additionally, Mrs Harris explained that the school's residence, where students stay during their time at school, is a "hub or meeting place" (Mrs Harris) for community members when visiting Adelaide from their remote communities. This 'drop-in' centre enables students to stay in contact with their communities while away at school and thereby maintain their connections with home and culture.

By contrast, in the metropolitan context of Southern High School (SHS), Aboriginal students' practice of culture noticeably differs to that of MHS students. Writing of Wiradjuri peoples of New South Wales, MacDonald (1998) explains that Aboriginal peoples of today have cultural ways of knowing, being and doing, informed by their pre-colonial and post-colonial experiences. So while the violence and turmoil of colonisation has meant that many aspects of pre-colonial cultural practice did not survive, the core principles underpinning distinct Aboriginal culture were successfully retained. Kinship, identification of belonging to the land and moral law are all examples of Aboriginal culture that have been retained and are taught to subsequent generations (MacDonald 1998). So, despite such disruptions to their distinct culture, Aboriginal students at SHS are still practicing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, though modified in response to the impact of dispossessing colonisation. Additionally, Aboriginal students face the conflicts produced by being Aboriginal in a learning space dominated by non-Aboriginal peoples. Gollan and Malin (2012) argue that Aboriginal children and youth develop their understanding of the world through their connections to Country and the values and beliefs of the Country that they are born into. Recognising this situation MHS—frequently initiated and led by the school's Nunga Room—has put into place a number of measures. For example, artworks depicting local Aboriginal significant landmarks and land/seascapes are developed by Aboriginal students in partnership with Aboriginal community members and displayed throughout the school. A further way of connecting and grounding Aboriginal students in their distinct culture is for Aboriginal students to learn about their specific language group and ancestral lines. Participating teachers, with their acquired cultural knowledge, understood that it would be a breach of Aboriginal protocols for them to teach Aboriginal students about the nuances of being Aboriginal. Consequently, Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) (where appropriate) and community leaders are engaged to undertake this cultural work. By way of an example, Uncle Pedro, who describes

himself as a "Mentor" has been running a yarning group for the past four years. Uncle Pedro describes some of the happenings of this yarning group:

> When I talk to the boys I say 'who's your grandfather?' 'who's your great, great-grandfather?' 'who's your Mum?' 'who's your Mum's family?' and they don't know. But then you take 'em out camping and you go and camp with them and light a fire and just sit around yarning around the fire and out come, 'I can tell you who my grandfather is'; but they won't tell you here in school with other students around and so forth. (Uncle Pedro)

Uncle Pedro went on to explain that Aboriginal students need:

> To be PROUD of who they are. A lot of them don't want to recognise their fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers and so forth. I do not know why but my parents and my grandfather done a lot for me and my grandmother she grew me up and helped me. I was the only one that went to my Dad when my Mum died. But all of my other brothers and sisters went (Stolen Generations); there was 14 of us. (Uncle Pedro)

Like many Aboriginal community leaders and Elders I have encountered, Uncle Pedro believes that being "proud of who you are as an Aboriginal person means you really need to know where you've come from, and the fight they've (parents and grandparents) put up and been put through" (Uncle Pedro). Underpinning the mentoring work of Uncle Pedro is the aim to be proud of who they are rather than feel the shame of being an Aboriginal person that dominates the lives of so many Aboriginal peoples as a result of dispossessing colonisation and normalised narratives of racism. This school sponsored program is delivered both within the school grounds and beyond the school gates, 'on Country'. That is, the world in which students live becomes the classroom, with Uncle Pedro becoming their masters, tutors and examiners as was the way of learning before colonisation (Price 2012, p. 4). A testament to the success of the yarning group is when Uncle Pedro encouraged Aboriginal students to bring along their non-Aboriginal school mates to the school sponsored camp and "they were fighting each other for the (available) places!" (Uncle Pedro, chuckling).

At both participating schools, student cultural competence means staying and strengthening as an Aboriginal person. It is about challenging Aboriginal student constructions of being Aboriginal that are often underpinned by normalised racist narratives of being in deficit, being uneducable, and generally just being 'less than' non-Aboriginal counterparts. For participating teachers educational success for Aboriginal students was first and foremost about being grounded in their distinct Aboriginal cultural identities which was understood to be a prerequisite to students becoming

competent in what is generally considered to be mainstream culture. Participating teachers understood that educational and cultural success is a collective responsibility and therefore as classified kin (discussed in section 6.2) they worked in partnership with members of the AET, community leaders, and Elders to ensure that Aboriginal students are grounded in their distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. This collective responsibility for the teaching of Aboriginal values and morals emerged as another significant theme and is discussed in the next section.

7.3.2 The teaching of values and morals

Aboriginal children and youth develop their understanding of the world through their connections to Country and the values and beliefs of the Country that they are born into (Gollan & Malin 2012). Aboriginal language groups throughout Australia have Dreaming stories, with each language group having their own words and stories. The Dreaming describes Aboriginal peoples' origins, and explains the formation of the landscape: The activities of the ancestral creators, or spirit beings, also provide the model for how life is to be lived (Edwards 2005). Despite major events over thousands of years, including climate and environmental changes as well as dispossessing colonisation, this very long tradition of adhering to Dreaming stories continues today for Aboriginal peoples. For example, Dreaming stories are a major way of teaching Aboriginal children and youth about the natural world, the spirit world, right and wrong behaviour, and the laws of society. The stories provide examples of sharing, being honest, showing respect for Elders, good manners and so on.

By way of an example, within the classroom of Aunty Nangala, The Dreaming story of *'Waatj Pulyeri the Blue Wren'* (see Appendix 5) is used to teach a "moral story" (Aunty Nangala). Aunty Nangala continues:

> The moral of *Pulyeri* is to accept your own uniqueness. That individuality is part of your Identity; you have been created uniquely. Comparing yourself to others does damage to your confidence, your success. (Aunty Nangala).

Rather than attempt to shape or indoctrinate the students with a particular set of values, or a particular construction of individual identity, the Dreaming Story served to assist students to examine what they believe and why they believe it. Students are encouraged to tell of their own experiences of comparing themselves with others, and how this has

turned out for them. It is a process of learning, rather than being told what it is you are meant to learn as would be the goal of banking pedagogy described by Friere (1970).

One further example of this teaching of values and morals through Aboriginal Dreaming stories was provided by Mr Banks who regularly invites a local Elder, who I will refer to as Aunty Rose to teach in his SAASTA class with senior Aboriginal students. In telling of the *Tjilbruke* or *Tjirbruki*" (both spellings are recognised) Dreaming Story Aunty Rose aims to teach students how complex and multi-layered the story is; that it tells of creation, the law and lore; and of human relationships. The story comes from an oral tradition so it's telling at any time is to suit the need and appropriateness of the occasion, both who is telling the story and who it is being told to and why (Aunty Rose and Aunty Nangala). This summary provides an outline, more detail may be told and meaning revealed when deemed appropriate by the storyteller:

> Tjilbruke is the creation ancestor of the Kaurna nation of the Adelaide plains. Tjilbruke is the creator of seven freshwater springs that flow along our coastline, a keeper of the fire and a peace maker/law maker (Aunty Rose)

Tjilbruke is a story with many elements, a story woven of many strands. Kaurna people have survived with the springs *Tjilbruke* created since ancient times (see Figure 7.1), and with the fire knowledge that *Tjilbruke* keeps. He tells us the safe way to travel across Country. He tells us about human relationships and relationships with Country, about respecting the life of the birds and animals to which we are related. His story tells us not to take the law into our own hands and teaches us about honouring our obligations to water and Country. He tells us that water is sacred. The role of protecting our Country is core to our survival and intrinsically linked to our obligations as traditional custodians of Kaurna Country (as told by Aunty Rose and Aunty Nangala).

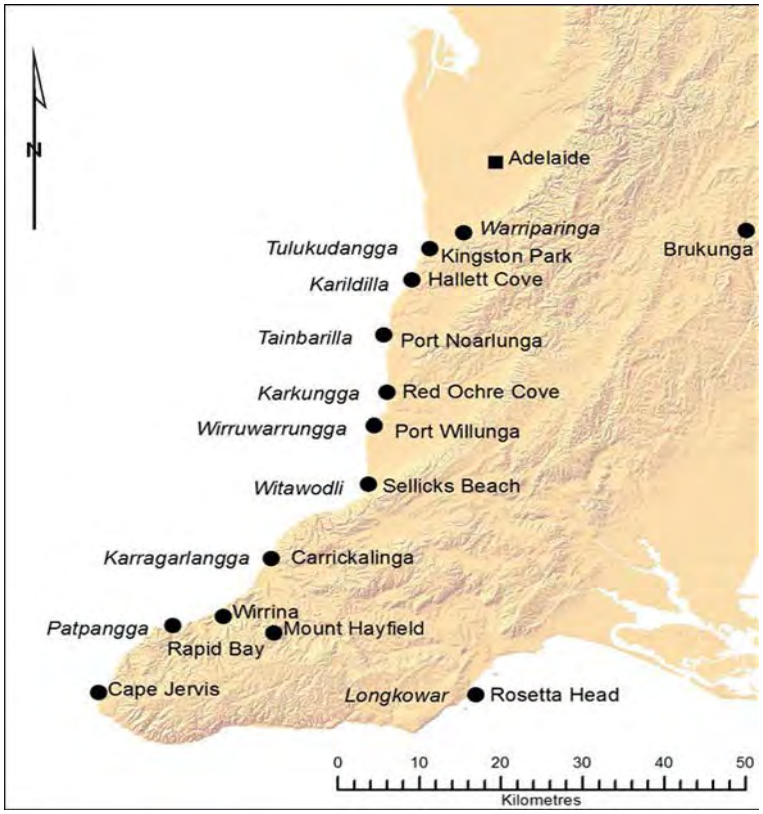

Figure 7.1: A map of the Tjilbruke springs along the south coast of Adelaide.

(Source: Provided by Aunty Nangala)

Additionally, embedded in The Dreaming of each language group, are protocols and practices that may vary widely from language group to language group across this vast land. However, some protocols are practiced by all language groups. By way of an example, Aunty Nangala was responsible for leading a primary-to-high school program for local Aboriginal students. In accordance with Aboriginal protocols each person present (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) was expected to identify who they are and where they are from. An Aboriginal language map (see Figure 7.2) was placed on the wall so that students can identify the language group they belong to. As Elder Aunty Rose stated: “You all come from somewhere yourselves; keep that, keep that. But acknowledge when you are in someone else’s Country” (Aunty Rose). Not all students (aged 12–13 years) were familiar or competent in this protocol. So the adults demonstrated the process and encouraged students to model the practice.

