# DISRUPTING PRECONCEPTIONS:

# POSTCOLONIALISM AND EDUCATION

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# Preface

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# EDUCATION, POSTCOLONIALISM AND DISRUPTIONS

*Anne Hickling-Hudson,*
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Imagine an education system that does not restrict access to schooling; a system that does not discriminate, stratify or exclude groups on the basis of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability or location; a system that does not tolerate anachronistic curricular and pedagogical traditions or management strategies; a postnational system that reaches beyond the boundaries and identities of nation-states. Imagine an education system that disrupts preconceptions about knowledges and power relations, and about its own ability to establish final and forever appropriate structures and solutions.

Postcolonial approaches to education, such as those explored in this collection, seek to stimulate educational theorists and practitioners to think and work beyond narrow economic rationalist objectives and taken-for-granted routines. They expose the sophisticated layering of stratified systems that continue to exclude and fail so many in so many contexts, and explore the epistemologies, patterns, desires and dynamics of old colonial inheritances, with a view to re-visioning reform and change.

This introduction offers a brief account of postcolonialism in order to clarify its main areas of debate and contention, and then moves to introduce the chapters that follow. The chapters in this book are organised under three broad themes of postcolonial analysis. The first, entitled 'curriculum and change: subjugated knowledges and representational practices', examines how experiences and

representations of subjects are formed through neocolonial processes and how subjugated standpoints, suppressed cultural histories and identities are recovered or re-made. The second, 'education systems and structures: re-inscribing colonialism', investigates how the after-effects of empire are pervasive in their restructure of educational institutions, systems and subjectivities. Finally, 'pedagogical interface: fractured identities and asymmetrical power', explores how images are fractured through multiple categories of difference including 'race', gender and class, and how inequality and oppression can operate in ambivalent and unpredictable ways at the pedagogical nexus of teaching and learning.

We introduce these themes to represent some of the important areas of research and questions explored by postcolonial theorists, and to set a context for a focus on education in this collection.

## Postcolonialism: The Field

Postcolonialism addresses the effects of colonisation, and is best regarded as a 'useful shorthand for conveying a structure of inequality, which is, in practice, highly variable because it always works alongside other structures' (Loomba, 1998, p. 18). Postcolonialism is thus a process rather than a descriptive or evaluative term and it recognises the philosophical, political, economic and sociocultural consequences of colonialism. The 'post' in postcolonialism does not imply that colonialism has ended, but rather that its aftermath is contested. It does imply a space for moving beyond the negative patterns that persist after colonialism began.

Postcolonial theory seeks to explain issues of opposition, privilege, domination, struggle, resistance and subversion as well as contradiction and ambiguity. These issues are all fundamentally related to a critique of the relationship between knowledge/power and an understanding of how representations of the world in words, ideas, images and texts both create and reflect beliefs and produce actions (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1990). Edward Said's adoption of Michel Foucault's thesis that knowledge/power are intimately connected, enabled him to demonstrate that the knowledge, discourses and ideologies of colonialism are as powerful as the material effects of subjugation (Quayson, 2000, p. 2). Said's (1978) foundational study, *Orientalism, Western Conceptions of the Orient*, argues that Orientalist discourses shape and constitute what has become known as the Orient. The term 'Orientalist' refers to the self-serving and distorted knowledges and attitudes that claim to comprise the 'truth' about the Third World. Such attitudes will not be put to rest by the facts of the matter. For Said, 'the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, and dehumanising ideology' (Said, 1978, p. 27) - and we would add representations of women - obliterates actuality, while at the same time,

serving Western interests. In other words, the Orient and its history - like the West and its history - are constructed through a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary in a manner that serves the interests of Western rule.

The pervasive theme of postcolonial theory is that societies and knowledges have been so thoroughly worked over by colonialism that we cannot assume that colonialism is over, only that colonial relationships continue to order and reorder the cultural and economic hierarchies of knowledge and disciplines (Prakash, 1995; Tikly, 1999). The colonial past cannot be neatly separated from the decolonising and postcolonial present or future. The aftermath of colonialism pervades both the metropolitan countries which built their wealth and political power on empires and the former colonies which were the sources of their wealth. The economic and political foundations of the capitalist system established during colonisation continues to keep in place a global means of disproportionately benefiting some countries and groups, and disenfranchising others. Stuart Hall (1996, p. 254) compellingly addresses the knowledge/power nexus of postcolonial theory in observing that which must be rejected 'is precisely the false and disabling distinction between colonisation, as a system of rule, of power and exploitation, and colonisation as a system of knowledge and representation'. Postcolonial analysis shows how cultural, intellectual, economic and political processes work together both to perpetuate and to dismantle colonialism (Loomba, 1998, p. 54).

A postcolonial focus on the general consequences of Western colonialism and imperialism[1] has been challenged for neglecting the specificity of particular historical processes of colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 1995). Clearly colonialism is not solely the preserve of Western nations. However, five centuries of European expansion and domination and over a century of similarly exploitative North American domination have shaped the contemporary world. A postcolonial analysis privileging Western-derived colonialism is justified because of its global scope and complexity and its association with the expansion of capitalist and industrialist modes of production (Pieterse & Parekh, 1995).

Another critique levelled at postcolonialism is that it diverts attention from the material basis of cultural difference towards generalisations and theoretical abstractions (Mukherjee, 1996; San Juan, 1998). Can Australia, for instance, sensibly be placed in the same discursive frame as India? How can two such different experiences be theorised under the same terms? Attempts to answer this criticism by classifying the material basis of different colonial experiences are also problematic. For example, the effort of Young (2001, p. 17) to group countries on the basis of whether they were colonies of settlement, exploitation or maritime enclaves[2] is unsatisfactory because such categories merge and overlap. British North America and Portuguese Brazil, which Young identifies as 'colonies of settlement', are as

much 'colonies of exploitation', and the recognition of exploitation should also not be left out of colonies which he describes merely as 'maritime enclaves'. We would ague that it is important both to seek more nuanced understandings than these of the implications of differences between types of colonies, but also to recognise the global commonalities left by colonialism.

Postcolonialism allows us to work at this nexus. It allows us, for example, to probe the commonalities stemming from the adoption of education structures and systems primarily informed by successive waves of European colonialism in countries as disparate as Mexico, Jamaica, Hong Kong, Angola, Australia, India, Vietnam and Indonesia. Yet it also deals with the fact that since different peoples have been differently colonised, this affects the issues with which they are left to contend. Nearly all the societies which suffered from the massive exploitation which took place in Latin America and Africa now face the crippling aftermath of impoverishment, deep inequity in the sphere of global power, and problematic structures of governance. Societies of white settlement (in North America, Australia and New Zealand for example) garnered great wealth but are still grappling with problems of decolonisation, disadvantage and privilege closely related to their distinct versions of internal colonialism.

Postcolonial theory challenges Western knowledge construction, truth and representation and calls into question claims of academic knowledge and intellectual authority. Postcolonial analysis recognises how discourses – that is, bounded systems of ideas, beliefs and practices which refract representations of the world – shape the way we do things. A focus on discourse highlights, for instance, how discourses of 'race' produce what we know of raced subjects, or how discourses of femininity establish the 'truth' about female subjects. Discourses of 'development' echoing constructed colonial binaries of Western 'enlightenment' versus the 'backwardness' of the non-West, produce and reinforce a modernised political economy that all too often devastates natural environments and re-hierarchises socioeconomic relations, both locally and globally. A postcolonial seeking of healthier alternatives draws on both local and global knowledges and wisdoms (Teasdale & Ma Rhea, 2000) to overcome the entrenched social, economic, political and environmental problems of the modernist development paradigm (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1992).

Racism is still deeply implicated in issues of marginalisation. The history that receded from view now returns to haunt us with recycled ideology, terminology and imagery. This is why international 'terrorism' and the situation of 'refugees' are commonly met, in the European diaspora, with a contradictory ensemble of perplexity, ignorance, hostility and moral ambivalence. As Perera argues with reference to refugees in Australia:

> Contemporary concerns are playing out in a recognisably colonial, highly racialised, register. The phobias and hatreds that have emerged in Australian public life in the spring of 2002 open the door to a much older storehouse of images, narrative and representations. (Perera, 2002, p. 26)

Reading racism as a discourse of power situates racialised thinking as a legacy of colonialism, which continues to sustain material inequalities. It is not enough, however, to know that theories of race and practices of racism arose from colonial ideologies and are anachronistic forms of symbolic and material domination. Analysing 'race' discourse means that contradictions are probed: as in the contradiction that there are very few self-identified racists about, yet there is still a widespread assumption that human beings can be categorised into racial, ethnic or cultural groups. It means that outcomes are identified, as in the way in which racism erodes the self-confidence of people 'of colour' and feeds arrogance, insensitivity and cruelty associated with beliefs in white or ethnic dominance.

From a postcolonial perspective, contested conceptions of knowledge, 'race' and culture are major objects of study. Essentialist binaries constructed between white and non-white, good and evil, East and West, and Orient and Occident are analysed to show how they serve to legitimise privilege, economic exploitation and its continuation in neocolonial societies. The construction, maintenance and contestation of different kinds of dominance – cultural, patriarchal and economic – are also scrutinised. This type of analysis does not confine itself to how elites of European origin maintain their dominance; it gives equal attention to 'how non-European elites defined by ethnicity, caste, class and gender also legitimise their dominance over other groups through their control over education systems' (Tikly, 2001, p. 254).

Postcolonial perspectives are cautious of the trap of replacing an essentialist Eurocentrism based on a claim to universalised 'white truth' with other essentialisms based on their own claims to universal 'truth' (Pieterse & Parekh, 1995, p. 7). Truth and knowledge rest on the power to produce, regulate, circulate and consume information. The exercise of colonial power is supported not only by economic and political force but also by the cultural power of a body of literature – scholarly works, political tracts, journalistic and creative texts, travel books, religious and philological studies. The 'flexible *positional* superiority' of the West (Said, 1978, p. 7) enables it to formate categories of thought and assumptions through which human social difference is conceptualised and ordered. Said exposes the complexity of colonisation as a process able to make 'truth' through knowledge and representation. Educators can draw important analogies from these arguments, for example, that the 'truth' found in modern subject disciplines demarcated by 'English', 'History',

'Maths' and 'Science' consist of culturally privileged knowledges and exclusions, and that subject boundaries and specialist language legitimates some knowledges and outlaws others.

Related to the postcolonial conception of the knowledge/power nexus is the argument used by Indigenous scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) that what we understand by 'knowledge', and the research methods that accompany this conception, simply constitute a dominant Western narrative or 'regime of truth'. Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledges are marginalised by a view of the world through 'imperial *eyes*', a view which (re)inscribes the dominant, exclusionary Western beliefs. Of particular concern for Tuhiwai Smith are current moves to commercialise and technocratise environmental knowledge. The unreflective practices of colonisation thus continue to silence other ways of knowing and being, with an ongoing and profound impact on the lives of Indigenous people.

Smith's (1999) analysis of Indigenous knowledges in the context of Indigenous people in New Zealand might be generalised to provide insight into the effects and impact of colonisation for other Indigenous peoples. Cathryn McConaghy (2000) offers an important perspective to any discussion about whether this generalisation is legitimate. She argues that, while the authority of education is embedded in specific political and historical contexts, the questions raised reach beyond local/historical context into larger epistemological and ethical debates. To answer questions about how particular knowledge claims secure authority at particular times, in particular ways and for particular purposes, about what processes reject old knowledge-claims and legitimise new ones, and how elements of the old persist in the new, it is necessary to examine the impact of historical, political, economic and social factors on local contexts, as well as ethical and epistemological debates about the nature of knowledge.

Early postcolonial work in literary critique (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2001; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989), and to some extent history, sociology and politics, highlighted the experience of colonisation and challenged the superiority of Western worldviews. The complexity of education's compromised position as an instrument of colonisation (Willinsky, 1998) and its potential for radical disruptive practice have not been adequately addressed in postcolonial debate[3]. While broad discussion about whether postcolonialism is a historical or geo-political condition, coherent methodology, analytical perspective, political stance, critique or critical idiom have been of general interest (Dutton, Gandhi & Seth, 1999; Gandhi, 1998; Loomba, 1998; Mishra & Hodge, 1993; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Mukherjee, 1996; Young, 2001), the key question for educators, and the concern of this book, is how postcolonial approaches can disrupt previously held preconceptions to initiate new educational interventions.

## Postcolonialism and Education: Assumptions and Disruptions

Postcolonial approaches to analysing education reach into the recesses of societies to identify the pervasive saturation of knowledges, academic practices and education systems with colonial and neocolonial ideologies. Highlighting the ambiguous nature of change and the contradictions within change, it seeks to disrupt the cultural beliefs, logic and theories in which education systems are embedded. This latter point is taken up in the discussion below which explains why important constructions of postcolonial theory are useful to education.

Colonial assumptions and contestations pervade educational systems. The colonial empires established Western models of education – although often distorted and impoverished models – all over the globe. Socioeconomic stratification at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education was built into these models, as were Western conceptions of curriculum, pedagogy, language and religion. In current times, debates continue over issues of what language(s) should be promoted, what content should be taught, and how educational institutions should relate to the design of urban settlements and buildings. Conflicts rage over the educational implications of race, ethnicity, gender and degrees of privilege, and not least, over the love-hate relationship between former colony and former coloniser. From the perspectives of postcolonial theory, these contestations have not yet disrupted the preconceptions of a neocolonial education system. They have not displaced the persistence of unequal and inequitable schooling structures, the curricula influenced by the ideologies of Eurocentrism, and the examination systems which exclude the majority from academic success. Although decolonisation challenged, countered and spawned contradictory impulses towards change, in most societies this process has only modified rather than erased embedded patterns of disadvantage.

Despite the expansion of formal education, advances in print and electronic communications, the Internet, the global knowledge economy and information overload, a Western-style curriculum tends to ignore the basic context of today's reality – 'that many of the wrongs, if not crimes against humanity are a product of the economic dominance of the north over the south' (Young, 2001, p. 6). Postcolonial analysis exposes assumptions that blame the victim, and goes on to explore how education has been, and continues to be, culpable in this enterprise (Willinsky, 1998). The bland, narrow and monocultural curricula of most schools and universities often ignore the question of how the divisions of colonialism came to delineate the privileged and the disadvantaged in the global sweep of Western imperial expansion. Many students are unaware of the bloody conflicts and tenuous resolutions that destroyed colonial empires and gave rise to hundreds of post World

War 2 nation-states. The fraught and multifarious conditions that both enabled and restricted the mobility of capital, materials, products and people are rarely included in traditional fields of study. Nor do Eurocentric education programmes commonly turn their gaze upon their own philosophical underpinnings, assumptions or practices. A postcolonial style of education would disrupt the narrow gaze of monocultural curricula by engaging with the intercultural contexts of phenomena being studied.

Education has a long tradition of engagement with ethical standpoints intended to initiate systems changes, policy outcomes and innovative curricula and pedagogy. Because it is fundamentally a praxis - by which we mean action orientated discipline, it cannot forget its 'what do I teach on Monday morning' imperative and this tempers what tendencies postcolonialism may have to lapse into discursive abstraction. Accounts of specific circumstances of injustice, domination and resistance prompt a direct engagement with the historical features, locations and machinations stemming from colonisation. This enables us to see how discourses of power are established and why they need to be undermined. This is a difficult project, constantly struggling against the fact that education is also a longstanding site of colonial intervention and deeply implicated in the project of colonialism itself. Contemporary conditions of neoliberal (or economic rationalist) capitalism have made for a limited conception of educational change and transformation.

This book seeks to sustain the ongoing critical conjuncture of postcolonialism and education to generate forms of consciousness and postnational practice necessary to spawn new ways of doing education in postcolonial contexts. The scrutiny of education for traces of the past in the present, and in the future, undertaken in the following chapters highlights the disruptive role of postcolonialism and the way education may become a reconstructive force for change and transformation.

## Curriculum and Change: Subjugated Knowledges and Representational Practices

Chapters in section 1 engage in one way or another with subjugated standpoints and representational practices to explore and illuminate histories of exclusion, oppression and resistance. Martin Nakata investigates the intersection of Knowledge and new information systems with reference to Indigenous Australians and uptake of emerging information technologies. Nakata begins by detailing the commodification of Indigenous Knowledge in recent times through the interests of science, development and aid, conservation, and research. Western interests permeate the valuing of Indigenous Knowledge in ways that make its current significance able to be likened to prior colonial interest in co-opting land, labour and resources from Indigenous peoples. However, by reconceptualising notions of the Cultural Interface as a space

where continuity with traditional ways of thinking and experience do not replace the current reality of interacting with new systems of Knowledge - or visa versa - Nakata begins an investigation into the complexity of the academic/Indigenous intersection.

The case studies carried out by Anne Hickling -Hudson and Roberta Ahlquist compare rural and urban primary schools serving Indigenous populations in the USA and Australia. Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist argue that decolonising, anti-racist approaches are not meant to elicit guilt about white privilege and racism, but rather to foster insight into patterns of oppression and desire for equality. The two state sector schools they describe in Australia and the USA leave us in no doubt that a particular model of Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy continue to inform current educational practices. These schools stand in stark contrast to the two community-controlled schools, also in Australia and the USA, which embody life affirming spirit and an intercultural education which balances Indigenous and non-Indigenous content. Yet these schools continue to suffer from the problems of a neocolonial context. It is argued that this research, far from implying any binary between state and community-controlled schools, instead focuses on the finding that there appears to be a continuum of neocolonial, decolonising and postcolonial approaches to education which describes the practices of schooling at the current conjuncture.

Postcolonialism for Thomas Bean marks the given condition of cultural diversity and exclusion within which teachers need to know how to teach. Secondary school English literature in the American context rely on a Eurocentric literary canon that prevents minority students in particular from achieving personal, cultural and racial identification with a literary subject matter. Bean argues that the inclusion of multicultural literature and postcolonial narratives invite all students to participate and engage directly with previously excluded or disregarded standpoints in knowledge and experience. Teaching approaches such as body biographies, reading against the grain, discussion questions, polar opposites, dialogue journals are all ways of teaching students to 'read' in postcolonial times. Importantly, facilitating student encounters with the stark choices and dilemmas of racism, the fragility of communication and the ethical dilemmas faced by minority groups facilitate points of contact and set the ground for the sorts of open-mindedness and cultural competence that precedes the ethical reflexivity discussed by Crouch, Chan and Kaye below.

Christopher Crouch, Dean Chan and Nicola Kaye use postcolonial debates about unequal cultural exchange and cultural incommensurability to inform and transform what was previously a Eurocentric art history curriculum offered at an Australian university. For Crouch et al., postcolonialism moves beyond Marxist critiques of imperialism to expose the production and consumption of visual culture and its

power/knowledge dynamics. Ethical reflexivity is promoted to prevent an over-reductive identification with cultural difference or its erasure, and to show how meanings are able to function differently in different cultural contexts. On the basis of data presented within the chapter, Crouch et al. argue for a pedagogical stance that moves beyond naming and disrupting cultural preconceptions, toward a framework that allows for a continual questioning of preconceptions as they surface within teaching and learning.

Continuing the theme of reflexivity in relation to research rather than teaching, this section closes with an insightful and contemplative essay by Christine Fox. Like other writers in this collection, Fox speaks directly to the need to connect with the 'rooted context' of postcolonialism. Fox exposes the dilemmas of representing and hearing minority standpoints and interests in Laos. Focusing on education policies prompted by the World Bank, UNESCO and bilateral aid programmes, she emphasises the waste of funds and untenable decisions made by outside consultants and agents with no prior understanding of the complexity of the local situation. Calling for engagement with the views and experiences of ordinary Laotians, Fox underlines the difference education can and has made in people's lives as well as the difficulties of communicating and representing their interests when the very act of representation can itself silence, commodify, homogenise or indeed diminish engagement with the multifaceted complexity of everyday peoples.

## Educational Systems and Structures: Reinscribing Colonialism

The second section of this collection brings together chapters that investigate the resilient after-effects of empire. Focusing on the case of sub-Saharan Africa, Leon Tikly charges existing accounts of globalisation and education with over-emphasising global economic and political structures, and downplaying the impact of colonial control. To understand the sub-Saharan situation, it is necessary to focus on local, contingent and strategic political struggle in light of the relationship of European colonialism to globalisation. Postcolonialism in this account is both a condition and a shift in how events are described and interpreted. The latter is distinguished by a recognition that colonisation and its legacies are precursors to relationships of contemporary global capitalism. Tikly's postcolonial framing of globalisation highlights unevenness. Accepted 'truths' of globalisation are contested in a situation where education does not directly correspond with the economy to either reproduce inequality or to challenge Western hegemony. Instead, state sponsored education sustains an array of obstacles, vested interests and possibilities. It maintains Western hegemony through elite formation, English language teaching and divisions

between rich and poor, but at the same time it is the only available means of funding the mass education necessary for economic, political and cultural development.

Pam Christie's meticulous account of education reform in post-Apartheid South Africa is more sceptical of the ability of postcolonial accounts to facilitate an understanding of the complexities of political and economic decisions made in light of globalisation. While postcolonial approaches highlight the incorporations of precolonial power addressed by Tikly, they also tend to universalise the complexity of colonial histories. Christie's case in point is education provision and reconstruction in South Africa, intended to redress the massive inequalities of apartheid. Policy decisions were made in light of human rights and cultural diversity/identity agendas. However, in an economy with negative growth, primarily dependent on primary commodity exports in a competitive and unequal global economy, financial redress necessarily took second place to the pragmatic priorities of macroeconomic policies and self imposed curbs to public spending. Education policy under such conditions was therefore less concerned with alternative interventions or foregrounding previously excluded knowledges and identities than pragmatic resolutions intended to fast-track the formation of the skilled, global citizens deemed necessary to launch South Africa into the global economy.

The historical and contextual differences that are an effect of colonisation take second place to broader colonialising themes in the work of Helen Tiffin who focuses on British colonial impact on Caribbean literary education, and Aaron Koh who looks at education in Singapore. Helen Tiffin argues that despite differences British colonial education systems have a great deal in common. Tiffin reiterates the point that postcolonialism is an ambiguous and ambivalent term. Although it offers useful tools for analysing disparate oppressions, she stresses that its grounding in situations with immediate historical connections to European empires best suits it to analyse relations of domination and subordination rooted in colonialism and extending into the present neocolonial era. Tiffin argues that the legacy of colonial education is also ambiguous. It did and continues to do violence to local cultures and devalue local education, it represses histories of slavery, and inculcates racist stereotypes and empire loyalty. However, the history of English language instruction and literary education demonstrates that it can be used by those who recognise that English and an Anglo literary education is a means to intellectual and vocational advancement, and as testified by the success of postcolonial literatures, it has also been used to stimulate the literary and artistic imagination.

The commonalities and contradictions of British colonial education systems are underlined by Aaron Koh in Singaporean context. For Koh, postcolonialism highlights the discursive and symbolic resonances of the colonial cultural imaginary

which gives rise to new and contradictory configurations of power and domination. Koh graphically illuminates how Singapore's education system constructs itself first through a nostalgic romanticisation of the colonial past and, second, through the promotion of 'Asian' values. It clings to British school curricula and examinations, but also strives to 'Asianise' the learning experience. In light of 'Asian values discourse', the Singaporean curriculum is regarded by Koh as an ideological framing device which maximises difference between 'Asia' and the 'West' while homogenising differences between 'Asian' countries to reinvent national identity.

## Pedagogical Interface: Fractured Identities and Asymmetrical Power

Deftly weaving the theoretical precepts of postcolonial theory with those of queer theory, Vicky Crowley offers a groundbreaking analysis of the pedagogical possibilities of queering postcolonialism, or indeed of undertaking the reverse case, and challenging racialised notions of identity and subjectivity assumed by queer theory. Crowley raises questions about the heteronormative conditions of postcolonialism and the white hegemonic conditions of queer theory. It is instructive to consider her point that the reception of postcolonialism and queer theory in education has tended to be reconfigured into categories of anti-racist and multicultural education or sexual health and homophobia, for it reminds us that dividing practices, frontiers, territories and boundaries delimit our capacity to engage with complexity multiplicity and hybridity. Further, these dividing practices reconfigure 'actual hybridities' through the singularly familiar and intransigent categories of race, class, gender and sexuality.

Practices of boundary demarcation and incursion are illuminated at the micro level of school practice in Julie Matthews' and Lucinda Aberdeen's analysis of racial discourse. They argue that settler societies contain entrenched myths justifying settlement in the face of Indigenous 'threat'. These myths enable students to both re-establish the racial discourse but at the same time demonstrate its ambiguity and internal inconsistency. The specific context of racial discourse in settler society challenges the idea that it can be undone by pedagogies designed to replace misunderstandings and ignorance with the facts of the matter. They argue that underlining the ways young people 'undo' their own racialising logic offers teachers important points of deconstructive pedagogical intervention.

The colonial legacy has facilitated unidirectional trade in education from Western nations to former colonies. Parlo Singh examines international education in the Asia Pacific region and Roslyn Appleby looks at English as a Second Language

teaching in East Timor. Both stress the need to account for historical, economic and political context of recipient nations in understanding the local situation. Focusing on women teachers in three Australian offshore university campuses in Indonesia, Singh explores the impact on pedagogical relations of a number of overlaying factors. She identifies the impact of complex historically and politically constituted power relations between 'Western' teacher and 'Indonesian' student and the subject positions of 'Asian learner'. Asian learners are commonly represented as deficient, uncritical, reliant on rote learning and memorisation. White Western women teachers are invariably employed on short-term teaching contracts to deliver standardised curricula, while representing desired Western knowledge and embodying the undesirable attributes of Western femininity. Singh argues that these mediating factors demand boundary crossing strategies and negotiations of power which severely limit teachers' capacity to undertake curriculum and pedagogical modifications. The professional development of teachers must be addressed in these terms if we are to provide quality education and pedagogical innovation which meet student need.

The heterogenous effects of pedagogies and knowledges in cross-cultural contexts is also the focus of Roslyn Appleby's concluding chapter. Appleby shows that English language teaching in East Timor is at the same time the language of cultural imperialism, cultural homogeneity, academic and vocational success, oppression and resistance. To understand processes of ESL pedagogy we need to comprehend the contradictions of local contexts. Thus in East Timor, language policy is caught up in a frenetic maelstrom of change, which is as much a fall out of successive colonisation and invasion as an effect of political and economic resolutions to independence struggles and decolonisation. Appleby argues that, while English language teaching is by no means culturally and politically neutral in as much as it normalises Western materialism, it is not entirely hegemonic. Appleby uses student writing to show how Western technical, vocational and academic English Language Teaching discourse is resisted by students to construct a parallel syllabus while using English to engage with the political context of their own concerns and experience.

## Conclusion

In the neoliberal doctrine of unregulated markets, education is just another market commodity, which like other products must adjust itself to the demands of consumers, clients and competitors to improve production. As many influential contemporary educational theorists have argued (Kenway, 1998; Luke, in press; Taylor et al., 1997), contemporary conditions of economic rationalism make for inadequate and limited conceptions of educational change and transformation. It is therefore necessary for educators to engage critically with currently dominant political and

economic imperatives, and the ways in which they draw rationale from earlier colonial discourses of subjugation, exploitation and exclusion. This is the first step towards finding ways of doing things differently. *Disrupting preconceptions: Postcolonialism and education* aims to open up and sustain this ongoing task.

## Endnotes

1   By way of understanding the frameworks 'colonialism' and 'imperialism', we might start with the distinction offered by Edward Said who states that 'imperialism' means the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; and that 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is 'the implanting of settlements on distant territory' (Said, 1993, p. 8, quoted by Ashcroft et al., p. 46). This delineation implies that imperialism is the bigger picture of how an empire is organised, justified and perpetuated, while colonialism constitutes the practices of conquest, settlement, governance and interaction in specific contexts and locations. A somewhat different conception is the Leninist view of imperialism as being the 'highest stage of capitalism' where imperial rule can be practised without colonial ownership of countries, for example, by means of the exploitative economic ownership and political control exercised by multinational corporations who are in turn supported by wealthy governments. From this point of view, the USA and some countries of Europe continue 'imperialist' practices through economic and political control, even though they now 'own' very few remaining colonies.

2   The distinctive historical and cultural differences between former and current colonisers are clarified in the three broad categories identified by Young (2001, p.17) namely; colonies of settlement (which include British North America, Australia and New Zealand, French Algeria and Portuguese Brazil), colonies of exploitation (which include American Philippines and Puerto Rico, British India, Dutch East Indies, French India and New Caledonia, German Togo, and Japanese Taiwan) and maritime enclaves (which include islands and harbours occupied for strategic military purposes as well as trade and commerce such as American naval bases on Cuba, Guam and Hawaii, all still under occupation, British Gibraltar, Malta and Singapore, Dutch Batavia, French/British Mauritius and Portuguese Malacca). However, it must be pointed out that colonial settlement was based upon massive exploitation, and exploitation usually involved settlement. What he describes as 'maritime enclaves' were not colonised solely to pursue commerce or strategic military purposes – they often also involved exploitation and some settlement.

3   Pathbreaking investigations of the postcolonial context of education have been undertaken by Willinsky (1998) who describes Western imperial education and how colonial ideologies shaped practices and knowledge in Western school systems and McConaghy (2000) who shows how Indigenous education in Australia secures authority through discourses and processes such as scientific culturalism, pastoral welfarism, assimilation, cultural tolerance and radicalism. Other applications of postcolonialism to education research include: Kenway & Bullen (2003), Hickling-Hudson (1998, 2000), Tikly (1999), Crowley (1999), Crowley & McConaghy (1998), McCarthy (1998), Matthews, (1998), Rizvi (1993, 1997 & 1998), Olson, 1998; Carlson, (1997) and A. Luke, J. Kale and M.G. Singh (1995).

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# SECTION 1

## Curriculum and change:
Subjugated knowledge and representational practice

# INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND THE CULTURAL INTERFACE:

## UNDERLYING ISSUES AT THE INTERSECTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS[1]

*Martin Nakata*

## Introduction

The whole area of Indigenous knowledge[2] is a contentious one. From what constitutes 'Indigenous' to whose interests are being served by the documentation of such knowledge there lies a string of contradictions, of sectorial interests, of local and global politics, of ignorance and of hope for the future. One might suppose that Indigenous knowledge refers to Indigenous peoples' knowledge but this would not reflect current usage of the term. Indigenous peoples' knowledge could be considered a subset of what is more broadly referred to as 'Indigenous Knowledge'. But even then it is an overlap rather than all encompassed.

## Concepts of Indigenous Knowledge

In colonial times, and residually in so-called postcolonial times, the knowledge of Indigenous peoples[3] occupied the realm of the 'primitive', an obstacle to progress along the path to modern civilisation and was largely ignored or suppressed; and in many places, because of dislocation from our land and way of life, much of it was lost. Until the 1980s, Indigenous knowledge surfaced in very few academic disciplines, for example, 'anthropology, development sociology and geography' (Warren, von Liebenstein & Slikkerveer, 1993, p. 1). Understanding of Indigenous peoples in the human sciences was largely within cultural frameworks, formerly as primitive and

inferior cultures and in more contemporary times celebrated as part of the diversity of cultures in the world—no longer inferior just different.

