

**How understanding the Aboriginal Kinship system can inform
better policy and practice: social work research with the
Larrakia and Warumungu Peoples of the Northern Territory**

Submitted by

KAREN CHRISTINE KING BSW

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

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All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. King'.

Karen Christine King BSW

9th March 2012

ABSTRACT

This qualitative inquiry explored the kinship system of both the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples of the Northern Territory with the aim of informing social work theory and practice in Australia. It also aimed to return information to the knowledge holders for the purposes of strengthening Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

This study is presented as a journey, with the oral story-telling traditions of the Larrakia and Warumungu embedded and laced throughout. The kinship system is unpacked in detail, and knowledge holders explain its benefits in their lives along with their support for sharing this knowledge with social workers.

Australian history is examined through the lens of the kinship system and offers insights into why the Aboriginal peoples are located in the spaces and situations in which we currently find ourselves. This knowledge also sheds light on the current relationship between Aboriginal peoples and social workers.

The findings suggest that knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal kinship is a gap in social work theory, practice, education and literature. This thesis argues that addressing this gap could result in culturally safer outcomes for Aboriginal peoples who come into contact with social workers, other professionals and service deliverers.

Outcomes of this study have been the development of a research model suitable for Aboriginal social workers, which has been called Aboriginal Circular Research, as well as a Pendulum of Practice and a Kinship Mapping Tool.

**Aboriginal peoples are warned that there are names and images
of deceased persons within this thesis.**

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I acknowledge and thank the Great Creator, the Rainbow Serpent, and all the other Creation entities for their gifts since the Dreaming. I also thank mother earth for sustaining our lives and for the relatedness and kinship connections she provides and maintains between all entities within the cosmos. I acknowledge I will speak here of the Rainbow Serpent's Law and therefore ask for blessings and guidance as I proceed on this journey.

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¹ My father is deceased so his first name will be shared only once. From then on, following the protocols of my people, the term 'kumunjayi' is used to refer to him. The same applies to my son Paul.

² RF indicates of whom I am speaking through the use of initials.

³ Children.

legged members of our family, Izzi and Genkie, who represent one of our totems, the dingo. The ACU provided a scholarship that enabled me to take time off work to progress my research and I thank them.

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GLOSSARY

Aboriginal. The terms Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal, Australian Indigenous and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout this thesis and refer to the First Peoples of Australia, not including Torres Strait Islanders (see below). Within this research, the definition of Aboriginal refers to, ‘people of Aboriginal descent through immediate Aboriginal genealogy bloodline’, or ‘a person who can name their ancestors who have identified, lived and were known and accepted in their Aboriginal community’ and ‘who live and are known and accepted as being of Aboriginal descent, can name immediate family members, identify and live as an Aboriginal community-oriented person, and who are known and accepted by the Aboriginal community where they live and work’ (Briggs-Smith, cited in Grieves, 2008, p. 300).

Aboriginal. It should be noted that Canadian academics sometimes refer to their Indigenous peoples as Aboriginal. Therefore, citations from Canadians in which the term Aboriginal is used will refer to Canadian Indigenous peoples.

Aboriginal Governance. Refers to Aboriginal governance that is embedded within Aboriginal Law, culture, protocols and the Aboriginal kinship system. This form of governance was given in the Dreaming by the Creation Entities and has been continually used by the Aboriginal peoples as a guide in our lives. This understanding of governance is very different to the way the term is used in the broader Australian context where it is usually attached to western views of accountability, structure and finance.

Axiology. A term used to describe the ‘ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for’ (Wilson, 2008, p. 34).

Cultural competence. Describes the delivery of services that are responsive to the cultural concerns of racial and ethnic minority groups including their languages, histories, traditions, beliefs and values, and responds by developing a set of skills, knowledge, and policies to deliver effective treatments (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, cited in Gibbs, Huang & Associates, 2003 p. 36).

Culturally congruent practice. Practice in which social workers are aware of their own worldviews, epistemologies, and axiology and recognise that these may differ from those of the Aboriginal peoples. They are also aware of any privileges they may have with regards to whiteness (where applicable), and the privileges and power that come with being a social worker, as well as the history of interactions between social workers and the Aboriginal peoples. Social workers are also aware of and incorporate cultural protocols that impact on their interactions and engagements with Aboriginal peoples at the individual, family and community levels.

Cultural safety. Refers to an environment that is spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically and culturally safe. Key concepts in cultural safety include a person understanding their own values and beliefs and how they affect relationships with others and the dynamics of power relationships.

Indigenous. This term is used interchangeably between the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and the First peoples of other countries depending on the context being referred to.

Jukurrpa. The Warumungu term for Aboriginal Law. Included in Jukurrpa are the following: kinship, reciprocity, obligations, land, care of country and totems, to name but a few. Law cannot be separated from the Dreaming or from spirituality, since they are

interconnected and interwoven. Much is lost in attempting to translate this complex and inter-related concept into the English language.

Kumunjayi. An Aboriginal word from the Northern Territory used to indicate that the person being spoken of is deceased. This term replaces the given name of the deceased person as a sign of respect. In some instances the initials of the deceased person are used in conjunction with this term, for example kumunjayi JF.

Mission. For the purposes of this thesis, ‘mission’ refers to distinct compounds organised by various Christian religions where Aboriginal children were sent when they were removed from their parents, in order to be taught Christianity, English, and be prepared to become servants.

Moiety. The word used to describe the two halves of Aboriginal society (Trudgen, 2000, p. iii). However Aboriginal understandings from other nations are more extensive than that offered by Trudgen, for the Larrakia and Warumungu, the cosmos fits into moiety, thus connecting all entities, including people.

Nation. Bodies of people bound together by their bioregional and other natural cultural affinities (Deloria Jr, 1984). Many Aboriginal peoples prefer this word rather than the word tribe.

Putuana. A Warumungu term which indicates that someone has died or is deceased.

Resilience. Capacities within a person that promote positive outcomes, such as mental health and well-being, and provide protection from factors that might otherwise place the person at risk of adverse health outcomes (Monograph, 2000).

Skin names. Are distinct Aboriginal language names within the moiety system that identify particular genders and generations. They are a key part of the kinship system of Aboriginal peoples. While the Warumungu have skin names called the system of eight it has in total sixteen skin names. Other nations can have four, eight or sixteen skin names. Skin names have nothing to do with the colour of a person's skin, they are about the generations in which people are born. Further information and useful links go to the Kulunga Research Network. aboriginal.childhealthresearch.org.au/useful-links.aspx.

Song lines. Ancient maps that criss-cross the land. These maps were traditionally not illustrated on paper as western maps are. Rather, they were learned through song, ceremony and dance and assisted in navigating land, sea and celestial bodies. Currently song lines are being used by Aboriginal peoples to support land claims and are being illustrated in paintings such as those found in the Canning Stock Route Exhibition.

Tacit knowledge. 'All that is unconsciously remembered, including a multitude of inexpressible associations, which give rise to new meanings, new ideas, and new applications of the old' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 196).

Torres Strait Islanders. A separate population group who are Melanesian, not part of the mainland or Tasmanian Aboriginal nations. As this thesis focuses on Aboriginal kinship, the laws and culture of Torres Strait Islander peoples are not included.

Totem. An animal that has a close spiritual affiliation with an individual, family, clan or nation. A totem is an animal ancestral being that speaks to, guides and inspires the groups that it is associated with. Aboriginal people are expected to care for their totem animal and its habitat. Neither do we eat the flesh of this animal.

Wirnkarra. The Warumungu term for the Dreaming which contrary to popular western thought is not a myth or fairy story. Wirnkarra is a complex concept which can be explained through use of the number '8', with the loops representing the past and future, and the connection at the centre representing the present. The loop is always in flux, as the future becomes the present and then the past. There is more than one 8: there are echoes of the 8, enabling people to move backward and forward in time. Hence, our ancestors can visit and speak to us because time folds into itself. Also, some of the Creation spirits remain in the land and continue to guide us.

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PROLOGUE: LOCATING MYSELF IN THIS RESEARCH

In preparing for this research journey, I have read a number of dissertations and papers written by First Nation scholars, both nationally and internationally. In doing this, I was impressed with the advice given by Maori scholar, Dr Graeme Smith, who suggested to his students that they write their story in a prologue at the very beginning of their thesis. I then saw this practice in action when reading the dissertation of Dr Margaret Kovach (2006), a First Nations woman from Canada.

The advice from Dr Smith fits well with one of the communication protocols of the Aboriginal peoples. The protocol we follow on meeting each other for the first time is to introduce ourselves culturally, so that those we are meeting with can identify who we are, where we are from, and who our relations and peoples are. This practice informs Aboriginal peoples about how to relate to each other and of any cultural protocols that may need to be addressed around Aboriginal Law in regard to obligations, reciprocity, kinship and skin names.

Introducing Myself

Wankili! - Piliyi angi nyinta? *Hello, how are you?* My name is Christine Fejo-King. My skin name is Naljarri. I am a Larrakia / Warumungu woman from the Northern Territory. My dudaba (father), kumunjayi⁴ Fejo, and his fathers before him were all proud Larrakia men, far back into the Dreaming. My mother is a Warumungu woman. Her name is Lorna Fejo. She is part of the Stolen Generations (see Chapter Three for more information around

⁴ Means deceased.

what is meant by this term); one who was fortunate enough to find her way back to her people after many decades of separation.

I am the second oldest of eleven karu (children). Of these, four putuana (died) in infancy and one putuana in his thirties. Of those living, I have three sisters - Rosemary, Aleeta and Mirella: we all share the same woman's skin name, which is Naljarri. I also have two surviving brothers, Eric and Richie, who also share the same male skin name, which is Jappaljarri. I am closest to my three sisters - they are my best friends, confidants and radars. Between all of my brothers and sisters, we have twenty-five karu (children) and they in turn have given us another fourteen grandchildren. I say this as through Aboriginal Law, the karu and grandchildren of my brothers and sisters are my karu and grandchildren and vice versa. Each person is precious to us and treated with love and kindness - they bring great joy and experience to the tapestry of our lives.

When I was a young girl, my older sister Rosemary and I were stolen from our parents and sent to the same Christian mission that our mother had been sent to when she was stolen from her family and community. We were stolen for no other reason than that we were Aboriginal. After some time, as government policy about Aboriginal people changed, the mission we had been sent to was closed down. My sister and I were sent back to Darwin, where our father was able to find us and take us back to our family again. Our mother had also found her way back to her family. However, her reunion took decades, whereas ours did not. The re-uniting of our family was as balm to our wounded hearts, minds and bodies.

My relations / countrymen come from all over the Northern Territory, as I am related to both salt water and desert people through bloodline and ceremonial practices. The list of my relations, though, extends even beyond the Northern Territory down into parts of

Central Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, as some of my grandchildren are located in these areas. It also extends to those who, like myself and my family, share the same skin name, Law and culture, but live outside of our homelands. I acknowledge and greet you all and welcome you on this journey with me.

Although I am a Larrakia and Warumungu woman, as already stated, I have spent the past twelve years living and working in the country of the Nungawal (Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory). Therefore, I acknowledge their ancestors and Elders, who have been so kind as to allow my kalyakalya (husband), karu (children) and myself, to walk upon and live within the boundaries of their country safely.

My Research Journey

The story of my research stretches over a number of years. It has been interesting, exciting, frustrating, fun, challenging and humbling, as well as being a wonderful journey that I would not have missed. I can truthfully say that I have not taken this journey alone as, on many occasions when I have been searching for answers, the voices of my ancestors have spoken to me in dreams to give the answers I have needed. I have also been guided to books, people, stories and knowledge at various points. All these occurrences make clear to me the importance and sacred nature of my research journey. It tells me that this work connects me and those I am doing this work for to the past (all our ancestors and relations), the present (all of us as countrymen) and the future (to all our karu and their karu yet to be born).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Heritage can never be alienated, surrendered or sold, except for conditional use. Sharing therefore creates a relationship between the givers and receivers of knowledge. The givers retain the authority to ensure that knowledge is used properly and the receivers continue to recognise and repay the gift (Daes, 1993, p. 9).

This qualitative inquiry explores the Aboriginal kinship system and the role it plays in the lives of Aboriginal people. I argue that the kinship system is a central part of Aboriginal Law and of the heritage of the Aboriginal peoples. It is unique and precious. Throughout the thesis I will argue that knowledge of the kinship system is essential for social workers and other helping professions, to ensure they work in culturally safe and congruent ways.

The citation above, shared by Daes, applies to this thesis, as the information that emerges from this research belongs firstly to the individuals, communities and nations from whence it came. This is knowledge that calls for respect, reciprocity and conditional use by all others.

It is important to articulate how this information should be used because there is a tendency for people who gain some knowledge about the ways of knowing, being and doing that belong to one culture to ‘incorporate them (possibly without permission) into daily life’ by the learners (Young & Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 162). Colonisation of knowledge and value-based understanding should be avoided. Rather, the knowledge shared in this thesis should be used to support anti-racist practice and to benefit the Aboriginal peoples; and there should always be an acknowledgement of the source and ownership of this information. No matter how much this information is read or used by others, it does not

become their property. It remains the intellectual and cultural property of the people who shared it.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain what this thesis is about and what it aims to achieve; as well as to introduce theories and concepts that are so fundamental to the whole thesis that they need to be understood before going any further. These theories and concepts clarify the insider positioning of this research. A historical perspective will be given of the two Aboriginal nations, some of whose members took part in this study, as this is critical to understanding the findings presented in Chapters Six and Seven. Since a fishing analogy is used in many chapters, its role is also explained.

Genesis of the Research

In 2004, while attending a presentation on the findings of *The Western Australian Aboriginal child health survey: The health of Aboriginal children & young people* (Zubrick et al., 2004), an opportunity presented itself to speak with Ken Wyatt⁵, a Western Australian Aboriginal man who was a member of the project steering committee. During the discussion, Wyatt made a comment on the number of Aboriginal peoples who had putuana (died) while the health survey research was in progress. He then made a statement that sank deeply into my mind. He said that when an Aboriginal person dies, it is like we have gone to a library shelf, but instead of finding all the books there, we find empty spaces dotted throughout. He explained that this is because the life stories of these people - their experience and knowledge - have not been written for succeeding generations to benefit from (Wyatt K., 2004, pers. comm., 3 June).

⁵ In the 2010 Western Australian Elections, Ken Wyatt succeeded in becoming the first Aboriginal person to be elected to the House of Representatives.

This was the second time I had heard these sentiments expressed from within the Aboriginal community and they caused me to pause and wonder what, if anything, I might be able to contribute to filling the bookshelves and to help address the despair that I have heard come from the hearts of our peoples. The first time I had heard these sentiments so clearly articulated had been in 2003, about six months prior to attending this presentation. At the time I had been working with a class of final year Aboriginal tertiary students, when an incident occurred which caused me to reflect on the importance of the kinship system to the Aboriginal peoples⁶.

On this occasion, the students had become very angry and disappointed that they, as a class of Aboriginal students, were being taught western theories and practices that they felt were not balanced with Aboriginal theories and cultural practices and would therefore hold very little sway within these communities or in the work that they were undertaking. They said they needed to be taught how to work with real issues like how to teach the young people that it was not good or right for them to have babies with their cousins; and the roles that Elders should have in the community. Why, they asked, was there not an expectation that Elders should be good people? Why were some of them getting away with sexually abusing the women and children of the communities? Why did no one help? Why were we powerless to do anything to stop this? Why did no one stop the violence in our communities? Didn't we have something in the past that prevented these things from happening?

⁶ It was only later that I came to understand how important this knowledge could also be for social work theory and practice.

Their first comment about the incongruence between the western theory and practice being taught and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing was, to me, valid. In the studies that they were undertaking, they were not exploring the Aboriginal knowledge base. Instead, they were exploring theories that began somewhere other than in this country. Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing were not visible or, indeed, included anywhere in these theories and practices.

We stopped what we were doing and began to speak about the cultural practices that were still strong within some areas of the Northern Territory around land, Law⁷ and culture, and how this knowledge was passed from one generation to the next. We spoke about the meanings embedded within Dreaming stories, and about the responsibilities and roles of Elders. We spoke about Aboriginal Law and more particularly, about the role of the kinship system as the safety net and glue that holds affiliated groups together across generations, borders and genders. We then discussed how, embedded within the kinship system and skin names were particular roles, responsibilities and relationships that ensured the safety of all.

Then came the comment: *“That’s OK for you mob in the Northern Territory, but what about us poor buggers that don’t have it anymore?”* So we began to explore what was happening within their families and communities. We also discussed existing relationships of care and connectedness. At the end of this process, many of the students were amazed to realise that the kinship system did in fact operate within all their communities in some form. However, in some instances it was hidden, while in others it had not been named.

⁷ Throughout this thesis the term Law is used rather than lore to illustrate that Aboriginal Law has consequences and that it regulates the lives of the Aboriginal peoples. When non-Aboriginal Australians use the term lore it is usually in the context of myths and fairy stories.

For some, the ability to name the kinship system in their own area only emerged when we talked about what the kinship system looked like in the Northern Territory. Despite this conversation, it was six months later when I heard Ken Wyatt speak that I felt a need to, and also identified a way, to take action.

My research journey began in earnest in 2005, when I wrote a paper entitled *Decolonising Research from an Australian Indigenous Research Perspective*⁸. Although I didn't know it at the time, I had taken the first step toward developing the theoretical framework that I have chosen to privilege throughout this inquiry. In that paper I sought to share my reflections, as an Aboriginal research student examining the questions this process had raised for me, around how my research could be achieved from within a culturally congruent and safe framework. These were central concepts for me, as I sought to find balance and harmony between theory and practice, the culture and knowledge base of the university, and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

The paper sought to privilege Aboriginal knowledge. It identified decolonising research methodologies by exploring paths that had been travelled previously by international and national researchers, in particular a Maori researcher, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), in conjunction with a number of other researchers both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Alinsky, 1971; Briskman, 2003; Clifford, 2004; Freire, 2003; Sonn, 2004; Soo See Yeo, 2003; Turnbull, 2003). Since that time, other Indigenous researchers have added to this knowledge base (Adichie, 2009; Arbon, 2008; Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Kovach, 2006; Mafile'o, 2009; Martin, 2008; Sinclair, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

⁸ Now held in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies library

At this point I began to wonder if I should pack up my research and go home, as it seemed that the concepts that I wanted to cover in my thesis had already been identified and discussed in beautiful richness and clarity. On closer reflection, I realised that my research would add to the growing knowledge base. It was some years later (see Chapter Two) that I discovered that my work was in fact validating Indigenism and Indigenist theory (Martin, 2008; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999) and offering a different perspective, that of an Aboriginal social worker.

Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis asks a number of important questions. The main overarching research question is: *“How can the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples of the Northern Territory inform social work theory and practice?”*

This question will be answered by asking a series of other questions. Firstly: *“How does the kinship system support, guide and structure Larrakia and Warumungu families, clans and nations? What is the value in returning the findings of this thesis to the broader Aboriginal community, in an effort to repair some of the damage done both through colonisation and through the untimely deaths of our leaders and Elders who held this knowledge?”*

Secondly, *“What is the current state of knowledge about the kinship system available to social workers? Is it adequate to lead them to develop culturally congruent and safe ways of working with the Aboriginal peoples?”* These questions will be answered through an examination of social work literature, as seen in Chapter Five.

The overall purpose of this thesis is not to gather data and have it sit on a library shelf gathering dust as Stanner claimed in 1968 had happened to information about the kinship system gathered by many anthropologists (which was repeated in the 1991 edition of his works), rather it is to use this information to bring about change. However, I wondered why this shelving of information had happened. Upon reading the reflections and insights offered by Crawford (Crawford, F., 2012, pers., comm., 28th February), I have come to understand that it is possible, that the reasons for the shelving of this information might be located in the resistance of past governments and other organisations taking this information on board because of the implications it would have in terms of service delivery, policy and practice.

This research therefore offers a unique opportunity. An opportunity to harness insider knowledge to support and take forward the work of the many people in the past (not just Anthropologists), who have tried in various ways to convey similar points to bring about a paradigm shift. This opportunity would support the building of a much healthier and more robust model of social work. I also argue that this shift should also occur in all other disciplines and professional practice as a means of achieving improved outcomes for Aboriginal peoples.

The Aims of this Research

Several of the aims of this research are to do with breaking new ground. One way is that the Aboriginal kinship system will be written about from the point of view of an Aboriginal social worker. A unique aspect of this research, is that this is the first time that the kinship system has been specifically studied by a social worker who was born into the Larrakia and Warumungu kinship system, including the moiety and system of eight which

includes sixteen skin names⁹, and who lives her life within their Laws. It examines the core of Aboriginal life through Aboriginal eyes and brings these insights into the social work arena.

Another unique aspect of this research is that the kinship system has been included in the theoretical framework; methodology, methods and Aboriginal protocols have been followed. Lived experience - the accumulated knowledge contained within the Aboriginal peoples' knowledge systems - has also been included in the research process. The inclusion of lived experience into the research process is empowering and decolonising and calls for accountability of the dominant research culture by the previously disempowered and marginalised 'other'.

A third aim has been to conduct the research with the underlying motive of enabling the Aboriginal peoples to 'talk back' to social workers; tell social workers, "*We have knowledge that you need*" and have their voices heard. It also offers the opportunity for the researched to work in partnership with the researcher.

Returning information to the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples is critically important to this thesis. Returning the findings to those from whom it has been sourced will demonstrate to them how their information has been used within the thesis. For other Aboriginal peoples, the insights about how the kinship system is used, maintained and sometimes modified may well be valuable information.

These are important concepts, as throughout the process of western research, much of Aboriginal culture, ceremonial practices, health, education, economic disadvantage and

⁹ Often referred to as the System of Eight.

everyday life have been under the microscope of academia. This intense scrutiny has resulted in the awarding of many doctorates to non-Indigenous scholars, but has given practically nothing back to the people from whom the information was sourced (Smith, 1999). The ethical question that was not asked, and should have been, was: *“What has been the tangible benefit of all this research to the Aboriginal peoples?”*

Relationships of trust begin with respect between two parties, each of whom values the contribution of the other. This sets the backdrop for this research and was the only way it could be progressed. Trust develops when rights are not violated.

Another aim of the research is to inform the development of Australian Indigenist social work and research which is currently in its infancy. It highlights that the Indigenist research process, along with all other aspects of Aboriginal life, is a spiritual journey that includes a number of central protocols around research that may be new and helpful to non-Indigenous social work researchers.

Insider / Outsider Positioning

In the past, etic approaches to learning about the culture of the ‘other’ were used by anthropologists and sociologists as they studied the Aboriginal world. In these kinds of research processes the objective observer applied what, for them, were universal knowledge categories (Quinn, 2009). The position from which they examined and studied the culture of the Aboriginal peoples was grounded in a western worldview (see Chapter Two for worldviews) that supported imperialism and colonialism. Through these lenses the Aboriginal peoples were viewed as savages and as less than human, so were seen as suitable objects of study. Through these studies, western researchers sought to learn about the evolution process of their ancestors (Parkin & Stone, 2004).

‘Emic’ approaches, on the other hand, ‘are those where learning is undertaken from within, and where understandings generated are seen as specific to that cultural context’ (Quinn, 2009, p. 102). Through this kind of research, the researcher opens up the worldview of the people being studied by entering and immersing themselves in the culture and everyday life of the group. Emic research is the closest a person can get to understanding and participating in a particular culture whilst still being an outsider (Quinn, 2009). Etic and emic approaches were further developed into what is now known as insider / outsider research.

In order to be an insider, the researcher has to have come from within the group that is being studied. While a number of positive points have been identified about undertaking this kind of research, such as easier access to informants (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Mafle’o, 2004), shared understandings (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010) and common language (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Mafle’o, 2004), there are also a number of disadvantages associated with undertaking insider research. One of these is an expectation, by the group being researched, that the researcher will know and understand what is being said without asking for details (Merriam et al., 2001). The researcher may also be constrained by gender issues that may not be adhered to as strictly if the researcher is from outside the group (Merriam et al., 2001).

Another issue of insider research is the embedded assumptions and tacit knowledge that the researcher brings with them to the research that they may not be aware of. For this reason it is important that a critical reflection of our personal ideology, worldview, axiology and standpoint are undertaken and, where possible, clashes are identified and strategies developed to mitigate them. In the case of the Aboriginal peoples, there may also

be taboos about certain relatives having any kind of interaction (see Richie's comments in Chapter Seven).

The western approach where questions are used can also be problematic, as this approach does not always lend itself to insider research with the Aboriginal peoples. Indigenous researchers who try to do this can find that this practice highlights a disjuncture with the culture and this can then lead to the researcher being viewed as ignorant or an outsider (Merriam et al., 2001). Doors might then close to specific information and knowledge, and this can affect the researcher's standing in the group into the future.

The insider / outsider binary usually positions the researcher in either one position or the other. Recently however, a number of Indigenous researchers from around the world have illustrated that the insider / outsider binary does not do justice to the complex levels of relatedness that exist within insider positioning (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Mafle'o, 2009; Merriam et al., 2001).

Insider knowledge plays an important role in this research. The insider context is multi-levelled, flows throughout the thesis and will be found in a number of chapters. Some of these levels of insider positioning can be found through the following.

This research is being undertaken from within a qualitative framework by an Aboriginal woman, who is an Aboriginal Law woman, a social worker, a member of both the Larrakia and Warumungu nations and also part of the skin system, having been born into it and continuously living within its Laws and boundaries. All these connections and insider standpoints mean that the research is being undertaken from within several levels of insider positioning, each offering particular access and insights that would not otherwise be as

readily available or accessible. It also means that this research is being undertaken from a specific standpoint (see Chapter Two).

Thesis Structure

Using the imagery of an Aboriginal seed necklace from the desert to represent this thesis, the thread on which the seeds are strung is represented by the kinship system, which runs throughout every chapter. The seeds are the chapters, which are all joined together via the kinship system to present an item of beauty and value, but only if the knot is tied securely so the necklace can be worn and enjoyed by many, and passed from generation to generation. The knot, therefore, is critical. A traditional knot is tied in three parts like the figure eight, which is also representative of the system of eight that make up the kinship system. In this analogy, one end represents the past; the other end represents the future; and where they join at the centre, is found the present. What we do in the present connects the past to the future, either in a way that brings usefulness and beauty or, if not tied securely, brings loss and destruction. This thesis (the present) could also be viewed as part of a knot; that ties history / ourstory (the past) to social work practice that will be culturally respectful, congruent and safe (the future).



Figure 1: Seed necklace

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter One has laid the foundation for this thesis by introducing the research topic, purpose and aims. A brief background of the nations and roles played by the people involved in the research is provided and the fishing analogy introduced. Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework, methodology and methods that support the thesis, but does this as a journey and identifies the ontology, epistemology and axiology. As part of the methodology used, Chapter Two introduces Aboriginal Circular Research. Chapter Three explains what is meant by Aboriginal kinship and skin names describing them in some detail and Chapter Four provides ourstory, which is an Aboriginal perspective of history.

Chapter Five is the social work chapter. It builds on the previous chapters by examining the literature that deals with social work interactions with the Aboriginal peoples. In particular it examines social work education, theories and practices to identify the level of knowledge of the kinship system available to social workers.

The next two chapters are the data chapters, followed by the concluding chapter. Chapter Six reports and analyses what knowledge holders said about the kinship system, while Chapter Seven reports and analyses what they had to say about social workers. Chapter Eight provides some ways forward with regard to including the kinship system in social work education, theory, practice and literature and introduces Kinship Mapping and Pendulum of Practice. It also provides ideas on how this thesis can be used by Aboriginal people to reinvigorate the kinship system. Gaps in knowledge are highlighted and areas for further research identified.

Backgrounds of People and Nations

Throughout the thesis, the reader will note that stories (see Chapter Two) are used in many different ways. Stories will be used during the research process to both share and interpret data gathered (see Chapters Six and Seven). Stories will also provide a means by which the reader's background knowledge and understanding will be developed and enhanced with regard to concepts that infuse the whole thesis, such as history and ourstory (see chapter Four), since they provide a framework to understand current situations and contexts.

Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign but stories can also be used to empower and to humanise. Stories can break the dignity of a people but stories can also repair that broken dignity (Adichie, 2009).

The two Aboriginal nations represented in this research are the Larrakia and the Warumungu of the Northern Territory. A brief story of each nation is given below in order to provide background knowledge of their different experiences of colonisation and the ways this has impacted on the kinship system. This information will enable understanding of the data presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

There were a number of people involved in the research that informs this thesis. These people included Elders, two cultural advisers and several knowledge holders. The Elders recommended two specific people as the best people to act as cultural advisers for this particular project.

‘Knowledge holders’ is a description used by Hart (2009), a Canadian First Nations man from the Cree Peoples, to describe participants. I prefer the term ‘knowledge holders’ and use it throughout this study, as I agree with Hart that the use of this description more accurately describes what these people do. The term ‘knowledge holders’ recognises their expertise and knowledge whereas the term ‘participant’ may leave the researcher as the expert and gives participants a lesser role. The description ‘knowledge holders’ also fits with Wilson’s argument that a shift in terminology enables a shift in understanding (Wilson, 2008).

Though the knowledge holders are introduced in Chapter Two, due to insider positioning the cultural advisers are introduced here. The term ‘cultural adviser’ denotes the role these people played.

Cultural Advisers

Mrs Fejo is a Warumungu woman who was recommended because she is a senior Elder and Law woman. She was part of the Stolen Generations, taken from the desert as a very young child and eventually placed in salt-water country, where she remained until she was an adult. She was able to reconnect with her people and learn language, ceremonies, Law and culture. Mrs Fejo was also recommended because she had been successful in negotiating both the white world and the Aboriginal world. Although uneducated by western standards, she has received numerous awards from government, the Australian

Medical Association and universities for the success of programs she developed. She was also suggested because she has extensive networks throughout the Northern Territory that she could use to provide insider access, if necessary.

Mrs Fejo is my mother. This brings in another layer of insider positioning. However, throughout this thesis she will be referred to as Mrs Fejo in recognition of her cultural standing and as a sign of respect. This formal term of address is my way of showing respect for her as a senior Elder. It also shows respect for her position in our family, clan¹⁰ and nations, recognising the wisdom and knowledge she holds as the keeper of lived experience, genealogies, Law, cultural practices and languages (she is fluent in four different Aboriginal languages).

Traditional protocols that are still maintained within the Aboriginal community and nations involved in this study are such that an Elder is never referred to by their first name alone by younger people. They are either referred to as Mr or Mrs, aunty or uncle, or by their skin name (in the case of Mrs Fejo, Nungala) as a sign of respect.

My second cultural advisor is Mr Ah Kit who is a very quiet-spoken man. His mother¹¹ was part of the Stolen Generations and was taken in the same scoop that took Mrs Fejo. These two little girls were together at the Bungalow in Alice Springs but from there they were given different religions and sent to missions in different parts of the Northern Territory. They met again in Darwin as adults. They were sister cousins through the kinship system. Mr Ah Kit is one of a large family who grew up in Darwin. Later he was

¹⁰ She is the senior matriarch of a number of clans.

¹¹ Now deceased.

able to find his mother's people, move to her country and learn language, Law and culture as an adult. He became very knowledgeable in Aboriginal Law and is highly regarded by Aboriginal people.

The map below shows where the Northern Territory is located within Australia and where Larrakia country (Darwin) and Warumungu country (Tennant Creek) are located along the Stuart Highway, though these are not drawn to scale. This highway extends from Darwin in the Northern Territory all the way across the continent to Adelaide in South Australia. For further information about Aboriginal nations' countries, see the Map of Aboriginal Australia, on page 139.



Figure 2: Map of the Northern Territory showing Larrakia Country and Warumungu Country

The Larrakia

Traditionally, Larrakia country included the Cox Peninsula (Mandorah / Delisiville), most of Gun Point, Darwin City and surrounding suburbs, Palmerston and much of rural Darwin. Darwin Harbour is also recognised as being within Larrakia country. Larrakia people are often referred to as Saltwater People, although the boundaries extend approximately 50 km inland (Larrakia Nation, 2001).

The extent of Larrakia country means that the lifestyle of the people is reflected in the traditional diet, which consists of both salt-water foods such as fish, turtles, dugong, shellfish, mud crabs and prawns; and land foods such as berries, plums, sugar bag¹², kangaroo, goanna, possum and flying fox.

Within contemporary Australia, and since many Larrakia live in the city, the dominant diet has become western foods bought from shops rather than the traditional foods, which are harder to find and harvest. However, these traditional foods continue to be used to supplement the diet of Larrakia families.

Background

There is an island off the coast that has been used for ceremonies by the Larrakia as far back as the Larrakia have existed as a people, as told through ourstory. Every ten years, at a time when the tide went out so far that people could walk from the mainland to this island, the people would gather there without their weapons in order to carry out special ceremonies. On one occasion less than one hundred years ago, the Larrakia were attacked

¹² Sugar bag refers to wild honey that is made by a native ant, which is very small and doesn't bite or sting. It builds a container made of black, gum-like substance and puts its honey inside so that its honey can be put into the ground or in trees and still be protected. The honey container can be as long as the length of a man's arm. When you break it open, the top is narrow but the end is bulb-like and contains most of the honey.

and the majority of the people killed. That was the perfect time for their enemies to attack them and they did so. These enemies included both Aboriginal and white men.

After this massacre there were only five families that made it to safety in a number of small canoes. My great grandfather, a king of the Larrakia, was killed but his wife and three sons were able to get to safety in one of the canoes. These survivors fled for their lives whilst being pursued by their attackers across the harbour to the current site of Palmerston, and they ran for safety. A number of the young warriors who had helped paddle the canoes across the harbour ran ahead following a special songline¹³. One of the three young men from my family stayed with their mother to help her. He was killed, but their mother was able to reach safety in Arnhem Land with her people. When the runners got to their mother's people, her brother (Kumunjayi Kangkuya Nadji), who was one of the leaders, sent warriors to meet them along the way and protect them from further attack.

Each of the Larrakia knowledge holders for this thesis was descended from people in the canoes. This massacre was such a devastating blow to the Larrakia that the kinship system had to be restructured by the survivors.

Planning the Future

After the Second World War my grandfathers, along with their wives and children, held a meeting. They said, "*We've survived the massacre and the war. How do we ensure that our family survives into the future?*" That is when they decided that, for their children to not just survive, but to thrive, the children were going to have to be educated and know how to live in two worlds - the white world and the Aboriginal world. So they said that

¹³ A songline is a map that is taught through song and dance, it is not illustrated on paper such as those used by other peoples of the world.

white education must become a priority, but there must be harmony and balance with Aboriginal Laws and education.

The adults made an agreement that all their future generations had to go to white school. If anyone saw those children out of school they were to send them back. The children had to report how they were going in school each year to all their Elders. From that decision and the enforcement of it, we now, some fifty years later, have within our clan medical practitioners, scientists, social workers and many other qualified people because our ancestors had the vision to say, *"This is what is needed"*.

In learning western knowledge, these Larrakia families haven't given up their Aboriginal identity. They have not lost their place within, or their knowledge of, the Aboriginal kinship system. These were and are maintained through ceremonies and everyday life practices.

The Warumungu

The country of the Warumungu is located around Tennant Creek, also within the Northern Territory. Warumungu people are known as Desert People because this is what their country is like. Tennant Creek is situated approximately 1000 kilometres south of Darwin. Warumungu language is still spoken fluently and there is a language centre in Tennant Creek that is working to ensure that the language continues, through the making of CDs and the recording and publication of stories.

Although the Warumungu have been affected by past government policies of control and land appropriation, they were not situated on land that was developed into a major city. As

a result, the Warumungu have been able to continue cultural practices, including the kinship system, skin names and ways of maintaining culture and Law.

The traditional diet of the Warumungu people includes such things as sugar bag, bush turkey, goanna, snake, wild fruits and vegetables. Living in contemporary Australia has meant that the dominant diet has become western foods bought from shops. However, as with the Larrakia, traditional foods continue to supplement the white diet of Warumungu families.

The Warumungu kinship system, which includes moiety and skin names, has remained virtually intact, despite having had children stolen over a number of generations. Their language, Law and their country remained very much under their control until the cattlemen arrived. Initially, my mother's clan of the Warumungu were able to remain on country and work as ringers¹⁴. This meant the families and clans were still together in their kinship and skin name networks. This lasted until 1967 when, as soon as equal pay for equal work with regards to the Aboriginal peoples became law, almost all the Aboriginal ringers were replaced with white stockmen.

Being unemployed, these men with all their family members were moved off the cattle stations and into camps in two towns, Elliott and Tennant Creek, along the Stuart Highway. Since the same thing had happened to neighbouring Aboriginal nations, these people were sometimes mixed in with the Warumungu in these camps. Culture, Aboriginal Law, ceremonies, kinship and skin names remained strong because there were no white people living within these camps.

¹⁴ Ringers and stockmen are similar to the American cowboys.

Now, forty years later, there are some adverse effects on the kinship system. Drug and alcohol abuse have impacted on the kinship system. Aboriginal people and our Law and culture have often been denigrated and demonised by the dominant white culture and the government to suit their purposes (this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four). These practices have in turn caused damage to the kinship system.

Some positive changes are that, in Tennant Creek, the Aboriginal peoples are now able to live in houses in the township and are not just confined to living within camps. When the Warumungu went to court to claim their country back, they won in 1993. This allowed a number of families to move out of the townships and camps and back to other parts of their country.

Having used stories to share some basic information about the similarities and differences between the Larrakia and Warumungu, I have laid the foundation as to why, in Chapters Six and Seven, there is such a range of answers to the research questions, both within and between the two Aboriginal nations. As a means of illustrating how the information that is used throughout the thesis has been gathered, a salt-water (Larrakia) analogy about fishing will now be introduced.

A Fishing Analogy

For the Larrakia, fishing is a very important part of life. It continues to assist the survival of the people and provide connection to ancestors, language and country. It also provides food and relaxation, excitement and fun.

For the purposes of this thesis, an analogy of the throw net will be used. The throw net is one of many fishing techniques employed by the Larrakia. In the past, the Larrakia made

these nets in particular ways to suit the fish they wanted to catch. This meant the holes in the net had to be small enough to capture fish of a certain size but big enough to let smaller fish simply swim through the holes and out of the nets. All around the bottom of the nets were pockets: these were used to capture any fish that slid to the bottom of the net as it was being gathered and lifted from the water. These pockets were held in place by weights that again related to the size of the fish to be caught. Great skill is needed to cast the net in such a way that it opens out into a circle when thrown. Skill is also needed to gather the net in such a way that the catch does not escape.

The following photograph illustrates the throw net. The young Larrakia man is being taught how to use a throw net, by his grandfather. Ancient skills are being passed on to a new generation. The water flows through the net as it is lifted out of the sea, and the pockets at the bottom can be clearly seen¹⁵.



Figure 3: The Throw Net

¹⁵ Permission to use this photograph in this thesis was received from the family involved.

The throw net analogy is used throughout this study as a means of describing the searches conducted. The following phrase is used, ‘the net is cast wide to capture those things that are important and relevant and to allow other things to flow out’ to illustrate my research strategy. The skill needed to cast the net is shown in the way that this research has been completed within an Indigenist framework. The weights that hold the net to the bottom of the river illustrate how various concepts such as protocols, spirituality, kinship and skin names ground the thesis and provide stability.

In Chapter Two the throw net represents the methodology used for this thesis and the fish represent all methodologies available. The net is cast to capture only those theories relevant to this thesis. In Chapter Three the throw net represents the kinship system and skin names, while the fish represent historical events. In Chapter Four all historical events that affected the kinship system are captured whilst other events are allowed to slip through. In other chapters, the analogy of the throw net might also be used to explain why certain sources are used in preference to others.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the thesis as a whole; to identify why the kinship system was chosen as the topic to be explored and to provide background information. Since the thesis is offering new insights and knowledge, it is very important there is an understanding that those who provided this knowledge own it and all others should use it respectfully, always acknowledging the source.

As there are several levels of insider positioning, this thesis has the opportunity to offer new insights, not only into the kinship system, but also into how a much greater depth of

initial knowledge possessed by the researcher lends itself to culturally respectful, congruent and safe practice, as demonstrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO – MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

Introduction

This chapter tells the journey of my thesis from beginning to end from the standpoint of an Aboriginal woman, who has used the kinship system to gather and process the data. The journey itself also provides a model of Indigenist research that can help others to design their own research journey in such a way that it will be of benefit to both the researcher and the Aboriginal peoples studied (see Chapter Eight). This chapter also describes the role of stories in the lives of Aboriginal peoples, since this feature of Aboriginal culture is used extensively.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the ontology, epistemology and axiology that guide the choice of theoretical framework, methodology and methods used to complete the research. The way in which these theories are identified is by casting the throw net to capture processes that help to support and progress this research in ways that take into account Aboriginal knowledge systems (Christie, 2006) and protocols (Sinclair, 2007).

The journey - from the genesis of the research, to the development of the proposal, the collection and analysis of data, and the contribution that this research seeks to make - is told as a story. It is set out chronologically so as to make sense of theories chosen and methodologies used. The story moves on to introduce the various western theories that have been examined and used as stepping-stones, and how this search led to Indigenism and Indigenist theories. However, Indigenist theory and Indigenist Standpoint Theory are introduced at the outset because they are embedded in the whole journey, so I have made them visible by speaking about them next.

Indigenism and Indigenist Standpoint Theory

Indigenism is a concept that has emerged over the last twenty years as a result of the engagement of Indigenous academics with research. It is our way of claiming a space within research for Aboriginal knowledge systems and ways of knowing, being and doing. In 1997, Lester-Irabinna Rigney, an Aboriginal educator from South Australia, coined the term 'Indigenist'. It is defined in the following way:

...a body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in the interest of Indigenous peoples for the purpose of self-determination. Indigenism is multi-disciplinary with the essential criteria being the identity and colonising experience of the writer. Similarly, by the term Indigenist I mean the body of knowledge by Indigenous scholars in relation to research methodological approaches (Rigney, 2001, p. 1).

Indigenist Standpoint Theory was progressed by Dennis Foley, an Australian Aboriginal researcher, as a response to the lack of congruency between existing western theories and the ways in which Indigenous higher education research students were trying to approach their research. The dominant theories were so obstructive to Indigenous researchers that many of them did not complete their research (Arbon, 2008; Budby, cited in Foley, 2003). The dominant theories were obstructive because they were so far removed from Indigenous knowledge systems, lived experience and practice bases that there did not appear to be a common understanding and meeting place.

Foley (2003) reviewed the work of a number of Indigenous scholars. These included the Japanangka Paradigm of Japanangka Kumunjayi E. West; the work of Lester-Irabinna Rigney around Indigenist research perspectives; and the environmental imagery of Hawaiian epistemology by Dr Manulani Aluii Meyer, a Hawaiian researcher. The work of

these three Indigenous theorists was used to develop an outline for Indigenist Standpoint Theory, a theory that is general and can be applied in many lands.

In Australia, Rigney's model of Indigenism has been expanded upon by three Aboriginal academics; West (2000), Martin (2003, 2008) and Arbon (2008), all of whom are Aboriginal educators. Within the work of these academics, there is a clear privileging of theoretical frameworks that locate the research firmly within indigenous practices.

West (2000) identifies Japanangka¹⁶ Paradigm, which introduces cultural, spiritual, secular, intellectual, political, practical, personal and public dimensions of research using the Warlpiri worldview. This approach is strengthened by the work of Martin (2003, 2008) who developed the Quandamooka Worldview Constructs, an Indigenist research theory that identifies Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. She places western theories as 'the other' and does not include them in her papers. Arbon (2008) focuses on Aboriginal knowledge systems and brings to the surface the disjuncture between western and Indigenous knowledge systems as they meet in a western academic setting. She focuses on how important it is to ensure that, in gaining academic status, Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing are not being assimilated.

Apart from these few Australian researchers, Indigenist theories are in the main being developed and led by Indigenous researchers from Canada, the United States of America and New Zealand (see Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008). Just as feminism (see later in this chapter) was a movement that allowed the voice of western women to be heard and empowered, Indigenism is a movement that allows the voices of Indigenous academics to

¹⁶ A skin name.

be heard and empowered. It is an emerging theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), which offers an opportunity for this thesis to contribute to its growing knowledge base.

From an international perspective, in North America, Ward Churchill (1997) challenged the domination of western ideologies that have been in conflict with Indigenous ideologies and worldviews and have sought to eliminate or silence them. Vine Deloria Jr also delivered an ontological challenge around the lack of spiritual recognition within western ideologies (2003). Margaret Kovach used a decolonising tribal methodology that ‘...privileges knowledge from [Indigenous researchers’] own cultural epistemologies and knowledge paradigms to guide research...’ (2006, p. 73). Priscilla Settee (2007) used a critical methodology that included naturalistic, participatory action research, and Raven Sinclair (2007) employed a holistic research process that included Indigenous philosophy and post-positivist epistemology that embraces both critical theory and feminist theory.

In New Zealand, Smith (1999) emphasised the way Indigenous researchers were and are ‘researching back’, as part of anti-colonial literature and the recovery of ourselves as Indigenous peoples who have much of value to share with the world. Bishop (2005) employed the whakapapa of Maori knowledge that is post-colonial, decolonising and critical while Ramsden (2002) addressed cultural safety in nursing in a way that had broad applicability.

The most influential contribution of each of these Indigenous researchers was the way in which they used the knowledge and lived experiences of the marginalised ‘other’ as a tool of empowerment to challenge, expand and enrich their research and to add to the foundations of an international Indigenous theoretical framework. All these theoretical frameworks are Indigenist, as they have been developed and employed by Indigenous

researchers; they privilege Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin, 2003); and harness Indigenous knowledge systems, language (Arbon, 2008) and worldviews.

Similarities between the work of Rigney and Foley can be found in research being undertaken by Indigenous researchers for the benefit of Indigenous peoples. This is not surprising, because Foley states that his work is informed in part by the work of Rigney. However, it is obvious that Rigney's work did not fully meet the needs of Foley because, in an effort to gain greater depth of understanding, Foley also examined the work of other Indigenous scholars and developed some specific features that support Indigenous research, from the standpoint of the researcher. This also illustrates the connection of Indigenous Standpoint theory to both Indigenism and feminism, in that the idea of examining phenomena from different standpoints emerges from feminist theory (see below).

Another similarity between the work of both Rigney and Foley is that they address research methods. The point of clarification offered by Foley can be found in his assertion that the supervisor should also be Indigenous. Although I did not have the opportunity to have an Indigenous supervisor, I understand and support the validity of Foley's assertion, as illustrated in the discussion on tacit knowledge later in this chapter. Foley's major focus is on the research process, whereas Rigney's is on methodology. Both Rigney and Foley's elements are embedded throughout this research, because they were the means by which I overcame the stumbling block of western theory, as described next, in relation to the development of my moral compass.

Moral Compass

I recognised at the very beginning of my journey that the word ‘research’, as heard, seen and experienced by the Aboriginal peoples, had become a ‘dirty word’ (Martin, 2008; Smith, 1999); a word by which colonisation, assimilation and the disempowerment of the Aboriginal peoples continues today. It is for this reason that I chose to explore decolonising research methodologies (see below) (Clifford, 2004; Fredericks & Adams, 2011; Green & Baldry, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Settee, 2007; Sherwood, 2010; Sinclair, 2007; Smith, 1999; Sonn, 2004; Soo See Yeo, 2003; West, 2000; Wilson, 2008).

In acknowledging that the Indigenous peoples of the world have become the most researched population groups since the colonisation of their homelands (Smith, 1999), I questioned myself, firstly, around whether it was appropriate for me as an Aboriginal woman to undertake research that is fully focused upon my own peoples. I spoke to my Elders and asked for their advice. This step draws on Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, being and doing, and is culturally respectful.

Secondly, I questioned myself around what my motivation was for wanting to undertake this research. In other words, I critically examined and reflected on my axiology. I wanted a PhD, but I did not want to find myself in a situation of taking from my people without some form of reciprocity - I wanted to give something in return. By taking this approach, I was addressing the issue of research being undertaken for the purpose of benefiting the community, rather than benefiting the researcher or university alone. I realised that there were three ways in which I could contribute and give back to my people. The first was that, by sharing information about the kinship system with social workers, it could be possible

to establish a standard for better outcomes and respectful relationships and practices between the Aboriginal peoples and social workers.

I had also become aware of a high number of Aboriginal research students who had begun the PhD journey, but had never completed it. I wanted to illustrate through my completion of this journey that it can be done. Thirdly, I asked myself what, if any, benefits would flow on to my family, community and nations and what, if any, benefits might also flow on to other Aboriginal peoples (Arbon, 2008). It was hoped that returning knowledge of the kinship system would benefit all Aboriginal peoples.

Fourthly, I pondered on the foundations my research would be built on and the theories I would use - in other words, what ways of knowing, being and doing would frame my research to ensure that western theories would not dominate. This was my hardest struggle, as explained in this chapter.

Very early in my research journey, I used these questions to develop a moral compass. I drew it up and kept it in a prominent position in my study so that I would see it each time I sat down to work, so that it would guide my research process. Over time, the moral compass was refined to its current depiction as shown here.

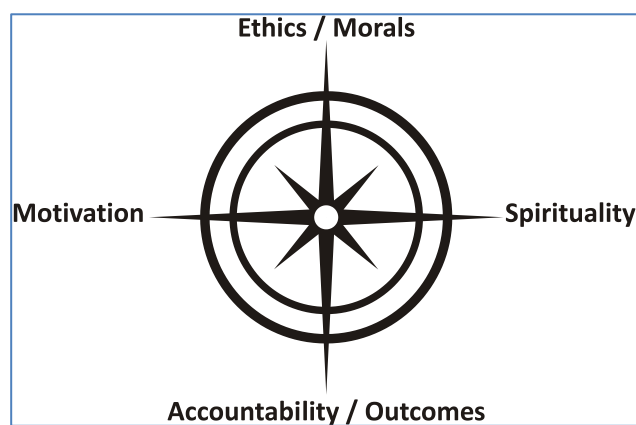


Figure 4: My Moral Compass

Other Indigenous researchers have also felt the need to address the question of axiology within their research. Bishop (2005), a Maori researcher, developed the Kaupapa Maori Approach to research. On examination, this approach appears to have a moral compass embedded within it. This is illustrated through questions asked of the researcher at every stage and includes critical reflection around the initiation of the research, what benefits will be returned to the community, representation, legitimisation and accountability.

My Journey Begins

The rest of this chapter is a chronological account of my research journey. It consists of a description of the struggles overcome and choices made, along with theories and theorists studied and decisions taken in regard to them. Although I did not know it early in my journey, I had already embarked upon Indigenist research from an Aboriginal standpoint. As an Aboriginal researcher, I was addressing Indigenist Standpoint Theory and, as an insider, I was addressing Indigenism by drawing on Indigenous knowledge and knowledge systems. These actions clearly illustrate that I was coming from the same ideological standpoint as Rigney and Foley, even though at that time I was not aware of their work.

As explained in Chapter One, when the Aboriginal students asked me whether there was something in our culture that had prevented abuse of our women and children in the past, my immediate thought was the kinship system. As a result of that discussion with the students and a discussion with Ken Wyatt I began to think about undertaking research, but I wanted to do research that would be of use to my community. On critically reflecting about the answer I had given the students, I decided to make the kinship system the subject of my research.

As an Aboriginal woman with strong family ties to a number of nations within the Northern Territory, it was logical for me to go back to my own people to undertake this research because I knew that the kinship system and skin names were still in place there and were still being taught to each new generation. This decision drew on Indigenous knowledge and insider positioning.

One of the main reasons for undertaking the research was that I wanted to test whether I was right in thinking that the kinship system was the answer to the students' questions. If this idea was substantiated, the information gained could be used in the future to help address a number of issues, including individual, family and community safety. This would strengthen Aboriginal helping systems and provide emancipatory research, which would advance the rights of Indigenous peoples and recognise the existing strengths within Aboriginal culture.

I also wanted to give information back to my own people about what was happening to the kinship system. I felt I could address both these topics because I am part of the kinship system and could access people and information that other researchers might have difficulty accessing. As a social worker, I also wanted those within my profession to know how to work in culturally congruent ways that would lead to culturally safe practice with my people. This supports political integrity as it advances the political struggle of the Aboriginal peoples.

Ethics Approval

Due to my knowledge of Aboriginal protocols, the university ethics application was shaped to fit Larrakia and Warumungu ways of knowing, being and doing (Arbon, 2008; Martin, 2008). It therefore drew on insider knowledge so as to ensure cultural safety by enlisting

cultural advisers (see Chapter One). It also involved me personally giving copies of the consent forms to the knowledge holders and explaining what the academic language meant; tape recording then transcribing the interviews; and the giving of gifts (Sinclair, 2007; AASW, 2010) to all those involved. This showed respect for their specialist knowledge and appreciation for their willingness to assist me. The application identified as essential, several visits for the following purposes: to collect data, report findings, privilege Indigenous voices by giving knowledge holders an opportunity to comment face-to-face and for information to be returned to the knowledge holders at the completion of the thesis.

There were several ethical considerations that were essential to this thesis. These included the expectations of the Australian Catholic University approvals process, which included the preparation, presentation and approval of the proposal. The proposal was approved through the University Ethics Committee in November 2005. Knowledge holders were provided with a letter that gave them basic information about the thesis (Appendix A) and informed consent was obtained (Appendix B). In relation to confidentiality, the knowledge holders were happy to be identified. Permission to tape the interviews for each phase of the research was also sought and agreed upon, thus enabling a free flow of conversation between knowledge holders and myself. These tape recordings were later transcribed and analysed.