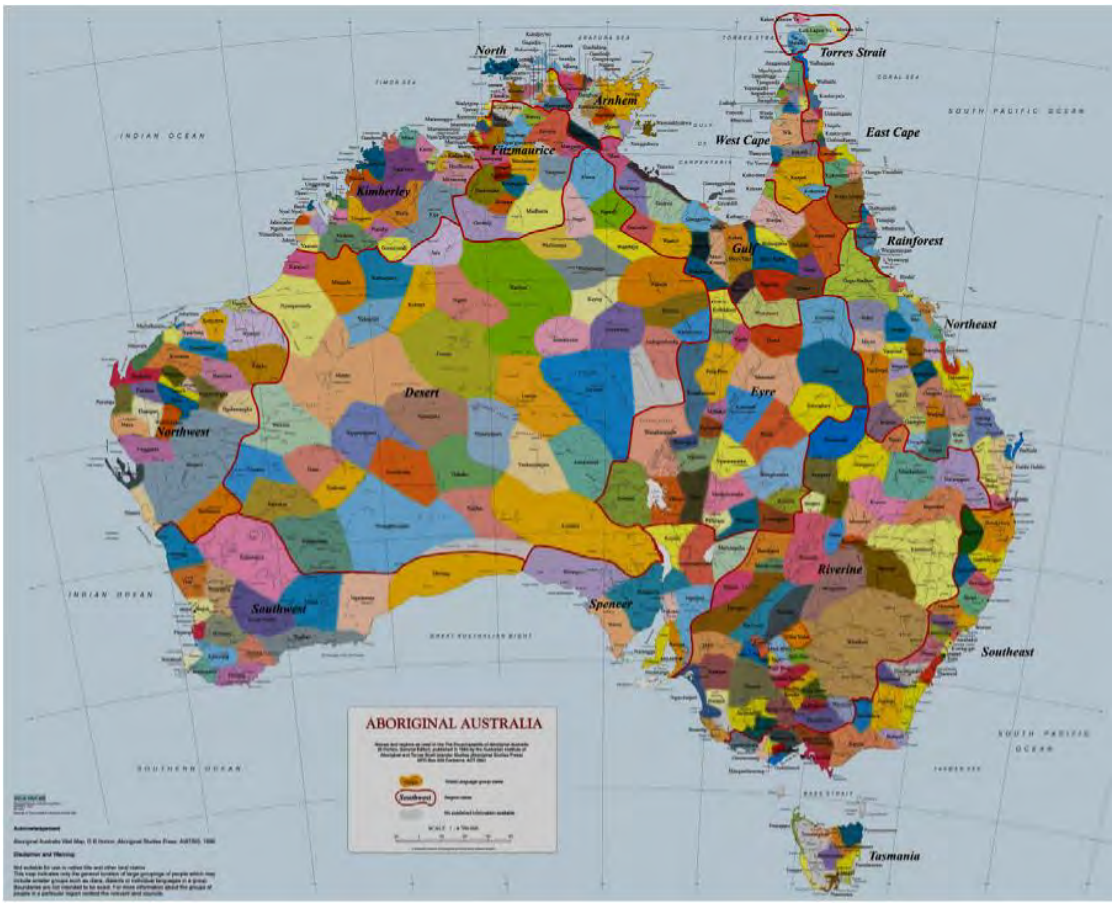

Figure 7.2: Aboriginal Australia Map

(Source: Aboriginal Studies Press, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1996)

Additionally, the values of generosity and reciprocity, central to Aboriginal culture, are taught to Aboriginal students through school supported programs. The development of generosity and reciprocity are significant as it is socially unacceptable for an individual to not be generous (Pattel 2007). Consequently, 'Gatherings' (or hospitality) are a regular occurrence where food is shared with Elders, students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), teachers, AEWs, and community leaders. Furthermore, at times like Reconciliation Week or the celebration of NAIDOC[19] gathering brings community and government organisations, to the school space to interact with Aboriginal students and their communities.

[19] National Aborigines and Islander Day of Observance Council (NAIDOC) is an annual, week-long celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.

At SHS, students worked in partnership with AEWs, and at times teachers, to organise these events (e.g. creating a guest list, sending out the invites and sorting food with fish sometimes being caught by Aboriginal students while out with Uncle Pedro before school starts for the day). The school has a purpose-built fire pit for the cooking of traditional foods such as damper, kangaroo and fish, located within the school kitchen garden and Eco Classroom Complex. "Gathering is a time where Aboriginal students are not just learning about how to be hospitable, they are demonstrating and growing there cultural pride" (Mr Banks). Walker (1993, p. 5) writes:

> Our families are proud people, and our children grow up knowing that 'Black is beautiful' and learning to be 'Black and proud'. The home, the nurturing place of learning, teaches us a lot about ourselves, but unfortunately does not always prepare our children for the roller-coaster ride ahead of them.

This "roller-coaster ride" frequently begins on entering the educational system where, as students, Aboriginal youth are quickly introduced to another set of values and beliefs, another set of experiences, language, and processes that differ markedly from their own (Gollan & Malin 2012). Within this institutional setting Aboriginal students' Aboriginality and sense of belonging are often denigrated, ignored or simply rejected as being of no value as a way to educational success (see Chapter 4). Participating teachers, working collectively with AEWs and community leaders, are challenging this cultural fabric of schooling discussed in Chapter 4. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers are replacing historically constructed, racially based narratives of being Aboriginal with a counterstory of 'stronger, smarter' identity (Sarra 2011a). Participating teachers, through their pedagogical practices that privilege and validate Aboriginal student distinct cultural identities, are rejecting the educational goal of assimilating students into a dominant, predominantly 'white', middle-class mono-culture at the expense of their own distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing.

CRPS therefore enable Aboriginal students not only to accomplish academic success but also achieve that success while maintaining a positive identity as Aboriginal youth (Ladson-Billings 1994, p. 38). As Martin (2005, p. 38) writes:

> Aboriginal people don't want schools to teach our children to be Aboriginal but we do want schools to support our cultural heritage, to have a respect for Aboriginal ancestry and to understand that this can never be replaced or supplanted by non-Aboriginal heritage or ancestry even though this is taught in schools.

As culturally responsive pedagogues participating teachers accepted responsibility for promoting Aboriginal student cultural competency, integrity and pride. This acceptance of responsibility adheres well to the principles of an Aboriginal ethic of care where participating teachers have become part of the extended kinship network as one of the multiple caregivers of Aboriginal students referred to as classified kin (see section 6.2). One further way that participating teachers worked towards this ends is through respecting, promoting and the teaching of student languages in the learning space, which is now discussed.

7.3.3 Student languages in the learning space

Education cannot function without language. Language is used to convey the official curriculum. It is the means by which education is delivered in the learning space of schooling and, is the medium through which teachers interact with students (Grote & Rochecouste 2012). "Language facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, the improvement of skills and the nurturing of social and emotional well-being that enables students to progress through the educational system" (Grote & Rochecouste 2012, p. 174). But for many Aboriginal students the language of teaching and schooling—Standard Australian English (SAE)—is a variety of English that is vastly different from the language used in their homes and communities, contributing to a cultural mismatch between schools and Aboriginal students.

At participating schools, Aboriginal students speak a variety of languages. Most, for example, speak a form of Aboriginal English (AbE) (Davis 2014) or, one or more Australian languages[20] (Troy 2012) as well as, or rather than, Standard Australian English (SAE). The CRP scholarship contends that educational outcomes for marginalised or minoritised students—like Aboriginal students—will improve if schools and teachers draw on the language strengths of students (Gay 2010). That is, instead of rejecting Aboriginal students' home or community languages in the learning space, and thereby creating a cultural mismatch, the student's home and community languages are respected and included in the institution of schooling. Participating

[20] The term 'Australian languages' refers to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages of Australia, the original languages of the country. This is not to diminish the importance of the other languages, including English, which are now languages 'or Australia brought to the country by colonisers and immigrants from other countries (Troy 2012, p. 136).

teachers, to varying degrees, possessed a working knowledge of the languages being spoken by their Aboriginal students.

For example, at MHS teachers recognised that their students frequently speak SAE as a third or even fifth language. While one aim of the program was to ensure students are literate in SAE, the aim of the program was to simultaneously ensure that students are literate in their home language/s as well. Standard English was taught by participating teachers as a separate language instead of it being taught as the 'most important language' or the 'language of the civilised world' (Perso & Hayward 2015, p. 92). However, teaching an Australian language, including schools considering implementing a language program, meant respecting those who identify with the language and, following cultural protocols. Teaching Australian languages is not a simple matter of referring to a curriculum document, developing a syllabus and picking up textbooks and resources as it may be in teaching other languages (Troy 2012, p. 147). Those who identify with the specific language have the right to determine who can teach, and when and how it will be taught (Amery 2012; Grote & Rochecouste 2012; Troy 2012). As Amery (2014, p. 415) asserts: "The ultimate goal should be to empower people to teach their own languages in their own right".

At MHS, the goal is mastery of language, English alongside the Australian language/s of Aboriginal students who come from remote communities. This central aim of the program was the expressed wishes of the specific language group of the students. School principal Mrs Harris stated: "They (parents and community) want their children to be literate in Pitjantjatjara and English". Consequently, at MHS the students' home community language was timetabled each week just as English or, perhaps Japanese or French are timetabled in mainstream schooling. Therefore, the teaching of an Australian language was part of the cultural fabric of the school.

The respecting and validating of student language in the learning space at MHS was evidenced in many other ways. For example, most teachers at MHS are, to varying degrees, literate in the Australian language of their students. Some teachers have acquired this skill in-house while others have spent time in the remote communities of students, immersed in the students' language. Additionally, it was evident that participating teachers made an effort to add to their new language vocabulary every day, modelling this for their students as well as learning for themselves how challenging this

can be. Often it was the students who were teaching their teachers their Australian languages; which frequently resulted in great laughter at the participating teachers' attempts and mistakes. However, students continued to encourage and teach teachers their language.

One example of the student becoming the Australian Language teacher came towards the end of my research investigation. The MHS program was expanding and undergoing major changes to meet the evolving needs of the students' remote communities. Consequently, while priority was given to the teaching of the particular language group that had initiated the program some three decades earlier, students from other remote communities (and therefore language groups) were now being admitted. This brought other Australian languages to the learning space for the first time. Reasonably conversant in Pitjantjatjara, Mr James would speak this language to his students alongside English. However, one day while teaching four students from this new language group the cry went up: "ENOUGH OF THE PITJ!" Mr James did not hesitate:

> Mr James: Enough Pitj?
>
> Students: Yes, yes! Enough.
>
> Mr James: Then you need to teach me your language?
>
> Students: OK.
>
> Mr James: So, you teach me four new words a day, yeah?
>
> Students: Yeah, ok.
>
> And so Mr James lessons began.

In this teacher–student encounter, Mr James was respecting and responding to the expressed needs of his students. Mr James was including the students' own language in the learning space rather than excluding and devaluing their home community language. As such, Mr James was drawing on his students' language strengths to engage students in their successful learning (Gay 2010).

As seen, for example in Mr Scott's Year 10 science class, Australian language was embedded into the delivery of the curriculum. Here, students were choosing an animal classification and providing an example of an animal that would be found in their desert communities. Students were asked to provide the scientific name, the more common name and the word used in Pitjantjatjara. Mr Scott instructed the students on how to

navigate the online Pitjantjatjara dictionary so that students could learn the spelling of words that they were probably familiar with in their everyday conversations. Therefore, students were becoming conversant and literate in the language of science, English and Pitjantjatjara concurrently. However, as illustrated in the following teacher–student encounter, distinct cultural sensitivities need observing:

> Mr Scott: So here's what I'd like you to do. I want you to go on to the Pitjantjatjara dictionary online So, I want you to find an example of these. Each one of these types of things. Just start on one. It doesn't really matter which one. So you might think, 'I'm going to do a mammal'. I'll choose dingo; I'll look up the dingo on the computer. What's the language name for dingo?
>
> [I note the energy in the room changes. Students go from being engaged to sitting back and putting their heads down. Mr Scott scans the room and quickly responds]
>
> Mr Scott: Is that one that can't be said in language?
>
> [Girls nod].
>
> Mr Scott: Girls can't say that? OK, then let's try a different example.

Mr Scott moved on to the classification of 'birds' and worked through the assessment task. The students were once more engaged in the learning. Mr Scott's knowledge of students and their community and knowledge of pedagogy (discussed in Chapter 5) means that he was conversant not just in the students' language but so too in the cultural protocols that accompany it.