Indigenous Knowledge now surfaces in academic and scientific circles,

> …in the fields of ecology, soil science, veterinary medicine, forestry, human health, aquatic resource management, botany, zoology, agronomy, agricultural economics, rural sociology, mathematics, management science, agricultural education and extension, fisheries, range management, information science, wildlife management, and water resource management. (Warren, von Liebenstein & Slikkerveer, 1993, p. 1)

Whilst Indigenous peoples might welcome the elevation of status that comes with increased recognition of their Knowledge systems after centuries of dismissal and disintegration, nothing comes without a cost (Eyzaguirre, 2001). Like colonisation, the Indigenous Knowledge enterprise seems to have everything and nothing to do with us.

This interest is overwhelmingly driven by research into sustainable development practices in developing countries (supported mainly by UN programs and NGO's) and the scientific community's concern about loss of biodiversity of species and ecosystems and the future implications of that for the whole planet (Myer, 1998). The disciplines noted above reflect these two areas of humanitarian and scientific concern. In the human sciences the elevation of Indigenous knowledge has been driven more by the academic interrogation of dominant discourses and the recognition and valuing of social and cultural diversity (Agrawal, 1995b).

Within the humanitarian and scientific areas, a number of other interested parties emerge (see special issue of the Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor, 1993). These include scientists who recognise that Indigenous knowledge needs to be recorded or validated if any of it is to be incorporated into the scientific corpus and utilised. Also interested are the agencies operating in developing countries who realise the importance of 'local' knowledge in solving problems at the local level. These two lead to the interest of researchers and those professionals involved in documentation and communication systems. Conservationists have developed a special interest in the environment and species degradation and the disappearing knowledge base of societies under pressure from development and industrialisation. There is increasing overlap between conservation and scientific interests as bio prospecting and gene-harvesting assumes greater priority. In response to much of this interest, political advocates interested in the tensions between North and South have emerged (e.g. Saw, 1992). This advocacy is carried out by various people and means, including activism from Indigenous peoples themselves and different bodies and mechanisms within the United Nations. Overarching all these interests is the

capitalist interest. To capitalist interests, Indigenous Knowledge is merely another resource for potential profit.

Out of these sectorial interests, we see the conceptualisation of Indigenous Knowledge becoming detached from holistic notions of 'culture' in the human sciences, and to be more reflective of the humanitarian, practical, environmental and scientific interests that are promoting its use and documentation in developing countries. It has become an umbrella term, not limited to Indigenous peoples, but inclusive of those in the developing countries who struggle to survive and who still rely on traditional forms of knowledge whether they be Indigenous within developed and developing nation-states, formerly colonised, or distant or recent migrant groups in developing countries. One estimation of this group of people is some 80% of the world's population who rely on Indigenous Knowledge for either medicine or food (Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) cited in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Civil Society Organisations and Participation Programme (CSOPP), 1995). At the same time, Indigenous Knowledge has become more fragmented and specialised as scientists and humanitarians pick at the bits and pieces that fit with their interests and disciplines.

Excepting the role of political advocates but not their presence, all these interests illustrate how totally a Western interest this interest in Indigenous knowledge is. The documentation of such knowledge by scientists, the storage of information in databases in academic institutions, whether they be gene banks or electronic networks, all look remarkably similar to former colonial enterprises which co-opted land, resources and labour in the interest of their own prosperity through trade and value-adding. According to documentations at the United Nations Development Programme:

> Indigenous knowledge fuels multi-billion dollar genetics supply industries, ranging from food and pharmaceuticals in developed countries to chemical product, energy and other manufactures. (United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Civil Society Organisations and Participation Programme (CSOPP), 1995, p. 9)

Yet developing countries and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) struggle to find ways to ensure the disadvantaged of the world have access to sustainable supplies of clean water and basic food staples, and international bodies struggle to enact and implement mechanisms for ensuring Indigenous peoples' knowledge is protected and recompensed (e.g. UN Development Programme, UN Food & Agriculture Organisation, UN Convention on Biological Diversity, etc.).

One thing is certain in all of this. Indigenous knowledge is increasingly discussed by all as a commodity, something of value, something that can be value-added, something that can be exchanged, traded, appropriated, preserved, something that

can be excavated and mined. Or, as Douglas Nakashima and Paul de Guchteneire (1999) put it, 'another information set from which data can be extracted to plug into scientific frameworks' (p. 2).

The brief discussion so far has illustrated that Indigenous knowledge is different things in different places to different people. There is contention about some of its characteristics. However, a quick and crude distillation of some of its elements from various sources gives a reasonable picture of how it is conceptualised broadly. As a system of knowledge it is understood in terms of its distance from 'scientific knowledge'. What is many, many systems is currently and variously recognised, from Western perspectives, as 'local knowledge'—knowledge that is 'unique to a given culture or society' (Warren, 1991, 1993), and as being 'oral, rural, holistic, powerless, and culturally-embedded' (Indigenous Knowledge & Development Monitor, 1993; von Liebenstein, 2000). It is the result of 'dynamic innovation' although informal and unsystematised (United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Civil Society Organisations and Participation Programme (CSOPP), 1995); and is 'continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems' (Flavier, de Jesus & Navarro, 1995). An African perspective reminds us that, 'an understanding is required of Indigenous knowledge and its role in community life from an integrated perspective that includes both spiritual and material aspects of a society as well as the complex relations between them' (Morolo, 2002, p. 1). A number of terms also are used interchangeably: local knowledge, traditional knowledge (TK), Indigenous knowledge (IK), traditional environmental or ecological knowledge (TEK), or Indigenous technical knowledge (ITK).

An important aspect of Indigenous Knowledge that is overlooked in some definitions is that Indigenous peoples hold collective rights and interests in their knowledge (Casey, 2001; Davis, 1997, 1998). This, along with its oral nature, the diversity of Indigenous Knowledge systems, and the fact that management of this Knowledge involves rules regarding secrecy and sacredness (Davis, 1997, 1998; Janke, 1997, 1998) means that the issues surrounding ownership and therefore protection (see Hunter, 2002) are quite different from those inscribed in Western institutions. Western concepts of intellectual property have for some time been recognised as inadequate (Casey, 2001; Janke, 1997, 1998). This is a most complex area for many reasons (see also work by Ellen & Harris, 1996; Ellen, Parkes & Bicker, 2000). Much work is being done in the UN (e.g. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2002) and by Indigenous groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's sponsorship of delegates to UN forums to lobby on Indigenous Australian interests, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' ethical guidelines for researchers, etc.) to develop

adequate principles and a different system for Indigenous intellectual and cultural property protection.

Accepting these conceptions of Indigenous knowledge immediately points to some of the contradictions in current activity—scientific, developmental and in information management. One contradiction more relevant to information professionals is that the strategy of archiving and disseminating Indigenous knowledge runs contradictory to the very conceptual basis of what is seen to be 'indigenous' in Indigenous knowledge (Agrawal, 1995a, 1995b). Strategies of conservation involve the collection, documentation, storage and dissemination of Indigenous knowledge (Koenig, 2001). When it employs methods and instruments of Western science, which involve fragmentation across categories of information, isolation and *ex situ* storage in regional, national and international archives and networks. then it begins to lay itself open to the same criticisms as 'Western science', which has largely failed in development contexts. It becomes not embedded in local meanings and contexts but separated from its original context—an entity to be studied, worked on, developed, integrated, transferred and ultimately changed to fit another.

Pablo B Eyzaguirre, a senior Scientist at the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute in Rome, expresses similar concerns:

> [t]aking 'validated' nuggets of Indigenous knowledge out of its cultural context may satisfy an outside researcher's need, or even solve a technical problem in development, but it may undermine the knowledge system itself. (2001, p. 1)

Of course, these are the very reasons for which Indigenous knowledge is of interest. I am not going to argue the extreme position that Indigenous knowledge should be left alone and forever isolated. And I am not going to argue that it should not be documented. Recovery and preservation of lost and endangered knowledge is extremely important for Indigenous communities. I venture to say, however, that knowledge recovery led by Indigenous communities would not look the same as that led by scientists, developmental technologists and conservationists (even when participatory). For without a doubt, the collection and documentation of Indigenous knowledge by the development and scientific communities is a very partial enterprise, selecting and privileging some Indigenous knowledge whilst discarding and excluding others. Of course, if what Indigenous communities choose to document is of no apparent value to others, then the cost of documentation may be an obstacle.

## Integrating Indigenous Knowledge

These concerns aside for the moment, there is in the development literature an acceptance of the value of integrating two systems of Knowledge—traditional and scientific—in order to produce new knowledge and practices that provide solutions

for sustainable development and developing countries and communities. Some authors (e.g. von Liebenstein, 2000), aware of the dominance and perceived superiority of scientific knowledge, take care to stress the complementarity of the two Knowledge systems. In much of the literature, there is an emphasis on incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into strategies for application (e.g. United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Civil Society Organisations and Participation Programme (CSOPP), 1995), or for scientific validation (The World Bank, n. d.), or further research (Morolo, 2002), or for developing foundations for sustainable development (von Liebenstein, 2000). Some have been prepared to argue for the need for models of community information management when integrating knowledge information systems (von Liebenstein, 2000).

This literature on the integration of knowledge systems, however, rarely interrogates in any critical way the distinctions drawn between Indigenous knowledge and scientific systems of knowledge. This is to be expected, developmentalists are primarily concerned with what works in practice, and the discussion of binary systems of thought is the realm of the theoretical. But I would argue, and have argued in other places (Luke, Nakata, Garbutcheon Singh & Smith, 1993; Nakata, 1997b), that addressing the theoretical underpinnings of practice is critical to any substantive understanding of Knowledge systems. Agrawal (1995b) makes the point that in the elevation of and talk about Indigenous knowledge, people 'commit them[selves] to a dichotomy between Indigenous and Western knowledge' (p. 2) when theoretically the attempt to separate them cannot be sustained. He argues that, because there are similarities across the categories and substantial differences within each of them, a simple separation on the basis of characteristics as announced in the literature on Indigenous knowledge fails in substance. Secondly, he suggests that the duality between them assumes fixity of both Knowledge systems in time and space that is inherently false. After many years of research in this area, I would proffer that the conceptualisation of Indigenous Knowledge currently promotes the idea of more fixity for that system than for Western Knowledge, which is seen to move ever onward in time and space. Whatever, Agrawal argues, and I would agree, that the development of Knowledge systems everywhere 'suggests contact, diversity, exchange, communication, learning and transformation among different systems of knowledge and beliefs' (p. 3). Thirdly, he interrogates the suggestion that Indigenous knowledge is socially and culturally embedded, but Western scientific knowledge is not. He cites contemporary philosophers of science who reveal the 'social moorings' of science, who foreground a view of science as culture and practice, and who see science as 'relative to culture', or 'relative to interests', to illustrate just how much Western knowledge is as 'anchored in specific milieu as any other systems of

knowledge' (p. 3). Arguing the epistemic limitations of the duality, he argues that 'to successfully build new epistemic foundations, accounts of innovation and experimentation must bridge the Indigenous/Western divide' (p. 3) rather than be founded on the simple separation of the two systems as expressed in the literature[4].

The key issue to note here is that the global push to describe and document Indigenous knowledge is gaining momentum without any commensurate interest in the epistemological study of Indigenous Knowledge systems.

In my own research work, I have raised similar criticisms about early anthropological documentation of Torres Strait Islanders in Australia (Nakata, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998). The University of Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait islands just over a century ago gathered extensive field data, which was then used to describe Islanders in terms of their distance from 'civilised' human beings (Haddon, 1901, 1904, 1907, 1908, 1912, 1935). The research team tested and described many of our physical, mental and social characteristics on a comparative basis with people in Western communities. A full reading of their scientific method, and particularly their interpretation of data and conclusions drawn, is an excellent example of just how culturally-embedded their thinking and practices were, and how much they were, to use an expression that Foucault (1970) coined, merely 'in the vicinity of science'.

This does not lead me to wish these texts had never been produced or that they should not stand on library shelves today. Quite the opposite, I would like to see them as basic reading for Torres Strait students. What better way to develop critical reading skills, to gain some understanding of systems of thought and knowledge production and to anchor down a Torres Strait or Indigenous standpoint in students' analysis of systems of thought and knowledge. My interest in them as texts for critical study is not to contest 'what is the truth about Islanders' but to rediscover the methods of knowledge production and how particular knowledges achieve legitimacy and authority at the expense of other knowledge.

## Indigenous Knowledge and Formal Education

In the past decade or so, Indigenous Knowledge has also gained increasing attention in formal education systems across the globe, especially in developed countries with agendas for social inclusion (e.g. Kaewdang, 2000). In the movement towards making curricula more inclusive, there has been a push to integrate Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. This has encouraged extraction of elements of Indigenous ways of understanding the world—mathematical knowledge, astronomy, stories, mythology, art, environmental knowledge, religion, etc. to fit with the curriculum areas. This movement is also encouraged in some Australian universities, in intent at least, if not in implementation.

Even though we don't find many references to Indigenous Knowledge until quite recently, for the last three decades the field of Indigenous education refers instead to cultural appropriateness, cultural content, cultural learning styles, culturally responsive pedagogy, Indigenous perspectives—issues but not knowledge. This reflects the influence of anthropology in the human sciences as a way of understanding Indigenous peoples and communities.

References to culture are references to a whole system of knowing, being and acting. The emphasis is given to **ways of knowing** rather than any discrete body of knowledge. Indigenous learners are understood in formal educational terms as having to reconcile two separate ways of understanding the world. These are simply expressed in terms of the distance between home and community (cultural/traditional) and broader society and institutions (dominant/Western). There are strengths and weaknesses in this approach, but they cannot be debated here in a way that can do the arguments justice[5]. Suffice to say that the very separation of the domains— cultural and Western—or traditional and formal—lead to simplifications that obscure the very complexities of cultural practices in both domains.

My argument has been that theoretically there are real problems with beginning from principles based in a duality between culture and mainstream (Luke et al., 1993). Not only do they obscure the complexities at this intersection, but they confine Indigenous peoples to the position of 'Other' by reifying the very categories that have marginalised us historically and that still seek to remake and relegate us within the frameworks of Western epistemes. These are conceptual frameworks that seek to capture a form of culture that fits with Western ways of understanding 'difference'. A cultural framework largely interpreted by Western people in the education system and filtered back to Indigenous students who learn or are allowed to express the acceptable little bits and pieces of their culture that are integrated into educational practice. In some places, there is still ambivalence to rigorous teaching of the knowledge and skills needed for comparative success in the mainstream because the very meritocratic nature of the system and the very knowledge it imparts are seen to undermine cultural forms and ways and are sometimes deemed irrelevant. Thus, we see many students falling between the cracks, achieving neither mainstream success nor maintenance of their own cultural traditions.

Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in educational curriculum promotes the visibility of Indigenous Knowledge and helps to raise self-esteem and interest in schooling. The inclusion of Indigenous topics of study are even more useful if they emerge from individual students' interest and provide a stimulus for them to develop and gain credit for academic competencies they need for success in the global marketplace or for understanding their own context more fully. However, such

inclusions in too many cases do little to orient students to the context of Western knowledges, which via the disciplines are also de-contextualised and removed from life.

## The Cultural Interface

Over the years, I have pursued an interest in the theoretical underpinnings of practice (Nakata, 1997b). I have focused closely at the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains, the *Cultural Interface*, and theoretically I have been inclined to begin there and have argued for embedding the underlying principles of reform in this space. This is because I see the *Cultural Interface* as the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and, more to the point, the place where we are active agents in our own lives—where we make decisions—our lifeworld. For Indigenous peoples, our context, remote or urban, is already circumscribed by the discursive space of the Cultural Interface. We don't go to work or school, enter another domain, interact and leave it there when we come home again. The boundaries are simply not that clear. The fact that we go to work means we live at the interface of both, and home life is in part circumscribed by the fact that we do. Social and family organisation has to and does to varying degrees orient itself to that reality. This does not mean we passively accept the constraints of this space—to the contrary—rejection, resistance, subversiveness, pragmatism, ambivalence, accommodation, participation, co-operation—the gamut of human response is evident in Indigenous histories since European contact. It is a place of tension that requires constant negotiation.

At the interface, traditional forms and ways of knowing, or the residue of those, that we bring from the pre-contact historical trajectory inform how we think and act and so do Western ways, and for many of us a blend of both has become our lifeworld. It is the most complex of intersections and the source of confusion for many. For in this space there are so many interwoven, competing and conflicting discourses that distinguishing traditional from non-traditional in the day-to-day is difficult to sustain even if one were in a state of permanent reflection.

Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples do traverse these intersecting discourses on a daily basis, responding, interacting, taking positions, making decisions and in the process re-making cultures—ways of knowing, being and acting. In Indigenous individuals, communities and the broader collective, differences in responses and in the priority given to different systems of Knowledge and thinking illustrate the dynamism and diversity within the collective (Nakata, 2001). This dynamism and diversity reflect the original heterogeneity of traditional contexts, the varied experience and impact of colonisation, the diversity of contexts in which Indigenous Australians

now live and the creativity of the mind in devising ways to bridge systems of Knowledge and understanding and responding to changing circumstances.

Embedding fundamental principles for reform in this understanding of the Cultural Interface allows for other possibilities. It accepts that the intersections of different knowledges and discourses produce tensions and condition what is possible, but do not directly produce certainty of outcomes. How Indigenous peoples respond varies tremendously. In this they are not dictated to—they make daily choices about what to accept, buy into, resist, refute, etc. And those choices often reflect previous intersections back through lives and generations as well as contemporary understandings of what lies ahead or what must be dealt with in the present.

Viewing the Cultural Interface as the beginning point accepts that inevitably Knowledge systems as they operate in people's daily lives will interact, develop, change and transform. It accepts that all Knowledge systems are culturally-embedded, dynamic, respond to changing circumstances and constantly evolve. It is not strictly about the replacement of one with the other, nor the undermining of one by the other. It is about maintaining the continuity of one when having to harness another and working the interaction in ways that serve Indigenous interests, in ways that can uphold distinctiveness and special status as First Peoples. Indigenous interests will include the recovery and maintenance of knowledge, but not without understanding, for example, what happens to that knowledge if documented and stored according to disciplines and technologies that have evolved in another Knowledge system.

This notion of the Cultural Interface as a place of constant tension and negotiation of different interests and systems of Knowledge means that both must be reflected on and interrogated. It is not simply about opposing the knowledges and discourses that compete and conflict with traditional ones. It is also about seeing what conditions the convergence of all these and of examining and interrogating all knowledge and practices associated with issues so that we take a responsible but self-interested course in relation to our future practice.

This may involve change, but change in our own long-term interests, rather than that imposed by bigger interests that may seek to coerce us unfairly; change that incorporates into our own knowledge all the ongoing developments brought about by the convergence of other systems of understanding, so that our own corpus of knowledge, derived within our own historical trajectory and sets of interests, keeps expanding and responding to that which impacts on daily life and practice.

This way of thinking about Knowledge intersections at the Cultural Interface also reinstates the notion of Indigenous peoples having their own history. It seems perhaps absurd to suggest that this history needs reinstatement, but one of the effects of colonisation and the supremacy of Western scientific ways of understanding Indigenous peoples was to incorporate Indigenous peoples into Western notions

and theories of history—what I call the out of Africa syndrome or the descendants of Ham trail. Dirks, Eley and Ortner (1994) and Agrawal (1995b) make the point that anthropologists in much documentation of Indigenous peoples and communities made cultural systems appear timeless by excluding historical investigation from their studies. Indigenous cultures it would seem were timeless and in 'pristine states' until European contact (see Nakata, 1997b). Foucault (1970, 1972) reminds us that constructing knowledge of the 'new' or 'unknown' world within a schema privileging Western historical frameworks achieves two things. Firstly, knowledge of 'Others' remains coherent and continuous with Western systems of thought and brings these understandings into a realm of the commonsense. Secondly, and particularly in the case of my own people, it forms knowledge of 'Others' that is quite discontinuous with Indigenous historical contexts. But continuity of culture (knowledge and practice) and identity rests on being able to make and keep coherent pathways through the passage of time, through disruptive chaos of events like colonial contact and periods of rapid change so that the historical knowledge that has contributed to current Knowledge systems can carry through. The denial of this to Indigenous peoples, or the reduction of it to cultural tradition, ensures the ongoing project of 'rescuing' Indigenous peoples from the catastrophe of colonial contact.

## Changing Perspectives

What skills do Indigenous peoples then need to make the choices that serve interests that allow for continuity with traditional ways of thinking and experience (Thaman, 2000), but not cut themselves off from recognising the day-to-day reality of being circumscribed by other systems of Knowledge (Kaewdang, 2000)—and not make the divide too difficult to bridge without elevating one at the expense of the other?

Over the years, along with others (e.g. Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, Kalantzis, Kress, Luke, Luke, Michael & Nakata, 1996), my argument has been that Indigenous peoples need meta-knowledge—knowledge about knowledge as the basis for their interactions with the multitudes of intersecting, often conflicting or competing discourses emerging from different systems of Knowledge. Some sort of schema that enables a better view of what impacts on and gives shape to daily decisions. Something that draws attention to the limits of any system of thought or knowledge, its ability to make claims to truth that are inherently socially situated and self-interested. And something that allows for the maintenance of Indigenous systems of Knowledge, that allows them to be carried through and continue developing rather than be arrested and hi-jacked into another system.

It might seem a rather difficult task, perhaps too theoretical for practitioners in schools and communities to incorporate. But in a practical way I think it is about

making explicit what is often sensed, sometimes obvious but never clearly articulated. If you can reflect for a moment on what education in your lives means, I think you would have to acknowledge that economic imperatives play an enormous part because survival in these times is mainly dependent on finding work that will pay for the day-to-day expenses. However, I think that you would have to acknowledge too that education provides you with the basis for understanding the social organisation of life and the means to make informed value judgments about what to filter in and out of your lives so that important social values are carried through. To understand what is increasingly accepted as diversity in accounts of explanation of social realities, we are currently seeing much more interdisciplinary research and investigation within the Western Knowledge system. The disciplines as a way of segmenting knowledge help us to understand the different aspects of our reality are increasingly under challenge. There have been historically and still are interesting intersections between Eastern and Western Knowledge systems that highlight the diversity of thinking about our realities (Ellen & Harris, 1996). So might we see some emergence of cross-cultural knowledge production between Indigenous Knowledge and other systems that properly sources Indigenous Knowledge systems?

It is a theoretical proposition that lends itself to much more research, especially in how it translates into curriculum, pedagogy and practice, and its potential in Indigenous management of Indigenous communities and affairs and their intersection with other Knowledge regimes. Just as inclusion of Indigenous knowledge into mainstream curriculum is argued to raise self-esteem and relevancy of curriculum content to the lives of Indigenous students, so can this theorisation be argued to raise Indigenous consciousness of systems of thought in their lives that delimit possibilities within a Western order of things.

## Opportunities with Emerging Information Technologies

The Web is an emergent global space that has enormous potential and implications for Indigenous peoples, for it has emerged at an historical moment when Indigenous peoples globally are enabled by social justice agendas to participate relatively freely. Indigenous Australians have embraced the Online environment (Nathan, 2000). This interest follows on from previous and ongoing participation in media and communication technologies through local Indigenous radio and television as well as phone and videoconferencing (Tafler, 2000). Like these technologies, the Online environment does much to overcome distance. It allows greater and faster access to information, connects Indigenous peoples from the local to the global, and allows for dissemination of Indigenous perspectives and representations produced by Indigenous peoples themselves (Nathan, 2000).

David Nathan (2000) suggests the historical Indigenous alienation from the written word—perceived as a one-way communication system quite discontinuous with Indigenous forms of communication—is not sustained in the interactive networked environment. The Online environment has reconstituted the balance between visual, oral and textual modes of presenting information in a way that supports cultural perspectives. Further, the Web supports publishing in ways that disrupt established 'elite' forms of publication and which 'authorise' previous excluded groups from publishing. This provides a platform for Indigenous publishing, which can disrupt the authority of Western representations in media and text. Lastly, the Web and its use of hypertext

> …[helps] destroy the myth that meaning is really contained *in* text, by highlighting the interdependence of documents and showing that meaning arises from the relationships between texts and from our interactions with them. (Nathan, 2000, p. 41)

This fits well with my conceptualisation of the Cultural Interface and the need for knowledge on the intersecting nature of discourses and systems of thought.

Indigenous peoples globally have been very active in the Web environment, considering the issues of inequitable access (e.g. Chisenga, 1999; Luyin, 1999; Mamtora, 2001; Oladele, 2001; Rodriguez, 2001; Shibanda, 2001). The proliferation of Indigenous-controlled websites with information presented by Indigenous peoples has not only connected them to each other in the shared struggle for rights but has allowed the presentation and representations of the issues that concern them. A much different view of Indigenous peoples can be found on the Web from that standing on many of your library shelves or in the mainstream media.

While there is much optimism, the Web clearly has both positive and negative possibilities (McConaghy, 2000). Its presence places pressures on traditional forms of communication and the cultural practices and meanings associated with that (Tafler, 2000). As well, for remote communities in particular, it requires a renegotiation of relationships with the Western world, which have implications for identity and self-determination issues (Tafler, 2000). Whilst it provides space for Indigenous peoples to announce their presence in the global, that global is often perceived in terms of an assimilatory, universalising monoculture which services capitalist interests—the 'global corporate hegemony' (McConaghy, 2000, p. 53).

There are very real concerns that need attention here. Cathryn McConaghy (2000) identifies the Web as reflecting 'the tensions between the reproduction of colonial structures and their disruption' (p. 53). She argues an urgent need for an analytical framework for critical and reflective studies of the conditions under which the Web promotes Indigenous interests rather than upholds colonial or hegemonic interests.

There has also been a move to promote Online learning for Indigenous Australians (*see* Aboriginal Research Institute, in progress)[6]. This not only overcomes some distance issues, but research has shown that multimedia is an *effective media* for Indigenous learners for many of the reasons described today (e.g. Henderson, 1993a, 1993b; Henderson, Patching & Putt, 1996; Henderson & Putt, 1993). It reduces the dependence on text alone for meaning-making, it allows for the explicit highlighting of particular aspects of grammar or text construction that people with different language backgrounds have difficulty with (*see* Chan, Lin & Zeng, 1999). Hypertext links allow the inclusion of further explanation, background and supplementary material to assist with contextualising Western Knowledge and allows it to be accessible in a moment and in a way that suits individual learning needs, that is, it allows control over pace and increased self-direction in learning as students make their own pathways through fields of information. The vast array of options allows course designers to cater for diversity and difference on a group and individual basis. It also allows for less-threatening forms of asynchronous communication (*see* Henderson, 1993a; Henderson & Putt, 1993).

Because the move to place courses Online is recent (*see* e.g. Harasim, 1989, 1990; Commonwealth Department of Education, Science & Technology, 2000), Indigenous peoples see the opportunity to be involved from the beginning, to exert influence on the development process and shape it for their own purposes (Aboriginal Research Institute, in progress). This process is much more about pedagogy than about simple inclusions of Indigenous content and access to resources. Currently I am part of a working group of Indigenous academics across six universities to build an Online degree in Australian Indigenous Studies. I am keen to apply a theory of the Cultural Interface so that the 'situatedness' of Knowledge systems is highlighted. This is not just to help untangle the discursive space that is the Cultural Interface.

One major strategy is to encourage the development of alternative theoretical platforms, Indigenous standpoints, in the intellectual engagement with knowledge and discourses from both Western and Indigenous domains, to produce useful knowledge to become part of a continuing Indigenous Knowledge tradition. For non-Indigenous students, who access these courses, the interrogation of their own systems of thought may help develop a better appreciation of the position of Indigenous peoples in changing times.

The necessity to undertake more research into the intersection between the Online environment that makes use of the Web, Indigenous contexts and academic contexts is made all the more urgent by all the issues discussed in this paper and the nature of the Web. The Web is an unbounded and chaotic discursive space. It contains endless possibilities. Indigenous peoples must be involved at a deeper level than

merely providing Indigenous 'content' or 'voice' if we are to use it for our own interests. The legacies of colonial activity, the failure of liberal reform measures since the 1970s to achieve comparative success and cultural restoration, the relentlessness of popular, corporate and global cultures need to be mediated effectively in this environment by Indigenous peoples.

## Concluding Remarks

So these are the *underlying issues at the intersection of knowledge and information systems*. When we begin to talk about Indigenous Knowledge as it connects with the academic domain, you can by now appreciate just how complex the issues are. In the beginning, this paper may have seemed to be largely about the issues to do with the current documentation and management of Indigenous knowledge and information as discrete entities that stand in contrast to Western scientific knowledge. The issues associated with this task become more complex when we consider the underlying theoretical basis for the conceptualisation of Indigenous Knowledge and the risk to the integrity of Indigenous Knowledge systems associated with their documentation. It becomes even more complex when we consider the implications of different approaches used in the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge into the formal education process. Bring in the issues that face Indigenous communities trying to not only rebuild Indigenous Knowledge systems, but also draw them in with other Knowledge systems to both solve difficult community problems and maintain ongoing continuity and coherence, the issues are at once fundamental and rather daunting. Add to that, big commercial interests knocking on our doors and often stealing through the window so to speak to extract information for exploitation without reference to the original producers of that knowledge. Add to that the vast stores of information and knowledge **about** Indigenous peoples across the globe that belong to the Western Knowledge system. These include the historical archive of outdated thinking about 'primitive savages', records and collections of materials, and so on. All of which is of value, however offensive, if Indigenous peoples want fuller understanding of their historical experiences and the mechanisms and regimes of colonisation and so-called postcolonial times. Add to that the vast proliferation of information on the Web and the potential positives and negatives for Indigenous peoples interacting in the Online environment. It all makes the academic/Indigenous intersection and what that might mean for information professionals look rather complex.

What the future Indigenous information context will look like is speculative. What can be certain is that the intersections of different Knowledges, systems, concerns and priorities will converge to inform and develop new practices in this

area. As this unfolds, I would hope that educational academies would be mindful of just how complex the underlying issues are and just how much is at stake for us when the remnants of our knowledge, for some of us all that we have left us, are the focus of so much external interest.

## Endnotes

1    This paper is a version of a more detailed chapter in a forthcoming book by the author and Prof. M Langton on Indigenous Knowledge systems.

2    In this paper, the use of Indigenous Knowledge with 'K' in the upper case is to identify with an epistemological understanding of knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge with 'k' in the lower case is to identify fragmented articles of a knowledge system—items of knowledge that are described and documented without any view to an epistemological context.

     3The use of the term, Indigenous peoples, in the plural, is used throughout this paper to refer to the fact that not all Indigenous people are the same, although we share a common experience with colonialism.

4    Agrawal received heavy criticism for his article highlighting limitations to the ways Indigenous knowledge was being pursued, and not surprisingly from those at the forefront of the recent push to describe and document Indigenous knowledge. See response by Agrawal (1996).

5    For further readings see also: Nicholls, Crowley & Watt, n. d.; Nakata, 2001.

6    For more information on online learning priorities in Australia's education system, see Education Network Australia (EDNA) for the schooling sector, Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) for the vocational education training sector and the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee (AVCC) for the higher education sector.