Meeting the requirements of the university was important, but it was also important to meet the local protocols that are part of undertaking any research with the Aboriginal peoples. Part of the process was to follow existing national ethical guidelines. The *National Health and Medical Research Council Guidelines on Ethical Matters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (NH&MRC, 1991) was one source that was examined and found to be quite general. The *Australian Institute of Aboriginal*

and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies (2000) provided more information. However, there are also local protocols that need to be recognised and followed (insider knowledge). By local protocols, I mean things specific to a particular group, geographical area or situation. This draws on insider knowledge and is respectful.

An example of disjuncture between local Aboriginal protocols and university requirements can be found in my experience of going through the university ethics approval process. When I submitted my request for ethics approval for this research I was questioned by the ethics committee about my desire to give gifts to my knowledge holders. It was only after I explained that this was a part of cultural protocols amongst my peoples, and not a bribe, that the ethics application was approved.

Once ethics approval was received from the university, I visited the Northern Territory and spoke face-to-face with my cultural advisers. From then on, I was able to follow up with telephone calls and emails until the field visits were made, at which time we worked together face-to-face as a team.

Gift Giving

Raven Sinclair, a Canadian social worker, offers very good insights into a number of Indigenous protocols, which she refers to as ‘cultural etiquette and guidelines that derive from Indigenous traditional knowledge, cultural practices and beliefs’ (2007, pp. 93-98). Sinclair applied these protocols to her PhD with regard to aspects of the research methodology and method. These same categories of cultural etiquette are found within ways of knowing, being, doing and the kinship system of the Australian Aboriginal

peoples and should be applied in Australian Aboriginal research practices (Arbon, 2008; Martin, 2008; West, 2000).

Ceremonies such as gift giving and reciprocity are guided by cultural etiquette and protocols that are commonly practiced between the Aboriginal peoples and help to build and strengthen kinship ties and relationships of respect. The gift giving that occurred as part of this research is an important practice that is not often recognised and honoured in interactions between non-Indigenous researchers and Aboriginal peoples.

Not until 2010 has any documentation appeared about gift giving as part of research practices within the Australian social work literature (AASW, 2010). From the perception of my peoples, this was a gap in social work knowledge and a breach of cultural etiquette and protocols. However, it should be understood that the giving of a gift does not negate the need for just wages for people who are employed in the research process. Under the laws of reciprocity, gift giving provides parity between the researcher and the researched, illustrating that any knowledge shared is valued by the researcher and will be treated with respect¹⁷.

Struggles with Methodology

The Aboriginal kinship system is a social phenomenon and, as such, is best studied through a qualitative methodology because, ‘qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). This qualitative view of research highlights how personal the relationship can be between

¹⁷ This does not mean that the gift given by the researcher has to be big or expensive - rather, it should be something of value to the knowledge holder.

the researcher and their topic of interest. This is very applicable to this study, as the kinship system is the focus of this thesis as well as being a central tenet of my life. Qualitative research also challenges the scientific method, which is grounded in a western ideology, and which supports the view that there is only one way to undertake research correctly.

The approach and methodology that are used within a research project are influenced by the researcher's ontology, or set of beliefs about 'what is 'real' (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). Ontology is often embedded within the knowledge system of the researcher prior to undertaking the research. It is learned and passed from generation to generation and is often not questioned because it is not recognised (Reber, 1993). However, it is the litmus test against which other peoples and their cultures are measured. West (1998) expanded on this for Aboriginal peoples, when he said 'our ontology is the inherent meshing of the spiritual events and the material world, this includes literal geographical connections and related events that occur regularly in our lives' (West, cited in Foley, 2003, p. 47).

A second part of the methodology is the epistemology, or way of knowing – how we know what we know and how we learn about the world around us and gain knowledge (Wilson, 2008). Again, just as with ontology, this can be learned through both formal and informal means (Richie & Lewis, 2003).

An example of informal knowledge is tacit knowledge (Reber, 1993), which is gained just by growing up in a certain cultural environment and / or context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Examples of this kind of knowledge, as illustrated in Chapter Five, are whiteness and the invisibility of whiteness. Until recently, universities have unwittingly promoted whiteness

by enforcing the use of western research methods on Indigenous students as well as using these methods on researched populations (Martin, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Methodology is ‘the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcome’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). It is also a means of gaining and building knowledge, and how this knowledge is impacted on by one’s worldview (Wilson, 2008). The methods chosen to inform a researcher’s study are based on their worldview and their standpoint, which make up their ontology. Methods are the tools and processes used to gather and analyse data about a particular research question or hypothesis. As illustrated by Smith (1999), research is undertaken for a reason and is not apolitical. The methodology and methods researchers choose to use also have an impact. By this, Smith means that choice of research is influenced by what the funder is seeking and the agenda or product they are promoting. The needs of the community can be overlooked. Findings can be put aside or manipulated to meet these needs, and methods can be chosen that will guide research to fit the funder’s needs (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Underpinning the whole research process is the axiology of the researcher. Wilson defines an axiology as including ‘the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge’ (2008, p. 34). This then raises the question of means and ends because, at certain points, morals and values can be set aside or manipulated to achieve particular ends, ignoring the process (Ife, 2010).

In relation to choosing my methodology for this thesis, first, I realised that I had already defined my axiology through the development of my moral compass. Next, I identified that my epistemology consisted of stories and tacit knowledge. There is a section on Stories

below and tacit knowledge is addressed later in the chapter. Once I clarified my worldview and standpoint and embraced the role of spirituality as an active part of my research journey, I had identified my ontology and was empowered by it. The sections below on Standpoint Theory, Worldviews and Spirituality illustrate my exploration of these areas.

Standpoint Theory

As one of the offshoots of feminism, Standpoint Theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a feminist critical theory and has been described as being explanatory, normative and controversial (Harding, 2004). Standpoint Theory was seen as a means to empower oppressed groups through the valuing of their experiences and through offering a way to develop ‘oppositional consciousness’ (Hill-Collins, 2004). This included the Aboriginal peoples (Foley, 2002).

Feminist Standpoint Theory supports the work of Aboriginal academic Dr Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul woman from Quandamooka (Moreton Bay). She examines feminism and Indigenous Australian women (2000). Morton-Robinson undertakes a dialogue between feminists and Aboriginal women, unpacking Standpoint Theory as a foundational understanding in which ‘perception and knowledge depend upon one’s social standpoint’ (Moreton-Robinson 2000, p. xi).

Moreton-Robinson views race, for Aboriginal women, as a feature that both grounded them and distanced them from western women (see Feminism later in this chapter), for whom the privileges of whiteness (see Whiteness in Chapter Five) remained unrecognised and unchallenged until recent years. White women, from their dominant social standpoint and their positioning as insiders within the colonial society, assumed that their worldview was universal to such an extent that they did not realise that there were other worldviews.

Worldviews

A broad definition of different worldviews is offered by Charles Royal, a Maori man cited in Cunningham and Stanley. This definition states that:

A Western (Judaean-Christian) view... sees God as external and in heaven 'above'; an Eastern view... focuses internally and concentrates on reaching within through meditation and other practices; and an Indigenous view... sees people as integral to the world, with humans having a seamless relationship with nature which includes seas, land, rivers, mountains, flora and fauna (2003, p. 3).

It is critical to understand the impact these differences have on the Aboriginal peoples, as we negotiate living within two worlds, in which the western worldview dominates (Whyte, 2005). The differences between these two worldviews can be understood by examining the place people occupy in relation to all other living things and all inanimate entities in the universe.

The worldview of Indigenous peoples in general is one of relatedness and connectedness, with people being equal to, rather than more important than, all other parts of creation (whether living or inanimate). North American scholar Joanne DiNova focuses on connectedness in her discussion of Indigenous worldviews, in particular on the idea that, 'connectivity encompasses, infuses and constitutes everything, thus forming the foundations of classical Aboriginal thought' (2005, p. 6). For the Australian Aboriginal peoples, this connectivity is found within the kinship system and the skin names, which are embedded within Aboriginal Law, Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and cultural protocols.

This worldview guides thought, action and reaction, impacting on the wellbeing and safety of children, families, clans and nations. As part of the worldview, the beliefs, values and

knowledge that comprise Aboriginal Law have been developed specifically from this land and passed down through each succeeding generation.

In contrast, the western worldview is of man as the pinnacle of evolution – western man, that is – along with the right to satisfy his wants (not just his needs) by plundering both the environment and other societies (since they are deemed to be of lesser value). Once western colonising nations invaded other lands they brought with them, and enforced, their laws, values and beliefs, which clash with those of the Aboriginal peoples (Kovach, 2006; Martin, 2008). This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four. Also, in contrast to the long-term stability of the Aboriginal worldview, the western worldview is continually changing.

It is important to recognise that the differences between the western and Indigenous worldviews impact on Aboriginal families in practical, day-to-day situations, particularly with regard to the way in which professionals interact with Aboriginal peoples. Power brokers; from within their western worldview and white standpoint, impose western epistemology, axiology and ontology on the Aboriginal peoples, with an expectation that we will conform. They are then surprised when this does not happen. The Aboriginal person might not realise what is required of them or may be trying to work out a solution that is culturally appropriate. Power brokers, however, might judge the Aboriginal person to be non-compliant, such as in Richie's story of the lawyers (see Chapter Seven). This sometimes has devastating outcomes for the Aboriginal peoples with regard to having our children taken away or spending time in prison.

Stories

Throughout the thesis, the reader will note that stories are used in many different ways. Stories will be used during the research process to both share and interpret data gathered (see Chapters Six and Seven). Stories will also provide a means by which the reader's background knowledge and understanding will be developed and enhanced with regard to concepts that infuse the whole thesis, such as history and ourstory (see chapter Four), since they provide a framework to understand current situations and contexts.

The stories shared amongst the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples come from two different sources; from the Dreaming or from colonisation. All the stories shared as part of this thesis emanate from invasion and colonisation because these show the damage done to the kinship system and people's resilience and coping strategies. The net has been cast to capture stories that show 'hits' to the kinship system. These stories have been handed down through generations as a means of survival (Margolin, 1997)¹⁸ to build resilience (Sinclair, 2007; Sinclair et al., 2009)¹⁹ and to maintain Aboriginal culture and connectedness. Each individual, family and nation adds information in the form of their own experiences, so the picture expands from generation to generation, unless these stories fail to be passed on. In that case, as Ken Wyatt laments (in Chapter One) we have empty bookshelves.

The Aboriginal peoples' experiences of, and opinions about, the invasion and colonisation of our country are very different to the western view. However, the western view was the

¹⁸ Margolin talks about how the African American slaves passed information through story to each other about white customs and laws in order to survive.

¹⁹ Sinclair explains that resilience, and the lived experience that supports this, is passed through families and generations in ways that cannot always be duplicated through other means or other people.

only one documented and taught and even now it remains dominant. It is called 'history'. In order to make visible the different origin of the stories shared in this thesis, I call the Aboriginal story 'ourstory' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). For more about ourstory, see Chapter Four.

Whereas history has been readily accepted by academia as a valid source of information, ourstory has not. In 'talking back' (Smith, 1999) to the western standpoint that only western scientific research is valid, Indigenous academics are validating methodologies that include stories, dreams, art, song and dance (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008); cultural protocols (Mafle'o, 2004; Sinclair, 2007) and ceremony (Wilson, 2008).

The citation below, and the paragraphs which follow, refer to the Dreaming stories so as to give a complete picture of the role of stories and their dissemination. This section should not only be read in conjunction with methodology in this chapter, but also in conjunction with the kinship system in Chapter Three, since it is how the kinship system is passed from generation to generation.

Stories that are heard are not the same as the silence of the written word. So much is lost in translation – the communal context of performance, gesture, intonation – even the best translations are scriptural reductions of the rich oral nuance (Blaeser, 1996, p. 19).

Stories play an important role in the lives of the Aboriginal peoples because ours is an oral culture. For the Larrakia and Warumungu, it is part of normal communication patterns to answer a question by telling a story, rather than by answering a question directly. That way, information and knowledge are couched in a particular context and location, rather than pulling a strand out of a whole tapestry and viewing it in isolation. Storytelling, as an Indigenist methodology (Beverley, 2005) is embedded throughout this thesis.

Larrakia and Warumungu stories have multiple meanings, and contain stories within and between stories (Arbon, 2008). These stories are about the relatedness of all things, connecting us to Dreaming stories or the stories of our heroes, our country, our totems, our families or our skin names. There are many different concepts within one story. There are many insights that can only be accessed through deep contemplation and reflection. As different layers of the story are peeled back, more layers of information and knowledge contained within and between them are revealed (Arbon, 2008).

This peeling back of layers is something that is taught to the children of my clans²⁰ and nations and continues throughout our lifetimes; along with critical circular and spiral thinking, discussion, reflection, and analysis; each providing access to information that is sometimes hidden and deeply embedded within the story. All of these skills were and are taught within kinship and skin name groups. The learning within these groups is such that it engages all the senses and is the opposite to the banking concept of education that is spoken about by Friere (2003), where you only take out what you put in, a method that is dominant within western education and learning processes.

Within the kinship and skin name groups, children are painted up and taught to dance the stories they are hearing. This process engages all the senses and embeds the knowledge being learned deeply within minds and hearts. Over the years, there are a number of Dreaming stories that are used over and over again, but with each telling we are at a different stage of our cultural learning, development and maturity. This means that different information is gleaned from the re-telling and contemplation of the story.

²⁰ A clan consists of groups of related families. Several clans make up an Aboriginal nation.

Spirituality

Previous to undertaking this study, I had not thought of being able to connect spirituality to an academic exercise, such as the completion of a PhD, unless a theology student was undertaking the study. This caused me to experience some concern about how I would proceed on this research journey. However, on adopting Indigenist theory as the methodology for this study and reading the PhDs of a number of other Indigenous researchers (Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Sinclair, 2007; Wilson, 2008) I was able, as a natural part of the process, to include it because spirituality has become an area of interest in social work literature generally (Bolzan & McRae-McMahon, 2007; Mathews, 2010; Payne, 2005; Stirling, Furman, Benson, Canda & Grimwood, 2010; Weinstein-Moser, 2008; Wong & Vinsky, 2009). I acknowledge the important role spirituality has played and continues to play within this study, since spirituality is a central part of my being and has played a major role throughout my research journey.

I have been guided by the words of my ancestors as they have informed and supported my research many times over the years. I have noted this throughout the study in various places. When I searched for answers, my ancestors have come to me in dreams and I have sat and conversed with them. At other times I have received information without asking for it, and later found why I needed it. I have felt and experienced the intense interest of my ancestors in the work that I have been engaged in. I have recorded these dreams in a diary that I had by my bedside. As I followed the advice I received, I have found answers to questions; have been led to specific people who could assist my journey; read books that have given me insights; and located information from Indigenous peoples from other areas of the world.

When I have felt disheartened or lost, my ancestors have come and comforted me. They have shared the vision of how important the work I am undertaking through this research will be, not just for social workers, but also for my own children and grandchildren, and many other Aboriginal children, and I thank my ancestors for this gift.

Struggling with Theoretical Frameworks

As the literature was reviewed, especially the theories and theorists, it became clear that the knowledge base of the dominant theories were firmly embedded in, and privileged, western ontology and epistemology. These findings challenged me on many levels, especially at the foundational position of being an Aboriginal woman undertaking research. I felt like a square peg trying to fit into a round hole, and understood how the students had felt when they spoke to me (see Chapter One). It became essential to locate a research approach that would turn this experience around. Some of the theories examined were Post-colonialism, Constructionism, Feminism and Critical Theory. Each of these is discussed below to show how they became stepping-stones to Indigenism.

Post-colonialism

Before speaking about Post-colonialism, it is important to understand what is meant by colonialism. Colonialism ‘can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods’ (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). Just as Colonialism had varied manifestations across the world and across the centuries in association with different empires, the impact on those colonised was not the same. Pre-industrial invaders required goods, servitude and tribute from those colonised. Post-industrial colonisation is closely aligned to capitalism, where the colony became part of the economic base of the invading country (Loomba, 2005; Smith, 1999).

The word 'post-colonialism' can be written with or without a hyphen and interpreted differently on that basis (Mishra & Hodge, cited in Williams & Chrisman, 1994), with the prefix 'post' being interpreted as either 'after' or as 'supplanting'. Post-colonialism can also have several different meanings, depending not only upon the discipline studying it, but also upon whether individuals or locations are the point of focus. Loomba (2005) makes the point that any discussion of Post-colonialism without specifying the location is meaningless, because people's experiences of colonialism, and therefore post-colonialism, are different. Since colonialism brought disadvantage to Indigenous peoples in the Australian context and this disadvantage has not been corrected, Australia is not post-colonial (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). I, therefore, rejected Post-colonialism as a theory to guide this study and moved on to examine Constructionism.

Constructionism

All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p.42).

Constructionism is useful to this inquiry because it describes people passing on knowledge by teaching each other using social structures and networks (Crotty, 1998). However, other features of this theory make it less useful. Western people explain the kinship system as being socially constructed by humans (Ife, 2010). This is the opposite view to the Warumungu people who assert that it was a gift from the Creation entities. However, once the kinship system was given to the Aboriginal peoples it was maintained by our ancestors and socially constructed in that it was then passed from generation to generation and was changed to meet the needs of Aboriginal people when and where necessary.

Another issue with Constructionism is that it is embedded within western ideology, because it places at the centre of the theory reality being contingent upon human practices. This is the total opposite of the Indigenous worldview, which sees a seamless connection between all things in the universe, with humans as only a part of this (see chapter Three). Taking with me the idea that the kinship system is both a gift from the Creation entities as well as being socially constructed and maintained, I then moved on to examine Feminism.

Feminism

Early feminists challenged social and political inequalities between men and women by valorising their role and responsibilities as women, whereas later feminists would shift from celebrating difference to emphasising similarities (St. Denis, cited in Green, 2007, p. 35).

As illustrated in the citation above, feminist theory paved the way for different standpoints and shifted to meet the needs of women over time. The value of Feminism for researchers from minority groups is that it opened a number of doors to people who had been excluded in previous theories. Some of these doors included gay and lesbian theories, African American theories and Indigenist theory.

Feminism went through a series of reinventions and transformations, sometimes dealing with women's needs and at other times dealing with women's rights, such as equal pay and access to education (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, there is no single definition of Feminism. The fundamental reason for Feminism being developed by white women was to free themselves from the domination of white men (patriarchy).

For Aboriginal women, Feminism was irrelevant (Green, 2007) for a number of reasons. One reason was that patriarchy in the form that feminists objected to is very much a western experience (Green, 2007). A number of Australian Aboriginal nations are

matriarchal. Even in the Aboriginal nations that are patriarchal, Aboriginal women have their own Law, which means that we have equity with men and our voices have not been silenced, nor our rights removed.

Apart from this, Aboriginal women were not beneficiaries of the feminist movement, because our lives continued to be controlled by government and government policies, equally with our men (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Another important factor is that, despite the assertion that Feminism was a universal recognition of sisterhood; white women dominated Aboriginal women at the same time as they were fighting for their own rights (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Nor did the majority of white women express concern that the behaviours they objected to in their men were being forced upon Aboriginal women (Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

The particular part of Feminism that had value for Aboriginal women came from Marxist feminist theory, which argued that the political is personal, and the personal, political. The personal, our birth - was political because the Australian government had policies that were directly aimed at the Aboriginal peoples. These policies were directed at Aboriginal people as individuals and as a group. Feminism had some value for this thesis, but only as a forerunner because it opened the door to Critical Theory that, in turn, opened the door to Indigenism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Critical Theory

The next stage of theoretical exploration was an examination of Critical Theory. Early beginnings of Critical Theory can be found in the work of theorists such as Marx (1818-83) and Freud (1856-1939). It was refined by members of the Frankfurt school where the works of Adorno (1903-69) and Habermas (1929-2007), Horkheimer (1895-1973) and

Marcuse (1898-1979) were very influential, because they introduced a critical lens to the existing theories (Macey, 2000). The Frankfurt school is a term used to describe ‘a group of German philosophers, sociologists, and economists associated with the Institut für Sozialforschung which was set up in 1923’ (Macey, 2000, p. 139). Their work remained very Euro-centric and did not include the views of other cultures (Honderich, 1999; Macey, 2000; Preston, 2008). Geuss (1981) described Critical Theory as being ‘one that provided a guide for human action, inherently emancipatory, included cognitive content and is self-conscious, self-critical and non-objectifying’ (cited in Macey, 2000, p. 75). In other words, it shares several goals with Indigenist theory.

Critical Theory is important to this study, as it incorporates a historical, structural and cultural analysis of the issues discussed and offers ‘epistemic gain’ rather than absolute truth. It is open-ended in that it recognises that there is a need for all existing theories to be revised, superseded or even rejected as new experiences, voices and knowledge are privileged and brought out of the shadows (Calhoun and Karaganis, 2001). This is very similar to the description that Saukko (2003) offers when she likens research to a prism and reality as fluid, and speaks of a prismatic vision of research, challenging the idea that there is only one way of looking at reality and the privileging of this view.

Mullaly, writing from a critical perspective, argues the aim is to free those being researched. Critical Social Theory sits well within an Indigenist framework. It is ‘motivated by an interest in the emancipation of those who are oppressed, is informed by a critique of domination, and is driven by the goal of liberation’ (1997, p. 108). Critical Theory has played a central role in creating a space for Decolonising Research Methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Critical Theory alone, however, was not enough

to support Indigenous researchers (Kincheloe 2007, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. ix).

Decolonising Research Methodologies

The ethical dilemma I faced caused me to search for a research process that would enable me to move forward, with the understanding that the goal was the empowerment of my people. In progressing this goal I was led to Decolonising Research Methodologies. Decolonising Methodologies are the voices of the colonised speaking back to their colonisers in an effort to change the power balance.

My identity as an Aboriginal researcher is reinforced through the stories and visualisations that I use to illustrate the development of my theoretical framework, methodology and methods (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). It is interesting that Settee discusses critical storytelling as a research framework used to ‘awaken the consciences of others by inviting a re-examination of the values and interests that undergird the subjugation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems’ (2007, p. 122). This supports the work of Benhem and Heck (1998) and my own positioning as a Larrakia story maker. This was like a puzzle that began to take shape as I found pieces in various places but the puzzle was still not complete. Decolonising Methodologies were still not enough.

Finding the Right Theoretical Framework

It was not until I attended the first *International Indigenous Social Work Conference*, held in Hawaii in 2007, and met and spoke with Raven Sinclair, a then PhD student from the First Nations of Canada, that I had an opportunity to discuss these problems with another Indigenous social work researcher. After listening to me outline my difficulties with the

theoretical framework, Raven quietly said, “*Christine, you should explore Indigenism*”, and suggested I begin by reading the work of Ward Churchill (1996). This was the first time that I became aware of this body of knowledge.

On my return to Australia, I ordered a number of Ward Churchill’s books, and followed the leads offered through his referencing. This led me to the great Indigenous leaders and academics who had informed his work and, through critical reflection of what I was reading, I came to realise that I would need to develop a research process that would suit the context of my study. This led to the development of Aboriginal Circular Research.

Developing Aboriginal Circular Research

One of the major difficulties experienced in developing the research methodology was trying to separate the different parts (ontology, epistemology, axiology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods). Some western theorists illustrated the methodology as columns and placed them in tables, for example, Crotty (1998). This did not ‘fit’ my way of doing things. I felt constrained, as if my thinking processes and understanding were being obstructed, because I think in circles (Dodson, 1998), which for me, allow for the freedom of ebb and flow between different parts of the process as a whole.

To assist in overcoming this problem, I decided to speak to my ancestors about the difficulties I was experiencing and ask for their insights. This is part of Aboriginal ontology and also privileges Aboriginal spirituality. The answer I received came as a picture from my childhood. I saw my father and his brothers making throw nets (for fishing) and using them, first in the open sea from the beach and then in a river (see Chapter One). The casting of the net told me that I had to capture everything, critically

analyse what was caught, then allow irrelevant things to flow out. The change of fishing spot indicated that I might have been looking in the wrong place.

Having cast the net in regard to western research theories and having found they did not meet my research needs, I cast the net again in new waters. This involved looking at Australian programs and projects that had successfully included the kinship system and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. From this, the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* (SWSBSC) program (Fejo & Rae, 1996) was identified (see chapter Three).

The SWSBSC program included a methodology that was developed and utilised by Mrs Fejo and her team. The program was such a success that many people wanted to know how it was developed and the methodology that was employed. Mrs Fejo is not a researcher or academic. Her methodology was achieved through the use of the kinship system and the revitalising of Grandmother Law through kinship, song, dance and ceremonies²¹. She was able to achieve what she did because she is a knowledgeable and highly esteemed woman and Elder who understands the kinship system and her place in it. This allowed her to sit within the circle of Law women – and this embeds her methodology within Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

As I critically analysed and reflected on Mrs Fejo's work, I gained insights that I might otherwise have missed if I had not had many levels of insider positioning (as identified in Chapter One and explained in Chapter Three). I learned the importance of deep reflection over a lifetime; the necessity of digesting the information; taking time to allow life

²¹ Mrs Fejo gave permission for this methodology to be shared in this thesis.

experiences to solidify; and for patterns and connections that emerge to be analysed and synthesised. By doing this, I privileged an Indigenous voice in its broadest sense, which included modelling of behaviour and following examples set. This is all part of spiral thinking, but, instead of returning to the point at which you began, there has been a shift in your thinking so you begin the process again from a different point and you progress to another level (DiNova, 2005).

This can be illustrated as either being raised to the next level or as going down into greater depth as shown in Figure 5 below. I was then able to unpack the ontology, epistemology and theoretical perspectives and also the axiology, methodology and methods. As a result of this insight, Aboriginal Circular Research was developed as illustrated in Figure 6 below.

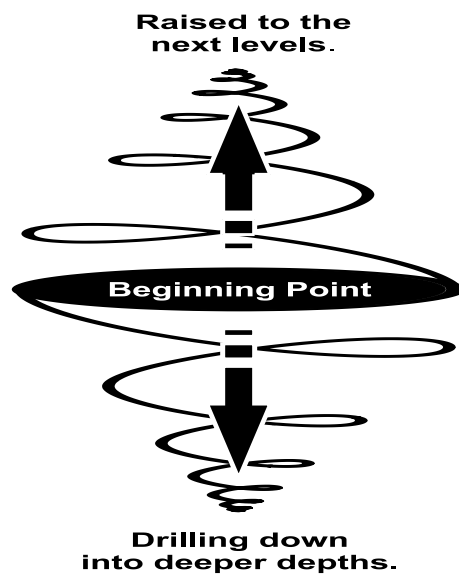


Figure 5: Spiral thinking

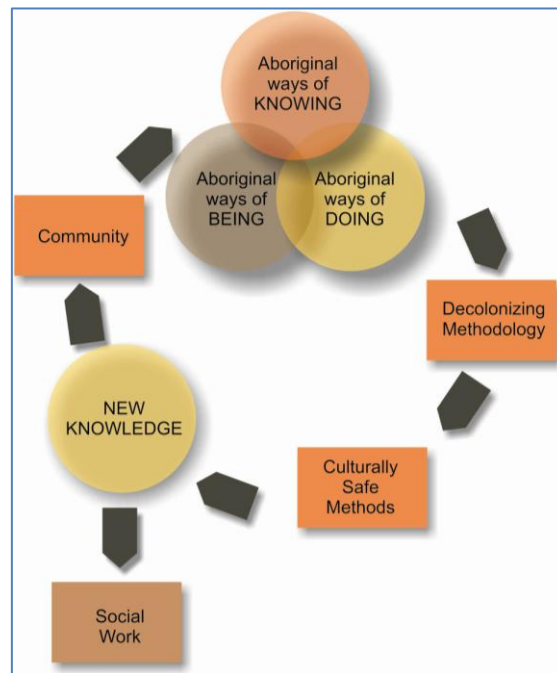


Figure 6: Aboriginal Circular Research

The People Involved in the Research

The people directly involved in the gathering of data were the cultural advisers (see Chapter One) and knowledge holders. Each of the interactions with them, as described below, show respect and were done in such a way as to ensure cultural congruency and safety, including considerations of positions of power in regard to locations used. Even the terms ‘cultural adviser’ and ‘knowledge holder’ were chosen as a means of showing respect and to empower those in these positions.

Cultural Advisers

When I introduced cultural advisers in Chapter One it was in relation to insider positioning, whereas here their responsibilities are explained and described, and the integral role of the cultural advisers at several points in my journey is highlighted. After I told Mrs Fejo and Mr Ah Kit that I had received permission to conduct research from both

the Elders and the university, I asked them if they were willing to act as cultural advisers as suggested by the Elders. They both said they were. We talked about what their role might look like. I asked them, “*How can we do this?*” because they were the guides and I recognised this and called upon their expertise about how best to go ahead with it. I had put in a proposal to the university, and we talked about how we could work within that proposal.

By agreeing to be cultural advisers for this study, Mrs Fejo and Mr Ah Kit were speaking on my behalf to the knowledge holders, their communities and nations. They were vouching²² for me. Even though I was already known to most of these people on a personal basis, I was not known from a research basis. By vouching for me (Bennett, Zubrzycki & Bacon, 2011), the cultural advisers were taking on the responsibility and obligation to ensure that, as a researcher, I would do the right thing. If for some reason I did not do so, Mrs Fejo and Mr Ah Kit would have been held accountable by the nations, communities and families involved. I would also have been held responsible, and would not have it any other way.

It was agreed that the cultural advisers’ role would include identifying knowledge holders who might be willing to participate in the study. They would lay the groundwork by meeting with these people, telling them about my research and explaining what I was hoping to talk to them about. They would ensure that all cultural protocols were followed, including gift giving. They said they would act as translators because I acknowledged my

²² The term ‘vouch’ used here in relation to the cultural advisers means they gave personal assurance that they knew me and that I was trustworthy.

rustiness in language. They would also serve as guides, after analysis of the results, as to what, from a cultural perspective, should be included and what should not be made public.

I then talked with my cultural advisers about the types of questions that I would be asking people. I told them these questions in advance so they could see exactly what was being asked. I also discussed with them the process of speaking to people individually, within family groups and within kinship groups. They said that they would help by identifying people they thought had knowledge of the kinship system and could contribute to the study.

I organised with them that they would both be involved in the interviews in Tennant Creek (see Chapter One). They would do the cultural and formal introduction of me as a researcher. They would sit in on the interviews so, if there was any concern, they would be there to support both the knowledge holders and myself. This would ensure cultural safety. Then Mrs Fejo would travel back to Darwin with me and participate in the interviews in Darwin, if it was deemed necessary.

One of the reasons my cultural advisers were heavily involved in Tennant Creek was to do with language. The people in Tennant Creek often feel more comfortable speaking in their own languages – this is their first choice. As a second choice they speak Kriol²³. Thirdly, they speak Aboriginal English. Because I had been away from country for so long my language skills were rusty; whereas between them, my cultural advisers were fluent in all the variations of language spoken in Tennant Creek. By allowing the knowledge holders to use their language of preference and by ensuring that complete, accurate translation was

²³ A mixture of Aboriginal languages and English.

available by people they trusted, Foley's point about use and privileging of Aboriginal languages was fully implemented.

We wanted to make sure that nothing was lost in translation so my cultural advisers were, in effect, acting as translators for both myself and for the people to make sure they were understanding what I was asking them (Mafile'o, 2004). In Darwin there was not the same need because English is the predominant language.

The role of the cultural advisers was as partners in the research process, making this research empowering and emancipatory. They had a very active, hands-on role by their own choice. On my arrival in both Tennant Creek and Darwin it was the cultural advisers who came with me to the homes of the knowledge holders and introduced us to each other in cases where there was not a pre-existing relationship. As part of this, they each also requested that they be interviewed as knowledge holders. It was also the cultural advisers who accompanied me in my discussions with Elders in each community.

Knowledge Holders

In the first phase of the research, eight knowledge holders were interviewed in Tennant Creek, including the cultural advisers (conducting interviews was in line with the proposal that had been approved by the university though it was not a comfortable way of working for me or for the knowledge holders). Only one of the knowledge holders was male. This is not surprising, given that an Aboriginal woman, who was also a member of this nation, was undertaking the research in a traditional area. It is an example of the kinship system itself at work within the research process, as each of the knowledge holders was connected to me through the kinship system. This does not mean that the knowledge holders were

blood relatives and closely connected to me; it simply means that we are all members of the same moiety and skin groups.

In the first phase of the research in Darwin, six knowledge holders were recruited. Of these, three were male and three were female. As with the knowledge holders in Tennant Creek, there was a connection between the knowledge holders and myself, the researcher, through the kinship system. These kinship relationships did not mean that all the participants were related to me through blood ties. However, the links were just as strong because they came through the kinship system.

The following table introduces the knowledge holders who were involved in this research, introducing their age, gender, their particular nation and the way in which they were recruited.

Country	Age	Gender	Nation	Recruitment
Richie	30s	Male	Larrakia	Self-selection
Gail	50s	Female	Larrakia	Cultural advisers
Sheila	70s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers
Wendy	50s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers
Mona	40s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers
Ellen	40s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers
Athelia	20s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers
Mrs Fejo	80s	Female	Warumungu	Self-selection
Mrs Black	90s	Female	Larrakia	Cultural advisers
Robyn	60s	Female	Larrakia	Cultural advisers
Robbie	40s	Male	Larrakia	Cultural advisers
Billy	50s	Male	Larrakia	Cultural advisers
Mr Ah Kit	50s	Male	Warumungu	Self-selection
Raylene	30s	Female	Warumungu	Cultural advisers

Figure 7: The Knowledge Holders

Location and Power

Principles about location and power apply in social work settings and interactions as well as with research. If we, as social workers, stay within our comfort and safety zones, such as our offices, when clients come to us, we maintain our power through location. In recognising this, a conscious decision was made right from the proposal stage that I would go on field trips and interview the people where they felt comfortable. I wanted them to be in control by letting them choose the location and physical environment for our conversations.

By working in this way, the knowledge holders also maintained all of their connections. They maintained their connections to each other, to country and to the other things that make up their kinship system. That added power to their voices. That is why the physical environment was important to this study – it is part of empowerment. The way this works is illustrated in Chapters Six and Seven.

By going to Larrakia and Warumungu country and speaking to the knowledge holders in their comfort and safety zones the power imbalance between us as researcher and knowledge holders was reset. Three of the meetings with the knowledge holders consisted of sitting under trees in the grounds of their homes and flats, sometimes on the ground and sometimes on chairs around a table. A lesser number of meetings occurred inside the homes of the knowledge holders.

A First Meeting with Some Knowledge Holders

A group of women were sitting outside their flats on a ground sheet under a big shady tree in Tennant Creek. On first approaching the women, the cultural advisers adhered to the

Aboriginal protocol of introducing me to the women I was meeting for the first time. They did this by calling me by my English name and then stating my skin name. Aileen Moreton-Robinson describes the process in the following way: 'the protocol for introducing oneself to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connections can be made on political, cultural and social grounds, and relations established' (2000, p. xiv).

This was demonstrated further as the women responded to the introduction. In this situation, however, what was happening in the Tennant Creek setting was much more detailed than Moreton-Robinson's description (2000). With the introduction of the skin name, another layer of relatedness was peeled back and entered into. By following cultural protocol and replying in the same way, the women within the circle expanded it, by immediately recognising and including me as one of them, despite never having met me before.

Further, by giving their English names and their skin names, we became one family. This is explained here. A number of the women were Naljarri, which means that through moiety they were my sisters. The expectation here is that we would relate to one another as sisters would, as if we had been born to the same woman. Another of the women was a Nungali. This meant that she was in the same skin group as my mother. The expectation here was that both she and I would relate to and interact with each other at the level of mother and daughter. A number of the women were also Nakkamarra, and identified themselves as being my sisters-in-law, and yet another woman was a Napangka / Nanngarriya, which identified her as being my daughter-in-law.

All this means that there was a shared understanding of who was sitting in the circle, what was expected of each of us (obligations), and how we should relate to one another (responsibilities). This is insider knowledge that is activated within the Aboriginal community when skin groups are still found and a particular skin name is used, like a key, to unlock it. This shared knowledge, understanding and expectation of behaviour, obligation and reciprocity laid the foundation for the interaction that then occurred. This kind of interaction drew on Indigenous knowledge and privileged Indigenous voices, in this case, literally.

Although the example I shared here is one found with a group of women in Tennant Creek, this situation was found in most of my interviews, regardless of gender, age, geographical boundary or nation, because of the relationship assigned through the kinship and skin system.

Detail of Field Visits

The gathering of data through visits to the Larrakia and Warumungu homelands was undertaken in two phases. The first phase, in 2006, occurred prior to the Northern Territory Intervention (see chapter Four) and the second afterwards, in 2008. It should be noted that this influenced what was said during the second phase.

In Phase One of this research, when meeting the knowledge holders it felt unnatural to ask them direct questions, but I was still trying to be a square peg and use western ways of doing things, so I asked my research questions. The knowledge holders answered me in a typically cultural way by telling stories, thus reminding me that I am an Aboriginal woman and should not walk only one path - instead, I should incorporate two ways of knowing on

my research journey. In doing this, without knowing it, they were reminding me of the need for political integrity in not allowing western theories to dominate my research.

In the two data chapters, the stories are shared and reflections given that help to unpack the information that is contained within them. By the time Phase Two of the research began I was much more relaxed because by then I had developed more experience and skill as a researcher, and this changed the dynamics between the knowledge holders and myself. The knowledge holders responded by sharing more information and clarifying what had been found in the first phase.

Insider knowledge was used to ensure that this research maintained an Indigenous focus and recognised and honoured cultural protocols. Following on from the request and cultural protocols, which took place before the interviews, each knowledge holder was given a gift as part of the gift giving protocol at the end of the interviews. These gifts were personal, and changed depending upon who the knowledge holder was and their situation. For example, some knowledge holders were given one of the very big handkerchiefs that Aboriginal women like to wear over their heads or around their necks in desert areas. In other instances, food or old family photographs were shared where there was a pre-existing relationship. Gift giving drew on Indigenous knowledge and was respectful.

The second phase was to return information that had been gleaned through analysis of the stories. This is about knowledge belonging to the people who provide it. The first people I met with were the cultural advisers. They saw the analysis of the data from the first phase and suggested I might ask people the following questions: *“Are you happy with what you said? Do you want to make changes or add anything? Is there anything you want taken out?”* When I contacted the knowledge holders, some were unavailable; others said they

were happy with what they had said and wouldn't need to meet with me. Others said they would like to catch up and, of these, a number gave more information and clarified what they had said previously.

The third stage of this research entailed going back to the Northern Territory in July 2011. At this time a synopsis of the thesis was given to each of the knowledge holders and cultural advisers and I answered any questions that they had. I will give a number of community presentations about the research and the findings. Finally, the thesis will be published once it has passed through the academic process so that as many people as possible will be able to access the information.

Role of Tacit Knowledge

In her research, Sinclair (2007) uses an Indigenist theoretical perspective that incorporates emerging Indigenous research methodologies along with a critical social theory approach that applies post-colonial, feminist, liberating lenses to her analysis of her topic, as they were the tools that she felt fitted with her study, since they were culturally congruent tools. In comparison, Settee positions her research, *Pimatisiwin: Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Our Time Has Come* within a naturalistic inquiry and states:

Researchers position themselves in their research projects to reveal aspects of their own tacit world, to challenge their own assumptions, to locate themselves through the eyes of the 'other', and to observe themselves observing. This lens shifts the observer's gaze inward toward the self as a site for interpreting cultural experience. The approach is person-centred, unapologetically subjective, and gives voice to those who have often been silenced (2007, p. 117).

This has certainly been my experience as an Aboriginal researcher. It has been a case of revealing aspects of my own tacit world; firstly, to my non-Indigenous supervisors, thus making them privy to my world and the tacit knowledge that is so much a part of it. What I

found was that, despite doing this, they couldn't see the stories within and between the stories or the spiritual connections that were so clear to me and to the other Aboriginal people involved. What this has meant is that I have had to go back and try to explain in detail what the tacit knowledge is. Foley's point about the supervisor of an Indigenous researcher also needing to be Indigenous was not possible in this instance because, as Arbon (2008) points out, there are very few Australian Aboriginal academics in a position to do this.

My supervisors not having the same tacit knowledge that was so much a part of who I am was very clearly illustrated when, in writing up the notes around the research undertaken in Tennant Creek, I wrote about sitting with a group of women who, although I had not met them before and was not blood related to them, are all related to me through the kinship system. I wrote: 'This group of women agreed to be interviewed together as they sat in a circle on a ground sheet and a blanket under a big tree in the yard. The rain clouds were rolling in, the thunder was clashing in the background and the camp dogs were having a fight while the children ran around playing. I really felt like I was home in the Territory again and with my people. The music of the language was like the soothing breeze to my heart - I am home again.'

When I showed this to my non-Indigenous supervisors, I was asked, "*What does this mean? Why don't you go into more detail? Why didn't you ask more questions?*" I had forgotten that Aboriginal protocols - the understanding of sitting within a circle of cultural women all related through the kinship system - cuts across and through so much of western understanding. When I was asked these questions I was taken aback. There is so much within Aboriginal culture and the kinship system that is unspoken around the genuine

acknowledgement and acceptance that is the natural right of all who live their lives within the bounds of the kinship system.

When I speak about the big tree in the yard, the rain clouds rolling in, the thunder clashing in the background and camp dogs fighting and the children playing, I am reminded that my ancestors live in this land; that the earth, the sky, the plants, animals and human beings are all related; and that mother earth nurtures all. Having gone home to the Northern Territory after living in a drought-affected area, I felt that the thunder was the voice of my ancestors welcoming me home, with the wind on my face and the rain falling on me as their tears of welcome.

The women within the kinship circle acknowledged all these things with knowing smiles and nods. I had, however, not realised that this tacit knowledge and intrinsic acceptance of the voice of our ancestors and my spiritual connection to the land and elements would not be recognised immediately from within a western knowledge base. This is because I had not learnt to put myself in the place of the other. I later realised that, even if my supervisors had been Indigenous, if they had not grown up within the moiety and skin system and had therefore not shared the same level of insider knowledge and tacit knowledge, I would also have had to explain it to them. Thus, my ability to put myself in the place of the other was expanded.

It is very clear that there are some insights around insider / outsider knowledge, tacit knowledge and shared knowledge that may sometimes go under the radar, so to speak, as these types of knowledge are not acknowledged or recognised within a research process where both the knowledge holders and the researcher are Aboriginal, and the university supervisors are not. This then means that there is a need for critical reflection on the part of

all to ensure that, during supervision, assumptions and ways of knowing are explored to enable the hidden depths of knowledge of Aboriginal student researchers to be illuminated and learned from. In other words, privileging of Indigenous voices - in this instance, the researcher's own voice - must occur and be recognised as part of qualitative research.

Analysis of the Data

Two forms of analysis were used to explore the data collected from the Northern Territory. Firstly, a microanalysis was completed. Microanalysis has been defined by Strauss and Corbin as being 'the detailed line by line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories (with their properties and dimensions) and to suggest relationships among categories; a combination of open and axle coding' (1998, p. 57).

As each of the transcribed interviews was reviewed, each sentence was numbered. Having completed that process, each line of each interview was analysed to identify interesting and related words and concepts. At the end of that process, words and concepts that had been used most often by the knowledge holders were grouped together, by simply noting them on paper and numbering how often they occurred. These are the words and concepts that I then took to the next level of analysis.

Having reviewed a number of analytical tools, I decided that thematic networks best suited the natural flow of the data. There are three major components of a thematic network, basic themes, organising themes and global themes. Basic themes are simple premises characteristic of the data on their own, but very little is gleaned about the text or group of texts as a whole. When a number of basic themes are brought together, they form an organising theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Global themes provide both a summary of the organising themes and insightful interpretations of the texts being analysed (Attride-

Stirling, 2001). A number of basic, organising and global themes emerged from the transcribed interviews and can be found in Appendix C.

The next level of analysis entailed mapping out on paper all the words identified as being used most often, and back-tracking them to find out what the real meaning of these particular words and concepts might be, by examining the context in which they were raised. For example, when the knowledge holders mentioned the word 'behaviour', I traced the word back to clarify what the knowledge holders had identified as acceptable behaviour and what they had identified as unacceptable behaviour. I also noted what the knowledge holders identified as prohibited behaviour: these included words like disrespect, stealing, having relationships with the wrong skin, and having children with the wrong skin.

On the other hand, when I explored acceptable behaviour, words and concepts such as 'reciprocity' (which was seen as a cultural duty) could be found. Keeping families together (which brought in problem-solving and support) and maintaining cultural protocols were all covered. Respect came down to respecting country, knowing and using protocols, and recognising and understanding body language. It also came down to the way one behaved towards their own family, clan and nation. Working together and supporting one another were also very important.

By undertaking such an analysis (see Appendix C), I was able to identify a number of similarities and differences with regard to concepts mentioned by the knowledge holders, as well as things they agreed on and things they did not. As I charted the information, the throw net that I used was Indigenist. This means that I chose things according to

Aboriginal culture and the kinship system and they fitted and were couched in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

A search of each sentence was then undertaken, searching for words with particular meaning that contained information of particular interest. Having gone through this process, I cut-and-pasted these words and sentences into their themes. I took particular notice of what was being said and what was similar and what was different. The information gained through this process was divided into different areas. These areas included knowledge of the kinship system; the role of the kinship system; dynamics, workings, functions; and lastly, ideas of how the kinship system might be used as a tool for the future. From this analysis, some of the issues that emerged are described in Chapter Seven.

As I reflected on the first phase of the study and applied Indigenist standpoint to unpack all that had happened, the importance of tacit knowledge was reinforced. The information gathered was not just about the stories. It was about location, atmosphere and drawings; it was about relationships and protocols (cultural, spiritual, ceremonial and communication); it was about the kinship system itself in action; and it was about connection to country. All of those things were at work within the data collection. Because this is Indigenist research based on Indigenist theory and ways of knowing, being and doing; in order to gather all the data available, stories are more than the words. To quote Blaeser again:

Stories that are heard are not the same as the silence of the written word. So much is lost in translation – the communal context of performance, gesture, intonation – even the best translations are scriptural reductions of the rich oral nuance (1996, p. 19).

Learning from the First Two Phases

I recognised at the very beginning of the research journey while developing the proposal that the study would need to be undertaken in three phases, with multiple visits to the sites. The first phase of the research would lay the foundation; it would give the knowledge holders thinking time to consider what they had said and what they might say on another visit, even after they had answered the questions during the first phase. The second phase was about taking my analysis back to the knowledge holders and giving them the opportunity to clarify, add, change or remove information (see above). The third phase was to give them a synopsis and presentation of the whole thesis.

Understanding the concept and need for thinking time when engaging in conversations or research with Aboriginal peoples is very much an insider's insight, which I believe is not acknowledged, or understood well, by non-Aboriginal researchers or universities. There is no set length or period for thinking time but there are a number of factors that affect it, such as: what is important to the community at a given time; how the community prioritises; distractions; frame of mind of community members; the relationship between the researcher and the community; the availability of people and the general level of health in the community. With regard to this research – a thesis designed to progress over a number of years - the timeframe between Phase One and Phase Two was two years with Phase Three coming three years later.

Greater depth and insights around the questions were expected to emerge during the second phase of the study because the knowledge holders would have been through the process of engaging with research and know what was expected of them. The knowledge holders would also feel more comfortable speaking with me and I would feel more

comfortable going back and engaging with them a second time, having provided them the courtesy of thinking time. This is a more culturally congruent practice than sending an email saying, *“This is what you said. Please review it and see if you want to make any changes or additions.”*

After completing the analysis of the first phase of the study, I decided to use the following three questions as a guide to the work necessary in the second phase. These are questions I asked of myself (with my reminders about them in brackets). What is this data telling me about the role of the kinship system (making sure I go back to my central research questions)? What do these answers mean in relation to my theoretical and cultural perspectives (recognising the throw net that I am casting in my research and how it is influencing my data analysis)? Given the answers to the above questions, are there gaps in my data, or areas that I need to explore further?

I had taken the report of the analysis with me when I returned to the Northern Territory. This highlights the fact that the knowledge gathered belongs to the people who provided it. This report included the themes that had emerged from the first interviews, so we were able to talk about those specific things. Apart from the knowledge holders and cultural advisers having thinking time, which drew on Indigenous knowledge and was respectful, they had also had experience of being part of the interview process and so, as a result, they took more control of the second interview. This fits with emancipatory research.

This time they gave more in-depth answers and explained things from their perspectives. This shows they felt culturally safe and comfortable. They gave examples and expanded on things and they did this through stories, drawing on Indigenous knowledge. By providing this opportunity, Indigenous voices were privileged. In one instance, one of the knowledge

holders said, “*No, I don’t agree with that. No, I don’t think you can say that*”, so the information was removed, highlighting that the knowledge belonged to the people who provided it. Then there was the new information that came out about the governance: it broadened our discussion and therefore our understanding of the role of the kinship system. I kept on talking about it as part of our Law but they pointed out very clearly that it is a part of Aboriginal governance as a whole and provides and maintains balance and harmony in the Aboriginal world.

Knowledge is contextually situated and is, therefore, partial. This concept is particularly important as, when reporting on the findings of the study, I am presenting what the knowledge holders told me, to another group. Spivak (1988), cited in Moreton-Robinson identifies two dimensions to the act of representation: ‘One dimension is to perceive representation as ‘speaking for’; the other is to comprehend representation as involving interpretation’ (2000, p. xxii). In this study, I am doing both. In the first instance, I am ‘speaking for’ the knowledge holders by telling about the importance of the kinship system in their lives. In doing this, I am not taking their voice, but giving them voice. I am also interpreting what they have said as I peel back the layers of the stories to bring to the fore several levels of meaning.

The Third Phase

The third phase is about reporting back to the knowledge holders about the research as a whole. In preparation for this, a synopsis of the research was written, collated and given to each knowledge holder personally. An opportunity was provided for them to ask questions and make comments. They were also thanked for their support. The third phase took place in July 2011. Once the thesis has been passed it will be published as a book and each

knowledge holder will receive a copy. This will continue the relationship beyond the research process.

Conclusion

The western theories that were used as stepping-stones that led to Indigenism, Indigenist theories and Indigenist Standpoint Theory were Constructionism, Feminism and Critical Theory. The ontology epistemology and axiology which guided the choice of theoretical framework, methodology and methods, were informed by an Indigenous Worldview, Standpoint Theory and spirituality.

In working through all three phases of this research, the kinship system has played a foundational role. It enabled connections between the researcher, the Elders, cultural advisers and the knowledge holders. It opened avenues to insider knowledge and culturally congruent and safe practice by harnessing protocols. The journey of this thesis was illustrated through a chronological story that highlighted such things as developing and using a moral compass, talking to the Elders, working in partnership with cultural advisers and giving the knowledge holders thinking time. The central role of tacit knowledge and the importance of location and power have been highlighted throughout the chapter.

Knowledge is not given just because you ask for it – you have to be the right person at the right time in the right location with the right people. This research could not have proceeded in the same way if the Elders had not been supportive of it and if the cultural advisers had not performed their roles. This is how Indigenist research progresses and what has happened for this thesis is clearly Indigenist research.

The next chapter provides an introduction to the kinship system, which was a gift to our ancestors from the Creation entities and has been handed down from generation to generation since that time. The Aboriginal kinship system is also a part of Aboriginal governance, which is different to western notions of governance and has been extensively studied by Anthropologists and others since the invasion of this land. It was a joy to write as it illuminates exactly how Aboriginal kinship is different to western notions of kinship and why it should be a central part of the knowledge base of any person, service deliverer or professional, who works with Aboriginal people.

CHAPTER THREE: ABORIGINAL KINSHIP

Introduction

Chapter One introduced the genesis of the research and its purpose and aims. It provided background information about the Larrakia and Warumungu people involved in the study and explained the fishing analogy that is used to capture relevant concepts. The structure of the thesis was also outlined.

Chapter Two explained the methodology, methods and theoretical framework used to progress the study and told the research journey in the form of a story. The purpose of this chapter is to explain what is meant by Aboriginal kinship and to describe it in some detail as it pertains to the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples involved in this research. This is done in order to illustrate how Aboriginal kinship is talked about, thought about and learned about from an Aboriginal perspective. Included within this discussion will be how kinship knowledge is used every day in the lives of the Aboriginal peoples of my nations, and how it is passed on from one generation to the next.

This chapter illustrates how the kinship system has changed over time, when necessary, to meet the needs of the Aboriginal peoples. It lays the knowledge foundation that is essential to understand the purpose of the interview questions used to gather data, and the responses made by the knowledge holders. This chapter also reviews who has studied the kinship system, how the information was sourced and what has been done with the knowledge gathered.

To assist its flow, this chapter has been divided into three parts. Firstly, kinship will be explained from the point of view of the Aboriginal peoples. This will be followed by

anthropologists' use of the information they gathered. This is important because anthropology is the key discipline that has studied kinship systems.

The third part of this chapter explains how Aboriginal academics and practitioners are currently using kinship, nationally and internationally, to better inform their disciplines and professions. The desired outcome of this sharing of knowledge about the kinship system and skin names is to provide culturally congruent and safe service delivery, and better outcomes for the Aboriginal peoples.

Defining Aboriginal Kinship

During the Dreaming the kinship system was given as Law to our ancestors by the Creation spirits and continues today since it is omnipresent (Tripcony, 1996). The best way for me to explain the Dreaming is through use of the number '8', with the loops representing the past and future, and the connection at the centre representing the present. The loop is always in flux, as the future becomes the present and then the past. There is more than one 8: there are echoes of the 8, enabling people to move backward and forward in time. Hence, our ancestors can visit and speak to us because time folds into itself. Also, some of the Creation spirits remain in the land and continue to guide us.