However, like many Aboriginal peoples across language groups, not all participating students are conversant with the language of their Country. As outlined in Chapter Two, at the time of colonisation approximately 260–270 Aboriginal languages (Dixon et al. 2006) and hundreds of dialects were spoken by as many as 1,000,000 people (Harris 2011, p. 22). However, colonisation achieved through the fictional doctrine of terra nullius, had a detrimental effect on the survival of many existing Australian languages. Historically, education policies repressed Australian languages and culture, ranging from denial, to segregation, then assimilation and onwards to integration (Beresford, Partington & Gower 2012).

AbE is the name given to dialects of English that are spoken by the majority of Aboriginal peoples, and which differ from Standard Australian English in systematic ways at all levels of linguistic structure (Eades 2013, p. 79; Malcolm 1995, p. 19). Metropolitan, regional and remote Aboriginal people speak a dialect of AbE, but unlike

traditional Australian languages, AbE is found more prominently in metropolitan areas (Malcolm 2013). In the past, and in many cases today, AbE is thought of as 'bad' or 'broken English' (Davis 2014). Such understandings of AbE fall within a deficit framework, constructing Aboriginal students according to a destructive racialised narrative rather than understanding that Aboriginal students are speaking their own Australian language.

However, at SHS, AbE was not understood as either 'bad' or 'broken English' by participating teachers or within the Nunga Room (see section 4.1.1). While AbE was not raised as a theme by participating teachers, it is important to note that at no time did I observe Aboriginal students being denigrated for speaking AbE either in the classroom or wider school setting by those participating in my investigation. This contrasts strongly with my previous pre-service teaching experiences where Aboriginal students were told, for example, to "Speak properly" as "They have to learn" (Daniels-Mayes 2010, p. 32). AbE was freely conversed among students, AEWs and, at times, participating teachers with varying levels of proficiency.

Participating teachers and AEWs seemed to understand that AbE is a marker of Aboriginal identity and has been sustained as a distinctive variety, suited to communicating what Aboriginal people want to say, through an Aboriginal perspective, modifying English to express an Aboriginal worldview (Malcolm 1995). As Jaky Troy, a Ngarigu woman and educator, states, "Language is the vehicle of cultural expression" (Troy 2012, p. 136). Additionally, Jeannie Bell, a Jagera and Dulingbara woman, writes, "Our languages are a key to maintaining and preserving ourselves as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" (Bell cited in Troy 2012, p. 132). Thus, respecting and privileging student language in the learning space helps to develop their self-esteem, engagement with education and their overall educational success (Troy 2012).

At SHS there was an ongoing discussion about whether to teach Aboriginal students an Australian language. Aunty Nangala stated that, "Everyone in community wants them to learn language, but which one? We have two. And then there are kids from other parts [of Australia]" (Aunty Nangala). This is not an uncommon situation. There are sensitivities in many language groups about what to teach and how and by whom; and to students other than their own children learning their language before they themselves have this opportunity (Amery 2014; Troy 2012). This is an ongoing debate and beyond

the scope of my research. However, at MHS students were becoming literate in both their Australian Language and English, and at both MHS and SHS, Aboriginal students were gaining a sense of identity and belonging in the learning space through having their languages respected and validated. Overall, students at participating schools are having the strengths of their languages drawn upon for educational success and cultural competence (Ladson-Billings 1994).

The next section discusses the third purpose of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success: critical cultural awareness—"Represent the Aboriginal peoples of Australia" (Uncle Pedro) which is built upon both educational success and cultural competence that enables Aboriginal people to stay and grow as Aboriginal peoples in possession of their distinct ways of knowing, being and doing.

7.4 Critical Cultural Awareness—"Represent the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia"

Ladson-Billings (1995a, p. 160) contends that culturally responsive teachers "engage in the world and others critically," and to do this, "students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities". Likewise, Uncle Pedro states that the third aspect of success for Aboriginal students is: "Represent the Aboriginal peoples of Australia". Having individual success is, therefore, not engaging in citizenship. CRP advocates that providing opportunities for students to critique society may encourage students to challenge and transform the embedded majoritarian narratives of deficit and failure that continue to oppress and segregate (Delpit 2013).

The next section discusses students becoming competent world travellers'—cultural, community, state, national, and global—so that they may be able to participate fully in, and succeed, in society.

7.4.1 Students as "world travelers"

Aboriginal students do not belong to the majoritarian, 'white', middle-class culture of mainstream society. Instead, Aboriginal peoples and their distinct cultures are constructed as "outsiders" by the dominant culture. Delpit (1995) argues that students who are not part of the "culture of power" must be explicitly taught the rules and codes of that culture to be able to negotiate it successfully and make decisions about how and

when they will negotiate it (see, for example, section 4.4.1). According to Castagno and Brayboy (2008, p. 37) this is a "both/and" approach rather than an "either/or" approach; that is, no one culture is valued and learned at the expense or de-valuing of the other. Aboriginal lawyer Noel Pearson, of both the Bagaarrmugu and Guggu Yalanji peoples contends that:

> The way forward is to achieve a complete bi-cultural capacity. That is, for young Cape York people to be completely fluent in their own culture and the wider culture – and to move with facility and capacity between the two worlds. (Pearson 2011, p. 75)

Brayboy and Castagno (2009, p. 37) similarly contend that perhaps the most fundamental goal of culturally responsive schooling is teaching Indigenous youth to become bi/multicultural. The use of the term "multicultural" is significant. Most of the literature, exemplified by Pearson above, references the goal of marginalised or minoritised students becoming "bicultural" and able to "walk in two worlds". However, Brayboy and Castagno (2009) are cautious of the use of the term bicultural because of the way it obscures the complexity and multiplicity of the actual experiences and goals of many Indigenous youth and tribal communities. As discussed above, one central and common aim of cultural responsiveness is for students to become culturally competent in their own distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing. With this competence in place, Aboriginal students are then better able to negotiate and operate within the myriad of worlds within which they live. As will be shown in this section, participating teachers were supporting Aboriginal students to utilise their educational success and their cultural competence to represent Aboriginal peoples as they switch from culture to culture, while not rejecting their own selves as strong and smart Aboriginal young adults (Sarra 2012).

This complex act of switching, or transitioning between cultures, is referred to by Argentinean feminist philosopher Maria Lugones, as "world travelling". World travelling "is described as "a process where one must travel through worlds of difference, unfamiliarity, or alienation as well as the contrasting worlds of comfort, familiarity, and support by shifting codes from one world to the next" (Lugones 1987, p. 631). Lugones (1987, p. 631) goes on to explain that: "A world need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society. It may be inhabited by just a few people. Some 'worlds' are bigger than others".

Furthermore, being a successful 'world traveller' involves the learning of language, rules, norms, and aesthetic conventions of that world, along with what it means to inhabit that world (Madison 2005b, p. 123). However, racism has a vested interest in obscuring and devaluing the complex skills involved in successfully transitioning across worlds and therefore the more different you are to the majority world, the more adept at world travelling you must become if you are to succeed (Lugones 1994).

Although Lugones (1987) does not write specifically about education, her concept of 'world travelling' provides a useful framework for thinking about Aboriginal students experiences of living as a minority cultural group. Aboriginal peoples are frequently positioned as 'outsiders' in a colonised Australia. Writing of New Zealand Maori students, Durie (2001, p. 4) argues that:

> To the extent that the purpose of education is to prepare people for participation in society, it needs to be remembered that preparation for participation in Maori society is also required. If after twelve or so years of formal education a Maori youth were totally unprepared to interact within te ao Maori (the Maori world), then no matter what else had been learned education would have been incomplete.

Likewise, as advocated in the research on cultural responsiveness, improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students includes preparing Aboriginal students to participate both in the wider society while also preparing and supporting them to participate in Aboriginal culture and society.

A key tenet of CRP is, therefore, that teachers actively assist students to make connections between their complex identities—cultural, community, State, national, and global—so that they may be able to participate fully in society (Ladson-Billings 2009). This preparedness for travelling in multiple worlds—but not at the expense of Aboriginal students own cultural worlds—was evident in many diverse ways within the pedagogies of participating teachers and schools which is now discussed.

7.4.2 Community/State/National connectedness

Participating teachers utilised a diversity of strategies to make their students aware of ways in which they can become more involved and connected in the community and worlds beyond school. As the stories of the two participating schools—referred to in my research as Metropolitan High School (MHS) and Southern High School (SHS)—have noticeable differences, I opt here to address their stories individually.

Metropolitan High School (MHS)

MHS is a program that has operated since the 1970s. Its stated aim is:

> The aim of the Program, in the main, is to develop the skills, talents, abilities and confidence of (its) students in the mainstream education and cultural process to enable them to gain greater self-management of their communities as adults within those communities in their future.

MHS' documentation goes on to state:

> The objective is to empower students to become self-determining so that they are able to manage their communities, determine their own futures and actively participate in the wider world". Ultimately, graduates from the Program will drive and foster the future development and sustainability of their communities. People of the communities actively support the Program as they hope to build the capacity of their communities and ensure the continuance of their communities and cultural ways of life.

Overall, the aims of the program appear to be being achieved successfully. For example, Mr Scott notes that:

> When you go into the kids communities, the AEWs and the people working in the office and the, TAFE and stuff; lot of those [people] would have come here for school. A recent road trip by the youth workers found one community that was basically just about being run by former students. (Mr Scott)

The success of the MHS program depends upon the respectful recognition of the students' distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing; and, in turn, embedding this knowledge into the pedagogical practices of teachers and other connected staff. Furthermore, communities recognise that students enrolled in the program need to learn about some contemporary aspects of western society. This is particularly important as the remoteness and isolation of communities restricts access to many of the experiences which mainstream society takes for granted. Therefore, one of the roles of MHS is to expand student experiences of worlds unfamiliar to them. When speaking with Mr Scott about defining student success he notes:

> Lots of different definitions of it you know. Personal growth. They [students] have a particular starting point and they've moved to a particular point in a given time. There's kids who have a huge benefit, like it might be socially or in terms of their life skills type of stuff. A lot of that might be more at the residence type end. We've [staff] talked about we need to have some sort of more informal measure of success rather than just academic. The holistic picture in terms of, when they came here they wouldn't talk to youth workers, they wouldn't engage with peers or whatever and now they're catching the bus, and they talk and they're confident to go into a shop and purchase something. It's that bigger picture stuff in terms of all the other stuff apart from academic. (Mr Scott)

This connecting students with the "bigger picture stuff", was evidenced in many other ways. Participating teachers, for example, encouraged students to take part in a wide variety of fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns. By way of an example, Mr James talked about student involvement in *Movember.*[21]

> It's something some of us teachers get involved with. Many of them [students] are too young to grow a mo and, of course, the girls can't. But they get involved in fundraising activities such as recycling bottles so that they can sponsor those trying to grow a mo. (Mr James)

Additionally, Mrs Harris spoke of taking female students to places and events such as the United Nations International Women's Day Breakfast. Here students learn about issues effecting girls and women locally and globally as well as getting to participate at a formal event so very different to their everyday lives. Mrs Harris also spoke of campaigns that students have been involved in such as *'Bullying. No way'!* and, *'Harmony Day'.* "Participation is voluntary but usually there's a good number of students involved" (Mrs Harris).

Moreover, developing student world travelling capabilities was evident in the timetabling of the curriculum. By way of an example, a weekly feature of the MHS timetable is the watching of *Behind The News* which is described as: "*A high-energy, fun way for upper primary and secondary students to learn about current issues and events in their world*"(www.abc.net.au/btn 2014). Appearing on one episode of this program was a fellow student who had attended the *National Indigenous Youth in Parliament* and delivered her maiden speech representing the needs of her remote community.