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# THE CHALLENGE TO DECULTURALISATION:

## DISCOURSES OF ETHNICITY IN THE SCHOOLING OF INDIGENOUS CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA AND THE USA

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## Introduction

The paradox of the 'settler societies' of North America, Australia and New Zealand is that they 'simultaneously resisted and accommodated the authority of an imperialist Europe[1] (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995, p. 4). In these societies, white supremacist ideology, based on the notion that European culture was so superior that suppression of all others was justified, has continued to assault the languages, cultures and life-worlds of Indigenous populations. At the same time, resistance to this process has established spaces for Indigenous self-determination. The paradox is vivid in education systems, which demonstrate that practices dominated by the privileges of 'whiteness' (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998) are still prevalent in many schools despite all the educational rhetoric concerning multicultural pedagogy, but that spaces for genuine change are being created and seized. We acknowledge that there are no linear solutions; one contradiction is addressed just as we stumble upon the next set of ongoing conundrums, and addressing them is always a zig-zag process.

This paper analyses the competing discourses of ethnicity and culture in school curricula offered to Indigenous children in the USA and Australia. Having observed a variety of schools in several States in the USA and Australia, we have selected case studies of four schools that serve both rural and urban Indigenous populations:

1) A State primary school in an Aboriginal settlement in 'outback' Australia,

2) a State primary school in a small town with a large proportion of Native Americans in the USA,

3) an Indigenous community-controlled primary school in urban Australia, and

4) an Indigenous community-controlled primary school in a rural Native American settlement in the USA.

Our analysis explores how far the curriculum appeared Eurocentric in the sense of being biased towards a white supremacist worldview, how far it appeared to be offering a broader, hybrid spectrum of curriculum, including Indigenous content, and the views of the teachers we interviewed about the curriculum. We discuss the significance of the range of curriculum styles that we observed and consider their implications for postcolonial change in education.

Across the globe, Indigenous and diasporic peoples 'of colour' who have suffered under European colonialism share strikingly similar experiences with colonial and neo-colonial education. Ruling elites have forced many such peoples to the bottom of the socioeconomic and racial hierarchies (Mills, 2000; Spring, 2001). Western schooling became pivotal to the attempt to eradicate the cultures of Indigenous peoples across the globe. In most white dominant countries, this deculturalisation continues (Spring, 1999), yet it is strongly contested both by alternative schools and by individual teachers within schools, as we show in our case studies. Identifying the processes of cultural oppression and contestation in the educational experiences of Australian Aborigines and Native Americans can help us understand the forces that shape the state of education for all children. The overarching concern is with how teachers can learn to challenge assimilationist curricula and teach the diverse histories, sciences and arts of people all over the world. These have been ideals of progressive teacher education for decades, yet it is rare to see them implemented.

## Framing the Analysis: 'Whiteness' and the Eurocentric Curriculum

By way of recognising the importance of our situatedness, we describe ourselves as teacher educators whose perspectives have been deeply influenced by our painful experiences of racism in different settings. One of us is black and one white, but in the variety of environments in which we have taught, spanning Montana, California, the Caribbean, England and Australia, we have seen and felt the effects of racist socialisation in playing havoc with identities and behaviour. 'Race' ideology has people defining their groups within unnatural borders of inclusion and exclusion based on constructed concepts in which 'races' are arranged in a hierarchy of intelligence and civilisational qualities (Harding, 1993). Belief in race/culture hierarchies is so strong that many teachers, socialised into Eurocentric assumptions

of superiority, see no need to engage seriously with non-Western cultures and knowledge systems in their study or teaching. This is the context which we challenge when we teach university programmes preparing teachers in multicultural, anti-racist pedagogy and when we supervise student teachers in schools. Our programmes ask students to explore the nature of Eurocentrism, including its racial ideologies, in the organisation of education, its deleterious consequences for all students, and approaches for constructing alternatives (Ahlquist, 2000; Ahlquist, 2001; Hickling-Hudson, 1998).

In his exposition on the intellectual dangers of a Eurocentric curriculum in education, John Willinsky in *Learning to divide the world: Education at empire's end* (2000) analyses the educational project of the West to bring the world together 'under the roof of European learning' (p. 4). He argues that this has left the world with colonially tainted understandings of why the colonised 'were subservient to a born-to-rule civilization' (pp. 3-4). As teacher educators, we have long been convinced of the pernicious effects of a Eurocentric curriculum, seeing its negative impact on students. We are not, of course, arguing that European knowledge or pedagogy are pernicious, but that Eurocentrism is. A Eurocentric curriculum teaches no critical view of culture which would enable students to see that all cultures have strengths and weaknesses and that they operate within particular epistemologies. Lacking this critical approach, it unabashedly asserts the superiority of European culture, turning non-European cultures into the inferior 'Other'. It disrespects and devalues other cultures and other learning styles by making them invisible or distorting them. This absence or distortion is not a simple oversight - it is an example of institutional racism. Many teachers and teacher educators are intensely socialised into its norms. It can have a devastating effect on non-European peoples who are required to submit to this episteme through compulsory schooling (see Pinar, 1993).

Our focus on case studies of schooling for Indigenous students comes from our efforts to improve our own competencies, as teacher educators, in constructing culturally relevant pedagogies that recognise the special place of Indigenous people in white-dominated societies. In Australia and in the USA, Indigenous peoples are in such a minority (around 2% or less of the entire population in both countries) that it is likely that non-Indigenous teachers will be dominant in the teaching service for the foreseeable future. Multicultural education has taken some steps towards recognising the languages and cultures of diverse ethnicities (Bennett, 2001). However, the role of Black and Indigenous cultures is still ignored or inadequately recognised in curriculum practice in Australia and the USA, as we are aware from our experience with university and school curricula. In this situation, extending the task of culturally and linguistically congruent, anti-racist, multicultural education is especially urgent.

A postcolonial perspective puts the process of 'unmasking whiteness' (McKay, 1999) into global context. It explores the ethnocentric and racial ideologies characterising the Eurocentric curriculum. These ideologies are rarely recognised or acknowledged, yet they are, in our view, a critically important factor explaining the relative lack of success of Indigenous students in the educational system[2]. A curriculum which humiliates and alienates students of colour by ignoring them or representing them in a contemptuous way is at least as important as institutional discrimination or poor social relationships between student and teacher in explaining the prevalence of negative educational outcomes for so many Indigenous learners.

We realise that there can be no simple comparisons between students in schools in states and provinces within one country, let alone across continents. But there are areas of comparison that are useful when clearly defined patterns found across systems provide a basis for comparability. What we have observed and recorded are compelling patterns of the imposition of dominant Anglocentric curricula on Indigenous students and a broad array of emerging experiments in changing this. We strive not to essentialise Indigenous groups, but to portray features of neocolonial education that affect many, varied groups and to discuss the features of decolonisation and self-determination that can challenge this in the interests of creating more equitable schools.

## The Case Studies

Any research on Indigenous education in Australia and the USA is faced with the overarching question: why is it that Indigenous citizens continue to be far away from achieving the educational levels of other citizens? In spite of all the special programmes for Indigenous people, education is still failing them. The causes of the failure lie in its continuation of many of the racist practices of a colonialist heritage, as we discuss by way of presenting two case studies of Anglocentric schooling. It need not fail them, as we argue by contrasting these with different ways of educating Indigenous children. These alternatives are only a few of the many examples being developed in countries all over the world.

## Anglocentric Schooling: Two Cases

### School 1, Australia

During the aggressive British invasion and settlement of Australia, some of the surviving Aboriginal people, from several different language groupings, were forcibly removed from their lands, which were taken over by white pastoralists, farmers and the 'Crown'. In the early 20th century, these Aborigines were thrown together by the government into communities of forced settlement in arid locations which had

no economic base. Although Aborigines made efforts to regain some semblance of normal life in these settlements, they remained places with such chronic economic and social problems – including an unemployment rate of up to 95% – that they are still in crisis today. One of the enduring crises is the state of education for the children in these settlements, characterised as it is by high absenteeism, poor performance in literacy and numeracy, and high dropout rates before the school-leaving age. We visited primary schools for Aboriginal children in some of these rural settlements and we selected for this article the curriculum practices in School 1. This school was on the threshold of change because of the arrival of a new principal. Since our visit, some improvements have been made. Hence, our description of School 1 is a snapshot of its profile in the last years of the 1990s. We provide it because it resonates with a model of schooling in Australia that from our knowledge is still widespread for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children alike.

Teachers expressed concern about the literacy level of most students at this school. Most children leave school at or after Grade 7, having attained only a Grade 3 literacy level. Their performance in all other subjects suffered from poor literacy skills. Nearly everyone we talked to blamed this widespread school failure on poor attendance. We were told that most children attended school only about 50% of the time, and that 'It's not a very traditional community and elders don't have the respect that they once did. Even if they tell the kids that it's important to come to school; kids don't necessarily obey'(Interview School 1, Teacher A).

It was noticeable at all levels of the primary school that the curriculum was not grounded in the daily life experiences of the students, but rather in the dominant culture knowledge and experiences of the young white teachers, regardless of whether their pedagogy was didactic, relational or a mix of teaching styles. Pictures on classroom walls, textbooks, library books and exercises children were doing gave the clear message that the curriculum was unabashedly Anglocentric. The walls displayed prominent pictures of the Disney versions of Snow White, Cinderella, The Three Little Pigs and Red Riding Hood. Reading books included *The Gingerbread Man*, *Humpty Dumpty*, *Incy Wincy Spider* and stories by Dr. Seuss. Sentences on the chalkboard for the children to read and copy spoke not of everyday, community matters or of Australian or Aboriginal history, culture, wildlife or society, but of content that had little or no connection to their daily lives. Introducing strange and new material in itself need not be problematic; one of the tasks of teachers, after all, is to try to have students consider the unfamiliar. It is, however, arguably problematic for Indigenous children to be so entirely immersed in the uncritically portrayed culture of the white dominant majority. The manifest flaws in this curriculum suggested to us one reason why the absentee rate was so high.

The Anglocentric curriculum we described was being provided in a community that was totally Indigenous. There was an evident mismatch between the teachers' middle-class 'Anglo' culture and that of a community in which adults were Aboriginal, rural and mostly unemployed. The children with whom we chatted were interested in a version of Black culture obtained from TV, videos and movies from the USA and from European, Australian and Jamaican entertainers. Some of them told us proudly that they had watched *Cool Runnings*, a film about a Jamaican bobsled team, seven times, and they were fans of Jamaican and African-American entertainers. The teachers – all of them Anglo-Australian except one – were ignoring this background and providing a narrow, middle-class and Anglocentric curriculum that was clearly culturally incongruent. When we raised this with them in conversation, there were different reactions. The issue had not occurred to some of them, but a few said that they were uncomfortably aware of it, particularly when they tried to teach literacy skills. They said that their universities had given them little or no preparation to teach anything other than the Anglocentric curriculum in their teacher education programmes. Furthermore, they had very little inservice support from the State Department of Education, and certainly none that would have helped them to re-orient their teaching to take account of its cultural context.

### School 2, USA

Educational outcomes for Native American children were in a similar state of crisis, with low attainment levels, in the town that we visited in the USA. This area is the heartland of a relatively large Indigenous group. In our visit to what we will call School 2, we observed classes being taught in five grades, talked with the five teachers of these grades and interviewed the principal. School 2 had an ethnically diverse population of students, about 40% Hispanic and 40% Native American. Only 14% was white and the rest were classified as 'other'. Nearly all of the students (92%) were entitled to free school lunches, which meant that the level of poverty of their families was high.

We were told that the Native American languages of the Native American children at the school had been 'pretty much lost' – only 10% of them spoke Indian languages as their mother tongue. The school provided programmes in English as a Second Language (ESL) for students whose English was limited and some of the teachers taught dual Spanish/English programmes up to the 4th Grade level. No American Indian languages were taught. Most of the teachers were Anglo-American. Although there were a few Mexican American teachers fluent in Spanish, they were encouraged to speak English, with the expectation, on the part of the administration, that this example would encourage second language learners to learn English. Classrooms

were, in general, visually interesting, but the content of 'whiteness' was prevalent everywhere. Few books, photos or pictures portrayed the rich ethnic diversity represented by students in the classrooms. It would have been easy to take some of the classrooms from this school and place them within School 1 in outback Australia, with hardly an indication that they were in a different country.

The public spaces of the two schools, however, did differ significantly. Whereas the outer walls of School 1 in Australia were illustrated with paintings in traditional Aboriginal style, the corridors of School 2 in the USA celebrated white histories. Display boards showed pictures of past Presidents of the USA, all white men, as well as horses and covered wagons of white 'pioneers' with long rifles, illustrating themes of 'Westward Ho' and the conquest of the natives. We were astounded at this insensitivity in a school with a 40% Native American student body. Pictures of or books about Native Americans and African Americans were nowhere to be seen. We saw no evidence of ethnically diverse role models, art styles, histories or cultural artefacts from the children's communities. Pictures of Mexican American children and Spanish/English words were displayed in only one of the five classrooms that we visited.

The curriculum in this public elementary school in the USA was clearly test-driven. The emphasis on raising the scores for State-mandated standardised tests was a high priority for the administration. Aware that their principal saw higher test scores as a primary goal for the school year, many teachers were resigned to accept this mandate. Yet they had very mixed views about the importance of such exams. Many expressed concerns about whether their students were ready for the onslaught of State-mandated, norm-referenced exams. Others quietly voiced their concerns about whether this was the right direction for their pedagogy. Most gave the impression that they were teaching for the tests against their better judgement. However, other teachers welcomed the strict routines of teaching for the test. In one of the classrooms, the teacher, strictly in control, deplored the low standards of literacy and numeracy of her students (nearly all Native American and Hispanic). She blamed parents for not making the children ready for school. But from another perspective, the problems were, as we perceived them, that the children seemed cowed by the teacher's harsh manner, and the work set for them, test-driven, was boring if not stupefying.

The classroom of one teacher in the first grade was clearly an exception to the dominant Eurocentric ethos of the school. The teacher, a woman of colour with a high degree of consciousness of multicultural education, had been trained in California, a State that mandates a culturally and linguistically diverse emphasis in credential coursework. This teacher did not teach from a colour-blind perspective.

She was committed to teaching children about how to affirm, not deny, their richly diverse skin colours and ethnicities. Children had drawn and coloured their own face masks with such paint tones as mahogany, cinnamon, toast, peach and coffee. This classroom had books from different ethnic backgrounds, photos of the children on the walls and pictures of Native American, Mexican American and other ethnically diverse peoples. Her curriculum outlines and teaching materials reflected a strong multicultural emphasis. She was bilingual and students spoke with her in both English and Spanish. This classroom showed much promise. Students' identities were being acknowledged and their cultures and languages were being validated.

### Indigenous Self-Determination: Two Cases

We now consider two schools where most of the teachers were challenging the Eurocentric tradition of teaching. We describe these as two of many alternatives to an Anglocentric curriculum in what we call School 3, a Native American controlled school in an Indigenous rural community in the USA, and School 4, an independent Aboriginal-controlled city school for Aboriginal and Islander students in Australia.

### School 3, USA

School 3, a community-controlled school in a Native American reservation, was for us a breath of fresh air, embodying an inspiring alternative to the Anglocentric curriculum that had so dominated Schools 1 and 2. The administrators of School 3 were committed to involving the community closely with the school. We visited it during a one week workshop for parents, teachers and community members, in which they came into the school each day to attend sessions on art, traditional Native American health care, parenting and special services for children in trouble.

This is a small primary school with 150 American Indian students, 120 in the kindergarten to 6th grades and 30 in the 7th and 8th grades. It is rural and located on reservation land. Students have the option to go to an urban high school in the nearest town, 20 miles away. Strong community support and parent involvement were visible features of this primary school. Nearby was a health and wellness centre which was being actively used. Parents were in the cafeteria, eating with their children, in the garden centre helping arrange new plantings, in the library searching for a book for their child. All teachers had State-required teaching credentials. Hiring policy favoured the hiring of qualified Indian teachers. Some staff were teacher aides without credentials. The curriculum adopts an approach which balances Indigenous and non-Indigenous content. The curriculum is discussed, reviewed and modified by a school board including teachers, staff, parents and other community members.

Two classrooms in particular stood out. The confidently balanced portrayal of Indigenous, culturally diverse and white cultures on the walls suggested that the students were encouraged to have comfortably hybrid identities. Wall posters included the alphabet, poems and proverbs in both the Indigenous language and English. Posters depicted Indigenous children and adults engaging in Indigenous science and philosophy. Cultural values were affirmed visually in these classrooms. There were globes, world maps, maps of tribal groups and maps of the world before as well as after the European conquests.

In several classrooms, the alphabet and words from the community Indigenous language were posted on classroom walls. No classroom in the entire school displayed Disney cartoon characters. There was a strong visual historical presence about how the community had developed over the years. Photos throughout the school depicted community members and their recent activities and accomplishments. Pictures, photos, posters and books, prominently displayed, reflected Indigenous peoples and their histories. Native medicinal herbs were displayed in the well-stocked library and in the wellness centre. There was a communal centre for ceremonies and rituals. The school community had begun to address discipline in a culturally appropriate way, after discussions about the lack of success with punitive measures. Field trips were viewed as necessary journeys into the world around this rural community. Physical activities, including hikes to tribal sites, were a major part of the students' extra curricular events. A school garden was another activity. Workshops on cultural topics highlighting Native interests were a regular part of the curriculum, open to the community. The school had a programme for parents to study for their high school graduation diploma.

The atmosphere on the campus was welcoming, informal, stimulating, friendly. Teachers and staff met regularly to assess and build on student learning. The school portrayed a caring educational environment. The teachers and staff at this school are struggling to provide a culturally congruent education for their students at a difficult time. Unemployment is high and, with the slashing of Federal funding, poverty is on the rise in many Native communities like this one. There was no paved road to the school, making access difficult. This has been an issue on many reservation schools. Federal government money for economic development projects has been drastically reduced. This means that rural schools like this one have to do more with much less money than in the past. This community school is not isolated from the problems of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse and single-parenthood, which face most communities in the USA. Yet there is an open acknowledgment that these problems exist and there are ongoing efforts to work with community members to address these critical problems as they affect children in the school.

### School 4, Australia

School 4 is a small, recently established independent Indigenous school in an urban location in Australia. Most of the children are at the primary level, a few are at the secondary level and small number of students from other ethnic groups also attend.

The children in School 4, nearly all of them Aboriginal, are doing outstandingly well academically by any standards, compared to the poor performance of many Indigenous children in other Australian schools. In 2001, in the State tests of literacy and numeracy competencies in Grade 3, every child in the class of 28 achieved better than State average. Some achieved 100% in the tests. Yet almost all of them come from families which are on social security – below the poverty line. Another unusual feature is that the children love coming to school. There is no problem of irregular attendance or truancy. It is important for educators to consider the strategies that are used to create a school that appears to be a seedbed for Indigenous academic and social success.

The school is seen as an institution belonging to the community of parents and interested citizens, not separate from it. The board members, all Indigenous, are well known in the community – they are public figures. Parents who visit keep coming back. The staff treat them with respect and they have a real say in their child's education. Many of the parents are from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and benefit from the adult evening classes provided by the school. Some have obtained jobs in the city as a result of their studies. The school's emphasis is on establishing a family-style environment which provides care for the children's social and health needs. Dental, optometry and other health services are provided in conjunction with the local government. We observed that the Principal is very accessible. Children hold her hands, talk with her, sit on her lap and she converses easily and frequently with teachers, parents, visitors and general staff.

The academic success of the children is achieved within this caring and supportive context. The teachers (most of them Indigenous) systematically identify and meet the learning needs of the students. A speech pathologist assesses literacy levels as children enter the school and, if needed, children get individual help with reading and writing from four to six hours a week. Teachers shape the curriculum both to reflect the culture and interests of the students and to meet or exceed State requirements. The school uses the State's syllabus material as a guide. In some subject areas, such as cultural studies, teachers rewrite their own curriculum based on Indigenous concerns. They creatively combine their own autonomous materials and pedagogy with the syllabus of the State Department of Education to ensure that the students get the same skill base as the State syllabus requires.

The cultural studies programme emphasises Indigenous history, society and culture. This is one of the things that differentiates the school from other schools. Teachers use Indigenous texts as much as possible and write a lot of their own material. But even when they use mainstream texts, the teachers put their own Indigenous slant on the material. Students study topics such as 'invasion and resistance' and 'the stolen generations' that might be considered controversial in other schools. Community elders are regular visitors to the school. They drop into classes informally to tell the children stories. Two dance educators visit regularly and teach the children in every grade traditional Aboriginal and Islander music and dance. The school has decided not to teach Aboriginal languages. The Principal explained that 'Students come from twelve different language groups and the issue would be: which language(s) do you maintain? All Aboriginal groups support the school, and part of maintaining neutrality is not to teach any particular Aboriginal language or any religion' (Interview Teacher C, School 4). Most of the students speak English as their first language, except for a few who come from Indigenous communities in rural areas.

The library suffers from a shortage of funds, yet it has several inviting book displays of multicultural children's literature, a well-stocked wall of Aboriginal books for adults and children and a few giant picture books including Aboriginal stories for the teacher to read aloud and display to the class. The walls are lined with pictures of Aboriginal people in their cultural context. This library could not be mistaken for anything other than one which is proudly emphasising Aboriginal culture.

## Discussing the Cases

Educational outcomes for Indigenous students remain in a state of crisis. There should be no victim-blaming in this matter: instead, the model of schooling offered should be under scrutiny as the source of poor outcomes. We argue that the flaws of the neocolonial approach to schooling characterising Schools 1 and 2 are the basis of a general alienation from education, shown not only by Indigenous but also by other disadvantaged groups, in their absenteeism, poor literacy and numeracy skills, and high levels of examination failure. This model has to be changed, as has been done by schools such as 3 and 4, to bring about better educational outcomes for those harmed by neocolonial education across the globe.

Our case studies should not be misinterpreted as representing binary or dualistic perspectives. There are no simplistic dichotomies between State schools perceived as oppressive and community schools perceived as empowering. The question is not whether the State or the community runs the school – it is on what kind of curriculum is provided. Any school can imbue principles of cultural diversity

throughout the curriculum if the will is there. Nor do we argue that Western education should be dropped in favour of something called 'Indigenous education'. We seek to provide a broad range of ideas as alternatives to the master narrative of a 'whitestream', dominant culture, Anglocentric curriculum. It is useful to refer here to the detailed critique put forward by Cathryn McConaghy (2000) of the dangers and limitations of a 'culturalist' approach in anti-racist work. There is far more to understanding social groups than can be gained by conflating 'racial' and 'cultural' identities. It is problematic to think in terms of repressive dualisms between white and black cultures. Instead, 'white' and 'black' identities and experiences are mutually constitutive, particularly in colonial and postcolonial situations where Indigenous and settler groups developed during the last few centuries in symbiosis with each other. Authentic scholarship presents this symbiosis, with all its low and highs, yet it also explores those aspects of culture that are unique to different groups. One might cite the example of the brilliant African-American musician, Wynton Marsalis, with his extensive expertise in jazz as well as European classical music, and ask who in their right mind would want him to give up one or the other? Another example is the voluntary programme initiated recently by Maoris, the Indigenous people of New Zealand, where students, teachers and community members are supported in learning Maori as a second language. Many New Zealanders are taking up Maori to become bilingual. There need be no dichotomy between English and Maori – fluency in both is desirable.

Thus, in commenting on our case studies we emphasise the paradox of the accommodation and resistance of oppressive practices (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995.) Not all of the teachers were of a kind in the case study schools. In spite of the culturally problematic curriculum in the first two schools, there were spaces for alternative practices. In School 1 in rural Australia, a few teachers were outstanding in their level of care and concern for the children. The display of Aboriginal murals on one of the buildings made a statement of cultural pride. School 2 in the USA appeared efficiently run and orderly, offered several extra-curricular activities and had a few teachers, such as the teacher we described in Grade One, who were creative in their attempts to 'customise' the curriculum for their students. However, such teachers were in a minority within the prevailing narrowly traditional ethos of both schools. In the third and fourth case study schools, not all teachers were succeeding in the ambitious goals of the school to balance local and global culture. But most of them were striving to reach these goals, had a consciousness that promoted global perspectives and culturally relevant pedagogy, and were being supported in their efforts by the school's administration as much as by its community.

Our case studies helped us to understand more clearly the nature of the problematic curriculum with which many, perhaps most, Indigenous students are faced and the distance that schools need to travel to change this. Most Australian and US schools are characterised by what Sleeter[2] describes as 'the overwhelming presence of whiteness' in the teaching and administrative staff, in the student body, in social relations between groups and in the curriculum. This 'whiteness' refers not so much to the dominance of a particular skin colour as to the dominance of a white-supremacist methodology, based on a particular mindset of thinking, acting and being. A further point is that most Indigenous students in State schools are not given the high quality of schooling that is available to elite groups of whites. Their schooling is not only white-dominated in practice and Anglocentric in content: it is also outdated, didactic, limited in culturally relevant resources and not geared to producing a positive and self-confident scholastic identity.

These characteristics became clear from our first two case studies. They are only two cases, but they are echoed by research (e.g. Groome, 1994; Johnston, 1998; Malin, 1997; Rains, 1999), and our regular visits to schools as teacher educators suggest to us that the white-supremacist model of schooling described here is generalisable to many schools. The curriculum foregrounds the doings of white folk to such an extent that children of colour do not see themselves represented in most of the written materials, texts, movies, videos or literature. They are not visible as contributors to the development of science, mathematics, histories or literatures. From this perspective, it is white men and the occasional woman who made history, discovered other lands, shaped the histories of science, the arts and humanities, made the 'important' contributions to the world. This kind of curriculum pays little attention to social context, ignoring the systemic structural factors which produce inequities of race, class and gender as part of corporate capitalism. Pedagogy is teacher-centred and test driven. The focus is on rote learning and memorisation of atomised factual data. Parents and elders do not play an important role in the school: indeed, they have little to do with it.

A fundamental dilemma is that, while education is often touted as a beacon of hope, those who succeed in the Anglocentric educational paths which are so predominant will probably be severed from their culture and community of origin. The role played by Eurocentric schooling in a community where the majority of adults have little hope of employment is, often, to remove or alienate young people. For most, school is puzzling and often perceived as irrelevant, humiliating or oppressive (Fettes, 1999). In order to go on to secondary school, students in rural areas often have to travel outside of their community (this was the case with students in Schools 1, 2 and 3 of our case studies) and many will seek work in other towns.

Given these circumstances, it is little wonder Indigenous students' absenteeism tends to be high and their performance poor, as was the case in the first two schools we studied, and that few parents are involved in their children's schooling. Turning this situation around would necessitate developing meaningful local employment in tandem with meaningful Indigenous education, perhaps the most difficult dual challenge that currently exists.

The two independent schools, School 3 and School 4, were imbued with a more culturally relevant pedagogy and a mixture of possibilities that promoted the Indigenous cultural confidence that the first two schools lacked. Self determination was shown in the control of the school by the Indigenous community. The presence of parents and elders was strong in both schools. The teachers, many of them Indigenous, had worked out ways of teaching both Western and Indigenous curriculum strands so that there was a sense of local culture embracing global culture. School 4 had shown that with this kind of curriculum and with response to individual learning needs, students can attain high passes even in State-imposed tests based on a 'Western' curriculum. The schools validated and affirmed student identities and histories. The curriculum was generated from their lived experiences, cultures and interests. Because of the strong programmes of holistic care in both schools, the teachers had come to know the students in their family and cultural contexts, and there was trust and mutual respect. These schools are examples of how school communities can be collaborative, involving learners, teachers, parents, students and general staff in working towards similar goals (see Christie 2000; May, 1999; McCarty, 2002). Yet in our experience such school communities are rare because the ideals of self-determination are fraught with problems. Poverty conspires to undermine efforts at community involvement. Teacher turnover rates, lack of money for adequate curriculum resources and materials, burnout, all can contribute to uneven leadership and participation.

It is this second model shown by Schools 3 and 4 that needs to inform the search to displace the much more common model of the school as a humiliating and resented institution imposed on communities by the laws of the land. The strength of the pedagogy of Schools 3 and 4 was based on the balance achieved between Western and Indigenous learning. Nonetheless, even when the curriculum is culturally relevant and even when school graduation rates are relatively high, as in the USA, poverty and unemployment cast a cloud over school communities. When the students graduate, what will they do? Unemployment figures for Indigenous ethnic groups suggest that most of them (perhaps apart from the small minority who complete tertiary education) have poor chances of good jobs in an economy that is downsizing and constricting employment possibilities. We need to ask if schools and communities

are preparing young people to address these economic concerns. Alcoholism and drug abuse become coping mechanisms when one's self-esteem is destroyed by the inability to provide food, housing and shelter for one's family.

## Conclusion: Framing the Change Agenda

All students, in order to develop dynamic identities in a world seemingly still dominated by Eurocentrism, need to learn the culture and the language of power. A postcolonial perspective does not seek to turn the tables and suppress the important legacies of European or 'Western' learning in order to promote Indigenous perspectives. It does not argue for one-way and either-or approaches to schooling. What it does is to argue for correcting the lies, distortions and omissions in Western ethnocentrism. This includes pointing out the unfounded assumptions of superiority and the processes of racism wherever they occur and naming and challenging the negative legacies of colonialism and their continuation through neocolonial practices. A postcolonial curriculum is a 'hybrid' one, engaging with the elements of non-Western learning and experience which colonialism so determinedly cast aside. It challenges the 'colour-blind' construct, which denies the link between socioeconomic privilege and whiteness as an ideology and which erases dangerous historical memories 'in a way that severs the connection between white people's contemporary privileged social location with historical patterns of injustice' (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 15). It investigates the assumptions underlying discourses of Eurocentrism including 'whiteness' and explores approaches for constructing alternatives (Willinsky, 1999). The goal is not to elicit feelings of guilt for white racism, but to encourage insight into the racialised nature of oppression as a foundation for working towards the redistribution of power and resources along more equitable lines (Rodriguez, 1998, pp. 33-35).

As we pointed out earlier, most educators of Indigenous students are likely to continue to be white in white-dominant countries. The challenge is a complex one: that of educating these educators to deconstruct, critique and decentre the Eurocentric discourses of 'whiteness' and to collaborate in exploring multiple discourses rooted in epistemologies which are unfamiliar to them. This could lead to a complete rethink of school practices dominated by the kind of Anglocentric curriculum practised by Schools 1 and 2 of our case studies. It could help educators to modify schools into places which integrate the community of parents and elders and collaborate with them to develop a curriculum which blends the best of Indigenous and Western traditions, as was happening in Schools 3 and 4. There will always be dilemmas and problems in this process of change, but if learning is contextualised, culturally relevant, authentic and socially just, students will become more engaged in their education. The rewards for students, teachers and the community are profound.