The kinship system could be said to be socially constructed (see Chapter Two) because the people who live it modify it as necessary and adapt it to their changing circumstances (such as invasion and colonisation). However, due to the Dreaming being omnipresent, the kinship system can still be claimed by Aboriginal people to emanate from the Dreaming.

The following explanation is given to help non-Aboriginal people to understand a small portion of a very complex, interwoven and embedded system within Aboriginal ways of

knowing, being and doing. It is also provided to support and understanding of Aboriginal spirituality and cosmology (Tripcony, 1996) as part of the Jukurrpa which includes Wirnkarra.

Included in our Law are the following: kinship, reciprocity, obligations, land, care of country and totems, to name but a few. Law cannot be separated from the Dreaming or from spirituality, since they are interconnected and interwoven. Much is lost in attempting to translate these complex and inter-related concepts into the English language.

The Warumungu word for the Dreaming is Wirnkarra, while the term for Law (which is inclusive of Wirnkarra) is Jukurrpa. There is no English word that combines these complex concepts and much can be lost in translation. Wirnkarra and Jukurrpa are conceptualised from within an Aboriginal worldview as ‘naturally’ connected and instructive as to human behaviour and interactional patterns. From this point on the concepts of Dreaming, and Aboriginal Law will be referred to by their Warumungu language names as a means of drawing the English speaker into Aboriginal terms and frames of reference.

For the Larrakia and Warumungu, kinship can be described as a network of social relationships and a form of governance. It is extensive and includes relationships and inter-relationships of all creation: from the celestial; to mother earth; to all inanimate formations or objects; to living creatures that fly, live on and within the earth, the waterways and seas; it includes Aboriginal peoples (Martin 2008); and even the seasons. Thomas King (1990) and Ravin Sinclair (2007) from North America refer to the inclusion of all things as being ‘all our relations’.

The celestial bodies also connect to Aboriginal peoples, as found in many Wirnkarra stories (for example, the story of the Seven Sisters, a star constellation in the Southern

night sky). The celestial bodies also control the seasons. For example, the different moon cycles tell the Larrakia the best time to harvest mud crabs. At full moon the crabs are fat, while at quarter moon they are skinny. Larrakia and Warumungu people moved around our country according to the seasons because different food sources were abundant in different seasons and in different locations. All these things are connected to the kinship system as all life, including the seasons, are part of the kinship system, and embedded within the moiety (personal knowledge).

However, as discussed in the previous chapter, our movements across our countries have been curtailed through the appropriation of our land by governments and through settlers moving in and Aboriginal peoples being removed (Haebich, 2004). All of these actions impacted negatively on Aboriginal kinship; as kinship includes the connection between, not only the land and the people, but between the celestial bodies, the seasons and the people. These interconnected relationships make up the social and spiritual fabric of Aboriginal life. When we are not on our country we cannot carry out all our kinship responsibilities or ceremonies, simply because some are directly tied to specific areas of land. There are also relationships that result from moiety, and skin names (Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Trudgen, 2000; Turner, 2005).

I argue that while this study focuses on kinship as it relates to the Larrakia and the Warumungu, this kinship system is shared by many tribes and nations (see Mrs Fejo's first and fourth comments in Chapter Seven). While there may be some differences, these tribes and nations would have enough recognisable aspects of relatedness contained within them to identify them as the kinship system, even though some may have lost certain aspects such as moiety or skin names (see Richie's lawyer analogy in Chapter Seven). Two examples of this variation in the kinship system and its visibility or invisibility within

different nations and locations can be found in my discussion with the students in Chapter One and Richie's discussion with an Aboriginal man in Chapter Six.

The kinship system is Australia wide but it is not uniform because of various government policies; which, while not targeting it directly, have impacted negatively since invasion and colonisation. Aboriginal kinship is part of Jukurrpa, Tjukurrpa or Tjukurpa which is Aboriginal Law / Dreaming (personal knowledge). These terms, while coming from different language groups, illustrate the extent of Aboriginal Law / Dreaming, in which kinship is embedded. Tjukurrpa comes from the Pintupi language while Pitjantjatjara and Luritja languages use Tjukurpa. These all have the same meaning as Jukurrpa. The Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands (often called the tri-state area) extend from the Northern Territory through to South Australia and Western Australia (Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker, 2010).

What Makes Up the Kinship System?

The Totemic System

Totems are animal ancestors and are part of the kinship system. Amongst the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples there are individual totems, family and clan totems and totems that represent their tribes and nations. Totems are sacred (Tripcony, 1996). They speak to us and offer guidance throughout our lives. Therefore, we honour them. We do not hunt or eat them. Our dances, music, songs and rhythms replicate the sounds they make and their movements. Their designs are painted in our artwork, and on our bodies at specific times to honour them, in remembrance of the ties of kinship that bind us.

Moiety

Moiety is the anthropological term widely known about and used by Aboriginal people to describe the two halves of the Aboriginal world - balance and harmony. Richard Trudgen described this concept with regard to the Yolŋu²⁴ when he explained, 'at Creation, Yolŋu society came into being in two halves. All creation, including humans, are either *Dhuwa*, or *Yirritja*' (Trudgen, 2000, p. iii).

The concept of moiety as two halves of the world is not confined to the Yolŋu alone. My father's clan of the Larrakia depict it as the black and white cockatoo. My mother's people, the Warumungu, also know about this concept and depict it as the separation of the black and red at the dawn of each new day. Trudgen tells us that, with regard to Aboriginal moiety, 'the only other well-known equivalent to *Dhuwa* and *Yirritja* is the Chinese Yin and Yang, although there are a number of differences between these two systems' (2000, p. iii).

Skin names

'Skin name' is a term used by Aboriginal peoples who are part of the system of eight (which for the Warumungu is divided into two lots of eight, one lot of eight male and the other lot of eight female, making a total of sixteen) to identify each generation within the kinship system. Skin names identify and position each individual and generation in Aboriginal society in relationship to other people, to the Jukurrpa and to the land. In anthropological literature, skin names are referred to as subsection names. The skin names are often used by Warumungu people as a short and quick way of navigating the complex

²⁴ Yolŋu is the word used to identify Aboriginal people in northeast Arnhem Land (Trudgen, 2000).

kinship system, working out relationships between people and any responsibilities, rights and obligations that should be honoured (personal knowledge).

The skin name also acts as a key that unlocks the door to the social and spiritual fabric of Aboriginal society. In some areas where the skin names continue to be maintained a person who has lost this key becomes separated from the kinship system, along with being lost to their family, clan, tribe and nation. In some instances, access to particular areas of the kinship system can be lost forever if this key cannot be reclaimed. This has happened for some as a result of the Stolen Generations. This is what can also happen when Aboriginal children are put into out-of-home care and responsibility is not taken by the worker or Department / organisation to ensure that the children's kinship and totemic connections are maintained.

The Warumungu Skin System

There are eight skin names (male and female) that fit into one moiety (or half of the world), and eight corresponding names that form the other moiety both male and female (the other half of the world), with a total of sixteen skin names covering both genders. This is often referred to as the system of eight by Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. People are born into these skin systems, so we know what the skin name of our grandparents, parents, marriage partners, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be. Once each of the sixteen skin names has been used, the system returns to the beginning, and the skin names are used again. This provides structure, order, harmony and balance to the Aboriginal world and the kinship system.

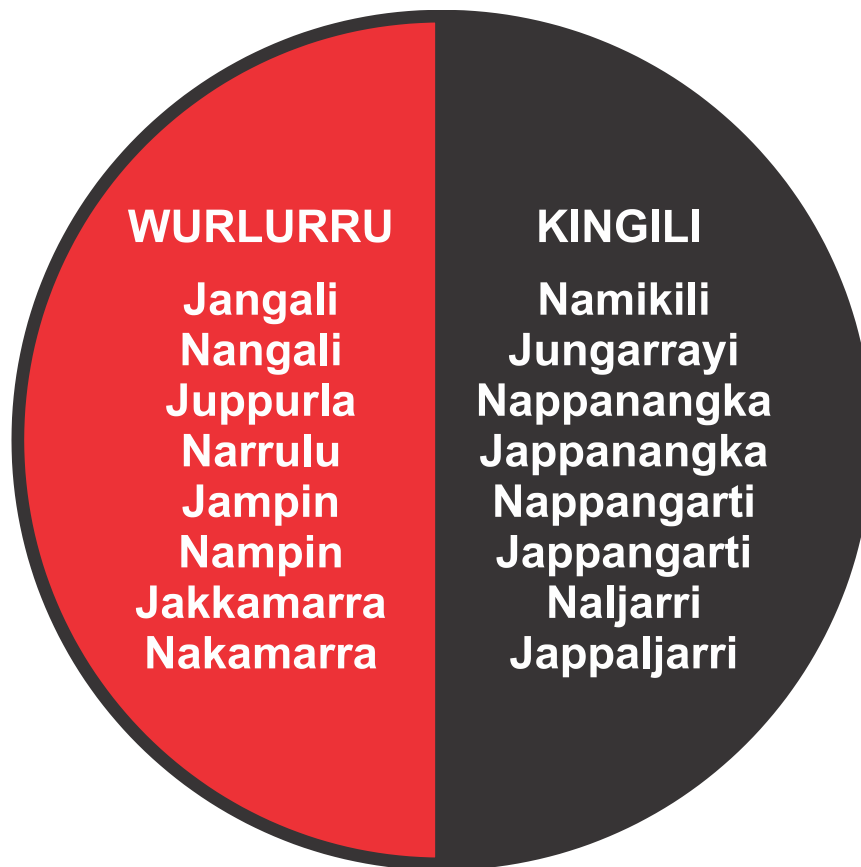


Figure 8: The Warumungu Moiety and Skin Names

Aboriginal people with particular skin names marry in a pre-ordered skin sequence. These are then said to be ‘straight’ or ‘right skin’ marriages. All the men’s skin names begin with ‘J’ and all the women’s skin names begin with ‘N’.

These skin names act as the glue that hold people together, guiding interactions, relationships and obligations of reciprocity and marriage. They are not only found within remote, or what are often called ‘traditional’ areas, as Aboriginal kinship is practised right across Australia, both in the major cities and in the regional and remote areas (Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Bessarab, 2006). For example, my husband and I and our children live and work in Canberra, the capital city of Australia, and there are a number of other

people from the same skin system who also live in Canberra, thereby enabling us to continue our kinship practices.

I grew up within the kinship system that has, as part of it, skin names. This is my birthright and the birthright of my family. It is also the birthright of all Aboriginal people who are born into that system and who know, keep and use it, though others can be adopted into it. I have had to learn it well to know who I am, how I fit into the world and how to interact with the world. What is being shared here is personal knowledge gained from infancy.

Even when my older sister and I became part of the Stolen Generations and were sent to a mission, she continued my cultural training by sharing Wirnkarra stories. We were lucky that she was old enough to know and remember these stories. Also, we were not separated, as many brothers and sisters were. Another major factor was that we had spent our early years in our father's country, which was salt-water. The mission we were sent to was also located in a salt-water area, so all of our kinship and totemic connections to land, sea and sky remained intact. We could hunt and gather food off the land and, as we did this, she told me the stories that connected us to them all.

This is the foundational knowledge of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. This is knowledge learned from my parents and grandparents, who in turn learned it from our ancestors. It is knowledge that I have passed it on to my children, and will ensure that my grandchildren also learn. This is knowledge that will guide their lives so they, too, can be firmly grounded within their kinship and totemic systems and never become separated from them or from who they are.

Warumungu Skin Name Cycle

(System of Eight)

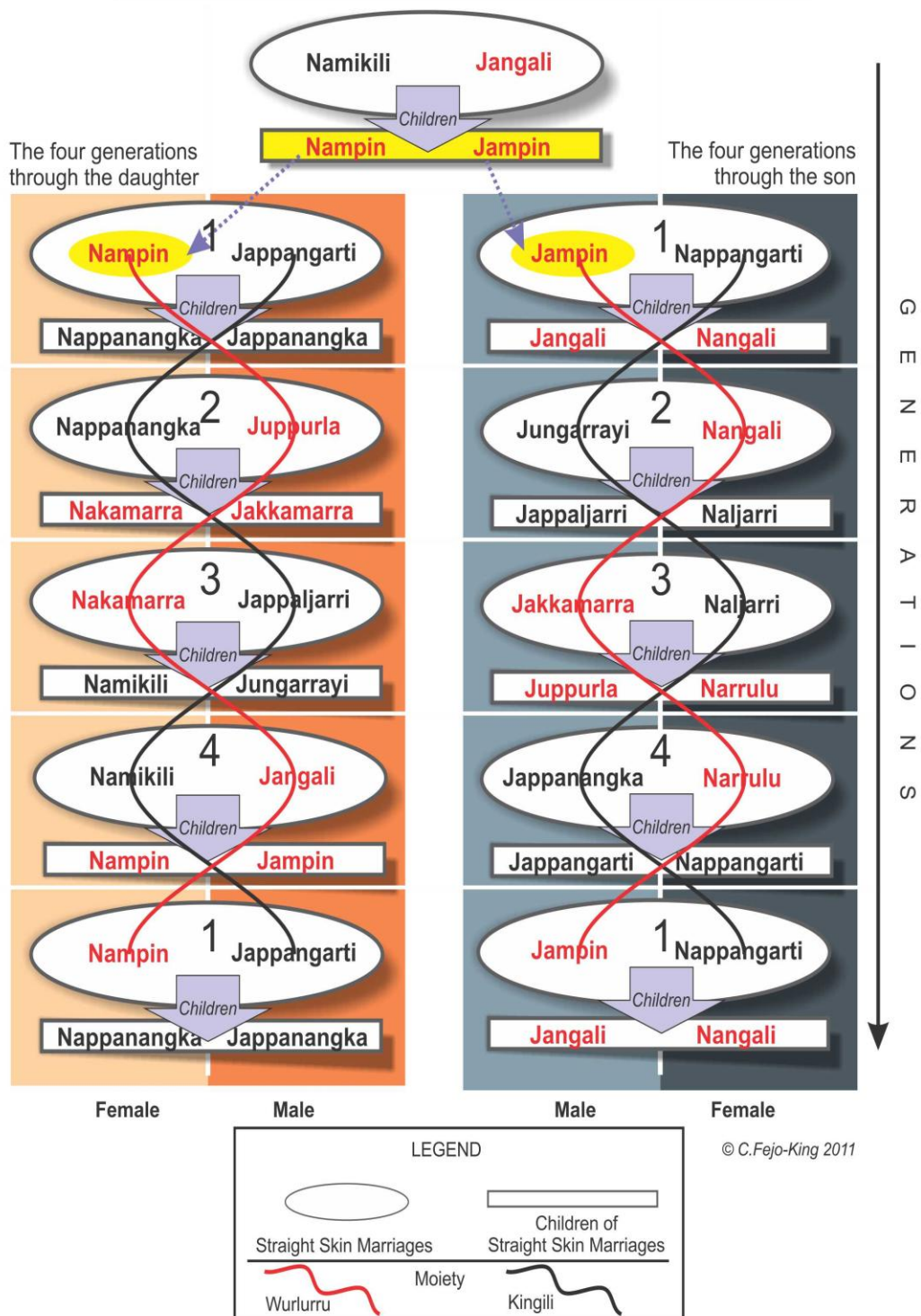


Figure 9: The Warumungu Skin Name Cycle

Family

Kinship is learned when we are babies in our mothers' arms, reinforced while growing up with our brothers and sisters and cousin brothers and cousin sisters, and supported by our grandparents, aunts and uncles. All these terms – 'mother', 'uncle', and so forth - have different meanings to western understandings of who these people are.

Within the Warumungu kinship system, the sisters of my mother and all the women of her generation, whether blood related to her or not, would all share the same skin name. The same applies for my father and his brothers and all the men born in his generation, whether blood related to him or not. All these people share the same skin name. They are all my mothers and fathers and we will have the same obligations of care and reciprocity existing between us as though they were my literal biological parents.

My grandmother and all her sisters, who share the same skin name, are all my grandmothers. The same is true of my grandfather: his brothers and those other Aboriginal men who share the same skin name are all my grandfathers. Everyone is treated the same within these skin groupings whether they are biologically related or not. This would apply even if I had never met the individual concerned.

This is one of the reasons that introductions between Aboriginal peoples, who are meeting for the first time, are so important. It is at this initial introduction that Aboriginal peoples sort out how we are related to each other through skin names, family grouping, membership within tribes, nations and kinship generally (Martin, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). This knowledge then guides and directs interactions from that time forward.

Because people have children at different rates, not everyone of the same age would necessarily be called by the same skin name, as they could be located within different generations. This difference means that you could have people of the age of grandparents sharing a skin name with a toddler, for example. They would still be, for all intents and purposes, sisters through skin, and the older woman would treat the younger child as her sister, and they would identify as such.

The kinship system is dynamic and has been changed to meet the needs of the people at various times and in various ways, which means that it will not easily become redundant or obsolete. With this understanding, let us examine more closely what is meant by the statement ‘the kinship system has been changed’ by viewing it through the lens of ourstory.

When my mother was taken away from her family in the desert, she was about four years old²⁵. She and the other children that were taken away from at the same time, who were part of her skin system, were sent from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs, to a place called the Bungalow²⁶. The removal of the children from their country and family kinship systems was a major ‘hit’ to Aboriginal kinship, even though, at the time, this was not the main objective.

On their arrival at the Bungalow, the children from Tennant Creek found that there were a number of other ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal children who came from different areas of the Northern Territory, and were from different nations, already in residence. My mother tells

²⁵ I am guessing here, because her birth was not recorded in Australian records at the time due to the fact Aboriginal people were not counted in the census until after the 1967 Referendum.

²⁶ The Bungalow was a compound run by the Australian Government where Aboriginal children from the desert were sent and accommodated until they were divided into various religious denominations. Shortly thereafter they were sent to live in areas across the Northern Territory that had been set up as missions.

of how the children tried to organise themselves within their skin systems in order to follow the pattern of care, responsibility and reciprocity that they had grown up in. However, they were beaten for speaking their own languages and for trying to organise themselves along kinship patterns.

Shortly after the children were taken to the Bungalow, they were told that they were going to be moved to Christian missions²⁷. They were physically separated from the children they were trying to stay with, given a white name and a Christian religion, then they were transported away. It is important to note here that, despite good intentions, the missions had a major negative impact on the kinship system as the missionaries, in their Christianising of the children, unknowingly cut across the kinship system and the ties of kinship that held the children together.

Younger children from the desert were taken to the salt-water, and it was later discovered that younger children from the salt-water were taken to the desert. These were deliberate actions to distance the children from their families and the landscapes and ways of living that they were familiar with. By doing this the children found it more difficult to try to run away and return to their homelands or kin and the kinship system was again impacted as the ties of children to country were severed.

What was only spoken about in hushed tones, much later, is that, in some instances, the older girls were lined up so white men could come and choose which girl they wanted and take them away (Blum, 2006). Many of these girls were never seen again and no one

²⁷ Missions were specific areas of land upon which various religious groups were able to build buildings that were set-aside only for children (no parents were included) who were to learn religion and to receive some education. The children stayed on the missions until they were sixteen years old at which time they were sent to either Darwin or Alice Springs (girls) or to cattle stations (boys) where they were employed as maids or ringers (labourers who worked with cattle) respectively.

knows what happened to them. All these things constituted more disruption to the kinship system. These children experienced several events that impacted negatively upon them and their kinship system in quick succession. These were, firstly, being stolen from their parents, country, language, food sources and lifestyle. Secondly, at the Bungalow, when they were taken from their regrouped kinship system, siblings, religion, country and clothing. Thirdly, they were again moved, this time to the missions to environments they were unfamiliar with.

My mother was sent to the Croker Island Mission²⁸, which has since reverted to its Aboriginal name, Minjulung. The children were at the Croker Island Mission for most of the rest of their growing-up years except for the war years, when they were evacuated to New South Wales. After the war they were returned to the mission and remained there until they turned sixteen. All the girls had to leave the mission then and go to Darwin to work, mostly as maids. The boys were sent to cattle stations to learn to become ringers.

While the children were at the Croker Island Mission, they reorganised their kinship system so that they all became brothers and sisters to each other. This was not just a name to them - they took it very seriously. They incorporated within these new relationships the underpinnings of Aboriginal kinship, which meant that there were obligations and responsibilities of care and reciprocity that they took with them even when they left the mission.

These kinship relationships were and are maintained in adulthood through the way in which they helped each other to find jobs and housing, to care for each other's children and

²⁸ At the time, the Croker Island Mission was a Methodist Mission.

to share money, food and clothing. These relationships have, in many instances, lasted throughout the lifetimes of these people and have, in turn, been carried over to their children. For some, this has not just been a strategy of survival; it has been necessary, because they have never been able to reconnect with their families of origin (personal knowledge).

This example illustrates both the impact of government policies on the Aboriginal kinship system and its robustness as well as the resilience of Aboriginal peoples and our willingness to incorporate kinship into our lives in one form or another. It is also an example of how the kinship system was changed to meet the needs of people at a given time. However, it should be recognised that knowledge of the original pattern of the kinship system was in place (because the children remembered what they had been taught) and that this traditional knowledge supported these changes.

Country

Mick Dodson, Indigenous Australian of the Year in 2009, explained the term ‘country’, and what it means to the Aboriginal peoples in the following way:

For us, country is a word for all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with an area and its features. It describes the entirety of our ancestral domains. All of it is important – we have no wilderness, nor the opposite of wilderness, nor anything in between. Country is country - the whole cosmos. Country underpins and gives meaning to our creation beliefs - the stories of creation form the basis of our laws and explain the origins of the natural world to us – all things natural can be explained (Dodson, 2009).

Country is both communal and personal. For the Larrakia and Warumungu people, kinship and our stories; which belong to the land, bind us to it, to each other and to all living and inanimate entities that are found on and in it, above it and under it, because all are

spiritually connected in never-ending circles. Our country gives us our identities, connecting us to our totems and our Dreaming. Our ceremonies ensure these physical, spiritual and psychological connections are strong.

For me, country is everything. As I listen to the tap sticks and chanting beginning at sunset and going into the night, I look up at the stars and the moon and I close my eyes to sleep. I hear the tap sticks again as I wake in the morning to see the sunrise, and I know I am where I belong, nestled in the heart of my spirit centre. I hear these sounds as the sound of my heartbeat and the heartbeats of my grandparents, mothers and fathers, that I heard as they held me close as a child. It is a sound that I have never forgotten. It is also the sound of the heartbeat of my children and grandchildren as I hold them close. They are also the sounds of the heartbeat of my country, because country is kin.

This is one of the fundamental differences between the way in which Aboriginal peoples understand and experience country (Dudgeon, Garvey and Pickett, 2000; Tripcony, 1996; Turner, 2005; West, 2000), as opposed to the way in which most non-Aboriginal people understand and experience country. To the non-Aboriginal, country is mostly just land. Land must be tamed and used, or it can be bought and sold (Stanner, 1968). This is incomprehensible to many Aboriginal peoples. As one old man said to Stanner:

*White man got no Dreaming,
Him go 'nother way.
White man, him go different.
Him got road belong himself.*
(Unidentified Aboriginal man, cited in Stanner, 1968, p. 57)

The explanation of country as given by Mick Dodson, and the connection to country as explained here by me, are some of the reasons why country is held as communal. If a

person is separated from their country, with no way of going back, it can cause physical, psychological and spiritual illness and even death for the Aboriginal person. Despite this, governments today, led by people such as the ex-Minister for Indigenous Affairs to the Howard Government, Mal Brough, want us to change the way we connect to our countries. They want us to objectify 'it' so that we can use 'it' to enter the market economy. They believe this is one of the ways to overcome the poverty of our peoples because as they see it, we are land rich and money poor. From my perspective we, the Aboriginal peoples, have already had so much taken from us. If we betray our responsibilities and obligations to all within our kinship circles (not just humans), we may well be money rich, but we will be country poor and spiritually adrift, and how long would the money remain our pockets and how long would our future generations feel the separation from their spirit centre?

Insider / Outsider Positioning in Relation to the Kinship System

Most people are both insiders and outsiders in any given situation and this is no less true of Aboriginal researchers. Being classified an insider or an outsider is all relative to the person or group you are trying to relate to, and these layers, in turn, determine what you can or cannot do. In no particular order, the layers within the kinship system are to do with a person's tribe, nation, clan, moiety, skin, totems, country, language, age, gender, participation in ceremonies and level of cultural training.

In progressing this research, the following layers of insider positioning were identified in Chapter One and are worth reiterating here. Being Aboriginal is a basic entry level into the kinship system, making every Aboriginal person an insider to this first layer. In working with the Larrakia and Warumungu nations, I am an insider in both because these are my

people - I did not go to another nation. As shown in my journey (see Chapter Two), skin names were used, placing me as an insider in regard to moiety and skin. Approaching the Elders first and using cultural advisers showed me to be an insider in relation to cultural knowledge and training. Since most of the knowledge holders were Law people and I am also a Law person, I am an insider in relation to Jukurrpa. In talking to women in Tennant Creek, I was an insider in relation to gender. In accepting the role of one of the women in Tennant Creek as a senior Elder and therefore spokesperson for the group, I showed myself to be an insider in understanding of communication protocols. We were all on country for every interview, making me an insider in regard to country. I was an insider in that I maintained the Larrakia and Warumungu cultural protocol of gift giving as reciprocity for sharing of knowledge. I was also an insider in relation to spirituality because our ancestors spoke to all of the women under the big tree through nature and all of us within the circle recognised and acknowledged it.

Even fully supporting my cultural advisers' position as interpreters who translated both ways to ensure not only that I could understand the knowledge holders; but that they could fully understand me, I was an outsider because my language skills were rusty. I was also an outsider because I was engaged in a very western process, that of research. I am also an outsider because I currently live off country.

When we first meet, we as Aboriginal peoples position ourselves in the Aboriginal world and work out how to relate to each other. We identify our layers of insider / outsider positioning, which determines how we relate to each other and what we can share with each other. It also determines the expectations we have of each other.

My Research Compared to that of Anthropologists

I am speaking from a woman's perspective and I realise that a woman's perspective is only half the story. The dominant voice in anthropology undertaken in the past - and which informs the anthropology of today - has been that of the white male anthropologist (Parkin & Stone, 2004). These male anthropologists mainly used Aboriginal men as their informants. This rendered Aboriginal women's Jukurrpa and ceremonies invisible to these anthropologists. They assumed that patriarchy was part of Aboriginal culture because anthropologists themselves came from a patriarchal society. Although the practice of men speaking to men aligns with Aboriginal culture, anthropologists were only hearing one side of the story yet they viewed Aboriginal kinship as 'one of the comparatively few topics that anthropology has managed to make its own' (Parkin & Stone, 2004, p. 2). As Stanner so eloquently pointed out:

If there are three subjects which anthropologists have understood quite well for a very long time, they are the initiation rites, the marriage systems, and the delicate intimacy of a kinship-bonded social life (1991, p. 38).

Not taking into account women's Law brings into question their boast, of 'owning' knowledge of Aboriginal kinship (Parkin & Stone, 2004). The methodology and methods used by anthropologists to study Aboriginal peoples have been grounded in naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Naturalistic inquiry calls for an:

Enquiry to be carried out in a 'natural' setting because the phenomena of study, whatever they may be – physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological – take their meanings as much from their context as they do from themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189).

In the past, and to some degree in the present, this exploration mainly occurred as ethnographic studies, with anthropologists going out to the countries and nations of the Aboriginal peoples, camping out, and watching everything that happened through the lenses of the ‘objective observer’. The idea of an ‘objective’ observer is interesting, as increasing numbers of researchers point out that there is no such thing as ‘objective’ observation (LaRocque, 2010): all researchers bring with them their ‘subjective’ knowledge and values, based on their own worldviews. Anthropologists managed to survive, often in harsh conditions, through the cultivation of what Vine Deloria Jr. (1969) described as ‘special relationships’. This also brings into question their claim to objectivity when, within an Australian context, a number were learning the languages, receiving skin names and participating in ceremonies.

Who are the Anthropologists?

The Dreaming is many things in one... A kind of narrative to things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of logos or principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man. If I am correct in saying so, it is much more complex philosophically than we have so far realised (Stanner, 1968, cited in Manne, 2004, p. 58).

In this section I am presenting some literature and knowledge that comes from anthropology because social workers study anthropology and incorporate anthropological knowledge into social work theory and practice. It is social work theory and practice that this thesis seeks to inform. Information about Aboriginal peoples has been gathered by anthropologists but not shared in a way that is helpful to social workers (Whyte, 2005).

With the origins of anthropology located, ‘in part in Victorian intellectuals’ self-affirmation of their own sense of superiority and civilisation. The study of ‘primitives’ was always bound to be of interest’ (Parkin & Stone, 2004, p. 1). Due to my ancestors being

labelled 'primitives', the wider anthropological community, both nationally and internationally, has for decades shown a particular interest in Aboriginal culture, examining it under a microscope. Of particular interest was and is the Aboriginal kinship system, as illustrated through the works of Biolsi and Zimmerman (2004); Carty in Webster (2012); and Stanner (1991 Ed.,).

Henry Lewis Morgan, an American lawyer-ethnologist who studied the Iroquois nation of America, completed research which resulted in 'the first grand theory' of kinship. He wrote two seminal works, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1870) and *Ancient Society* (1877) (Parkin & Stone, 2004). Australian anthropologists include Stanner, a humanitarian anthropologist who inspired a new generation of anthropologists and historians to examine the real history of Australia. He thought they should not just take for granted what had been written / left out by historians (genocide, murder, rape, slavery). He did this in order to bring about an understanding of the real history of this nation, rather than accepting the existing picture of unchallenged 'settlement'. Stanner wrote extensively about the kinship system and the way in which it is embedded within Aboriginal life and relationships.

It is acknowledged here that there have been a number of female anthropologists such as Mead, who, in 1930, studied the Omaha Nation of America. Daisy Bates was an Irish journalist who is often positioned with anthropologists. Despite all her work helping Aboriginal peoples over a lengthy period of time, she still saw them as a dying race and spent a lot of time recording Aboriginal culture before the people disappeared. She was very outspoken and disagreed with assimilation. She 'resisted the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white men' (Books LLC, 2010, p. 31). However, she was also controversial, as she saw all people of mixed Aboriginal descent as worthless and stated

that, “*the only good half-caste is a dead one*”, as quoted in the *Perth Sunday Times*, 12 June 1921 (McQueen, 2010, p. 270).

A current well-known Aboriginal female anthropologist is Marcia Langton (from the Yiman / Bidjara people) who, among other things, made a major contribution to the SBS production entitled *The First Australians* and the book of the same title (Perkins & Langton, 2008). Other current, non-Indigenous anthropologists who advocate strongly for Aboriginal peoples and the issues that we face today include John Altman and Melinda Hinkson (Altman & Hinson, 2010), to mention just a couple. Included in this group is John Carty - co-curator, anthropologist and historian – who was influential in developing the Canning Stock Route Exhibition (Webster, 2009), discussed later in this chapter.

What have Anthropologists done with the knowledge they have accumulated?

We have built up a treasury of good knowledge that ought not gather dust on library shelves or in museum basements. Given all the years of the locust, and the debris of folklore they left behind, it continues to surprise me that we have not found a way to put our treasury of good knowledge to full educational use (Stanner, 1991, Ed., p. 41).

Anthropological studies of the Aboriginal kinship systems have been ongoing over an extended period, up to and including the present time (Altman & Hinkson, 2010; Martin, 2008; Smith, 1999; Stanner, 1991; Sutton, 2009). The data gathered has continued to gather dust as it has been left on library shelves or in museum basements. It has not really been used in any way to inform the broader population or to help the Aboriginal peoples in any meaningful and tangible way. This might well have been true until Manne in his introduction to Stanner’s 1991 reprint, issued a challenge to up-and-coming anthropologists to change their practices. In Australia, this was the impetus for a paradigm shift in the disciplines of anthropology and history.

However, Stanner and Manne were not the only impetus for change in anthropological theory and practice. Vine Deloria Jr, a very influential American First Nations lawyer and theologian, caused quite a lot of turmoil in the anthropological world with statements about ‘the massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists’, their ‘attempts to capture real Indians’, and the way that he illustrated that anthropology ‘theories have contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian peoples today’ (Deloria Jr, 1969, p. 81).

This statement is part of a critique delivered by Deloria Jr in 1969, which fired a warning to anthropology and archaeology as it was then practised in America, with the effects being felt across the world. This was the case because American anthropological theory and practice was one of the world leaders. It is important to understand this, as anthropology is one of the foundational disciplines that informs the disciplines of social work, psychology and history (Whyte, 2005).

Deloria Jr’s was a powerful challenge delivered by a First Nations person of high esteem, to a discipline that felt it ‘owned’ the knowledge of all things Indian and, for that matter, all things about Indigenous cultures of the world. Deloria Jr’s critique was a clear case of the Indigenous voice ‘talking back’ (Smith, 1999) loudly and strongly to the dominance of anthropologists. Deloria Jr, boldly stated:

Why should we continue to be the private zoos for anthropologists? Why should tribes have to compete with scholars for funds when the scholarly productions are so useless and irrelevant to real life? (1969, p. 95).

From the standpoint of an Aboriginal woman, this seems a fair question. Having witnessed over my life how anthropologists in particular have mined Aboriginal Australians for

information about our ways of knowing, being and doing, I agree with what Deloria Jr says about anthropologists treating our families and peoples as private zoos.

Anthropological 'Expertise'

The 'expertise' of the anthropologist has come to be recognised and privileged, in white society, over the 'lived experience and knowledge' of Aboriginal people, and it is time for a shift. This shift should recognise the expertise of the people whose birthright this is and who live this knowledge, rather than just those who study it. This privileging of western knowledge about Aboriginal kinship has often been detrimental to the Aboriginal people, as shown below.

LaRocque (2010) notes that in Canada, anthropologists worked themselves into the position of 'expert' with regard to all things 'native' which led them to be consulted by colonial officials. She indicates that some anthropologists went on to become colonial officials (p. 42). This same pattern can be clearly seen within an Australian context. One example shared here, is that of Walter Roth. This anthropologist was seen as an 'expert' on Aboriginal culture and had a central role in developing the policies that impacted negatively on the lives of the Aboriginal peoples for extended periods. Walter Roth, initially the Northern Queensland Protector of Aborigines in 1900, then Chief Protector for the whole of Queensland, is credited with being the author of the Aboriginal child removal policy in Australia (Queensland Government, cited in Manne, 2004).

More recently, anthropologists have been involved in both sides of land claims and native title hearings: they have been employed both by the Land Councils (Northern and Central) in the Northern Territory to represent Aboriginal groups fighting for their rights to their land as well as by governments and other interested parties who have been fighting against

these claims. This is an area of work where these conflicts of interest have not endeared anthropologists to Aboriginal peoples because, in these instances, the voices and knowledge of the anthropologists have been privileged over that of the lived experience and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples (Martin, 2008).

Aboriginal interactions with anthropologists have not all been negative, however, as illustrated through the work of Stanner, Manne and, more recently, of John Carty. The latter was involved in helping to put together the Canning Stock Route Exhibition, which was on display at the Australian National Museum in Canberra at the end of 2010 and beginning of 2011. The Canning Stock Route Exhibition was one of the finest examples of non-Indigenous anthropologists working in partnership with the Aboriginal peoples rather than mining our ways of knowing, being and doing for information, academic accolades and personal prestige. This exhibition is significant because it told the un-censored version of both the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal story of the Canning Stock Route for the first time.

This project illustrated a win-win situation that brings out what has been missing in past relationships between anthropologists and Aboriginal peoples, namely, the Aboriginal side of the story. In the Canning Stock Route Exhibition, the Aboriginal story was magnificently told through re-enactment, art (some of which illustrated songlines), film and oral history, which validated all the forms in which our story is shared. Written accounts were also included. Paintings of very high quality were created by Aboriginal people involved in this project as a means of telling their stories. Aboriginal people also benefited by being given the opportunity to earn money and learn new and exciting skills. Carty and his co-producers empowered Aboriginal people and centred this group within

Australian history. This is in stark contrast to all other records of the Canning Stock Route as, previously, only heavily edited ‘white’ history had been available.

Ways Forward

Aboriginal knowledge and kinship is currently being used by Indigenous academics and practitioners to better inform their disciplines and professions. This enables us to reclaim and assert ownership and authority over our ways of knowing, being and doing. Through this process, Indigenous academics and practitioners have brought about critical reflection, stimulated discussion and, in some areas, caused a shift in theory and practice²⁹ (Churchill, 1996; Deloria Jr, 1997; LaRocque, 2010; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere 2009; Ramsden, 2002; Wilson, 2008; Martin, 2008).

The incorporation of Aboriginal knowledge into some academic disciplines and service delivery areas is also occurring informally. This can be called ‘Indigenising’ or ‘Aboriginalising’ them. This movement has been happening in the background, out of sight of many scholars, for at least the past four decades. For example, Aboriginal social workers have been incorporating Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in their practice since the 1970s and influencing those around them to do so.

²⁹ An example is that at the Curtin University in the early 90s the anthropology unit required of all social work students was replaced by an Indigenous Studies Unit. This change involved lobbying by the five Aboriginal social work students enrolled at the time (personal communication from Fran Crawford, March 2012).

A recent example of this practice can be found in the writing of the *Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) Code of Ethics*, launched in November 2010. It begins with a preamble recognising the special place of the Aboriginal peoples and has, laced throughout it, Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Examples can also be found in other disciplines such as Psychology, as illustrated in the writing of *The Australian Psychological Society's (APS) Guidelines for the Provision of Psychological Services for and Conduct of Psychological Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People of Australia*, adopted in 1996, and the writing of the *Ethical Guidelines and APS Code of Ethics* (APS, 1996).

An Example of Successful Project that Incorporated Aboriginal Kinship

The *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* (SWSBSC) program was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health, Rural Health Support, Education and Training Program and the Northern Territory Health Services. The aim was to address the issue of Aboriginal women having small babies by developing bicultural strategies. It was also aimed at reducing the occurrence and effect on Aboriginal women of poor nutrition and infection during pregnancy and to instigate planned and safe community birthing (Fejo & Rae, 1996).

To achieve these goals, a very different approach to the issue was taken to the usual one of using western knowledge, practices and leaders. The lead for the project was given to an Aboriginal woman Elder, Mrs Lorna Fejo who, despite not having western credentials, had the ability to interpret western knowledge and change it to fit with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. This included the employment of *Strong Women* workers (usually Elders and women with cultural and knowledge of Jukurrpa) in a number of

nations across the Northern Territory. Language, song and dance were used along with the skin system, which immediately connected all the women. Grandmother Law was revitalised and strengthened, using particular knowledge of women's Law and ceremonies to reinvigorate it where it was weak.

A number of successful outcomes flowed from this project. Some as already identified had to do with Jukurrpa and culture, others had to do with the impact on the health and wellbeing of the expectant mothers, which resulted in healthier, bigger babies being born. An unexpected result was the birth of a number of healthy, good birth-weight twins (personal knowledge). What helped to bring about these positive outcomes was insider knowledge about what would work and what would not. Also, access to the inner circle of kinship was gained through skin relationships. Aboriginal women's self-determination, ownership of the project and leadership was visible at all levels; and recognition, empowerment, support and honour were given to Grandmother Law; all with the support of the Northern Territory Health Service. At the centre of all of these was the skin system, which connected all the women. It was these relationships that enabled entry into the communities, into the circle of women and access to the love, care, responsibility and reciprocity that was needed for success³⁰.

Martha Johnson, an American sociologist, completed her Masters' thesis on the SWSBSC Program in 2003. Johnson suggested that there were five major factors that contributed to the success of the SWSBSC program, which were:

³⁰ It is interesting to note that in the Kimberley of Western Australia in the 1970s and 1980s the Aboriginal Community Homemaker program also drew strongly on the kinship system in its daily operations (personal communication from Fran Crawford, March 2012).

1. *The creative initiative, holistic orientation and combined efforts of several Northern Territory Government agencies and key administrators.*
2. *The health education 'curriculum' of the program was developed and taught in Aboriginal and 'whitefella' way, and the health practices targeted by the program were framed in traditional ceremony.*
3. *The program was taught and carried out in the communities, as opposed to being taught as a convention or lecture series in a major city.*
4. *The use of spirituality as a foundation for practical knowledge.*
5. *The specific influence of Mrs Fejo herself* (Johnson, 2003, pp. 4-5).

This project, now a program, was so successful that it is still being used in a number of areas across Australia, and continues to achieve the outcomes sought. As a result of the SWSBSC project, Mrs Fejo has received a number of awards, which include an award from the Australian Medical Association in 1998. In 2000, Mrs Fejo won an Australian Achiever Award. In 2009 she was the recipient of an Australian Centenary Award and in 2010 Mrs Fejo received a Research and Innovation Award from Charles Darwin University. The work completed by Mrs Fejo within the SWSBSC program was one of the major contributing factors for her story being shared by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008 when he delivered the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples (personal knowledge).

Conclusion

On reflecting on this chapter, I found that writing it has a joy and has clearly demonstrated the wisdom and insight of Larrakia and Warumungu ancestors right back to the Wirnkarra. They laid out for us a pattern that would keep us strong and connected to each other through ties of obligation, kinship, ceremony, care, reciprocity and responsibility, which continue today. I thank my ancestors for this great gift, including all my Elders and teachers but especially my parents, who lived their lives within the bounds of our kinship

systems and who embedded within me a living knowledge of it and a desire to pattern my life along its teachings.

The aim of this chapter was to inform the reader about what kinship means to the Larrakia and Warumungu; to illustrate how Aboriginal kinship is talked about, thought about, learned about, and how it has changed over time, when necessary, to meet the needs of the people. It also demonstrates that Larrakia and Warumungu people are resilient, have resisted assimilation and continue to maintain their unique ways of knowing, being and doing, thereby building and maintaining the strength of their identities, Jukurrpa and culture despite colonisation and neo-colonial practices. It highlights that the Larrakia and Warumungu are not western people, they have never ceded their sovereignty, nor forsaken their ways of knowing, being and doing and will never willingly do so. Larrakia and Warumungu peoples have survived all that has been done to them in the past and are maintaining the kinship system as a heritage for their children.

This chapter, through the sharing of the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* program suggests that, rather than trying to force Aboriginal peoples to conform to a foreign worldview that has never been in their best interests or worked for them, ways should be found to support the kinship system; ways that will achieve the best outcomes for the people.

The next chapter provides ourstory, which is an Aboriginal perspective of past events and an alternative to western history. It illustrates how actions of the past impacted on the kinship system, in some instances bringing about its loss and in others causing it to change to meet the needs of the people. It is a chapter about great suffering, loss and pain and was very difficult to write, but had to be addressed so that the central role of the kinship system

could shine through as a means of resistance, resilience, connection and re-connection for the Aboriginal peoples.

CHAPTER FOUR: OURSTORY

Introduction

Background information about the Larrakia and Warumungu people taking part in this research was provided in Chapter One. Chapter Two gave information that enabled an understanding of the worldview, insider positioning and standpoint of this thesis. Chapter three shared knowledge about kinship as a means of building an understanding of the fundamental difference between western notions of kinship and those of the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples which also includes a number of other nations.

Chapter Four builds on the first Three chapters by explaining the situation of Aboriginal people today, how we got here, and what the impacts have been on Aboriginal kinship over time. This chapter examines history (the western version of events) and ourstory (the Aboriginal version) in order to provide contextual knowledge³¹, which is necessary prior to any detailed examination of Aboriginal kinship. By looking back, we may be able to gauge how far we still have to go to complete our unfinished business³² (Gunstone, 2007).

While this thesis focuses on the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu people of the Northern Territory, this chapter is broader and includes history and ourstory from the whole of Australia. In terms of invasion and colonisation, the Larrakia and Warumungu cannot be separated and isolated from events that occurred nationally. Similarly, ourstory does not just focus on the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples, but includes stories from

³¹ History and Ourstory are not taught as part of social work education today.

³² Unfinished business is a way of referring to what still needs to be done to bring closure and the ability to move forward. It is about social justice and human rights.

other areas of Australia that came to us through song lines, trade routes and our interactions with other Aboriginal nations.

Various government policies are introduced and discussed as a way of highlighting shifts in attitudes and responses to Aboriginal people. I will argue in this chapter that these key events and policies have changed Aboriginal kinship in a variety of ways, but despite this, the kinship system remains a source of strength and resilience.

What is unique about this chapter is that it offers a particular insight into Australian history using Aboriginal kinship as the throw net that captures and dictates what is included, and what is not. If Aboriginal kinship was not ‘hit’ as a direct result of a particular historical event, that event is not included in this chapter. The rationale for deciding what constitutes a ‘hit’ to Aboriginal kinship is found in the question posed to interrogate the readings. This question is: ‘Did this particular event shake-up Aboriginal kinship or the kinship system, cause it to take on a different form, be used in a different way, or for it to be lost?’ If the historical event being examined did none of these things, it was excluded.

What is meant by Ourstory

Just as western history is made up of many stories, so too is the story of the Aboriginal peoples. Ourstory is not one story. There are some shared stories around invasion and colonisation of our homelands. There are also different strands of the same story that tell of how different groups met and interacted with visitors and invaders, along with how policies and practices were enacted upon us and how we survived. Within these different

strands are found stories of the various compounds³³, institutions and missions; as well as the stories of groups that remained in their homelands while others were taken away (Cummings, 1990; Fesl, 1993; Haebich, 2000; Trigger, 1992; Wright, 1998).

History is made up of stories of the past written by historians who, in the case of Australia, have predominantly been white men. History had been silent with regard to the Aboriginal peoples for almost one hundred and fifty years (Rowley, 1970). Historians have only begun to write about the Aboriginal peoples in recent decades. Ourstory, on the other hand, has emerged from the knowledge traditions of the Aboriginal peoples. I have accessed ourstory through growing up on my country, being part of the Stolen Generations, sitting within the circles of my family, clans, tribes and nations, and hearing ourstory told by our knowledge keepers.

Family and individual stories contribute to ourstory and help to develop and shape it. The differences enrich us as a people and help us to appreciate the strength and resilience of our ancestors and our families. Embedded within these stories are the testimonies of our ancestors, passed down through generations. Just like history, ourstory is a living story and is still unfolding because what happens to us today will be taught to our children tomorrow.

In the Beginning – the Wirnkarra

Before the Dreaming, the Australian continent was a flat, featureless place, devoid of life. Then a myriad of beings came down from the sky, came from across the sea

³³ A compound was an area where the government brought a mixture of Aboriginal peoples together and confined them. Within the compounds there were men, women and children. This is in contrast to institutions, where children were confined away from parents and other Aboriginal adults. Missions also had only children but the focus was on teaching them religion, English and how to be servants.

and emerged from the earth itself. With their arrival, the Dreaming began and life was born (Perkins & Langton, 2008, pp. ix-x).

For the Aboriginal peoples, the Wirnkarra is the time of the creation of this landmass when, as indicated by the citation above, the ancestral entities created everything. It is also a time that runs parallel to the present and includes the past, present and future; all connected through ceremonies, many of which continue today, illustrating the eternal nature of time (Collard, 2000). Unlike western religions, some of the Creation ancestors remain within the land, thus giving the Aboriginal peoples ‘sacred sites’.

Western scientific thought, as illustrated through the work of anthropologists and archaeologists, estimates that Australia has been home to the Aboriginal peoples for up to 120,000 years (Perkins & Langton, 2008), and that over this period we have maintained a continual culture. This time period is challenged by ourstory. When asking the Aboriginal peoples how long we believe our ancestors have lived upon this land the answer has always been, and continues to be, “*from the Dreaming*”. This means that the Aboriginal peoples have been on this land from the beginning of time. This is a good example of how worldviews differ.

Contact with Others Prior to the British Invasion

Long before the Aboriginal peoples sighted the sails of the British ships for the first time they had met, traded with, and evicted a number of sailors and explorers from other lands. These included the Dutch (1600s), whose exploration of Australia is documented through a number of old maps (National Library of Australia, 2011), maps which refer to the mainland of Australia as New Holland and the island of Tasmania as Van Diemen’s Land. It was the Dutch who recorded the trade of another group, the Macassans (Ivory, 2003).

The Macassans traded with the Yolŋu of Arnhem Land. This trade consisted of Trepang (sea slug), pearls, tools, utensils and other materials. Trudgen (2000) and Dudgeon, Garvey, and Pickett (2000) write about the antiquity of this trade, which covered the period from 1451 to 1906. Aboriginal / Macassan trade was brought to a stop in 1906, when the South Australian government claimed the waters around the Northern Territory, preventing the Macassans from entering ‘their’ waters³⁴. The closure of this trade route had a devastating effect on the existing economy and the future economic development of the Aboriginal peoples in the Northern Territory (Ivory, 2003).

At the other end of the continent, some European men - called ‘sealers’ due to their hunting, killing and trading of seals - stayed and lived on different islands around Tasmania, and by 1810, had developed ‘relationships’ with Aboriginal women (Perkins & Langton, 2008) that resulted in children. This had a direct impact on Aboriginal kinship. The differences in interactions between these groups just mentioned were as follows. Both interactions were very localised and were around economic factors, but there was no invasion. There was a definite benefit for many Aboriginal people when the Macassans traded with the Yolŋu, because the Yolŋu, in turn, traded with their land-bound neighbours. This is in contrast to the British, who will be introduced next.

The British

‘Invasion’ implies something and somebody exists prior to the invasion. Moreover, what exists does so in a certain culturally coherent manner. In other words, what exists before the invasion, and what makes invasion ‘invasion’ is precisely the fact that peoples and cultures original to the land space existed (LaRocque, 2010, p. 78).

³⁴ The Northern Territory came under the jurisdiction of South Australia until it became a separate Territory.

The invasion of Australia by the British did not occur in a uniform pattern. Rather, it was staggered over time (Martin, 2008). First contact occurred in 1770, when Lieutenant James Cook landed at Possession Island on the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula, raised the British flag and claimed the whole of Australia; then left. After a period of eighteen years the British flag was again raised on Aboriginal land, this time by Governor Phillip at Sydney Cove. The British invasion and immigration³⁵ then began in earnest. The first twenty years of the invasion are very important to understand, as this is when a template was established for the interaction between the invading British and Aboriginal peoples. I would assert that, in many respects, this template has been followed from that time to the present.

Invasion Template Established

The attitude reflected within the International Law of Europe in the eighteenth century was that European countries had the right to help themselves to other lands. They could take it if it was 'empty', buy it if it was not, or go to war for it if the original inhabitants refused to sell (Banner, 2009).

When America, Canada and New Zealand were 'discovered' they were labelled 'inhabited', so the British asked the original inhabitants for areas of land; and tried to buy land with trinkets. They then invaded the land when what they were able to gain was not enough. In each of these countries, villages were recognised as dwelling areas as well as economic units, and were preserved (Rowley, 1970). Community leaders were identified and negotiations undertaken. These two criteria were similar enough to the English social

³⁵ Often referred to as 'the first boat people' by Aboriginal people (personal knowledge).

structure to be able to be inserted into the English worldview and dealt with as required by law. Where resistance by the original inhabitants of these lands was acknowledged as a state of war, the British were required to make treaties. According to Rowley (1970), these treaties offered some protection for the local inhabitants.

If the land, despite having Indigenous peoples, was labelled 'empty', it was known as *Terra nullius* (LaRocque, 2010; Moses, 2004), and claimed for the British Crown. This is what happened with Australia. The economic support base of the Aboriginal peoples, as well as the structure of Aboriginal society, were so foreign to the British worldview that they could not identify or explain either. Therefore, the British dismissed both as being non-existent. Additionally, since a state of war was never acknowledged by the British in the Australian setting, no treaties were ever made with the Aboriginal peoples, so no protection of any kind was put into place for our peoples. With no treaty, and with the land proclaimed Crown Land, the Aboriginal peoples were declared criminals rather than prisoners of war and dealt with by local residents or authorities rather than by the British Government (ATSIC & AIATSIS, 2003; Bamblett & Lewis, 2007; Rowley, 1970).

British invasions seemed to follow a pattern of behaviour that, when used in one land after another, can be seen as a template of invasion. Despite the difference in entering Australia (as just outlined), once they were in the country the British followed the same pattern of conquest as they had done in other countries (LaRocque, 2010; Rowley, 1970). The invasion template appears to progress in a number of steps, as illustrated below.

When speaking about the Aboriginal peoples, there is a perception by some that we are one people; that we share one culture, one language and that there was only one kinship system prior to Invasion. This perception is incorrect. We consist of many tribes and nations, made

up of clans (Mudrooroo, 1995; Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker, 2010) that are both matriarchal and patriarchal. Much like the different nations of Europe, we share a continent and cultural heritage, but are separate; we each have our own languages, are independent, and are fiercely loyal to our own country (see Figure 8 below) and people.