Southern High School (SHS)

Southern High School (SHS) has an Aboriginal student population of 10% (well above the national average of 4%) (Government of South Australia 2012). Typically students reside within the surrounding suburbs and attend classes within the wider, mainstream school. Senior students in years 10, 11 and 12, can choose to enrol in the South Australian Aboriginal Sports and Training Academy (SAASTA) which is one pathway to complete their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

[21] The Movember Foundation is a global charity committed to men living happier, healthier, longer lives. Since 2003, millions have joined the men's health movement, raising $685 million and funding over 1,000 projects focusing on prostate cancer, testicular cancer, poor mental health and physical inactivity.

Aboriginal students at all year levels at SHS were given opportunities to participate in, and experience, a diversity of 'worlds'. For example, students partake in Youth Week activities, NAIDOC and, Reconciliation Week community and school-based activities. Additionally, students were encouraged by AEWs to promote events such as Nunga Tag Carnival[22] in the local media and community. Through 'Gathering' events students experience the "ins and outs of meet-and-greet that they will need later in life" (Aunty Nangala).

For the senior students, SAASTA is: "A sporting and educational organisation that provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior high school students with skills, opportunities and confidence to achieve in the areas of sport, education, employment and healthy living" (Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet 2015). The program is delivered to students at SHS, offering a minimum of two SAASTA subjects, with students completing their additional subjects in mainstream schooling. In addition to the educational outcomes achieved by students, "SAASTA places a strong emphasis on enabling students to grow as people, connect with their culture and gain an understanding and attitude towards the importance of becoming independently resilient" (Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet 2015).

One specific example of a school excursion, organised as part of SAASTA activities, was a bus trip to Melbourne for the female students to play at the Women's Rugby Cup. To cover costs of travel and accommodation, the students were mentored by an AEW to organise several fundraising events. One such event was a formal dinner where, besides organising the venue, the menu and the entertainment, students worked as waiters at the event itself. In this way, students are gaining skills and confidence that will assist them in their extra lives beyond the school gate.

Overall, the students of MHS and SHS are being explicitly taught by participating teachers and AEWs about how to walk in multiple worlds. Aboriginal Students abilities to accomplish the skills of world travelling are expanded by participating teachers who connected them with the global world of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to which I now turn.

[22] The Nunga Tag Carnival is a free annual Southern Region Community Event that provides an opportunity for Nunga students and family members to participate and engage with other Nunga students and regional communities in a positive environment (http://www.sarugbyleague.com.au/).

7.4.3 Global connectedness

As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers understood that they are tasked with the job of not just having their Aboriginal students succeed academically. As highlighted above, participating teachers assisted students to make local, state and national connections (Ladson-Billings 2009). However, participating teachers also understood that Aboriginal students have the additional role of being the "next leaders" (Aunty Nangala), the "next in line" (Uncle Pedro). Aboriginal students educational success therefore included being able to represent the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. With this in mind, participating teachers worked to expand student capabilities as world travellers by creating global connectedness (Ladson-Billings 2009).

By way of an example, Mr James spoke of the significance of, "letting the kids know about some of the more political issues that Indigenous people as a collective face. Something I try to achieve is getting them to think a bit beyond some of the just warm and fuzzy stuff people think is enough." (Mr James). Mr James goes on to add, "Because a lot of the issues that Indigenous people face in Australia are echoed in other Indigenous communities around the world. Colonialism will do that" Mr James. Mr James primary purpose for developing student global knowledge, and in particular, Indigenous issues was not "political" but rather:

> Just definitely encouraging kids to think ethically and have empathy, not just for their own Indigenous peoples within the Australian community but to seek comparisons with other Indigenous people around the world. (Mr James)

By way of an example, Mr James established a blog site between his Year 8 Aboriginal Studies Students with a similar class in remote Canada:

> What would be really cool, and what I'm sure is hoped by [your teacher], is an educational and cultural exchange of sorts. In short, we would be keen to learn about you and in turn you can learn about us via blogging, blogging and emailing. We can set weekly questions or tasks in which we each can answer via this blog site and really get something exciting started. There are also opportunities for pen pal friendships as well as other educational possibilities as time goes by. Our distance is the only issue in as far as doing anything in real time. But if we keep things simple and regular I believe we can have a lot of fun. I know my students are excited at the potential. (Mr James)

To begin with, teachers at both schools acted as a scribe for their students. Topics varied from geographic comparisons (i.e. desert vs remote island), languages spoken, climate (i.e. rain vs sunshine), wildlife (Do you ride kangaroos to school?); through to the more

typical ‘teenage’ topics of, for example, favourite music, sport, dance, liking/disliking school, video games and favourite movies. As time went on, students exchanged photo collages about their schools and other significant factors. As the connection between schools strengthened students began writing their own blog entries; asking each other questions about a diversity of topics. An excursion to ‘Sorry Day’[23] events in Adelaide led to a sharing of information: Canadian students wrote of the Truth In Reconciliation Commission and its current aim to have the federal government amend the Oath of Citizenship for new citizens (i.e. in addition to swearing alliance to the Queen, new citizens would pledge: “I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada including Treaties with Indigenous peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen)”. In exchange, Mr James students wrote of the Stolen Generations, what it is and the resilience of those impacted upon by such dispossessing historical events in Australia.

This type of education helps Aboriginal students to become aware of the world around them, the similarities and differences between Indigenous peoples around the globe and, ultimately, teaches students their role in community and society as Aboriginal peoples and emerging future leaders. Furthermore, Mr James (and indeed all participating teachers in varying ways) are fostering a sense of the students’ connection to community, to something greater than themselves (Delpit 2012, p. 23). As noted by Kaurna Elder, Lewis O’Brien:

> You’ve gotta get back to this philosophy. This is what it is all about. The group is far more important than the individual. People have been sold a terrible statement that any individual can do as they like. That’s the worst thing that people can do in their lives. It’s a very bad philosophy. What are you on about? If you are just on about the survival of yourself, you’re gonna do that and you’re gonna die tomorrow, if you think about it. (O’Brien cited in McBride 2000, p. 5)

This message of reciprocity and responsibility was reinforced by Elder ‘Aunty Rose’ during a ‘culture talk’ delivered to students enrolled in the SAASTA program at Southern High School. She passionately noted:

> I tell my own young people the same thing: For you young, you have got nowhere else to go but to grow up, be a girl growing into a woman, or a boy growing into a man. That’s the only place you’ve got to go; you have nowhere else to go. And when you grow up you have responsibilities. (Aunty Rose)

[23] National Sorry Day is an annual event that has been held in Australia on 26 May, since 1998, to remember and commemorate the mistreatment of the country’s indigenous population.

Here, Aunty Rose was alluding to the interconnecting web of finely integrated responsibilities of reciprocity and kinship to be found in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. McBride (2010, p. 5) notes that traditionally:

> Aboriginal systems of reciprocity embraced not only goods but also people, rituals, and social, political and legal obligations. The associated rights, obligations and responsibilities provided individuals with a guide to their own behaviour as well as predicting likely behaviours when meeting other people

Accordingly, , Aboriginal peoples believed that they are responsible for and must contribute to the maintenance of their community and their Country. It is a sense of place that "leads to an understanding of historical, cultural, emotional and genetic links to one's surroundings" (Nichol, Archibald & Baker 2010, p. 50). In this way, students are supported to develop a sense of place that is grounded not only in knowing and understanding Aboriginal communities or local regions but also to understand the interrelationships between themselves and other places in the world (Cajete 1999).

This contrasts markedly to the ‘western’ values that dominate Australia which promote the idea that individuals can do as they like, with the aim of benefiting themselves as an individual (McBride 2000, p. 5). Aboriginal values instead are more about the group being far more important than the individual thus demonstrating significantly differing social values (McBride 2000, p. 5). Privileging of the individual does not take into account the kinship system to be found in Aboriginal communities and this is the structure for Aboriginal life and culture (McBride 2000). Despite the devastating impact of dispossessing colonisation, like traditional kinship systems discussed in section 6.2, responsibility and reciprocity has adapted and evolved to meet the needs of contemporary times.

Consequently, participating teachers were tasked with the responsibility of validating and preparing their Aboriginal students for their future roles in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds; in the local, state, national and global worlds in which they will likely travel. Participating teachers undertook this task as part of their ethic of care; as members of Aboriginal students extended kinship networks; as part of their commitment to social justice and activism. As culturally responsive pedagogues, participating teachers were playing a pivotal role in the educational success of Aboriginal students; they are, in short, creating a counterstory of Aboriginal educational success in accordance with the second tenet of ColonialCrit.

7.5 In Closing

This chapter focuses on the second major teacher characteristic of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, which is of 'demander.' The first research question is addressed: "How is culturally responsive pedagogy evident in the pedagogical understandings and practices of six high school teachers in metropolitan Adelaide who are achieving educational success with their Aboriginal students?" The three key purposes of Aboriginal student success are highlighted: “They [Aboriginal students] got their education; stayed as an Aboriginal person; and, represented the Aboriginal people of Australia” (borrowed from Uncle Pedro). Firstly, the chapter outlines how each participating teacher understands student success with a common theme of students being able to define it for themselves being evident. Pedagogical strategies including predictability, structure, routine, opportunities for mastery, combined with cultural responsiveness are discussed as fundamental to enabling students to feel safe enough to participate in the learning space. Next, student cultural competency or staying Aboriginal, illustrated several key strategies such as grounding students in their own cultural identities, supporting ways to teach about Indigenous values and beliefs, and respecting Aboriginal languages. Aboriginal Elders' teachings are shown to be foundational, as they have been for thousands of generations. Finally, ways in which Aboriginal students developed social justice and knowledge of issues related to Indigenous peoples locally, nationally and internationally was explored. Overall, the chapter illustrated that Aboriginal student success is dependent upon robust caring relationships that allow teachers to demand success of their Aboriginal student both within and beyond the classroom by privileging a student’s distinct culture.

The following chapter will highlight the key factors that were identified when answering the question: What *does successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students look like? More specifically,* based on the results of my investigation and discussion drawing on national and international research, the concluding chapter will highlight particular wicked education policies and practices that would enhance Aboriginal student engagement in education and subsequent success.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

8.1 Introduction

On May 10 2016, I awoke to the news headline: *Aurukun teachers evacuated over safety fears, 'slow' police response probed.* (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2016). Overnight, 25 teachers and staff had been evacuated from this remote Aboriginal school in Far North Queensland due to fears for their safety. Youths as young as six allegedly tried to steal a car, brandishing weapons including machetes. "Police have asked parents to keep their children supervised" and "I actually think parents have to be held to account" are but two of the comments published in reference to this incident. This was the second time that teachers had been evacuated from this school in a month. Ultimately, the school remained closed for six weeks, with students missing out on their education.

In contrast, on May 27 2016, I attended the annual *National Reconciliation Week Breakfast* in Adelaide. The keynote speech was delivered by Tanya Hosch, Joint Campaign Director of *Recognise*, the fight for recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the nation's constitution and *to remove racist clauses.* What got me excited were the speeches delivered by the newly trained *Recognise Youth Reps, ranging in age* from 16 to 20 years, talking about their hopes for the future. One student had received an almost perfect score in her SACE and was now studying science at university. Another student, who had won numerous awards, has a goal of becoming Australia's first Indigenous Prime Minister. Another planned to join the police service on completing school (Reconciliation South Australia 2016).

But, as I have asked myself nearly every day through the past several years of studying education at university and beyond, how do we eliminate the despair that is still apparent? How does hope become the expected norm rather than the exception in Aboriginal peoples' lives? My thesis is my contribution, and the communities

involved—Aboriginal and successful teachers—contribution, to establishing a hopeful present and future.