To prepare teachers to implement authentic pedagogy for Indigenous students, they need to be provided with a different kind of teacher education (see Ahlquist 2001; Hickling-Hudson & McMeniman, 1996). The unmasking of the socio-political role of 'whiteness' and of its instrumentality in furthering Eurocentrism should lead to a deeper understanding of the pedagogies of deculturalisation imposed by Western schools and the devastating impact of this imposition, not only on Indigenous students, but also on other subjugated ethnic 'minorities'. Teachers and teacher educators need to study alternative epistemologies, Indigenous histories, multiple perspectives and critical multicultural pedagogies which would lead them to different ways of educating. They need to welcome the Indigenous community into a dialogue about what is best for their children and to collaborate with them in curriculum development. This would involve compiling resources from existing Indigenous curricula and reviewing what alternatives already exist that might be useful. Teachers and educational leaders need to work together with Indigenous specialists to create authentic, qualitative assessment which goes beyond the simplistic standardised, norm referenced testing. They need to experiment with the difficult task of creating alternative curricula and pedagogical approaches that not only rock the boat, but ultimately overturn the boat of the traditional curriculum grounded in the dominant culture of unexamined 'whiteness'.

## Endnotes

1    .Settler societies are defined as 'societies in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over Indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms' (D. Stasiulis & N. Yuval-Davis, 1995, p. 3). The authors note that the concept of white settler societies is a racialised and gendered hegemonic myth of origin, contested by anti-racist movements seeking policies that redress the exclusion and oppression of Indigenous and some migrant groups (p. 8).

2.    The education system is not giving Indigenous peoples the same opportunities that it gives most other ethnic groups, although Native Americans appear to have more opportunities than Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Figures from the 1990s indicate that people who hold university degrees represent just over a quarter of the adult population in both Australia and the USA. But 9% of Native Americans have college degrees, compared to only 1.3% of Indigenous people in Australia. This must have something to do with the far more successful school system in the USA, where 70% of Native Americans have graduated from high school compared to the national average of 86% (see http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/INAR.html, accessed 6 July 2002, pp.1-4). In contrast, in Australia 6.6% of Indigenous Australians have successfully completed high school with a Year 12 qualification, when the national average is 70% (see AusStats 1999b EducationalAttainment,accessed19June2001,http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/ABS…3677eca2569de002539f!4OpenDocument). However, the educational advantage apparently held by Native Americans compared to Australia's Indigenous people does not translate into better employment opportunities, and recent surveys indicate that Indian school drop-out rates are again on the rise.

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# THE ROLE OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE AS A COUNTER-FORCE TO THE LITERARY CANON

*Thomas W. Bean*

## Introduction

Recent efforts within Indigenous groups, aimed at initiating a cultural Renaissance, suggest that while the 1960's may have marked a chronological end to colonial control, significant efforts are still needed to counter mainstream practices aimed at homogenising microcultures (Childs & Williams, 1997). Indeed, schools strive to 'normalize students into shared practices, although *whose* shared practices should always be open to question' (p. 232). Schools and the prescribed literary canon represent a hegemonic structure that often seems impervious to change (Schutz, 2000). Indeed, the sanctioned literary canon, with its emphasis on European and European-American authors, is far removed from the background experiences and diversity of today's students (Godina, 1999). When students' cultural knowledge is not represented in classrooms, the disconnection of home and school that was perpetuated in colonial times lives on in postcolonial times. Kalnin (1998) noted that 'if students interpret the school's ways of using text as a violation of their personal, cultural or racial identity, they are likely to refuse to participate in what they are asked to do by teachers' (p. 275). In contrast, postcolonial narratives 'open space for the reader to see and hear people from a variety of backgrounds and cultural practices' (McGillis, 2000, p. xxvii).

In this paper, I explore postcolonial theory and multicultural literature as potential frames of reference for challenging a narrow vision of the literary canon. I draw on

my previous studies involving secondary students' reading young adult multicultural novels representative of Navajo and Hispanic cultures (e.g. Bean, Valerio, Money Senior & White, 1999), as well as more recent work (Bean & Rigoni, 2001) and Aboriginal insiders' writings (e.g. Sabbioni, Schaffer & Smith, 1998). The question I raise as a focal point for this paper is: 'To what extent is contemporary multicultural young adult literature a counter-force in postcolonial times?' Multicultural young adult novels have the potential to engage students in discussions of difficult issues of institutional racism, disequilibrium and ethical dilemmas (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). However, the way in which novels are introduced in a classroom sets the stage for in-depth discussion and reader response. An openness on the part of the teacher to explore the constantly evolving genre of multicultural young adult literature and the myriad ways to engage students in discussion is crucial. An openness to a 'pedagogy of freedom' (Freire, 1998) that respects students' experiences and funds of knowledge as a starting point for intertextual connections with characters and events in a novel is also critically important. Freire argued that: 'to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge' (p. 30). Similarly, Gunderson's (2000) study of teens from a variety of cultures and language backgrounds in Canada caused him to question the fact that 'Eurocentric views and beliefs form the core of educational thought that guides curriculum development and instructional practice' (p. 694). To be successful in this mainstream setting meant abandoning one's language and culture, the essence of one's identity. 'Members of diasporas in this study were lost in spaces between various identities: the teenager, the immigrant, the first-language speaker, the individual from the first culture' (p. 702).

My research examines how novels and characters construct identity in various sociocultural contexts depicted in the fictional world. Although mainstream views of identity construction still adhere to the Enlightenment myth of the rugged individualist, more postmodern studies show that identity is shifting in response to the fluid urban spaces teens now occupy (Bean & Readence, 2002; McDonald, 1999). In addition, both the discourse within a novel and subsequent discourse devoted to discussing events and characters in novels occur within social worlds and communities of practice (Gee, 1996; 2001). Gee (2001, p. 717) argued that: 'Reading instruction must be rooted in the taking and imagining of diverse perspectives on real and imagined material and social worlds.' Gee (1996) distinguished discourse related to functioning as an insider within particular communities of practice with a capital D. For example, surfers have their own language and style and within surfing communities there are microcultures (e.g. long-boarders and short-boarders). Gee (2001, p. 719) called Discourses 'identity kits' to emphasise the development of an insider's way of acting

and talking. Naturally, people have many identity kits and they shift in their ways of acting and use of multiple social registers depending upon varying social contexts. For example, a surfer who is an award winning chemistry professor at Tourmaline, a long-boarding spot in San Diego, will act and speak differently in that context than when attending a meeting of other Nobel prize winners at the University of California, San Diego. While this individual is skilled at shifting his identity kit and related discourse, recent studies of adolescents in school contexts suggest a profound disconnect between their outside-of-school literate identities and literacy practices in school (e.g. Hagood, 2002). Positioned as losers in the school context, many adolescents excel outside those narrow boundaries.

Characters in multicultural novels illustrate how identity is often altered and disrupted within Western diasporic societies and school contexts. Multicultural novels and their characters can be viewed as metaphoric ethnographic cases, revealing the ongoing struggles and increasing complexity of adolescents and Indigenous peoples in postcolonial times. Issues of institutional racism, stereotyping and socially deterministic views of Indigenous groups are confronted in recent fiction.

## Postcolonial Theory and Culture

Writing from an Aboriginal insider's perspective, Jennifer Sabbioni (1998) argued against homogenised views of her culture. She noted that the term 'Aboriginal' is limited and ignores regional and cultural diversity. Rather, people refer to themselves by their bond with the land. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders call themselves Murri in Queensland, Koori in New South Wales and so on. This shift to regional names represents a conscious break with labels assigned to Indigenous people by the white man under a period of oppression and dispossession begun in 1770 with the landing of Captain Cook in Australia. The British doctrine viewed Australia as 'unoccupied territory, despite the long-term inhabitation by indigenous peoples' (1998, p. xxviii). Colonial ideologies privileged European over Aboriginal languages along with written over oral languages. Xie (2000) argued that 'the critical mind's recent turn to postcolonialism aims to rethink, recuperate and reconstruct racial, ethnic and cultural others that have been repressed, misrepresented, omitted, stereotyped and violated by the imperial West with all its institutions and strategies for dominating the non-Western' (p. 1).

Sabbioni argued that the Western concept of biological determinism, grounding identity in genetics and bloodlines, is limited. Rather, Aboriginal and other Indigenous people view identity in terms of social practice. Thus, kinship relationships, community understanding and interaction patterns are the crucial cultural ingredients in identity development. Oral traditions are primary and 'authority comes from people, not

the written word' (Dunn, 2001, p. 681). This counterpoint view is a potential antidote to years of oppression in a time when young Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and raised in institutions by non-Indigenous people. Much like Hawaiians with their cultural roots in the land or aina (Kawakami & Dudoit, 2000), Aboriginal people were close to the pulse of nature. Their knowledge of zoology, astronomy, botany and biology were integral to their survival (Bean, 2000). Spiritual Dreamtime sites and totems were linked directly to a deep connection with the land. Many of these spiritual sites were lost during colonization and the poetry, oral histories and stories reflect the deep pain of this loss. An excerpt from Errol West's (1998, p. 115) poem, *White Man's Vision*, captures his tribe's connection with the land and the colonists' callous destruction of precious life-giving and spiritual resources.

Feel the earth; you touch my flesh!
Its only meaning in your quest is the
acquisition of a dollar, white man's vision
Koories' nightmare, what do you know
you're not there!

Much of the literature that is emerging in multicultural and young adult genres centres on cultural and individual identity with a particular interest in preserving lost cultural beliefs and practices. This effort to retrieve the past is occurring amidst the new capitalism where design, production and marketing target particular niche markets based on consumer identities and values (Giroux, 1999). In this postindustrial climate, mainstream socioeconomic forces of consumerism and consumption attempt to flatten and homogenise beliefs and practices. Indeed, it is hard not to find products and services duplicated to such a degree that travel from one area of the world to another is largely a matter of distance but not substance. Everything looks the same. Alternative California rockers, the Red Hot Chile Peppers' song, *Californication*, (1999) proclaims:

It's the edge of the world
And all of western civilization
The sun may rise in the East
At least it settles in the final location
It's understood that Hollywood
Sells Californication

Similarly, Giroux's (1999) critical analysis of Disney's megacorporate influences in film, numerous consumer products, television and education shows that these organizational values serve to diminish diversity and misconstrue complex cultural dimensions. For example, Giroux's media critique of Robin Williams' performance

as a one-line delivering disk jockey in the film, *Good Morning Vietnam*, questioned its misguided premise. 'Humor not only serves to position the identity of Vietnamese women as merely Western sexual commodities, it also links the objectification of the Vietnamese to the internal colonialism that Cronauer (Robin Williams) reproduces in his relationship with Garlick (an African American soldier)' (p. 135).

The general progress of multicultural policy and literature moves at a slower pace. By the 1970's, Australia embraced a multicultural policy in government that challenged older, colonial views (Stephens, 2000). Other groups, including Native Americans, Hawaiians, Asian-Americans and Hispanics, are engaged in creating a literature that captures the complex, hybrid nature of contemporary social structures. In particular, these postmodern novels disrupt unidirectional character roles. For example, in Walter Dean Myers' (1999) *Monster*, Steve, the African-American 16-year old main character has been jailed for his involvement in a convenience store robbery and murder. In order to cope with his fears and the brutal cacophony of the county jail, he writes text that is at once a diary and screenplay of his thoughts and subsequent trial. The font changes from manuscript to cursive style when Steve switches from the trial to his interior thoughts. As the novel/play progresses, it calls for the reader to construct meaning with Steve in a fashion that leaves the reader unsure of his guilt or innocence. Black and white photos and charcoal drawings created by Christopher Myers are scattered throughout the second half of the novel.

Postmodern novels like *Monster* challenge older ways of reading and interpreting characters and their complex identities. Multiple interpretations are possible and need to be considered. Afro-Caribbean scholar, Cameron McCarthy (1998), argued that culture is fluid and hybrid such that younger generations of Indigenous people embody a complex array of beliefs and practices. Given that complexity, he argued that we cannot simply add multicultural literature to the existing canon because 'it fails to de-stabilize each cultural group from its steady mooring in a separate port' (p. 155). He supported engaging students in reading canonical literature from a critical multicultural perspective. In addition, allowing the space and time for deconstruction of canonical literature and the addition of the growing body of high quality multicultural literature representing insiders' voices is crucial. This contemporary literature needs to become an integral part of students' reading and discussion while acknowledging the complexity that postmodern hybridity suggests for identity construction in shifting social contexts.

## Identity Construction in New Times

Older definitions of identity evoked 'an image of a bounded, rational, and unitary self—a self capable of agency and autonomy' (Alvermann, 2001, p. 678). However,

more recent, postmodern conceptions of identity recognise its complex and multifaceted character. For example, Gee's (1996; 2001) notions of identity construction introduced earlier suggest that identity is never static and that its development is ideological in nature. Bikers, rappers, windsurfers, golfers, kite surfers, skateboarders and so on know what is needed to be insiders in these roles and they undoubtedly know how to shift into other diverse identities.

 In addition to Gee's construct, work in critical literacy explores texts in terms of historical context and the influences of social and political power relations (e.g. Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a useful lens for examining character identity development in a multicultural novel. The three levels of CDA include: a) local discourse (e.g. home, classroom),  b) institutional discourse (police station, school principal's office) and c) social discourse (larger society, e.g. politicians).

Ethnic identity development theories are also important in examining characters in multicultural young adult novels. Ethnic identity construction in adolescence within European-American societies often arise from a critical life episode or encounter (Ponterotto & Pedersen, 1993). A critical life episode may be one in which cross-cultural communication fails, or it may involve an act of racism (Bean, Readence & Mallette, 1996). This critical life episode, or series of episodes, produces a feeling of disequilibrium (Wurzel, 1988). Previously held attitudes and beliefs about others and oneself are called into question. A person or character may decide to resist assimilation in mainstream culture or assimilate without accepting all the values and beliefs of the mainstream group. At a more advanced stage of ethnic identity clarification, characters may demonstrate biculturalism, easily bridging from one group to another as needed (Banks, 1994).

Based on Banks' process model depicting stages of ethnic identity construction, a discussion typology for novels was developed that is useful for considering a character's choices when confronted with instances of disequilibrium. The typology has four stages: a) Ethnic isolation (low self-esteem and feelings of rejection), b) Ethnic pride (a strong sense of community belonging), c) Multiethnic acceptance (appreciating and valuing others) and d) Multiethnic unity (being part of a multiethnic community) (Bean, Valerio, Mallette & Readence, 1999).

In addition to stage theories of ethnic identity development, Gee's discourse constructs and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, we can also view identity development in terms of recent work in Complexity Theory (Sumara, 2000). Complexity Theory has its philosophical roots at the intersection of the psychological and physiological. In essence, this theory suggests that our thinking is strongly influenced by a complex array of social, cultural and environmental factors (Lakoff

& Johnson, 1999; Sumara, 2000). Thus, identity is multi-faceted and shifting within various social contexts and conversations (Davies & Harre, 1999). We are positioned along a fluid continuum as cultural insiders or outsiders. 'An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate' (Davies & Harre, 1999, p. 35).

Sumara (2000) argued that students benefit from reading fiction and identifying with characters because 'relationships with literary texts are important for the integration and symbolization of their senses of remembered, presently experienced and projected identities' (p. 273). For example, by identifying with a character in a young adult novel who faces issues of racism and socioeconomic struggle, young adults may be better able to cope and adapt to their own problems. They may also gain greater degrees of tolerance and understanding, both crucial elements for cross-cultural competence (Banks, 1994). 'The reader's relationship with fictional characters and situations then becomes as influential to the development of self as any other experience' (Sumara, 2000, p. 273). Thus, the more-than-human world of characters in novels offers a metaphor for the day-to-day experiences of students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. How these characters adapt and cope with conflicts is crucial if young adult multicultural novels are to function as a counterforce in postcolonial times.

In summary, the four constructs reviewed offer a lens to examine characters and their actions in young adult multicultural novels. Gee's large D identity elements and small d discourse, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis of local, institutional and social discourses, the stage theory of ethnic identity development and Complexity Theory each illuminate the state of young adult multicultural novels in new times.

In the section that follows, I examine the major characters in two multicultural young adult novels from previous studies (Bean, Valerio, Money Senior & White, 1999; Bean & Rigoni, 2001) in terms of their identity development. By centring this analysis on critical events where the characters experienced significant disequilibrium, we can examine characterization as a counterforce in postcolonial times. In essence, the question to be addressed in this analysis is: 'To what extent is contemporary multicultural young adult literature a counter-force in postcolonial times?'

## Morgana Cruz in *Heartbeat, Drumbeat*

*Heartbeat, drumbeat* (Hernandez, 1992) is a romantic multicultural young adult novel that many adolescents find appealing. Set in rural New Mexico, it deals with Morgana Cruz's Navajo-Hispanic biethnic identity development. The book was published by Arte Publico Press, which seeks to publish nonstereotypical insiders'

perspectives on multicultural experiences. Morgana Cruz is a potter by trade and she relies heavily on the guidance of Isadora, her Navajo mentor, who dies early in the novel. The traditional Navajo funeral ceremony conducted by Eagle Eyes, an accomplished attorney who bridges Navajo and Western funds of knowledge, causes Morgana to question her identity. Her father is Mexican and her mother Navajo. The novel revolves around a number of critical episodes that give Morgana a feeling of disequilibrium within the two cultures. For example, she has embraced the Navajo closeness to the land and nature.

> For long moments she stood praying to Earth Woman, seeking
> harmony and peace. Father Wind tore at her hair tangling it into a
> hundred knots; yet, she stood braced against the cliff. She loved
> the mountains which she understood to be deities. Isadora told her
> that the mountains were homes of the Gods while the hogans were
> the homes of the Navajo people. Morgana believed this without
> question. She felt the power of the mountain each time she pulled
> clay from it. And, she loved the land. Like her father, she had no
> doubts about the land; but for life, there were no easy answers.
> (Hernandez, 1992, p. 8)

This harmony is broken abruptly when Isadora dies and Morgana has been selected to conduct the traditional burial ceremony with Eagle Eyes, an imposing Navajo leader who orders her around. Morgana's disequilibrium relates to a host of events in this lengthy Navajo ceremony designed to free Isadora from her worldly possessions so she can join the deceased. The killing of Isadora's mare shocks Morgana, as does the burning of Isadora's home. Morgana is accustomed to being a rebel within her family but she is insecure in her Navajo identity and this conflict with Eagle Eyes drives the novel.

> Morgana's eyes flashed with anger. 'Tell me of your relationship to my teacher,
> Isadora.' (p. 22)

Eagle Eyes explains that Isadora was his mentor also and, when Morgana tells him she will go get her mother, a full-blooded Navajo, to attend to the burial, Eagle Eyes commands otherwise, starting a long chain of conflict in their relationship.

> He released her hair and stood staring at her before he commanded, 'You will
> clean and dress Isadora in her finest. You will not leave this hogan. It is
> commanded. Do you understand?' (p. 22)

Unbeknownst to Morgana, Eagle Eyes is less secure when he is around Morgana than she realises.

Morgana frightened him, perhaps he thought to himself, because she seemed so flawless, because she also was taught by Isadora, and because she had each foot planted in a different world as he did. Her world of Mexican and Indian cultures, he was sure, created conflict as his mix of Anglo and Indian traditions challenged him at times. In law school he was whispered about because he wore his hair long and braided. Because of his vest, jeans and well-worn boots. He used his strange personality and his unusual dress as his chief defense against all those law students whose socks matched and whose expensive loafers were spit-shined daily. But, now, that episode of his past was something he laughed about over a cold beer. (p. 41)

Indeed, throughout much of the novel, Morgana views her biethnicity as a double-edged sword. 'You see, because my parents are of two different races, I have to blend in with both worlds in order to survive' (p. 67). She has experienced coming of age ceremonies in both cultures but remains insecure in her Navajo heritage. In addition, her Mexican father refuses to let her do the ranching chores around their place, preferring to let her be an artist. As the novel progresses, Morgana and Eagle Eyes fall in love and ultimately marry. A major turning point in her ethnic identity development occurs when she is asked to sign the Navajo tribal wedding book.

As she hastily wrote her name, suddenly realizing that she had been listed as a member of this tribe all along. For years she had considered herself an outcast, not really belonging to her mother's clan. She realised now that she had branded herself. Now, to find that her name and the name of her father has been recorded in tribal records overwhelmed her. She turned to look at Eagle Eyes and noticed that he was watching her in wonder. (p. 131)

Morgana and Eagle Eyes are complex characters in terms of identity construction. Morgana embraces Navajo values and Mexican culture. She is fluent in both languages as well as English. Eagle Eyes is a law school graduate with a profound sense of social justice and grounding in his Navajo culture. Discourse in the novel centres mainly on local issues in this rural New Mexico ranching community (Fairclough, 1989). Morgana's ethnic identity development ranges from isolation and feelings of not belonging to multicultural unity toward the end of the novel (Bean, et al., 1999). Both characters illustrate sociocultural hybridity (Bhabba, 1994; McCarthy, 1998). They embody multiple ethnic and cultural dimensions from Navajo, Mexican and European-American influences. Both Morgana and Eagle Eyes change social registers and alter their actions when they are with insiders in their cultures or find themselves interacting with characters outside their cultural mores.

Indeed, when we engaged a group of ninth graders in reading, discussing and researching the cultural authenticity of events in the novel, Araceli, one of the 9th-graders wrote:

> The new Navajo are different from the old Navajo men. Now they treat their woman with great attention, consider them equal…The woman is the real owner of all the sheep, and the men dare not dispose of them without their permission. (Bean et al., 1999, p. 36)

Above all, within the realistic genre of contemporary young adult multicultural fiction, this is a hopeful novel with a happy ending, somewhat of an anomaly in this genre. Morgana lives on a New Mexico ranch, rides her own horse for fun and seems to survive just fine as an artist, a fairly idyllic lifestyle compared to that experienced by many characters in young adult fiction.

Ninth-graders viewed both characters as real people and they were able to compare their own ethnic identity development to Morgana and Eagle Eyes (Bean et al., 1999). For example, Araceli, a Latina student, wrote (Bean et al., 1999):

> Morgana's heritage is something very hard for her, I think. Because she is half Mexican and half Indian. Because of her being a half breed she has to do both things. What I mean is since she is Mexican she has to act like one. She still has to do all of those traditions, customs that Mexicans do. By being half a Indian she also has to do all the things that a Indian would do and I feel Morgana is very confused because of this. (p. 35)

Aracheli commented on the Navajo burial ceremonies for Morgana's mentor that Eagle Eyes made her attend, as well as the Mexican Quinceanera, a huge celebration at age 15.

Postcolonial novels like this one have the potential to reveal the complex struggles of Indigenous people dealing with multiple worlds that include European-American mainstream influences co-existing with ancient cultures and values that are close to nature and the land. Contradictions, conflicts and dynamic tension in this genre provide an opportunity to critique how characters are positioned, who has agency and power and what alternatives are available to ameliorate these tensions.

In the case of *Heartbeat, drumbeat*, this novel is one of possibility amidst family strife and misfortune. In that sense, it could serve as a counterpoint to stereotypical portrayals of Native American and Hispanic characters. The next novel is more typical of this genre and the problems that confront a young adult character living in poverty.

## Eddie in Buried Onions

Eddie, the main character in Gary Soto's (1997) *Buried onions*, lives in a barrio in Fresno, California. The novel is set in the hot part of the summer and chronicles Eddie's life as a 19-year old community college dropout, surviving by spray painting house numbers on curbs in suburban neighbourhoods. His aunt taunts him to avenge a cousin's murder but Eddie shuns his former gang friends. As the novel unfolds, Eddie experiences racism, poverty and one problem after another as he strives to carve out a new identity. Eddie offers an insider's or 'emic' perspective that departs from many of Soto's earlier, more sanguine young adult novels (Godina & McCoy, 2000). The novel appeals to many adolescent students as they relate to the many dilemmas Eddie faces in life (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). His former gang affiliation, the aborted dream of getting a steady, good paying job after college and living on his own in a ramshackle apartment make Eddie complex and compelling. Throughout the novel, his identity is in flux, tied to the various events that create disequilibrium amidst fleeting moments of stability.

Early in the novel, Eddie sees himself as an integral part of his southeast Fresno neighbourhood, one he has mixed feelings about. 'We sit on front porches, our gaze following anyone who comes into our neighborhood. We know each other, marry each other, and hurt each other over small matters' (Soto, p. 4). In a hopeful section of the novel, Eddie gets a job across town in a white suburban neighbourhood working for a Mr. Stiles, landscaping his yard. Unfortunately, when he uses Mr. Stiles' Toyota truck to transport trees and shrubbery he has removed from the property to the local dump, the truck is stolen. This, coupled with his aunt's constant badgering to avenge his cousin's murder, creates a level of disequilibrium that results in Eddie hiding out from the world.

> I was drinking a beer, my third, and hiding in my backyard on this day when I had started off on my bicycle and ended up on my knees praying that Mr. Stiles would understand why I never returned. The other two beer cans lay crushed at my side. I was buzzed. I felt like a deflated inner tube hanging in a garage, black from depression, because I had done what people and the Bible told me to do: work. But that advice had failed me. (p. 31)

Later in the novel, Eddie is able to locate the Toyota truck and get it back to Mr. Stiles. Eddie, however, has abandoned any hope of working for Mr. Stiles again and confides in his basketball coach who oversees recreation at the local park. Coach encourages Eddie to think about going into one of the services like Jose, Eddie's cousin. 'I wanted to resemble a straightahead kind of dude, someone who had his act together' (p. 95). But at the navy recruiting office, the recruiter is a racist, more full of himself than helping Eddie consider a new career.

I scooted out of there, sweatier from this air-conditioned encounter than from the heat outside. I bought a raspada, shaggy with coconut, from a Mexican vendedora working the mall. Returning to my apartment, I stepped over winos, the homeless, and stray dogs with ladders of ribs poking through. Hunger, I saw, was crawling from one end of the street to the other. (p. 100)

Eddie, through the help of Coach, resumes working in Mr. Stiles' yard but only for a short while before he is mistakenly arrested for the brutal beating of an old man in a laundromat. Mr. Stiles' truck had been used in this robbery during the time it was missing. 'They had me facedown on the dirt, handcuffing me…I walked with my head down, throat tight around a lump of big-time sorrow' (p. 104). Eddie again spends the next few days depressed in his apartment, resigned to the cockroaches and diet of Top Ramen. Eventually, Coach rescues Eddie with a trip to the country to go fishing in a favourite creek.

When Eddie returns to Fresno he encounters Angel, a gang leader suspected of killing his cousin. Eddie and Angel fist fight and both end up with stitches. As the close of the novel nears, Eddie's aunt drops him off at the navy recruiting office so he can get out of town before he is killed. 'I felt like crying. All my life everyone was pulling away from me—Father, my mom, Jesus, school friends and homies who disappeared in three lines of the obituary column' (p. 143). As they drive past the field of onions, the navy van transporting Eddie and the other recruits to boot camp pulls over for a rest stop. A worker picking onions recognised Eddie from an encounter in a Fresno restaurant parking lot where he sold Eddie and his Marine Corps cousin, Jose, bags of onions.

Without saying a word, the man raised up and handed me onions, one for each hand. And whether it was from the sun or the whipping wind, my eyes filled and then closed on the last of childhood tears. (p. 146)

At the close of the novel, Eddie's identity remains in flux. He is on the verge of a profound change brought on by leaving Fresno and his familiar barrio and family. He is unusual in this regard and, while events in the novel offer a forum for discussing ethical dilemmas and identity issues, Eddie stays mired in Stage 1. of our typology (i.e. Ethnic Isolation—low self esteem and feelings of rejection) (Bean et al., 1999). In terms of Gee's (2001) notions of an identity kit, Eddie is in transition from a barrio vato to a navy recruit. He is trying to move beyond the pain of his former identity toward a better future in the same fashion as his cousin, Jose, a marine. Eddie is less of a hybrid character than Morgana Cruz or Eagle Eyes and, at one point in the novel, comments that 'I was nineteen and I hadn't been anywhere—two times to L.A. and four times to Sacramento. But Sacramento didn't count. It looked

a lot like Fresno' (p. 94). He regards himself as a part of his Fresno barrio, subsisting from day-to-day. 'My face was no different from the face of a brown person lucky enough to hold down a city job, like the person collecting litter along the freeway' (p. 5). Discourse throughout the novel stays close to the gang bravado consistent with Eddie's reality and students reading this novel in urban high school classrooms with significant Hispanic populations develop deep intertextual connections with Eddie and his dreams (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). For example, Jesus, a high school sophomore, writing a dialogue journal entry to an inservice teacher at the university noted:

> The ways that I can relate to Eddie are, I know how tough it is to live in a barrio and try to stay out of trouble. Some of my homeboys back at home have gotten shot or stab thankfully they survived. I know who got them or at least know where to look, and that's how I can relate to Eddie. (p. 243)

Jesus sees his identity as a former gang member closely linked to that of Eddie in the novel. His identity kit is both that of a student trying to stay out of trouble and get ahead, and a former gang member who is familiar with an *eye-for-an-eye* code of revenge. Eddie spends most of the novel trying to resist both the stereotypes assigned by the mainstream Fresno white culture and his family pressures to avenge his cousin's murder. For students like Jesus and others in this particular study, reading Soto's novel represented an all too rare connection between reading a book and thinking about their own experiences in circumstances similar or different from Eddie (Bean & Rigoni, 2001). Moje (2002, p. 217) noted in her studies of gang-connected youth that urban gangs 'were more often than not simply ways of identifying with other youth, getting through the day, or finding space to belong.' In a study of Latina and Latino urban high school students who decided to stay in school or leave, Flores-Gonzalez (2002) found that those students who stayed in school developed strong alliances with peers and teachers. In particular, a conscious effort to incorporate Latina and Latino perspectives is crucial to creating a culturally conscious school climate. Literature can make students feel invisible or important, and the infusion of multicultural literature that disrupts stereotypes and socially deterministic views has an important role to play in connecting students to curriculum.

At a minimum, engaging students in personal connections to the events and characters in multicultural young adult novels is a start. However, moving from this foundation to a critical consideration of how characters are positioned and which characters have voice and power is essential for an examination of the social forces at play.

A California band, The R. A. Brotherhood (Andrade, 1998) recorded a song entitled *CA/MX (California/Mexico)* that captures some of the emotions Soto and

other multicultural young adult authors have written about. This excerpt illustrates the profound displacement and disequilibrium of Indigenous people in new times.

I see people, proud people

With hopes and dreams in their eyes

Run across the river

Run across the desert

And the highways

They are my (our) people

This was their country

Not so long ago

California/Mexico

Both *Buried onions* (Soto, 1997) and *Heartbeat, drumbeat* (1992) illustrate the complexity of character identity construction, influenced by a mosaic of social, cultural and environmental dimensions (Sumara, 2000). Using young adult multicultural literature in content area classrooms offers a powerful counter-force in postcolonial times, but the degree to which these novels function in this fashion is dependent upon how they are introduced, read and discussed.

## Discussion and Implications

A number of discussion strategies help students respond to characters in multicultural young adult novels and express multiple interpretations. Indeed, the colonial myth of the rugged individual, bootstrapping his way forward in society (Street, 2001) is heavily challenged in well-crafted multicultural novels. For example, Eddie's allotment of mainstream cultural capital and power should he elect to stay in Fresno seems limited. His best efforts to bootstrap his way into an independent future were continually blindsided in the novel by institutional racism, poverty and his diminishing sense of self.