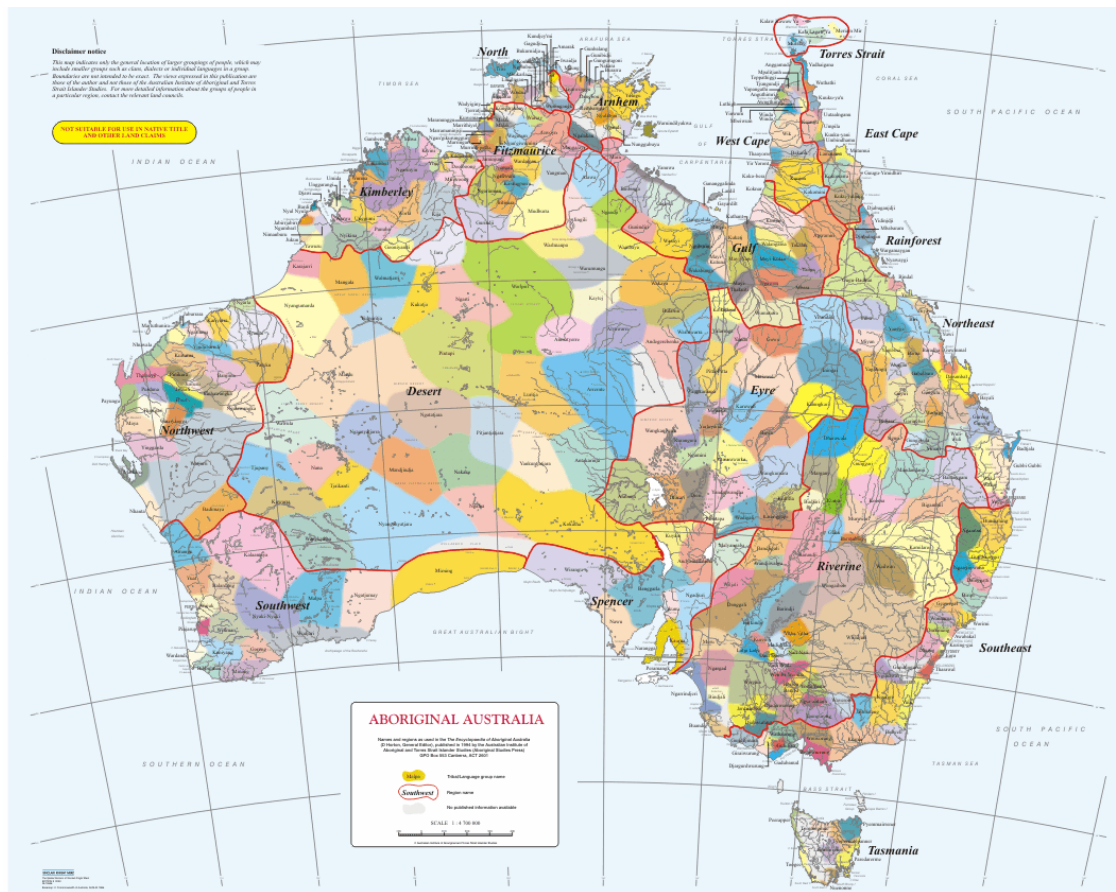


Figure 10: Map of Aboriginal Australia showing countries of Aboriginal Nations. Used with permission from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

We are different because our countries are different. We consist of salt-water people, desert people, forest people, lake people, island people, mountain people and plains people. These differences call for different ways of living with the land and with each other. All these differences in topography did not make the invasion of our lands as easy as some historians have suggested (Moses, 2004). Another issue was fierce Aboriginal resistance, which has largely been ignored by white historians. To deal with this Aboriginal

resistance, the template of invasion was used. The steps below were not applied sequentially, but they were applied repeatedly.

The Invasion Template in Action

First Step - Befriending

The first step was befriending. The Indigenous inhabitants were offered trinkets, and attempts were made to befriend them (Perkins & Langton, 2008). The Aboriginal peoples accommodated the British until there was friction, or until it became clear that they did not intend to leave. In his very first attempts to befriend 'the natives', Lieutenant James Cook tried to approach the people he saw and give them gifts, as shown by his journal entry for Tuesday 1 May 1770, in the part of Australia now known as the suburb of Sutherland, in Sydney, New South Wales³⁶.

Eighteen years later at Sydney Cove, Governor Phillip captured Bennelong whom he described as an Aboriginal chief, on 25 November 1788. He then befriended him (Kociumbas, 2004; Perkins & Langton, 2008). As an Aboriginal man, Bennelong would have had responsibilities and obligations within his own kinship system. Taking him out of his country meant that those responsibilities and obligations were not being met which

³⁶ *Tuesday, May 1st.--Gentle breezes, Northerly. In the P.M. 10 of the Natives again visited the Watering place. I, being on board at this time, went immediately ashore, but before I got there they were going away. I follow'd them alone and unarm'd some distance along shore, but they would not stop until they got farther off than I choose to trust myself. These were armed in the same Manner as those that came Yesterday. In the evening I sent some hands to haul the Saine, but they caught but a very few fish. A little after sunrise I found the Variation to be 11° 3' E. Last night Forby Sutherland, Seaman, departed this Life, and in the A.M. his body was buried ashore at the watering place, which occasioned my calling the south point of this bay after his country. This morning a party of us went ashore to some Huts, not far from the Watering place, where some of the Natives are daily seen; here we left several articles, such as Cloth, Looking Glasses, Coombs, Beads, Nails, etc.; after this we made an Excursion into the Country, which we found diversified with Woods, Lawns, and Marshes (Cook, 1770, 1 May).*

would have delivered a 'hit' to the kinship system. A similar situation occurred with Coleby, another Aboriginal man from the Sydney area. However, Coleby escaped shortly after being captured. These were not the only two Aboriginal men treated in this way but they are the most written about.

Second Step - Imposing British Law

In the second step, British law was imposed and the Aboriginal peoples were forced to comply (Perkins & Langton, 2008). When they did not, they were punished – usually through punitive raids. Initially, when there were incidents between the Aboriginal people and the invaders, Governor Phillip decided there would be no reprisals as people were to be considered innocent until proven guilty. Governor Phillip's good intentions lasted only until his own gamekeeper was speared in November 1790 (Kociumbas, 2004). He then set a pattern for frontier reprisal.

The concept of law and kindness was abandoned. Governor Phillip personally created a punitive expedition of fifty men as a reprisal for one man, his gamekeeper, being speared. What Phillip did not take into account was that his gamekeeper had been hunting and killing Aboriginal people for sport and his death was the result of those actions (Elder, 2003). Even as early as this, the Aboriginal kinship system was impacted upon due to families being hunted and killed. This meant, among other things, that marriage partners were no longer available.

Third Step – Dehumanising

In the third step, the original inhabitants were animalised (Tatz, 2006) and dehumanised (LaRocque, 2010; Memmi, 1965; Savage, 2006), thus taking away any recognition of their humanity. The use of terms such as 'wild and tame', 'sport and game', 'fauna and flora'

have also been used (Savage, 2006). Language then leads to actions because dehumanising the 'other' is a prelude to genocide (Tatz, 2006).

In 1875, Haydon said:

Awkward words are always avoided, you will notice. 'Shooting a snipe' sounds better than 'murdering a man'. But the blacks are never called men and women and children; 'Myalls' and 'niggers' and 'gins' and 'piccaninnies' seem further removed from humanity... What right have 'myalls' to exist at all – mischievous vermin with their ignorance, and their barbarism, and their degradation and their black skins? (Haydon, cited in Evans, 2004b, p. 157)

Fourth Step – Moved Off Their Lands

In the fourth step, the original inhabitants were moved off their lands. Initially, Aboriginal people were driven away with no thought about where they might move to or what the implications of this move might be for them. In later decades, they were moved to containment areas not wanted by the invaders at the time, making way for the new population (Haebich, 2004).

This is called ethnic cleansing. There are a number of people who write about ethnic cleansing in Australia. For example, Anna Haebich (2004) does this most clearly as she articulates one process by which it was done. Haebich describes how, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Western Australian Government carved up the land into thousands of small farms and offered generous land grants and financial assistance to those who took up this offer. This area of the land later became known as the wheat belt.

At the time of the division of the land, many people thought that the Aboriginal people from that area had died off. When they found that this was not the case, it made no difference to them - they continued to take the land. The impact on what Haebich describes

as a 'thriving and self-sustaining Aboriginal community', was to reduce them to poverty and cause them to become homeless (2004).

This then impacted on the kinship system because the families that were dispersed and removed from their country eventually became fringe dwellers, surviving on the outskirts of the white townships. Kinship impacts occurred through the disruption of the relationship of the people to the land and to each other.

As the Aboriginal families moved into the fringes of the townships, Haebich states they came to the attention of the Aborigines' Department, which began to monitor what these families were doing. This scrutiny occurred because it was the Department's role to protect and care for Aboriginal peoples under the auspices of the *Aborigines Act 1905*. Haebich (2004) describes 'protection and care' as 'dole and control' meaning that, for the money they received, the Aboriginal peoples had to live in the way the Government specified. There was no choice, as the local police enforced these requirements.

What happened in Western Australia was not unique. The clearing of land happened all over Australia. Aboriginal peoples were either moved out of their homelands or killed to make way for the new population (Maynard, 2007; Rowley, 1970; Watson, 2004).

Fifth Step - Genocide

The term 'genocide' was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Russian-born Jewish man who in 1944, provided a general definition of what actions could be described in this way (Lemkin, 1944). The *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948), Article 2, defines genocide more narrowly than that originally

developed by Lemkin, stating that genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups, by:

- (a) *Killing members of the group;*
- (b) *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- (c) *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring out its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- (d) *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- (e) *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group* (UN, 1948, p. 277).

This definition fits with the actions taken against the Aboriginal peoples since the British invasion (Churchill, 1996; Elder, 2003; Moses, 2004; Reynolds, 2001). This was also a time of terrorism perpetrated by the military, police and settlers who committed genocide or murder and biological warfare (Moses, 2004; Tatz, 2005; Trudgen, 2000) in order to gain control of the land when Aboriginal peoples refused to leave their homelands. This understanding of what occurred was supported through the words of Prime Minister Hughes In 1913 who, in a speech given in Canberra, candidly observed that Australia and the United States were two nations “*destined to have our own way from the beginning*”– for they had ‘killed everybody to get it’ (Hughes, cited in Evans, 2004, p. 108).

There are many reports of murder and genocide of Aboriginal peoples by the British invaders. There is a subtle difference between murder and genocide in that genocide is state-sanctioned, whereas murder is committed by private citizens (Bartrop, 2004). It was hard to distinguish between genocide and murder when ‘acts of violence may be kept ‘administratively clean’ by [the representatives of the law] absenting themselves on such occasions’ (Rowley, 1970, p. 6). In Australian history, we find stories of terrorism, and blood oaths of secrecy being made to prevent white settlers from having to face murder

charges and hanging, as was the fate of the perpetrators of the Myall Creek Massacre³⁷.

The Myall Creek Massacre was the only time in the history of Australia when white perpetrators were brought to justice and punished (Bartrop, 2004). No officers of the state were ever tried for genocide (Bartrop, 2004).

As early as 1799, when a white settler named Hodgkinson was speared, his wife admitted to wanting revenge. To this end she sent men out to kill Aboriginal boys, regardless of their innocence. She was never brought to trial for her actions. The five white men involved were found guilty of murder but immediately set free, then pardoned three years later (Elder, 2003). The law was not the same for the Aboriginal peoples, who were never given a chance to tell their side of the story – instead they were hunted and killed (Elder, 2003).

Sixth Step – Slavery and Eugenics

Slavery has been an unacknowledged part of Australian history that has only recently been written (Moses, 2004). However, it has been part of ourstory for much longer. Aboriginal women were forced into service as domestic servants and as sex slaves. As these women had children these children were sold on to other white men; as were the Aboriginal women (Watson, 2004). In northern Australia, Aboriginal men and their families were used on cattle stations as ‘free’ labour.

Ourstory also tells of rations of flour, sugar, tea and tobacco being the only provisions given or payment made for many decades. During this time, no financial payments were

³⁷ This refers to a massacre that took place at Myall Creek, in northern NSW in Australia on the 10 June 1838, when twenty-eight men, women and children were killed by a group of local stockmen after meeting and being encouraged in this act by a punitive expedition of Mounted Police. This encouragement resulted in hundreds of Aboriginal people being killed in this region, which all became known as the Myall Creek Massacre (Memorial Stone, Myall Creek).

ever provided for the work done, and there was no option afforded to workers if they were unhappy or wanted to leave (Wright, 1998). Later, when money was received for the work, the bulk of it was kept by white employers to be paid into 'trust funds'. These trust funds were supposedly managed on behalf of the Aboriginal peoples but no access was given to the money and it was later found that the trust funds were empty. To date no one has been held accountable for the disappearance of the monies (Kidd, 2007).

In the twentieth century, Aboriginal children with fair skin were taken from their mothers and given to white families to adopt so that they could be absorbed into the white population; or they were sent to missions or other institutions where they were taught western religion and trained as servants. Their languages were no longer allowed to be used, and they were taught to be 'white' through pain and punishments with the ultimate goal being assimilation (Rowley, 1970). When Aboriginal people did not conform, 'measures' were taken against them, thus coercing compliance. Each of these actions delivered direct 'hits' to Aboriginal kinship and children were lost to their families and the kinship system.

Under the United Nations definition of genocide, all these actions caused serious physical or mental harm. They impacted on the kinship system in many ways, including preventing the families from becoming economically self-sufficient. As Cronin says:

Protection, dependency, assimilation and welfare fit hand-in-glove in Indigenous affairs policy and practice. They constitute a way of denying sovereign rights to Indigenous people. The denial of sovereign rights has left Indigenous people with a welfare economy and has put us in a position of 'dependency', where we must rely on the benevolence of government (2007, p. 179).

The next section introduces some of the legislation, policies and practices that impacted on Aboriginal life and which continue today.

Legislation, Policies and Practice

Despite the labelling of our lands as being empty, the Aboriginal peoples existed and had to be controlled and contained. To achieve these goals, a number of measures were needed after the ‘killing times’ (Evans, 2004; Reynolds, 2001). Legislation, policies and practices were introduced to deal with the ‘Aboriginal problem’ (Manne, 2004). These were dependent upon the political agendas and aspirations of the government at the time. There was no thought given to, or moral responsibility taken for, the negative impact of these regulations upon the Aboriginal peoples. Over time there have been a number of different policies developed to deal with the ‘Aboriginal problem’. These are discussed below.

The Absorption Policy (Invasion to 1909)

History shows that the theory and assumption behind the policy of absorption was that, over a number of generations, ‘full-blood’ Aborigines were fated to die out. This assumption was based on Darwin’s theory of evolution, rather than being seen as a direct result of the invasion and the internal war that had been unleashed on the Aboriginal peoples. The desired outcome of absorption was that, over time, the ‘colour could be bred out’ of Aboriginal peoples (Manne, 2004). They would become progressively lighter, to the point that they would be absorbed into white Australia (Blum, 2006; Cummings, 1990; Haebich, 2000; Manne, 2004; McGregor, 2004; Perkins, 2004).

The failure of the Absorption Policy can be found partly as a result of racism, because, if a person had an Aboriginal ancestor, he or she continued to be identified as Aboriginal by both the Aboriginal community and the broader white community. No matter how fair-skinned these people became they were never going to be accepted as equals by the descendants of the British settlers.

Our story is that Aboriginality is not about colour; it is about identity, kinship, belonging and relatedness (Bessarab, 1997). Half-caste children were initially mostly the result of white men raping Aboriginal women then taking no responsibility for either the women or the resulting offspring. Aboriginal men accepted these children because they knew their wives; sisters, mothers and daughters had had no choice in the conception of these children. Aboriginal people valued children and kept the children with their mothers and their kin as part of the family circle. Aboriginal inclusion worked, whereas white absorption did not.

Protectionism and Segregation Policy (1910 – 1960)

As Aboriginal people proved to be resilient and not die off or be absorbed, the next set of policies focused on protectionism and segregation. In 1910, the South Australian Parliament passed the *Aborigines Act of 1910* (the Act) concerning Aboriginal welfare.

This legislation identified Aboriginal people as:

‘Natives’ of Australia or any adjacent islands; a part-Aboriginal person living with an Aboriginal wife or husband; a part-Aborigine, other than a wife or husband, who was living habitually with Aboriginal ‘natives’; or a part-Aboriginal child whose age could not exceed sixteen years (Long, cited in Cummings, 1990).

This definition was so broad that Cummings explains that only a few Aboriginal people were not captured within it.

The South Australian Act applied in the Northern Territory because, at that time, the Northern Territory was still part of that jurisdiction. During that time the South Australian Government received 'persistent reports of mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the territory, which included exploitative employment practices and illicit trafficking of alcohol and opium' (Cummings, 1990, p. 8), and the Act was passed in response to those reports.

Though this Act was supposedly to improve Aboriginal welfare, it led to different results in that its effect was to control the whole lives of Aboriginal people, from the bedroom to the workplace. Permits were necessary to move from place to place and to work. Permission had to be sought from the Chief Protector of Aborigines for Aboriginal people to marry and if this permission was not received the men concerned were charged and imprisoned, as it was an offence under the Act for people to cohabit. However, the Act did not solve any of the problems for which it had been specifically developed. Sexual exploitation continued, so the number of half-caste children continued to grow.

Our story is that we were not protected. Our families lived in compounds similar to refugee camps. Aboriginal people from other nations were incarcerated with our families, even when they were traditional enemies. Use of any Aboriginal languages continued to be prohibited and everyone was forced to learn English or punitive actions were taken against them. There was still no opportunity for Aboriginal people to make choices or decisions for themselves. All monies were still controlled by state governments with the bulk going into the trust funds, never to be seen again, so our families remain in poverty to this day (Kidd, 2007). These policies brought into these pseudo-communities dysfunction and violence that continue to the present day. However, Aboriginal peoples are blamed for

these results, rather than those who devised and implemented these policies or the people who constructed and controlled these communities.

Stolen Generations (1869 – 1970s)

I do not believe an Aboriginal mother felt the forcible removal of her child more deeply than did a bitch the loss of her pup. I would not hesitate to separate any half-caste from its Aboriginal mother, no matter how frantic momentary grief might be at the time. They soon forget their offspring. All Aboriginal women are prostitutes at heart and all Aborigines 'dirty, filthy and immoral' (Isdell (1909), cited in Manne, 2004, p. 223).

The citation above illustrates the kind of ideology that underpinned many of the policies that were enacted against the Aboriginal peoples. However, the stated reason for taking the children away was that the Government wanted to remove half-caste children from the camps and from their Aboriginal mothers, supposedly to give them better opportunities in life. These actions, then, were part of an Assimilation Policy. It was believed that, because the children had fair skin, they were smarter than their Aboriginal mothers and could be taught white ways and therefore integrated into white society (Manne, 2004). The removal of the children was actioned by the police who would go through the Aboriginal camps and, if they saw a half-caste child, they would take him / her from their family. The child would be sent to a mission to receive religion, be educated and trained to be a servant. In some instances, where the child was fair enough to 'pass', he / she was adopted into a white family.

The main goal was to absorb the Aboriginal people into white Australia. To this end, there was a concerted effort to breed out the colour by having white men marry (or take) fair-skinned Aboriginal girls and have children with them. This occurred even if it was against the girls' will – their agreement was not sought (Manne, 2004). The impact on the kinship

system in these cases was that the children were lost to their family and kin and they also lost their connections to their land, Law and culture.

As already mentioned, ourstory tells us that, from the 1790s onwards; Aboriginal women and children were stolen, both for sexual purposes and to be servants. Later, any children who were fair-skinned (whiter than the other children) were taken away. It didn't matter if they were living in the bush or in the city. Ourstory is all about terror. For generations our families lived in terror and were hunted like animals. This has meant that, for about one hundred and fifty years, no Aboriginal child was able to enjoy the carefree days of childhood. This was as a result of so many children being stolen from their nations and kin groups.

If the men were hunting, the children couldn't wander or play because they had to stay near the hiding places. Even tiny children were trained to hide, stay very still, and be very quiet no matter what happened around them. Even if their brother or sister, hiding very close to them, was found and stolen they must not move or the same would happen to them. Think of what an unnatural and fearful existence this was for children, yet this was our reality. This is what the *Bringing Them Home* report (HREOC, 1997) uncovered on a national basis.

Yet another impact on the kinship system of removal of children was that of children never returning to their families or knowing who these families were, and, in cases where they were able to return as adults, finding that their mothers had died. In some instances this meant that these people did not stay with their extended family and kin, as they felt that the connections were no longer there (HREOC, 1997).

Assimilation Policy (1961 to the Present)

In 1961, the *Native Welfare Conference* came to the agreement that assimilation would be defined as one in which:

...all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians (McGregor, 2004, pp. 297-298).

To illustrate the impact of the Assimilation Policy, I will use examples from my own family. Our story is one of devastation, loss, grief and trauma that resulted due to the following enforced changes of lifestyle. Use of Aboriginal languages continued to be banned, not only in schools but also in public, and we were flogged if we used them. This resulted in the loss of numerous Aboriginal languages over time.

Many Aboriginal peoples living in missions, communities or cities were not allowed to call each other by Aboriginal names or skin names and parents were not allowed to give Aboriginal names to their children even though these names connected us to our land and positioned us in the Aboriginal world³⁸. This control of Aboriginal lives had a major impact on the kinship system as Aboriginal names and skin names inform Aboriginal people around who and how we should communicate and interact with each other, so not being able to use them caused great social confusion and in some instances wrong marriages (see chapter Three). Aboriginal people were also forced to take on last names –

³⁸ Our parents overcame this by not recording the Aboriginal names of their children on official documents, while using them at home and in private. About thirty years ago parents openly documented their children's Aboriginal name and today it is a common practice.

my grandparents who were in the bush didn't have last names, but my grandparents who were in Darwin, were forced to do so.

Up until recently in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal people had been polygamous and always lived as extended families close to each other in our clan groups and extended families, whether on our country, in the mission or in the compound. In 1963, before Queen Elizabeth II visited Darwin, Aboriginal slums were razed and houses were allotted in the new suburb of Rapid Creek. However, Aboriginal families were not permitted to have Aboriginal neighbours. To be allotted a house, Aboriginal families had to move into a nuclear family structure. In this new situation white rules were enforced – if the extended family moved in, the tenants were evicted. This meant that families were broken up and the responsibilities of care for each other disrupted, delivering a major 'hit' to Aboriginal kinship.

By this time, the money that my parents earned was no longer going into trust funds, but the money that had been taken was never returned. The wages they received were subsistence wages and the only jobs available were menial. To survive, we again relied on living off the land and using our kinship system surreptitiously by providing each other with food without the authorities knowing.

My parents who came from the mission (mother) or the compound (father) had received minimal education. As children, we now went to non-segregated government schools but had no one at home to help do homework as no one could read, write or understand English well enough to do so. Many children left at the end of primary school to help support the family, despite having very low reading and writing skills. This continued the

cycle of poverty and tied the children to menial, low-paying jobs, making it impossible to build up an economic foundation for the family.

In the 1970s, the Whitlam³⁹ Government had a different political agenda, one that encouraged Aboriginal self-determination, land rights and education. It was Whitlam who poured the soil of his homeland into Vincent Lingiari's hand, as a way of symbolising the return of the land to the Aboriginal people (Wright, 1998). This was also when *Abstudy*⁴⁰ was introduced. This was the first of several positive government policies, brought in over the next twenty years, which continued to empower Aboriginal peoples.

Late Twentieth Century

About two hundred years after invasion, many things appeared to be improving for Aboriginal people as a result of changes in governments and in policies. The Hawke⁴¹ Government's view of the Aboriginal peoples was one in which self-determination was supported and ways were found to enable this to happen. 'At the core of these policies has been the idea that Aborigines themselves should be involved in the decision-making processes that affect their lives' (Sanders, 1993, p. 1).

Land rights became a reality for the people of the Northern Territory and a national representative body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was established in 1990⁴². The *Bringing Them Home* report had been released (see the section in the second half of this chapter), and the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in*

³⁹ Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister of Australia between the years 1972-1975.

⁴⁰ *Abstudy* provided payments to Aboriginal families, enabling children to stay in school. A small allowance was also paid to the children as pocket money as an incentive, which worked very well. *Abstudy* was available to children in high school and then for tertiary education.

⁴¹ Prime Minister Bob Hawke was in power from 1983-1991.

⁴² ATSIC was defunded and shut down by the Howard Government in 2005.

Custody had been published. A new generation had been born, the first generation in my family not to be under threat of removal simply because of their race.

The Mabo decision (1992)⁴³ had proven the fallacy of *Terra nullius*. Aboriginal medical services were organised around the country, and Link Up⁴⁴ was developed. Aboriginal people who were able to access higher education had access to better paid jobs and began to move out of the cycle of poverty and to help support their families and kin.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (SNAICC) and a number of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs) were set up to advocate for Aboriginal children in the child protection system and keep them within Aboriginal communities across the country. The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) was established to provide secretariat support to Aboriginal medical services around the country. Aboriginal legal services were established and Aboriginal Law was taken into account in sentencing options in courts across the country. All these innovations had positive effects on the Aboriginal peoples and on Aboriginal kinship.

However, in the remote areas, things were not getting any better. Palliative care for our old people consisted of lying in the holes their dogs had dug, to die (personal knowledge). There were communities with no running water, no taps, no sewerage and overcrowded

⁴³ The Mabo decision, named after Eddie Mabo from the Torres Strait Islands, reversed the doctrine of *Terra nullius*, which had rendered Aboriginal people invisible and part of the flora and fauna, by recognising Native Title for the first time.

⁴⁴ Link Up services help Aboriginal families separated through the Stolen Generations to locate and reunite with their families of origin where possible, supporting all concerned through the process.

housing or shacks that were not safe⁴⁵ (Hagen, 2007). There was always a community school but the standard of education was very poor. The ‘Aboriginal industry’, which consists of non-Aboriginal people working in Aboriginal programs, grew and expanded, with phenomenal sums of money going into ‘Aboriginal programs’ but never filtering down to the Aboriginal people themselves and their communities. This, in turn, had a negative effect on the kinship system as people were struggling to provide food, shelter and other necessities for themselves and their immediate families.

Government Reports that Contributed to the National Apology (2008)

A key event in Australian history was the Apology (discussed later in this chapter), in 2008, from the Australian Government, for the policy of removing children from their families, i.e. the Stolen Generations. The Apology did not happen overnight, it took some time to occur and two key reviews provided the evidence and pressure for an apology to be given.

Without specifically naming it, the Apology recognised the damage that had been done to the kinship system. Each of the reports described below identifies various ways in which the kinship system had been damaged. Although the Apology could not undo the damage that had been done, it had a powerful spiritual and psychological healing impact on Aboriginal peoples that continues even to the present day. I believe it will continue into the future because it is now part of our story.

⁴⁵ Many of these issues still persist in the Northern Territory, despite the Northern Territory Emergency Response - the Intervention - having been in place for over four years.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991)

The *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (RCIADC, 1991) was commissioned by then Prime Minister Hawke (1987) in response to growing public concern about the increasing number of Aboriginal people dying in custody. There was also concern about the lack of explanation around these deaths.

The RCIADC investigated and reported on 99 Aboriginal deaths in custody between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989 - handing down the report in 1991. These included deaths found as the result of suicide, natural causes, medical conditions and injuries caused by police. The Terms of Reference of the RCIADC included 'social, cultural and legal factors which may have had a bearing on the deaths under investigation' (National Archives of Australia, n.d.). At the conclusion of the investigation, 339 recommendations were made. The major focal points centered on procedures for persons in custody, liaison with Aboriginal groups, police education and improved accessibility to information.

One of the findings of the RCIADIC was that many of the people who died whilst in custody had been part of the Stolen Generations, or were the children of the Stolen Generations (introduced in the next section). With regard to this issue, it recommended that the mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be a priority, as this issue contributed to the high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the criminal justice system and who completed suicide whilst in custody (Zubrick, Kelly & Walker, 2010). The RCIADIC is also important because it highlighted the impact on generations of Aboriginal peoples when kinship connections were damaged.

By highlighting the situation of the Stolen Generations who died whilst in custody, the Commission provided the groundwork and support for an investigation into the Stolen

Generations. Aboriginal peoples were beginning to mobilise around this issue and pressure groups were being organised. We also enlisted the aid of non-Aboriginal organisations and people who were interested in social justice. One of these pressure groups organised a conference in the Northern Territory about the Stolen Generations, which provided another impetus. This was the *Going Home Conference*, held in Darwin in 1994 (Katona, 1994). The pressure from the national call for a national inquiry into the Stolen Generations issue resulted in the *Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (HREOC, 1997).

*Bringing Them Home Report: National Inquiry into the Separation of
Aboriginal Children from their Families (1997)*

This landmark report (HREOC, 1997) was commissioned by the Australian Attorney-General in 1995, and led by Sir Ronald Wilson, who was president of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; and the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Dodson. The Report was tabled in 1997 and consisted of 680 pages, and 54 recommendations, which clearly and devastatingly illuminated how past government policies and practices had impacted on the lives of the Aboriginal peoples in the most insidious way possible, through the stealing of children from their families for no reason other than their race. Every Aboriginal family had been impacted upon while these policies were in place.

The *Bringing Them Home* report made visible to all Australians, part of the history of this nation of which they were previously unaware, as it concluded that:

Indigenous families and communities have endured gross violations of their human rights. These violations continue to affect Indigenous people's daily lives. They were an act of genocide, aimed at wiping out Indigenous families, communities and

cultures, vital to the precious and inalienable heritage of Australia (ATNS Project, 2009).

The impacts of the removal policies continue to resound through generations of Indigenous families (Atkinson, 2002). The overwhelming evidence from the *Bringing Them Home* report was that the impact of the Stolen Generations did not stop with the removed children - the impact was passed on through generations in multiple complex ways (HREOC, 1997, p. 222).

A key recommendation (7a) in the *Bringing Them Home* report was that an apology should be offered by the Australian Government to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the removal of their children from their families as a result of past policies. Another key recommendation was that financial repatriation should be paid⁴⁶.

There were a number of other positive outcomes from the *Bringing Them Home* report. These actions included additional funds being made available to the Link Up services to enable family reunions; and funding for mental health counselling to assist with healing, loss and grief (Atkinson, 2002) resulting from the experience of being forcefully removed as children from family and kin. Parenting programs were also funded. There was a realisation that, when child after child from successive generations were stolen and raised in institutions and missions, rather than in a home with parents to teach and guide them, and to model good parenting behaviour, these children had little opportunity to develop good parenting skills themselves (HREOC, 1997).

⁴⁶ To this date, no payments have been made to Aboriginal people, though the apology was made. I believe this to be a continuation of racism and an illustration of the existence of two unspoken and unrecorded laws in this country, one law for the Aboriginal peoples and another for other Australians, who do receive compensation for wrongs that are done to them.

The Stolen Generations was and is a social justice issue. However, rather than treat it on this basis, the Australian Government quickly positioned it within a medical model, which then portrayed Aboriginal people as being ill, rather than the system that placed them in institutions as being wrong (personal knowledge)⁴⁷. This change of emphasis made invisible the responsibility of government and the role of government to deal with it on a social justice basis. It shifted responsibility from governments to the people themselves and focused on Aboriginal people's problems rather than their strengths (Fejo-King & Briskman, 2009).

So how was the *Bringing Them Home* report received? 'In general... the genocide conclusion of the *Bringing Them Home* report was treated by the Australian Government, by the popular media, and by the right-wing intelligentsia with levity and derisive contempt' (Manne, 2004, p. 218). However, when the general public became aware of the fact that genocide, murder, ethnic cleansing and slavery were part of Australia's history and that their ancestors were involved, there was what became labelled as 'perpetrator trauma'. This was described as trauma experienced by the wider Australian population, and defined by Moses as being 'the shock of realisation at the crimes committed by one's compatriots' (Manne, 2004, p. 10). A national day of remembrance, Sorry Day, was instigated as a symbolic response and celebrated on 26 May, the date that the report was handed down (Cummings, 1990; HREOC, 1997; Zubrick, Kelly & Walker, 2010).

The *Bringing Them Home* report and the RCIADIC had major impacts on the broader Australian community. As everyday Australians heard of the ripping apart of families, and of the trauma, grief and anguish experienced by their fellow Australians due to the

⁴⁷ This decision was made despite the arguments of Aboriginal people.

dehumanising practices of the stealing of Aboriginal children from their families, they reflected on how they would react if people walked into their homes and perpetrated these crimes against them. They contemplated how they would feel and what it would take to enable healing and forgiveness, and they took action.

This action was visible in a furthering of a people's movement toward reconciliation, independent of government, and, for many, a desire to bring about change to the existing way of doing things. These feelings provided the impetus for the bridge walks nationally in 2000, where over a million people walked across bridges, including Sydney Harbour Bridge, to show their support for the Stolen Generations and to say, "Sorry" for the actions of past governments. These walks occurred on Sorry Day on 26 May 2000 and later strengthened the support base for the Apology in 2008.

The Western Australian Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Well Being of Aboriginal Children and Young People (2005)

A third report that added weight to the evidence of the Bringing Them Home report and the RCIADIC was *The Western Australian Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Well Being of Aboriginal Children and Young People* (WAACHS), (Zubrick et al., 2005). The WAACHS was a 'large-scale epidemiological survey of the health and wellbeing of 5,289 Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children' (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 3).

The main aim of this longitudinal survey was to ascertain what the needs of Aboriginal children and young people in Western Australia were with regard to healthy development and to then inform the community, scientists and governments.

The findings were published in four volumes. The first, which was launched in 2004, centred on the physical health of the study group while the second, launched in 2005, focused on their social and emotional wellbeing. In 2006, two further volumes were launched. The first one focused on educational experiences of the group (March 2006), and the second one on the role of families and communities (November 2006). This was the most detailed and extensive research undertaken with Aboriginal children that has been completed to date. Embedded throughout the study is the importance of the Aboriginal kinship system to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and their families.

The Survey demonstrated the impact of various government policies, which had ripped apart the fabric of Aboriginal families over time and across generations. These policies affected not just those taken, but those left behind and the generations after them, thus delivering a direct 'hit' to Aboriginal kinship.

The National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples (2008)

It took ten years after the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report for the Apology (2008) to occur, with many members of the Stolen Generations dying during that period and most others believing they would not live to see the day it would actually happen. Apology Day was the fruition of a long-held hope and dream. Many people travelled to Canberra to witness it, as it was perceived by many as a means of restoring the humanity of Australia, but more especially the humanity of the Aboriginal peoples. On the day, a small number of witnesses from the Stolen Generations were seated on the floor of the House of Representatives in Parliament House. Others sat in the balcony, watching and listening, while still others sat in the Great Hall of Parliament and many more on the lawns outside Parliament House and in other gathering places all around Australia where they

were able to witness the Apology on big television screens. All came to witness this historic and long-awaited event.

There was a great deal of excitement in the lead-up to the Apology, but nothing could eclipse the excitement experienced on the day. Among those who had been invited were members of the Stolen Generations (Koori Mail, 2007), all living previous Prime Ministers (the only one who chose not to attend was previous Prime Minister John Howard), members of different religious denominations, representatives of other First Nations Peoples from around the world, and other high-profile Australians. Importantly, in the audience were Mick Dodson and family members of Sir Ronald Wilson (deceased), the men who had led the Inquiry into the Stolen Generations and who had then tabled the *Bringing Them Home* report (personal knowledge).

When then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd walked into the Parliament everyone rose to their feet and clapped and cheered and then sat with bated breath listening intently to his every word, and what was delivered was balm to the soul. Tears flowed and hearts began to heal with those very small but very important words, “*We are sorry*” from the mouth of the leader of this nation. News reports showed how members of the Stolen Generations and others of goodwill gathered across the nation to hear the Apology. The country stood still and listened to these words, whether the people in these circles supported the Apology or not.

To truly grasp and understand the importance of the Apology, not just for the Stolen Generations but for Australia as a whole, there must be an understanding of both sides of the story of this land - this means ourstory as well as history. Professor Michael McDaniel, who is the first Aboriginal person I have heard align public policy to domestic violence in

a public forum; said in a speech at the launch of the Allens Arthur Robinson Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)⁴⁸ that we, as a nation, needed to not just reflect upon and discuss the past, but that Aboriginal peoples:

...need to tell you the story of what it's been like to be the by-product of your success. We need, as partners within what might be described as a domestic violence situation, the right to sit down and tell you how it felt, because we can't go to the next stage. We can't have a box of chocolates, a bunch of flowers, go off to a dance and not talk about it. Right? Silence is a form of abuse, and if you impose silence upon us as a first step you continue the abuse, so we need to have a chat (McDaniel, 2009).

I believe that the sentiments expressed by Professor McDaniel are even more pressing, given events that unfolded within the Northern Territory in 2007, that have come to be known as 'the Intervention'.

Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) - The Intervention - (2007 and Continuing)

Allegations of widespread neglect, violence and sexual abuse being perpetrated against Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory were reported in the national media in 2006. Included amongst these was a report by Nannette Rogers, a Central Australian Crown Prosecutor. During an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Commission's (ABC) *Lateline* program, Rogers gave details of some of the cases she had been involved in (Merlan, 2010).

⁴⁸ A RAP is a tool that was developed by Reconciliation Australia. It focuses on assisting organisations to formalise positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through relationships of respect that provide opportunities for reconciliation, employment, cadetships and traineeships that will last. Reconciliation Australia also supports other organisations that enter the reconciliation space, as there is certainly enough work for anyone who wants to change things from the way they are to a more positive and meaningful relationship and engagement.

The Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle 'Little Children are Sacred' Report
(2007)

In response to these allegations, the Northern Territory Government set up a Board of Inquiry to investigate what was happening to Aboriginal children right across the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory Government commissioned the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle 'Little Children are Sacred'* report (Wild & Anderson, 2007) in an effort to find better ways to address child protection issues in remote Aboriginal communities under their jurisdiction.

The report was undertaken by a team of researchers who had a good rapport with Aboriginal communities, so parents and carers opened up and told them things that they might not have said to other researchers. The report found that Aboriginal people were not the only perpetrators. It was reported that the majority of the abuse was perpetrated by non-Indigenous men, who were living and working in Aboriginal communities at the time, but who disappeared from the dialogue very quickly; leaving only Aboriginal men to bear the brunt of the reprisal actions taken by the Australian Government (Behrendt, 2007).

This investigation was completed the following year and the *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle 'Little Children are Sacred'* report (hereafter referred to as the *Little Children are Sacred* report), consisting of 316 pages with 97 recommendations, was submitted to the Northern Territory Government (Wild & Anderson, 2007). Shortly thereafter, the *Little Children are Sacred* report found its way to the Australian Government.

Australian Government's Response to the 'Little Children are Sacred' Report

In response, the Australian Government declared a National Emergency on 21 June 2007 as a means of intervening in the Northern Territory. There were two stated aims of the Intervention, the first dealing with the protection of children and making communities safe (Brough, 2007). The second, a longer-term aim, was to create a better future for Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (Yu, Duncan & Gray, 2008).

On 7 August 2007, the Howard Government introduced Emergency Response Legislation into the House of Representatives. This legislation consisted of three bills⁴⁹, which were passed on the same afternoon they were tabled, with in-principle support of the then opposition, the Australian Labor Party. To enable the NTER to proceed, the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* was suspended and the *Anti-Discrimination Law* in the Northern Territory was removed (Yu, Duncan & Gray, 2008).

There were widespread calls from the public for a more measured approach and, in response, a one-day Senate Inquiry was held on 10 August 2007. Between the forty-eight hours from the announcement of the Senate Inquiry Committee being established, and the time of its sitting, 154 submissions were received. The Committee sat on Friday and tabled its report on the Monday, recommending that the legislation be passed, with a stipulation that a progress report be tabled within twelve months and a review conducted at the end of two years. The Senate passed the legislation on Friday 17 August without these amendments (Hinkson, 2007). However, they were later included.

⁴⁹ The *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, the *Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Welfare Payment Reform) Act 2007* and the *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007*.

In November 2009, the Report on the NTER Redesign Consultations was released. Legislation introduced by the Australian Government to reinstate the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* with some modifications that enabled the Intervention to continue as outlined in the Policy Statement⁵⁰. The Government's legislation was passed by the Parliament on 21 June 2010, and came into effect on 1 July 2010 (Hinkson, 2007).

Northern Territory Government's Response to the NTER

The Northern Territory has been self-governing since 1978 and had previously opposed Australian Government interference in its affairs. However, when it came to the NTER, the Northern Territory Government's reaction was very different. Then Chief Minister Clare Martin argued that, 'the issue was far bigger than her or her Government' and she therefore accepted the Australian Government's intervention (Sanders, 2007, p. 63).

The United Nations' Response to the NTER

In 2010, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous people, James Anaya, visited Australia and went to the Northern Territory to ascertain exactly what had happened. Anaya provided a report, entitled *Observations on the Northern Territory Emergency Response in Australia: Advanced Version* (Anaya, 2010). He found that, in several key aspects, the NTER limited the capacity of Aboriginal individuals and communities to control or participate in decisions affecting their own lives, property and cultural development; and did so in a way that, in effect, discriminated on the basis of race, thereby raising serious human rights

⁵⁰ The Policy Statement was entitled *Landmark Reform to the Welfare System, Reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act and Strengthening of the Northern Territory Emergency Response*.

concerns (2010, p. 2). In his opinion, the NTER, as configured and carried out at the time, was incompatible with Australia's human rights obligations (2010, p. 2).

Aboriginal Response to the NTER

The Northern Territory Aboriginal response to the NTER was mixed. Some people were totally against the NTER because it ignored the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report. They were also against it due to there being no consultation with those Aboriginal people directly affected by the NTER (Dodson P., 2007), and because of control of monies by the Australian Government rather than by individuals or local communities (Hinkson, 2007). Other problems were lack of self-determination (Dodson M., 2007), the repeal of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Behrendt, 2007) and the vilification of all Aboriginal men when they were labelled as being paedophiles (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008), with no empirical evidence to support this allegation. Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory also saw it as a land grab by the Government (Turner & Watson, 2007). Other Northern Territory Aboriginal people were in favour because they were finally getting police to help control violence in the communities (personal knowledge). There was a promise of more housing and services (Shanahan, 2007), all of which had been sorely needed for decades (Dillon & Westbury, 2007; Shanahan, 2007). As time has passed, a number of high-profile Northern Territory Aboriginal people who were at first supportive, such as Galarrwuy Yunupingu, are now against the NTER because it has not delivered what it promised.

For those Northern Territory Aboriginal people who were against the NTER, their response was, and is, national / international, multi-faceted and multi-levelled, and continues today. There were delegations to the Howard Government, including

representation to Parliament, politicians and the Australian public, with lobbying and demonstrations all over the country. Appeals were also made to the United Nations. Documentaries were made, and the Internet was used to put across messages to inform Indigenous and other networks across the nation and internationally about what was being said and done, so that people knew what was happening as events were and are unfolding. A book, *This is What We Said*, was launched (2010) to give the Aboriginal version of what was happening and recently an Aboriginal political party was registered in the Northern Territory to contest the next election.

Some high profile Aboriginal people such as Noel Pearson, an Aboriginal lawyer from North Queensland, and Dr Sue Gordon AM, a Western Australian Aboriginal woman, were both strongly in favour of the NTER and were both involved in its design and implementation (Flanagan, 2007; Hinkson, 2007; Langton, 2010; Pearson, 2003). Other Indigenous scholars and activists spoke against the NTER and gave reasons, such as it being another example of the Government bullying a vulnerable people whose human rights had been stripped away; racism; a reversal of reconciliation and a means of again stealing children (Anderson, 2007; Atkinson, 2007; Behrendt, 2007; Calma, 2007; Davis, 2007; Dodson M., 2007; Dodson P., 2007; Mansell, 2007).

Response of Anthropologists to the NTER

All the while these public debates were raging; anthropology, the academic discipline that has arguably had the longest and most intimate contact with Aboriginal people, was quiet. The only place where the voice of anthropologists was heard was in the book *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, normalise, exit Aboriginal Australia* (Altman & Hinkson, 2007). Many people wondered why this was so (Povinelli, 2010). After all, anthropologists had

boldly claimed for decades that they ‘owned’ the study of Aboriginal peoples (Parkin & Stone, 2004). So where were they when there was a need for another voice in the debate? What little was being said publicly gave the impression that anthropologists were just as divided as the wider Australian population.

Then, in 2009, anthropologist Peter Sutton published his book, *The Politics of Suffering*, in which he supported the actions of the Australian Government with the NTER. Aboriginal child rearing practices were also criticised and so the battle lines were drawn, with arguments for and against. The extent of the anthropological internal discussion, described by some as ‘scholarly debate’ and by others as ‘bloodletting’, was illuminated through the writings of different anthropologists in the book *Culture crisis: anthropology and politics in Aboriginal Australia* (Altman & Hinkson, 2010).

Special Measures Put in Place through the NTER

Child Protection

The issues that mobilised the Australian Government to initiate the NTER were purportedly those to do with the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children, yet in the roll-out of the NTER there was no reference to the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report, and none of its recommendations were included in the Emergency Response. Behrendt (2007) spoke of the in-depth reports that governments had been receiving for decades about the same issues that had contributed to the NTER (Dillion & Westbury, 2007). These reports had given detailed analysis about underlying causes and possible ways forward, yet had been ignored (Phillips, 2007).

Initially all Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory were to be subject to compulsory health checks to locate and treat health issues and any effects of abuse. However, due to

medical concerns about who would do the medical check-ups to ascertain sexual abuse; and the fact that these examinations could be viewed as child sexual abuse in and of themselves, these checks never went ahead (Behrendt, 2007). These changes and others gave the impression of ‘policy on the run’ (Fawcett & Hanlon, 2009; Hinkson, 2007).

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT) submitted a paper to the Review Board (2010), which was required to take all submissions into account when preparing its report for the Government. This submission is significant because AMSANT represents Aboriginal medical services that operate in remote areas where there are often no other medical services at all. In regard to child protection, AMSANT offered several criticisms of the NTER. The Review said that extra child protection staff had not yet been recruited or programs implemented. Nor was there increased communication between service providers, or training for those at present working in the field with no training. It also said that cases of child sexual abuse were not being found, even with extra police available to investigate (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).

The AMSANT review condemned the fact that the Australian Government had ‘encouraged a public perception that all Aboriginal men were abusing their children or other young people’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, p. 1). It highlighted that this sort of public vilification, far from helping children, actually undermined the means of implementing solutions. Other long-term detrimental effects in relation to Aboriginal men’s self-esteem, authority in their communities and mental and physical health were identified (Fejo-King, 2011).

The portrayal of all Aboriginal men as paedophiles and abusers of women (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, p. 1), can also be seen as the ‘othering’ of Aboriginal men in the same way in which animalisation had been used in the past within the invasion template, with a particular political agenda of influencing the wider community against Aboriginal people as a whole. This agenda enables governments to act unopposed with regard to Aboriginal issues or to mute the voices of opposition that might otherwise be heard and listened to. All these actions impacted negatively on the kinship system.

Alcohol

Widespread alcohol restrictions were imposed. However, a number of years ago various Aboriginal communities chose to become ‘dry’ (Martin, 2007). This means no alcohol or drugs were allowed. The communities strictly policed these restrictions themselves and experienced a high level of success. Some of these communities were included in the NTER but no recognition was given to the fact that the restrictions, supposedly implemented as part of the Intervention, were already in place in a number of communities (Martin, 2007).

The permit system that controlled who could enter Aboriginal land was scrapped in prescribed communities with regard to communal areas, road corridors and airstrips. However, when David Ross of the Central Land Council spoke up against the NTER, he talked about how the permit system had kept out the grog (alcohol) and undesirables from Aboriginal land and how the Government, by removing the permit system, left Aboriginal communities vulnerable (Tilmouth, 2007). These concerns were dismissed out of hand by then Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough (Schubert, 2007).

With regard to law enforcement, the number of police was to be increased through secondments of officers from other jurisdictions to supplement the existing force in the Northern Territory. On the positive side, more frequent presence of police was appreciated, as this helped to reduce alcohol-related violence.

Income Management

The NTER treated all Aboriginal families in receipt of welfare payments as economically dysfunctional and gave no recognition to families who had high levels of success in managing their income (*Editorial: Beyond Handouts*, 2007; Hinkson, 2007). Income management prevented families sharing resources because families were no longer given payments in the form of money. Instead, they were given a Basics Card that enabled them to purchase specific goods at certain shops, with a record being kept of all purchases made. Fuel is very expensive. Families had previously managed by pooling their money (personal knowledge) to enable them to travel to townships to do their shopping or to travel to other communities for ceremonies, to visit kin and to care for country, but they could no longer do that because no one had any cash at all (Hinkson, 2007). This forces people to remain in one place – it socially isolates them - thus constituting a ‘hit’ to the kinship system.

Land Ownership

Though the NTER was only implemented in prescribed areas of the Northern Territory, this included all land held under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, covering 600,000 square kilometres. Those prescribed areas encompass over 500 communities containing over seventy percent of the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory, a figure of over 45,500 men, women and children (Altman & Hinkson, 2007).

Additionally, a number of Aboriginal townships were acquired through compulsory five-year leases. To enable this to happen, the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* had to be amended. ‘Just terms’ compensation was to be paid, though it was never made clear whether this meant a payment to the community, or whether these funds would be offset against the Australian Government costs to provide services. There were to be improvements in housing, which would include the introduction of market based rents and normal tenancy arrangements.

Aboriginal leaders from the Northern Territory voiced local concerns. Pat Turner and Nicole Watson spoke about the NTER using the abuse of Aboriginal women and children as a ‘Trojan Horse’ for stealing Aboriginal land (Lewis & Karvelas, 2007; Turner & Watson, 2007). William Tilmouth spoke about how Brough, the then Minister for Indigenous Affairs, had gone to Alice Springs and offered to pay Aboriginal communities millions of dollars if they would give ninety-nine year leases to the Government for their land, and how, when this was refused, these same communities were taken through the NTER at no cost to the Government (Tilmouth, 2007).

The Australian Government pressure to move people from communally held land to individually owned land disrupts the relationship between the people and the land as well as the people to each other. The kinship connections between Aboriginal people and their land has been recorded in the works of anthropologists for decades (see Chapter Three), and used by past governments to develop policies dealing with Aboriginal peoples. Brough’s goal - that concerns for custom, kin and land give way to individual aspirations (Hinkson, 2007) illustrates that as one of the designers of the NTER, was directly attacking the kinship system and trying to destroy it, furthering the goal of the invasion template spoken of earlier; the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples.

Housing and Services

Financial support for all community development employment programs (run by Aboriginal peoples) was removed, thus putting many people out of work. No account was taken of the success of these programs or the level of employment offered (Skelton, 2007). At the same time, the local workforce was to be harnessed through ‘work for the dole’⁵¹ programs⁵² to undertake ground clean-up and repair of communities to make them safer and healthier. Non-Aboriginal managers were appointed to achieve improved governance in all prescribed communities with regard to all Australian Government businesses (Brough, 2007). Housing was also to be increased and improved.

The Aboriginal peoples resented the fact that they were blamed for problems resulting from decades of Australian Government neglect around basic services that should be the right of every Australian. Larissa Behrendt (2007) spoke about how there had been thirty years of neglect of Aboriginal communities by previous governments, including the Howard Government, who had been in office for eleven years before rolling out the NTER.

The promised housing has not yet eventuated despite the Government’s own review board stating that ‘adequate housing is fundamental to environmental health and safety’ (Australian Government, 2008). Neither have the jobs for Aboriginal people been generated. However, housing was provided for the Government workers who were employed as part of the NTER and rotated in and out of the Northern Territory on a regular

⁵¹ Unemployment payments.

⁵² The ‘work for the dole’ program spoken of here has clear links to that spoken of by Haebich when she describes what happened in Western Australia in under the Aborigines Act of 1905. This clearly illustrates that very little has changed over time in the way that Australian governments deal with the Aboriginal peoples.

basis. These people are paid substantial amounts to work in the Northern Territory, in addition to their usual payments. Failure to provide, in some cases, even third-world housing and services to Aboriginal families, impacts negatively on the kinship system.

As an Aboriginal woman from the Northern Territory, I am well aware of the results of decades of government policy failures and lack of basic services when it comes to Aboriginal peoples. I have grown up through all these and seen and experienced the impact of them in my homelands and within my family and clans. Of the millions of dollars that have gone into the NTER, very little has trickled down to the Aboriginal families and communities (personal knowledge).

Comment on the NTER

It is an indictment on the Australian Government that reports produced over several years were ignored, yet the Government of the day (the Howard Government), responded to items in the media, then later used the media as a tool (Duffy, 2007). It is also of great concern, that a well-researched and carefully crafted document such as the *Little Children are Sacred* report appears to have been used to progress a Government agenda with racist overtones, with none of the dangers it identified being addressed effectively and none of its recommendations being implemented.

In addition to the arguments raised above, many people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, were and are suspicious about a number of the actions within the Emergency Response that appear to have more to do with the appropriation of land, and with assimilation, than child safety (Fawcett & Hanlon, 2009; Lewis & Karvelas, 2007). This 'national emergency' was declared during a hard-fought federal election campaign in which the Howard Government was not winning (Lewis, 2007). What added to these

suspensions was the previous history of the Howard Government in manufacturing a crisis, as with the ‘Tampa Affair’⁵³ (Briskman, Latham & Goddard, 2008; Robinson, 2006) in a previous election.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated whether and how the kinship system has changed over time. One of the major arguments introduced in this chapter was that there are two stories about this land now called Australia. The first story is history; the second is ourstory. I argue that ourstory has been one of terror, genocide, murder, rape, the stealing of our children and other attacks, which caused major damage to our kinship system. The continuation of the assimilation agenda has also been clearly illuminated.

The chapter described how, in the past, Aboriginal peoples were being imprisoned in concentration camps called institutions, missions and reserves to make way for the immigrant population, often delivering a direct ‘hit’ to the kinship system (Cummings, 1990; Fesl, 1993; Haebich, 2000; Trigger, 1992; Wright, 1998). While peoples from other countries of the world have come to Australia to escape persecution we, the Aboriginal peoples, have not been able to find sanctuary from the never-ending persecution inflicted on our people through legislation, policies and programs which are aimed at replacing our unique culture with a western model, thus impacting on our families and our kinship system.