The aim of my investigation was to answer the question: *What does successful teaching of Aboriginal high school students look like?* I intended to further develop my understanding of pedagogical practices used by teachers nominated as successful by the community in which they work including colleagues, school principals, Aboriginal Education Workers, community members and Aboriginal students. While my research was designed to contribute to theoretical knowledge and development in Aboriginal educational research, the primary focus was on practical and policy implications for schools and teachers, as well as for pre-service teacher training and policymakers. Overall, I intended to identify significant factors which have the potential for improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. I do not propose a one-size-fits-all solution but rather argue for a theoretical framework that enables pedagogies of success to emerge according to the identified needs of a specific lived experience and, to the distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing of an Aboriginal language group.

When I first embarked on my research pathway, my focus was on *what factors are important for Aboriginal students to stay at school?* Then I was introduced to Dr Kiara Rahman, a Badimia Woman from Yamatji Country in Western Australia. She had in 2009 completed her PhD titled: *Indigenous student success in secondary schooling: factors impacting on student attendance, retention, learning and attainment in South Australia.* It is Kiara who introduced me to the scholarship on culturally responsive schooling and There began my journey with this extensive, expanding and exciting body of education scholarship.

8.2 Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success (CRPS)

I found that culturally responsive pedagogies vary greatly within, between and across disciplines and countries (Dunbar & Scrimgeour 2009). Although called by a myriad of names, the ideas about why it is important to make teaching more consistent with the cultural ways of Aboriginal students, and how this can be done, are virtually identical (Gay 2000). International scholars such as Au and Kawakami (1994), Brayboy and Castagno (2009), Gay (2010), Kleinfeld (1975) and Ladson-Billings 1994) have all written extensively about CRP.

My literature review of CRP found that several key characteristics and principles consistently emerged and these are listed below:

- A student's culture is privileged and centred in their learning;
- Culture is seen as an asset for learning and not a problem to be solved;
- Teachers have high expectations of student academic and life success;
- Students' life learning is connected with life beyond the school gates;
- Students develop a critical cultural awareness;
- Caring relationships between teacher and student are non-negotiable for student success;
- Culturally responsive pedagogues recognise, reveal and reject the majoritarian narrative of deficit thinking; and
- CRPS respect and privilege Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing of a specific language group.

In my investigation, and in comparison to the international scholarship, a relatively small body of Australian literature referring specifically to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was found (see, for example, Krakauer 2015; Perso 2012; Perso & Hayward 2015; Rahman 2009, 2013). Instead, the focus was predominantly on 'good, 'effective' or 'quality' teaching with a student's distinct Aboriginal cultural ways absent from much of the discussion.

Despite the richness of this body of research, I found that the vast majority of the CRP scholarship does not problematise racism. In particular, the CRP scholarship in the main does not provide any critical analysis of the ongoing impact of colonisation for Indigenous peoples globally. In their extensive review of the CRP literature for Indigenous youth in the US, Castagno and Brayboy (2008, p. 943) assert:

> We will suggest that more explicit and sustained attention must be paid to tribal sovereignty and self-determination, the racism experienced by Indigenous youth, and Indigenous epistemologies if educators and scholars hope to move away from the essentialisations, generalisations, and easy anecdotes that seem to derive from much of the literature and instead move toward engaging in genuinely culturally responsive learning for Indigenous youth.

My research, like that of Castagno and Brayboy (2008, p. 950), found that, '...racism is a pervasive and consistent element in the schooling experiences of Indigenous youth'. My research therefore argues for a framework of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success infused with the tenets of Critical Race Theory alongside my modified Australian version of Colonial Critical Race Theory. Overall, this framework seeks to dispossess those who are affiliated with the dominant majoritarian story of their racialised narratives be they biologically, genetically or culturally based.

Furthermore, I argue that Aboriginal education must be understood as a societal problem, one that is difficult to clearly define, resistant to resolution, multidimensional, has no quick or linear solutions and, often has contradictory requirements. But above all else, as found in my research, this wicked problem of improving Aboriginal educational outcomes is both possible and a human rights imperative. Finally, I argue for an approach to improving Aboriginal educational outcomes that responds to the distinct Australian Aboriginal story, that privileges Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and language in the learning space and, explicitly problematises racism.

8.3 Critical Race Theory and Colonial Critical Race Theory (ColonialCrit)

The most basic argument of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is that 'race' and racism are a defining characteristic of society and CRT aims to expose the patterns of exclusion and what is taken for granted regarding 'race' and privilege (Ladson-Billings 1998). While CRT originated in African-American legal circles in the United States, it has been variously modified and applied to other geographical, cultural and contextual settings. Such localised modification responds to the reality that racism is experienced differently by different groups in places with different historical and political trajectories (Rizvi 2009, p. 364). So, in my investigation I needed to respond to the experiences of dispossessing colonisation and, the racism that continues to flow from it, which persistently impacts on Australian Aboriginal peoples.

My research revealed that when Aboriginal students are spoken or heard of, it is frequently within a narrative of deficit, disadvantage and failure. Such a destructive majoritarian narrative has evolved out of two centuries of colonisation that sought variously to: civilise and Christianise; integrate, segregate, protect and assimilate; and, ultimately, to dispossess Aboriginal peoples. However, this destructive legacy is rarely

considered when trying to either understand the current situation of Aboriginal education, let alone considered in the myriad proposals of how to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. My research revealed overwhelmingly that we need to be engaging in "courageous, truthful conversations" that disrupt racism (Burns, Keyes & Kusimo 2005, p. 19). Supporting this call for courageous conversations, I argue that while CRT is still relatively new to the Australian educational landscape, it offers generative explanations for the persistence of the so-called 'achievement gap' between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Australia. Moreover, CRT can provide new ways, and a new language for analysing and challenging the role of racism in education. More specifically, CRT can be a constructive tool for challenging and disrupting the long-held expressions of deficit, disadvantage and intervention frequently connected with Aboriginal education.

In my thesis I have attempted to modify and expand the tenets of CRT to the Australian context. The aim was to draw attention to the ongoing impact of dispossessing colonisation, through the fictional doctrine of terra nullius, in the critique of Aboriginal education and, specifically, establishing a framework of pedagogical success. I therefore developed a modified version of CRT referred to as Colonial Critical Race Theory (ColonialCrit) which consists of four key tenets that attempt to capture the distinct Australian story of terra nullius styled colonisation:

- recognising the social embeddedness of racism;
- asserting the social construction of 'race' as a tool of oppressive segregation;
- privileging stories and counterstorytelling; and
- committing to social justice and educator praxis and hence Incorporating activism.

Overall, Colonial Critical Race Theory privileges the lived experiences of Australian Aboriginal peoples and their marginalised story of dispossession through colonisation. It argues that racism continues to be embedded in the Australian narrative. That the fictional doctrine of terra nullius, declared by Captain James Cook in 1770, created a void between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that persists into the present day (Matthews 2012). However, this destructive majoritarian narrative was found to be habitually relegated to the past, of belonging in a bygone era. But there is much more to racism that this popular view neglects.

My research revealed that implicit and explicit racism, both in the form of individual acts and systemic racism persist in the everyday of Australian society and its schools. Moreover, , my research revealed that the concept of 'culture' has now become the primary mechanism by which differences in human groups are to be understood rather than the historical concept of biology and 'race'. Jones (2012, p. 43) asserts: "Yet, it is this very notion of culture which in some ways became the new mechanism by which individuals could be differentiated into 'races'". So, "to speak of culture is not to cease to speak of race" (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997, p. 5). That is, both 'race' and 'culture' are forms of hierarchical comparison, classification and categorisation that enable peoples to be deemed inferior, to be excluded and, to be 'othered' (Gillborn 2006). That is, the social construction of 'race' as a tool for oppressive segregation continues its destructive work in Australian schooling. What is needed then is a new story, a counterstory of Aboriginal education success that privileges their distinct Aboriginal ways. Finally, like CRT, ColonialCrit is activist in nature, focusing on both critique, activism and social transformation.

8.4 Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success

My research privileges the lived experiences and stories of Aboriginal educational success and, where relevant, stresses counterstories that critique and transform the majoritarian racialised narrative of deficit and disadvantage. Overwhelmingly I found that the theoretical framework of CRP provides ways in which to reveal these stories that are frequently silenced or pushed to the margins. However, CRP infused with the tenets of Critical Race Theory and, for my purposes, colonial Critical Race Theory, enabled a robust theoretical framework to emerge that involves schools, teachers and teaching referred to as Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success (CRPS).

According to Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002), counterstorytelling is about learning to listen to other people's stories and finding ways to make them matter within the education system and within education research. Revealing this counterstory of Aboriginal educational success involved doing research 'proper ways' (borrowing from Aunty Nangala). As an Indigenous/Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher I did not take my insider status for granted. Instead I undertook my research in a culturally respectful, responsive, inclusive and culturally savvy way. I used the methodological frameworks of critical ethnography, culturally responsive research, and critical race theory

methodology that enabled me to 'Aboriginalise' data gathering and data analysis methods. My research is not just about getting a PhD but rather "it's something that you're building for yourself and for your community" (Wilson 2001, p. 179). The CRT method of counterstorytelling, framed within the principles of yarning (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010) and Storywork (Archibald 2001, 2008), was instrumental in revealing a counterpedagogy of Aboriginal educational success that has implications for both practice and policy, which is now discussed.

8.5 Implications for Practice and Policy

My version of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is grounded in a narrative that is fundamentally different from those mainstream narratives that generally inform how education has historically been constructed and implemented for Aboriginal students. Overwhelmingly, my research found that improving Aboriginal education involves more than 'fixing' the students, their families and their communities as has been the majoritarian story for generations. CRP does not belabour Aboriginal students so-called problems and pathologies (Gay 2010). Instead, I argue that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students requires Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, culturally responsive teachers and, culturally responsive schools. Finally, culturally responsive policy that responds to this complex human rights issue is needed. Each of these overarching dimensions has implications for policy and practice, which are now outlined.

8.5.1 Implications for pedagogy

Successful teaching of Aboriginal students was overwhelmingly found to involve two fundamental characteristics: Caring and Demander. My research findings therefore supports existing scholarship on successful teachers of marginalised or minoritised students. Embedded within international scholarship on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy are the constructs of 'warm-demanders' *(*Kleinfeld 1975) or 'caring-insistence' (Irvine & Fraser 1998; Ware 2006).

The agreed upon term for my research was that of 'caring-demander' which involves:

- an Aboriginal ethic of care that involves teachers becoming part of the extended kinship network (i.e. classified kin);

- culturally responsive caring relationships;
- the building of teacher–student "relationship cred." (borrowing from Mr Scott);
- high expectations for learning and educational success;
- the use of humour and creative nagging;
- culturally responsive proactive behaviour management;
- building safety and resilience in the learning space; and
- recruiting student interest through the privileging of Aboriginal distinct cultural ways of knowing, being and doing including student language/s, Dreaming, and partnerships with student Aboriginal communities.

So, while the first and most important characteristic of successful teaching was found to be the ability to create a climate of emotional warmth through caring relationships that dissipates students' fears in the classroom, emotional warmth on its own was found to be not enough to attain success (Kleinfeld 1975). Educational success also involves teachers possessing high expectations of students and demanding academic achievement and being intolerant of student failure.

My research overwhelmingly revealed that when students know that teachers care about them personally, and are concerned about their academic progress, they are far more willing to learn (Burns, Keyes & Kusimo 2005). For teachers, as implementers of caring-demander pedagogy, failure is not an option but success needs to be defined by the students themselves and not by the teachers, schools, communities or government. However, as Aboriginal students who have cultural and kinship responsibilities, teachers are aware that students' success is not just about the individual student but so too about the wider community, the language group to which they belong, to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and, to the Indigenous peoples of the world.