There are a variety of classroom approaches that are likely to engage students and teachers in 'vigorous classroom debates over what texts attempt to do, which ideologies are represented…' (Luke, 2000, p. 453). A critical literacy approach to literature goes beyond the typical interpretive discussions. Such an approach emphasises looking behind the text to examine whose agenda is served, who is included in a novel or excluded, who has a voice or power in the events that unfold and how cultural practices are represented (e.g. in a trivial or accurate fashion)? The more students become familiar with reading a variety of texts in this fashion, the greater likelihood they will challenge the status quo as citizens. In essence, critical

literacy is a foundational form of social activism and an antidote to technical rational forms of learning that fail to critique the accepted social practices of mainstream society. Willis (1997) noted that 'it is in discussions of the contexts of multicultural literature that unvoiced assumptions about culture, class and power begin to be recognised and addressed' (p. 155).

Some of the classroom approaches that lead to vibrant, critical discussions of multicultural young adult novels include (a) body biographies (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998), (b) reading against the grain (Temple, 1993), (c) discussion questions (Bean & Rigoni, 2001; Readence, Bean & Baldwin, 2000), (d) Polar Opposites (Readence et al., 2000) and (e) dialogue journals (Readence et al., 2000) among others.

Body biographies involve students in the development of multimedia interpretations of a character in a novel, short story, or play (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998). Students in small groups use large pieces of butcher paper to trace a body outline and fill it in with artistic representations of the character's traits, relationships, motivations and experiences. Quotes from the novel, poetry and other response modes enhance the visual and verbal power of this device. Students can then display them around the room and conduct a gallery walk to share their views on the novel. For example, high school English students developed a body biography of Eddie in *Buried onions* that included magazine clippings and quotes designed to depict his various dilemmas and complex development in the novel.

Reading against the grain (Temple, 1993) develops a questioning, critical stance in readers. Questioning easy assumptions and examining characters and events from a variety of angles is an often overlooked but important dimension of reader response. For example, in a high school English class, students evaluated the authenticity of Navajo cultural traditions in the novel *Heartbeat, drumbeat*. Their research unearthed some departures in modern Navajo beliefs, values and practices from the older ways (Bean, et al., 1999).

Discussion questions have been around for ages and remain an excellent way to get multiple ideas and interpretations of issues on the table. For example, we posed the following question for high school students and university graduate students to consider about Eddie at the end of *Buried onions* (Bean & Rigoni, 2001).

Eddie knows his barrio and his enemies. Angel, Stiles, and others all form barriers to his growth as a person. If he stays, this will continue, if he leaves, maybe it will be better. Based on what you know about society, why is it only a 'maybe' it will be better if he leaves?

Polar Opposites (Readence et al., 2000) consists of a series of statements that ask the reader to select a response by placing a check-mark nearest the statement to be supported and defend it using the novel. The following example is geared to an evaluation of Morgana Cruz's development in *Heartbeat, drumbeat*.

In the early part of the novel, Morgana Cruz is:

Brave ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Afraid

Why?

In the last part of the novel, Morgana Cruz is:

Brave ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ Afraid

Why?

Dialogue journals allow the reader to reflect on events in the novel with the understanding that the audience for this reflection may be another student or the teacher. Dialogue journals (Readence et al., 2000) can be combined with discussion, shared among peers, or written for a teacher's response. They can be written and shared electronically across various classrooms. With the web-based capability of threaded discussions, dialogue journals can now be expanded to include a number of participants and points of view.

I typically include a different multicultural young adult novel in my content area literacy course for teachers and in my other research seminars on literacy and diversity each semester. For many, this is their first introduction to a powerful corpus of literature and we have vibrant discussions about the novels each week. Simply reading one or two new novels each year is a move in the right direction. Reviews in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* and other international literacy journals reveal the increasingly strong collection of works in this area. However, they are unlikely to be readily available in mainstream bookstores but most of these books can be ordered via the Internet or bookstores.

If we are to make multicultural teaching more than 'merely a set of ideals' (Hedegaard, 1999, p. 278), active inclusion of the narratives that chronicle social practices in adolescents' lives from various traditions is crucial. An increasing array of excellent multicultural young adult literature is now available to expand the traditional literary canon. Indigenous people and insiders from various ethnic and cultural traditions are making their voices heard, often as a counterpoint to stereotypical postcolonial views. These works resonate with contemporary students, yet many adolescents are reading works popular over 30 years ago! While high quality literature from various traditions is important, we need to balance the scales

to include multicultural young adult literature that speaks to issues of institutional racism and ethnic identity development in new times.

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# TRANSFORMING THE STUDY OF VISUAL CULTURE:

## POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE ETHICALLY REFLEXIVE STUDENT

*Christopher Crouch, Dean Chan & Nicola Kaye*

## Introduction

This chapter is an account of the transformation of the study of visual culture at an art school in a West Australian university. The core theory programme under discussion became less Eurocentric, less a history course, and focused instead on the theory of the production and consumption of visual culture for student practitioners. The reorganised course drew heavily upon key concepts in postcolonial theory, and central to the conception and implementation of change in the course was the examination of the processes of cultural interpretation and exchange. The basic premises of this examination were: firstly, the unequal nature of such exchanges; and secondly, the ultimate impossibility of cross-cultural understanding - what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls the 'incommensurability' between cultures. The shift in curriculum emphasis away from traditional art history towards cultural interpretation led to the need for the student body to become ethically reflexive in order that they could personally assimilate and act upon the consequences of the curriculum change presented to them. In this way it is hoped students can more readily translate theoretical concepts into practice and become people who ask questions rather than just answer them. In this chapter we argue that simply exposing students to basic access and equity paradigms is insufficient. We suggest that the different lived experience of students must be located in their social, cultural and political context, and that postcolonial theory can be the engine by which they are introduced to the need for ethical engagement with visual culture. Accordingly, we argue for the engendering of a pedagogical shift away from simply using postcolonial inquiry to name and disrupt cultural preconceptions, to facilitating a framework (based on

postcolonial theory's precepts of unequal exchange and incommensurability) in which preconceptions are continually questioned as they come into being.

The discussion in this chapter is related to a case study involving copyright law, cultural ownership and the cultural appropriation of Indigenous materials. This case study is used to illustrate the way in which difference in this context can be negotiated and highlights the awareness that this negotiation is framed by unequal power relations. It could be argued that there are two main intercultural models in Australia. Firstly, there is the relationship between original European colonisers and the Indigenous peoples. At the centre of this relationship is the conception of *terra nullius*, which provided the ideological justification for the British annexation of Australia by legally defining the Indigenous peoples as without culture and the rule of law. Secondly, there is the relationship amongst different post-settlement migrants – the post second world war migration of state sanctioned, non-English speaking Europeans, then non-European migrants arriving after the official dismantling of the White Australia policy in the 1970s. It is necessary to understand the relationship between the two models because, whilst post-settlement migrants find themselves in a constant state of cultural contestation and negotiation, it is only Indigenous people who have been legally framed as being without culture. It is also the case that Indigenous people were granted the legal right of Australian citizenship only in 1967. What are the educational implications of these histories and networks of power relations?

Initially it seemed to us that radical curriculum redesign and the introduction of non-European material was sufficient to redirect the study of visual culture at the School of Visual Arts. Subsequent evidence demonstrated otherwise when, during a professional practice tutorial, a group of final year students dealing with the issue of Aboriginal copyright law argued that cultural appropriation was simply a matter of formal stylistic borrowing, rather than negotiating the cultural, moral and property issues related to Indigenous image-making. The subjects and styles of Aboriginal culture are subject to Aboriginal law, and only certain social groupings are allowed to make art using certain stories from the dreaming and using certain stylistic devices. The students from European and Asian backgrounds seemed to understand such specificities of Indigenous cultural ownership, but they could not reconcile them within their own cultural frameworks. They proposed that art making was an unproblematic union of individual expression and technical means in a seeming jettison of all notions of the social and contingent nature of meaning in visual culture. After three years of study in which the unequal nature of cultural exchange had been theorised and in which the political contextualisation of cultural practice had been stressed, it was disturbing to hear this reading of an issue so central to Australian

contemporary culture. Why was it that students who had been exposed to ideas in a course of study in visual culture framed by postcolonial discourse were unable to translate those theoretical concepts and locate them in cultural practice? What was preventing praxis? These were not academically poor students or students who were opposed to the objectives of the course. They were neither malicious nor unsympathetic towards Indigenous culture. They were unable, however, to contextualise the complexities of the relationships between Aboriginal art and wider cultural politics. They were simply students who, when confronted with the reality of Bhabha's (1991) unmanned, antagonistic and unpredictable sites of cultural contestation (p. 16), retreated into the safe, isolated, disconnected world of specialist activity. This could be explained by the way in which reflexivity was seen as operating only in relation to the individual as an autonomous subject and not in the individual's relationship to the social. It was evident that a sizeable minority of the student body saw the space offered to the individual by the subjectivities of post-structuralism as one in which all readings were of equal value. Within such a structure it is inevitable that it is always the individual reading that is considered paramount. It was clear that, whilst students could identify cultural transgression theoretically, when faced with it intruding into their own lives they had no ethical framework by which to negotiate with it and retreated back into the wider, non-confrontational cultural framework that surrounded them.

The wish for a unified mythic national Australian identity is a significant phenomenon that is still privileged culturally and politically. This is why we see the adoption of a postcolonial pedagogic discourse in Perth as fundamental in politicising the student of visual culture. It is well known that Perth is geographically isolated. However, less understood is the changing population demographic. The city's size has doubled in little more than 20 years through migrant growth. One might think that the impact of this on local practitioners would be significant, but much art that is exhibited focuses less on social and political issues and more on individual subjectivities. Ulrich Beck (2000, p. 172) notes the problems that are faced in politicising the population: 'On the one hand, the "living your own life" society validates at the heart of national politics the basic proposition that the individual - and only the individual - counts as the source of democratic legitimacy'. If we adopt Beck's analysis, therein lies a potential problem for the student relating their work to a social context. Instead of a restrictive structured approach that treats students as a homogenous group, the students' different lived experiences need locating. This is not possible, however, within the current cultural frame that Richard Sennet (2000, p. 175) speaks of: 'Modern culture is flooded with identity-talk ... of crude stories about "how I discovered the person I really am".' Sennet suggests that practice

within the art institution needs to be more than just a cathartic or narcissistic endeavour. We would argue that the post-structuralist legitimisation of individual subjectivity may leave people in an ethical vacuum.

It was evident to us that the ideas of social justice, which were implicit in the theory programme, needed to be made explicit. We were, and continue to be, discomfited by the thought that a student can graduate from a course about the study of culture and not be critically and ethically reflexive. To be critically and ethically reflexive is to be able to enter into the dialogue characterised by Habermas (1980, p. 13) as that between the lifeworld and specialist spheres of practice. In order to arrive at this (utopian?) state, it is becoming increasingly clear that an understanding of ethical practice is vital. In a multicultural society such as Australia's the process of establishing a personal cultural taxonomy becomes 'more than the struggle over identifications or a representational politics that unsettles and disrupts common sense; it is also a performative act grounded in the spaces and practices that connect people's everyday lives and concerns with the reality of material relations of values and power' (Giroux, 2000, p. 106).

The mere act of supplementing the curriculum in the name of cultural inclusivity is therefore inadequate. The bottom line is a need to move away from the pedagogical model that positions itself exclusively in terms of the dissemination and acquisition of received knowledge. In a classroom engaged with cross-cultural studies in visual culture, for example, this knowledge-based model often risks becoming reduced to a pseudo-ethnographic 'way of life' travelogue. The consequence is that cultural texts tend to become 'either the reified markers of a narrow version of identity politics or pedagogical resources for uncovering the attributes of specific identities' (p. 68). The former approach privileges the individual artist as a seeming progenitor of autonomous social meanings, while the latter risks amounting to a reductive exercise in fetishistic culture spotting. Studying visual culture in this way becomes

> a hermetic process removed from larger social and political contexts, and questions of power are engaged exclusively within a politics of representation. Such readings largely function to celebrate a textuality that has been diminished to a bloodless formalism and the nonthreatening, if not accommodating, affirmation of indeterminacy as a transgressive aesthetic. (p. 69)

Such narrow visions of cultural politics inscribe sanitised and aestheticised versions of social reality that are indelibly distanced from the lived reality of the student in the classroom. Identity politics become mere textual play and reduced to a representational performance of individual subjectivities. As demonstrated in our case study, specific and local issues are subsumed under supposedly international

aesthetic concerns. There is, in other words, a disjuncture between the politics of meaning and a broader politics of engagement.

It is unsurprising in retrospect that curriculum change was insufficient in itself to enable students to make the jump into ethical praxis. The subjectivities of post-structuralism are deeply embedded in the mass culture that surrounds them, and that mass culture is constructed in such a way that their allegiance to it is hard to break. The new structure of theoretical study at the school rejected the paradigms of Eurocentric aesthetics and drew heavily upon postcolonial theory. It stressed the importance of cultural difference and the issues of cultural negotiation and exchange in its attempts to develop a socially progressive study of culture that reflected an Australia struggling to come to terms with the reality of multicultural life and its aspirations, successes and difficulties.

A number of questions had presented themselves during the restructuring of the course. The most substantial was: how to define Australian culture? Part of any such framing had to be geographical. Contemporary Australia has a precolonial Indigenous culture with which it has still to reconcile itself. Its physical location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans exposes it to a range of cultures and cultural experiences that are not mirrored in its consumption of mass culture, which as we have observed casts Australia metaphorically adrift in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. This disconnection between the lived experience in Australian cities' multicultural suburbs and the land of television cannot be over-emphasised.

The products of the British and American cultural industries are seen as largely superior to anything produced in Australia. This attitude reinforces a sense of cultural dependency. From this dependency emerges a form of identification, not just with the ideas (and artifacts) of those cultures, but also a sense of racial identification (in this particular case with an idealised view of the Anglo-Saxon aspects of Britain and America, and not with their many cultured reality). Visual culture, unless consciously framed otherwise, can be very easily framed as a Caucasian activity. The Australian student body is not exclusively European in origin, so for an Australian non-Caucasian this is a profoundly problematic issue. However, for the student of European origin, contemporary mass culture provides a safe cultural space that, whilst it is not home, it is nevertheless a place that can provide some sort of generic comfort.

The geo-political reality of Australia creates problems for Australians adopting the Marxist critique of colonialism as its origins lie within the European tradition of Humanism and the Enlightenment. When Marx (1973, p. 105) wrote that capitalist society 'is the most developed and the most complex historic organisation of production ... [and] ... thereby allows insights into the structure and relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it

built itself up', it was a double edged observation. On one hand it acted as the starting point for a trenchant critique of bourgeois capitalism and its project of imperialism. On the other it validated the idea that European Modernity was the single vantage point from which the rest of culture could be examined, that is, the vantage point of a 'developed' industrial Europe. Whilst Australia is one of the world's most urbanised nations, it does not however have one of the world's major industrial economies and, because of its history of authoritarian government and a racist immigration policy, it came late to the cultural ideas of transgressive Modernity. It was not until the late 1930s that radical European ideas about the form and content of cultural practice became acceptable to the deeply conservative Australian institutional establishment. Hence, one can agree with Jean-Paul Sartre's (1967, p. 22) observation that 'the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters', and happily (or perhaps 'unhappily' would be a more appropriate adverb) substitute Australian for European.

It is indisputably the case that notions of cultural egalitarianism made tangible in European nations were at the expense of their colonised territories. As Franz Fanon (1967, p. 231) says, 'Europe is literally the creation of the Third World', but any aspiration to social equity is too precious a concept to lose in a general condemnation of the project of Modernity. Marx's class analysis of the processes of development is a useful one, but it largely ignores the issues of race and culture. An understanding of race, culture, privilege and power is best informed from an awareness of postcolonial theory.

For us, part of the study of visual culture has to be what Stuart Hall (1990, p. 15) calls the 'unmasking … of the unstated presuppositions of the humanist tradition'. The racial and cultural constituents of Australia are still largely European, but it is not geographically European and remains othered by the European centre. It is part of the minority 'First' world, but at once a subject of the minority world's cultural policies. It is both resentful of its Anglo-American colonising cultures, but an enthusiastic consumer of them. It is like many colonial and postcolonial cultures that are caught in the bind of being 'simultaneously progressive and co-opted' (West, 1990, p. 94), of critiquing the centre, but being consumed by it. Postcolonial theory provides a lens through which the complexities of Australia's power relationships can be read because it gives us a way of freshly contextualising embedded cultural information. We have already established the valuable role in which postcolonial theory can expose the contradictions of cultural exchange. And yet, as our opening anecdote illustrates, the demonstration of cultural inequality through study alone remains theoretical unless it can be located into the students' lived experiences. How can the students judge the ethical relationship between their own lived experiences and the cultural structures that define them?

The way in which this dilemma can best be articulated is to frame the demand for ethical practice on John Rawls' (1971) ideas of social justice, in particular the sense of 'rightness'. If, as Rawls argues, a sense of the good is achieved through the individual's satisfaction of rational desire, then what is right is that which ensures the same possibility for other individuals to also achieve what is good for them. Under this model the individual is constantly required to negotiate culturally, compelled to examine whether what is good for one group is good for another or at its expense. By necessity, the individual is engaged in dialogue with a network of cultural systems. Because of the fractured nature of contemporary culture, there are currently few other ways of creating a coherent cultural space within which to communicate other than through a shared sense of the ethical. The old essentialist divisions of race, gender and class, whilst still absolutely central to the way we have been culturally formed, need negotiating in an increasingly subtle way. Bhabha (1994, p. 1) discusses the 'move away from the singularities of "class" or "gender" as primary conceptual and organizational categories', which he sees as having resulted in the awareness of a variety of subject positions currently informing ideas of identity. He argues that it is in the negotiation of the range of subject positions in contemporary cultures, from the 'periphery' or boundary to authorised rule, that dominant discourses in Western culture can be challenged. An ethical critical awareness allows the analysis of cultural inequalities that emerge from postcolonial theory to be articulated personally rather than abstractly, but it forces a framing of the individual's negotiation with institutional mechanisms to go beyond the reflective, or self referential. An ethical critical awareness allows for cultural movement across and within the paradigms of race, class and gender without the subject becoming narcissistic.

An ethical critical awareness also implies a negotiated interpretive appraisal of differing cultural values. We are not suggesting, however, that differences can simply be explained away. The notion of cultural incommensurability entails that complete transparency of meaning may not always be achievable or possible. In this sense, incommensurability may be understood in terms of conflicting regimes of value judgement. At the most basic level, an ever-vigilant reflexiveness about differing cultural contexts creates an awareness of how meanings function differently in different contexts. Consider the example of artistic techniques and styles transferred between cultural boundaries. This transfer may result in subsequent uses that might not be compatible with the interpretive discourses of the originating culture. What may be deemed as a prefabrication or copy could well be valued in new contexts if only because of the prior absence of such techniques and styles in these localities, as is clearly evident in the history of modern Asian art. This example shows the contextual mapping necessary to qualify judgements about cross-cultural derivation, adaptation

and transformation. A relativisation of cultural values is required by this interpretive procedure. The specificities of both originating and new cultural contexts need to be factored into consideration. As Thomas McEvilley (1996, p. 130) summarily puts it, 'Today a value judgement must attempt to incorporate awareness of alternatives and counterjudgements.' It is this mode of interpretive evaluation that, for instance, incorporates and preserves the specificities of cultural ownership in the context of Indigenous cultures. Therein lies Hal Foster's (1996, p. 203) emphasis on the need for a kind of critical and ethical reflexivity that avoids both 'a reductive over-identification with the other' and 'a murderous disidentification from the other'. The onus is therefore on developing a framework of ethical referents that is not only attentive to the constituencies of difference, but also the varied ways in which differences are structured in the first place.

Simply exposing students to basic access and equity paradigms in the name of instilling a basic consciousness of social justice is insufficient. What we are arguing for is the need for the inculcation of a more proactive negotiation of the relativisation of democratic values. Anna Yeatman (1994, p. 91) argues that the 'new liberalism' in contemporary commodity cultures, based on economic liberalism rather than a democratic liberalism, essentially co-opts and consumes the politics of difference to the extent whereby '[d]ifference is homogenized within the category of consumer preference and rendered a function of privately oriented and self-regarding action.' Accordingly, a student can elicit a complaint about the relevance of being asked to read a set text written by a gay, male, Trinidadian, Chinese video artist and film-maker in Canada. What, asks the student, has it got to do with her painting practice in Perth, Western Australia? Similarly, why, asks another student, do Asian-Australians need to identify themselves as such and demarcate their difference in this manner? Why can't they just be Australian? The logical corollary of private, self-regarding enclosure is finally either that of disidentification (a refusal to engage altogether) or an assimilatory erasure of otherness. These two examples underscore the importance of establishing a relational model of ethical referents in the name of critical pedagogical practice. A relational model uses theory to understand specific contexts as lived relations of power 'in order to bear witness to the ethical and political dilemmas that animate both the specificity of such contexts and their connection to the larger social landscape' (Giroux, 2000, p. 129).

Wolfgang Iser (1996, p. 296) characterises the mutuality involved in this form of dialogic engagement as a 'recursive looping' between different contexts. He values the process of interpretive looping as a vital and ongoing 'respecification of difference'. For central to the negotiation of difference is the immediate awareness that the recognition of difference itself is always lodged in contingency, as in different from

what and in relation to whom? At the same time, however, mutuality should not be mistaken for a homogenising, assimilatory 'transcendental stance' (p. 301). This is because mutuality is 'marked simultaneously by an insurmountable difference between cultures and an interminable drive to build bridges.'

Thus, the emphasis here on fostering a sense of ethical reflexivity requires not only locating the self in a broader context, but also a critical understanding of our own contextual frames of reference and interpretation, as well as the inequities inscribed in unequal social exchange and cross-cultural negotiation. Difference is ineluctably marked in this paradigm as the product of a broader social network of power, privilege and inequality. Becoming ethically reflexive thereby involves a continual process of 'remaking the context, where context [itself] is always understood as a structure of power' (Gossberg cited in Giroux, 2000, p. 134).

We argue for the urgency of a socialised visual art practice. One of our aims is to achieve social justice. This outcome is not to be interpreted as a dictatorial pedagogic strategy, rather a working suggestion that enables a critical space for debate. Elizabeth Gertsakis (1997, p. 42) is cynical about the apparent passivity of the Australian public and the government's efforts at keeping 'the "general satisfaction" of the populace in the apathy that it requires for a sustained balance of its authority, its control.' She essentially calls for public political intervention on issues relating to the republic, immigration and oppression. We mention Gertsakis' point to link the 'apathy' of the general population with the 'apathy' of the student body. How then do we facilitate what Gertsakis is asking for, which is by extension the inculcation of a social practice?

Many of our students approach the programme with a fixed idea of what art and the artist is within contemporary visual culture. The 'artist as hero' is still a commonly held view that is perpetuated by the institutions of visual culture and in the promotion of a national identity (which can be problematic depending on one's cultural and ideological stance). This point alerts us to the question of ethics. If the artist as hero is seen as reality not as myth, will the student produce work without consideration of the broader context? The ramifications of this could be harmful both culturally and politically; therefore the role of the practitioner and the educator needs to be continually negotiated in constructing a socialised practice. A critical visual culture can be facilitated by discussing the inherent complexities in an institutionalised study, where one criticises from the security of belonging to it. This attempts to destabilise former institutional power structures by recontextualising visual culture concomitantly acknowledging that another institutional visual culture is perpetuated. Once this is established, the student/ individual can critically negotiate within the institution armed with a critical awareness of the boundaries. The intention is to empower the student in mapping visual culture.

This highlights a further challenge in forming strategies that facilitate a working relationship between theoretical and practical studios as often students struggle to connect their practice with broader concerns. The approach that is taken within the printmaking studio in the school exemplifies direct associations with these broader cultural issues. Current concerns of third year students include: a study of the fragmentation of contemporary culture and the illusion of choice using digital media; the impact of genetics and skin engineering using installation and projection; and problems associated with private/public sphere using more traditional print processes. What links all these projects is their emphasis upon ethical relationships. Potentially, the debate around the ethical can be difficult due to the apathy that Gertsakis discusses. However, her call for active participation is attempted within these situations. We encourage a critical dialogue which proffers a diversity of opinions that can be extreme and challenging. However, the space constructed is an active space. We are not arguing for an environment where the student attempts to illustrate a particular theory as this can render the artwork literal and simplistic. Instead, students struggle to negotiate the ethical with context, theoretical concerns, practical issues and audience/community as informed through postcolonial discourse. This contributes to a self-critical awareness that is demanded within their studio practice at third year level.

As suggested, the apparent disconnectedness of theory and practice in the visual art institution appears to be symptomatic of contemporary cultural life at large. Therefore, the emphasis we place on the student is to become critically and ethically aware of strategies they can employ to map and negotiate contemporary culture. As Anthony Giddens (1991, p. 1) tells us:

> The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications.

This approach is intended to liberate the student of visual culture to actively negotiate within cultural institutions and the broader social and political context that frames them. As Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens (2000, p. 217) warn, 'Individual choice alone - the key element of neo-liberal philosophy - cannot supply the social bonds necessary to sustain a stable and meaningful life'. However, we would argue that by critical engagement and active involvement in wider cultural and social debates the art practitioner can shift preconceptions of what art is in the community.

It is difficult to promote the idea of ethical responsibility within a culture that promotes individualism whilst denying the emotional and intellectual resources

necessary to live a full and satisfying communal life. It is difficult, too, to understand the demand for ethical practice in a culture which promotes the idea of individuality within the closed confines of a commodity culture, a culture that in addition is profoundly limited in its ability to reflect cultural difference. Unless consciously directed otherwise, the individual studying visual culture will fall back upon established interpretive practices no matter how the curriculum content of study may change. Habermas' dialogic model raised earlier in the chapter encourages the student of culture to move backwards and forwards between the institutions that define cultural paradigms and the individual's own lived experience. This process suggests that curriculum content is almost irrelevant when compared to the potential power that the remaking of the context of study has. Postcolonial theory gives us a means to create a context that frames established bodies of information in a new way, though we are aware that negotiating 'otherness' through contextual reframing is a complex task fraught with confusion and conflict as individuals come to terms with the way they have been constructed. An understanding of how the discourse between the individual and the institution functions has the potential to free the individual, but for what purpose?

Donna Haraway (1991, p. 151) talks engagingly of the illusory and frayed vision of the autonomous self, and argues for a re-invention of the individual as one committed to 'irony, intimacy and perversity … oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence'. We readily acknowledge the importance of strategic and transitional demands in the construction of cultural programmes, but to give this rhetoric flesh we argue that a study of culture has to expose the incommensurability that is at the heart of any relationship between the individual and the cultural institution. Without such an understanding, individuals cannot locate themselves as part of the complex and contradictory relationships between cultures. Unless a study of culture deals with the unequal exchanges that constitute cultural exchange at all levels of experience, what can be promoted is a superficial self-referentiality rather than reflexivity. We argue for a reflexivity that exposes the contingent nature of the individual's relationship with other cultures. We wish to go still further though and suggest that, rather than celebrate the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of such a relationship, contingency is framed by an ethical demand for social justice. It is the de-centred, fragmented, unlocated self that permits the perpetuation of a system of social injustice in a commodity culture. The use of postcolonial theory can provide a model for a study of culture that encourages ethical reflexivity, a study of culture that has little to do with entertainment but everything to do with social liberation.

## Endnotes

1   See Chan & Crouch (1997); and Crouch (2000).

2   The concept of the 'reflective practitioner' first raised by Schon (1983) is a concept that is increasingly familiar. Its emphasis is upon the individual's analysis of his or her practice and the consideration of the way in which that practice operates within an explicitly acknowledged set of paradigms. In this way the practitioner becomes self aware and able to refine his or her practice according to established criteria. Reflexivity, however, in the way we wish to use the term, takes reflection beyond the idea of paradigms of acceptable criteria. By reflexivity we mean a praxis that brings to the surface issues that expose the contingent, ambiguous and often contradictory implications of whatever system is being reflected upon. Reflexivity is far more unsettling than even the most rigorous reflection because it uncovers illusions of fixed meanings and stability of systems. Implicit in our use of the word is the idea that meanings must be frequently reconstructed in the light of the realisation that in any form of cultural enquiry the 'subjects' and 'objects' of that enquiry are difficult to separate. This sense of the use of reflexivity is based substantially on the discussions to be found in Lawson (1985). In addition, we have used the word as it is used in sociology where it refers to the realisation that, as cultural traditions are shattered, there is increasing opportunity for the reflexive individual to act upon the world as well as be acted upon. We would temper Beck's (1992, p. 90) observation that 'the individual becomes the reproduction unit of the social' without denying its importance in recasting the potential of the individual for social action.

3    This aspect of Aboriginal traditional law is reinforced by Federal Australian copyright law. It means that Aboriginal communities can protect what is often their main source of income, which is art based, from pirated mass produced versions of their art.

4    Hence our location of this discussion in the particularities of our home state, Western Australia. Perth, the capital of Western Australia, has a population of approximately two million people. It is the most geographically isolated capital city in the world. Add to this the fact that nearly 30% of the population of Western Australia are overseas-born and only 30% of these born in the colonial centre, the UK, and it becomes obvious that understanding cultural diversity, and administering it, is of some significance to the state. More than 11% of Western Australians speak a language other than English at home, with more than 30% of the population in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions in the north of the state speaking Aboriginal languages. Because of this complex diversity, the state also provides translation services for over 50 different languages (Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs, 1999).

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# TENSIONS IN THE DECOLONISATION PROCESS:

## DISRUPTING PRECONCEPTIONS OF POSTCOLONIAL EDUCATION IN THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

*Christine Fox*

## Introduction: A Postcolonial Shift: The End of Dichotomies?

In recent years, a discernible shift towards a postcolonial critique has occurred in educational literature. Initially led by such theorists as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, to name but three, the critique has particularly tried to disrupt discourse that is abstracted from its context or that is complicit in the colonial agenda by perpetuating dichotomies of the powerful and powerless.

It is a challenge for educators to take up an agenda which does not accept the dichotomies implicit in the terms colonisers/colonised, us and Other, developed/developing, but rather explores the relations of power through dialogue, creating spaces for transformation, for new educational and methodological strategies (and *see* Fox, 1996).

This chapter examines a particular context of education in order to allow the voices of the hitherto marginalised to be heard. That context is the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a small Southeast Asian state of less than five million people surrounded on all sides by other countries. Laos today is struggling through a period of challenge and denial, as this chapter explains. Through the images and stories of Laos outlined below, I have attempted to portray the tension between colonial, postcolonial and transformative dialogue in education. The second section outlines the tensions arising from the influence by the World Bank, Unesco and bilateral programs on educational programs and policies. The third section draws some inferences from postcolonial theory for education.

In many respects, both a poststructuralist agenda and some postcolonial literary analyses focus on describing, when we should be 'scribing' (writing new agendas); on deconstructing, when we should be constructing (creating new knowledge); negating, when we should be negotiating (actively seeking change); and feminising/ womanising when we should be listening to womanist ways of knowing (gendered activist work of women of colour, indeed all women).

For postcolonial educational theorists, a way forward lies in a shift in:

- voice — who is speaking, for/with whom, which gender and who is listening;
- context — from system to the context of private/public lives;
- theory — from modernity to postmodernity to critical postcoloniality.