⁵³ In August 2001, the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa rescued 438 refugees from a distressed fishing vessel heading for Australia. The Tampa then entered Australian waters despite being refused permission by the Howard Government. When the Australian Navy aggressively boarded the ship, claims were made that the refugees threw their children overboard. Then Prime Minister Howard used this to attack refugees trying to reach Australia by boat and to retrospectively change laws about entering Australian waters. Months later, the widely publicised claims of the parents throwing their children overboard were proven to be false.

These policies confine us in invisible prisons – they effectively build concentration camp walls around our nations, our country, our families, our identity and our whole world. There are also prisons made of brick and mortar overflowing with our people (Day, Nakata & Howells, 2008). We do not have self-determination because this does not fit the political agenda of successive Australian Governments and the huge Aboriginal industry that has resulted from them. Therefore, we are at the mercy of the whims of government agendas.

This chapter provided part of the context for the whole thesis, because it explained the relationship between the Aboriginal peoples and the broader immigrant population. The next chapter focuses on social work, from its historical beginnings in Britain and America and how these beginnings have dominated social work theory and practice in Australia. The social work literature is examined to locate knowledge about the kinship system in social work and Aboriginal social work is introduced.

CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL WORK WITH THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Introduction

The three contextual chapters introduced the research topic (Chapter One), the kinship system (Chapter Three), and historical background (Chapter Four) thereby providing a graphic picture of the differences in Aboriginal kinship to that of non-Aboriginal kinship, and past and present interactions between the Aboriginal peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Chapter Five shifts the focus of the study and centres it on social work. It begins with an explanation of how social work emerged from Britain, was transported to America and reached Australia as a mature profession, firmly dominated and embedded within western texts, theories, knowledge and systems (Camilleri, 1996; Dickey, 1987).

The emerging awareness of whiteness within social work will be addressed, as well as a discussion of how stereotyping and wilful blindness are also still embedded in social work theory and education. A literature review is undertaken to identify the extent of knowledge of the kinship system available to social work. The chapter then introduces two examples of innovative practice. The first introduces Aboriginal social work in Australia, which has a very different origin, in that it was born in Australia rather than being imported from elsewhere, while the second illustrates how theory and practice came together for the Apology to the First Australians.

Finally, social work education is examined, as I argue that knowledge of the kinship system has not thus far been included within social work curricula.

Throughout the chapter, a number of key debates - which include individual versus structural approaches, care versus control and generic versus specific social work - will be discussed. These are important issues, as they remain just as pertinent in social work today as they did much earlier in the history of the profession. This is particularly so within the Australian context, because these ideas have impacted on the Aboriginal peoples and on social work with the Aboriginal peoples.

Structural versus Individual Social Work

The Emergence of Social Work

Specht and Courtney (1994) explain that, for the western world, the earliest forerunners of social work can be traced to patronage, piety, the Poor Laws and philanthropy, which were the different ways that poverty was dealt with in England. These methods of helping the poor were taken to America by colonists and remained in place until 1935, at which time the *United States Social Security Act* came into being. Elements of the Poor Laws continue to be found within ways that governments provide support and services today and in the way that social work theory and practice have developed over time.

Two American women with diametrically opposite ideologies, who both became well known in the 1880s and kept working up to the 1920s, were Jane Addams and Mary Richmond (Margolin, 1997). Jane Addams worked to change society by recognising and enlisting the existing structures and strengths of the community. She looked at systems that brought about poverty and used social change mechanisms, such as women's suffrage and child labour laws, to bring about improvements. This can be seen as the beginning of structural social work. Mary Richmond was the mother of casework, which included

surveillance and the resulting detailed case-notes. This can be seen as the beginning of individual social work (Margolin, 1997).

The influence of these two women is still being felt in social work today due to the way in which American theories are used in other countries. Margolin highlights the influence of these women when he states, ‘social workers may claim Jane Addams as their source of inspiration, but they *do* Mary Richmond’ (1997, p. 4).

Apart from the issue of structural versus individual social work, another tension within social work is that of whether social workers are involved in care or control of clients. Specht and Courtney (1994) state that there is a dilemma for social workers, who are often called upon to enact state and government policies of social control in regard to the protection of children and particular groups of adults. This role conflicts with the social justice aspirations of social work and creates an increased risk of burnout for social workers (Margolin, 1997). The other risk for social workers is that the people they are working with can view them as ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ type characters. This means that social workers might say to the people that they are trying to help them, whilst at the same time, enforcing policies that the people see as biased, cruel or evil (Blackstock, 2009). This affects the way clients view social workers and, therefore, the ability of the social worker to build a relationship of trust with the client (Calma & Priday, 2011).

Generic social work was based on the premise that the social worker can use the same theories, knowledge, value system and practice regardless of differences between clients’ cultural backgrounds, histories and lived experience (Roberts, 1990). Western knowledge, ideology and perspectives dominate social work in that it is informed from a western standpoint. This was the only model of social work for several decades. However, over the

last twenty years, there has been a recognition that specific models are needed to meet the needs of certain groups, particularly Indigenous peoples (Durie, 2010), for whom the generic model has been a source of trauma and damage rather than care (Blackstock, 2009).

The History of Social Work in Australia

As mentioned above, social work was brought to Australia as a mature profession and as yet a comprehensive history has not been written. A comprehensive history would include all models and variations of social work that have been used in Australia. This would include Indigenous social work (see below).

Some aspects of the history of social work in Australia have been gathered here, as it is essential to address them as part of this thesis. Understandably, therefore, this can only be a sketchy picture. This gap in Australian social work knowledge – about its beginnings and development in an Australian context – needs to be filled soon, by beginning to gather information while some of the early Australian social workers, who trained in the 1940s, are still alive. This could well be a research project for the future.

Social work was first taught at Sydney University in 1940, qualifying graduates to either work as social service workers in hospitals or to work as child welfare officers (Camilleri, 2005; University of Sydney, 2011). As shown below, soon after its development as an educational option in Australia, social work was involved in applying government policy with regard to the Aboriginal peoples, and this kind of practice fell into the realms of control rather than care.

With regard to the social work issues of structural versus individual, care versus control and generic versus specific; in more recent years, social work practice continually changed as the welfare state declined and the ideology of liberal capitalism gained precedence from the 1940s to 1980s (Camilleri, 1996; Margolin, 1997). This mirrored what had happened in America where social workers' values and beliefs were impacted upon as significant numbers moved away from 'service to the poor in community-based non-profit agencies' (Margolin, 1997) into government departments. In these situations, social workers' responsibilities were to apply government policies, which were sometimes at odds with the social work values of social justice, self-determination, 'empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being' (AASW, 2010). For the client, this meant that what social workers were espousing to work towards, was not always supported by their actions.

Care versus Control

The History of Social Work with the Aboriginal Peoples

Social Darwinism portrayed Aboriginal peoples as savages, and tribalism as deviance and as less evolved than the white people (Tatz, 2005). There are no records to suggest that when social work was developed in Australia, it engaged with Aboriginal people in a helping and enabling way. In 1949, McMahon (2002) notes that a group of Aboriginal people went to social workers in Victoria and spoke about developing services for their people, but no action was reportedly taken (McMahon, 2002). From that point there is no further written mention of social work interaction with Aboriginal peoples in *Australian Social Work*, one of the major Australian social work journals (McMahon, 2002).

The first notable involvement of social workers with Aboriginal peoples was in the form of taking children away as part of the Stolen Generations (see chapter Four). By the early 1960s in Australia, welfare officers were stealing Aboriginal children and placing them in either Government or church run facilities. Welfare officers began working with the police to remove Aboriginal children and later took over this role from the police. In the mid-1960s, social work as a profession was first spoken about in relation to the stealing of children. This is not to say that social workers were not involved earlier than this, rather, this is when conversations of Larrakia and Warumungu people in the Northern Territory began to include the term ‘social worker’. Prior to this, the term was ‘the welfare’ (personal knowledge). This is ourstory of social workers. The removal of tens of thousands of Aboriginal children (Long & Sephton, 2011) from their families and communities, for no other reason than their Aboriginality, was viewed as being ‘in the best interests of the child’ by social workers and others acting as social workers, though not qualified (HREOC, 1997).

The second way in which social workers have in the past, and are still, implementing government policy is in the area of child protection. The AIHW’s *Child Protection Australia 2008-2009* report states that ‘the rate of Indigenous children on care and protection orders was nine times the rate of non-Indigenous children’ (2010, p. viii). It also notes that, ‘the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care was almost ten times the rate of non-Indigenous children’ (AIHW, 2010 p. viii). While recognising that a range of social and behavioural issues may have contributed to the removal of these children, what may not have been examined is the contribution of whiteness and white standpoint to decisions made by either social workers or child protection workers (Bamblett & Lewis, 2007).

Thirdly, the Northern Territory Intervention (2007 – to the present) is a situation in which the Australian Government decided that an intervention was called for with the Aboriginal peoples, in the ‘best interests of the child’. It developed policy and rolled it out, with social workers being amongst those first called upon to action the policy along with police and the army (see chapter Four).

All these actions impacted heavily on the kinship system. The practice of stealing children resulted in generational grief, anguish and great pain for the Aboriginal peoples, the impact of which continues today. More recent child removals have retained the catchcry of being ‘in the best interests of the child’ and are enacted, in the main, by social workers.

The Aboriginal peoples have always been positioned as being a problem, for one reason or another (see chapter Four). Within the realms of social work, the identification of a person as Aboriginal can immediately bring into play four factors: racism, stereotyping, wilful blindness and whiteness. Both racism and stereotyping have been identified and written about in psychology books (Dudgeon, Garvey & Pickett, 2000; Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker, 2010) and stereotyping in sociology (Van Krieken et al., 2006), with stereotyping as part of the curriculum of social work students. However, they still occur. Wilful blindness appears to be a gap in social work knowledge, so will be introduced next.

Wilful Blindness

In the 1960s, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted experiments to examine whether people would obey an instruction that they knew would hurt someone, and if so, why they would obey. He did not include criminals; he picked supposedly good people who had a high moral code. Milgram found, that in order to conform and to please the ‘boss’, almost

all people would carry out actions that visibly caused grief and pain to others, without any emotional involvement on their part. Heffernan quotes Milgram as saying:

Although a person acting under authority performs actions that seem to violate standards of conscience, it would not be true to say that he loses his moral sense. Instead, it acquires a radically different focus. His moral concern now shifts to a consideration of how well he is living up to the expectations that the authority has of him (2011, p.113).

Milgram's results can be applied to everyone who was involved in the stealing of Aboriginal children for the last one hundred years. They saw the anguish of the parents and children as they tore the child from his / her mother's arms and they still persisted. This information is vital for social workers to consider, since social work has been the main profession involved in the removal of Aboriginal children from their families over this period. Wilful blindness is the term used by Heffernan to describe this phenomenon because people made a choice. Since the war crimes trials after the Second World War, right up to situations of white-collar crime today, obedience of employees to their superiors has not been considered a valid excuse for criminal activity.

In the case of the NTER, social workers should have known it was wrong because, to enable these actions to be taken, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* had to be suspended. It has been argued by some social workers that they were concerned about the rights of the child. However, as Calma and Priday (2011) make clear, all human rights should be treated equally. If you have to remove one set of human rights to enact another set, there is a fundamental flaw with what is happening and the humanity of all concerned is diminished.

Actions of social workers in this situation highlight how control was exerted, supposedly to show care (Calma & Priday, 2011). This supports Young's assertion that:

As agents of the state, social work practitioners have been implicated in the control of marginalised people, contradictorily at the same time that they have worked towards emancipation and empowerment of those people under social work's social change and social justice functions (Young in Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 104).

If nothing else, statements such as the one above, along with situations such as the role of social workers in the NTER, should have brought into play a rigorous debate such as that which occurred between anthropologists (Altman & Hinkson, 2010) (see chapter Four). However, this did not happen - and this very lack of vigorous debate by social workers calls for a questioning of why. I assert that part of the reason for this lack of reaction can be found in the concepts of racism, stereotyping, wilful blindness and whiteness within social work.

White social workers who interact with the Aboriginal peoples, and who do not have an understanding of ourstory, or who have heard it but not critically reflected on what this means for their practice, would not understand the trauma that has been experienced by the Aboriginal peoples and the impact of history. Social workers coming into contact with Aboriginal clients could then interpret fear and anger as guilt.

Consequences of Wilful Blindness

The Stolen Generations issue eventually had major ramifications for the social workers of Australia, causing the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), to express regret around the role of social workers in regard to the Stolen Generations (HREOC, 1997). Later, when the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) apologised to the Aboriginal peoples for the role of their member organisations with regard to the Stolen Generations, the AASW as a member was included in this action (Calma, 2008).

In 2008, the then Human Rights Commissioner for Indigenous Affairs, Tom Calma, addressed a group of social workers at the Australian Catholic University on the eve of the Apology. He acknowledged the apology that had been proffered by the AASW for the involvement of social workers in the Stolen Generations. He encouraged Australian social workers to become human rights workers, saying that they were ideally positioned to do so because of the unique goal of social workers to achieve social justice (Calma, 2008). This added to what Jim Ife had been writing about for a number of years in regard to the importance of human rights social work practice (1996, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2010). Calma recently renewed his call for social workers to become human rights workers (Calma & Priday, 2011).

The other major issue mentioned above, a concept which until recently was not recognised or acknowledged in social work education, theory, practice or texts, is whiteness. This will be discussed now.

Whiteness

Whiteness is an assumption about the superiority of white society's worldview and ideology, which judge all others to be of lesser value or of no value, and is essentially racist. McIntosh (1988), in her seminal work, demonstrated the invisibility of whiteness and white privilege when she introduced the concept of a knapsack of white privilege that was invisible but could be used at any time. She explained that she and other white people could take out and use the items within this knapsack to gain access or entry into privileged states that were not accessible to people of colour.

In order to examine whiteness in Australian society, two stories are shared here. The first relates to a regular situation that normalised whiteness in a whole town, whilst the second story deals with my first experience of tertiary study.

*Whiteness in a Town*⁵⁴

When I was growing up, every Wednesday night was Ranch Night at the old Star Theatre in Darwin. This meant that two cowboy-and-Indian movies would be shown. It was the social event of the week and everyone saved up to go. The theatre was one of the old ones, which was open air near the screen and covered at the back, with second storey seats and third storey boxes. The front open-air part was reserved for Aboriginal people and there were no seats: you would sit on the ground. Next came poorer white people, including people such as Greeks and Italians (who were considered black) and half-caste people, who could either sit in the open-air part with canvas seats or behind on the seats under shelter. Upstairs, on the second floor, was where all the white people sat (those with pale skin and blue eyes). In the boxes on the third floor were the really nice seats for the rich people (all of whom were also fair-skinned). Aboriginal people did not enter the building: we walked down the alley and bought our tickets near the entrance to our area.

The evening began with the National Anthem, which at that time was *God Save the Queen*. Everybody had to stand for this. Then the Movietone news would be followed by the movie. One of the really noticeable things was that everyone on the ground floor would be barracking for the Indians whilst everyone on the second and third floors would be barracking for the cowboys. We used to wonder how come the cowboys always won.

⁵⁴ Dawn Bessarab an Aboriginal social worker who completed a PhD thesis in 2006 also used the example of the local picture theatre to illustrate racial divisions in a town in Western Australia (personal communication from Fran Crawford, March 2012).

Some words that were very familiar to us were, "*The only good Indian is a dead Indian.*" We had had the same thing said about us. We also noticed that on the screen, people of mixed race were called half-breeds. This was also a reflection of what was happening in our lives, with the term being half-castes. We saw Indian men portrayed as drunks and as abusers of women and children and these labels were also applied to Aboriginal men. We saw Indian women being portrayed as promiscuous, a label also applied to Aboriginal women. We felt very close to the Indians. One reason we enjoyed these movies was that all the men in my mother's family were ringers (the equivalent of the American cowboy) so there was great interest in the horsemanship as well as in cowboy fashions, because the cowboys all wore high-heeled boots, big-buckled belts and big hats whereas the ringers rode bareback and barefoot.

On reflection, I can look back now and say that what we were seeing were stereotypes and the dominance of whiteness. The message that was coming across the screen was that Indigenous people were no good and that no matter how hard they tried, they would never beat the whites. Some of the positive messages that I saw were the survival of the Indians despite all that happened to them. I also saw that they had great leaders who developed wonderful battle and survival strategies.

Frankenberg raises three dimensions of whiteness, each of which can be identified in this story. 'Whiteness' is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege' (1993, p. 1). This is shown through the seating arrangements at the theatre. Secondly, she speaks about a 'standpoint', 'a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society' (p. 1). The movies we watched were developed from a white standpoint and illustrated how they saw themselves as the good guys, heroes and winners. The third dimension she raises is that whiteness refers to 'a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and

un-named' (p. 1). Standing for the National Anthem was not part of Aboriginal culture, it was part of white culture; yet if we did not stand we would be thrown out of the theatre. However, by paying homage to the Queen of England we were paying homage to imperialism and colonialism and the place from which they emanated. A lot of Aboriginal people dealt with this third issue by buying their tickets before the show but only entering the theatre area after the National Anthem had finished.

Indigenous Students and the IQ Test

Rothenberg (2008) explained that one of the ways white privilege was pushed in America was through the intelligence test, which was skewed by developers of the test, Terman, Goddard and Yerkes; especially to keep out south-eastern European immigrants and to show that African Americans, American Indians and Mexicans were of lesser intelligence than White people. Rothenberg goes on to say that, in 1912, eighty percent of immigrants failed the test.

In Australia, through the 1970s and 1980s, the South Australian Institute of Technology (SAIT) Aboriginal Task Force (ATF) opened its doors to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students entry into tertiary education. It was the first institution to do so. What enabled this to happen was the Whitlam Government agenda of self-determination for Aboriginal people, which saw the Aboriginal Tertiary Grants Scheme come into being (Bin-Sallik, 2003). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students came from all around Australia to attend.

In the 1970s, when Aboriginal students applied for entry into the ATF, one of the hurdles we faced was to pass an intelligence test (IQ test). I remember very clearly sitting in the classroom along with about 30 other Aboriginal students from all over Australia. We were

handed the paper and told to complete it, then the teacher told us that she would be back in twenty minutes. The teacher then left the room, leaving one of the previous year's students in the room. As soon as the teacher went out the door, we turned over the paper and our faces must have shown our horror. We looked around and someone said, "*What is this? Does anyone know what this means?*" We started having a conversation about the questions and the answers. There were things we had no idea about because some of us were from the bush, most of us had never been in a white person's house and the things they were asking were about white society, clothing, history and behaviour. As we began to talk, a person would say, "*I know the answer to this one – it's this.*" So we went through and answered all the questions together, as a collective. That student from the previous year took no part in the discussion – he just read a book the whole time.

What is interesting about this situation is that it shows clearly the division between worldviews. I know that some non-Indigenous people reading this will be horrified and say we all cheated, but for Aboriginal people it was very cultural to come up with answers collectively. What's more, a lot of us were connected through the kinship system – we were sitting in that classroom with our brothers and sisters, our brother cousins and sister cousins through skin, and we were helping each other. We didn't see it as wrong. This clearly shows where the two worldviews are so different and where judgements are made about behaviour that can go against Aboriginal people for following our values and ways of doing things that don't fit with the dominant view (see the reflection on the nurse's story in Chapter Seven).

Everyone not only got into the course, we went on to be awarded either a Community Development Certificate or an Associate Diploma in Social Work. Throughout this time, although we all worked on our individual assignments, we always worked together by

discussing what we were learning. The majority of us returned to our home communities after we received our qualifications and became very involved in many aspects of social work over the next thirty years. Since this social work qualification was a diploma and not a university degree, those holding it were denied membership in the AASW, which was the only social work association at that time.

This meant that there were two streams of social work in Australia in the late 1970s, divided on racial grounds by the qualification held, since only non-Indigenous people got a degree and were thus eligible for membership in the AASW. Steve Larkin was the first male Aboriginal social worker to receive entrance into a university and complete a degree in social work. He attended the University of Queensland and graduated in 1984 (Larkin, 2011).

The ATF model was so successful it was used to develop Aboriginal units in all tertiary institutions throughout Australia. The teachers we had were all white but they were very much in favour and very supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being educated. The teacher who left the room made it possible for all of these things to be achieved. I believe she recognised the whiteness of the test she was required to administer and did something about it. In this story, what is clearly seen is Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing; and the kinship system at work in a white situation.

Whiteness in Social Work

The notion of improving other people is endemic to social work. It is both a source of moral nobility and trepidation. It implies an ability to define accurately another's deficit, to locate its importance in his / her life, and assumes the efficacy of external motivations and sensibilities to change (Blackstock, 2009, p. 31).

Blackstock, who is an Indigenous Canadian social worker, makes these comments in the

citation above in reference to social work practice in Canada. Her observations are just as relevant to social work in Australia. The goal of ‘improving’ others, especially Aboriginal peoples, by making us more like white Australians has been embedded within the ideology, policies and practices of this country for decades (as clearly illustrated in Chapter Four). This is also an example of ‘*doing* Mary Richmond’ (Margolin, 1997), since defining ‘another’s deficit’ shows that individuals were seen as having the problem, rather than society. It is ironic that the profession of social work in Australia has not critically examined itself until very recently in order to define its own deficits in relation to working with the Aboriginal peoples.

In 1997, the AASW, along with other members of ACOSS, made a statement of apology to the Aboriginal peoples for the role of the Australian social welfare sector played in the Stolen Generations. From this point onwards, the Australian Psychology Association (APA) took a number of proactive steps to ensure that Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing were embedded within psychology practice. This paradigm shift was led by Indigenous psychologists and resulted in two seminal publications, the first being by Dudgeon, Garvey and Pickett (2000) and the second by Purdie, Dudgeon and Walker (2010).

Social work (specifically the AASW) did not embrace the changes in the same way that psychology did. Even though its deficit had been identified and acknowledged it did not use this as an external motivation to change. It is ironic that a profession so concerned with examining and changing others took so long to begin to examine and change itself. It took twelve years for the AASW to begin to take action. In the meantime, Indigenous social workers had set up their own organisation, the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers’ Association (NCATSISWA), in 2005, because they felt

that the needs of Aboriginal peoples, including Indigenous social workers, were not being met by the AASW.

Finally, in 2010, the AASW took a number of steps to meet the needs of Indigenous people. The Association organised an Indigenous-working group to provide input into social work policy as it impacted on the Aboriginal peoples. Another step was to review and change the Code of Ethics to include a preamble recognising the special place of the Aboriginal peoples (AASW, 2010). Embedded within this document was a philosophy of change, addressing the need to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into social work practice. A review of national social work curricula is currently being undertaken and will include Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and Indigenist theory.

McMahon's much cited work (2002), which reviewed past editions of *Australian Social Work: Journal of the Australian Association of Social Workers* between the years 1947 – 1997 found that, of articles published over this period, only sixteen articles had been written about social work with Aboriginal peoples. Only one of these is reported as being by a social worker who identified as Indigenous. Finally, nine years later in 2011, in an effort to address the issues that McMahon reported on, there was a push to include articles by Aboriginal social workers in the social work journal. This push resulted in the *Special Issue on Australian Indigenous Social Work and Social Policy*, Part 1⁵⁵ and Part 2. Both editions consist of articles written mainly by Indigenous social workers. This has not happened before in the history of the journal. This lack of visibility of the writings of Aboriginal social workers in this journal was an example of whiteness in practice.

⁵⁵ A number of these articles are referenced in this thesis.

Current Australian social work education and theories are informed by psychology, anthropology and sociology. Social workers have to complete subjects from those disciplines as foundational learning in order to gain a social work degree (Whyte, 2005). Individualism is central to the current western dominant paradigm, as espoused by Mary Richmond. Payne (2005), an English social work academic, talks about three kinds of social work practice. The first is reflexive-therapeutic, the second is the socialist-collectivist view and the third is individualist-reformist. These are all ideologically based within western contexts and evident in Australian social work education (Camilleri, 2005).

The need for a shift in practice to be more inclusive of other perspectives, especially those of the Aboriginal peoples, is beginning to emerge in Australian social work education. The profession has acknowledged that current theory and practice are not sufficient because they do not take into account the different ideology and experiences of Indigenous peoples of the world. This conclusion is supported by Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird (2008), who state that current social work practice does not meet the needs of Indigenous peoples because it does not seek to change the systems that have oppressed Indigenous peoples.

This is due to social work emanating from a dominant western philosophical background. It is Indigenous social workers who have acted from within Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing and the kinship system who have achieved this (as illustrated below), whereas the dominant practices have not.

In other countries, Indigenous supportive systems that existed before formal social work have been recognised. For example, Tracie Mafile'o (2009) identifies the existing social helping networks within the Pacific nations of New Zealand, Tonga and Papua-New

Guinea when she describes Pasifika Social Work. In her research, she examined how the existing Tongan network was used in New Zealand by Tongan social workers with Tongan clients. In the case of Pacific nations, Tongan social work, as a western construct, is developing theories that incorporate local practices. Those promoting Tongan social work have ensured that the western theories do not dominate, or even damage, what is already in existence (Mafile'o, 2009).

Sir Mason Durie, in his keynote address at the *International Social Work Conference* held in New Zealand (Durie, 2010), stated that the nations of the south need to develop theories and practices that are directly relevant to their various cultural and historical settings rather than relying on those from Britain and North America, which were not relevant.

One Australian academic who speaks about the need to take up the challenge of examining whiteness in social work theory and practice is Susan Young (2004), who wrote one of the chapters of the book *Whitening Race: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (Morton-Robinson, 2004, pp. 104-118). In the introduction to this chapter, Young wrote:

I, as a White social worker, maintain that the profession has yet to fully engage with an understanding of itself as racialised and to explore what this might mean for practice. In this essay I argue that the project of critical self-examination is incomplete if it does not engage with the Whiteness of social work as practice (p. 104).

Whiteness and white privilege are currently being recognised and spoken about more openly within Australian social work literature (Long & Sephton, 2011; Quinn, 2009; Walter, Taylor & Habibis, 2011; Young & Zubrzycki, 2011). I propose that this is just the beginning and that the dialogue needs to not only continue, but to expand into social work

education and flow into practice. Zubrzycki explains that there are many tensions within educating students about whiteness and explain that:

The aim of whiteness education is for non-Indigenous students to recognise that they do need to take responsibility and that one of the challenges that educators working with this perspective often confront and need to deal with is the common response of non-Indigenous students to adopt a white guilt position which then immobilises them in their practice (Zubrzycki J., 2011, pers. comm., 20 October).

Zubrzycki goes on to say that educators need to challenge the immobilising response because, by feeling guilty and being immobilised, non-Indigenous students are not taking responsibility and acting positively for change (Zubrzycki J., 2011, pers. comm., 20 October). If the discussion around this topic is not handled carefully, there is a possibility that students can come to believe that the particular issue being discussed lies solely with the Aboriginal people, thereby making this an 'Aboriginal problem'. See Chapter Four for many examples of white people causing the poverty, ill health and lack of housing; and then blaming the Aboriginal people for the circumstances they find themselves in. This is the insidiousness of whiteness that, unless actively challenged, results in the telling of only one side of the story of this land.

Also, when white students are told not to take on any blame, this does not take into account the impact of this attitude on the Aboriginal students and Aboriginal social workers present. Ourstory is that these statements and this attitude have offended Aboriginal students and social workers, myself included. We challenge this style of teaching as it colonises and disempowers us. A step forward would be for the lecturer to acknowledge that the responsibility lies squarely with the invading British in the past and those who have maintained and exerted power over Aboriginal peoples from that time on. This approach identifies the problem as being structural rather than an individual issue:

Decentring whiteness requires recognition of epistemological and ontological assumptions so deeply embedded that they are invisible to those who carry them. This invisibility permits white privilege to exist unacknowledged and unchallenged within societal formations (Walter, Taylor & Habibis, 2011, p. 6).

What has been addressed to this point has illustrated the continuing debate between structural versus individual and between care versus control. What has not so far been addressed is generic versus specific models of social work. The literature review provided next brings this to the fore.

Generic and Specific Social Work

As explained earlier in this chapter, generic social work is ‘one size fits all’, while specific social work is customised to meet the needs of minority groups. Both international and Australian literature reveal that there are some areas of theory and practice that social workers find challenging. These include a recognition of the doing of evil (Blackstock, 2009), racism (Fejo-King & Briskman, 2009), the failure of generic social work to meet the needs of Indigenous social workers and the broader Indigenous community (Baikie, 2009), the invisibility of whiteness (Young, 2004), reconciliation based on Indigenous ways of helping (Galloway, 2005; Hart, 2009), contesting worldviews (Whyte, 2005), and Aboriginal social work as opposed to the Aboriginalisation of social work (Bin-Sallik, 2003; Rigney, 2001; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009).

The International Literature

The international literature identifies a broad range of cultural practices within social work. This literature attempts to promote different ways of working with Indigenous peoples because it recognises that what exists does not meet the needs of Indigenous peoples or the social workers engaging with them (Blackstock, 2009; Durst, 1992; Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird, 2008; Mafle’o, 2009; Ruwhiu, 2009; Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009). It was

also developed to meet the needs of anyone from a different ethnic background (Lum, 2011). This work highlights the need to develop specific models of social work rather than continuing to use the generic model.

The literature deals with (to name just a few) such things as anti-colonial social work (Sinclair, Hart & Bruyere, 2009), culturally competent practice (Lum, 2011; Weaver, 1999), culturally relevant practice (Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird, 2008), cultural safety (Bin-Sallik, 2003; Mafle'o, 2009; Ruwhiu, 2009), cultural security (Ramsden, 2002) and Indigenous social work research (Hart, 2009). Each of these refers to systemic change rather than individualism, thus bringing us back to the work of Addams, which had been neglected for several decades while Mary Richmond's work took precedence (Mullaly, 1997).

One example of the changes social workers would need to make in order to shift their practice is explained by Weaver, who suggests that, 'culturally competent practitioners go through a process of shifting from using their own culture as a benchmark for measuring all behaviour' (1999, p. 218). Weaver, here, is addressing one's standpoint (see Chapter Two).

There are a number of ways in which culturally respectful, empowering and de-colonising social work practice has been progressed in different countries of the world with regard to working with their Indigenous peoples. For example, in the United States there has been a shift to culturally competent practice, described by Lum (2011) in terms of interactions.

Some Australian social workers have been using international literature because they recognise the importance of the Indigenous standpoint and the need to incorporate this into their practice. One example is the introduction into Australia of family group conferencing,

a program imported from New Zealand to Victoria by Child Protection Agencies in 1992 (Harris, 2008). This approach is interesting as it assumes that a program that was developed by one Indigenous group, in line with their knowledge system and protocols, is transferable (almost unchanged) to another quite different Indigenous group in a different country with an entirely different history.

Another issue in the international social work literature can be found in the domination of the voices of white social workers with regard speaking about Aboriginal social work theory and practice in Australia. There should be a close examination of who is speaking in the international literature. Close examination of the most recent international social work book that deals with Indigenous social work (Gray, Coates & Yellow Bird, 2008) reveals that none of the authors who speak about Indigenous social work in Australia are Indigenous. This is in stark contrast to other countries of the world, which used Indigenous authors. I disagree with this practice and assert that this kind of practice is no longer acceptable as it undermines Indigenous voices - in this instance, the voices of Aboriginal social workers - through the legitimisation of western 'experts'. This continues colonisation and patterns that reinforce domination. Scheyvens and Leslie (2007) stated:

The scales of knowledge are yet to be balanced in ways that affirm Aboriginal knowledge and expertise, while not totally discarding all professional expertise derived from dominant cultural paradigms. In order to avoid undermining Indigenous voices through the legitimisation of western 'experts', there is a moral requirement to incorporate those voices without colonising them in a manner that reinforces patterns of domination (Scheyvens & Leslie, cited in Briskman, 2007, p. 13)

Australian Social Work Literature

It should be noted that I found critiquing the work of other Aboriginal social workers challenging on a number of levels. These levels included as an Indigenous researcher, as

an Australian Aboriginal social worker and as an Aboriginal woman. I have relied heavily on my moral compass to guide my steps and my words in this process. I am not the first Indigenous researcher to express feelings of discomfort and to search for ways to address them. Wilson (2008) also speaks about this problem and how he traversed it. I believe that acknowledging this difficulty is important, because if it was experienced by both Wilson and myself, there is a good chance that other Indigenous researchers and social workers may experience the same dilemma and search for ways through it. If this happens, they might find it useful to know they are not alone on this journey and may find that our experiences offer insights into how to address this problem and move on.

Just as with Chapter Four, where the throw net is cast to capture history and ourstory as they impact on the kinship system, this literature review casts the net wide with the intention of capturing literature which deals with social work and Aboriginal peoples, with a particular focus on the kinship system, allowing other things to flow through. To facilitate this aim, the literature review is divided into two sections. The first section examines social work and the Aboriginal peoples to give the bigger picture of where this literature fits. Next, Australian literature which speaks specifically about the Aboriginal kinship system is examined and discussed.

Literature about Social Work and the Aboriginal Peoples

Through a review of the existing social work literature, the areas where social workers interact with the Aboriginal peoples are identified, along with the different settings in which these interactions occur. Interactions are in the role of colleagues (Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Bennett, Zubrzycki & Bacon, 2011; Green & Baldry, 2008; Lynn, 2001) and as human rights workers (Briskman, Latham & Goddard, 2008; Calma, 2008; Ife,

2001, 2008; Long & Sephton, 2011). There are areas where the Aboriginal peoples were predominantly cast in the role of client within the mental health arena (Atkinson, Nelson & Atkinson, 2010) or as the recipients of human service delivery (Allan & Kemp, 2011; Baldry, Green & Thorpe, 2010; Gilbert, 2005, 2009). Social workers also interacted with the Aboriginal peoples in community development settings (Ife, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2010; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Nickson et al., 2011), and as both researchers and research participants (Baldry, Green & Thorpe, 2010; Bennett & Zubrzycki, 2003; Adams, Paasse & Clinch, 2011).

Given that social workers interact with the Aboriginal peoples at so many points, a major concern of this thesis centres on the question of whether there is sufficient knowledge, both within the discipline of social work and by individual social workers, about the central importance of the kinship system in the lives of the Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal social worker Stephanie Gilbert has written about the intersection between the Aboriginal peoples and social workers on a number of occasions (Gilbert, 1995; 2005; 2009). However, there are several differences between her work and this thesis. These differences are located around the focus of our writing. The filtering lens of Gilbert's work has been history, whereas the filtering lens used to guide this thesis is the kinship system. It is this filter that dictates what is included and what has been excluded. Although these may seem to be minor differences, they, in effect, offer different views of the same events.

This review was undertaken to assess the level of knowledge of the kinship system as recorded by social workers. Therefore, the works of Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers were reviewed. Literature was also sourced from diverse disciplines, which included psychology, sociology, education, law, history and anthropology. This was done because social workers sometimes write in these disciplines, for example, Atkinson in

Atkinson, Nelson and Atkinson, 2010; Crawford in Dudgeon, Garvey and Pickett, 2000; and Young in Moreton-Robinson, 2004.

Literature that Mentions the Kinship System

The literature review entailed searching for instances when the kinship system was named in the literature, identifying who was speaking, what they were saying about it and why. The reasoning behind this analysis was to ascertain whether the information provided would help social workers, who had no knowledge of the subject, to gain an understanding of what the kinship system is, how it is used and who is involved; so that these social workers could appreciate the role of the kinship system in the lives of Aboriginal people.

A review of Australian literature written by social workers revealed that there was a paucity of information about the kinship system. Only six authors gave any detailed information about it. Although each of these authors brings particular insights to this topic, no illustrations are shared to help visualise it. This is important because it is such a complex structure. This is a gap in the literature (see Appendix D.) The social workers whose descriptions of the kinship system will be showcased here include Bennett and Zubrzycki (2003), Briskman (2007), Bessarab (1997), Harms (2010) and Crawford (2000).

Bennett and Zubrzycki (2003) describe the kinship system as being about the complex relationships between and within Aboriginal families as a result of a number of links, including through marriage. From a Warumungu perspective, this is a clan, though they do not name it as such. Briskman (2007) talks about how different family groups connect to make a clan, how different clans connect to make a nation and which families fit within each of these groups. An understanding of country (traditional lands) and how people should behave in relation to their kinship network, are also addressed.

Bessarab (1997) adds to the expanded picture of Aboriginal kinship by emphasising that the traditional view of the nuclear family can be understood as only a small part of the extensive kinship system of the Aboriginal peoples. Harms (2010) illustrates the differences between the Aboriginal kinship system and family structures of other Australians by introducing the concept of multiple fathers and mothers. Crawford (2000) explains this complexity by introducing the concept of skin names.

Although acknowledging that there are complex relationships, Bennett and Zubrzycki (2003) do not provide any insights into what, how, when or why these complexities are brought into play. By introducing Elders, Bessarab (1997) identifies that there are other important people within the kinship system, although she does not go on to explain who these others might be. The weakness of these, as well as of Briskman's (2007) description of the kinship system, is that they can all appear to be no different to a western family structure in that the concepts 'extended family' and 'clan' in some form or other are also present in a number of other countries and cultures.

It is Harms (2010) who begins to identify the real difference by identifying that if a group of adult males are brothers and one of them has a child, all of them will be considered fathers to that child. The same applies to a group of sisters all being mothers to the offspring of one of them. This means that all of these people look after the child as if he or she was their own, which is quite different to the role of European aunts and uncles. Having raised the complexities of the kinship system, Harms (2010) does not go on to explain what these complexities are, beyond stating relationships. Although speaking about the skin system of kinship, no definition of the term 'skin' is provided. Crawford (2000) on the other hand, gives a wonderful example of how the skin kinship system works.

However, she does not identify any of the many other complexities of this model of the kinship system.

Within all this literature, nothing explains who cares for the old person, the widow or the orphan. Some idea has been given of the structure of the kinship system but no idea has been given of its use. In social work, the kinship system has not been given an opportunity to come to the fore due to a gap in social work knowledge about the kinship system and the way it is used by Aboriginal people as an integral part of their lives.

There is a growing body of literature about social work with the Aboriginal peoples. However, what is missing is knowledge about the detail of the kinship system and how it can be integrated into social work theory and practice.

A Working Model of Australian Aboriginal Social Work

Australian Aboriginal social work was born in the 1970s, and developed from what was learned in SAIT by those enrolled in the Aboriginal Task Force (ATF), especially being guided by the work of Friere (2003) and Alinsky (1971). Added to these approaches were Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing; applied and supported through the kinship system. Australian Aboriginal social work did not come from Europe or America: it did not come from a foundation of charity, piety, the Poor Laws and philanthropy. The model emerged from the desperate needs in our Aboriginal students to support their families and communities and the tools provided by Friere and Alinsky to address these. What follows below is a part of the story of this journey from my lived experience as one of those students.

On returning home after completing my studies in the 1980s I, along with the other graduates, were faced with the needs that existed in our communities around the huge numbers of children that had been, and were being, removed through the child protection system. The enormous burden of trauma, grief and pain that existed in our communities as a result of the Stolen Generations was then being added to through the child protection system, which had taken over from the Stolen Generations. The catch cry of ‘in the best interests of the child’ remained unchanged. Another major issue was health concerns experienced by our people who, in most instances, had no access to medical services of any kind. Apart from illness and injury, there were chronic health issues due to abject poverty, government neglect and lack of education and employment. Yet another issue was the disproportionate numbers of our people entering the corrections system, both through juvenile justice and through the adult prison system.

Using both Alinsky’s (see Appendix E) and Friere’s theories along with the kinship system, we set up our own national networks because we were working in different communities right across the country. Rather than being isolated in our struggles, we now had access to the strength of these networks and, through them; we began and supported campaigns for change. This is the untold story of Aboriginal social work. Over the years, we diversified into health, child protection, legal services, native title campaigns, politics and human rights. This exemplifies a structural approach to social work, as advocated by Addams.

This structural model of Indigenist social work was developed using Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing to develop specific theories and practices by incorporating Jukurrpa, culture and kinship; which took precedence over western theories. This means we designed a specific model of social work, which was relevant and fitted the Australian

context and could be modified at the local level. None of the existing western social work theories or code of ethics at that time supported what we were doing because they were situated within the dominant western paradigm. We worked for the Government or other agencies (in paid jobs) and the community (for free, after hours and on weekends). As we did not have degrees, we were not able to join the AASW and were classified as community workers, not social workers.

The networks that began at SAIT became national networks as we kept in communication with each other and shared information and knowledge. Many continue working with the qualifications received from SAIT today. However there are others who have gone back to study and received social work or other degrees and higher qualifications, such as Dr Mick Adams (personal knowledge). Using our national networks, we were able to support each other. Various members of this group of Aboriginal social workers were involved in the development of Aboriginal medical services (AMSs), the development of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), the development of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal Islander Child Care Agencies (SNAICC), the development of Aboriginal child care agencies (ACCAs), the Northern and Central Land Councils and the development of Aboriginal legal services, Link Up and the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (personal knowledge).

A significant number were also involved in the movement that brought about inquiries into both Black Deaths in Custody and Stolen Generations, both of which were forerunners to the Apology. This is a story of Aboriginal social work that is yet to be written. There are a number of learnings from this model that can be exported to assist the development of an Australian social work model.

Practice Exemplar – The National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples (2008)

What follows is another part of the story of Australian social work – another part that is not recorded elsewhere because the history of Australian social work has not been written. When this story is eventually written, it will be essential for the story of Aboriginal social work to be included, as it will bring rich and vibrant threads that will otherwise leave Australian social work very much poorer.

The practice exemplar to be shared here relates to the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples delivered by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008. The story begins in the 1990s.

Leading up to the Inquiry into the Stolen Generations, there were meetings of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. One of the people who organised these was a SAIT graduate (see above) named Barbara Cummings who had also been involved in the development of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, Link Up, SNAICC and other Aboriginal organisations to address the issues impacting on the Aboriginal peoples. In the 1990s it became clear that large numbers of Aboriginal children were entering out-of-home care and becoming lost in the system. In response, community meetings were held, not only about this issue, but to discuss the connected issue of the Stolen Generations and the trauma, loss and grief still being experienced by those affected. A conference bringing people together to discuss the Stolen Generations issue was organised and held in Darwin at Kormilda College. One recommendation to emerge as a result was the call for a Royal Commission to investigate this issue.

A number of social work graduates of SAIT are listed in Linda Briskman's book about Aboriginal activism⁵⁶. However, since her focus was elsewhere, she did not identify them as social workers. All through the history of Aboriginal activism Aboriginal social workers can be found, involved in many different areas, from the Stolen Generations to health to land rights and the Apology. They were not only working with communities on the ground, but also lobbying for action by government and supporting each other nationally.

Before the Federal Election in 2007, when Rudd began saying that if he were elected he would apologise, Indigenous social workers began to work more intensely, activating all their networks, which criss-crossed this country and extended internationally, to gain support for this action. When it came to the actual planning for the Apology, Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers took the lead in working with other professions to ensure care and safety for the people concerned in Canberra and other locations around the country. A significant number of Aboriginal social workers elected to stay with their own families and communities and to support them as needed.

It was necessary to ensure that the Elders and others who were part of the Stolen Generations who chose to be present in Canberra for the Apology were supported whenever possible, and that counselling and medical attention was available for those who might need it. The Australian Government did follow through on these suggestions by having counsellors available on the day of the Apology. In Canberra, Winnunga Nimmityjah, the Aboriginal medical service led by their board, Senior Dr. kumunjayi Dr Peter Sharp⁵⁷ and their staff illustrated the worth of these services. Winnunga Nimmityjah

⁵⁶ The Black Grapevine (2003).

⁵⁷ Dr Sharp putuana (died) in September 2011 and will always be remembered for his commitment to Aboriginal health in Canberra and the surrounding region, including in the prison.

was present, visible and ready to care for any health emergency whether it was physical or emotional. Also present and available to assist were Aboriginal psychologists. Joyleen Koolmatrie, an Aboriginal psychologist from Western Australia who had been involved in the inquiry into the Stolen Generations, was asked to make herself available as a counsellor and to recommend others, which she did.

When it was recognised that there would not be enough accommodation in Canberra, social workers, through Mary Ivec, a non-Indigenous social worker, were asked to use all their networks to find accommodation for the people who were pouring into the capital. However, the care offered by social workers and those they recruited to help went further than just accommodation. Social workers matched those needing accommodation with those who offered it. Hosts collected their guests from the airport and made them welcome, took them to the pre-Apology meetings that happened the night before, then took their guests to Parliament House to be present for the Apology the next day. The hosts then returned their guests to the airport when they were ready to leave. Another way that social workers were involved in the Apology was through ensuring the physical needs of the people attending were catered for. Prior to Apology Day there was a realisation that there were not enough toilets or water available and it was social workers who raised these issues.

All the social workers who had agreed to be involved but who did not come to Canberra supported their communities by participating in local functions and providing care and support where and when necessary. Social workers who were in Canberra negotiated a special dinner on the night of the Apology for members of the Stolen Generations. The Southern Cross Club of Canberra hosted the dinner and the management took great care to

ensure that a wonderful meal in an elegant setting was provided. The meal was available free of charge to all Stolen Generation members and their families who wished to attend.

What occurred here was the actioning of social work aims, objectives and values that enabled social work ideology, theory and practice to come together for this major event in this country's history. What was also important was that the non-Indigenous social workers took a lead role in ensuring the comfort and safety of the people attending. This also illustrated care for their Indigenous colleagues, many who were also survivors of the Stolen Generations or whose families were affected by these policies. The support of non-Aboriginal social workers meant that Aboriginal social workers could take a step back and enjoy the day with their families.

Current Social Work Education

Aboriginal practitioners, as described above, are still involved in social work, but they and their practice remains in the margins of social work, relatively unknown, as their practice has not been written about. This is a gap in the social work literature that if addressed would strengthen social work practice and theory at many levels.

One of the issues around the inclusion of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing and access to Aboriginal knowledge systems is the low numbers of Aboriginal social work educators in Australia. Despite these low numbers Aboriginal social work educators have been able to include Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in some university social work programs such as in the University of Western Australia, University of New South Wales and Curtin University. However, there is no national consistency in social work curricula.

Another issue is the devaluing of Aboriginal knowledge that comes to the schools of social work through their Aboriginal students. For example Baikie (2009) a Canadian social worker, describes how when she entered social work as a young student, she was told that everything she brought with her, as a Canadian First Nations person, was incorrect. Instead of being valued, her knowledge and experience were dismissed and she was told she had to learn western theories. Here in Australia, this was also my experience when I attended the Northern Territory University (now known as Charles Darwin University) to complete a social work degree. I have also heard these same sentiments expressed by other Aboriginal social work students.

Apart from not having significant numbers of Aboriginal educators, the schools of social work are impacted upon by the crowded curriculum and there has not been an expectation that at least one student placement should occur in an Aboriginal setting. Rather, this has been an idea that has not been followed through for a number of reasons, the major one being the lack of funds to support this move. This is interesting given the Australian Government push in recent years to 'close the gap' in life expectancy, health, housing, education and employment between the broader Australian community and the Aboriginal peoples and the possibilities that are now open for exploration and action.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an explanation of how social work emerged from Britain, was transported to America and reached Australia as a mature profession, firmly dominated and embedded within western texts, theories, knowledge and systems (Camilleri, 1996; Dickey, 1987). It explored both the international and Australian social work literature to ascertain how knowledge of the kinship system might inform social work theory and

practice in Australia with the Aboriginal peoples. It exposed gaps in knowledge and identified an Aboriginal social work model developed in this country that can be drawn upon to build a uniquely Australian model of social work that incorporates the kinship system.

It explored the emerging awareness of whiteness within social work in Australia and discussed how stereotyping and wilful blindness are embedded in social work theory and education. The literature review identified what knowledge of the kinship system is currently available to social workers. The chapter then provided two examples of innovative practice. The first introducing Aboriginal social work in Australia, and the second illustrating how theory and practice came together for the Apology to Aboriginal peoples. Finally social work education was examined, and the gap in knowledge of the kinship system within social work curricula was highlighted.

Throughout the chapter, a number of key debates - which included individual versus structural approaches, care versus control and generic versus specific social work - were discussed. These were identified as being important issues, as they remain just as pertinent in social work today as they did much earlier in the history of the profession, particularly because these ideas have impacted on the Aboriginal peoples and on social work with the Aboriginal peoples.

The following two chapters provide the data and offer reflections on what has been said. Once again, the central role of storytelling within Indigenous research will be highlighted since this is the way the knowledge holders answered questions and shared information.

CHAPTER SIX: WHAT KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS SAID ABOUT THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

Introduction

Each of the previous chapters has provided a basis for understanding what will be presented in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter One introduced the cultural advisors, while Chapter Two introduced the knowledge holders. The following two chapters are the data chapters.

This chapter reports what knowledge holders said about the kinship system through their stories, thus enabling others to hear their voices. The stories are the knowledge holders' way of answering the questions posed to them. Within Indigenous research practices that sit within a qualitative framework and narrative inquiry, there is an aspect called a testimony or testimonio. These are oral histories, life histories, or life stories, through which Indigenous peoples 'are able to speak about painful events or a series of events in their lives that have a political focus or have resulted from political events' (Smith, 1999, p. 144) in a culturally safe way. It makes sense, therefore, that a number of stories should be included within this chapter, as they illustrate the role of the kinship system in the lives of individuals and communities; the depth and breadth of it.

The knowledge holders were asked the following interview questions:

1. Please describe the kinship system as you know it.
2. Do you think the kinship system has changed? If so, how?

3. What role does the kinship system play in your community and what role does it play for you individually?
4. In what ways do you think knowledge and understanding of the kinship system might inform social work practice in Australia?

These four questions fit with two of the major aims of this study. These were firstly, to empower peoples through exploring and returning knowledge about the kinship system to those who may have moved away from it (had a choice at some point), forgotten it (as a result of the deaths of their Elders and teachers), or been removed from it (had no choice in the matter, e.g. the Stolen Generations and their descendants). Secondly, to conduct the research with the underlying motive being that of enabling the Aboriginal peoples to ‘talk back’ to social workers and tell social workers, *“We have knowledge that you need”* and have their voices heard.

It is interesting to note that the knowledge holders did not restrict their answers to their own nations, but discussed the kinship system in other parts of Australia and within other nations. This shows how, in the minds of the knowledge holders, the kinship system crosses borders. This means that while the thesis focused on the Larrakia and the Warumungu peoples, the answers given by the knowledge holders can apply Australia-wide.

A number of themes emerged from the data and the chapter is organised so that the stories shared by the knowledge holders are brought together within each theme. Each knowledge holder has already been introduced briefly in Chapter Two. However, as a prelude to their stories, a little more background and history about each person will be given, to enable a context for their stories. As the story is presented using the words and voice of the story,

the real person emerges and the way in which the kinship system is activated in the lives of the people, and its role, is placed in context. In the next section the Larrakia knowledge holders are introduced and some background information provided. Having done this, the Warumungu knowledge holders are then introduced and some information about each of them is also made available.

Kinship Heritage of the Larrakia

Even though each of the Larrakia knowledge holders was descended from people who escaped the massacre in the canoes (see Chapter One), this does not mean their stories are the same. Of the six Larrakia knowledge holders who participated in this research, only one felt the benefits of the meeting held after World War II (see Chapter One): this is Richie.

Richie

Richie is a Larrakia man who was born on Larrakia country and was part of the birthing rites of the Larrakia, which intimately connected him to his country. He learned about the land, Law and culture from his fathers, uncles and aunts. He walked around the country and learned stories that connected him to the Dreaming, his ancestors, country and totems. He learned about the kinship system from a Larrakia perspective. However, while Richie was growing up he was also taken back to Warumungu country (his mother's country) and taught by his mother's brothers about land, Jukurrpa, Wirnkarra and culture from a Warumungu perspective. This is where he gained his knowledge of the kinship system and skin names. Richie is also a ceremony man.

Gail

Gail's family is Larrakia and was very close to Richie's family. Her father was a part of the Black Watch⁵⁸ along with Richie's grandfathers. The relationship between Gail's parents and Richie's parents was very strong, as was that between Gail and Richie's grandparents. Gail's family kinship connections are also through Arnhem Land, but not the desert as are Richie's.

Billy

Billy's mother was a strong Larrakia woman, whom Billy describes in his story. Billy speaks in some detail about the Larrakia kinship circle. Billy grew up on Larrakia country and his mother was close to both Richie and Gail's parents.

*Mrs Black*⁵⁹

Mrs Black was adopted by Richie's grandfather and became a part of his family through cultural law when she was a very young child, when he married her mother. At this time, he said in front of everyone, "*This girl is my child*". From that time on she was considered and treated as his child by the clan. Mrs Black's children and her grandchildren are his great grandchildren. She was part of the Stolen Generations, and when she came back to the family she fitted back into that position. That is an example of the kinship system in action. There was no formal western adoption process or paper – it was all done through Larrakia, culture and protocols.

⁵⁸ An Aboriginal unit of the Australian army that was started up during WWII when the Japanese attacked and bombed Darwin. They were called the Black Watch because, apart from the Captain of the unit, the soldiers were all Aboriginal men. The Black Watch was the forerunner to the current Norforce (personal knowledge).

⁵⁹ Mrs. Black putuana during the period of this research and is remembered for her love and kindness to everyone and is deeply missed.

The reason Mrs Black was stolen from her family was because she had a white father and was fair skinned. As a result, Mrs Black did not learn the kinship system, which included the system of eight, while she was growing up. When she returned to Darwin, she made the connection to family. However, because she did not have the knowledge of the system of eight, which came from Richie's mother (Warumungu), she could not teach it to her children.