Furthermore, there is extensive evidence in my research that participating teachers are achieving educational success with Aboriginal students through a culturally centred teaching approach. This style of teaching is substantively different from the pedagogical approaches described and prescribed in the good, effective or quality teaching research that currently dominates the Australian educational landscape. In my thesis I responded

to the often-asked question of: “Isn’t Culturally Responsive Pedagogy not just simply good teaching practices or educational strategies for all students” (Au 2009; Jordan 1995)? Education researcher John Hattie (2003, 2009), would likely answer this question with a categorical ‘yes’ with no mention of the significance of a student’s distinct culture in learning in his synthesis of more than 800 meta-analyses which identified the effect of an extensive list of variables on educational success.

Similarly, there is a predominance of research on teaching pedagogies for Aboriginal students that positions all such students in the low socioeconomic status (SES) category (see, for example, Byrne & Munns 2012; Hayes, Johnston & King 2009). In her paper, *It’s Not the Culture of Poverty, It’s the Poverty of Culture: The Problem with Teacher Education*, Ladson-Billings (2006b, p. 106) writes of pre-service teachers reasons for low academic outcomes. Typically the response is one of blaming the: ‘culture of poverty’. Ladson-Billings (2006b, p. 106) counters with: “They use this phrase to describe what they see as a pathology of poor students and hide behind child poverty as an excuse for why they cannot be successful with some students”.

My research found that while some Aboriginal students lived in low socioeconomic circumstances, this was certainly not the case for all students. To focus on the concept of poverty is to potentially avoid problematising and confronting embedded racism (Castagno 2014; Gay 2013; Ladson-Billings 2006b).

According to my research, certain general principles of good, effective or quality teaching appear widely relevant to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. This is captured well by Monica Brown (2007, p. 4) who states: “culturally responsive teachers use the best of what we now know about good teaching”. Going one step further, I strongly agree with Byrnes, Keyes and Kusimo 2005, p. 27) who poignantly assert: that “whilst culturally responsive teaching is good teaching; good teaching is not necessarily culturally responsive”. So, I argue that successful teaching of Aboriginal students needs to stop overlooking and rejecting their distinct ways of knowing, being and doing as a variable in the learning space. My research revealed time and again, that when teachers embedded the students’ distinct Aboriginal culture in the learning space it resulted in teachers being able to build robust teacher–student relationships which then enabled teachers to use this relationship credibility to not only expect educational success, but to demand Aboriginal student success.

At the outset of this chapter, I made reference to the despair in Aurukun, Far North Queensland, where teachers had been evacuated due to fears for their safety. Aurukun is part of the Cape York Academy established by Aboriginal lawyer Noel Pearson and makes use of direct instruction teaching developed in the US in the 1960s. The direct instruction system focuses on the needs of children with learning difficulties; it is a highly scripted system where teachers are told what to say and students are encouraged to respond in a particular way (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2016). Though implemented for the past six years it is alleged that performance indicators of success are going backwards. Furthermore, teachers have apparently stated that they find the program demoralising. Aboriginal educator Chris Sarra stated:

> It is time to stop treating the people of Aurukun as if they are somehow sub-human, because when we treat people as sub-human, then of course these kinds of sub-human behaviours are going to emerge. (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2016, p. 1)

Thus, this US-centric system of learning that was first developed in the 1960s is not culturally responsive. It is a system that assumes that all students have problems and are at the same academic level; and it's highly scripted approach prevents teacher–student relationships to develop; it does not advocate for high expectations of student success; and, direct instruction does not privilege the distinct culture of the students and their language group/s. Sarra went on to assert:

> Instead of spending $30 million on a US-based product like direct instruction, in Aurukun we could spend just $150,000 on a curriculum writer specialist teacher who could sit down with the people of Aurukun and write a high expectation kind of curriculum program for every year level. (Australian Broadcasting Commission 2016, p. 1)

So, my research strongly advocates for a CRPS framework that centres students' distinct cultures, that responds to the specific location, and that is delivered by teachers who possess the characteristics of caring-demander. For within the classrooms of participating teachers, Aboriginal education success is happening on a daily basis though it goes largely unnoticed by the majority.

8.5.2 Implications for teachers

My research found that teaching is not a profession that you are 'born to do' and that successfully teaching Aboriginal students can be achieved by middle-class, white men (and women) and is not just the purview of Aboriginal peoples. Additionally, my

research found that successful educational outcomes for Aboriginal students is possible across all disciplines be they humanities or STEM[24]. Finally, the research revealed that while years of experience was of some advantage, it was not essential with participating teachers having experience that ranged from one year out (aged 24) through to three decades (aged 60 plus). Instead, the research revealed the teaching characteristics needed for successful teaching and that the necessary pedagogical characteristics can be acquired and learned. Teachers who position themselves within CRPS:

- develop caring relationships with their students;
- have high expectations of their students;
- believe in their student's ability and right to be successful in school and life; and
- privilege student's distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing being and doing in the learning space.

However, if the potential of culturally responsive pedagogies are to be realised, then widespread pre-service teacher and professional teacher development reform is needed.

At its very simplest, CRPS is "enacted cultural competence" (Perso & Hayward 2015, p. 1). But according to my research investigation, cultural competency as it is currently delivered, does not go far enough. Instead, I would argue that what is needed is for teachers to be *culturally savvy with educators possessing or knowing how to acquire:*

- knowledge of self;
- knowledge of students inclusive of their distinct Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing; and,
- knowledge of teacher practice through praxis that incorporates activism.

Evident in my research is that many teachers continue to adhere to deficit constructions of Aboriginal students. This is perhaps not so much a reflection on them as teachers as much as a reflection on their pre-service and professional training (Ladson-Billings 2006b). Nonetheless, this teacher (and school) stance is a significant barrier to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. Learning how to critique such

[24] Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

normalised majoritarian narratives is part of becoming culturally savvy and, in turn, culturally responsive pedagogues. Finally, being culturally savvy means that teachers become highly skilled at identifying the nuances of racism in the wider educational landscape and have the skills to critique and disrupt this destructive narrative so that Aboriginal students have ample opportunity to succeed. In short, as culturally responsive pedagogues, teachers become agents of change for social justice and education equity.

So, I argue that if successful teachers of Aboriginal students are to become the norm within our schools rather than the exception, then teacher education, both at the pre-service and ongoing professional development levels, will need serious transformation. Currently, teacher preparation programs are delivered by commonwealth funded, mainstream, predominantly 'white' universities, borne out of two centuries of dispossessing colonisation, and therefore run the risk of being sucked back into the system (Castagno 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate 2006). Consequently, pre-service teacher programs intended to prepare teachers to successfully teach Aboriginal students (and Aboriginal Studies) become more of the normalised majoritarian narrative instead of a means for disrupting and radically transforming the educational landscape. My research demonstrated that what is needed is a consistent and coherent approach to pre-service teacher training as well as ongoing professional development if sustainable improvements are to be seen in Aboriginal educational outcomes. Finally, I argue that the presence of successful teachers within schools needs to become the norm rather than the exception so that Aboriginal students have every opportunity to succeed.

8.5.3 Implications for schools

According to Schofield (2010, p. 7) education is generally understood to be an essentially optimistic human enterprise characterised by goals of individual progress and betterment. My research revealed a counterstory where the goals, or purposes of education for Aboriginal peoples differs significantly and are framed as:

- get your education;
- stay as an Aboriginal person; and
- represent the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

These three interlocking purposes of education, borrowed from Elder Uncle Pedro, formed the framework of culturally responsive schooling discussed in my research. To embed these purposes of education for Aboriginal students into everyday schooling would require an intense dialogue about the "ends and means of schooling, including re-examination of cultural assumptions about what a 'real school' is and what sort of improved schooling could realise new aspirations" (Tyack & Tobin 1994, p. 478). My research, however, revealed that schools continue to be places of assimilation for Aboriginal students into the mainstream where their distinct culture and languages are largely dismissed as having no value. Howard and Perry (2007, pp. 402-403) argue that Aboriginal students "... need to feel that schools belong to them as much as any child".

A key finding of my research was the necessity of providing students with a predictable and safe learning space which facilitates a sense of student belonging. One barrier to ensuring this was noted by my research participants. That is, by the time my research had concluded: three teachers were still on short-term contracts, one teacher needed to change schools, another teacher had retired and another teacher is close to retirement. With regards to Aboriginal Education Workers: one had moved to another position outside the school, two had changed schools due to contract issues, and two were part-time across two school locations. This uncertainty was noted frequently in my research as not enabling teachers to have sufficient time to establish robust caring-demander relationships with students. Nor does such unpredictability promote a sense of belonging for students.

In the absence of a culturally responsive school, I found that participating teachers and Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) were explicitly teaching Aboriginal students the rules and codes of the dominant culture so that they are able to negotiate schools successfully and make decisions about how and when they will negotiate such power without jeopardising their Aboriginality (Delpit 1995). Consequently, participating teachers and AEWs are engaging in 'acts of refusal' (Smyth, McInerney & Hattam 2003). That is, they are refusing to allow the rules, policies and rituals of the traditional institution of schooling to go unquestioned and unnoticed, thereby decreasing the frequency of suspension, expulsion and overall exclusion experienced by many Aboriginal students (Rahman 2009). Moreover, my research demonstrated repeatedly the significance of a culturally safe space within the learning setting where Aboriginal students are "spiritually, socially and emotionally safe" (Williams 1999, p. 213).

In short, a culturally responsive school, or the ability to negotiate the school as it currently is, means that schools become a place of benefit and betterment for all students, and not just for those affiliated with the dominant culture.

8.5.4 Implications for policy

Australian government departments and agencies respond to the stress experienced in Aboriginal peoples' lives with policies and practices that emerge from majoritarian values. It is a racially based narrative borne out of two centuries of colonisation that typically does not privilege Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Instead, such distinct Aboriginal ways are more often constructed as being primitive and therefore of no relevance in contemporary Australian society. What results is a top-down, or 'tame' (Australian Public Service Commission 2012) approach to Aboriginal policy and practice that excludes and silences the lived experiences of Aboriginal peoples .

For example, over the past decade there has been widespread enthusiasm for the Australian government's commitment to 'Close the gap'[25] on Aboriginal disadvantage. With regards to education, this 'disadvantage gap' has focused on closing the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in areas such as numeracy and literacy rates, school attendance and retention of students to Year 12 (Calma 2014; Dreise & Thompson 2014). But is *Close the gap* a useful policy strategy? During the course of my research investigation, I have become increasingly unsettled about the nature of this initiative, or what, at least, it has become. *Close the gap* promises measureable progress, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians working together to improve the lives of Australia's first peoples (Pholi, Black & Richards 2009). This gap is the annual measure and symptom of what Ladson-Billings (2006a) defined as the "education debt". The "education debt" highlights the systemic and cumulative impact of two centuries of educational inequities related to dispossession, civilising and Christianising; of exclusion, segregation, assimilation and integration; of racially-based low expectations and deficit constructions; and of funding, curricula, teachers, and professional standards. The achievement gap is arguably a tangible demonstration of the legacies of

[25] On 20 March 2008, representatives of the Australian federal government, peak Indigenous health bodies and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner signed a Statement of Intent 'between the Government of Australia and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia ... to work together to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians by the year 2030' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2008). This grass-roots campaign has since come to be known as *Close the gap.*

colonisation and without the education debt, the achievement gap could be narrowed or even closed (Ladson-Billings 2006a).