This chapter illustrates the postcolonial shift in the fields of voice, context and theory, first by using the voice of people who have been marginalised and 'othered' by those in power. Through the voices of three people who live in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the complexities and contradictions of decolonisation can be seen in the ways in which formal (former colonial) education has influenced the speakers.

Giyatri Spivak, a formidable spokesperson for the subaltern, constantly refers to the power of voice and the need for those of other cultures to listen carefully across cultures. Often, the space to listen has not been present, and it is that space, that intercultural context, that is worth struggling for. As she says, it is better to negotiate the space rather than negate the possibility of making that space: '…as long as one remains aware that it is a *very* problematic field [i.e. intercultural education], there is some hope' (Spivak, 1990, p. 63). And she goes on to say that it is not so much telling the story as knowing that somebody is listening. In this chapter, a space has been made to both tell a story and for others to read (listen) to it.

Secondly, in terms of context, I have focused the discussion on the educational context of Lao PDR and on the impact of education on the private/public lives of Lao individuals. This illustrates my recommended shift away from system as unit of analysis, yet does not deny the importance of understanding the broader systemic sense of context. Ania Loomba describes postcolonialism as a process of disengaging from the whole colonial syndrome, but warns against abstracting the idea from the context. 'If uprooted from specific locations, 'postcoloniality' cannot be meaningfully investigated' (Loomba, 1998, p. 19). As she says, there are similarities between feminist theories of patriarchy—without the context, without understanding different feminist ways of thinking and feeling, the description of patriarchal power and domination is not meaningful. Similarly, without the context of economic exploitation or social marginalisation, without understanding ways of thinking and feeling of particular participants, the description of colonialism is suspended outside reality.

Thirdly, in terms of the shift from modernity and postmodernity to critical postcoloniality, it should be noted that theorists have earlier confronted postmodernity with some alarm at the seeming fragmentation and diversity of approaches that sidestepped issues of social justice, gender equity and critical engagement with various forms of social 'reality' (Masemann & Welch, 1997, p. 398). Postcoloniality seems to address some of those Foucouldian concerns, but remains ambivalent. Such ambivalence emerges in Bart Moore-Gilbert's work (Moore-Gilbert, 1997). He sees theory as related particularly to French 'high' theory, and criticism as applied to any number of contexts, not restricted to a particular era, or region, or socio-cultural formation.

> Postcolonial criticism can still be seen as a more or less distinct set of reading practices, if it is understood as preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge or reflect upon the relations of domination and subordination— economic, cultural and political— between (and often within) nations, races or cultures, which characteristically have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and which, equally characteristically, continue to be apparent in the present era of neocolonialism (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p. 12).

Moore-Gilbert is anxious to move the above conception of postcolonial criticism away from European theory into a postcoloniality that is concerned with moving theory into practice, reflection into action. His discussion of the work of Gayatri Spivak is particularly relevant to my discussion on the shift from postmodernity to critical action. He emphasises that Spivak's work illustrates the need to be aware of the power of pedagogy and the need for interventionist practice as the situation requires rather than conventional academic discourse appropriated by the elite. Spivak, he says, is particularly suspicious of the 'conventional kind of academic narrative which purports to build coherently to a closure which has by then established the whole and definitive 'truth' about the particular text or theoretical problem in question' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p. 75).

Also highly suspicious of 'truths' in intercultural contexts is Trinh Minh-ha in her work *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Trinh 1989). Trinh's discussion of the issue of voice and context in relation to theory sums up for me many of the concepts struggled with in the current chapter. In her writings, Trinh warns the reader not to take, or create, people that are apart from your culture for dissection, not to lose the sense of being in attempting to use theory as an oppressive tool to will or perpetuate existing power relations, as '…theory is no longer theoretical when it loses sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition' (Trinh, 1989, p. 42).

The following sections of this chapter outline the Lao context, the voices of three Lao educators, and the tensions within Lao as the colonial agenda is challenged, disrupted and then threatened by neocolonial forces.

## Background

The Lao People's Democratic Republic sits between powerful forces east and west, both geographically and ideologically. Lao PDR is a landlocked country of just under five million people, from over 47 different ethnic groups and languages, situated between Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Myanmar. This land of former Lao kingdoms, and once a French colony, has only recently allowed itself to enter into the economics of globalisation[1]. It is one of the least developed countries by OECD statistics, yet complex and rich in languages, Indigenous knowledge and Theravada Buddhism.

Formal education was transmitted to Laos by the French colonial system in the 20th century until 1975. Education was largely restricted to the rising middle class and the aristocracy and was in French. Teachers were imported from France and Algeria, and Lao intellectuals went to France for their university education. The language of 'culture' was French. From 1975 to the early 1990s, 'Western educated' Laotians trained in the former USSR, Hungary and other socialist countries. The language of ideology was Russian. Increasingly, scholars and economists are turning to English-speaking countries such as the USA and Australia. The language of globalisation is English.

The present move towards a more universal attempt to encourage literacy and numeracy at home stems from the sentiments expressed at Unesco's 'Education for All' conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, together with the strongly nationalist Lao vision for the future, a largely socialist ideological agenda. Systems and structures are, however, overshadowed by the reliance on external grants and loans, which on the one hand provide the means to make changes, but on the other are disrupting the intentions of the Lao authorities. For example, as fast as the Lao government tries to move all basic education into the Lao language of instruction, the economically better off sector of the population looks to English to enter into the global economy. At the same time, the country has a complex diversity of culture and language, so that other main languages such as Hmong, or Khmer, are being marginalised.

## Personal Stories from the Ministry of Education in Lao PDR

The 'storying' of people's lives from another's perspective is in itself a postcolonial conundrum. It can be a form of commodified culture, an intrusion, an example of silencing of the other by speaking on their behalf. The stories that follow are hopefully from the speaker's perspective, not the writer's. They are intended to provide a

historical-experiential focus to an educational story of which I the writer am not a part. The first two stories by Kao and Ngan were told to me in a spirit of collegiality. Both are educators working in the Ministry of Education in Lao PDR and both shared their stories as I shared mine. I was taken into their confidence only after several months of working in a team with them. The third story was told to me by a school girl who was anxious to give her views to a Lao consultant who was with me on a trip to the rural north.

### Kao's story

Kao was born in the north of Laos in the early 1950s, the daughter of a Chinese teacher and medical healer, and a local Lao woman who had never been to school. There were five children, the eldest two were boys, and the three youngest were girls. Kao was the youngest. Three months after she was born her father died after suffering for a long time. He knew he had not long to live, although he could not name his disease, and he told his two sons to leave school so they could work with him. The family moved to the south.

The father had never had to use his hands to make a living, but he settled on some land, cleared it and planted coffee. After his death, the mother took over the plantation and also planted other crops which she sold at the market. She organised the family and managed the money; yet by Western standards she was totally illiterate and unskilled. She had a deep knowledge of the plants, the soil, the means to preserve vegetables and the seasonal requirements. She was helped by her eldest daughter, who had three years of schooling, and the second daughter, who never went to school. The boys never returned to school.

Kao was the only formally 'educated' woman in her family, because she was too weak to carry heavy loads. Until she was about 10 she used to go to the mountain 'garden' where the corn grew and collect bags of corn to carry in a basket on her back. It was about five kilometres up and five back. She had no idea how long it took her because she did not have a watch. The family decided that her destiny should be elsewhere.

Now Kao is a senior educator in the Ministry of Education, after several years of secondary and tertiary study and a 15-month Fellowship to Australia to study English. Of all the family she probably earns the least, and she is the only one to live in an urban area. She divides her life into four periods: when she had to carry heavy loads; when she became a teacher and purchased a second-hand bicycle so she did not have to walk everywhere; when she became a bureaucrat and purchased a motor-bike; and when she will have enough money for her children to buy a car. The means of transport determined her role, her daily life and her level of health.

Kao's world is divided between her duties at home as a mother, her work in preparing English text books for schools and her work with English-speaking consultants in preparing curriculum policy. She also serves on committees for the Lao Women's Union and contracts privately for doing translation work at night, because her salary is not sufficient to provide for her family since she is a single parent.

### Ngam's story

Ngam was born in the northeast of Laos in the late 1950s, the son of a village group of *Khmu*. He lived within the area known as the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' on the Lao side of the border between Vietnam and Laos, and remembers his early life living in a cave to escape the American bombs. The family lived with other village populations in these caves for many, many years, coming out at night to tend the rice fields and vegetable gardens, never knowing if they would come back alive or be killed by an unexploded bomb detonating in the water. The Khmu people were not schooled for the most part and lived through the knowledge of their ancestors.

When Ngam was a teenager he had his first opportunity to go to a school, and by the time he was 20 he had completed a primary school education, one of the few boys in his village to do so. None of the girls ventured into this other world. Ngam's extended family still live in the Khmu village, and most do not have any Western education. They have their own understanding of why people live or die, what plants are useful or poisonous, what spirits are protective or menacing. The Khmu incorporate this understanding with the legacies of the war – napalm related illness, contaminated vegetation, UXOs throughout the fields.

Ngam left primary school and went to the south of the country to a teacher training college. He learned Western science, which was based on totally different assumptions from the older men and women in his village. After several years of teaching, he continued his education, went to University and is now a senior science educator. Today he is also writing a 'Life Skills' curriculum book for Lao children in ethnic minority areas, a book which will reach the children of his own village.

At first, Ngam was reluctant to identify with an 'ethnic minority' as Khmu tend to be ridiculed and vilified by the educated elite. Once it was established that his listener was awed and interested, the pride of being Khmu was obvious. Nevertheless, the words he used to describe his village were those of the elite: they are 'ignorant', they 'do not like to change' or 'they don't understand'.

### Yangxia's story

Yangxia is a young girl aged about 15 who lives in the rural north, some 30 kilometres from the Chinese border. It took our group of four more than an hour to reach the village from the nearest small town of Luang Nam Tha. She told the story

in her own language, which was then translated into Lao and further translated into English. We sat in her home, the women inside and the men outside. We had to climb up the ladder to get into the house which is built on stilts. Inside it was quite dark, in spite of it being midday, as there was no electricity. All around the walls were pasted pictures from a Western calendar.

Yangxia is a Hmong village girl and she has already been to primary school and hopes to start secondary school soon. She wants to be a teacher or a doctor. She lives in a remote village and carries out the duties of a girl, including working in the rice fields, looking after the chickens, helping her mother with her younger siblings, working in the vegetable garden in the mountain. She has never been outside her village except to the market. She has no idea where foreigners come from, except that more and more of them are appearing in the local market with backpacks and wanting to spend money.

Her village was recently moved from the mountains to be resettled near the road and near the market, so nothing around the village is traditional for her parents. Her former village was many hours' walk from any road. She knows from her parents that the government has resettled many of her fellow Hmong speaking groups, many against their will. But she was glad, because it gave her a chance to go to school. She has strong beliefs about how children who are born may die if the afterbirth is not buried near the house, but now this is not so easy because of the resettlements.

### Educational Preconceptions and Educational Struggle

From these stories, it is clear that formal education has changed the lives of these three people. It has yet to be seen where Yangxia will go, but it is fairly certain that she will enter the formal sector of work unless her family requires her to remain at home. It is also clear that Kao and Ngam had a struggle to reach their positions in the public sector, given that both came from minority cultures, although in the current socialist government all children are expected to be given the opportunity to study.

Although the narrators privileged formal education as their principal vehicle for change, they were also well aware of the power imbalance between themselves and myself as the listener, who had the role of education consultant. While there was an undercurrent on the one hand that my presence could lead to further opportunities in education for them, there was also a genuine sharing of the conflicts and contradictions of engaging in educational interventionist projects from the outsiders. In many cases, the sharing of such ambiguities with someone from another culture is rare for, if it does take place, the information may be taken at a fairly superficial level, ignoring the lessons that need to be learned from the colonial enterprise.

Sara deTurk (2001) has developed an argument for intercultural empathy, and while she argues, as I have in other work (Fox, 1996), that empathy is created through an 'authentic', uncoerced dialogue among people from diverse cultures, there are dangers of taking intercultural communication at face value. Often, in situations where one interlocutor represents power, or powerfulness, the intercultural communication is a strategic device to obtain an advantage, an agreement that may not be in the interests of the less powerful. She states 'subordinates learn that direct, honest reactions are dangerous, and that open communication is possible only with each other. Dominant groups are left ignorant both of their own impact on others and of subordinate group members' true identities and experiences' (p. 379). In the stories presented here, I am illustrating her point of cultural empathy. In other words, even though Kao, Ngam and Yangxia represent subordinate groups, I was not attempting to bring about a strategic agreement; I was merely 'swapping stories'. I also believe, like Sara deTurk, that marginalised groups often demonstrate a greater understanding of the social order as a whole than those who are blinded by their own confidence of being on top.

It is not surprising, for example, that marginalised groups usually speak (or at least understand) the language of a dominant group and speak their mother-tongue and perhaps other languages as well, while dominant groups tend to speak only their own language. This is symptomatic of so much intercultural interaction and provides a metaphor for the postcolonial condition. To emphasise an earlier point, it is through the voice of the 'other', spoken in the context of their own situation, that 'the perspective of the 'other' permits various cultural irrationalities or inconsistencies to emerge into clearer view' (Swigonski, 1994, in deTurk, 2001, p. 380).

## Tensions of Education Reform: Reconstruction or Neocolonialism?

Neocolonialism is one of the outcomes of the forces of globalisation where there is a loss of agency of national governments. One typical example of neocolonialism through reconstruction in Lao PDR also illustrates how preconceptions from colonial days of what education should look like can influence the foreign donor's decision making process and the loss of agency by the national government:

In Lao's rural areas, a lack of access to a school or a teacher is a major factor preventing children from receiving a formal education. Nevertheless, international agencies have funded the construction of large expensive school structures at an equal distance from three small villages, each village remote from each other. In effect, the new school was still inaccessible for children from two of the three villages; those small villages had no road access to the school and were too far away for

small children to walk (World Bank, 2000). International agencies in the past have also tended to stipulate particular building designs with materials not locally available, so that the materials costs rise and haulage of non-local materials is impossible in more remote areas (ADB, 2000).

Amitava Kumar (1999) tells an amusing parable of the ways in which attempted domination through economic power was, in this case fortunately, disrupted through miscommunication. The story is paraphrased as follows:

> Once upon a time there was a foreign businessman and a village farmer in India who met at a roadside where a statue of a horse stood. The foreign businessman took a fancy to the statue and tried to buy it from the farmer, but he could not understand what the farmer was saying. The farmer, who did not understand what the foreigner wanted, thought the foreigner was trying to buy his two goats. After some time, the businessman gave the farmer one hundred rupees for the statue. The villager took the money, turned and walked home quickly so that his goats did not follow him. Meanwhile, the foreign businessman packed up the statue and took off with it in his truck.

As with the postcolonial condition, the story's ending is ambiguous and paradoxical. The story could in a sense be a description of some of the immorality and irrelevance of foreign development aid in education and is reminiscent of Ngam's story where he feels disillusioned about the Indigenous knowledge of his extended village family. It may be turned around to reflect Kao's situation where she is enriched by formal education, but in her family's eyes still impoverished. It could personify the cultural clash in Yangxia's family, where the Hmong are closer to economic markets in their resettled village, but unable to perform their religious ceremonies at the birth of a child. To extend the parable, it could signify the poverty of cultural understanding in the process of globalisation.

Simon Gikandi (2001), whose books *Maps of Englishness* and *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, explore the postcolonial in English literature, believes that postcoloniality and globalisation are the two most important terms in the social and cultural theory today (Gikandi, 2001, p. 627). In a detailed article on globalisation, he states:

> …they are concerned with explaining forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change (ibid, p. 628).

In the same way, education restructuring and reform in less industrialised countries are often attempts to transcend boundaries and enter into a narrative of teaching

and learning that is linked globally.  What is of concern, however, is the efficacy of the reform process, its relevance and the moral and ethical dilemmas entailed.

### Reconstruction and Reform: The Issue of Efficacy and Funding

Once a national education system becomes the recipient of international loans and aid projects, the national ownership of the system may be deeply encroached upon by the donor, whose global priorities may differ from those nationally. For example, the debate about whether to fund formal basic education for children 6-10 (or 5-12), or non-formal basic education for adults 15-40, or higher education, is driven by priorities of organisations such as the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank. Another key problem with reform programs is the emphasis by so-called donor agencies on creating rationales for their interventions in the form of lengthy reports prior to funding. National experts in Ministries and Departments are subjected to team after team of foreign project designers asking the same questions and demanding the same sets of statistics on the education system. Embarrassingly, foreign project designers are often not aware of prior history or the current situation. In the Lao PDR situation, as our illustrative example, some outside consultants make assumptions that Lao personnel have never planned their education system prior to the consultants' arrival in the country.

These types of decision tend to exacerbate the inequalities between urban and rural, and as well between male and female participation in formal schooling. Large central schools are prohibitively distant from villages (unsafe for girls) and too costly for minority communities to contribute to. Many communities can no longer afford to support the poorly paid teachers because most of their resources go to the construction of school buildings. Many schools are closing down because teachers are not being paid and are leaving. The Dakar Report for Laos (Unesco, 2000) showed small and significant increments in participation percentages, but not among ethnic groups and not among girls continuing beyond Grade 2. Illiteracy among adult women is around 80% in Lao PDR; dropout rates of ethnic minority girls is still around 60% by the end of Year 5 of Primary School, up to 100% in some 40% of villages (Nagel, Fox & Vixaysak, 2000).

### Reconstruction and Reform: The Issue of Relevance

The national policy for education in Lao PDR, like many other countries, tends to rely on a national curriculum. In the case of Lao PDR, such a curriculum is incomprehensible and irrelevant to many sections of the Lao population[2]. On the other hand, national policy aims to achieve unity and coherence in a country ripped apart by the so-called Vietnam War, known as the American war by many in Laos[3], and a country with over 47 different ethnic groups.

Teacher shortages are severe; many teachers are untrained and known as 'voluntary teachers'. In such a situation, the relevance of going to school to be counted as 'participating' is a dream rather than reality. Girls in rural areas for the most part do not participate in public life; they tend to be withdrawn and dependent on cultural tradition to determine their role; vast changes are underway, but the relevance of formal learning is hard to determine when it favours the dominance of boys and favours boys' interests (Fox, 2000).

International agencies such as the AusAID Basic Education for Girls, the UNICEF work, NGOs in a number of districts, Save the Children Norway, GTZ (Germany), Sida (Sweden) have initiated a number of idealistic projects. In terms of their efficacy and relevance, however, the spread of their work is narrow; the numbers of people reached covers only parts of the country; and the ideology of gender equity and individual freedom ironically tends to clash with national initiatives related to the 'new economic order' of opening up the socialist government to economic rationalism and the stereotyping of women's roles at home by male heads of family. Yet the rights of the child, the rights of women, the issue of social justice and equity, all are in the national Constitution. This is indeed a paradox and a tension.

### Reconstruction and Reform: The Issue of Morality

The concentration of international funds on formal schooling may be admirable and necessary, yet tension arises when it is considered that much of the funding comes from loans to the government by the international agencies, loans which increase the national debt beyond what is possible to repay. Wastage of funds is endemic, and it should be said that many international consultants have a morality (or immorality) of their own, which may well not be in the interests of the Lao government.

Of crucial concern is that the structural reforms tend to exacerbate what Leon Tikly calls the 'management of exclusion' (Tikly, 2001, p. 152), where the gap between so-called 'haves' and 'have-nots' increases rather than decreases.

Kaoal Malhotra of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) decries those international policies which are made out to be 'the panacea for all ills, regardless of a nation's historical, social or cultural context' (Malhotra, 2000, p. 363). The new agenda includes an unprecedented reliance on information technology (unevenly available globally), the massive capital flows that are not including educational assistance, and the reduction of public expenditure on health and education to the detriment of less well off countries (ibid, p. 364). The morality of these structural 'adjustments' is very questionable.

## Tensions in Postcolonial Terms

From the stories presented at the beginning of this paper, it becomes apparent that the concept of a linear progression from colonial to postcolonial is a myth. The postcolonial 'condition' is a contested concept, inclusive of the colonial, and is both a presence and an absence of post-independence domination by colonial authorities. The postcolonial condition(s) (for surely there are multiple conditions of postcoloniality) point to the new politics of identity and belonging, 'one which centres within the postcolony on who represent whom and to/for whom' (Werbner, 1998, p. 2). Postcolonialism also centres within the former colonisers' understanding of their own identity and who is represented as Other (Chabal, 1996, p. 37). Postcolonialism represents both a triumph and despair, a new voice and some new silencing. The debate is somewhat aligned with the new discourses of globalisation, which 'seems to be perpetually caught between two competing narratives, one of celebration, the other of crisis' (Gikandi, 2001, p. 630).

Terence Ranger (1996) sees postcoloniality in terms of the First World's view of the world, first as the coming of Third World identities into the First World, their cultural hybridity expressed through their intellectual voice in two worlds; second as a methodology which challenges the 'self-confident rationality of imperial science', moving from so-called development studies to postcolonial studies to raise an awareness of history and relations of power (Ranger, 1996, p. 271); and third as a way to describe the contemporary state of ex-imperial societies in Africa and Asia (ibid., p. 272). He sees postcoloniality as a counter-version of colonialism, using postcolonial theory and methodology to deconstruct colonial society and to expose the falsities of re-presenting colonial history in terms of some mythical 'golden age'.

Missing from these accounts is, as so often happens, the voice of those very people who have so often been labelled as Other, the voice of the participants who are actively generating the means and meanings by which the silenced can obtain respect and respectability (Ogden, 1998, p.165). It is these participants who hold up the postcolonial mirror through which contemporary educators can see themselves, and through which the distortions of colonial discourse can be revealed. And it is this mirror in which I believe postcolonial educators need to gaze when seeking interpretations of the past and looking towards the future. Unfortunately, the mirror itself may not reflect anything more than the multiple images the gazers themselves believe they can see. It needs the postcolonial subjects to speak and to shatter the colonial image. The use of postcolonial theory to discuss education outside the dominant English-speaking world has been plagued by 'essentializing the subaltern or of losing track of the subaltern almost entirely through a growing commitment to postcolonial discourse theory' (Fisher, 2001, p. 582).

Also missing from these accounts is a feminist critique of the postcolonial, either from a poststructuralist perspective or from other areas of feminist theory. An essay in *Feminist Studies* by Parama Roy (2001) discusses the contradictions and disruptions to feminist theory and activism. She notes that 'the issue of the national and now, more recently, the issue of the transnational, has singularly powerful resonances for scholars of gender and sexuality. But although a good deal of the extant work on nationalism is conspicuous for its engagement with feminist questions and methods, there is as yet some critical inattentiveness to the gendered coordinates of diaspora and its cognates' (Roy, 2001, p. 711). Her concern is more of the transnational woman from South Asia to the United States, but it ably outlines the tensions, even among those who use the word 'postcolonial' and who the 'other' represents, in feminist literature. 'What, postcolonial and feminist critics might profitably ask themselves, constitutes a periphery or a margin, and how might it be distinct from what Spivak has named as a self-consolidating Other?' (op cit, p. 715).

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided an example of voice, context and theory that is situated, postcolonial in approach, and full of tensions and contradictions. I hope to have made clear the significance of the shift away from the dichotomies, the colonial discourse, the fixities of modernist theory and the 'othering' syndrome that Trinh Minh-ha (1989) so eloquently critiqued in her work *Women, Native, Other.*

As always, a story provides more questions than answers, more interpretations, more desire to hear the next episode. Is there anywhere a postcolonial pedagogy? Is the education of the three Lao people whose story was told in this chapter a colonial or postcolonial or merely a Lao education? Has the Lao PDR yet managed to construct a new vision of education?  Have they disrupted preconceptions of what education is?

The Lao countryside provides some answers to these questions, and there are probably nearly five million people living in Lao who would give different answers. The experience of being educated in Lao today shifts and changes in texture along with the seasons of drought and flood. Trinh (1989, p. 2) says in the introduction to her book:

> The story never stops beginning or ending. It appears headless and bottomless for it is built on differences. Its (in)finitude subverts every notion of completeness and its fame remains a non-totalizable one. The differences it brings about are differences not only in structure, in the place of structures and of surfaces, but also in timbre and in silence.

## Endnotes

1   The history of the emergence of the modern nation of the Lao has undergone several cycles of unrest, war and reconstruction since the days of the former glorious Kingdom of Lane Xang. The establishment of the Lao Issara in 1945, and the subsequent struggle and overthrow of the shortlived Royal Regime, was ended by the socialist revolution in 1975 and the establishment of a one-party socialist system. At that time, many of the educated elite fled the country and are now living abroad. A great number of Lao people also live in the border areas in Thailand.

   The education system is one of the main instruments for teaching ethnic minorities in Laos about a Lao standard culture. The country still has more than 11,000 small villages, some of them in remote and mountainous areas, accessible only by foot. Over 80% of the population depend on subsistence agriculture and in some areas only 10 to 20% can read and write. The literacy rate is 60% for the nation as a whole, but the rate for women is lower (Unesco, 2000).

2   This is in contrast to an observation by Ordoñez and Maclean (*Prospects*, *30*(3), 2000, p. 292) who claim 'On the positive side, the fundamental value given to education, to respect for elders, sages and teachers, the central role of the family, and the implicit faith in the importance of educating the next generation are common across the great cultures of Asia'.

3   During the Vietnam war in the 1960s, over half of the country was heavily bombed (e.g. in Luang Prabang, the former capital of Laos, only 36 of the 120 temples remained intact after the bombing; in the south, much of the country is still littered with UXOs).

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# SECTION 2

## Educational systems and structures:
Reinscribing colonialism

# GLOBALISATION AND EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:

## A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS

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## Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to consider the implications of globalisation for educational change in sub-Saharan Africa from a postcolonial perspective. The chapter sketches out the challenges posed to education policy makers by economic, political and cultural globalisation. Although there is a burgeoning literature on the impact of globalisation on education in high income countries, literature looking at the implications for low income, postcolonial countries such as those of sub-Saharan Africa is more limited. It will be argued that the work that does exist often fails to take account of European colonialism and is based on an insufficiently critical view of the impact of global forces in low income contexts. Much of this work is also biased towards economic aspects of education and does not take adequate account of the political and cultural dynamics of educational change. The chapter attempts to set out a new framework for understanding the implications of globalisation for educational change in sub-Saharan Africa. Given the position of the sub-continent in relation to dominant global forces, it will be suggested that the implications of globalisation for education are in important ways unique. Finally, it will be argued that although educational change has an important role to play in development, it can succeed only if it is part of a broader process of economic, political and cultural change at the global, regional and national levels.

Although the present chapter focuses on educational change in sub-Saharan Africa, it is also intended that it should contribute towards an understanding of the relationship between globalisation and educational change in low income, postcolonial

countries more generally. This is to acknowledge, on the one hand, a general level of commonality between all postcolonial, low income countries in terms of their experiences of globalisation. It is also to recognise, however, differences in the specific responses to globalisation in different regions of the postcolonial world. Here Hoogvelt's description of distinct 'postcolonial formations' is relevant (Hoogvelt, 1997). Hoogvelt describes four such formations, including sub-Saharan Africa, militant Islam, East Asia and Latin America. The response to globalisation in each is a product of economic, political and cultural factors, and studying the impact of globalisation on each region draws attention to different aspects of the postcolonial condition. In sub-Saharan Africa, given the catastrophic impact of structural adjustment programmes and the growing chasm between the 'haves' and 'have nots', the focus is on the *management of exclusion*, a point that will be developed below.

## Postcolonialism and the Study of Globalisation

The mode of critique adopted in this chapter is a 'postcolonial' one (see Tikly, 1999). That is, the chapter seeks to explain the impact of contemporary globalisation from the perspective of low income postcolonial countries and against an understanding of the continuing legacy of the colonial encounter in Africa. At the most general level the term 'postcolonial' is used to describe a global 'condition' or shift in the cultural, political and economic arrangements that arise from the experiences of European colonialism. Importantly, it is used not just to describe specific events related to colonialism and its aftermath but also to signify an *epistemological* shift in the way that these events are described and interpreted. There is much debate, however, concerning the meaning of the term (Loomba, 1998; McClintock, 1992). The approach adopted here is to use the term to signify a general '*process* of disengagement with the whole colonial syndrome which takes many forms' (Hulme, 1995) and as 'the contestation of colonial domination and of the legacies of colonialism' (Loomba, 1998, p. 12).

Understanding postcolonialism as a process helps to draw attention towards an important element of postcolonial theory, namely the move away from the modernist pre-occupation with the nation state. For writers such as Hall (1996) and Loomba (1998), postcolonialism should be seen as an aspect of the emergence over several centuries of the system of global capitalism. This view has two important implications. Firstly, it serves to underline the point that colonialism is not 'over' in the sense of an epochal shift, but that its modalities and effects are being transformed as a consequence of globalisation. Secondly, it draws attention to the central role that European colonisation of countries outside of Europe has played in defining the postcolonial condition.

Implicit in Hulme's characterisation of postcolonialism as a process is a more subtle change of emphasis not only in the content of what postcolonialism is seeking to describe but also in the way that colonialism is *understood* and narrativised. This re-narrativisation involves a reconceptualisation of colonialism not as a sub-plot of some 'grander' (European) narrative such as Marxism or liberalism, but as a violent event central to the developing new relationships of globalisation and global capitalism (Hall, 1996). Crucially it also signals an 'epistemic shift' (i.e. a renegotiation of the ground base of knowledge on which European, modernist accounts of colonialism were premised). This involves going beyond the 'binary oppositions' by means of which colonialism has been studied in the past such as those between 'coloniser' and 'colonised', 'First' and 'Third World' and 'Black' and 'White'. One consequence of this shift has been the development of a more contingent and complex view of colonial culture, politics and identities, a point that is taken up below.

A second consequence has been the development of a more contingent and strategic view of political struggle. For example, for some writers, the work of Antonio Gramsci on political struggle and on hegemony has provided a means for reinserting a concern with political struggle into their work (Young, 2001). The attraction of Gramsci's ideas lies in his 'open' form of Marxism which allows for a theorisation of the ways in which different factors, including 'race', class and gender become implicated in the operation of both hegemony and counter-hegemony. If, as argued above, however, one views postcolonialism as a process, then it is also necessary to understand how old binaries or ways of understanding political struggle (for example between 'First World/ Third World', 'Black and White') continue to be re-inscribed upon and to articulate with new modalities for understanding and engaging with the political level.  This is true, for example, in relation to the resurgence of conservative and essentialised views of culture and of difference on the continent (see below). It also underlines the necessity to take seriously the work of the earlier theorists of national liberation (Parry, 1995).