What we learn from this is that the kinship system was changed to meet the needs of the people. This change was not voluntarily, but necessary as a result of the enormous loss of people and knowledge over a very short period of time, due to the massacre. However, it can be pieced together, and is being pieced together, through connections with surrounding nations who hold some of this knowledge and parts of the stories.

Robyn

Robyn is the daughter of Mrs Black. Robyn grew up at a time in the history of the Larrakia when the change from the Larrakia language to English was being enforced and her kin were not speaking to the children in language so that neither they nor the children would be punished for doing so. She is one of the older members of the current generation of the family circle and is the holder of many stories of grandparents, aunts and uncles. She has helped to grow up many of her grandchildren and has cared for many other community children. Her mothering skills and capacity to care for others is renowned within the clan.

Robbie

Robbie is Robyn's son. As a result of the Stolen Generations many of the older knowledge holders did not have any knowledge of what their mothers were like because they were

stolen away when they were too young to remember them. When they returned to their families, their mothers were no longer amongst the living. For the majority of the knowledge holders, the gap in family was found to be their grandparents - many did not know their grandparents or have any knowledge of them through physical contact because of the Stolen Generations and the deaths of the grandparents while the children were on the missions or in institutions. Robbie was different because he had continual contact with both his mother and grandmother.

Kinship Heritage of the Warumungu

Mrs Fejo and Mr Ah Kit were introduced in Chapter One, so nothing more will be said about them here. Rather, information about a number of the other knowledge holders will be given.

Rayleen

Rayleen was the youngest of the Warumungu knowledge holders. She had grown up on country learning Jukurrpa, culture and language with her family and as part of the kinship system. Her father was the genealogist of the clan and could chant the family line right back to the Wirnkarra⁶⁰.

Sheila, Wendy, Mona, Ellen and Athelia

Sheila was the senior woman and spokesperson for this group of women, who wanted to speak as a collective. They were all related to each other and the other knowledge holders

⁶⁰ Personal knowledge.

through the kinship system, and modelled how the kinship system, cultural protocols, and Jukurrpa worked when meeting another Aboriginal woman for the first time.

The Stories

The important and prominent role of storytelling has already been introduced in previous chapters and the introduction to this one, as fitting within Aboriginal knowledge systems and as being an important and pivotal means through which knowledge is shared and passed from one generation to the next. This chapter extends this concept, as it introduces and illustrates the way in which stories are also used within Larrakia and Warumungu communication patterns to answer questions, which is what happens here. It is vital, therefore, that a number of stories should be included within this chapter on the findings of the research project, as they are the means by which the knowledge holders explain the role of the kinship system in their lives; the depth and breadth of it. Each knowledge holder has been briefly introduced as a prelude to sharing their stories. Other relevant information is shared throughout the chapter.

Within and between each of the stories, the seven principles of Indigenous storywork as developed by Jo-Ann Archibald, a First Nations woman from Canada, will be clearly identifiable. These principles are respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, inter-relatedness and synergy (Archibald, 2008). This is another example of the similarities between Indigenous people's worldviews, ontology, axiology and lived experiences both nationally and internationally.

Uncovering Culture

The following story was shared by Richie, who self-selected to be part of this study, as he believed that he had a specific contribution to make. He is also one of the youngest contributors. Richie has worked in the Aboriginal legal area for most of his working life, but is currently employed by the Northern Territory General Practice Education and Training (NTGPET) office. A major part of Richie's job is to teach cultural awareness and culturally safe practices to medical students who come to the Northern Territory. For many of these students, this will be the first time they will work so closely with Aboriginal people and communities.

Richie's knowledge - about the kinship system, Wirnkarra, Jukurrpa, and culture - has been developed through lived experience and growing up within learning circles. He had the direct guidance of his father, a very knowledgeable man, who was the leader of his clan after the untimely deaths of his grandfather and great-uncle (who had been his teachers, mentors, and guides).

Richie's First Story: Uncovering Culture

"I was down south and another Aboriginal guy came up to me and said, "Richie, why don't you live in Darwin?" and I said, "Why? Because I want to live here." And he said to me, "Well, you've got everything up there! You've got language, you've got culture, you've got ceremony, you've got it all." I said to him, "Are you saying to me you don't have culture?" and he said, "Yeah, we don't have culture here." I said, "Okay, well, you tell me what you do when you go and you shoot a wallaby. Do you share it with your family?" and he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Well, you've got culture!"

“Because he’s actually hunting and he’s dividing the meat amongst his family, which shows that he is sharing and he’s caring, which is an important part of our culture and he didn’t realise that. He wasn’t aware that he had culture, but he had it and all I did was bring it to light. And he said, “Wow, you’re right, we’ve got culture!” This was someone who less than 30 seconds before talking to me, believed that he didn’t have culture.”

Reflection on the story

This story is important to this study, as there are synergies to the foundational questions that were the impetus for this study (as introduced in Chapter One). When a group of Aboriginal students asked, amongst other things, *“Didn’t we used to have something in the past that prevented violence against women and children in our communities by Elders?”* After a discussion about the kinship system, comments came very close to the sentiments of the man from Western Australia when they said, *“That’s OK for you mob in the Northern Territory, but what about us poor buggers that don’t have it any more?”* So we began to explore what was happening within their families and communities and the existing relationships of care and connectedness.

This is the same thing that Richie does in this story and, at the end of this process; the outcome is similar to that of with this young man. Many of the students were amazed to realise that the kinship system did in fact operate within many of their families, communities and nations – they just had not recognised it and how they were living their lives within its framework. Sometimes people need someone else to point something out to them for realisation to occur.

Another similarity between this story and others is the joy this young man exhibits when he realises that he does indeed have culture (and the kinship system is working in his life).

This is the same reaction exhibited by the students whose questions led to this study. They were overjoyed! Years after our discussion, I would meet them in the street or in other places and they would tell me how they had continued to implement the kinship system into their everyday lives and the lives of their families. Once again, cultural pride, self-esteem, resilience and relationships of trust within the family and the community were being worked on within cultural frameworks, and people were experiencing success. This is the opposite of what happens when the individual experiences cultural breakdown or loss and separation from the kinship system.

How the Kinship System Crosses State Borders

As already explained, Mrs Fejo is a part of the Stolen Generations. She was stolen from her family when she was just an infant and is now aged in her eighties. She is one of the cultural supervisors for this study who, along with the other cultural supervisor, requested that she have an opportunity to participate as a knowledge holder because of what she believed she could add to the study.

Despite being a part of the Stolen Generations, Mrs Fejo was able to reconnect with her family, land, law and culture, language and re-enter ceremony and Jukurrpa circles when she was older. When she was stolen, Mrs Fejo was sent to a mission with a number of other Aboriginal children. Some of these children were older and some were younger. The older ones brought with them a working knowledge and experience of the kinship system. They used this knowledge to structure themselves into a new family. The children became brothers and sisters in relationships that have long outlived the missions and are still a part of their lives.

These children, now adults with their families, live in every state and territory of Australia, but still maintain these connections. Mrs Fejo also married a man who was a member of the Larrakia nation and whose family was connected to other Aboriginal nations within the Northern Territory, so he retained knowledge of the kinship system and was connected to it through his relations. When Mrs Fejo married this man she was connected to his kinship systems, her kinship systems and the one built by the children she had grown up with on the mission. This has not always been the experience of members of the Stolen Generations, as will be illustrated later, in Mrs Black's story.

Mrs Fejo's First Story: How the Kinship System Crosses State Borders

"I went to Kilderk, that's a place I've never been to before. It's close to Western Australia area. When I went there I didn't know anybody. To me that was a strange place. Aboriginal health workers were there, but for an outsider to come in they are very wary. I said, "I'm a Nungala"⁶¹. I'm from that Warumungu tribe around Tennant Creek." Wow! You should have seen their faces! They just screamed and shouted, "Hey, come on all you Nungalas, your sister's here. We got to help her with this health program." So they practically helped me to run the meeting. They got the people together to sit and listen to me talking about AIDS/STD at that time."

"So I was talking to them and at that time I was teaching about AIDS/STD and the effects of AIDS and, you know, teaching them about condoms. Later on I went into the Strong Women Program and again when I went into Western Australia into the Kimberley and I

⁶¹ Nungala and Nangali are the same generation. Aboriginal people often translate their skin name from one area to another so that they fit in with the other nation's skin name. It takes very skilled and knowledgeable people to translate names across the kinship system.

didn't know anybody again. The doctors targeted me as an effective communicator, right, so I went into the Kimberley and I told them who I was and they could relate."

"I said, "Any Nungala here?" I knew at this time my Aboriginality can open the doors for me in getting people to listen about health issues, so I said, "Any Nungala here?" They would look and look and I would say, "Well, I'm a Nungala." And introduce myself and they would put up their hand and I would say "Come on. You are my sisters. Come and sit here." And they would come up and they would help me gather the people together."

Reflection on the story

As part of her employment with the Northern Territory Department of Health, Mrs Fejo travelled throughout the Northern Territory and into Western Australia, as she explains in her story. What is of interest to this study is how Mrs Fejo used her skin name to unlock Jukurrpa through the cultural protocol of introducing herself. By following this protocol, Mrs Fejo positioned herself within the Aboriginal world and actioned Jukurrpa and governance. Once Jukurrpa and governance rules had been activated, people knew what was expected of them.

People Mrs Fejo had never met before were able to place her in their world in relation to themselves. Relationships embedded within the skin kinship system became clear, and everyone knew what their responsibilities to each other were. Mrs Fejo was no longer a stranger from another place, unknown and alone; she was a sister, daughter, mother, aunt and grandmother, despite never having met any of these people previously. This is an example of how the kinship system and skin names unlock doors to relationships of mutual obligation, support and safety; and the way that the kinship system crosses borders, be they state and territory, family, nation or age.

This is also an example of how western programs can be successfully Aboriginalised and implemented using the kinship system as a point of entry. Mrs Fejo not only used skin names, she went on to use Aboriginal-grounded methods such as protocols, language, ceremony, song, dance, and re-invigoration of cultural practices in areas where they were weak (Johnson, 2003). The kinship system could be used in a similar way to introduce other programs.

People Become Visible

As identified earlier in this chapter, knowledge holders said that the kinship system, and in particular the skin name, positioned them in the Aboriginal world. This means that they became visible to other Aboriginal people who live their lives within the framework of the kinship system. Without this positioning and visibility within the kinship system, Aboriginal people do not have a guide in their minds about how to interact and behave in interactions with others. They do not know the role that they or the others should play. This is often the reason for giving a skin name to non-Indigenous people who come to live and work in Aboriginal areas where the kinship system and system of eight is still being adhered to. The giving of the skin name does not mean the person becomes Aboriginal, it means they become visible in the Aboriginal world.

Gail's Story: Becoming Visible

“When I went nursing, I donned the uniform and I put on the little hat and I became like one of the other nurses. The thing is, I moved from my home culture into nursing culture and medical culture, which was totally different. New language, new clothing, new way of behaving, you know, and it was a real shock. The first few years I hated it and I left and I went south and I came back and eventually I got back into it and I learned to love it. I was

able then to reflect on my own practice and so it was really crucial that I maintain really strong relationships with my family - my immediate, and the others around."

"But I remember when I was nursing, the number of occasions I'd be walking into work and all these Aboriginal people would be sitting out the front. They were all Arnhem Landers and I'd walk in and I'd hear them muttering and they would be calling my skin name. So they knew who I was and most of them knew dad and would find out who I was and I would just go into work and, wherever I worked, if there was an Aboriginal person there I told them my skin name and it made them feel more comfortable. They'd work out my relationships and I'd tell them who my mother's family were from that way, because a lot of them didn't know Larrakia people."

"We were visible as Larrakia people. They knew who our family were, but they did not understand the Larrakiadness because colonisation had caused that to happen and institutionalisation and so we weren't really recognised as Larrakia people, but what was lovely was my own family. We recognised that we were Larrakia people and that was important to me, that whole identity."

Reflection on the story

Having been born into the kinship system and understanding the value of it, Gail used this knowledge and the skin name to help people who were patients in the hospital to feel more confident. These are the foundational pieces of information used by Aboriginal people to give them visibility within an Aboriginal world that is governed by the kinship system. This was an important breakthrough for these people, as there is a belief and fear amongst many that you only go into hospital to die (personal knowledge). By identifying herself through her family and skin name, Gail makes visible her 'Larrakiadness', thus breaking

through the separation she perceives between people as a result of colonisation and institutionalisation, and her identity is validated.

Though Gail's Aboriginality made her an insider, it was her skin name that placed her within the inner circle (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Mafile'o, 2004). The patients were then able to locate her within their world. By doing that, they were not alone in this foreign situation. Due to the layers of relationship, responsibility, reciprocity and care embedded within the kinship system, the patients had confidence that they would receive the care they needed.

First Wife is Boss

Within Jukurrpa, particularly in the Northern Territory and the nations that are partners within this study, the practice of promising wives and of men having multiple wives was common as I was growing up. This does not mean that a man who wanted / wants a number of wives is able to do so off his own initiative. There were and are strict rules and codes of behaviour around this practice that are still in place today.

The lifestyle of Aboriginal peoples as hunters and gatherers makes sense of this practice. A man who hunts does not always bring down enough food to provide sustenance for his family especially in a desert area. It is the women who gather food to supplement what the man is able to provide.

There is also the question of who cares for the women and their children if the husband should putuana (die). Through the Jukurrpa there are rules that guide promised marriages and multiple wives, if a man should die, the next oldest of his brothers has a responsibility to care for his brother's family. The surviving brother will take the wife / wives of his

deceased brother as his own. This means that the women are cared for and the children are not lost to the family or clan.

Mrs Fejo's Second Story: First Wife is Boss

"When I went back to the people, I was a happy Jack⁶². My brother was there. He had a house and the other younger brother was in the camp, [he was] president of the camp. When I went there one of the women got jealous and said, "Oh, that Nungala coming back to get my husband." One Saturday morning we were driving slowly on the Stuart Highway and there she was walking up the Stuart Highway with [her] nulla-nulla⁶³. All of a sudden my brother put the brakes on, slowed down and pulled up. He was going down lower and lower to hide."

"I said, "What's going on?" and he said, "You in trouble, sis, that woman got nulla-nulla for you." I said, "What! What she got nulla-nulla for me for?" "She want to fight you!" and I said, "Why?" "She think you come back to get your promised husband."

"I said, "All right, I'll fix her up. Pull up, pull up." So he pulled up, I got out of the car, my sister-in-law was ducking down in the back hiding and the kids were ducking. I said, "All right, I'll fix her up, I'll handle this!" So I got out of the car on the left-hand side, I went round the back way and there she was. She got that nulla-nulla. "Nungala, what you come here for? You come here to take my husband off me? I'm married to that man now." I said, "That's fine, but you remember this, you are second. I'm first promised wife, you second, you come behind me so you stand behind me."

⁶² The term 'happy Jack' is a Larrakia term used to indicate that you are extremely happy.

⁶³ A nulla-nulla is a fighting stick that is also used for digging so is blunt (rounded) at each end. It is about 1 metre long and is about as thick as a person's forearm.

“She was stunned! This Nungala know the land, law and culture. My brother got up, “Oh, whew!” (Laughs) Yeah, she thought I had gone back to claim my promised husband and that was not right. I had husband, I had all you kids. She didn’t realise that as I was going up and down back to the people, I was learning all about the culture and how the skin kinship works. My promised husband had to respect me regardless, and his wife had to know her place because in them olden days the men had to work for flour, tea, tobacco, sugar. Hardly any money, but they had to share that, so when they took on more than one wife, the first wife was still the boss.”

Reflections on the story

This story illustrates the importance of traditional knowledge, and the way that it can be used to mitigate issues and problems. It is also an excellent example of how the kinship system regulates relationships and interactions between people, how Jukurrpa and the kinship system work to provide balance, harmony, peace, safety and status for those who live within its framework and in the Aboriginal world.

The Impact of the Stolen Generations

I had assumed that all my knowledge holders would know about, understand and live within the framework of the kinship system. However, one interview in particular stands out from the rest as being different on a number of levels. I am referring here to Mrs Black’s family interview. During this interview, on being asked the first question, *“Could you please describe the kinship system as you know it?”* There was silence and then they replied with a question of their own that caught me completely off guard. Their question was, *“Could you please explain what you mean when you say the kinship system?”*

This question was surprising to me because I had known the family all my life and had assumed that they, along with the other knowledge holders, would know what was meant by this question. Although I knew that this family had had a number of children stolen across generations, including the matriarch of this family, I had assumed that they had been able to regain any knowledge of the kinship system that might have been lost. This was one assumption that was proven wrong.

The second difference between this family's interview and other interviews was that there were three generations involved, with an age difference between the youngest and oldest of approximately forty years. Two of the knowledge holders were mother and daughter, while the third was the son / grandson of the family.

Mrs Black's knowledge of who she was and where she fitted into the world had been very different to those knowledge holders who had been able to remain with their families. It was also very different to those who, although being stolen in their youth and institutionalised, remained together as a group with some older children who brought with them their previous knowledge of the kinship system and were able to continue living it and sharing their knowledge of it with the younger children.

Mrs Black had been adopted, so did not have the support and / or knowledge that had been available to other members of the Stolen Generations included in this research. On being returned to her family, Mrs Black returned to a mother who had also been a part of the Stolen Generations and had been disconnected from the kinship system. The result of removal of one generation after another of the same family was that this gap in knowledge about the kinship system had been transferred through succeeding generations, firstly to Mrs Black's daughter and then on to her grandson. Despite all of this, when I explained

what I meant by the kinship system to Mrs Black and her family, they were able to identify family connections and sharing as being cultural practices that they had grown up with.

Mrs Black's Story: "What do you mean when you say kinship system?"

"When I was young I was taken away to a different family and I didn't come to know it until I was older [that she was Aboriginal]. Someone said, "That's your real mum." (pointing to another woman) and I was shocked, you know. The family that grew me up, they were from another country overseas, and they took me out and [it was] a terrible thing [to learn she was not their child]. When I came face to face with mum [her birth mother] I was shocked. She came up and said (to my adoptive mother) "You've got my child." and these two women were fighting in the street. But I came to know I was Larrakia, even though I was raised in the Tiwi Islands."

Reflections on the story

Although it may not appear so at first reading, there are a number of connections between this story and the others presented so far. These connections include those that pre-empted this study, when I was working with a group of students who did not recognise the kinship system working within their own families and communities. There are connections to the first story shared in this chapter by Richie when, after asking the young man he was speaking with to explain how he lived his life, Richie was able to say, *"Well, you've got culture!"*

There are also connections to Mrs Fejo's stories, but from a different perspective. These two stories can be seen as the two different sides of a coin. Mrs Fejo's stories show what can happen when a member of the Stolen Generations reconnects to family and the kinship system. Mrs Black's story illustrates what can happen when a member of the Stolen

Generations is reconnected to their family, but is not able to reconnect to the kinship system and system of eight.

The stories of Mrs Fejo and Mrs Black also illustrate the rippling effects of historical events into the present. The story and lived experience of Mrs Black make clear that trying to make 'one shoe fit all' just does not and will not work when interacting with Aboriginal peoples. The diversity between and within experiences is too great. Each individual family and community should be approached as though each is unique and will therefore need different approaches to address issues.

Loss of language

As noted previously, it was the Larrakia who were most vocal about the need to maintain Aboriginal languages, as due to the effects of colonisation, the Stolen Generations and assimilation, we had experienced first-hand the loss of our language. We found it difficult to understand how the Government and policy makers had gone full circle in our lifetimes. The Australian Government had taken Aboriginal people on a journey, one in which we began as free people, owning our own lands, caring for our own families. A turn in the wheel saw the invasion of our lands, colonisation, and genocide through Government policy. The army, police, bureaucrats and social workers enforced these policies. Another turn of the wheel saw Aboriginal people moved to a position where we had no rights and were controlled by the Government and their enforcers (army, police, bureaucrats and social workers). Amongst other things the Aboriginal people had lost our lands, language, identity, self-esteem and parenting skills.

Another turn of the wheel of Government policies gave Aboriginal people rights and what appeared to be freedom. But another turn of the wheel of Government policy took these

rights away again through the Northern Territory Intervention. Once again, the enforcers of this policy were the army and police.

Robyn's Story: Loss of Language

Robyn shared the following story about language that came to her from her grandmother, who had also been stolen from her family:

"They were talking language. Before that there was no English in their language. Granny reckoned they all spoke their mother's language and I said, "What about the Chinese father?" Well, he was busy working all the time like that and they must have learnt to speak his language, because when they came out [of the community] they didn't speak English. Indian and Chinese and stuff like that, I often think they spoke those languages. So Granny was nine years old when she was taken away – so she was speaking the language then [Wagaman] fluently. Well, they were speaking to themselves until they got into trouble. Every time they talked [in their own language], she used to tell me, if they ever spoke the language they'd get in trouble."

"Today they [Aboriginal children] have English all right - that's communication to communicate with the whites - but they need to be able to relate to their own families as well, you know, not just speaking English, because some of the old people are not speaking English. Some of the old people that's left, they don't speak English."

Reflection on the story

By privileging English as the dominant language and enforcing its use in all public places, the Australian Government was undermining Aboriginal culture impacting on the kinship system. It prevented experiential learning. Robyn's grandmother would have been nine

years old in 1920, when she was taken away. At that time the enforcement of English speaking in all public places was already in place. As a child in the 1960s, I was similarly punished, so this law was in place for at least fifty years.

Larrakia teachers would have walked along the land and spoken about landmarks, plants and animals as they came to them or saw them. This form of teaching was part of their everyday life and would have been a continuous, everyday experience for the children. It was much more personalised and hands-on than western systems of schooling (the banking system of information in, information out that Freire (1993) spoke about).

Due to the incapacity of the old people to speak English fluently enough to get their message across, and the young people's lack of fluency in their own languages due to the enforced teaching of English and, more importantly, the punishment that accompanied any use of Aboriginal language in any public place, a communication gap developed. Culture could not be passed through this gap. This is what Robyn was identifying. It also illustrates what can be lost in translation, since some concepts cannot be translated because English does not have a word for some Aboriginal concepts and words (see the example of Jukurrpa and Wirnkarra in Chapter Three).

Richie's Second Story: Loss of Language

Richie has not given up on finding and revitalising Larrakia language. He gave the following example:

“One day I was at work and I was googling up Larrakia in my lunch break and I came across an explorer who claimed to have knowledge of the Larrakia language. And I didn't actually believe that because there are some people going around that make up language

when they don't really know their language and I don't believe in second-guessing language or culture. I believe that you can get in trouble for that and there are a lot of people going around doing that as well."

"I actually view language like a volume and if you are in town you'd probably have a volume – like, one - but if you go out to remote community it will go up to ten. And when - I'm bouncing around a bit - but when I saw this information on Larrakia language, I was thinking, "Well, this is a bit strange." So I looked through the words and I was thinking I didn't know whether this was true or not because it was actually dated around 1870. And as I was looking through the words, there was suddenly one word that I recognised that made me know that this was Larrakia language and it's probably only twenty words in Larrakia language, but there was one particular word which verified for me from memory, from what my understanding is, that this was Larrakia language."

I asked, "What was that, Richie?" and he replied, "That word was Moonma", to which I said, "Why are we laughing, Richie?" And he said, "Because even when I was a baby, family would say he moonma'd his pants. Meaning I had pood or had a poo in the Kimbie or nappy. We used to use that language (and still do) and to see that recorded in 1870 by one of the explorers was amazing. I actually recognised right then, that the rest of it was probably authentic, too."

Key themes that Emerged about the Kinship System

This research was undertaken over a period of five years, with two field visits to each of the research sites. At the time of the first set of interviews, the Northern Territory Intervention had not occurred. Before the second interviews could take place, the NTER was rolled out and it had a major effect on all the Aboriginal communities in the Northern

Territory. This is reflected in a number of the comments made by knowledge holders during the second phase of the research. From both phases of the research, a number of themes emerged. These are knowledge, language, identity and culture.

Knowledge

Mr Ah Kit likened traditional education to high school, except that Jukurrpa is a lifelong learning process, so the learning never stops. The young men would go away for long periods of time with Elders and be taught in isolation, *“and when they walk out of the bush they have triple PhDs in Aboriginal law”*. Traditional knowledge has great depth and connects to systems of the cosmos and Dreaming. Not all of it is open or available to everyone or anyone who wants it. To learn and be included in these learning circles and ceremonies, a person has to demonstrate to the Elders that they are worthy of the knowledge, that they are responsible and that they won’t abuse it. Mrs Fejo, when asked about what makes a person a senior Elder, explained, *“They have to go through ceremonies and learn about the land, law and culture to get that prestige and respect from other Elders and from other people, because it’s not easy.”*

The kinship system dictates what knowledge belongs to whom. For example, certain art forms or stories belong to certain skin groups, and they are the only ones who have the right to tell those stories or to paint them. The teaching was not just carried out by one person or even by the parents of the child. The beauty of it was that other adults were involved at various stages of the child’s development as prescribed through the skin and kinship system. Richie explained that one of his uncles taught him art, took him on bushwalks and showed him particular plants and talked about Larrakia country. He took him fishing and taught him how to fish. By doing this, his uncle was fulfilling that kinship

responsibility. Robyn said of her sister cousin and herself, “...[we] had that drummed into our heads when grandfather was alive. The dos and don’ts and where to go and where not to go, you know, women things and men things are two different things.”

Other knowledge holders spoke about how the method of passing knowledge on from generation to generation was interrupted because of the Stolen Generations. Robyn said, “Mum had lost sixteen years of her life with her real mother... It must have been a horrible experience, but then again, history repeated itself and I met my father for the first time when I was fifteen.” Robyn’s mother came back “speak[ing] a Tiwi language fluently because of the 15 years she spent over the Tiwi”. Robyn went on to say that a relative “Was asking me questions and I said ‘What about your father?’ and she said, ‘Well, Dad didn’t know much.’” This person’s father had been taken as part of the Stolen Generations.

Richie explained: “We don’t have the Elders around us to teach us anymore so a lot of this knowledge that we have or may have been taught tends to re-emerge after we give it a bit of a spark, you know, and for us it could be sitting down the beach, for us it could be looking back and even having memories of people you know.” Robyn remembers, “When I was four or five years old... Auntie used to sit us kids down and teach us how to speak language... I can’t remember. I can’t remember. I remember sitting in a circle. Aunt... was sitting there telling us say this and say that.... Why don’t I remember the language? Because it was a no-no in the end... They weren’t allowed to speak their language so there was no Larrakia language there anymore.” Since Robyn hasn’t heard the Larrakia language spoken now for sixty years, there is nothing to spark her memory or speak it with her.

Richie built up a picture of the types of learning the children experienced when he said, *“Our knowledge has been passed down through this country for generations and generations and generations and where that story comes from - it’s a story about a people that lived on this land, our furthestest ancestors, who lived in harmony with the land, who lived in balance with the land, who took care of the animals and the wildlife and the plants.”*

Richie compared use of the land by Aboriginal people and the white people when he said: *“We’ve got an ongoing food system... Because our system works within our ecosystem – and this is what I’m talking about, an ancient people having balance with this land to sustain each other’s lifestyles... We live wholly from our land which is why a lot of people refer to the land as being our mother because when they take care of their mother, their mother takes care of them... However, there are still things that affect us deeply like this development, you know. It saddens us to see things like the pollution of Rapid Creek which was one of our freshwater – not only our fresh water source, but a source of food... We used to catch yabby down there... I wouldn’t dream of letting my kids do that now because of development.”*

Language

Mrs Fejo spoke of the difficulty of learning English when she says, *“because being taken away when you’re that age and then learning another really alien subject to you – was the English language. Speaking the Aboriginal language all the time then, all of a sudden, you put into this other environment.”*

The absolute importance of maintaining and revitalising Aboriginal languages was one of the strongest themes to emerge from this study. Mrs Fejo saw something on television

about the Australian Government wanting Aboriginal children to speak predominantly English. She went on to say, *“the old people still want that old system to keep going somehow or other, skin, kinship and the language.”*

On this same subject, Robyn said, *“No, they still should have their own language, too, you know. They have English, alright, that’s communication to communicate with the white people, but they need to be able to relate to their own families as well, you know, not just speaking English because some of the old people are not speaking English. Some of the old people that’s left, they don’t speak English. That’s the ones that stayed behind – they weren’t taken – but all the half-caste ones that was taken. They missed out on a lot of things.”*

Richie said, *“It might take some research and, you know, there’s no harm in getting research from books. However, you have to be able to identify that what you are getting out of the books is the proper story... I actually think... that there are people still around who might make a connection. And that might be a small connection. However, it might lead to something big, you know... Using these Larrakia words to start up a small base and slowly expand.”*

Richie explains, *“In the Top End region alone I know that there was, when I was studying it, approximately 250 languages. Now somebody can use their language from salt-water country, from up north, Darwin, Arnhem Land, any of those places, and go down to Tennant Creek and say their skin name down there, and there are some people down there that knows what their skin name means in their language, and filters out to be the same thing. So, imagine that being Australia wide.”* He explained that the skin name can be translated, *“only if the language is known.”* The key point here is that skin names are

translatable into other Aboriginal languages from one region to another, but cannot be translated into English.

Robyn expresses a yearning of the heart when she says, *“I wish we would have learnt it, I really would, you know, because everything that happened – when they were young they were taken away. Wasn’t allowed to speak their language or culture – anything like that. Everything had to be English – even changed their names – never carried their names again and everything like that. So when it came to us, there was nothing – everything was all English – there was no language for us to learn.”*

Identity

“Basically the kinship system is an interrelated system that tells Aboriginal people, or Indigenous Australians, how we relate to each other,” explained Richie. He told the story of meeting another student at Charles Darwin University and how they each identified themselves through their skin names. *“He said, ‘Hey, you my brother,’ and I said, ‘Hey, brother, brother.’ We didn’t know each other but we took to each other straight away because we know what that means, that we’re brothers.”* Richie explained further, *“I might be down south or I might even be up here. I might be in some unknown area and I introduce myself to somebody and I say my skin name and straight away people just know who I am and it’s like amazing because there could be a whole group of people who just don’t know me or identify me and see me as an outsider and as soon as I say my skin name I’m inside the circle.”*

The kinship system, skin names and the roles and responsibilities that they entail are so embedded within the psyche of the people that they can be away from country and still live their lives within its boundaries. They can also be away from any contact with it for years

or generations and still come back to where it is known and practised, enter the key which is their skin name, and be welcomed back as a brother, sister, mother, aunt, uncle, grandparent or grandchild, and be treated in that way. Billy explained, *“That’s one of the things that amazes me about the central Australian Aboriginal people. They can go away for so long and when they go back they can just pick it up just like that because they’ve got this name, you know.”*

Billy said, *“Unless you’ve got a name that you can identify with, you don’t know who these people are... So kinship is also about names so that you can identify with these people... What I’m saying is that the identity is the one thing that’s important for kinship because if you can’t identify, you’ll be like two ships crossing in the night.”* Sheila confirms this when she says, *“Yeah, it’s all around, all around Australia. No matter where you go, someone will come up and ask, ‘Who are you?’ First thing they’ll ask you is ‘What is your skin?’”* When you have exchanged skin name, relationships to each other are immediately known. In Sheila’s case, the person replied to her, *“Oh, you are my cousin.”*

Culture

Mr Ah Kit says, *“The kinship system has a really important role to play for me in terms of my cultural status and my role, and the role me and my wife and my children take into the future. I think the kinship system is a really big part of us and I think that our kids are going to take culture on and be part of cultural change. One of the things they really need to know well is the kinship system and I think when the kinship system is working at its very best, I think that its roles and responsibilities are that families look after each other. Is a very clear role so there’s no darkness or cloudiness in terms of how I relate to the other seven skins that are in our kinship system.”*

Robyn expressed concern about white people who work with Aboriginal people when she said, *“They’ve got to understand our life, how we are and how we’ve been brought up, and how our life has been totally different to white people. And the white people are trying to make us like them but they keep doing that, and, in time, the kids are not going to know their culture or anything like that.”*

Robbie said, *“Culture is important because it gives you a set of rules.”* Stanner (1991) pointed out that a main difference between Aboriginal and western ways of knowing, being and doing was that Aboriginal ways were given once, in the Wirnkarra, and have remained stable ever since. The stability spoken about in Jukurrpa does not mean that the culture was stagnant; it meant that it was stable. As shown through the length of time that the kinship system has functioned, it worked. In one way or another, all of the knowledge holders mentioned the balance and harmony that the kinship system brought into their lives.

However, western societies have undergone rapid change over the decades and centuries, with these changes not necessarily bringing greater stability. Gail raised the issue of changing of government regulations. She described it as almost like being in a washing machine. Just when you think you know what the rules are, you’re thrown back in the washing machine and tumbled around then brought back out to find a completely different set of rules in place. The ground was always shifting for Aboriginal people.

Set in Stone, or Dynamic and Changing?

During the first phase of the research, when knowledge holders were asked the second question, *“Do you think the kinship system has changed, and if so, how?”* there was a difference between the answers given. Some of the knowledge holders, such as Mr Ah Kit,

Richie and Mrs Fejo, said that they did not think the kinship system had changed - it was the same now as it had been from the time it was given in the Wirnkarra. Other knowledge holders said that the kinship system did change, that it was resilient, flexible, and that it changed to meet the needs of the people.

This diversity of views was not between the genders, or even different age groups, and needed clarification. Therefore, finding an answer to what people meant became a priority for the second phase of the research project. On returning to the Northern Territory the following year to report on the findings of the first phase, I asked knowledge holders what they thought this difference in opinion might mean.

Mrs Fejo said, *“The skin kinship system should never change. Can you change grandfather to uncle, or father to uncle, to nephew to niece, whatever? NO! It’s set in place, there are set rules... Brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, mother and father, so that has to stand... You can’t lose the culture, you’re nothing without your own. The land, law, and culture, this is your land. Who are you, what are you? If you lose your culture you’re nothing. You become one of the mainstream group. Aboriginal people MUST have their land, their law, and their culture. They must have that system in place.”*

Richie had a lot to say on this subject:

“Well, I actually think that the kinship system itself is probably written in stone. However, our role within the kinship system may change because of various reasons and I think you look at things like the effects of the Stolen Generations. Okay. People were taken. Young kids were taken away off country. Now, if they had been left on the country, and I’ll use this as an example, if they were left on the country, then they would grow up within part of their kinship system and within part of the system. Let’s just say, for example, they weren’t

allowed to talk to their brothers, okay. However, because of the Stolen Generation taking them away from young ages and then several decades later they came back, they were able to talk to their brothers and that was accepted.”

“There were different considerations given for that, you know. And as the secondary stage of the Stolen Generation effects come in a new generation, a second generation of Stolen Generations who were people like me, who basically because of Stolen Generation were always afraid of doing things like, okay for example, the Stolen Generation we would get flogged for speaking languages and stuff like that, practising culture, things like that.”

“So, as a second generation of the Stolen Generation person, we would hear these stories and we would always have this fear of police, you know. We would have the fear of the law, we would have fear of doctors, we would have fear - we felt like we were under threat if we didn’t go to Balanda school or white school, we would be taken away by Welfare. And that’s the big irony because this is what’s broken down our kinship system. Now I do believe that the kinship system, the structure itself is fool proof. I mean it’s been around for tens of thousands of years.”

I asked Richie, *“Is that what you mean when you say it’s set in stone?”*

He replied, *“Yes, it is. That’s what I mean. That the kinship system, the system of eight is not only set in stone, but I believe that it’s widespread. This particular system, now looking at the Warumungu system itself, I believe that you can take all the words off here and change those words to that of the Nuka or the Larrakia or the Tiwi. The system itself is solid. However, what changes is the language, because it’s a different language region.”*

“However, because of the effects of population, of colonisation, and things like that, Aboriginal people have changed. And you can’t say that Aboriginal people haven’t changed unless they are way out in the Never Never, you know, because you just don’t find places where Aboriginal people are walking around on a daily basis wearing a nargan, carrying a spear and boomerang, you know. These are the effects that have caused our culture to adapt. And perhaps that might be the secret word ‘culture’ because within the kinship system we all have roles of how, in culture and Law, we relate to each other. It tells us how we act by Law, by the kinship system. It tells us how we are allowed to do things. It tells us what’s good and what’s bad, and what’s right and what’s wrong. However, because culture has adapted, we’ve adapted along with that, and that affects our kinship system.”

Mr Ah Kit said, *“I think that that’s one of the big issues that we find. When we talk about cultural maintenance we’re talking about surviving in a western-dominated world and we’re also talking about surviving in our own cultural Law language. And so the kinship system is merely a way of governance on how we interact, on how we communicate, on how we talk, on how we treat people in our kinship system, and if school curriculum was written in Warlpiri language or Warumungu language or there were education programs written in the appropriate Aboriginal language there would be a very strong and vibrant way of how things happen.”*

“But just getting back to the kinship system, I think it is governance - I think it determines our behaviour. It determines our rules of engagement. They’re for people to understand and for people to follow and it is that – it’s governance - to make sure that there’s this code of behaviour, this way of rules and the way we engage, and I think it’s quite interesting. When we see that play out, too, in the way that it should be played out. It

creates harmony. It creates goodness. It creates a whole range of things that let people know that they're operating in a cultural context around the kinship system. I think it's fun!"

Gail gave a different perspective: *"So the original relationship ties are still there with the family groups; and when we were in the land claim, the way the land claim was run was that it had a respect for the fact that we were already relating that way. Then when the native title came and we set up the Larrakia native title."*

"So the Larrakia nation, the land council, came to us and basically said the Inuit have a similar way of governing themselves, and we figured, when we looked at their model, that ours was already set up. But all we did was pull a table up between us and using the different ways of working to come to agreements about things, when it came to the Northern Land Council, wanting us to agree on certain issues relating to native title and organisations and groups wanting permission for things."

"So that was the difference, we just put a table between us and had to sign papers and make agreements. You see, with the Inuit, they had traditional owners who come to the table but we had family members - two from every family group - and that balanced out the negotiating power then. It's a good model, but you have to actually make it work. Models are only limited anyway, as people change models need to change, but to this point it seems to be working."

What Does All This Mean?

This then brings us back to the question, *"Is the kinship system set in stone, or is it flexible and able to change with the needs of the people?"* What is set in stone is the system of

eight, which refers to the sixteen skin names explained in detail in Chapter Three. These cannot be changed because relationships are due to birth, or time of cultural adoption and by whom. The responsibilities that are aligned with the relationships are also set in stone.

What are flexible are the tools that are used. For example, instead of hunting with a spear and boomerang, people hunted with guns and then they started going to the supermarket. Aboriginal people have adapted to the social context around them. Despite this, they still maintain the Jukurrpa and culture by providing for their families and by sharing what they have. They also still live off the land where and when possible.

The Impact of Development

The impact of development of Aboriginal land is one that is felt by all nations, but for those whose lands are located in areas where cities and towns have been built, there is a more direct impact, as people are no longer able to live the lifestyle patterns set by their ancestors, that followed the pattern of the seasons. Things like pollution of waterways - including the sea, rivers and creeks - means that the foods traditionally harvested are no longer edible. Pesticides, carbon dioxide poisoning and other chemical spraying of wild berries, plums, root vegetables and plants makes them toxic and that impacts on the lifestyle of the people. Richie comments on all of this and explains the impact on Aboriginal people and our capacity to maintain our traditional lifestyles well in the following story.

Richie's Third Story: The Impact of Development

“With the Larrakia, a lot of old knowledge seems to have gone and a lot of language seems to have gone and a lot of rules seem to have been made more flexible. And I think that’s the word I’m looking for, ‘flexible’, because when we are in an environment where we are

not being raised to, you know, get proper cultural ways because simply we can't because of things like development. I mean, for the Larrakia, we can't live off our traditional foods because of things like pollution. We can't eat all the berries and things like that we used to, and you can see why when you see all the pollution around the trees."

"For fish and salt-water – We can't catch the type of fish that we used to because a lot of the regions around in Larrakia country have been fished out, you know. To get fish, we need to go out further. Again, some of the fresh water places because, it's my understanding that we used to camp along the beaches and have different camps and even up through Rapid Creek. We would have the fresh water there. Today, the fresh water from Rapid Creek – you can't drink it! It's got sewerage pipes and stuff like that."

"Now this affects us wholly as a people because for Aboriginal people – what gives us identity – it's our land, we were born into the country, you know. How we interact with the country. In the old days, the country would take care of us. We would drink the water from the country; we would eat the food from the country. However, we can't do that in today's society because of development, so that's affected our lifestyle and it's changed the order that we naturally do things."

Reflections on the story

As has been stated previously, the kinship system is not limited to human beings; it is inclusive of all vegetation, animals, insects, rivers and waterways, the heavens (sun, moon, star constellations), and seemingly inanimate objects such as landscapes, rocks, stones and pebbles. This is because they are all part and parcel of land, or mother earth.

When one thing is destroyed, the impact ripples out and touches all things because they are connected and have a place within the cosmos that maintains balance, harmony, relatedness and connection to country. The impact of development has meant that many things have been disturbed, thus bringing imbalance, disharmony, un-relatedness and disconnection to country. The impact is felt by all within the kinship system be they human, animal, plants or mother earth herself.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, the kinship system and, more especially, the skin names that are the centre of it are vitally important to Aboriginal peoples. The kinship system positions people in the Aboriginal world, making them visible; connects them to each other; and builds resilience (Devison, 2002), pride and self-worth. The kinship system is part of Jukurrpa and our governance, the gift given to us from the Wirnkarra. By living our lives within the boundaries of the kinship system we help to maintain balance, harmony and the relatedness of all things, including our lives and our relationships with each other.

Every one of the knowledge holders said that the kinship system was of vital importance in their lives. It guided their interactions with each other and the way they related to each other. It positioned them within the Aboriginal world, not just in the Larrakia or Warumungu world, and gave the parameters of their lives. They said they could not imagine their lives without the kinship system.

The next chapter reports what knowledge holders said about social workers and other professionals. It follows a similar pattern to this chapter. This pattern honours Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing within an Indigenist research paradigm.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHAT KNOWLEDGE HOLDERS SAID ABOUT SOCIAL WORKERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

“You don’t know everything, so stop pretending that you do.” (Billy)

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the stories of the knowledge holders when they were asked the three interview questions relating to their understanding of the kinship system, their use of it and whether they thought the kinship system had changed over time. Chapter Seven builds on the previous chapter by reporting what knowledge holders said when asked whether they thought an understanding of the kinship system might inform social work practice in Australia. This chapter therefore also builds on Chapter Five, which is about social work.

I knew that high numbers of our peoples come into contact with social workers employed in many different fields and disciplines. I believed that the knowledge uncovered and developed through this study might assist to better inform and equip social workers to work with Aboriginal peoples. It is for this reason that the question that guides this chapter was asked of the knowledge holders. I wanted to hear from the knowledge holders what their thoughts would be. It is noticeable that the knowledge holders spoke about a range of professions, not just social work.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part shares stories and comments made by knowledge holders, along with my reflections on these. The second part of the chapter

identifies a number of key themes that emerged from what the knowledge holders said. These key themes include diverse experience, governance, cultural awareness, inclusion, language and the clash of two worldviews. The chapter concludes by summarising the findings of this chapter and suggesting ways forward.

Stories and Comments Shared by the Knowledge Holders

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost and when you are lost you start to open up and listen (Tafoya, cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 6).

The stories and comments given below illustrate the concept of other stories existing within and between stories. They also bring out differences in ways of knowing, being and doing between the Aboriginal peoples and the broader non-Aboriginal population of Australia, highlighting some of the impacts of these differences.

Richie

The Lawyer Analogy

"I spent five years working for legal aid - for the Aboriginal legal aid - and one of the first things that came to hand was that there were a lot of people – lawyers - who would come up from down south and they were trained in law and they were gun lawyers, the lot of them. They were really great lawyers, but because they didn't know anything about culture and protocols and stuff there were things going on like - they would come up to me and say, 'Oh, Rich, I'll be talking to this woman' or 'I'll be talking with this man' - well, mainly women - I don't think it applied to men."

“But they’d be talking to this woman, or something like that, and there was no eye contact, you know, and the basic job for these lawyers is to find out the truth so that they can fairly represent these people in a court of law, and this is important because these people’s lives depended on how good these lawyers were, you know, and in some cases it would depend on if they were going to jail or not, and how long they were going to jail, and that’s a really important factor. And lots of times, if there were lots of people continuously going to jail for someone [the same lawyer], you know, from one community, that would reflect on the service [Aboriginal Legal Service], you know.”

“So my job was to kind of like to identify things like that, and a lot of these lawyers, with as much knowledge and as witty as they were, they would say things to me like, “Rich, there were people I was talking to today that weren’t looking at me and, you know, they was turning away from me and, you know, and they would - I was trying to talk to them and like they wasn’t interested.”

“I’d have to say to them, “Look it wasn’t that they wasn’t interested, it’s that they are not allowed to look at you, they’re not allowed to talk to you, so they was looking down, because they wasn’t allowed to do that because of cultural reasons.” And there was a lot of things taken up, all at once by these lawyers that were being trained that they just never had any concept of before. You know, eye-to-eye contact. I mean Balanda people, or white people; they believe that if you have to talk to each other to know the truth, you have to maintain eye contact. I learnt that when I was working at legal aid as a clinician, okay. We learned how to read body language and stuff like that. We was trained to know when a person was lying to you by the way they looked at you, by the way they maintained eye contact and by the way they had body language.”

“But when you take that out to the community everything flips upside down, because people aren’t allowed to face you, people aren’t allowed to look at you, people are not allowed to maintain eye contact. And these white lawyers, or Balanda lawyers, they just did not understand that. And these are some of the protocols that I’m saying that, when you go from Melbourne to Darwin, Darwin to any outstation - I won’t say any outstation, but any top end outstation, and I believe that’s whether you’re in Queensland, Northern Territory or the top of Western Australia - any of those places where there’s very strong culture, there are practices and protocols that have to be learned.”

“A social worker who knows this, and I’ll say it really loud, will double their efforts, you know, their efficiency.”

Reflection

The story within the story is that the lawyer, on being confronted with this seeming lack of engagement, could have taken it at face value and represented his clients as being uninterested in the process. The result could have been a guilty verdict rather than not guilty, or a longer rather than a shorter time in prison.

On the other side of the coin, there would have been a different outcome for the client if a lawyer who had a working understanding of the kinship system, and was applying it, had recognised that there were cultural communication protocols impacting on the interaction between himself and his client. He could confirm that this was the case by talking with the Aboriginal court liaison officer, if there was one. He could talk with Elders, who would be more open if he had a skin name. He could also have checked with other Aboriginal services to ensure the local context.

If the lawyer had developed knowledge of the kinship system and its workings, and had been accepted as part of the kinship system, he might have had insights about why this seeming lack of engagement was occurring. However, I say ‘might’ have had insights because there are examples of non-Aboriginal people going to work in Aboriginal communities and being taught this information; and then not using it at crucial times.

Fran Crawford, a non-Aboriginal social work educator in Western Australia, shared a story about how she had learned the intricacies of the kinship system by living and working in a particular Aboriginal community as an anthropologist. This was prior to her becoming a social worker. Crawford describes the process of being given a skin name and being accepted as part of a particular skin group and the wider Aboriginal community. However, on packing up to leave the community, she made a mistake that crossed the lines of kinship and caused her to be rebuked soundly by one of the Elders. It took courage for Crawford to share this experience. She admitted that, when it came to crunch time, she forgot what she had learned (Crawford, 2000). This is an example of how embedded non-Aboriginal people are in their own worldview, even after spending time immersed in Aboriginal culture and Law.

First Comment by Richie

“I know undoubtedly that if anybody wanted to work with Aboriginal people they will definitely benefit if they take the time to meet the Aboriginal people, to greet the Aboriginal people, to respect the Aboriginal people and respect their culture, where they’re from, respect their country and respect who they are.”

“It is because, whenever you go into someone else’s country you have to know, say for example, who the king and queen are. You have to know who the traditional owners are,

you have to know who's placed around you in the kinship system. You have to know where you are placed in the kinship system and I think talking about this now makes me think that one of the big faults is that a lot of people who go onto other people's country assume they know what's best for these people."

"They say 'Alright, I know this, I know that and I've got whatever, a degree or whatever and I know what works best for this country.' And it's going back to saying this happens, happened years ago, centuries ago, but the thing is these people, they don't give the right respect. Eventually they're thrown out, they're rejected from these communities because they don't listen to the Elders, and they don't take the right approach and if they did, chances are they'd be adopted into a tribe and given a skin name and that would make them part of the kinship system you know, and for that to happen to anybody is great."

Reflection

What Richie says about non-Aboriginal people taking the time to really get to know Aboriginal people, by spending time on Aboriginal country and interacting with the people in this setting, is very important. As a social worker, I am very aware of how power shifts within different locations (see Chapter Two).

As I reflected on this comment, I thought about what happens when people come to an office to receive a service. In these cases social workers hold the advantage of local knowledge about the office system, how the office works, the language that is used, the values and expectations of the office, who is sharing this space with us, what should happen in that space, how we should interact with each other and what is expected of us. This knowledge empowers us and we are able to control what happens, even in our own individual offices, with the way in which the office is set up. One of the major concerns is

our safety. Therefore, we are usually able to control what happens to us and around us as much as possible, so we are in our comfort and safety zones.

If non-Aboriginal professionals and others go out of their comfort and safety zones and into Aboriginal country the power balance shifts because, as Richie said in his analogy about the lawyers, everything is turned on its head. Nothing is the same, and the non-Aboriginal worker is no longer in control. Richie expresses his hope that perhaps, as a result of this experience, the professional might learn the context of life from an Aboriginal perspective and, as part of this process, the professional might gain some understanding and respect for the people they are working with. In an urban context, the same would apply.

Understanding of the local context is vital in the development of sound policy and practice, if the goal of the interaction is social justice and human rights. This then takes us to the heart of the issue, that is, what are the underlying motives, agenda, aims and objectives of the non-Aboriginal professional? Self-examination and critical reflection should be two of the basic practices of all social workers, not just non-Aboriginal people who decide to work with our people. As Lila Watson in her much quoted epigram said:

If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together (Watson, cited in Young, 2004, p. 118).

A second reflection on the same story

Getting to know about Aboriginal kinship, and using that knowledge correctly, provides opportunities to build relationships of respect. By the non-Aboriginal practitioners doing their best to build relationships of respect, Aboriginal people will feel more comfortable

working in partnership with a particular practitioner. They will feel confident that the practitioner has their best interests at heart and they, in turn, may include that professional in their kinship system. Even when the issue is contentious, they will trust that person.

An example of when this happened can be found in the *Little Children are Sacred* review of 2007. Aboriginal people entrusted information on the sensitive issue of child sexual abuse to the researchers who produced this report, with the expectation that the recommendations would be implemented and that the Aboriginal people would have the opportunity to work in partnership with the researchers.

However, this is also an example of how good research practices that result in sound recommendations can be hijacked by others – in this instance the Howard Government with the support of the then opposition, the Australian Labor Party – to progress their own political agenda (this was discussed in Chapter Four). The NTER provides a very clear illustration of a lack of respect for Aboriginal people and the researchers involved in the *Little Children are Sacred* report; as well as the people in the areas where the Intervention was rolled out. In the future, researchers and others working with Aboriginal people ought not to be surprised if there is an even more distrustful attitude toward them, especially about raising delicate issues.

A second point that I want to reflect on, that Richie raises, is where he states that if service providers were respectful of Aboriginal ways of doing things, the “*chances are they’d be adopted into a tribe and given a skin name and that would make them part of the kinship system you know, and for that to happen to anybody is great.*”

Fran Crawford, who was mentioned previously, shares a very important story about being included within the kinship system through the giving and receiving of a skin name

(Crawford, 2000). Skin names are valued highly by Aboriginal people. Non-Aboriginal people should not ask for a skin name - to do so is not respectful.

Richie Talks about Asking for a Skin Name

“I’ve got a lot of people saying to me all the time, ‘Oh, what’s my skin name? What’s my skin name?’ you know and I say, ‘No, I won’t talk about that because I’m still a junior - it’s not my right to.’ I still don’t have enough knowledge, but people see me and my status as a popular type of person and they say, ‘Come on, Rich, you’re a Larrakia man. Tell me my skin name’, and I say ‘No, it’s not my place to do so’, because I’m not going to get into trouble with my Elders. And if a person is honest and forthcoming enough, I will take them to my Elders and I will introduce them to my Elders. And if I have a hundred percent belief that they’re the real deal then I will do that and then, maybe, my Elders will decide to take them in. But that’s not a job for me, and that’s the same for any other country you go to, that’s the way it should be.”

“When we go from country to country, we respect each other’s country. We’re visitors and it should be vice-versa and when people, it doesn’t matter what your job is, you go to someone else’s country, you take the time to meet those people, you take the time to basically become one of them and you’ll always have a positive outcome. Not like going into a country and saying, ‘I know what’s best for you mob, I know this, I know that’. That won’t ever work.”

“Another thing I forgot to say... I was just reminded, was when people go to other people’s country, one of the things they should always do - the first thing they should do - is go and meet the Elders and they should ask permission to stay on their land.”

Reflection

From what Richie is saying here, it is clear that having a skin name is very prized by many Aboriginal people⁶⁴. It is also clear that some people have skin name and others don't. This is one of the results of invasion and the legacy of past government policies.

As Richie so rightly points out, there are boundaries around what is shared, by whom, how and when. Unlike western knowledge that is freely available to anyone with an interest, Aboriginal knowledge is held sacred, belongs to different groups, and is taught when a person has proven that they are worthy of that knowledge and that they are trustworthy (Young & Zubrzycki, 2011).