Furthermore, by applying a ColonialCrit framework, I now understand the destructive majoritarian narrative hidden within this popular initiative. The secret message conveyed in those three words of *Close the gap* are that Aboriginal students are behind, in need of intervention and that they must catch up to their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Policies and programs continue to position Aboriginal students within a discourse of progress and enlightenment where on one hand they are disadvantaged, and on the other hand, what they could become as a result of education (Harrison 2007). It is a majoritarian narrative that is about the potential to become rather than recognising the success of Aboriginal students in the present. But what if there is no progress? Who gets the blame?

In the 2014 *Close the gap* statement, a new target was added: end the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school attendance within five years (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014). In 2016 the *Close the gap* report revealed that no progress had been made in reaching this attendance target (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2016). No improvement despite the employment of, for example, more than 400 school attendance officers in the Northern Territory (Dreise & Thomson 2014). This new target operated on the assumption that improving Aboriginal educational outcomes would simply come from ensuring attendance at school. However, as so eloquently stated by Aboriginal leader and scholar Tom Calma "getting people in the door is not going to mean you're going to learn" (Calma 2014, p. 1). Consequently, as illustrated in my research, the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students need to be assessed according to all that they do, and all that they need to contend with, and not just a few areas that are relatively easy to measure such as school attendance.

My research argues that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students is a 'wicked problem', in that they are complex, difficult to understand and resistant to resolution rather than wicked in the sense of evil (Australian Public Service Commission 2007). As a societal and community problem, improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students will, I argue from my research findings, involve solutions:

- that are multidimensional;
- that respond to the localised situation including the specific language group and its' cultural ways of knowing, being and doing;
- that are identified through collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders;
- that provide for contradictory pathways of resolution;
- that take into account the ongoing impact of dispossessing colonisation;
- that are focused on short-term, medium- and long-term outcomes; and
- whose success is both quantifiable and anecdotal.

I argue that *Close the gap,* with courageous conversations between those concerned, could become part of the solution. For, despite its shortcomings, *Close the gap* has at least focused attention on the social justice imperative that every child is entitled to learn and to achieve an education. Furthermore, comprehensive and reliable data are important for setting benchmarks and monitoring progress in the achievement of rights-based goals (Calma 2006). Through courageous and truthful conversations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in the know, I argue that *Close the gap* has the potential to become a useful tool for focusing critique, reform and transformation. To discontinue quantitative goal-setting and performance monitoring makes no sense, but it is reasonable to call for an end to the excessive privileging of such approaches (Morrissey et al. 2004, p. 247). Working within a framework of improving Aboriginal education as a wicked problem enables this initiative to become more than an exercise in statistical equality (Pholi, Black & Richards 2009). That is, before deciding how to 'fix' the current 'crisis' it is important to understand how Aboriginal culture is different to non-Aboriginal culture, and therefore why "looking for mainstream solutions to deeply entrenched non-mainstream problems" is not suitable for improving the situation of Aboriginal peoples (Slater 2010, p. 144). Although the *Close the gap* campaign does draw necessary attention to the injustices faced by Aboriginal peoples (Pholi, Black & Richards 2009), it fails to recognise the key reasons for Aboriginal education stress, namely, the pervasive process of colonisation (Pholi, Black & Richards 2009). Finally, *Close the gap* contains and transmits the secret message of deficit and failure, of being

'caught up' to the 'white man's' world as being the solution for all ills while not addressing the embedded pathologisation of Aboriginal peoples (Sefa Dei & Kempf 2006).

8.5.5 Implications for further research

Research on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, teachers and schooling, offers new and promising directions for improving Aboriginal education outcomes. More specifically, research into cultural responsiveness infused with the tenets of ColonialCrit has the potential for creating a counterstory of Aboriginal education success that disrupts the majoritarian story of deficit, failure and disadvantage. This is particularly important in today's era of national teaching standards, assessment benchmarks and rigorous national and international assessment procedures where ensuring equity for Aboriginal students via culturally responsive pedagogical practices may get lost in the dialogue and sucked back into the dominant system. My research revealed a number of areas for future research that centre Aboriginal educational equity and social justice:

- The undertaking of multi-sited, culturally responsive ethnographies of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success infused with the tenets of Critical Race Theory and my proposed modified version of Colonial Critical Race Theory. The framework developed in my thesis needs to be applied in other Aboriginal language groups and geographical locations—metropolitan, rural and remote—to reveal their nuanced counterpedagogies.

- Research into teacher education both at pre-service and professional levels. Recent attention in the US and Canada on preparing teachers to teach culturally diverse students would be of assistance (see, for example, Castagno 2012; Delpit 2013; Hollins 2008; Gay 2010; Nichol, Archibald & Baker 2010; Villegas & Lucas 2007). This research would extend and expand on the Australian scholarship by, for example, Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) and Price and Hughes (2009) that investigated what is working for preparing teachers to work successfully with Aboriginal students. Such training would: privilege Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success; problematise pedagogical practice by confronting racism; teach educators how to engage in praxis that incorporates activism; and assist emerging and established teachers to challenge the normalised purposes of schooling.

- Research into how we move beyond the ‘culturally competent’ to the ‘culturally savvy" learning space’ where teachers and educators become highly skilled at identifying and disrupting the nuances of racism in the wider educational landscape so that Aboriginal students have ample opportunity to succeed. This would include further investigation into the knowledge that teachers (and pre-service teachers) need: knowledge of self; knowledge of students and their cultures; and knowledge of teacher practice through praxis.
- Research into having safe learning spaces throughout the school that facilitates Aboriginal student school belongingness and ability to negotiate and disrupt the embedded culture of power;
- Research into my proposed modified CRT framework, ColonialCrit that responds to the distinct Australian story of dispossessing colonisation which seeks to dispossess those who are affiliated with the dominant majoritarian story of their racialised social constructs be they biologically, genetically or culturally based.

8.5.6 Social imperative

Aboriginal peoples have the fastest growing population in the country and have a significantly skewed age structure. They are a young population, with more than one-third of Aboriginal people being aged 15 years or under, compared with one-fifth of non-Aboriginal people (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). In 2010, approximately 200,000 more Aboriginal students were expected to enter the Australian educational system by 2020 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). These are essential statistics for education stakeholders as it suggests a larger proportion of Aboriginal children are school-aged and therefore in need of schools and teaching that is ready for them.

Unfortunately for Australia, the full benefits of education have yet to be realised for Aboriginal peoples. My research is a significant departure from normalised ‘good’, ‘effective’ or ‘quality’ pedagogy that is yet to achieve sustainable educational improvements for Aboriginal students. Culturally Responsive Pedagogies of Success, investigated in my research, offers potentially new and transforming possibilities. This counterpedagogy proposes that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students will involve both new pedagogical approaches and critiquing and seriously disrupting how schools operate as assimilating and dispossessing spaces. Evident in the research is the need to re-purpose education for Aboriginal students and their communities.

Now is the time to get down to the serious business of transforming teacher education, both at the pre-service and ongoing professional development levels, so that success of Aboriginal high school students (academically, socially and culturally) becomes the 'norm' and not the exception. I argue that we need to be re-culturing our schools so that teachers can be re-cultured and, in this way, Aboriginal students can stay cultured while succeeding academically, socially and culturally.

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Appendix 1: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Terminology Diversity

	Descriptor	**Delivery**
Cultural(ly)	Responsive	Pedagogy
	Relevant	Instruction
	Appropriate	Schooling
	Sensitive	Curriculum
	Centred	Education
	Congruent	Teaching
	Compatible	Intervention
	Reflective	
	Mediated	
	Responsible	
	Contextualised	
	Synchronised	
	Competent	
	Relative	
	Sustainable	
	Revitalised	

Appendix 2: Consent Forms

Appendix A: Site Information Letter

University of South Australia
Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences
School of Education

David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research

22 February, 2013

Successful Teaching of Aboriginal Secondary Students: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Supervisors:
Telephone:
Email:

Dear_____

My name is Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes and I am currently undertaking PhD studies at the University of South Australia. I am conducting research in the area of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy with Aboriginal mainstream high school students.

Research tells us that teachers are the 'break or make' element of success for Aboriginal students. Therefore, the aim of my research is to investigate and document the practices of teachers who are identified as being successful with Aboriginal secondary students in mainstream schooling. In this way, my research has the potential for improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students on a broader scale.

The research project will consists of three stages across two schools over a period of three school terms. Activities will include: interviewing of key school personnel including principals, lead teachers and, Indigenous staff; consultation with relevant parents; discussions/forums with Years 8/9 Aboriginal students; classroom observation of identified teachers; the taking of photographs by students of successful teaching and learning. Additionally, to gain a contextual knowledge of the chosen site, I will seek access to relevant documents such as policies and annual reports and, attend key school meetings/events.

Please be assured that this research will follow strict guidelines in accordance with the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and all participants are free to withdraw at any time, without consequence. All data will be secured for a mandated period of five years at the University of South Australia after which time they will be destroyed via deletion of digital data and shredding of hard copy data. Data will be managed so that your school and the participants involved are not directly identifiable within it and that only the researcher will be able to re-identify your participation within the data. Any photos taken are not for public viewing or publication but rather for the purpose of conversation with the participant. Findings from the study will be reported and may be published, in both cases pseudonyms will be used for the school and all participants involved. A summary of the findings from the study will be made available to you should you request it.

The research project has the potential to inform both pre-service teacher training courses and, ongoing professional development. In this way, the research supports the DECDD's strategic plan in a multitude of ways including: cultivating a high standard of learning; improving Aboriginal educational outcomes through identifying key aspects of quality teaching; and, to gain insight from both students and parents for future planning.

This research has been approved by the *University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)* and the Department for Education and Child Development.

If you are prepared for your school to take part, a formal letter of support from your school is required. Should you require additional information regarding this research, please contact Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes on Mobile: ...

Thank you for considering this request.

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix B: Teacher Participant Consent Form

University of South Australia
Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences
School of Education

David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research

22 February, 2013

I (name) _____

hereby consent to my involvement in the research project entitled:

Successful Teaching of Aboriginal Secondary Students: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Principal Researcher: Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes

I have read and understood the Information Sheet on the above project and understand what is being asked of me - being shadowed by the researcher; being observed in my classroom over two school terms; to participate in semi-formal interviews and ongoing casual conversations; to participate in photo elicitation autodriven method; and, to provide feedback on analysed data.

I understand that the observations and interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription and subsequent data analysis;

I understand that I may not directly benefit by taking part in this research;

I understand that I may challenge or clarify what has been written to ensure accuracy and confidentiality

I understand that while information gained in the study may be published, I will not be identified; all individual information will remain confidential;

I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary;

I am free to withdraw my participation at any time with negative consequences;

I understand that there will be no payment for my taking part in this study;

I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference;

I consent to being involved in this project.

Signed: **Date:**
Print Name:

Appendix C: Aboriginal Education Worker Consent Form

University of South Australia
Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences
School of Education

David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research

22 February, 2013

I (name) _____

hereby consent to my involvement in the research project entitled:

Successful Teaching of Aboriginal Secondary Students: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Principal Researcher: Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes

I have read and understood the Information Sheet on the above project and understand what is being asked of me - participating in semi-formal interviews and casual conversations regarding the research concern;

I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription and subsequent data analysis;

I understand that I may not directly benefit by taking part in this research;

I understand that I may challenge or clarify what has been written to ensure accuracy and confidentiality

I understand that while information gained in the study may be published, I will not be identified; all individual information will remain confidential;

I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary;

I am free to withdraw my participation at any time with negative consequences;

I understand that there will be no payment for my taking part in this study;

I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference;

I consent to being involved in this project.