For some critics, (Dirlik, 1994), the problem with postcolonial theory is the way that it grossly underplays the importance of the economic domain and 'capitalism's structuring of the modern world'. Indeed it is often the case that the emergence of global capitalism is bracketed to one side in much postcolonial literature and this can in part be related to the emergence of postcolonial studies as a sub-discipline of literary and cultural studies. Ironically, the neglect of economic concerns in much postcolonial theory is in sharp contrast to the economism of much globalisation theory! What is required is a more balanced approach. Globalisation has many aspects that impinge on education including economic, political and cultural factors,

not to mention epidemiological (e.g. the spread of HIV/AIDS) and military for that matter (the involvement of children in wars and conflict, for example). All of these factors are important for understanding the impact of globalisation in postcolonial contexts. That is to say that educational change is multi-causal and cannot be read off from one factor alone. Here an important concept to come out of postcolonial theory is that of 'articulation', which is used to designate the contingent and context-bound relationship between different factors (Grossberg, 1996; Slack, 1996). Indeed, it is often at the point where all of these global forces intersect that the true magnitude and tragedy of the crisis in African education can be comprehended. In the following section an attempt is made to use the general insights outlined above about the nature of the postcolonial condition to develop a theoretically relevant model of globalisation and education in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Understanding Globalisation

The definition of globalisation offered here is taken from recent work by Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton (1999, p. 16). The authors define globalisation as:

> A process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions - assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.

The authors explain that by 'flows' they refer to 'the movements of physical artefacts, people, symbols, tokens and information across space and time', whilst 'networks' is used to refer to 'regularized or patterned interactions between independent agents, nodes of activity, or sites of power' (p. 16). The authors' understand globalisation as a set of *processes* rather than a single 'condition', involving interactions and networks within the political, military, economic and cultural domains as well as those of labour and migratory movements and of the environment. These processes are fractured and uneven rather than linear and involve a complex 'deterritorialisation' and 'reterritorialisation' of political and economic relations. Here one can see clear overlaps with a postcolonial perspective. In this view, power is a fundamental attribute of globalisation, and 'patterns of global stratification mediate access to sites of power, while the consequences of globalization are unevenly experienced. Political and economic elites in the world's major metropolitan areas are much more tightly integrated into, and have much greater control over, global networks than do the subsistence farmers of Burundi' (p. 16).

Held et al.'s analysis also provides an historical periodisation of *different forms* of globalisation, in the pre-modern, early modern, modern and contemporary periods. Here we see further areas of overlap with a postcolonial perspective. Of particular relevance here is their analysis of the global flows and networks associated with Western global empires and the soaring of global trade and investment during this period. An important global network established during this period was colonial education, which was a key site for the spread of global flows and networks in the modern and contemporary periods. For example, colonial education was a key mechanism for the imposition and diffusion of global religions throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially Christianity. It also contributed directly to the development of global trade and commerce in the colonial era by providing Indigenous labourers with the basic skills and dispositions required by the colonial economic and administrative systems. However, because colonial education only typically offered a very limited education and was never universal, it contributed to the subsequent marginalisation of postcolonial African economies through failing to develop an adequate skills base on which these societies could develop (see below). Colonial education was also highly elitist and was, therefore, deeply implicated in the formation of Indigenous elites. Further, it was instrumental in the globalisation of English and other European languages and this has directly facilitated the commodification and the creation of markets for Anglo-American cultural forms in the contemporary period (Philipson, 1998). Finally, and in quite a different vein, colonial education has provided an important seedbed for local *resistance* to contemporary global forces in that leading intellectuals and revolutionaries during the heyday of national liberation struggles on the sub-continent were products of colonial education!

Contemporary globalisation is, according to the authors, historically unprecedented in terms of its extensity, intensity, velocity and impact. Held et al. distinguish the current (post-1945) phase as one in which 'empires, once the principal form of political rule and world political organisation, had given way to a worldwide system of nation-states, overlaid by multilateral, regional and global systems of regulation and governance' (p. 425). The contemporary era has been characterised by increasing American hegemony and by ever tightening systems of economic regulation (first through the Bretton Woods system and more recently through the World Trade Organisation) alongside a more liberal world economic order. Contemporary globalisation has also involved a massive increase in migrations of populations, the increasing significance and impact of environmental issues and concerns and developments in mass media and technologies. Contemporary globalisation involves reflexivity on the part of a growing worldwide elite as well as popular consciousness of global interconnectedness. It is also contested as states, citizens and social movements resist or manage its impacts.

## Economic Globalisation and Educational Change

Hoogvelt (1997) takes as her starting point three distinctive features of economic globalisation in the contemporary period. Firstly, she describes the advent of a *new market discipline* which, within an increasingly shared phenomenal world, creates an 'awareness of global competition which constrains individuals and groups, and even national governments, to conform to international standards of price and quality' (p. 124). Secondly, she describes *flexible accumulation through global webs* by which she refers to the 'way in which the fusion of computer technology with telecommunications makes it possible for firms to relocate an ever-widening range of operations and functions to wherever cost-competitive labour, assets and infrastructure are available' (p. 126). Finally, Hoogvelt describes *financial global deepening* which has involved a 'tremendous increase in the mobility of capital (p.129) within a geographically confined area including the Western and newly industrialised countries. For authors such as Castells (1993) and Amin (1997), however, the upshot of the new global economy has been to create pockets of the 'fourth world' in the former first, second and third worlds. Much of sub-Saharan Africa is included in this emerging 'fourth world' with the consequence that a significant part of the region's population has shifted 'from a structural position of exploitation to a structural position of irrelevance' within the new world economy (Castells, 1993, p. 37). Importantly, however, many postcolonial elites in sub-Saharan Africa 'bought into' this emerging global economy. This was often achieved by using money fraudulently diverted from overseas loans and from government funds (Hoogvelt, 1997).

The principal response, advocated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund since the 1980s, has been to impose structural adjustment policies on many countries of sub-Saharan Africa (although in some instances such as South Africa, many aspects of structural adjustment have also been self-imposed) (Marais, 1997). The main ingredients of these policies are well known and documented and have included cuts in government expenditure, trade liberalisation policies, currency devaluation, reduction of price controls, a shift to export oriented policies, revised fiscal policies to increase government revenue, user charges for public services like education and increased privatisation (see Samoff, 1994 for a full account). For authors such as Hoogvelt (1997) and Chossudovsky (1997), however, the impact of structural adjustment has been economic catastrophe, the slowing down and even reversal of human development – in short what Chossudovsky has described as 'the globalisation of poverty'(Chossudovsky, 1997, p. 34). In Hoogvelt's analysis, structural adjustment policies served a dual function, namely, to enable the periphery of the world capitalist system to be 'managed' in the interest of the core countries; and, to more effectively extract an economic surplus from it (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 171).

Yet how can the relationship between these aspects of economic globalisation and educational change be conceived? Ilon's (1994) work provides a useful starting point for such an analysis. Here Ilon paints a future scenario involving a growing gulf in educational opportunities between emerging global elites and the rest of the population. According to Ilon, 'a national system of schooling is likely to give way to local systems for the poor and global systems for the rich' (p. 99). Within this highly differentiated environment, a top tier will benefit from a private education that will make them globally competitive; a middle tier will receive a 'good' but not 'world class' education, whilst the majority, third tier, will have a local, state education that will make them 'marginally competitive for low-skill jobs' (p. 102).

Ilon's ideas are interesting because they seem to correspond to the reality of education in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa (although they need to be supported by more empirical research). There is also a need to avoid crude functionalism and the idea of a clear-cut 'correspondence' between education and the emerging global division of labour. Following Fritzell (1987) and Ball (1990) it is possible to conceive of different sectors within education having more or less positive or negative correspondences with the global economy at different times. This is to suggest that at times education may be highly 'functional' for global capitalist accumulation as well as for the legitimisation of the capitalist system and at other times not. Education can also have a critical correspondence with the global economy because of its role in providing a focus and forum for the development of resistance to the status quo (Tikly, 1994).

The nature of the correspondence between education and contemporary economic globalisation remains contradictory. For a tiny minority, access to prestigious, private education has provided the forms of socialisation and high skills development required for integration and participation in the global economy. The inclusion of individuals from the South within the board rooms and debating chambers of trans-national corporations and global political institutions also helps to legitimise the global capitalist system. This 'positive correspondence' can, however, turn critical. In other words, although there exists at one level a commonality of interests, the economic and political interests of the global elite are not always of a piece. In order to secure their own position within the emerging historical block, postcolonial elites from sub-Saharan Africa may also use their participation in global forums to form a bulwark against Western economic and political hegemony, e.g. in demands to end the debt burden on poor countries.

Lower down the system, in relation to Ilon's second tier, the picture is more patchy. Although many trans-national corporations currently provide their own education and training for their national operatives, there remains a negative

correspondence between the high skill requirements of business and the public sector at the national level and skills that the Indigenous education system is able to produce. This mismatch is exacerbated by the crippling 'brain drain' that affects most high skill occupations in sub-Saharan Africa (Carnoy, 1999).

It is in relation to Ilon's third tier, however, that the problem of correspondence becomes most serious. Here at least 50% of the population in low income countries (such as those of sub-Saharan Africa) can expect to be permanently excluded from employment with another 20% in low income, insecure employment (Hoogvelt, 1997). These figures are unlikely to change so long as the West's relationship with Africa remains premised on the extraction of surplus through the system of debt peonage and the fate of African economies remains subject to pressures and decisions made elsewhere in the globe. It is at this point that the analysis breaks most sharply with the assumptions of human capital theory for sustained economic growth is basically unachievable in this context, regardless of the skills base of the economy. In terms of the outputs of education then, the pathetic educational opportunities offered to most children on the sub-continent can actually be perceived to have a positive correspondence with the global division of labour.

This may not be the case, however, in relation to education's role in legitimising the global division of labour. Here a more negative correspondence is developing and there is evidence that the traditional legitimatory role of education may be coming under threat. Structural adjustment and austerity along with rising populations has led to a decline in enrolment rates and in the quality of education in much of the sub-continent. More than 40 million children are estimated to be out of school, (a figure only paralleled in South Asia) and the region has the lowest primary enrolment rates in the world, estimated at 60% in 1999 (World Bank, 1999a). Enrolment and drop-out rates are, however, the result of complex phenomena and cannot be explained simply in economic terms as rates of return analysis attempt to do (Dachi, 2000). For example, the slow down in enrolment and the increase in drop-out rates in primary and secondary schooling have been greatly exacerbated by the terrible impact of HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, the crisis does in part reflect a view on the part of communities that there is a declining economic benefit, or 'rate of return' from schooling, particularly for girls. The growing number of street children in the urban areas, child soldiers and levels of juvenile crime attest, to some extent at least, to a despondency with schooling as a way out of poverty.

Despite what has been argued above, however, it remains the case that many parents and children continue to hold out hope of a better future through education. It is also not being suggested that education cannot play a role in reducing poverty and promoting sustained growth in the global economy. Defining this role for

education in relation to development in the African context, however, is a more difficult and complex task than the existing literature on skill requirements would have us believe. For example, the World Bank argues that globalisation requires a new kind of worker who will be able to engage in lifelong education, learn new things quickly, perform more non-routine tasks and more complex problem solving, take more decisions, understand more about what they are working on, require less supervision, assume more responsibility, and – as vital tools to those ends – have better reading, quantitative, reasoning, and expository skills (World Bank, 1999b, p. 1).

The problem is that such a view of the skills required by globalisation are based on the reality of globalisation in so-called 'high skills' economies i.e. 'economies that have the social capacity for learning, innovation and productivity in a post-industrial or 'knowledge' economy' (Brown, 1999, p. 233). It is unclear how relevant the concept of a 'high skills economy' is in contexts where the impact of the new technologies and forms of production have been partial and uneven and where the majority of the population relies on 'low skills' in order to subsist.

Rather, it is argued that there is no universal panacea for the skills required for development, that more research is required in individual countries and that the responses of different governments need to be seen in relation to a broader analysis of the economic and political context. In this respect, the increasing pace of economic globalisation presents something of a moving target for education policy makers in Africa. Reductions in the number of public employees (a result of structural adjustment measures), the selling off of parastatals to private (often multinational) interests, the privatisation of agriculture and the growth in the service and informal sectors have rapidly changed the skills required for economic development. As noted above, a large proportion of the population also has to be equipped to deal with prolonged periods without formal employment.

## Globalisation, the State and the Politics of Educational Change

How can the postcolonial state in Africa be described and what implications does this have for its relationship to globalisation on the one hand and educational change on the other? A useful starting point is Bayart's (1993) insistence on the 'historicity' of the African State. Rather than see the modern African State (as some exponents of dependency theory do) as simply an invention and tool of colonialism and neo-colonialism, Bayart prefers to see the African State as the outcome of political struggles and developments dating from pre-colonial times. This helps to explain the diversity of forms of the state in Africa but also the continued existence

of systems of lineage and other pre-colonial political forms, which influence it and give it shape. In this conception of the state, new postcolonial elites have mobilised different constructions of ethnicity and of Africa's past in the pursuance of hegemony. The specific nature of past political struggles and cultural identities on the continent has also given rise to unique kinds of social stratification and the emergence of special categories of subordinated subjects such as 'youth' and 'women'.

As in other parts of the world, the state has proved a key site for the emergence of national and global elites as well as for the maintenance of the status quo. Hegemony has been built and maintained through the mechanism of the 'reciprocal assimilation of elites', i.e. a process of ameliorating emerging or existing elites through granting limited access to status and wealth. Access to state power gives access to material and cultural resources which can be mobilised to alter the domestic power relationship. A job in the public service also carries a salary, which even if modest and paid irregularly is no trivial thing, and can be used to invest in other economic activities. Holders of positions of power can also use their position to demand goods, cash and labour without recourse to violence and can, if they wish, often supplement their salaries with bribes and other illicit sources of income (practices that have their origins in colonial times).

Education plays a key role in all of these mechanisms. Under colonialism, education was the principle means for gaining access to public service and has subsequently 'assumed a decisive role now that the mastery of western knowledge also conditions mastery of the State and the economy' (Bayart, 1993, p. 75). Then and now, access to education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, is one of the major resources that those in public service can access for themselves, their children, relatives and friends. Bayart also argues that education is a key mechanism in the reciprocal assimilation of elites precisely because it is an important resource and because of its power to form an *esprit de corps* amongst the emerging elite.

Understanding education in this way, i.e. as an aspect of elite formation, also provides a key explanatory mechanism for understanding the difficulties of bringing about educational change in the postcolonial era. In this respect elites do not have a significant interest in change within the mass schooling system. One effect of the development of Ilon's 'global education system for the rich' is to further distance elites from the education systems in their own countries. However, the motives of educational decision-makers are shaped by a number of factors and are often the outcome of conflicting pressures and concerns. For example, despite their own vested interests, elites have also had to maintain legitimacy for the social order through extending educational opportunities, particularly for countries undergoing social transition (Carnoy & Samoff, 1990).

Related to the role of elites in African education is the fragility of the African state in the context of international relations (Clapham, 1996). This is because, in the great majority of cases, states have been 'created by international action in the form of European colonialism, and have been left with state frontiers that rarely correspond to pre-colonial social or geographical identities' (p. 4). This, together with the weakness of African economies, has meant that the very survival of the state has become a key motive for international action for African governments and elites whose own survival is tied in with that of the state. The upshot is that the fragility of the state and of the postcolonial status quo has ensured that most African states are much more susceptible to global forces and agendas, including educational agendas, than those of wealthier countries.

This susceptibility provided the conditions for the imposition from the early 1980s of a new neo-liberal orthodoxy in the economy and politics that has disrupted Indigenous political and economic programmes. As we have seen, this orthodoxy has been severe in its implications for all areas of social welfare, including education, and has served to exacerbate social stratification. Rather than a subtle 'repositioning' of the state by global forces (as has happened in the UK and elsewhere), what has occurred in Africa has been nothing short of a full frontal attack on state provision (whilst maintaining support for elites). (It is important, however, not to be overly deterministic with respect to the impact of structural adjustment policies (Carnoy, 1999). Some countries, e.g. Eritrea and South Africa, have, for different reasons, been able to resist structural adjustment loans and the conditionalities that accompany them.) Others have tried to mediate their effects.

It is also important to recognise a range of political mechanisms by which different global agencies have influenced education policy besides simple imposition through structural adjustment programmes and conditional lending. For example, Dale (1999) describes processes of harmonisation of policy between countries within a region such as within the post-Mastricht European Union. Even in the Africa context, regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) have sponsored research aimed at policy harmonisation. He also describes the mechanism of dissemination associated, for instance, with the setting of policy agendas, indicators and targets in African education by supra-national organisations such as the World Bank. A third mechanism, that of standardisation, refers to the observed spread of a particular form of Western education throughout the world (manifested in a universal structure of schooling and of the curriculum), which has persisted in the postcolonial era. Finally, a fourth mechanism, installing interdependence refers to the spread of environmental, human rights and peace issues (amongst others) by the new 'global civil society' and Non Governmental Organisations.

In conclusion to this section, what of the future of educational politics in Africa in the era of contemporary globalisation? It has been a central argument that education in Africa has been profoundly linked to the politics of the postcolonial state. This is likely to remain the case in the foreseeable future. It should be recalled that education systems emerged in Europe over more than a century and as an aspect of a long and painful process of state formation (Archer, 1984; Green, 1997). In the newly industrialised countries of the Pacific Rim, educational advancement in the postcolonial era has been driven by a strong developmentalist state. If education is going to play a part in development then the state needs to play a prominent role. As in other parts of the world, the state is the only Indigenous body that is capable of funding an enterprise such as mass education. It is also through the state playing a leading role in education policy that education can be harnessed to Indigenous hegemonic projects and accumulation strategies.

A key concept in such an endeavour, however, ought to be that of 'partnership' (Bray, 2000). This is to acknowledge that the state alone cannot ensure educational expansion and development and must continue to rely on international support as well as support from civil society and communities themselves. However, 'Partnership' does not just mean sharing the costs of education. Partnership must also mean an inclusive, democratic approach to policy making that ensures that Indigenous social movements in particular have a voice in educational reconstruction and policy is not simply driven by the imperatives of elites. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that marginalised constituencies such as women and youth, ethnic minorities, the rural poor and the workers have a say in the governance of education and can reign in the elites. The sub-continent is rich with examples of mechanisms at the local level of inclusive governance structures (although these take a plurality of forms from 'traditional' village councils and development committees to 'modern' local government and policy forums). The same is true at the regional, provincial and national levels. These structures have strengths and weaknesses and vary in the extent to which they provide a forum for marginalised groups to have their say. The point, though, is that there is much that Africa can learn from Africa in relation to good education governance and there is a role for organisations such as the AU and SADEC in fostering intra-continental learning and exchanges.

## Race, Culture and the Globalisation of Education in Africa

Mention has already been made of the importance of education in spreading Western cultural forms during the colonial era. It has been argued that this provided an important mechanism for the consolidation of Western hegemony during the period of contemporary globalisation. As some commentators have pointed out,

however, one of the effects of contemporary globalisation is to reshape cultural identities in new ways. Hall (1992; 1996) and Hoogvelt (1997), for example, have commented on how processes of migration, diaspora formation and cultural hybridisation have transformed individual and group identities and created 'new ethnicities' based on fluid rather than fixed identities. In the African context these processes appear contradictory and partial in their effects. War, famine and poverty on the sub-continent have led to a growing number of refugees and has accelerated processes of migration between countries and between rural and urban areas. This has inevitably entailed the development of cultural melting pots, particularly in the urban areas. The African diaspora in the USA and elsewhere has also influenced the development of youth culture on the sub-continent. Social movements and forms of resistance in education and politics have also been shaped by political movements and ideas (e.g. such as Pan Africanism) that have evolved diasporically (Tikly, 1999).

These 'new ethnicities' have also emerged, however, at the same time as there has been a reassertion of more conservative and essentialised identities and an escalation in ethnic conflict. Writers such as Amin (1997) have argued that the growth in the number and intensity of these conflicts must be seen as an aspect of the colonial legacy which destabilised ethnic relations, the demise of uniting ideologies by which the nation state could secure the basis for national unity and growing poverty and inequality associated with economic globalisation and financial mismanagement. The tragic genocide in Rwanda has been interpreted in this way (Prunier, 1997). Carnoy sees the assertion of cultural identities in the contemporary period as 'an antidote to the complexity and harshness of the global market' and to 'the globalised bureaucratic state' (Carnoy, 1999, p. 78). Given Africa's increasingly marginal position in relation to global economic and political forces, coupled with growing inequalities, the dynamics giving rise to ethnic conflicts have been writ large on the sub-continent. A reassertion of more conservative ethnic politics has had negative implications for women and has been a key factor holding back their progress in the labour market and education systems (Swainson, 1998).

In sub-Saharan Africa education continues to play a key role in relation to culture and ethnic politics. This is because schools and other educational institutions are a significant  locus where different ethnic groups interact. The important role of education in this respect has been underlined by recent debates about 'social capital' in organisations like the World Bank, i.e. the idea that the development of cultural tolerance and shared norms and values is a necessary basis for economic development (see Fine, 2001 for a critical review of these debates). In the postcolonial period, many governments have used education as a means of forging national unity through curricula interventions, language policies, ceremonial activities and the suchlike. As

some writers have pointed out, however, the challenges of changing cultural identities and the emergence of culturally defined social movements pose new challenges for educational planners and policy makers who must find new ways of working with diversity and difference in the curriculum. A consequence of the focus on the economic aspects of economic reform in the global era has led to a neglect of the important role that the curriculum can play in providing young people with knowledge about other cultures, providing them with a critical basis on which to assess their own cultural heritage in global era and protect and affirm the rights of women and ethnic minorities.

Because of education's role in relation to elite formation (see above) and entry to labour markets, access to educational opportunities can also act as a fuel for ethnic conflict as in countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria and South Africa. In some of these countries, decentralisation has provided one mechanism for ensuring a greater say for communities whether defined in cultural, geographical, linguistic or religious terms. As Carnoy (1999) and others (Bray with Lillis, 1988) have pointed out, however, the central government still has a key role to play within decentralised systems in 'levelling the playing fields' in terms of opportunities afforded to different groups.

In relation to language planning in particular, Rasool (1998) has described the issues surrounding linguistic human rights in the context of mass migration of peoples and the 'hybridisation' of Indigenous cultures. On the one hand, she describes the tremendous possibilities opened up for language choice for migrant and formerly colonised groups of people in relation to ever-changing geographical demographies. On the other hand, she points to the difficulties of language planning in relation to these groups. She demonstrates how the issue of language choice for specific communities in former colonised countries is heavily contingent on a number of factors including their social status within the country in question. Once again this draws attention to the limits of educational reform if it is divorced from wider questions of cultural politics, power, poverty alleviation and democratic governance.

Language planning must also contend with the ambiguous role of colonial languages in relation to globalisation and cultural politics. Pennycook describes how the spread of English, partly through education, has had contradictory effects. On the one hand, it has contributed to Western hegemony. On the other hand, Pennycook argues that this phenomenon can act counter-hegemonically as counter-hegemonic discourses can be 'formed in English' (Pennycook, 1995, p. 72) and that access to English can mean access to global networks.

Negotiating issues of language, identity and power is critical in the African context. It links directly with economic globalisation and is deeply implicated in the maintenance

of support and resistance to emerging hegemonic projects. Once again, however, Africa provides rich examples of policies concerned at negotiating language rights in the era of contemporary globalisation as exemplified by the Swahili experiment in Tanzania, the official languages policy in South Africa and the trilingual approach adopted by Cameroon.

Finally, European racism continues to exert an influence on the trajectory of educational reform in sub-Saharan Africa. Hoogvelt argues that the implementation of structural adjustment policies has been very much tied in with the spread of the 'new racism' which 'has come to underpin popular explanations for the growing political instability and inter-communal conflicts in the marginal areas of the global economy' (Hoogvelt, 1997, p. 179). This new racism, based on cultural explanations of difference, has come to replace biologically-driven notions of racial superiority in the Western psyche. In many European constructions of the African 'Other', Africa's malaise is seen to be rooted in Africa itself. International school effectiveness studies, supported by global agencies such as the World Bank, can feed into and support such views. Largely based on research, rationalities and an underlying epistemology developed elsewhere, school effectiveness studies lay the 'blame' for school failure at the local level. Understood in discursive terms, as an example of knowledge/ power in operation, school effectiveness can be understood as a 'disciplinary technology' i.e. as an important tool for 'managing crisis' and apportioning blame (Harber & Davies, 1997; Morley & Rasool, 1999; Samoff, 1994; Tikly, 1999).

Ndoye (1997) makes the point that the effect of structural adjustment programmes has also been to stifle Indigenous African responses to educational crisis. This is because they have undermined governance structures and have emphasised policies such as user fees. Whereas in the past many African communities have been successful at intervening in crisis through collective action, user fees lay the responsibility at the doorstep of individual parents and families and support a Western, individualistic and entrepreneurial model. Clearly there are dangers in Ndoye's argument of romanticising a collective African past and of presenting an essentialised and homogenous view of African cultures. Nonetheless, it is true that the concepts of 'self help' and community provision of education do have a long pedigree on the sub-continent and often have a cultural basis (as in the 'harambee' movement in Kenya or the idea of 'tirisano' which is currently being used by the South African government to mobilise support behind educational reconstruction).

## Conclusion: Education and the African Renaissance

In conclusion, it is worth revisiting the notion of the African Renaissance which has been popularised most recently by the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki

(1999). In important respects this idea provides a unifying framework that brings together many of the themes explored in this chapter. In Mbeki's view the idea of the African Renaissance involves a struggle against Africa's marginalisation in economic and political terms as much as it involves a celebration and development of African cultures. In this respect it fits with the Gramscian notion of the formation of a postcolonial historical bloc. For both Mbeki and Gramsci, development has economic, political and cultural dimensions and involves a 'battle on many fronts'. Political and cultural development relies on economic growth but, conversely, economic success is contingent on cultural renewal and innovation and on the maintenance of political stability.

It has been argued that educational change in Africa has been profoundly shaped by global forces both in the contemporary and modern periods. It has also been argued that education can play a crucial role in Africa's renewal because of its central importance for economic, political and cultural development. In this respect, education is a sine qua non for the African Renaissance. There are, however, many obstacles and vested interests in the way of education playing such a role. Educational change will only begin to play a significant part in development if it is adequately funded and access widened at all levels. More information is also needed about the skills required for development in the global era. Further, policy making needs also to be democratised and vested interests challenged. Finally, policy makers need to find new ways to work with and manage cultural diversity. In meeting these challenges, Africa itself provides a rich source of policy options and alternatives to the status quo. Crucially, however, education cannot succeed alone and if educational reform is to be successful it must articulate with broader processes and struggles for change at the global, regional, national and local levels.

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# REFORMING EDUCATION STRUCTURES IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD:

## THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

*Pam Christie*

## Introduction

The demise of apartheid in South Africa took place at the same time as the crumbling of the Eastern bloc states and the decline of socialism. The synchronicity of these events – the victory of the national liberation struggle and the ascendency of neo-liberal globalisation – profoundly influenced the social and economic directions taken by the post-apartheid government and its policies for educational restructuring. In a global order unsympathetic to state-led redistributive agendas, the new government's early proposals for reconstruction and development soon gave way to a form of self-imposed structural adjustment more in line with global capitalism. While equity, redress and social development were key educational goals, education development was sharply constrained by demands for efficiency, fiscal restraint and curbs on social spending.

This chapter looks at the steps taken by the post-apartheid government to restructure education in South Africa in its early years in power. The chapter argues that the first phase of post-apartheid educational restructuring has been simultaneously shaped by two imperatives: a modernist agenda of extending equal citizenship to all on the basis of national liberation; and a macroeconomic agenda of supporting market-led development within the framework of neo-liberal globalisation. The notion of a modern democratic citizenship underpins South Africa's new constitution as well as its education restructuring, and participation in global economic markets is a central goal for the new government. Thus, while education restructuring has focussed initially on removing racial discrimination, it has been more oriented towards the

enablement of the skilled, global citizen than building on traditional knowledges and identities. The chapter begins by commenting briefly on the political transition in South Africa. It then explores the modernist and macroeconomic agendas adopted by the new government, and the education restructuring it embarked upon. In the light of these points, the chapter concludes with a comment on postcolonial theorising.

Without in any way diminishing postcolonial theorising and its variety, I take the comments of the development theorist, Ankie Hoogvelt, (2001) to be illustrative of a postcolonial approach. Hoogvelt opts, albeit with some reservations, to replace 'third world studies' and 'development studies' with 'postcolonial studies'. For her, a postcolonial approach offers three windows: the importance of a politics of cultural identity; the decentring of class and nation in the '*complexity* of identity formation'; and the destabilising of binary structures such as 'first world/ third world', 'north/ south' and 'socialist/ capitalist' (2001, p. 166). Hoogvelt emphasises the importance of discourse in postcolonial studies, as well as its potential vulnerability to criticism of being apolitical and ahistorical. (See also McClintock, 1993; Pieterse & Parekh, 1995; Shohat, 1993; Tikly 1999, 2001; Varga, 2001.) Using this broad understanding of postcolonial theorising, the chapter raises questions about the extent of its usefulness to an analysis of South African education restructuring after apartheid.

## Political Transition

Apartheid was brought to an end not by the anticipated bloody conflagration, but by negotiated settlements and shared agreements between the liberation movements and the existing establishment. Part of the negotiation was that the first post-apartheid government would be a 'government of national unity' bringing together a range of different political interests and actors. The African National Congress led the government in alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the unbanned and relaunched South African Communist Party (SACP). Also in the new government were apartheid's architects, the National Party, and a number of smaller political groups. The emphasis was on political compromise, negotiation and reconciliation, and with this came a narrowing of the broad visions for social transformation which the alliance partners had developed before 1994. The new bureaucracy was also a hybrid form, with 'comrades' and erstwhile political activists (often inexperienced in government) working side by side with bureaucrats of the old order who knew how the system operated and were able to block measures they did not support. The needs of both running the government and simultaneously changing it brought particular complexities to the project of social transformation.

In understanding the nature of the political transition and educational restructuring, it is useful to comment briefly on the goals of the new government in relation to dismantling apartheid (see Marais, 2001). First, the ANC and the SACP had a long-standing pragmatic agreement on the notion of a two stage approach to change: the first stage would entail the establishment of national democracy, and the second, socialism. This meant a commitment to democratic political transformation in the first instance, on the basis of which the inequalities of ownership and social class could then be addressed. The ANC's alliance partners, COSATU and the SACP, supported this strategy, even though it meant compromises to their own political agendas in the short term. Consequently, these movements placed a high priority on building legitimacy as a government capable of managing a functioning (capitalist) state in political transition. The implications of this for socialism are addressed below in the context of the macroeconomic agenda.

Secondly, the ANC and its partners were committed to a strategy of non-racism in building a broad base of opposition to apartheid. Here, it is worth acknowledging the extent to which the architecture of apartheid was structured on social difference. Four major racial classification groups (Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites) were buttressed by 10 tribal 'homeland' identities, and as well as this, English- and Afrikaans-speaking identities preserved in separate schools and cultural activities. In education, 19 different departments calibrated racial and regional differences to provide schooling which was nominally based on the same core curriculum but allowed for huge variations in practice. In the face of these structured identities of difference, the ANC and its alliance partners pledged themselves to non-racism. They also pledged themselves to equality, a common national identity and a single citizenship in a democratic polity. The lived experience of apartheid, with its mantra of 'separate but equal', gave ethnic identity politics in South Africa a particular character (a point I return to later in the chapter), in the face of which unitary citizenship is an important substantive as well as symbolic move. Commonalities rather than differences, reconciliation rather than conflict, inclusion rather than exclusion characterise the hegemonic project of the new government. Through constitutional protection of individual rights and a parliamentary system based on equal franchise, the ANC's goal was to lead the government of Africa's newest democracy and to play a role as a middle level power on the world stage. This is the basis of what I have termed its modernist agenda, to which I now turn.