Just as with the gaining of knowledge, there are protocols to be followed. There are, as Richie says, protocols around the giving of skin name to those who are not born within this system, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. There are also rules about the relationships that go with these skin names. Richie points out two rules. Firstly, that it was not his place to give anyone a skin name as he is a junior, and that he would have to speak to his Elders. The second point that Richie raises has to do with the character of the person asking for a skin name, and whether Richie would feel confident in vouching for that person (personal knowledge). All of this relates to the insider / outsider binary

⁶⁴ I have to admit that I do not know what it is like not to have a skin name. I come from nations that I believe are privileged in still having and maintaining these aspects of kinship. I, along with so many others, am a recipient of a wonderful gift from our recent and distant ancestors. So many of the knowledge holders involved in this study said that they could not imagine their lives without the kinship system, including moiety and skin. I understand where they are coming from and it is one of my express desires that, by undertaking this research project and sharing the learning, other Aboriginal people who live within these systems will re-invigorate and strengthen what they have, so that all our children into the future will share this wonderful gift with us.

explained in Chapter Three. What Richie outlines here is a very different process to the one that the broader Australian population is used to working within.

Billy

Embarrassment

Billy talks of the embarrassment felt by Aboriginal people who can see that the non-Aboriginal person does not know what they are talking about. The Aboriginal people might therefore look away and be quiet because they would not want to embarrass that person more. They feel shame for that person. The non-Aboriginal person, from a position of power, but also ignorance, could interpret this as unwillingness to engage or as lack of understanding on the part of the Aboriginal people, rather than as their own shortcoming. They could then go on to impose their views and, since theirs would be the only view reported back to head office, could paint a negative picture of the individual, family or community.

Drawing

When I was speaking with Billy, we were sitting at the table in his home and as we were conversing he was drawing on the table with his finger, to explain what he meant and to illustrate his points. This is a very common practice amongst the Larrakia and Warumungu, who draw in the sand as we are conversing with one another, learning from one another, or when complex concepts are being discussed. You can add to someone else's drawing to explain a point or to expand on what they've said, as long as the person speaking is not an Elder. In that instance we sit, listen, watch and learn. When the conversation or lesson moves to the next concept the ground is wiped clear, as with a blackboard or a whiteboard, and another set of drawings is done (personal knowledge).

Within this communication pattern, questions can be asked and clarification sought. If the other person or Elder tells that you are ready, or worthy to hear the answer, they will add more detail to their drawing, or wipe it off and do another drawing to explain the concepts in more depth. The concept of worthiness is very different to western learning: in the Aboriginal context you have to prove that you are worthy of the information, rather than be given information just because you ask for it or pay to be taught it.

Gail

The Nurse's Story

"We recognised that we were Larrakia people and that was important to me, that whole identity. My parents would say to us, 'Whatever you choose to do in life, always remember your people.' So in other words, whatever we chose, not to ever separate that we were Larrakia people and that we were Aboriginal people. And that's just the way it is in our psyche, I think, for all of our family."

"It's relational and, like the nursing itself, I never ever recognised that until I worked on the wards for a long time. And then the charge nurse recognised the value of it and then she allowed me to be - whenever she needed information or anything she would come to me."

"It put me in a situation where I would work way better with some groups of people than others. But at other times, because of my relationship, especially with some of the men, I'd actually ask her not to work with them because they were closely related - they were brothers. And she would be quite happy to put me somewhere else or she would say, 'Are you able to work with them today?'"

“And it was really good, but I think that generally nursing never did work it out because there was not a lot of Aboriginal nurses to begin with. So I actually worked out my own model of working with them.”

Reflection

There are a number of stories within and between this story shared by Gail. One relates to identity; another, responsibilities and obligations; and yet another deals with the concept of relationality. The most obvious deals with nursing and developing a model that works.

The first story is of identity and the responsibilities and obligations that come with being Aboriginal. More especially, it addresses the responsibility that is extended to all our people as illustrated through the admonition given to Gail by her parents when they said, *“Whatever you choose to do in life, always remember your people.”* So, in other words, *whatever we chose, not to ever separate that we were Larrakia people and that we were Aboriginal people. And that’s just the way, it’s in our psyche, I think, for all of our family.”*

This lesson was also taught to the children within my family and continues to be given to each new generation. Individualism is not the primary motivation of Indigenous peoples; collectivism is. Whereas, in non-Aboriginal society, people strive to promote themselves and compete with and beat others, amongst the Larrakia and Warumungu children are taught to help those around them and bring those others with them, rather than overtaking them and leaving them behind. If a person excels, they do it to show others it can be done rather than to show how good they are.

Another story deals with the concept of extended relationships. Here we see that the concepts of relationships and responsibility extend to ‘your people’ - in this instance, all the Larrakia - so what we are seeing relates to kinship and the bonds of kinship being maintained and strengthened.

The third and most obvious story deals with nursing and developing a model for working as both a nurse and an Aboriginal woman. This contextual and practical model, developed by Gail, provided cultural safety for the patients and for herself, and achieved better outcomes for all involved. The charge nurse learnt to understand and appreciate the kinship system because it made her work easier and helped her to achieve her goals with regard to, firstly, her patients and secondly Gail, whom she was supervising.

If this model was replicated in other areas it could achieve the same positive outcomes for the supervisors, the workers and the clients. The non-Aboriginal workers would eventually come to the point to where they would become confident to work with Aboriginal clients instead of leaving the bulk of the work to the Aboriginal workers: this is professional development.

Sheila

Working for the Council

“I work for the Aboriginal council here in Tennant Creek and we got eleven tribes here, and with that eleven language groups. Well we got troublemakers but we go and speak to each tribe so that they can speak in their own languages to that troublemaker. And that’s how we sort things out.”

“That’s the kinship system.”

Reflection

Aboriginal tribes⁶⁵ as identified by Sheila, already have an existing way of addressing trouble when they are sharing a space (Maddison, 2009), in this instance, on Warumungu country. However, there are some things that are missing in this story. One of the missing elements is that the Aboriginal people in Tennant Creek have their own night patrol that picks up people causing trouble and takes them home or to the sober-up shelter so they're not caught up in the white system of police, prison and courts. Therefore, it enables these tribes to address this issue in their own way, which is a culturally congruent way. If the police had been involved, the people would have been picked up and put in the lock-up overnight. They would have had to go to court and could have spent time in prison.

The place of Respect and Traditional Owners

"You have to have respect for yourself and respect for others. For other tribes, we're here on Warumungu land so we gotta respect the Warumungu land and people. Even though so many come from different language groups, they still got to have that respect for Warumungu people because this is their land."

Reflection

What is being explained here by Sheila is that both the place and rights of traditional owners are embedded within Aboriginal governance. This governance is about interactions between a person, family, clan and nation; it is about kinship and totems. All these connect and interact at some point on a particular piece of country. The recognition of traditional owners and respect for their authority within their own land is paramount (personal

⁶⁵ In this story Sheila refers to tribes, throughout this thesis I have referred to nations, as that is what my Elders support.

knowledge). This is foundational knowledge taught to children. Once these foundations of respect are in place they can be extended to include other Aboriginal nations and then all others, but it all begins with respect for self.

With regard to respect, this is an overarching principle that is applied firstly to yourself, because if you do not have respect for yourself, your family, your clan and nation, how can you extend respect to others? We are taught that, unless we can live our lives in such a way that we can hold our heads up high, we cannot value that same attribute in others.

A Story of Inclusion

“Some non-Aboriginal, when they come from interstate, when they get jobs in the Aboriginal organisations or in the communities, well we, as the people, give them skin names. And by, through that skin name we work together and that’s how we form that kinship now even in Aboriginal organisations in the Territory. No matter where you go they will tell you, “Oh that’s so and so, that’s Japananga, oh, that’s so and so, that’s Napaltjarri.”

“That’s how we work together, we come together and work together now through that skin name and kinship system.”

“You can tell those white fellas straight that if they come from another country to work he tells himself, “Oh I’m a German person” so all the Aboriginal people get together and say, “Oh, we’ll give that person a skin name”. Well they give him that skin name now and he becomes as family for that skin group.”

Reflection

What Sheila is advocating here is cultural inclusion. This would empower the Aboriginal people as they become the teachers and guides, the judges of what is right and what is wrong in relationships and interactions, totally turning around the current situation. This concept fits well with Billy's comment at the beginning of this chapter, "*You don't know everything so stop pretending that you do*". However, receiving a skin name is a process and privilege that also empowers the non-Aboriginal person who is the learner and provides a win-win situation for both groups.

A skin name is not a trophy to be held up so that a person can say, "*Look, I have a skin name, too,*" nor does having a skin name make the recipient Aboriginal. If a person is privileged to have been given a skin name (without asking for one) it says a lot about the person's trustworthiness, the relationship they have with the people they are working with, and how they might work with Aboriginal people in the future. If they do not, it tells a different story.

Mrs Fejo

As referred to earlier, Mrs Fejo made a number of comments that were not spoken about by others; comments that add value, depth and insights to this thesis. They are introduced here.

First Comment

In reference to being taken to another Aboriginal group's country, learning the language, ceremonies, and way of living with the land and making these others very happy through their willingness to learn, Mrs Fejo said:

“But in our hearts we knew that we have to come back to country and learn our way and learn about our ancestors. So even now as you get older and older you’re learning about other people’s ways and culture - ways and systems - and it unites the whole. It’s a big link up, say, for the whole of the Northern Territory and you do slot in, you do fit in. The benefit is you’re not a stranger, you’re one of them. And they accept you and they trust you and you must not break that trust. Right, to me that’s really strong bond link-up and bond made between you wherever you’re going.”

Reflection

The point that Mrs Fejo makes about having to go back to one’s own country to learn culture and about one’s own ancestors, is what grounds Aboriginal people and forms the deep connections that exist between the Wirnkarra, Jukurrpa, ancestors, spirituality, country and the people. Here Mrs Fejo is talking about memory in the blood. Our old people spoke about memory in the blood and how it would enable our ancestors to call to us, to speak with us in our dreams and to guide us. Even if we had been separated from our families for some reason (they were referring to the Stolen Generations) our ancestors would still communicate to us because of the blood connection.

The Larrakia and Warumungu peoples are not the only ones who speak about memory in the blood. This topic has been raised, and spoken about, by other Indigenous peoples of the world in their literature (Allen, 2002; Baskin, 2006; DiNova, 2005), and in music (Good Shield, 2010). However, it has been judged by western empirical science as not being substantiated because it does not fit with western scientific scrutiny (DiNova, 2005). I am not disheartened by the lack of belief on the part of many non-Aboriginal scientists. I am sure they as a profession felt the same way when they were told that the earth was round,

or that the disregard for mother earth would bring about ecological and environmental disasters.

The children of my family and clan groups were told that blood memory is what enabled us to connect to the Dreaming, to our family who were in the world of the spirits, to our country, and our totems. We were also told that if we did not follow through and answer the blood memory when it called to us, we would become ill psychologically, spiritually and physically, and that western medicine would not be able to help us. I believe that this may have been what Mrs Fejo meant, when she said that, *“in our hearts we knew that we have to come back country and learn our ways and learn about our ancestors.”*

Memory in the blood also has huge ramifications for Aboriginal children who are taken out of their families, clans, and nations, whether this was the result of the Stolen Generations, child protection, or for Aboriginal children who are adopted out of the Aboriginal community. Perhaps one-way of trying to explain blood memory is to think of genetic markers: these markers make a person susceptible or predisposed to particular conditions. You may not express it but you may carry it and, with the help of an environmental trigger, the trait appears, though it is not noticed until that time.

Either way, blood memory may be a gap in western knowledge and an area where there could be some research undertaken from within an Australian context. However, it is outside the parameters of this study and may be a subject that can be taken up in the future, especially as it relates to health and wellbeing.

The other thing that Mrs Fejo speaks about is the big link-up across the Northern Territory that would enable people to ‘slot in’ and ‘fit in’. This refers to the role of the kinship

system and, more especially, the skin system of eight, as it is the sixteen skin names that enable the ‘slotting in’ to occur.

Comment Two

“I don’t think that I could survive without that kinship. As a health worker or travelling around, a mediator for health, I was the middle person between the white man’s society and the Aboriginal society so I was the middle person to go out and be a spokesperson, learning white man’s way then understanding what they were teaching us, then going out to promote it to the Aboriginal people who could hardly understand what the white non-Aboriginal wanted.”

Reflection

On reviewing the achievements of Mrs Fejo, it is clear that she was indeed able to act as the middle person. She was able to go out and be a spokesperson because she had the opportunity, knowledge and skills to learn the white man’s way of doing things and then promote it to Aboriginal people in a way that was understandable and acceptable within culture. This is a very special skill. It takes a deep understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal cultural protocols, Jukurrpa and ways of communicating. It means moving out of the worn-out attitude that teaches that western people know what is best for Aboriginal people. When you reflect on all the failed policies and practices over decades, a clear picture emerges that western people do not know what is best for Aboriginal people.

Comment Three

“Social workers have to be of Aboriginal descent. That is priority because we don’t want the people out there to switch off. And they say, “Oh they’re gammon you know, they’re

not Aboriginal people, they're Mooninga or Balanda. Salt water way Balanda, Mooninga desert way, okay?" So we have to be very careful on who the middle mediator person is. It's like crossing a bridge from this side going over that side and the person in the middle is the one that weighs the balance. Balance is everything, okay."

Reflection

I agree with Mrs Fejo that there is certainly a need for more Aboriginal social workers, as they do indeed play the role of mediator, acting as guides for those who want to join two ways of doing things. They also bring with them Aboriginal worldviews that support Aboriginal social work practice. By this I mean that they already work within the framework of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

Comment Four

"It has never changed. Land, Law and culture stand united. I mean, with the development of things going on now, I mean, even if you go out now, still kinship stands. Automatically, as a child is born, they know exactly where the child fits into that system. They know it and I don't know but it's really good. It unites the Aboriginal tribes together, whether it be in Katherine, Tennant Creek, wherever, Alice Springs, Pitjantjatjara homelands, Western Australia, it's like a link-up system. When I went to Western Australia with the Strong Women Program I didn't know anybody there and I said, "Any Nungala here?" And two ladies put up their hand and I said, "Well, you're my sisters, your role is to help me 'cause I'm your sister. Come up here and you help me teach," and that was right across the border, right?"

Reflection

The knowledge shared here by Mrs Fejo is not only about the way in which the kinship system crosses Australian state and territory borders, but also about how it crosses boundaries of Aboriginal nations. Mrs Fejo, as a Warumungu woman from the Northern Territory, is able to use her skin name with the Western Australian women who are from a different Aboriginal nation. The skin names are transferable across all these borders.

This knowledge, if used properly, could be of great assistance to social workers and other professionals in the planning of policies and programs and in being able to connect programs to the kinship system. The value of this practice has already been illustrated very well through the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* Program (Johnson, 2003).

Key Themes That Emerged about How Understanding the Kinship System can Inform Social Work

The knowledge holders did not separate social workers from other professionals such as lawyers and nurses – they saw all as needing cultural training and knowledge about the kinship system before engaging with Aboriginal people. A number of useful themes emerged from the study, as discussed below.

Diverse Experience

Aboriginal people are not all the same. Aboriginal people, whether from different nations or from the same nation have varying histories in regard to invasion and also have a variety of models of the kinship system.

The knowledge holders did not experience the kinship system in the same way because some had grown up in their country with Jukurrpa at the centre of their lives and with the kinship system (that includes moiety and skin names) embedded within this. Others were a part of the Stolen Generations. One group that was stolen did not reconnect to the moiety and skin system so they moved to family groups: this means their understanding of kinship was focused on this model. The other group that was stolen was able to reconnect to the moiety and skin system so this was the model that was used to guide their relationships.

This knowledge and understanding of these differences is important, because as illustrated by Baldry, Green and Thorpe, many people who staff human services believe that Aboriginal people are all the same and that, ‘as long as there is an Aboriginal liaison officer the obligation to Indigenous clients is fulfilled’ (2010, p. 369). As illustrated through this study, particularly through an examination of what the Larrakia knowledge holders said, there is evidence of a wide variety of lived experience, knowledge of culture, and ways of being Larrakia as a result of government interventions in the lives of this nation over generations.

Governance

The kinship system was identified as the governance of Aboriginal peoples: there are specific protocols that must be followed, there are rules within Jukurrpa about land, and culture; and there are rules of engagement that should be followed when interacting with Larrakia and Warumungu people. Relationships between people, how we should interact, care for each other, whom we should marry and how we treat our Elders, children, brothers and sisters, poisoned relationships (relationships where people cannot be in each other’s

presence or speak to each other) are outlined and taught through the kinship system and the skin system.

When speaking about Larrakia and Warumungu governance we are speaking about Jukurrpa and the kinship system, which act as the regulators within Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Governance from an Aboriginal perspective includes communication protocols such as introducing oneself on first meeting someone; who can speak to whom; how communication happens when one senior person is the spokesperson for a group; and who can share what information. Some knowledge holders in Tennant Creek used these last two protocols, since they participated in the research as a group (see Chapter Two). It was important to know about this beforehand and to interact appropriately with the spokesperson and with the others in the group.

Aboriginal governance is about relatedness and responsibility; it is about connectedness to all things and maintaining harmony and balance between these things. As Mrs Fejo said, knowing where you are placed in the kinship system defines your responsibilities. Even though she was the one with the Government mandate to implement the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* Program, Mrs Fejo empowered other women, by activating the kinship system through use of her skin name, to help run the program (see chapter Three). The program became theirs as well. This meant that these women had a stake in it – they had some ownership of it – and thus a duty to ensure that it worked. This is a much more powerful method of implementation than the western system. Attempts to implement this same program by applying western strategies and pressure had failed (Johnson, 2003).

The kinship system plays a major role in Aboriginal governance, both at a macro level (societal) and a micro level (family and individual). On a macro level, there are protocols

for giving and receiving of skin names if you are not born into the system, as well as protocols around how you use that skin name. Mrs Fejo activated governance on a macro level by involving all the Nungalas in the implementation of the health program. The kinship system was activated on a micro level in the Tennant Creek interviews by using not only communication protocols, but also protocols of hierarchy, in that the most senior person of that group spoke for them (see Chapter Two).

Governance of an Aboriginal community, from a western perspective, means organisations that have been developed and set up as a prerequisite to funding from various government departments. The latter regulate how business is done, following western practices, with organisations being judged on their performance in relation to these regulations. Much is made of financial accountability.

Social work is a western profession. Social workers need to realise that to be effective, they should apply social work theories in culturally congruent ways. One reason why social workers should recognise, know about, and work effectively within, the kinship system when interacting with the Larrakia and Warumungu people is that it provides a means of informing their practice and thus achieving better outcomes for their clients and themselves. How this can be achieved will be explained in Chapter Eight. Richie's example of the lawyers not understanding why Aboriginal women would not make eye contact (see above) can be correlated with similar situations in social work.

The other reason social workers should know about the kinship system is that it crosses state borders and other boundaries around the country, because as people move they take their kinship system with them and use it in their new locality. For example, Larrakia and Warumungu people will connect with their countrymen (people from the same nation as

themselves) in their new location and maintain the practices of the kinship system in the ways that they interact with each other. They also maintain their relationships, obligations and duty of care to those who remain on country in the Northern Territory. This means that what impacts on people who remain on country also impacts on people who are out of country.

Cultural Awareness

In Australia, many non-Aboriginal service providers as well as government departments have been participating in cultural awareness programs for over twenty years but knowledge holders, for example Billy and Richie, say that there has been no shift in practice. This is because cultural awareness is a cognitive process that does not require any real commitment by the participant about a shift in practice. All that is required is usually attendance at a one-day or two-day course, which involves listening, participating and regurgitating what was shared. If service deliverers and others are really serious about engagement, empowerment and change, they will recognise that much more is necessary, because what currently exists has not changed or improved outcomes for the Aboriginal peoples (Walker & Sonn in Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker 2010).

Cultural immersion is a beginning point that all social workers should experience because it is the first step in a journey of engagement. As Richie explains in his comment about the benefit of taking time to learn all about the Aboriginal people social workers are going to work with, it shows respect for Aboriginal people and our culture; and respect should be the basis for interactions with people, and is one of the guiding principles of social work. However, cultural awareness in and of itself does not provide culturally congruent practice

that leads to cultural safety (Purdie, Dudgeon & Walker, 2010). These concepts are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

The important thing is to not only have the knowledge of the culture but to apply it. The importance of knowing, understanding and practising within a local context is vital because cultures are not all the same. Local history is different: timeframes and impact of colonisation affected Aboriginal people and the kinship system in many ways. For example, the Larrakia experiences of colonisation were so varied as to lead to different kinship models, as illustrated through Mrs Black's and Gail's stories.

Inclusion

Within Larrakia and Warumungu practices, there is always space for inclusion, not exclusion. For example, with the 'half-caste problem', the children of mixed heritage remained with their mothers and their families and nations and were included as Aboriginal children, with all the same rights and privileges as all other children. Amongst these privileges was inclusion within the kinship system and the system of eight as they received a skin name where this practice continued. In white society, these same children were excluded and not afforded the same privileges or position that their fathers enjoyed or that their white brothers and sisters enjoyed.

Mrs Fejo, as one of these 'half-caste' children, explained that she never felt comfortable in white settings even though she lived and worked in Darwin for many years. However, as an adult, quite by chance, her mother's people recognised her and told her who she was and where she came from. They immediately welcomed her back and gave her the same privileges enjoyed by other Warumungu people. From a Larrakia perspective, Robyn was

taught, about the term ‘half-caste’; “*Don’t ever say half, there’s no such thing as half in the Aboriginal Law.*”

Inclusion makes people a part of the Aboriginal world through the giving of skin names where this part of the kinship system continues. This can occur for both Aboriginal people from other states and areas and for non-Aboriginal people who have come to live and work in Aboriginal country. Skin names assist Aboriginal people to understand how they should interact with others who also have a skin name. There is not an equivalent system in western society. To western peoples an Aboriginal person is always an Aboriginal person whereas, for Aboriginal people who live within the moiety and skin system, unless another Aboriginal person has a skin name they do not enter the inner-circle of kinship (see Insider / Outsider Positioning in Chapter Three). Once a skin name is given, the person who was previously an outsider becomes part of the skin groups and is treated as a close relative with many of the rights and privileges of that position.

An example of an Aboriginal person from another area being included and receiving a skin name is that of Kumunjayi⁶⁶ West (2000). He was a Tasmanian Aboriginal man who went to the Northern Territory and lived and worked with the Warlpiri. He was given the skin name Japanangka. West went on to develop *The Japanangka Teaching and Research Paradigm – An Australian Aboriginal Model* (2000) based on his learning from the Warlpiri about the kinship system, Jukurrpa and culture. An example of a non-Aboriginal person who went to live and work among the Aboriginal people and was given a skin name is Fran Crawford (2000).

⁶⁶ Kumunjayi indicates that this person is deceased and is used in place of their given name. In the Northern Territory this protocol is often followed.

If a person is given a skin name, as in Sheila's story, that person would need to understand that the skin name must be used appropriately, not only within the Aboriginal community that gave them the name, but back in the home environment of the receiver, even in another state. The non-Aboriginal person could use that skin name to make connections and build relationships with any Aboriginal person who is a part of the kinship and skin system of eight, no matter where they are now living within Australia. This should change the way that the receiver practises from then on: they should not forget the kinship system once they move away from the community that gave them the skin name, as they will meet other Aboriginal people who are a part of the kinship system and they will be able to connect with them.

Body Language

Western communication practices teach that you can tell if someone is lying by watching their body language. For example, they say that if you don't have eye contact with the person speaking to you, you're lying to them. However, often when Larrakia and Warumungu people are thinking deeply about something, they tend not to look at the person they are interacting with.

Also, when there is a difference in gender, an Aboriginal person may not look at the person they're speaking with, and may face away from them when they are telling them the truth. This communication pattern can occur in many situations such as a male lawyer speaking to Larrakia or Warumungu woman or a female social worker talking to a Larrakia or Warumungu man and, unless social workers are aware of these differences in basic communication patterns, they may not achieve the best outcomes for their clients.

Richie spoke about this in his story about lawyers and Gail implied it in her story about herself, as a nurse, being expected to work with Aboriginal men. The charge nurse is shown to be very astute in her observations and analysis of how to use Aboriginal protocols (even if she could not identify them as such) to best advantage for both the nurse and the patients.

Identification of Issues raised by the Knowledge Holders

A number of issues were raised by the knowledge holders as they shared their stories. There are similarities between these issues and the concerns raised by both the students and by Ken Wyatt, which led to this research. The things that all were worried about were the violence and the loss of knowledge occurring in Aboriginal communities today.

A number of Warumungu knowledge holders said that some of the young people were not interested in learning the kinship system because it was not valued outside of their community or their families. The knowledge holders identified that the impact was that there was an increase in crime and the crimes were being committed against people within their own kinship system, to whom they had a responsibility of care. Drug and alcohol abuse also led to lack of interest in culture, involved violence and led to early deaths. The knowledge holders said that the kinship system acted as the governance and regulator of the behaviour of the people. When the kinship system was not being taught or was not working, crime increased.

The initial reason for this research was because I believed that the Larrakia and Warumungu kinship system was still being taught in the same way that it had been taught to my children and myself. I found that this was not always the case. Therefore, the aim of

restoring knowledge of the kinship system, and to reiterate the value of it, is just as pertinent to my own people as it is for others.

I heard from the Elders of the untimely deaths of young men and women (aged in their twenties and thirties) who had been trained from their childhood to be the next leaders. Their teachers were, by then, in their seventies and eighties and felt distressed that they now did not have the time remaining to teach a new group of young people before they putuana (died). The younger knowledge holders also spoke about the impact of the loss of their Elders, whose unexpected deaths had caused a break in the teaching of the kinship system to their grandchildren. These younger knowledge holders had felt this loss keenly. However, speaking with me about this research had highlighted to them the value of the kinship system and they were going to make particular efforts to find ways to teach the children in a number of different settings.

One learning from the research was that a number of urban people saw the kinship system as changing while those still living a more traditional lifestyle saw it as set in stone and said that it is people who change, not the kinship system.

Conclusion

One of the major findings of this chapter was that the knowledge base of social work and other professions with regard to engagement with the Larrakia and Warumungu is insufficient. It is insufficient because, as illustrated through the stories shared and the comments made; cultural awareness, which at the moment is seen as equipping social workers and others for working with the Aboriginal peoples, is really only the first step to enable entry level practice.

What was suggested by the knowledge holders as a first step toward moving from cultural awareness, to safe and innovative practice, was cultural immersion. Cultural immersion was seen as being gained through being on Aboriginal country, like the Warumungu homeland, away from cities and working with Aboriginal people on their turf, so to speak. This chapter highlighted that the Aboriginal kinship system is such a fundamental part of Aboriginal life and ways of knowing, being and doing that knowledge of it, what it is, how it works, who is involved and how it directs Aboriginal participation, response and input should be foundational knowledge for social workers, and others who engage with the Larrakia and Warumungu and other Aboriginal nations (as the knowledge holders spoke of the role of the kinship system as it crossed borders and boundaries).

The following chapter is the conclusion of the thesis. It brings together ideas that can inform and develop social work theory and practice in Australia. It also sums up the findings of the thesis as a whole, identifies gaps in knowledge and suggests areas of further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT – THE END OF MY RESEARCH

JOURNEY

If, in order to admit the place of the other, we have to feel ourselves endangered, then we must have a very fragile sense of ourselves. To deny the past is to deny yourself, no matter how little you think you were a part of that past. To deny the past is actually to prepare the way for your own replacement because, after all, if you think you replaced somebody, then somebody will quite clearly replace you – and it won't be at the time of your choosing (Saul, cited in DiNova, 2005, p. 173).

Introduction

This research journey began as a result of the questions Aboriginal students asked me with regard to two things; firstly, the violence in their communities, and secondly; why they had to learn western theories, which they believed were irrelevant to their own people (see Chapter One). At that time, I wondered whether the answers to their questions were embedded within the kinship system. Another impetus for this journey was Ken Wyatt's remarks about the loss of knowledge when people died. Exploring these issues was the focus of this research journey.

This thesis has asked a number of important questions. The overarching question was, *"How can the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu Peoples of the Northern Territory inform social work theory and practice?"* The two research questions were, firstly; *"How does the kinship system support, guide and structure Larrakia and Warumungu families, clans and nations?"* Secondly; *"Is there sufficient information about the kinship system available to social workers in their education, theory and practice, or within the literature, to lead them to develop culturally congruent and safe ways of*

working with the Aboriginal peoples?” While the interview questions gathered data to answer the first question, the literature review gathered data to answer the second.

Just as there are stories within stories (see Chapter Seven), there are journeys within journeys. Two interlocking journeys are reported on here. The first deals with the journey of the knowledge while the second deals with my journey as a researcher.

Using the questions listed above, the journey of the exploration of this knowledge is that I gathered information from the knowledge holders in 2006 and 2008 (see Chapters Six and Seven) and returned a synopsis of the thesis to them that included the information and knowledge they shared, in July 2011. The journey of the knowledge will continue as this thesis informs the social work profession and is used both in research and in social work education theory and practice for the benefit of both Aboriginal people and social workers.

The other part of the journey is that the thesis will be published so that wider access can be gained by social workers, the Aboriginal community and other interested parties. Presentations will also be given through workshops and conferences. It is hoped that Aboriginal students, such as the ones who sent me on this journey, will be able to go to the bookshelf (as spoken of by Ken Wyatt in Chapter One) and find fewer empty spaces than might otherwise exist; and that the book that results from this research will provide some answers to questions they might have.

My journey as a researcher began with critical reflection on the process. I asked myself four questions, which I then developed into my moral compass (see Chapter Two). Having found answers to those questions, I was confronted with the decision as to what theories I would use to guide my research journey. Finding the answer was difficult, because at the time, the theories I was aware of were unsuitable. This caused me to feel like a square peg

in a round hole (see Chapter Two). It was not until I discovered Indigenist research theories that I was able to jump that hurdle and move on.

It became clear that, for people reading my thesis to understand why Aboriginal peoples find ourselves in the position that we do in Australia today, some background information would have to be provided, both about the kinship system (see chapter Three) and history/ourstory system (see chapter Four). As I wrote about the kinship system I was uplifted and I felt a stronger connection to the Creation entities that gave the kinship system to the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples as a gift. I also felt a stronger connection to my ancestors and those within the kinship system, who continue to live their lives within its framework. This gave a spiritual aspect to this research that positions it as Indigenist. On the other hand, I found that writing about history and ourstory (see chapter Four) brought me to great depths of sadness. It was traumatising and eye-opening.

My journey as a researcher also involved a number of levels of insider positioning (see Chapters One and Three), not only as an Aboriginal woman researching the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples, but also as a social worker. In Chapter Five I reviewed the literature, theories, practices and education of social workers around the kinship system and found that there was a gap in knowledge on this subject. Throughout this thesis I have an opportunity to provide information that will assist in closing this gap. Contained within this chapter are specific tools that have been developed as part of this thesis, and that can assist social workers to improve their practice. They will be introduced later in the chapter.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section will be about research, because my research experience brought home to me that the research process brings with it

particular issues for Aboriginal researchers. The second section deals with the first question and explains how the kinship system can empower Aboriginal people. The third section deals with the second question and addresses the level of knowledge of the kinship system currently found within social work. Finally, in answer to the main research question, the fourth section explains how knowledge of the kinship system can inform social work theory and practice.

Section One: Research

One aim of this thesis has been to develop an Australian Indigenist social work research framework (see Chapter One). My experiences in the course of preparing this thesis have brought up a number of considerations with regard to the research process when both the researcher and the research group are Aboriginal peoples and the supervisors are not. What will be addressed here is the moral compass; the researched group as partners; location; terminology; the full range of data and Indigenism.

Moral Compass

Developing a moral compass (see Chapter Two) is an important part of the process of preparing to work with the Aboriginal peoples, either through research or through direct practice. Researchers and their supervisors should first come to know themselves and their 'sites of privilege and potential power, be that based on race, gender, class, expertise or situational knowledge' (Crawford 2000, p. 205).

When contemplating working with the Aboriginal peoples, it is the responsibility of each researcher or practitioner to critically reflect upon who they are, where and how they are positioned in the world and where and how they might be positioned from the perspective

of Aboriginal peoples. They must also critically reflect upon their skill and knowledge base to ensure that if they do decide to undertake research with this population group they are proficient (Briskman, 2007). They need to determine that their reasons for wanting to work with the Aboriginal peoples are sound. They should also ensure that they do not bring with them stereotypes, prejudices (Baldry, Green & Thorpe, 2010) or the possibility of doing evil rather than good (Blackstock, 2009). As part of this self-examination and critical reflection, whiteness in social work theory and practice should be recognised, brought out into the open, and examined.

By reading the definition of a worldview provided in Chapter Two and examining the tacit knowledge and experiences that inform their own worldview, researchers and others can begin to reflect on the differences between their worldviews and the one that underpins this thesis, particularly with regard to how mine might be emerging from an entirely different worldview to theirs. Even though this thesis is being written to meet the requirements of western academia, it is embedded within an Australian Aboriginal worldview. What becomes clear is that one's worldview and lived experience inform one's standpoint (see Chapter Two) and the way one then interacts with the world.

It is important that academics analyse their own worldview and standpoint because those two things will colour the way they view work produced by academics from different cultural backgrounds. Work produced by others might require the academic to also examine their insider / outsider positioning and the role of stories and spirituality in their own life and their own work. Having done this, they should not put this information on the library shelf, but use it.

This self-examination leads one to develop one's own moral compass (see Chapter Two). If I, as an Indigenous Australian researcher, felt the need to create a moral compass before working with my own people - all of whom were related to me through the kinship system - so as to meet all protocols, how much more need is there for other researchers to do the same? This applies to Indigenous researchers, whether working among their own people or a different Indigenous population. This certainly also applies to non-Indigenous researchers.

Part of the role of the moral compass would be to ensure that the aims of the research include a win-win situation, rather than a one-sided mining of, and appropriation of, Indigenous knowledge, as has happened too often in the past (Smith, 1999). As this is implemented, the kinship system is strengthened because, for a win-win situation to occur the social worker would need to recognise, value and use Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in such a way that the community can see and share in the benefits.

Researched Group as Partners

Inclusion of the Aboriginal peoples as partners at all levels within the research process, including the ethics framework, will ensure that the research process is culturally, emotionally, spiritually, physically and psychologically safe for all involved. Aboriginal peoples included as cultural advisers should include Elders or those nominated by Elders, where they would act as guides, mentors, advocates and co-researchers, thus providing cultural congruency. Knowledge holders would be drawn from the broader community, depending on the topic. This process strengthens existing kinship ties and develops relationships of trust and accountability between the researcher and research group.

It is essential, where Elders are fulfilling their role, that their authority within the kinship system be recognised, because not all voices are equal. It is not a democracy with consensus; it is an Aboriginal system in which leaders have had to prove themselves over a lifetime, in order to gain the knowledge that places them in a leadership position.

Prior to progressing the research proposal with the university, it is important that the would-be researcher speak with the Elders and other important people within the community to ensure that the research is going to be relevant and of value to the research group, not just the researcher. If there are synergies between what the researcher wants to do and what the community wants, then the research should go ahead; but if there is incongruence between what the researcher wants and what the community wants, then the researcher should re-evaluate the topic that they are proposing to study, because it is important that there is always a win-win situation. The researcher could also share their view of why they believe this research is important and would benefit the community, but the ultimate decision remains with the community. This is something that has not often happened in the past: in the main, the research agenda has been set by others and not by the community and any community objections have been overruled, which is a continuation of colonisation.

A research example can be found in the work undertaken by Australian psychologist Melissa Feeney at the request of the Stolen Generations Alliance around an Aboriginal healing foundation similar to the one in Canada. This research was identified as a need by the Stolen Generations Alliance. Dr Feeney was approached and asked to do this research *pro bono* in the first year after the Apology. This helped to support and progress the discussion around a healing foundation model in Australia. Although this research was undertaken by Dr Feeney (a non-Indigenous researcher), it was owned and supported (not

financially) by Aboriginal people through providing access for Dr Feeney to the people she needed to speak to.

Returning Information to the Knowledge Holders

Returning information to the knowledge holders is one contribution this thesis seeks to make to the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples. Returning this information to those from whom it has been sourced will illustrate how their information has been used within the thesis. The way in which the information is returned needs to be culturally congruent. In order to do this, I have been going back to the knowledge holders at each phase to share with them, which themes were emerging and to give them the opportunity to vet it and to hold me to account. This was done face-to-face so I could sit down and explain things and see their body language. If I saw, by their body language, that they did not understand something, I explained further. These visual cues are not available by email or by phone.

The other thing that I did when I went back to speak to the knowledge holders, was to speak to them in a way in which they would feel comfortable. If they wanted to speak with me individually, that is what we did. If they preferred family members to be present, then we arranged that. If they wanted to speak to me in Kriol, then we spoke in Kriol. They guided me. This makes for a longer process, a process that is more culturally safe. It also allows their voices to continue to be heard well past the interviews.

Finally, wherever possible I personally visited each knowledge holder and gave him or her a synopsis of the thesis. This was about giving the knowledge holders something tangible that they could hold, read and share with others. The synopsis thus became another dimension of ourstory. When my thesis is published in book form, each knowledge holder will receive a copy. Our relationship, that for most knowledge holders and myself pre-

existed the research, will continue and develop as I inform them of other uses of my thesis findings in the future. This ongoing relationship is one aspect of Indigenist research that does not necessarily exist in western research.

Location and Power

Research is not an Aboriginal activity; it is a western activity, guided and ruled by western knowledge systems that are not always understood by Aboriginal people. This puts the researcher in a position of power, backed by the university, the funder (which is most often government) and the whole western knowledge system. Also, the findings of research are often imposed upon the community at a later date. Right from the beginning of their research, it is very important that researchers take actions to mitigate this power imbalance.

Location is important because it is connected with power. When I say that location should be taken into account, I mean where and how the people feel comfortable, not necessarily where the researcher feels comfortable. If the researcher has to leave their place of comfort and go to where the Aboriginal people are, there is a shift in power. Research often takes place in Aboriginal communities but this is only one aspect of location. Particularly where English is not the group's first language, the researcher needs to also take into account the knowledge holders' desire to either work as a group with just one spokesperson and the others signalling agreement or adding comments here and there, or to use a translator; as well as groups in which everyone's voice is heard.

Terminology

During the interviews for my thesis, one of the questions had to be modified because I, and even my cultural advisers, had made an assumption that the knowledge holders would

understand all of the questions and this proved to be incorrect. The problem was related to terminology rather than kinship knowledge. This is something for researchers to be aware of in the future.

Another factor is that of language, in that Aboriginal people have their own languages. In order of preference, a person might first speak his or her own language, followed by Kriol, then Aboriginal English, or a mixture of all of these. Care needs to be taken to ensure that nothing is lost in translation when speaking to the knowledge holders or when receiving information back from them. Since many English words have many meanings, and since Aboriginal English might add other meanings to a word, the researcher should ensure that all parties have a shared understanding.

When reviewing the literature I found that there was often an assumption that the kinship system was known about and understood by the readers. Few articles specifically named the kinship system and spoke about what was unique about it. The term ‘kinship system’ needs to become linked to a full and accurate description that will identify the differences between the Australian Aboriginal kinship system and all other family structures in Australia. By making this clear, researchers will understand the central role of the kinship system and why they should work with Aboriginal people in a different way.

Realising that Data are more than just Words

Aboriginal Circular Research, just like the throw net, has captured what is relevant for this study and allowed other things to flow out. One of the concepts woven throughout this thesis, and which has been made visible, is spirituality, which is fundamental to any research endeavour with Larrakia and Warumungu peoples, and is central to Aboriginal Circular Research. Spirituality permeates the whole of Aboriginal society. When

researchers recognise and use spirituality in culturally congruent ways, the kinship system is strengthened.

Another important aspect that emerged from this study is that qualitative research is more than just the written word. It is more than what is being asked in the interview and the reply. It encompasses all the factors that are relevant: in this case, stories, atmosphere, location and drawings. It includes the feelings shared between people once skin name information is exchanged and relationships established. When stories are shared, the layers of meaning can be peeled back to new or unexpected information.

Insider knowledge also played a role in the methodology and methods that were harnessed in this particular study and it is important to recognise that this will be a factor when the researcher and the group being researched are both Aboriginal (see chapter Three). There were several ways that this was illustrated in this study. The first was to do with the kinship circle of women in Tennant Creek having a spokesperson. The second was to do with the need for thinking time to be incorporated within the design of the study and its implementation. The third is tacit knowledge, which is gained from being an insider and having experience in how the kinship system works.

Indigenism

Indigenism and the development of Indigenist theories were used within this thesis and played a critical role. Academics should be aware of the emerging theories that are encompassed within this theoretical framework, particularly when they are supervising Aboriginal students, marking their papers and research, supervising placements and sharing ideas. Otherwise the dominance of western theories and research practices continues. Those who mark the work of the research students should understand

Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing, the kinship system and other aspects of Aboriginal life such as the importance of spirituality and the different protocols. Aboriginal research is subjective because, just as every other researcher brings with them their own ideologies, so does the Aboriginal researcher. Academics should analyse their own worldview and standpoint (see Chapter Two and Moral Compass, above) because it will impact on the way the work produced by academics from a different cultural background is viewed.

Indigenism was the theory that helped me to overcome the mental block that I suffered as I tried to fit my research into the dominant western theories. At this time, my academic advisers also offered support by identifying to me that they had noticed I think in circles so I should return to this process. Other Indigenous researchers have noted that a significant number of Aboriginal researchers have begun a PhD but not completed it (Arbon, 2008). I myself have experienced this difficulty and came close to giving up. However, one of the major things that kept me going was that I wanted to blaze a trail for other Aboriginal researchers but, more particularly, for other Aboriginal social work researchers, to give them the message, *“If I can do it, so can you!”*

The issue of methodology could be a contributing factor to this lack of completion within social work and it is proposed that research be undertaken to ascertain whether this hypothesis is correct. The increasing focus and development of Indigenous theories should help the search for a methodology. I recommend that students read other Indigenous researchers’ PhDs, both national and international, including those of other disciplines. They should pay particular attention to methodologies and to any personal expressions about the research journey. It is essential for Aboriginal peoples to write and publish, even when still students, in order to put out stepping-stones for others who follow.

Foley (2003) speaks of the added burden placed upon Aboriginal researchers when their supervisors are not Indigenous, as these researchers have to explain Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing; the kinship system; cultural protocols and worldviews to their supervisors, as well as undertake the research. I experienced this on a number of occasions throughout this research journey (see Chapter Two). There is also a strong case for having one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal supervisor. This would accomplish two things. The Aboriginal supervisor could alleviate the burden of the student having to explain Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. This does not negate the need for the student to explain this in their research, if necessary. The second advantage is in having supervisors with different backgrounds who will bring two different worldviews and strengths to the research process.

Some of the methods that have come out of this study may be relevant, not only for the Larrakia and Warumungu people, but for other Aboriginal nations in Australia as well as other Indigenous groups internationally. This is illustrated through the connections and synergies between my work and that of other Indigenous researchers throughout the world. The methods, methodologies and axiology must suit the group involved in the research. This was why Indigenist theory was used and Aboriginal Circular Research developed to guide this study.

How to Bring Back the Kinship System

Mrs Fejo gives some very good advice that could be a guide for Aboriginal peoples who may have moved away from the kinship system (had a choice at some point), forgotten it (as a result of the deaths of their Elders and teachers), or been removed from it (had no choice in the matter, e.g. the Stolen Generations and their descendants) and wish to reclaim

what is their birthright - a knowledge of the kinship system - and to live their lives within its framework.

Mrs Fejo said: *“Anything can be revitalised, Chris. You got documentation on it. Other people [anthropologists] before have documented the skin kinship system. Aboriginal people - the senior Elders and the senior women Elders - should go in and help: they should be called in to help to keep it going... Right? Give time. How much time does it take to take a class? One hour, half an hour, three quarters of an hour? Start from small.”*

Section Two: How Does the Kinship System Support, Guide and Structure Larrakia and Warumungu Families, Clans and Nations?

The question, *“How does the kinship system support, guide and structure Larrakia and Warumungu families, clans and nations?”* sought answers around whether the kinship system is the glue that holds the Aboriginal peoples together as families, clans and nations. It asked if the kinship system provides safety, harmony, and balance by structuring and guiding all relationships and connections that exist in the Aboriginal world through the kinship system and skin names. This question has been supported in the affirmative by the interviews with the knowledge holders (see Chapters Six and Seven).

The four interview questions reflect one of the major aims of this study. This was to empower Aboriginal peoples through exploring and returning knowledge about the kinship system to those who may have moved away from it (had a choice at some point), forgotten it (as a result of the deaths of their Elders and teachers), or been removed from it (had no choice in the matter, e.g. the Stolen Generations and their descendants).

Sharing Information with the Wider Aboriginal Population

For other Aboriginal people, the insights about how the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples is used, maintained and sometimes modified will make it valuable to them. When the children were stolen (see chapter Three), they tried to stay in their family groups. When they could not and were divided up and sent to different missions and institutions, they still regrouped themselves along kinship patterns. Using this part of ourstory, those who still have the kinship system can use this model to assist others to revitalise it. Doing this will build stronger networks between the Elders and the younger generations. It will strengthen Aboriginal people's pride in their identity. It will begin to help people to understand their responsibilities to each other in greater depth. This may then lead to a lessening of the internal violence and a strengthening of the people as individuals, clans and nations. It will also build stronger ties between different Aboriginal nations.

If people are not sure whether they have the kinship system or not (see the students in Chapter One), this thesis can help them to identify the kinship system in their lives (see Richie's story in Chapter Six). Those who have lost the kinship system or have been removed from it can search for and find their own (not just take the kinship system from another area). All these are possible steps for Aboriginal people to take: this is about self-empowerment and has nothing to do with governments.

Section Three: Is there Sufficient Knowledge of the Kinship System within the Social Work Literature?

The second supporting question was to determine what level of available information currently exists about the kinship system for social workers in their education, theory and practice, or within the literature. It was determined that there is not enough detail of the kinship system to lead social workers to develop culturally congruent and safe ways of working with the Aboriginal peoples. The Larrakia and Warumungu knowledge holders felt that knowledge of the kinship system should be included in social work education, in the theories that are developed and studied, and in the social work literature.

The overall purpose of this thesis is not to gather data and have it sit on a library shelf gathering dust (Stanner, 1991 Ed.), but rather to unite two quite different sources – the kinship system (from Aboriginal culture), and social work theory and practice (from a western background); in order to bring about a paradigm shift in social work practice. This will enable the building of a new model of social work that is uniquely Australian and will better meet the needs of the Aboriginal peoples in the future.

Governments and the Kinship System

Although talking specifically about social work here, it is also essential that a paradigm shift occur within governments; that they recognise the value of the kinship system and use it to inform projects and programs; because, as clearly illustrated through the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* program, they may have successes where they have previously had failure. As governments employ a large number of social workers any shift in social work theory and practice will also flow across into government.

Future Research

It is proposed that a study be undertaken that looks at what happens in a community where the kinship system is working well. There is a difference in the kinship system being used properly along cultural lines, rather than being manipulated for personal or family gain. Choice of communities would be made by Aboriginal people themselves. They would self-nominate and claim that the kinship system was working well for them. Questions that can be addressed at a community level could include the following: If the kinship system is working well, is there a lower level of violence or abuse than in communities where the kinship system is not working well? Are there higher education and employment levels? Are there better levels of mental health and social and emotional well-being? As this is a comparative question, the researcher should involve a number of different communities in the research.

There were a number of issues raised within this study by the knowledge holders that may benefit from further research. These are: the relationship between lack of training in the kinship system and involvement in crime; correlation between influence of western culture and lack of interest in Aboriginal culture; causes of untimely deaths of those trained to be leaders; knowledge of the kinship system held by people in different age groups and in different skin name groups. All these studies would need to be completed by those with insider access who are known by, and have relationships of trust with the people they want to engage with; and the information gleaned returned in a useful form to the knowledge holders.

I propose that the efficacy of government organisations learning about and harnessing the kinship system be tested in the following way. Two kinds of communities with similar

levels of poverty, unemployment and general levels of health could be selected, where one has the kinship system operating properly and the other one does not. Government services could be offered in two different ways, one following current practices and the other being in a culturally congruent and safe way that harnesses the kinship system and empowers the Aboriginal people (see Governance in Chapter Seven). It is recommended that this research not be confined to the rural and remote communities that anthropology has focused on in the past, but be broadened to some of the urban nations.

It is also proposed that, when governments and other service deliverers want to develop and introduce a new program, they use the kinship system as the vehicle to introduce, guide and support it. There has certainly been an example of where, when the kinship system is incorporated into finding answers to health issues, it can work well, as with the *Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture* Program (see Chapters Three and Six). If it can work for that program, where the kinship system played such a vital role, it can be replicated in dealing with other issues.

Ourstory of Social Work

Before this new model of social work can be developed and implemented, the hurts and abuses of the past and which continue in the present must be identified, acknowledged and addressed. Muriel Bamblett of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) shared the following definition of cultural abuse:

When the culture of a people is ignored, denigrated, or worse, intentionally attacked. It is abuse because it strikes at the very identity and soul of the people it is aimed at; it attacks their sense of self-esteem, it attacks their connectedness to their family and community (Bamblett & Lewis, 2007, p. 42).

Cultural abuse is the total opposite to the ‘cultural courage’ called for by Zubrzycki and Bennet (2006) or the fundamental challenge that Briskman presented to all social workers in Australia who work with the Aboriginal peoples to, ‘help create a renewed and reinvigorated social work with Indigenous peoples’ (2007, p. 24).

Some Australians might argue that Aboriginal peoples must conform to Australian dominant society views. However, there is also the argument that this expectation takes us back to the invasion template and, in particular, to the Assimilation Policy (see chapter Four).

One direction in which social workers are being pulled reflects the structural versus individual model of social work, whilst the other reflects care versus control, so we can see that the issues of early social work remain embedded within social work today (see Chapter Five).

In Chapter One, I explained that the stories that constitute ourstory came from two sources: from the Wirnkarra and from colonization. Here in Chapter Eight, when discussing ourstory specifically in relation to social work, there are also two sets of stories. One set of stories will make visible the views held by Aboriginal peoples about social work and social workers and the reasons why these views are held. It will bring to light failures - the trauma and insecurity experienced by those who should have been nurtured and empowered. It will also show successes – where Aboriginal peoples were indeed helped by social workers. Using the throw net will enable those aspects of current social work theory and practice that are of benefit to Aboriginal peoples to be caught within it, identified and described, and to let everything else flow out.

The other set of stories will describe the working model of Australian Aboriginal social work referred to in Chapter Five. For these stories to be made available to the wider social community, Aboriginal social workers need to write books about the history of Aboriginal social work in this country. We must ensure as part of this that we write about our experiences and our practice; and it is especially important that we explain specifically how the kinship system contributes to Aboriginal social work where relevant. This will illustrate that Aboriginal social work with Aboriginal peoples has been a different stream of social work, happening in parallel to that of non-Indigenous social workers. These stories will illustrate that Aboriginal social work has been much more successful structurally and with individuals and families because it is a model which is specific to the culture of the Aboriginal peoples and takes into account the local history and experiences of the clients.

Up until now, social work history has not been aware of ourstory. What is now needed is for ourstory to be recognised, valued and validated. Including ourstory in social work theory and practice in Australia will assist in making the paradigm shift in social work. It will also add another dimension to social work, thus bringing about a diminution in the whiteness that currently exists in social work.

More Learning in Schools of Social Work

Due to many layers of insider positioning (see chapter Three) the use of Indigenist Theory, the development of Aboriginal Circular Research and the use of protocols within the kinship system, this thesis has offered new insights, not only into the kinship system, but also into how a much greater depth of initial knowledge possessed by the researcher lends itself to culturally respectful, congruent and safe practice. A working knowledge of the

kinship system should therefore be part of the practice principles of anyone or any profession before they are permitted to engage with our families, no matter who they are, so that they can also operate in a culturally congruent, respectful and safe way.

This lack of a working knowledge of Aboriginal kinship is quite possibly one of the reasons that many policies, practices and services are not achieving what they aim to with regard to the Aboriginal peoples. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN, 2007) should also be part of the curriculum. Apart from validating the study of the kinship system, the United Nations Declaration would help students to identify whiteness and any other biases within their practice and within their own worldviews.

In Australian social work education, the schools of social work would need to play an active role in ensuring that Aboriginal social work is part of the curriculum and that Aboriginal social workers who understand the intricacies of the kinship system are employed to teach it. This would replace cultural awareness and sensitivity training, which, after twenty years of use, have not succeeded in bringing about any major change in practice.

Opportunities for cultural immersion experiences rather than cultural awareness will build social work knowledge and experience of working with the kinship system as the Aboriginal people use it. If social workers are not culturally competent prior to working in an Aboriginal setting or with Aboriginal clients they should not be employed to do so, as a lot of harm can be done through good intentions that view Aboriginal social work as being the same as social work with other groups, which is a one-shoe-fits-all ideology (Blackstock, 2009).

Learning in Field Education Placements

The kinship system is the Aboriginal model of helping which western social workers and others have discounted. They have then tried to substitute social work, which has not always been successful. There is a lot that social work can learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing embedded in the kinship system. The reason for placements would be not just to learn communication protocols or to get a skin name, but to see the kinship system at work caring for all by means of a comprehensive range of rights and responsibilities shared by all age groups and both genders. This will shift social work practice from a deficit- to a strengths-based model. This goes back to Richie's story about the lawyers (see Chapter Seven), where, when working with Aboriginal people, one has to turn upside-down everything they have learned and realise that they are not the expert.