Signed: **Date:**
Print Name:

Appendix 3: Teacher Profile

Remember your answers to this survey are STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and your anonymity will be protected. However the demographic information provided will help the researcher in the contextualisation of data gathered. When complete please email to:		
Question One: Personal details		
Name:		
Home suburb:		
Email Address:		
Phone:		
What is your cultural heritage?		
Question Two: Age? Please tick one:		
21-25		
26-30		
31-35		
36-40		
41-45		
46-50		
51-55		
56-60		
60+		
Question Three: What is your gender?		
Female		
Male		
Question Four: How many Years have you been teaching?		
1-3		
4-6		
7-9		
10-12		
13-15		
16-19		
20+		
Question Five: How many years have you been teaching at this school?		
1-3		
4-6		
7-9		
10-12		
13-15		
15+		
Other	*Please explain:*	

Question Six: Please list any other schools where you have taught and how long for:	

Question Seven: What high school/s did you attend as a student? *Please include: school, city, state and country:*

Question Eight: What year level did you leave school? (please mark one)				
Year 9	**Year 10**	**Year 11**	**Year 12**	**Other**

Question Nine: Think back to when you were in school (K-12), would you say that you:	
Liked school a lot	Did not like school
Liked school a little	Hated school

Question Ten: Think back to when you were in school (K-12), would you describe yourself as:	
A studious student	A sporting student
An average student	A rebellious student
A disinterested student	Other?

Question Eleven: Would you describe your grades as:	
Poor	
Below average	
Average	
Above average	
Excellent	
Other?	

Question Twelve: From what college or university/ies did you graduate?	
Institution Name	**Course Title**

Question Thirteen: How many higher education courses did you take related to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples? (circle option one below)					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Other?**

Course Name	**Year Level**

Question Fourteen: What assignments (if any) do you recall undertaking either from the courses above or other courses that related to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people? *(Briefly describe)*
Question Fifteen: Before becoming a teacher what, if any, other jobs did you do?
Question Sixteen: : Please describe briefly why you decided to become a teacher?

Question Seventeen: : What subjects do you teach at school?	
Question Eighteen: On average, how many students do you teach each day?	
Question Nineteen: Approximately how many students are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?	

Question Twenty: How do you define educational success?			
Question Twenty-One: Do you do anything differently to teach Aboriginal students?			
Yes		**No**	
If yes, what do you change?			
If no, how come?			

Question Twenty-Two: Please check all that are applicable?	
Answer options:	
I participate in community events	
I have explored the community of my students	
I know where most of my students live	
I know most of the parents of my students	
I collaborate with community members both in and out of school	
I maintain high expectations for all students	
I am warm and caring	
I know how to connect with my students	
I maintain strong classroom discipline	
I have a great deal of knowledge of the culture of my students	
I know about the culture of my students	
I know little about the culture of my students	
My teaching connects directly to student's lives	
Any other comments?	
Thank you for your time.	

AEW - PHASE I SURVEY

Remember your answers to this survey are STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and your anonymity will be protected. The demographic information provided will help the researcher in the contextualisation of data gathered. When complete please email to		
Question One: Personal details		
Name:		
Home suburb:		
Email Address:		
Phone:		
What is your cultural heritage?		
Question Two: Age? Please tick one:		
21-25		
26-30		
31-35		
36-40		
41-45		
46-50		
51-55		
56-60		
60+		
Question Three: What is your gender?		
Female		
Male		
Question Four: How many years have you been an AEW?		
1-3		
4-6		
7-9		
10-12		
13-15		
16-19		
20+		
Question Five: How many years have you been working at this school?		
1-3		
4-6		
7-9		
10-12		
13-15		
15+		
Other	*Please explain:*	

Question Six: Please list any other schools where you have worked and how long for:	

Question Seven: What high school/s did you attend as a student? *Please include: school, city, state and country:*

Question Eight: What year level did you leave school? (please mark one)				
Year 9	**Year 10**	**Year 11**	**Year 12**	**Other?** *Please specify:*

Question Nine: Think back to when you were in school (K-12), would you say that you:	
Liked school a lot	Did not like school
Liked school a little	Hated school

Question Ten: Think back to when you were in school (K-12), would you describe yourself as:	
A studious student	A sporting student
An average student	A rebellious student
A disinterested student	Other?

Question Eleven: Would you describe your grades as:	
Poor	
Below average	
Average	
Above average	
Excellent	
Other?	

Question Twelve: From what college or university/ies did you graduate?	
Institution Name	**Course Title**

Question Thirteen: How many higher education courses did you take related to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples?? (circle option one below)					
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Other?**

Course Name	**Year Level**

Question Fourteen: What assignments (if any) do you recall undertaking either from the courses above or other courses that related to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people? *(Briefly describe)*			
Question Fifteen: Before becoming an AEW what, if any, other jobs did you do?			
Question Sixteen: : Please describe briefly why you decided to become an AEW?			
Question Seventeen: : How would you describe your role as an AEW?			
Question Eighteen: On average, how many students do you work with each day and in what age range?			
Question Nineteen: What do you see as your major challenge in undertaking your work?			
Question Twenty: How do you define educational success?			
Question Twenty-One: Do you do anything differently working with Aboriginal students?			
Yes		**No**	
If yes, what do you change?			

If no, why not?	
Question Twenty-Two: Please check all that are applicable?	
Answer options:	
I participate in community events	
I have explored the community of my students	
I know where most of my students live	
I know most of the parents/families of my students	
I collaborate with community members both in and out of school	
I maintain high expectations for all students	
I am warm and caring	
I know how to connect with my students	
I maintain strong classroom discipline	
I have a great deal of knowledge of the culture of my students	
I know about the culture of my students	
I know little about the culture of my students	
My teaching connects directly to student's lives	
Any other comments?	
Thank you for your time.	

Appendix 4: National Professional Standards for Teachers and focus areas

Focus areas

Professional Knowledge

1. Know students and how they learn	1.1 Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students
	1.2 Understand how students learn
	1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
	1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
	1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
	1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disability

2. Know the content and how to teach it	2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area
	2.2 Content selection and organisation
	2.3 Curriculum, assessment and reporting
	2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
	2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies
	2.6 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Professional Practice

3 Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	3.1 Establish challenging learning goals
	3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs
	3.3 Use teaching strategies
	3.4 Select and use resources
	3.5 Use effective classroom communication
	3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs
	3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process

4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning	4.1 Support student participation
	4.2 Manage classroom activities
	4.3 Manage challenging behaviour
	4.4 Maintain student safety
	4.5 Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically

5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	5.1 Assess student learning
	5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning
	5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements
	5.4 Interpret student data

Standard	Focus areas
Professional Engagement	
6. Engage in professional learning	6.1 Identify and plan professional learning needs
	6.2 engage in professional learning and improve practice
	6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice
	6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/ carers and	Meet professional ethics and responsibilities
	Comply with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements
	Engage with the parents/carers
	Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

Source: AITSL (2014)

Appendix 5: The Dreaming story of 'Waatj Pulyeri the Blue Wren'

Aboriginal Dreamtime stories are a learning pathway to build our cultural competencies by increasing our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Australia. Creation or dreamtime stories often explain how the country, animals and people came to be as they are. They tell us when things were made, why they were made and how they were made. Creation stories can be used as children's stories with moral tones that reinforce correct behaviour.

Aboriginal Dreaming Story of Waatji Pulyeri
The Little Blue Wren
Original narrated story by Jimmy Rankine, Ngarrinderi

I'll tell ya story about Waatji Pulyeri, the blue wren.

A long time ago all the birds were happy, flyin' around and getting along together. Then one day the Muldrie, Mr Magpie said "Look at my feathers, they're really pretty, don't you think?" The Blue Herron popped his head up and said "who cares for your feathers, look at my legs, they're so long and beautiful". Other birds joined in then showin' us their beaks, their tail feathers and their feet.

Soon, a big argument broke out. Who had the prettiest eyes or the strongest legs or shiniest feathers or the sweetest song? All the birds were yelling and screamin', the argument grown louder and louder until they woke up Mr Owl. He looked down on them and yelled "KEEP QUIET!" The birds stopped arguing, they never heard the wise old owl raise his voice before. "What's all this arguing about?" asked Mr Owl. "Kungari, the Swan has the strongest legs", The Blue Herron, "but mine are stronger" he said. "Are not" said Kungari the swan. So they all started

arguing again and once more the Old Owl he called for quiet. "What's the point of arguing about how the Great Spirit made you" Laughed Old Owl "You are all different anyway, why don't you have a competition instead?" "A competition?" said all the birds "What sort of competition?" The Ol bird rolled his eyes back and side "Ahh, sometimes it's hard being old and wise. What's something that you can all do?" he asked. The birds scratched their beaks and ruffled their feathers wondering what is that, that they could all do? After a while the old owl flapped his wings at them and said "What are you a bunch of bird brains? Fly! You can all fly". The birds agreed that

flying was something they could all do. So they lined up and took turns to see who could fly the highest. Mulderi the Magpie took off first. Next was Kungari the Swan who flew very high.

Waatji Pulyeri, The Little Blue Wren was watchin', thinkin' all these birds are doin' hard work. But I'm smart, I gotta plan. He snuck behind the bush near to where the birds were taking off and waited. Ol Walduri The Eagle and Ngori The Pelican were left. Eagle flew higher and higher catchin' an air pocket that took em' up into the sky so that all the birds were askin' "Where is he?" When Waljurri back, all the birds were cheerin'. Ngori said "Wait till I get up there, I'll show you" He took off flappin' his wings until he caught an air pocket too. Now remember little Waatji Pulyeri, the little blue wren, when Old Ngori the Pelican took off Waatji Pulyeri snuck in under Cloury Ngori Pelican's wings, catchin' a free ride, he was still holdin' on when old Ngori the Pelican looked round and reckoned he was higher than Waldurri the eagle had flown. "I'm the winner" said Ngori the Pelican. Just when little Waatji Pulyeri, The little Blue Wren flew out from underneath Ngori Pelican's wing and started up into the air. Higher than Old Ngori the Pelican had gone. "No you're not" said Waatji Pulyeri, the little blue wren "I'm the highest, I'm the winner" And he flew down with Old Ngori and the Pelican chasin' him callin' out "Cheat! You had a free ride!" Little Waatiji Pulyeri the Little Blue Wren landed and said he was the winner and all the other birds started cheerin'. Then, Ngori the Pelican landed and told them what Waatiji Pulyeri, the blue wren, had done. Walleri the Eagle who had keen eyes said he saw Waatiji Pulyeri dart out from underneath Ngori, the pelican's wing in the sky. All the birds were angry with Waatiji Pulyeri called him a cheat. They chased him away peckin' him teasin' him, said they didn't want him round, so little Waatji Pulyeri went and hid in the bush and that's where Waatiji Pulyeri lives to this day. He only flys up above the bush to look around and darts back again. Because that is his punishment. He cannot now fly higher than the Waatiji bushes.

Educator's Reflection on Morals of story…

The Moral of this Dreamtime story is the acceptance of one's uniqueness. That individuality is part of your Identity you have been created uniquely. Comparing yourself to others is detrimental to confidence and success in learning. This is relevant

to Educators when reflecting on their Principles and reviewing their teaching strategies in order to create a culturally responsive learning space.

Educators strive to teach young children within their care that they are all special and unique despite what society may deem as strengths or attractive characteristics. In relation to the Early Years Learning Framework Educators will be reflecting on this Dreaming Story to assist them to teach the children to achieve a strong sense of Identity. To be connected with and contribute to their world and to begin to teach children about Aboriginal Culture and the History of Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal Australia.

Source: Provided by Aunty Nangala.