Just as those students who started me on this journey realised that the western theories they were being taught were not relevant to their communities, so social workers in general need to understand that the western theories and practices they have learned are not necessarily useful in an Aboriginal context. By listening, observing and being teachable whilst on placement, social workers can begin to develop the practices that are necessary to bring about the paradigm shift. Placements also address the issue of location and power discussed above.

In 2005, when the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Social Workers' Association raised the issue of students completing placements in an Aboriginal setting with the AASW (personal knowledge), the answer was that there were not enough placements and too many students. However, this thinking is very narrow because Aboriginal placements can be located in Aboriginal research or in Aboriginal projects and

programs. The essential ingredient is that the research, project or program is identified, supported, directed and owned by Aboriginal families, clans, nations or organisations. It is absolutely essential that, unlike the *Little Children are Sacred* report, neither the work nor its findings are commandeered by governments and the recommendations disregarded (see suggestions for governments, above).

Projects or programs can be supported in the long term by successive placements, whereby the social work educator, students, families and communities work in partnership to build the skills of all concerned, not just the social workers. This will achieve a number of goals for the social work students as well as for the Aboriginal family, nation or community. It will build relationships of trust and it will begin to embed Aboriginal-centred ways of social work education, theory and practice. The stable factors in this model must be the Aboriginal family, community or service along with the social work educator. The latter would ensure the smooth transition of students in and out of the programs.

To facilitate the capacity of social workers to understand basic aspects of the kinship system, the Kinship Mapping Tool has been developed. It will be invaluable for social workers to use this tool as they begin a new placement or meet a new Aboriginal client for the first time, as explained below.

The Kinship Mapping Tool: A Supplement to Genograms

A genogram is a western tool, which was developed to assist a helping professional to visualise the nuclear family structure, social networks and relational dynamics of a client (Harms, 2010). Examples of helping professions that use genograms are social workers, psychologists and medical practitioners. Researchers and anthropologists also use genograms. Since each client's details are different, each genogram will look different and

be drawn up by the helping professional in such a way as to show the information they need at a glance. While genograms are helpful for most clients, they do not always fit the needs of Aboriginal peoples who live their lives within the system of eight (see Skin Names in Chapter Three).

When working with Aboriginal peoples and where there is not a possible threat to the safety of the social worker, the social worker should seek to build a relationship of trust by introducing themselves in a way which aligns with the Aboriginal protocol of introducing oneself. This opens up dialogue and paves the way for the social worker to set up a culturally congruent interaction. It aligns with the Aboriginal protocol of positioning oneself in the Aboriginal world at first meeting. The information exchanged by Aboriginal peoples includes name, clan (family group), skin name, country and nation or tribe.

An example is as follows: *“Hello, my name is Jane Smith. I work with the Family Coordination Section of this organisation. I was originally from Sydney but moved to Canberra about three years ago. My parents are from England.”* This social worker has said who they are by giving their first name. They have given the equivalent of the clan or family group by saying their last name. Their job identifies how they should be related to. Where they come from can equate to country and their ethnic background can align with nation or tribal affiliation.

In searching for information, it may be too difficult for a social worker that does not understand the kinship system to ask the right questions or to accurately write the answers. Therefore, a tool has been developed to specifically address this need. The Kinship Mapping Tool can be shared by the social worker with the client, who can point out or circle the answers that relate to them. Information in the Kinship Mapping Tool includes

the client's country, nation, totem and kinship structure. On the map of Australia, the client marks the region they come from and writes the name of their nation or tribe. If they are part of the Stolen Generations and do not know this information, a comment is written to that effect and they should be asked if there is a mission, institution, or community that they identify with. Next, totems are addressed, by the client selecting from the pictures provided, or by drawing or writing theirs if it is not there. Again, if the client does not know this information, this is noted.

Next, family structure is identified, by displaying a genogram and the Warumungu Skin Name Cycle, which is the System of Eight. The client is asked which of these looks most like their kinship structure. Once the client identifies which one aligns with their family, the relevant information is mapped. It should not be taken for granted that one or the other of these will suit the client due to their current place of residence because the kinship system that frames their lives is still relevant even if they have moved to another part of Australia. Once the information is gathered, if it is identified that the System of Eight rather than a genogram is appropriate, this broadens the pool of people with a responsibility for that family or child, thus providing a greatly increased support base.

For example, when a child needs out-of-home care, the worker will usually look to the genogram to locate family members that the child can be placed with. If no family members are available to assist, then following the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, another Aboriginal family is approached, and if there are no options in that group, the child is placed outside the Aboriginal community. Using the Kinship Mapping Tool means that the social worker, at a glance, can see there are other options within the Aboriginal community.

To strengthen and extend the pool of Aboriginal carers, kinship mapping information about the carers should be used to update the Aboriginal carer database. The Kinship Mapping Tool should also be used in the recruitment of new Aboriginal carers. Until this is done, the social worker can use the Kinship Mapping Tool directly. With the Kinship Mapping Tool available, when a child needs out-of-home care, the worker will first check whether the child's kinship system fits the genogram or the System of Eight. For the genogram, they proceed as normal. For the System of Eight, they go to Step 2 of the Kinship Mapping Tool, which is the totemic system, and find a match. Matching a child within their totemic system is very important because the totemic system directs the food that is eaten or not eaten, and the ceremony, song, dance and spiritual connection to the totem; which, if not matched, removes the child from the correct strand of the kinship system. An example of a mismatch is when an emu child is placed with a crocodile family. To explain how important this is, examples from other cultures could include feeding a Jewish child non-kosher food, or feeding a Muslim child during daylight hours in Ramadan.

Kinship Mapping Tool

Stolen Generations:

Mission, Institution or Community:

Nation or Tribe:

Skin Name:

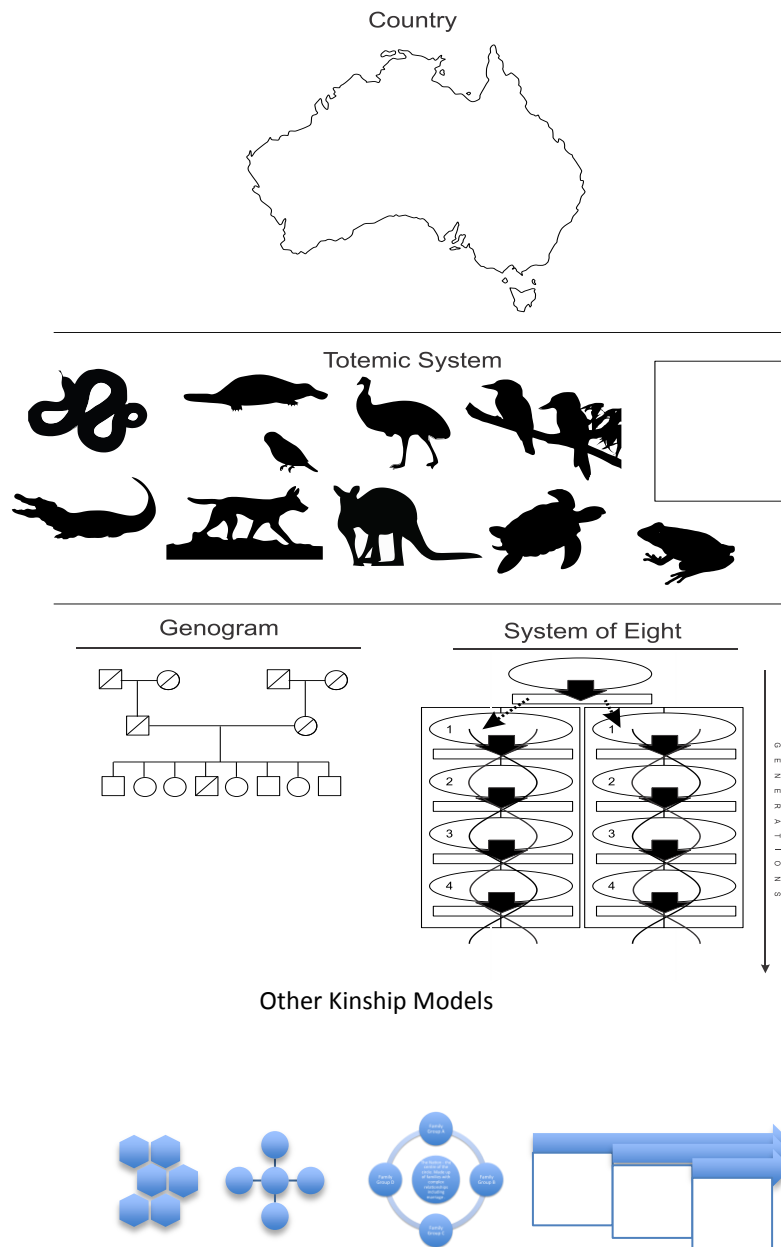


Figure 11: Kinship Mapping Tool

Updating Qualifications

Apart from social work students who learnt on placement about the Aboriginal kinship system and how to use it in practice, there are a relatively small number of non-Indigenous social workers that understand the complexities and intricacies of the kinship system and how it can be harnessed to inform social work theory and practice. Until this changes, the form of social work that is being practised in Australia is unsafe for Aboriginal peoples. With regard to social work students, the curricula should to be written and rolled out to all schools of social work.

Social workers already in the field, as part of their practice principles, would be expected to participate in training that is specifically focused on the incorporation of the kinship system in social work theory and practice. At the moment, to make up this deficit in knowledge, there is a dependence on Aboriginal social workers and others to continually act as the mediators and cultural teachers for non-Aboriginal social workers in the field. When you think about this from the perspective of what should be prior knowledge before working with a particular population group, this is unacceptable practice. It also burdens Aboriginal social workers with an extra workload that is often unacknowledged, unpaid and unrewarded in promotion.

The strategies above would enable certification of social workers as competent to work in Aboriginal settings. Aboriginal leaders in Queensland have called for regulation of service deliverers going into their communities (Gray, 2009). These service deliverers, which include social workers, should be certified; firstly, as being competent to work with Aboriginal peoples, and secondly, competent to work in the local Aboriginal context. The

Spectrum of Practice (introduced below) could be used to support this. This study supports a shift in social work theory and practice.

In 2009, at the International Social Work Conference held in Auckland, New Zealand; Maori leader Mason Durie spoke about this issue and the need for the social workers of the Asia-Pacific region to begin to develop social work models of practice that are uniquely relevant to the ideology, history, lived experiences and ways of doing that belong to this region of the world. His idea of using the local context of these lands fits with the findings of this thesis.

The way that this might be achieved in Australia is by Aboriginal social workers taking the lead. It means that Aboriginal social workers become the experts around working with Aboriginal people. It gives back our voice and our power, which, at the moment, is dominated by the voices of white social workers. Aboriginal social workers who live within the kinship system bring different knowledge and insights and will add real value to the theories and practices that need to be developed. This is applying Indigenist theory and giving the subjective viewpoint a voice.

Generic social work has, as its goals, social justice and human rights. Aboriginal social work is much more focused and clearly targets empowerment and self-determination. It will use all its networks to support the achievement of these goals. The inclusion of Indigenist theory is also essential. Studying the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, paying particular attention to its requirements in regard to Articles 5, 11, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 25, 31, 34 and 40 would also bring new insights (UN, 2007).

As mentioned in Chapter Five, there is a wide range of cultural practice within Australia. However, what is missing is a tool to assist the social worker to identify exactly where they

are within this range and what actions they should take to shift their practice. The following section introduces a tool that has been developed as part of this research. This tool can guide practitioners.

Section Four: How can the Kinship System of the Aboriginal Peoples inform Social Work Theory and Practice?

The main research question for this thesis was, “*How can the kinship system of the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples inform social work theory and practice?*” In answering this question, I have not only gathered information, but also developed a tool that will assist social workers to position themselves on a spectrum of practice by means of a pendulum. Both the pendulum and the spectrum will be described below.

Pendulum of Practice

Muriel Bamblett (2008) introduced a Cultural Continuum, which was illustrated as a series of stages that practitioners could move through to reach culturally safe practice. Her work is acknowledged here. However, there are a number of areas of digression between her model and the way in which I perceive culturally congruent practice in Australia.

First, the model she uses makes no mention of cultural awareness and sensitivity, which are the dominant cultural practices in Australia today, in which all service deliverers who interact with Aboriginal people are required to participate and receive training. Second, there is no identification of the knowledge systems from which the models identified in the continuum are emerging except that the diagram comes from the mind of an American.

Third, the model depicts the movement of the person engaged in this practice as being in one direction only, with no mention of the local context, knowledge or experience of the worker being taken into account. Fourth, there is no way for an individual, agency, department or organisation to identify and position itself on the continuum. Fifth, there is no tool provided, nor suggestion made, around how one positions oneself on the continuum. Lastly, there is no tool provided that enables the measurement of practice with goals to be achieved that would enable critical and informed movement across the continuum.

In contrast to the cultural continuum Bamblett uses, what I propose is a Pendulum of Practice. Following on from Mason Durie's (2010) suggestion, this is a social work model based on Indigenist theory. The Pendulum of Practice represents the social worker as a pendulum that can swing in both directions, dependent upon the context of practice. Their expertise, knowledge and past experience first place them as the pendulum at a certain point as they enter a given context; but it is their teachability⁶⁷ that determines which way they, as the pendulum, will swing, as well as how far and how fast. Since Aboriginal groups differ in various ways from each other, the social worker does not stay in exactly the same position on the spectrum when they move to a new practice context.

In the figure below, entitled the *Spectrum of Practice*, the bar on the bottom is the spectrum and depicts the types of practice currently in use. The social worker is represented by the pendulum and can assess their type of practice each time they use the spectrum.

⁶⁷ Willingness to be taught; to see themselves as the student rather than the expert; the humility to learn from those who might have much less formal western education than themselves.

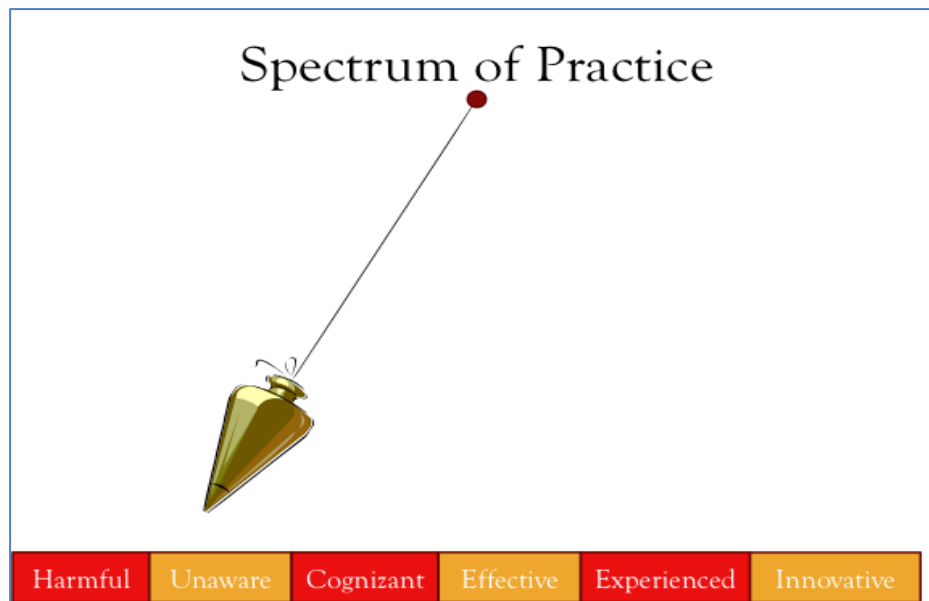


Figure 12: Spectrum of Practice

Why use a Matrix to Unpack Practice?

The spectrum in the figure above is just a series of column headings and is of little use until these headings are fully explained. This explanation is provided through a series of matrices. However, given the constraints of this thesis, only the basic matrix is included here.

Column Headings in the Basic Matrix

Column headings summarise the social worker's level of functioning and are arranged in order from least to most desirable. These enable social workers to not only critically evaluate and place themselves within the Spectrum of Practice, but also to clearly see the path they can take to improve their practice. It should be recognised that, in each practice context, you may start at a different position. The figure below unpacks in detail the meaning of each column heading.

Column	Examples “You are...”	Description “You...”
Harmful	Discriminatory Stereotypical Prejudicial Racist Oppressive Self-serving	Favour one above another Classify all as fitting a certain mould Are biased against See them as inferior Impose upon rather than collaborate with Are only in it for the money, not the client
Unaware	Ignorant Wilfully blind	Have no understanding of the people or the history Ignore obvious signs and messages
Cognizant	Aware Non-judgmental Ineffective	Have cognitive recognition, but it doesn’t necessarily lead to positive action. This is where cultural awareness sits. Can listen to other sides of the story Are basically not getting the job done
Effective	Consultative Participatory Culturally considerate Reflective Competent	Ask for others’ opinions and advice before acting Include others Recognise that there are differences in culture, then act in culturally congruent ways Think about own practice and improve practice based on those reflections Are fully aware, engaged and able to get the job done
Experienced	A source of information Empowering A challenger of inequalities Listener One who walks beside	Share information with the people that need it Recognise the strengths and capacity of others and enable them to use these to bring about change Speak out fearlessly, even to own employer or government, about injustices, but still implement if ordered Internalise requests, consider, take responsibility and implement Recognise when the client is the expert and learn from them then
Innovative	Able to be led by the people A person who fights wilful blindness	Are humble Recognise self as the student and support leadership shown by client See the client as the expert and empower and encourage them Recognise the political and structural agendas of others Not only refuse to implement policies and practices that are morally and ethically flawed, but... Can categorise approaches that are more appropriate, see what could be done instead, develop proposals and advocate for change (due to depth of knowledge and level of trust)

Figure 13: Explanation of Column Headings in the Basic Matrix of Practice

Row Titles

Each row represents one criterion that social workers should develop in order to function effectively when working with the Aboriginal peoples. All these criteria, when grouped together, comprise the basic matrix. In this basic matrix, the rows help social workers to assess their knowledge of Aboriginal nations, kinship, protocols, country and history.

As you read each column in the row, there is a description of variations of one criterion, ranging from harmful to innovative, or in other words, from least desirable to most desirable. One of these descriptions will most closely reflect social workers' competence in regard to that criterion. This is where the social worker, as the pendulum, has swung in that row. As the social worker reads each row they may find that, just as a pendulum swings back and forth, they land in different columns for different criteria.

Basic Matrix of Practice

The basic matrix of practice will help each social worker to identify where their current practice sits. It can and should be used before entering an Aboriginal practice setting to help the social worker to identify both their strengths and their gaps in knowledge in broad terms. When used during employment in that particular Aboriginal practice setting, it can be used to guide the social worker to improve their skills and practices in the local context. When used after completion of work in that particular practice setting, but before beginning a new one, it serves as confirmation of local proficiency but, due to the pendulum effect, does not translate directly into local proficiency in the new context.

As an example, I, as an Aboriginal social worker from the Northern Territory, would rate well on the broad spectrum, but if I were asked to work with Torres Strait Islander people I would rate much lower because my knowledge and experience in this area is much less. In

fact, even in the Northern Territory, I would rate much more highly with the Larrakia and the Warumungu than I would with the Tiwi or the Arunta.

As the social worker positions themselves in each row, they are depicted as a pendulum swinging back and forth between the columns, dependent upon on their expertise in each criterion. When they use the matrix before accepting an assignment, they will address the criteria in general terms. However, best practice dictates that when they use the matrix again partway through an assignment, when they are already engaged with an Aboriginal community or organisation, they tweak the wording in each box to fit the local context as they assess themselves. The social worker may find that the pendulum will swing for many criteria now that they need to hone their skills for the local context. For example, instead of reading Row A as 'Nations', they should read it as 'Recognition of the Nations Who Live in', for example, Tennant Creek. This would be repeated for all other criteria. Due to the depth of information provided, the matrix is spread over the next five pages, with one row of the matrix on each page.

	Harmful	Unaware	Cognizant	Experienced	Effective	Innovative
Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing one person as 'more Aboriginal' than another. • Seeing a fairer skinned person as not a genuine Aboriginal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are the same as each other. 	<p>Realising that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are two different groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Torres Strait Islanders are Melanesian ○ Aboriginal Australians' origins are embedded within the Continent of Australia • There are many different Aboriginal nations. • Each nation has its own: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Country ○ Language 	<p>Realising that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving the whole continent the name of Australia is a western practice. • Calling all continental peoples 'Aboriginal' is also western. • Nowadays Aboriginal people from some states and territories give themselves an overall name e.g. Koori, Murray, Nguar, and Ngngas. • The real identifier for each Aboriginal person is their own nation. • Recognition that many of the Stolen Generations do not know which nations they are from. 	<p>Knowing that, apart from their nation, each Aboriginal person can be identified according to the main type of terrain their nation dwells in e.g. salt water, desert, lake, forest, island, mountain or plain. This means different:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods • Musical instruments • Dances • Stories • Ways of doing things because of connection to country • Different kinds of totems • Different kinds of ceremonies 	<p>Knowing that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nations sometimes connect to neighbouring nations with e.g. shared ceremonies and song lines. • Ancient trade routes cross the whole continent. • Individuals, families and nations are connected through the kinship system across modern Australia.

Figure 14: Nations

	Harmful	Unaware	Cognizant	Experienced	Effective	Innovative
Kinship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not accepting that there is a difference between Aboriginal kinship and the family structure of the dominant society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a genogram to 'map the family tree' of the Aboriginal peoples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realising that the kinship system is different but not knowing in what ways • Not knowing how to explain it or use it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing that the kinship system includes land, law and culture • Using a Kinship Map to gather kinship information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing about and being able to explain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Moiety ○ Skin groupings ○ Totems and ○ Song lines • Using data from Kinship Mapping appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing that the kinship system includes everything within the cosmos and being able to explain the connections. • Knowing how all parts of the kinship system support each other and impact on each other and on the lives of the Aboriginal peoples.

Figure 15: Kinship

	Harmful	Unaware	Cognizant	Experienced	Effective	Innovative
Protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuming the Aboriginal peoples do not understand what is being said to them. • Talking down to Aboriginal people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking that western methods of communication and western rules about introductions are the right ways to interact with the Aboriginal peoples. • Being unaware of the protocols of the Aboriginal peoples when working with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing protocols for being on someone else's country. • Knowing how to address Elders and Law People. • Knowing the importance that Aboriginal peoples place on introductions when meeting for the first time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing the etiquette for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ giving people thinking time ○ not expecting immediate answers to questions ○ waiting until it's your turn to speak (not talking over others or using their speaking time) • Knowing the difference between welcome to country, acknowledgement and reply to welcome to country. • Knowing protocols for speaking about deceased persons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing and using the previously introduced protocols as well as those around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ going into a person's home ○ personal space ○ giving and receiving gifts. 	Knowing, using and understanding the meanings and nuances contained within specific protocols and when and how to use them effectively.

Figure 16: Protocols

	Harmful	Unaware	Cognizant	Experienced	Effective	Innovative
Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing about our story as it relates to land and our connection to our country. • Believing that the Aboriginal peoples have no connection to their homelands. • Believing that the Aboriginal peoples put in land claims in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take white people's land from them. ○ Get rich. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking that the Aboriginal peoples view land the same way in which it is viewed by white people • Viewing land as a commodity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that the Aboriginal peoples were the owners and custodians of this land well before the British arrived. • Knowing that there are sacred sites on country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing that 'Country' identifies a geographical area associated with a particular nation, clan or family group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that the Aboriginal peoples continue to be custodians of the land. • Recognising that these rights have never been sold or ceded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding and incorporating the notions of country as held by Aboriginal peoples within practice where applicable.

Figure 17: Country

	Harmful	Unaware	Cognizant	Experienced	Effective	Innovative
History	<p>Biased against Aboriginal peoples as shown by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making disparaging remarks about ourstory. • Only accepting the white version as in early history books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having no understanding or interest in the history of the people you are working with. • Being wilfully blind – have ignored obvious signs and measures such as acknowledgement that wrong has been done to the Aboriginal peoples by Australian governments as evidenced through the Stolen Generations and the apology offered to the Aboriginal peoples in 2007 by Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realising that the Aboriginal peoples have different experiences and views about what happened in Australia from the time of the British invasion. • Understanding the invasion template as used and followed in Australia by the British and their descendants. • Realising that the privileges and wealth experienced by white Australia and others have come and continue to come at the expense of the Aboriginal peoples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing about the slavery and imposed poverty of the Aboriginal peoples. • Knowing about the ‘trust funds’ and the ‘missing’ funds that belong to the Aboriginal peoples and the way this has contributed to the poverty of the people. • Understanding the impact of the Stolen Generations on the mental health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal peoples and the continuing trauma of the Northern Territory Intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing about the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as supported in 2008 by the Rudd Government and working towards a shift in practice to enable this document to act as a litmus test for practice in an Australian setting. • Recognising the importance of many stories in providing a whole picture and being open to this way of thinking, listening and acting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the impact of history as it impacts on the lives of the Aboriginal peoples today. • Knowing about and being willing to listen to ourstory and being guided in practice by this context. • Being guided in practice and interactions with the Aboriginal peoples by the many stories of survival and resilience.

Figure 18: History

Generic Versus Specific Practice

Just as an individual social worker can assess themselves, so can an organisation. The following figures illustrate where an organisation might sit in relation to the spectrum of practice. With the organisation as the pendulum, the figures below are arranged in order from least desirable to most desirable in terms of the practice the organisation expects of its employees in relation to the Aboriginal peoples. Since generic practice has been the industry standard, with cultural awareness training in place, most organisations might find they begin on generic practice since cultural awareness is not enough to move an organisation to Aboriginalisation. Aboriginalisation has, for the most part, been left to the Aboriginal staff. In order for the pendulum to swing, a majority of staff would need to use the matrix above to move their practice to innovative.

An organisation can only achieve Aboriginal practice by having a good percentage (fifty percent or more) of Aboriginal employees, all of whom are supported to do Aboriginal social work (see Chapter Five) with their Aboriginal colleagues and clients; while all non-Aboriginal employees are participating in Aboriginalisation rather than generic practice. Obviously, social workers would use another model of social work with non-Indigenous clients. This is the best form of customising the service to the needs of the client and the employees. In this way, social workers and organisations will “respect others’ beliefs, religious or spiritual world views, values, culture, goals, needs and desires, as well as kinship and communal bonds, within a framework of social justice and human rights’ (AASW, 2010, p. 17).

The Pendulum of Practice, Spectrum of Practice and Basic Matrix of Practice have all been developed to show how the kinship system can inform social work theory and practice.

Even though these tools were developed to help the Aboriginal peoples, there is broader applicability as the matrix can be rewritten for other minority groups such as migrants or people with special needs.

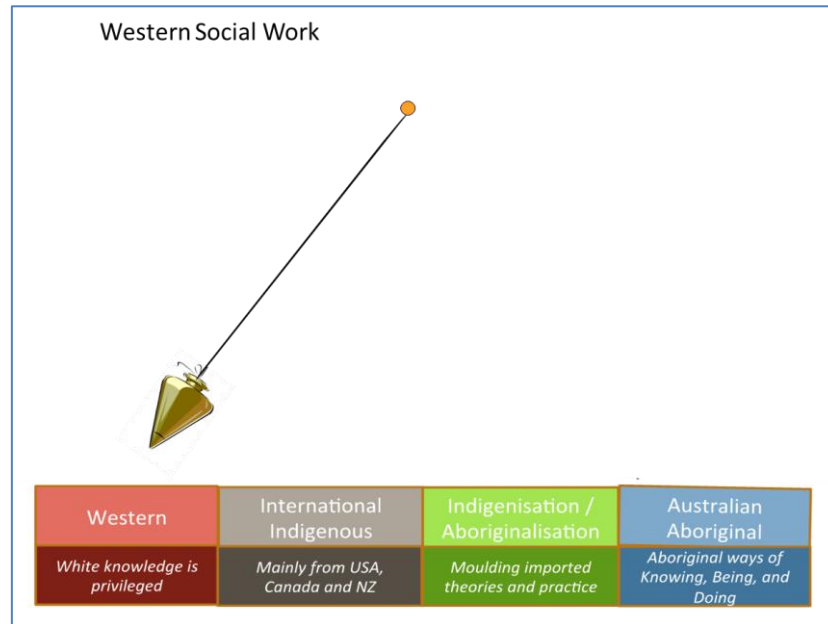


Figure 19: Western social work as generic practice – this is a one shoe fits all type of social work dominated by a western worldview. Even with the best of intentions using this model social workers can cause harm.

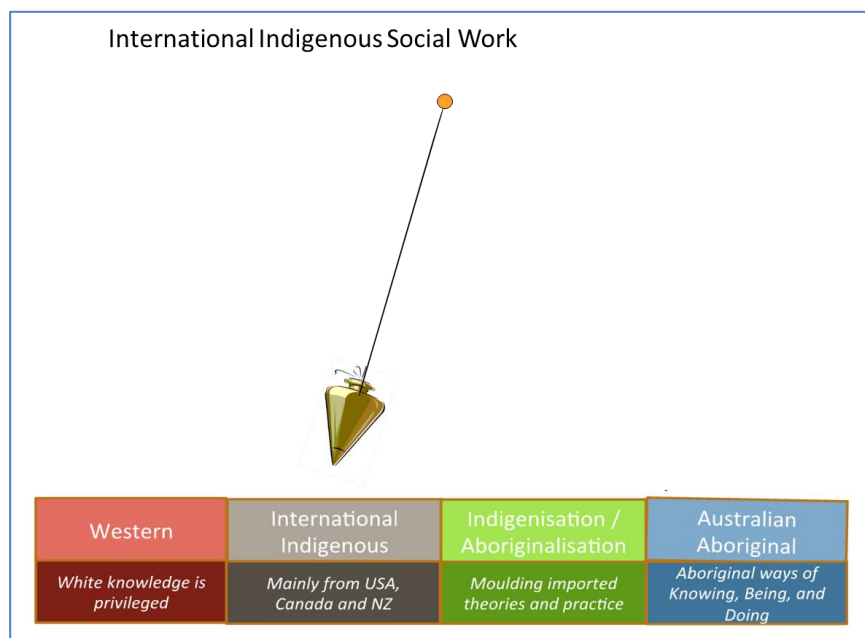


Figure 20: International Indigenous Social Work as Indigenous Practice from other Cultures – this type of social work comes from an Indigenous worldview and allows for a range of relationships between people such as the role of Elders. It also allows for culture. Though much more beneficial than generic social work, since it is not Australian Aboriginal specific it can still pose difficulties.

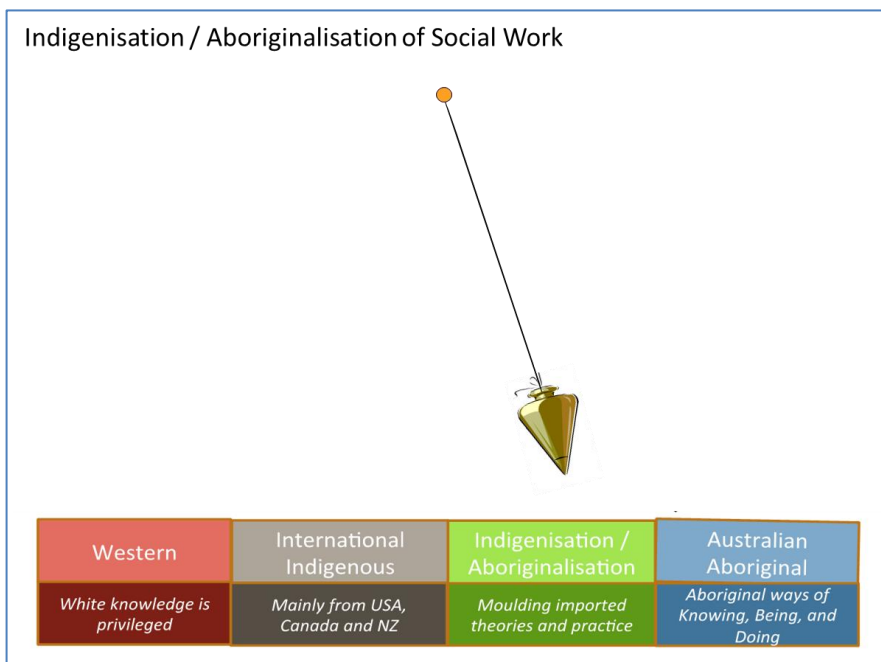


Figure 21: Indigenisation/Aboriginalisation of Social Work - Developing Specific Practice: Australian Aboriginal social workers begin to modify social work to fit with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. They use the kinship system and follow cultural protocols. They begin to customise practice to suit the specific nation they are working with. This can be taught to non-Aboriginal social workers.

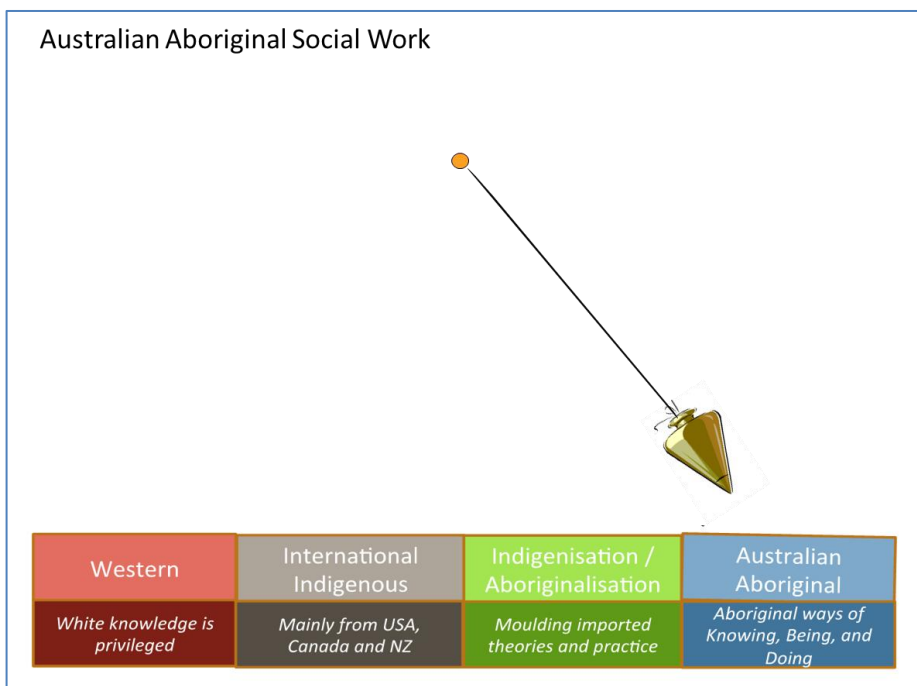


Figure 22: Australian Aboriginal Social Work: Achieving Specific Practice – This is achieved when Australian Aboriginal social workers as insiders, fully use the kinship system and Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing to benefit Aboriginal people. Work is customised to each nation, follows all protocols correctly and supports the Elders to bring lasting positive change to the whole community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate a few main points. Firstly, although this thesis has focused on kinship as it relates to the Larrakia and Warumungu peoples, this kinship information has broader applicability, as identified by the knowledge holders themselves. Aboriginal people might like to use the information provided in this thesis to strengthen the kinship system within their own families, communities and nations. Social workers are invited to use this knowledge in order to develop culturally congruent practice with Aboriginal peoples, realising that a much greater depth of knowledge of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing enables them to implement fully the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *AASW Code of Ethics*. Other helping professions are also encouraged to use the information in this thesis to guide their practice.

Secondly, although problems experienced by the Larrakia and Warumungu have been discussed, the whole purpose of this thesis is to build a strengths-based approach so as to harness the assets of individuals, families and communities in order to build a better future. This means that, although problems are acknowledged, they are not allowed to dominate. This fits with the social work ethic of social justice and empowerment and is implemented by developing a specific Indigenist model of social work that is structural rather than individual and ensures care rather than control.

Having come to the end of this research journey, I sit in my study and look up at my moral compass. I developed the compass to guide me through this journey, to ensure that I was doing the research for the right reasons and that I do not take from my people without giving something in return. I hope I have achieved this goal through the writing of this

thesis. Therefore, thirdly, I encourage social workers and others to similarly examine themselves and to develop a moral compass and to be aware of their own ideology, worldview and standpoint. This knowledge demands that social workers and others no longer take without giving, but instead ensure a win-win situation for the Aboriginal peoples with whom they work.

I believe the kinship system to have been a gift from the Great Rainbow Serpent to all my relations. It is precious and dear to me: it is a part of my heritage that I share with all who honour it and live their lives within it. It is also a part of my heritage that I am sharing with the social workers of Australia and others who are now, or will in the future, work with the Aboriginal peoples. Since I realise that the kinship system is a complex social structure, I have developed the Kinship Mapping Tool to help social workers and others to begin to access the kinship system at a glance. The Pendulum of Practice has been developed to help social workers and others to see where their practice sits and how to improve. I strongly encourage them to use these tools to bring about a shift in practice.

This journey has taught me a lot about myself. I hope that as you read it, you will learn about yourself, who you are, your practice, your privileges, rights and responsibilities and I hope that you will use this knowledge wisely and with a good heart. With this in mind I share once again the words that began this study:

Heritage can never be alienated, surrendered or sold, except for conditional use. Sharing therefore creates a relationship between the givers and receivers of knowledge. The givers retain the authority to ensure that knowledge is used properly and the receivers continue to recognise and repay the gift (Daes, 1993, p. 9).

As mentioned above, the progress of the work resulting from this thesis will continue to be

returned to the knowledge holders, the Elders, the cultural advisors and other Aboriginal people as well as to social workers and others with desire to engage with the Aboriginal peoples respectfully and be well informed about our ways of knowing, being and doing. It is my sincere wish that when this study is published, it will be placed in public and private libraries, to be used for the good of my people.

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS



Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

THE ABORIGINAL KINSHIP SYSTEM: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: MORAG MACARTHUR

STUDENT RESEARCHER: CHRISTINE KING

ENROLLED IN: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY – SOCIAL WORK

Dear

My name is Christine King, my father was a Larrakia man and my mother is a Wurrumungu woman. I was born and lived most of my life in the Northern Territory and am a part of the kinship systems of these two nations. I have been living in Canberra for the past eight years and I am in the process of completing a Doctor of Philosophy – Social Work through Australian Catholic University here.

I am writing to let you know about the research project that I am working on and to ask if you would be willing to participate in my research, by allowing me to visit with you and talk to you about the Aboriginal Kinship System. The two kinship systems that I will be looking at are the Wurrumungu and the Larrakia.

I want to find out how the kinship system might assist in developing and achieving workable and successful policy and social work practice in Australia. I recognise that the kinship system does not and will not look the same in every area of Australia, but what is learned through this study in the Northern Territory, may give insights that are useful in other areas of Australia, where the kinship system exists in different forms.

I would like to discuss with you the following:

1. What role if any, you think the kinship system plays in addressing Aboriginal disadvantage?
2. The various factors that have undermined the role played by the kinship system in Aboriginal families, communities and nations.
3. How the role of the Aboriginal kinship system might be extended or re-vitalised and re-activated in order to develop effective policy and social work practice in Australia?

Basically, what I am trying to do is to tell a story about the kinship system. In telling this story, I would like to share information and yarn with you. I would probably want to spend about an hour with you; however we can stop at any time. If you agree I would like to audio tape our discussion. If you would feel more comfortable, we can even meet with a group of your friends if they are willing to be a part of this project.

There are a number of reasons why I am studying the kinship system. The first is that I believe the kinship system is the safety net of our peoples and that it plays an important role in the life of every Aboriginal person today, but that this is not a well known and recognised fact for many people both within our community and outside of it. Secondly, for many years Anthropologists and Sociologists have studied the kinship system, but the information they have gathered has not been returned to the people it was sourced from in any beneficial form. Thirdly, the central role that the kinship system plays in the building of resilience, good mental health, strong families and communities and even its impact on the economics of our peoples has not been widely recognised.

I would like to use the information that I gather in a number of ways. Firstly, as a part of my PhD, secondly, to look at how the information could empower our community. Thirdly, I would like to explore how it might assist in developing and achieving effective policy and social work practice in Australia. To help me to achieve my goals I would want to share the information I am finding in my PhD research, in conferences, by writing and publishing journal articles, by giving community presentations if and where appropriate and by coming back and sharing with you, what I have found throughout my study. I am also considering writing a couple of books at the end of my research. One will be for the community sharing stories and learnings that might help to enhance the capacity and resilience of our peoples, and the other will be more academic and will be aimed at social workers, educators and policy makers.

You are free to refuse to be a part of this study. I will not be offended, and you will not be asked to say why you have made that decision. You are also free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time without giving a reason.

If you should agree to participate in this project, you will not be identified in any way during the conduct of the research and in any report, publication or books arising from it.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have about any part of my project. You are also free to speak to my supervisors. I have listed their names and contact details for you here:

Dr Morag McArthur
on telephone number (02) 62091225
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University Limited
P.O. Box 256
Dickson, 2602
ACT, Australia

Dr Joanna Zubrzycki
Senior Lecturer
Course coordinator BSW & BA/BSW
School of Social Work
Australian Catholic University Ltd
Signadou Campus
223 Antill Street
WATSON ACT 2602
Telephone: 02 6209 1159

I am also happy to provide feedback to you on the results of the project, as I believe that the information gathered will be of interest to the Aboriginal community as a whole, not just to me as a researcher.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University. If you have any complaints or concerns about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that I or my supervisors have not answered to your satisfaction, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address:

Chair, HREC
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Strathfield Campus
Locked Bag 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2136
Tel: 02 9701 4059
Fax: 02 9701 4093

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

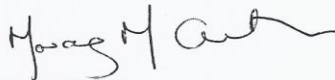
If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, keep one copy for yourself and return the other copy to me.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing back from you and hopefully having an opportunity to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,



Christine King
Student Researcher



Morag MacArthur
Principle Supervisor

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE PROJECT: THE ABORIGINAL KINSHIP SYSTEM: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

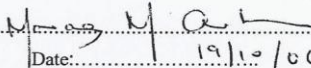
NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: MORAG MACARTHUR

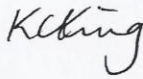
NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: CHRISTINE-FEJO KING

Ihave read or had read to me and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, realising that I can withdraw at any time. I agree that the interview be audio taped and that the research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in an appropriate manner and in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

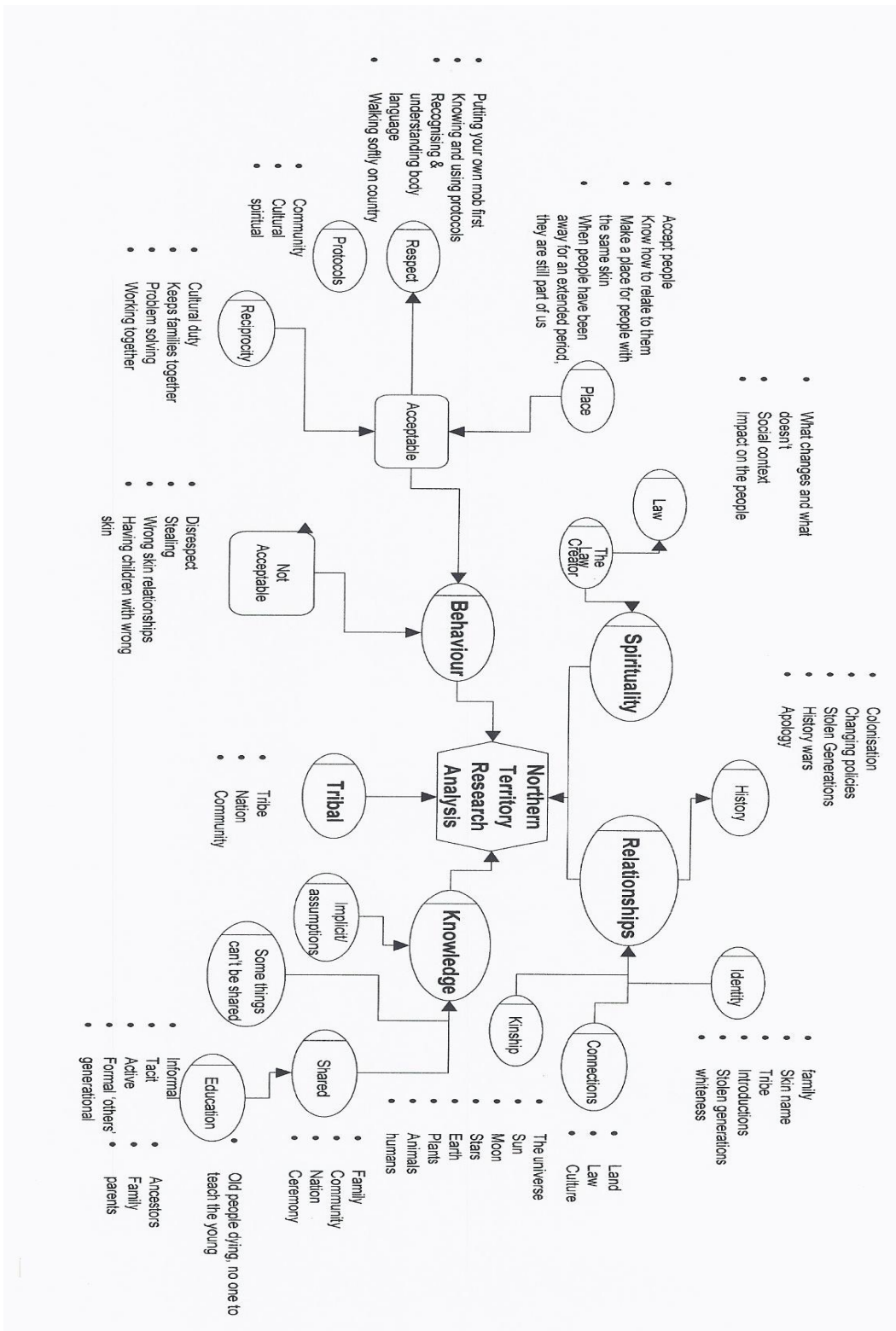
SIGNATURE..... Date:.....

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: .....
Date: 19/10/06

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: 

Date: 19/10/06.....

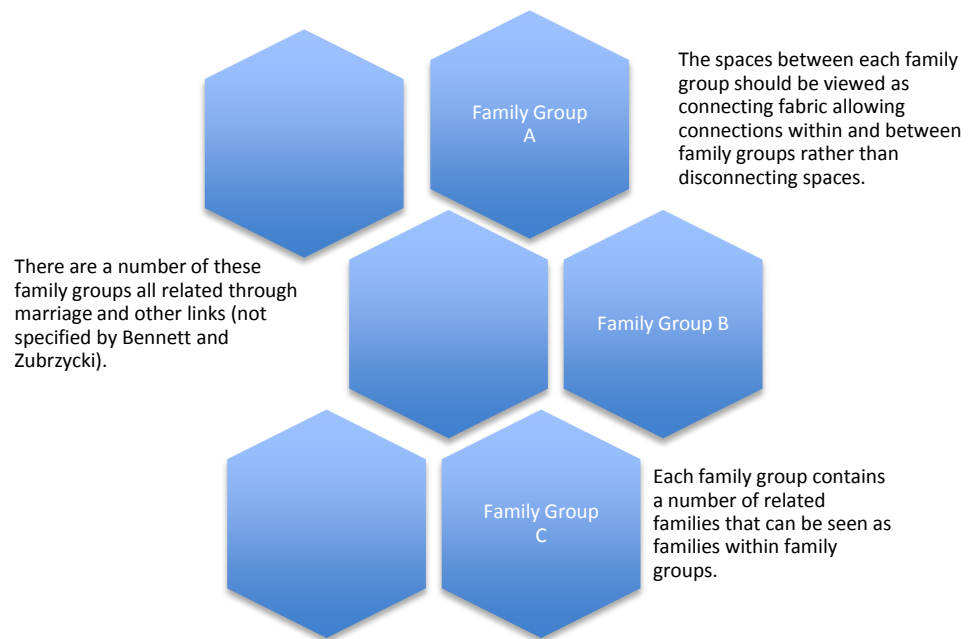
APPENDIX C: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE DATA



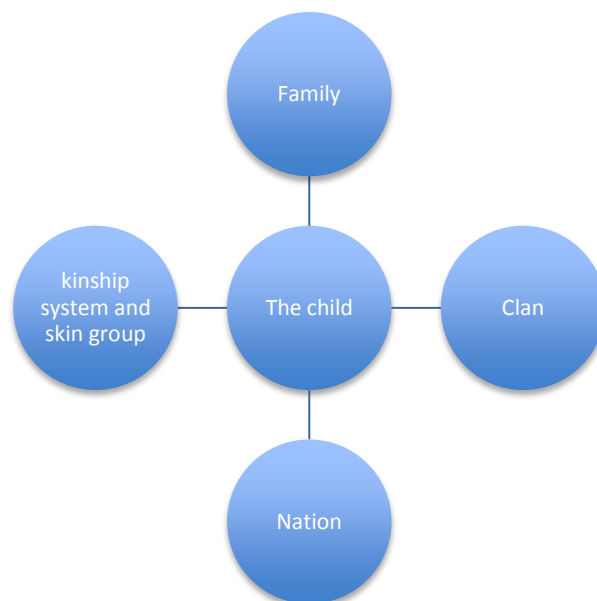
APPENDIX D: MY DEPICTION OF OTHERS'

DESCRIPTIONS OF KINSHIP

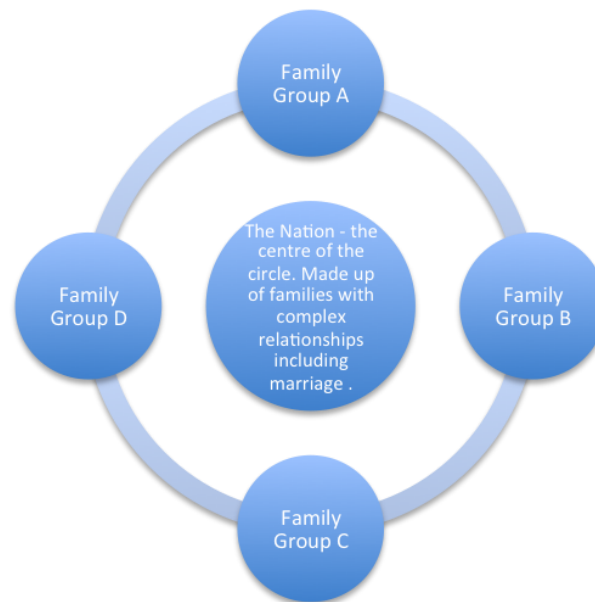
Basic kinship relationships as described by Bennett and Zubrzycki:



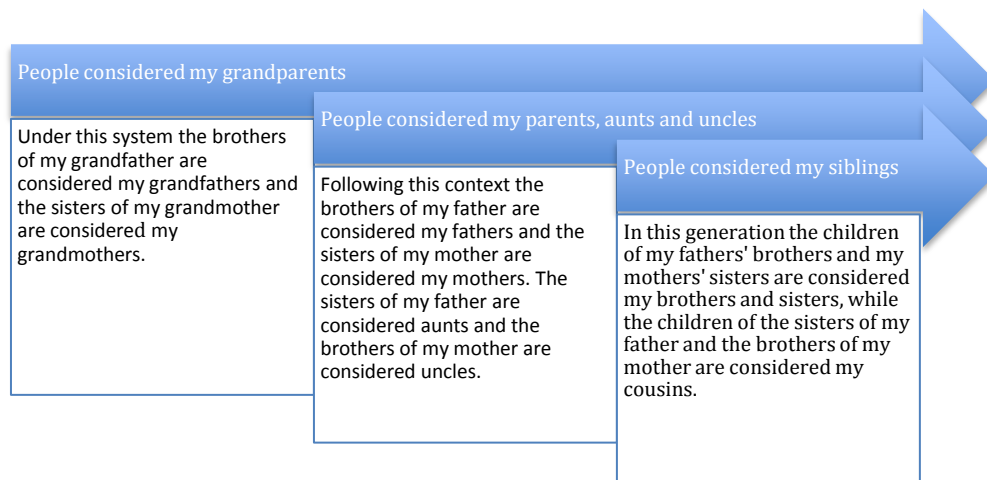
Kinship Relationships as introduced by Briskman:



Kinship relationships as introduced by Bessarab:



The classificatory description of the kinship system as introduced by Harms:



One skin group as introduced by Crawford's story:

All the women within this one skin group are considered sisters as they share the same skin name. Sharing, reciprocity and responsibility extend to all in the same way.

The relationship between them is one in which they care for each other as though they were literally born to the same mother.

Because the rates at which people have children is different, you could have a wide variety of ages within the same skin group.

APPENDIX E: ALINSKY'S RULES FOR RADICALS

1. One's concern with ethics of means and ends varies intensely with one's personal interest in the issue.
2. The judgement of the ethics of means is dependent upon the political position of those sitting in judgement.
3. In war, the end justifies almost any means.
4. Judgement must be made in the context of the times in which the action occurred and not from any other chronological vantage point.
5. Concern with ethics increases with the number of means available and vice versa. To the man of action, the first thing is to determine what means are available.
6. The less important the desired end, the more one can afford to engage in ethical evaluations of means.
7. Generally, success or failure is a mighty determinant of ethics.
8. Are the means being deployed at a time of imminent defeat or of imminent victory.
9. Any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical.
10. You do what you can with what you have and clothe it with moral garments.
11. Goals must be phrased in general terms such as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (of the common welfare) or bread and peace.

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ATNS – see Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project

ATSIC – see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

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