## The Modernist Agenda: A Framework of Rights

An early priority for the ANC-led alliance, begun before it assumed government, was the development of a new Constitution and Bill of Rights which were intended,

in the words of the Constitution, to 'heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Bill, 1996, p. 3). The Constitution is an exemplar of modernism, which enshrines liberal rights such as equality, human dignity and freedom, and outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, culture, language and so on. The Constitution also recognises 11 official languages (in contrast to the two languages recognised by apartheid), thus affirming the right to identity and difference. This framework of rights was taken up in the first White Paper on Education and Training (1995), which set the ground rules for the restructuring of education and the development of new policies. The White Paper affirmed the right to basic education for all, as well as the right of equal access to educational institutions, protection from unfair discrimination and rights to language, culture and religion. Importantly, it also affirmed the importance of human resource development as a central goal of the education system, stating that:

> The main theme of the … [government's] human resource development program is the empowerment of people, through education and training, including specific forms of capacity-building within organisations and communities, to participate effectively in all the processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression and community life. (1995, p. 25)

The two axes of equality and human development which underpin the White Paper and subsequent education policy documents uphold the notion of the skilled global citizen, and whereas language and cultural rights are protected, they are not promoted as a basis for building traditional knowledges and identities.

Universalist statements of equal citizenship, set out in the Constitution and the first White Paper on Education and Training, stand in strong contrast to the fragmented racial and ethnic identities of apartheid. However, as Brian Turner has aptly noted, inequality in the modern state is 'ubiquitous, endemic and resistant to social policies aimed at bringing about a substantial measure of equality in practice' (1986, pp. 24-5). South Africa faces particular challenges in this regard, given that apartheid capitalism left profound and cumulative inequalities along lines of class, race, gender and region. Apartheid education exemplifies these inequalities. At the time of political change in 1994, the apartheid government was spending four times as much on the education of a white child than a black child, and in the heyday of apartheid this was as much as 12 times. Given that comparative population sizes are in inverse proportion to this pattern of distribution, the task of achieving redress is a massive one.

In 1996, a single inventory of all schooling provision in the country was mapped for the first time. The Schools Register of Needs (see Bot, 1997; Motala, 1997) presented a stark picture of the deprivation of the majority of (black) schools: 24% had no water within walking distance, 13% had no toilet facilities at all, 57% had no electricity, 69% had no learning materials and 83% had no library facilities. The greatest deprivation was in rural schools, and consequently in provinces which are largely rural. As well as physical deprivation and inadequate provision, black schooling was characterised by high drop out and failure rates, and in many township schools the culture of learning and teaching had been shaped by protest and disruption. Not surprisingly, the picture for white schools was quite different. White children were given more years of schooling, had smaller classes in better provisioned schools, were taught by better qualified teachers, and had lower failure and repetition rates.

It is a truism to state that without redistributive policies, equal citizenship rights cannot deliver equality of educational experience and outcomes. In particular, South Africa's conundrum has been how to achieve both equity and quality (interpreted in terms of the system of education historically provided to the white minority). Social theorists such as Iris Young (1990) and Bob Connell (1992) are quite correct in cautioning that notions of distributive justice have limited value in education. Rights are relationships not things; education is not a commodity that can be easily quantified; and educational inequalities go beyond issues of access. Nonetheless, when inequalities of provision are so profound, redistribution to redress disadvantage has a strong moral imperative and a compelling political logic. Statements of equal rights and equal citizenship are necessary, at least at a symbolic level, to articulate the aspirations of the new government as a modern democracy intent on redressing historical injustices. Giving material substance to these aspirations remains a commitment, even though achieving this, particularly in the short term, has not been possible.

A major question facing the new government has been how to finance redress, and it is here that the imperatives of equity and economic development have been difficult to align. This tension is explored in the next section.

## The Macroeconomic Agenda: Participation in Neoliberal Globalisation

The post-apartheid government inherited an economy with negative economic growth, a negative balance of trade, high unemployment, high levels of poverty and a highly skewed income distribution. Developing macroeconomic policies to steer and develop this economy, as well as build local and global confidence in it, were major priorities for the new government. In the lead-up to the 1994 elections, the alliance partners had formulated the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP)

as a strategy for radical economic and social transformation. Based on the central principle of 'growth through redistribution', the aim of the RDP was to stimulate economic growth through a coherent and integrated development strategy. However, this redistributive agenda did not survive, and by the end of 1996, it had faded away as a program for transformation. The RDP program had envisaged redirecting resources and setting up cross-department initiatives, and this proved too difficult to implement, particularly under the conditions of the new government of national unity described above. More importantly, however, the global climate of neoliberalism constrained the government's options for macroeconomic policy. The prevailing view within the ANC was that there was no alternative but to orient economic policies towards global neoliberalism. In the context of the fall of socialist states, the hegemonic project of the political left required reimagining, and alternatives were hard to envisage. In place of the RDP, the ANC introduced its Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, an unabashedly neo-liberal, macroeconomic programme of deregulation, privatisation and fiscal restraint. COSATU and the SACP were unenthusiastic partners to this.

Though supporters of GEAR have argued that these strategies are necessary for participation in the existing framework of economic globalisation (see Chisholm, 1997), it is important to recognise that GEAR was not an imposition, but the political choice of a development path towards market-led economic growth. Distancing itself from Marxist ideology, socialism and nationalisation, the ANC government did all it could to court domestic and international capital, riding any tensions this caused with the SACP and COSATU. The consequence is that there has been a political settlement in post-apartheid South Africa which has left the structure of economic interests largely untouched to this point (see Marais, 2001).

In global terms, South Africa may be described as a middle-income, semi-industrialised developing country, with contrasting first and third world living conditions based historically on race. Marais categorises South Africa as 'somewhere between countries such as South Korea or Taiwan, and Brazil' (2001, p. 105). While South Africa is economically stronger in most respects than other African countries, its economic future is still uncertain. Manuel Castells, who takes a pessimistic view of the future of Sub-Saharan Africa's participation in the new informational economy, comments as follows:

> South Africa does not have the manufacturing and technological base to represent by itself a substantial centre of accumulation on a scale large enough to propel development in its wake…. The real problem for South Africa is how to avoid being pushed aside itself from the harsh competition in the new global economy, once its economy is open. (2000, p. 126)

Dependent as it is on primary commodities (particularly gold) and on capital goods imports, and with limited technological capability, the South African economy has chosen the difficult path of trying to catch up in a highly competitive and unequal global economy. The alternatives – of trying to forge a different growth path which would include more radical, less conventional changes – have not been sustained. Thus, it is unlikely that the new government could achieve any national priorities that run counter to global trends.

In terms of education, a key issue stemming from this macroeconomic stance is the fate of social spending, including spending on education, within what amounts to a self-imposed structural adjustment framework. A prevailing assumption has been that South Africa's budgetary allocation for education should not be increased, and that increased education spending should be based on economic growth – proposals consonant with World Bank recommendations on education spending (see Chisholm, 1997; Fataar, 1997). In the short term at least, it has proved extremely difficult to rectify the material distribution of education within existing education budget allocations. In line with GEAR principles, the national government's attitude towards education spending has been one of fiscal austerity. It has held the view that resource problems are not straightforwardly financial, and that solutions lie in improving internal efficiencies in the system, building technical capacity and developing management competence. Within these terms, all of the provinces have battled to keep education spending within budget limits. A priority has been to reduce spending on teachers' salaries, which have absorbed around 90% of provincial budgets, so as to free up funding for change initiatives. This in turn has brought tensions with teachers and their unions, further stretching the capacity of provinces to manage the education system. With education planning strongly constrained by fiscal planning, a redistributive agenda has taken second place. Overall, resource constraints, inefficiencies and poor management capacity have impeded the implementation of a systemic reform agenda.

Inroads are slowly being made, with school enrolments steadily increasing and numbers of out-of-school children reducing. Additional schools and classrooms are slowly being provided, and historically white, Indian and Coloured schools are becoming increasingly integrated. But conditions in the poorest and most marginalised communities and their schools have proved slow to change. Nonetheless, in 1999 the situation was so dire that Education Minister, Kader Asmal, declared the whole education system to be in crisis.

The tension between equity and financing redress is well illustrated in the case of payment for schooling. Given apartheid's resource maldistribution in education, the new government has been unable to provide free education for all, in spite of education being recognised as a basic human right. Instead, school governing bodies

have been given the responsibility for charging means-related fees. Though children who are unable to pay cannot legally be excluded – and thus have rights to access to public schools – it is inevitable that social divisions will be perpetuated as wealthier communities are able to harness more resources for their schools. Blade Nzimande (member of the SACP and chair of parliament's Education Portfolio Committee) and Mathieson (2000) comment as follows:

> The gap between the quality of the best-resourced and the least well-resourced public schools will remain for the foreseeable future. There is also a danger that the state will become dependent on parental contributions, and will retreat from taking responsibility for providing a free public education to all. If this happens, it is the least well-resourced schools that will suffer, and a quality education will remain a privilege for the rich, rather than a right for all South African citizens. (2000, pp. 121-2)

What this chapter illustrates so far is that South Africa's modernist project of extending equal rights has proved difficult to achieve within a macroeconomic project which includes curbs in social spending. The chapter now turns to a brief overview of the major education policies and the policy-making process that were developed in this context.

## Post-apartheid Education Policies

In the lead-up to the 1994 elections, significant policy actors, including the ANC, COSATU, private sector groups and even the National Party began to explore educational alternatives. As Nzimande points out, 'there was unprecedented co-operation between the national liberation movement and mass democratic movement on the one hand, and progressive left-wing academics on the other...around the development of policies for the democratic movement in preparation for the ascendency of the movement into state and governmental power' (1997, pp. iii-iv). In this process, what was envisaged was the integration of education and training in a system of lifelong learning that would articulate adult basic education and training, formal schooling and learning programmes for out-of-school children and youth. Structures representing stakeholder interests would ensure accountability and participation at all levels of the integrated system. A national qualification framework (NQF) would plot equivalences between qualifications to maximise horizontal and vertical mobility. New policies would articulate changes across the whole of the existing education and training system.

As it happened, there were considerable shifts after the 1994 elections. In the new government, education and training were kept in separate ministries, and policies for the two were developed separately (see Christie, 1997). The government's moderate

politics of compromise tempered the alliance's more radical pre-election ideals. Idealist policy proposals developed before the election did not have their anticipated salience, particularly since they did not anticipate or address the day-to-day imperatives of running the system and at the same time changing it. These imperatives included the most fundamental issues: how to set up a new education system based on new principles; how to finance and administer the system and its schools; how to redress the fundamental inequalities of the apartheid system; how to establish legitimate governance for schools and other educational institutions which had a history of contestation of authority; what to teach in the new system, and how best to assess and accredit; how to redistribute resources; how to manage change; how to deracialise; how to develop teachers' capacity and willingness to participate in a new system and new curriculum; how to reduce spending on the personnel budget; how to get textbooks more efficiently delivered to schools. The list is endless and daunting.

One of the first tasks of the new government was to dismantle the apartheid education system with its 19 different racially-based departments and to restructure the system provincially. Under the new Constitution, the national Department of Education was given responsibility for developing norms and standards, frameworks and national policies for the system as a whole, while nine new provincial Departments were given responsibility for implementation and service delivery within these frameworks. This restructuring has proved to be a massive bureaucratic task in itself, leaving aside the need to deliver educational reforms. In these circumstances, the national Department has concentrated on developing a series of ideal-type, blueprint policy frameworks and putting in place the legal and regulatory conditions for these (Christie, 2001). Responsibility for delivery rests with the provinces, and this structural divide between policy formulation and implementation has bedevilled the process of change, with provinces accountable for delivering policies they have not developed, and the national Department working in isolation from educational delivery and schools.

The first White Paper on Education and Training (1995) provides an impressive overview of the developmental initiatives considered by the government to be priorities. Subsequently, the national Department has been working to put frameworks in place for each. The following have been addressed, among others:

- The South African Qualifications Authority brings education and training together in a single national qualifications framework.

- The South Africa Schools Act and subsequent acts and regulations set out frameworks, norms and standards for school governance. It stipulates that all schools should have democratically elected governing bodies on which parents are the majority, with powers to determine admissions policy, language policy and school fees.

- A National Commission on Higher Education has provided the basis for the Higher Education Act.
- Norms and standards for school funding have been developed to redress past imbalances.
- Curriculum 2005, an outcomes-based curriculum, was phased into schools from 1998, starting with Grade 1. This was reviewed and revised in 2000.
- A new policy framework was drawn up for Further Education and Training.
- Frameworks for teacher employment were set out in the Education Labour Relations Act, and conditions of work, codes of conduct, and duties and responsibilities have been agreed upon for educators.

In one sense, these represent state-of-the-art policy documents, which draw on what is judged to be best international practice, as well as local values (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002; Sayed & Jansen, 2001; Jansen & Christie, 1999). However, they have two major weaknesses: first, they are ideal-type frameworks, which lack strategies for transforming actual conditions on the ground; and secondly, they have tended to require greater capacity to implement than has been available in the bureaucracies and schools. Moreover, the sophistication of the policies has brought the unintended effect that they are of most benefit to those communities and schools that have the resources to take advantage of the opportunities they offer (see Christie, 2001; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999). For under-resourced communities and schools, these policies run the danger of producing the opposite effect, acting as extra burdens rather than opportunities for improvement.

In defence of the new policies, it must be said that they provide paradigm-switching policy visions as alternatives to the social engineering of apartheid, and symbolically represent what the new government aspires towards. They also illustrate that fundamental transformation cannot be speedily achieved and that there is much work to do in the years ahead.

To sum up, this chapter has attempted thus far to give an outline of the political changes in South Africa and its education system in the transition from apartheid to national democracy. One intention has been to give a sense of the magnitude and complexity of the task of transformation. In the light of this, the question remains: How, then, does postcolonial theorising fit with the analysis provided here?

## Engaging Postcolonial Theory

Colonised first by the Dutch and then the British, South Africa's history has a number of typically colonial markers: the virtual extermination the Indigenous Khoi-San people; frontier wars and the violent subjugation and dispossession of Bantu-

speaking people; contestation over diamonds and then gold; and racial segregation formalised in South Africa's case into the coercive and exploitative inequalities of apartheid after 1948. There is no doubt that this phase of South African history has been shaped by colonialism.

Yet, strictly speaking, a number of different and potentially conflicting colonial forms can be identified. Given that South Africa left the British Commonwealth and declared itself a republic under the National Party in 1960, did its colonial history end then? Does its illegal occupation of Namibia from 1915 to 1990 constitute colonialism? And what of the debates within the South African liberation movement about whether concepts like 'internal colonialism' and 'colonialism of a special type' are analytically useful in theorising the South African state under apartheid (see Wolpe, 1972, 1975, 1980)?

Clearly, these questions themselves reflect a particular reading of colonialism and postcolonialism, in which the precision of terminology is considered to be important. The liberation struggle in South Africa reflects a rich history of both political (and military) as well as theoretical engagement, and particularly with the move into state power, this has required engagement with the instruments of government and the economy. This particular form of engagement is not driven primarily by notions of postcolonialism, even though it has required engagement with the legacy of colonialism in a range of ways. I am not arguing that they are incompatible, but rather that the emphasis is different.

This position is no doubt influenced by my own experience, and others will bring theirs. As a history student in South Africa in the early 1970s, I was fortunate to be part of the first African History course at the University of the Witwatersrand and to attend the intellectually robust African Studies Seminars where radical young scholars launched scathing attacks on liberal history and sociology. The political economy of South Africa was explored and contested in detailed historical and sociological research on a range of topics, including the African peasantry and the conquest of the countryside; the complex forms and consequences of migrant labour; the British 'Randlords' as capitalist exploiters of Witwatersrand gold; the class composition and social base of Afrikaner nationalism; and the relationships between industrialisation, urbanisation and the black peril election which brought the Afrikaner National Party to power in 1948 and launched apartheid. As well as this, beautifully textured social histories drew pictures of life in early Johannesburg, and the jostling of black and white urban cultures in the newly emerging mining town. In a context where the banned works of Marx were kept in a locked cabinet in the university library and ideas were strictly policed, I read illicit photocopies of the works of Harold Wolpe and others who explored with analytic precision the particular form of the South

African state and the complex relationships between race and class. Working in black adult education in the 1970s, the banned works of Freire and Fanon were too dangerous to use explicitly, and those who did so were themselves banned. Analysis was fused with political action, and carefree gestures drew unwelcome attention to oneself and others. At the time of the June 1976 Soweto student uprisings, I was part of the provocatively termed 'People's College', which ran a 24 page education supplement in the *Weekend World*, the highest circulating black newspaper. Unsurprisingly, it was banned, but not before it left a record of alternative education in conditions of repression. In the decades following June 1976, the resistance struggle against 'gutter education' became a life and death matter.

In the 1970s, anti-apartheid writing on education tended to highlight racial inequalities and tended to draw on liberal premises. In the 1980s, I was part of the revisionist education scholarship that challenged liberal assumptions about race and explored the class relations of apartheid and the various forms of reproduction theory (Christie, 1985; Christie & Collins, 1982). Student resistance against apartheid education counterbalanced the potential determinism of these theories and themselves were investigated and theorised. Largely excluded from research in schools because of our political and theoretical positions, we concentrated on critique. In the 1990s, with the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, we were challenged to move from critique to constructive engagement in working on policy options and capacity building in preparation for the new government. In this context, it is not surprising that early post-apartheid educational policies tended to be ideal-type, top-down formulations. And, in this context, there is growing recognition that redressing apartheid inequalities and shaping a new education system will involve a longer term engagement between ideals and conditions on the ground. We need also to accept that our own actions will be judged by history and supplanted by different theories that are critical of ours.

Returning, then, to postcolonial theorising, its relationship to colonialism and the Enlightenment project is necessarily ambivalent. Looking at the political project of government, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) points out, it is impossible to conceive of political modernity without the intellectual traditions of Europe. He writes:

> Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history…. These concepts entail an unavoidable – and in a sense indispensable – universal and secular vision of the human. (2000, p. 4)

Chakrabarty goes on to say that these concepts of political modernity are 'both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the various life practices that constitute the political and the historical in India' (2000, p. 6). So it is, also, with the African experience, though these life practices and histories take different forms. Chakrabarty argues rightly against historicism (understanding events as unfolding unitary processes), but this does not mean abandoning history. Instead, it could be argued, the challenge is to engage more thoroughly with historical specificity.

A good example of this in the African context is to be found in the work of Mahmoud Mamdani (1996). Writing on contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism, Mamdani argues that colonial rule in Africa took its specific form in the ways in which tribal authorities were incorporated in structures of indirect rule over local populations. In becoming part of colonial rule, tribal customs and authorities were stabilised and homogenised into particular forms of customary power. The specific form of colonial state in Africa bifurcated power between racialised civic structures and tribalised structures of customary authority, producing both 'modern' citizens and 'traditional' subjects. Dismantling customary power has proved extremely difficult in post-independence African states. Whereas most African states have achieved some measure of success with deracialising civic structures, their difficulties in dismantling tribal powers mean that they have not fully democratised since independence. In this context, economic development has been difficult to achieve, beleaguered by interethnic and urban-rural tensions.

Mamdani's cautionary point is that it would be unwise to regard South Africa as a case of exceptionalism in this regard. In his view, customary power, urban-rural divides and interethnic rivalry are evident in South Africa, in spite of it being 'the home of the strongest and the most imaginative civil society-based resistance on the continent' (1996, p. 297). Considerable political work is necessary – but possible – to reform both civic and tribal customary structures for democratisation to be achieved in South Africa. Tensions, he argues, do not necessarily lead to antagonisms, but must be creatively woven together in ways that recognise and legitimate social difference:

> The antidote to a mode of rule that accentuates difference, ethnic in this case, cannot be to deny difference but to historicise it. Faced with a power that fragments an oppressed majority into so many self-enclosed culturally defined minorities, the burden of resistance must be both to recognise and to transcend the points of difference ... In the specific circumstances of contemporary Africa, to create a democratic majority is to transcend two divisions that power spontaneously imposes on resistance: the rural-urban and the interethnic. (1996, p. 296)

Shifting the balance of forces towards democratisation is a political task of engagement with transforming a colonial legacy. It is a task of a postcolonial period, but, I would argue, it is a task which is not particularly driven by the concerns of most postcolonial theorising, whose strengths lie most notably in bringing issues of culture and identity to the fore, and destabilising and decentring colonial hegemonies.

What I have argued here is that the celebration of cultural identity and the decentring of class and nation have not been the main projects of the post-apartheid state. Engagement with identity politics is indeed enriched by postcolonial theorising, and class and nation must indeed be considered problematic concepts. But all of these notions need to be engaged with in their historical specificity in struggles around government and the management of the economy. While notions of first/ third world may well belong to a past period, their legacies cannot be discursively displaced but must be engaged with in processes of state formation and development. As Tikly (2001) points out, the core-periphery relationships of colonialism have been destabilised by globalisation, but the effects are complex and require specific political and economic engagement. Putting postcolonialism to work in South Africa has meant a push against fragmentation and identity politics in relation to a broader politics of democratisation. It has also entailed transforming colonial legacies to establish legitimate government and to develop economic trajectories in relation to globalisation.

This is not to deny the importance of thinking beyond colonialism. Rather, using the case of post-apartheid education and its restructuring, it is to argue for the importance of engagement with specificities in the political, economic and social processes of transformation. What this chapter has argued for is the need to both accept and at the same time interrogate/ unsettle the metanarratives of colonialism in struggling for political, social and economic change. This means using postcolonial theorising where it is appropriate, but not treating it as a necessary metanarrative of its own.

Taking this a step further, it may well be that the colonial/ postcolonial project is being superseded, as the complex and uneven processes of neo-liberal, capitalist globalisation are reconfiguring power relations between and within countries. Global relationships are changing. Manuel Castells (1996), for example, argues that with the rise of information technologies and the formation of global networks, new patterns of relevance and marginalisation are developing, and inequalities are deepening. He suggests that countries which were once in a position of neo-colonial dependent exploitation are now structurally irrelevant in global economic terms. New economic geographies of globalisation are emerging (see Sheppard, 2002), albeit on historical terrain shaped by colonialism. In these circumstances, as Arif

Dirlik provocatively suggests, '…a preoccupation with the legacy of the past may … obstruct recognition of problems that have emerged in the present – problems that, however new, also recast our understanding of the past' (2002, p. 614). Arguably, an understanding of educational restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa needs to take into account not only the legacy of a complex colonial past, but also the challenges of global transformations in the present and future.

## Acknowledgements

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# THE BENEV(I)OLENCE OF IMPERIAL EDUCATION

*Helen Tiffin*

## Introduction

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, education systems throughout the British Empire were instituted and developed at different times and in many different ways depending on both local colonialist circumstances *and* political changes and educational developments within the British Isles itself. Nevertheless, Britain's colonial education systems still had much in common. At primary levels the *Royal* and *Irish Readers*, developed for use in England and Ireland, provided the template for primary textbooks for other colonies, both in the settler colonies and the colonies of occupation. Secondary school curricula (and many lower civil-service entry exams) were conducted through Cambridge, producing an educational control exercised not just at the level of curriculum, but governing interpretation of the knowledge as well. Where Universities were established they were generally modelled on those of Britain and their curricula determined by tertiary models in the Imperium.

This paper focuses on one particular aspect of that education – literary education – and its ambivalent application and reception in colonial/postcolonial contexts. At a time when not only literature but all Arts/Humanities scholars in Australia are being pressured to 'produce real results' (usually understood as 'make money')[1], it is instructive to look back to a time when some of the most important political and educational 'results' – both good and bad – were seen to be a direct product of literary education throughout Britain's Empire.

Before considering literary education in more detail, I would like to briefly consider the problem of terminology. By titling this essay as I have done, I have been able to avoid some of the vexed issues involved in using the term 'postcolonial', particularly in a cross-disciplinary arena. As the term has become popular in the second half of the twentieth century, it has been employed in an astonishing number of ways. As Stephen Slemon noted in 1994,

'Post-colonialism', as it is now used, describes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises. It has been used as a way of ordering a critique of totalising forms of Western historicism; as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism (and conversely, as the condition from which those two structures of cultural logic and cultural critique themselves are seen to emerge); as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings; as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third World intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of 'reading practice'; and – and this was my first encounter with the term – as the name for a category of 'literary' activity which sprang from a new and welcome political energy going on within what had been English literary criticism. (pp. 16-17)

Individual commentators across different disciplines still define 'postcolonial' in very different ways. For Bart Moore-Gilbert, postcolonial *criticism* offers a distinct set of reading practices 'preoccupied principally with analysis of cultural forms which mediate, challenge, or reflect upon relations of domination and subordination – relations which have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism and continue to be apparent in the present era of neo-colonialism' (1997, p. 24).

The term 'postcolonial' first appeared after World War II in the disciplines of history, political science and economics where it was used to signify the post-independence period. Increasingly, however, especially in those fields primarily interested in cultural formations – anthropology, literary criticism, cultural studies – it came to be distinguished from the term 'post-independence' in its stress on cultural continuity.  Since the influence of colonisation on Indigenous populations (and on the settler invaders involved in its perpetration) began neither on the exact date of the formal institutionalisation of colonial rule, nor ceased on the day of independence ceremonies, the term 'postcolonial' came to include aspects of the colonial encounter from first contact to the present (see Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, pp. 1-2). Neither neo-colonial formations nor the various forms of globalisation which dominate so much discussion today are innocent of the complex legacies of European colonialism, a movement out of Europe, which, over several centuries, affected over three quarters of the globe. For this reason then, the term is most often used in a way that is partly analogous to Terry Eagleton's use of 'post-Romanticism'; that is, as product, practice or period 'not confidently posterior to an event', but rather, (at least in part) the result of it (1983, p. 18).

As with all such definitions, however, discussion continues over its usage both between different disciplines and within single areas (such as literary criticism) where discussion of its meaning and application has been more vigorous than most (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002, pp. 124 ff.; 194-99). Debates within the academies of

different countries as well have altered its meaning in practice. In the former English speaking colonies of the British Empire, for instance, what is included in 'the postcolonial' or 'postcolonialism' is generally considered to be attached to a particular colonialist politics and practice – that of Europe from the Renaissance onwards, or, as Moore-Gilbert (1997, p.12) puts it, 'relations which have their roots in the history of modern European colonialism and imperialism'. In the United States, however, and in those academies and disciplines most influenced by American practice, 'postcolonial' has often been used as a catch-all term for any form of marginalisation, discrimination or oppression (including gender) without regard to any particular history.[2]

While there are many problems with the designation 'postcolonial', I for one, am opposed to the broader usage, since when 'postcolonial' is employed merely as a synonym for oppression or marginalisation, it is necessarily weakened, both politically and intellectually. This is not to argue, however, that postcolonial paradigms, re-located and re-specified, do not offer useful tools for analyses of other situations which have no immediate historical connections with the European Empires. Moreover, such 'tools' are of particular importance in analysing some of the complexities of *internal* colonisation today, primarily, but not exclusively, in the former settler colonies, where older colonialist practices persist or have metamorphosed into neo-colonialist ones. Thus, one might well use the category of the 'postcolonial' for Aboriginal writing in English today, not because Aboriginal peoples are no longer 'colonised' by white or Asian metropolitan Australian cultures but because, in Terry Eagleton's terms, their societies and cultural formations exist 'not confidently posterior' to European invasion and government, but rather as a *partial* product of it, and indeed often in opposition to it.

The title of this paper, with its deliberate play on 'wellness' or 'goodness' and 'violence' is meant to indicate the ambivalence of the project of imperial (literary) education. Undoubtedly such education had, as postcolonial writers have noted, many good effects, but it also did violence to local life and culture in the colonies of occupation and resulted, in the settler colonies, in an inferiority syndrome, sometimes described as the 'cultural cringe'. Although I've made a distinction here between settler colonies and colonies of occupation, the negative effects of the 'cultural cringe' mentality were extremely significant in both, arguably having continuing deleterious effects on foreign policy[3], education, development[4] and attitudes to the environment.

Because pan-imperial education is too large a subject for a single paper, I will use the particular instance of the British Caribbean as a typical example of such benev(i)olence. In *Images in Print* (1988), Ruby King and Mike Morrissey note that, although some countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean have been independent for 25 years, many aspects of colonialism persist in general ideas about education in

syllabuses and curricula, and in textbook choices and contents. Their study, and more general ones such as Philip G. Altbach's *Education and Neocolonialism* (1971), direct attention to the potency of colonialist histories of education not just in the Caribbean but across all post-colonised cultures.

At least three Australian television commercials over the last couple of years depended for their success on the broad public knowledge of the basic terms of Daniel Defoe's eighteenth-century novel *Robinson Crusoe*. The assumption is that the classically colonialist tropes of that work remain so pervasive and powerful in English-speaking cultures that they may be readily drawn on by contemporary commercial interests. In *The Hot Zone* (1994), the American journalist, Richard Preston, invokes and quotes from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to reinforce the dichotomous images and stereotypes of 'civilisation' and 'savagery' naturalised throughout the English-speaking world through, amongst other sources, this widely read and widely taught classic. The savagery coming 'out of Africa' was in Preston's novel a 'flesh-eating' viral disease whose terrifying contagion is easily spread, in the era of plane travel, to all areas of the world, even, the author portentously tells us, to the (neo-imperial) heartland of Washington.

I begin with these instances to suggest the ways in which European texts and Anglo-European educational systems still maintain authority throughout the postcolonised world. My focus is thus on two apparently different yet related topics: the nature and role of education, specifically literary education in colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonised cultures, and the responses of colonised peoples to this literary education.

Texts like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Heart of Darkness* have retained their efficacy because, as the British realised, literature appeals to 'the heart'. Where history and maths curricula also serve to interpellate the colonised within European epistemes, the added power of literary texts was conferred by affective (metaphoric/symbolic) use of language and through subject matter in conjunction with explicit literary critical claims of 'universality'. But language and literary education in postcolonial cultures are also sites of radical ambivalence whose continuing power has produced interrogation and dismantling, reconsideration, rereading, rewriting and political rebellion.

In *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989), Gauri Viswanathan demonstrated the ways in which the British, in formulating education policies in nineteenth-century India, used literature and literary criticism as prime means of colonialist control. Not only English literature and literary criticism, but the exclusive teaching of other subjects in English in Indian education programmes ensured widespread Anglo-interpellation. While the most famous document establishing this policy was Thomas B. Macaulay's 1835 Indian Education Minute

(in Young, 1935), similar policies were in place in the rest of Britain's Empire. In the Caribbean, the slave trade and plantation economies had virtually eradicated the mother languages of Africa – or rather, partially eradicated, since African survivals were and are to be found in popular speech, dance, song and folk culture. However, by the twentieth century,

> the education system inherited from the colonial power was one in which English, in addition to being a subject to be taught, *was the sole medium by which literacy was acquired* as well as the sole medium of instruction. The assumption underlying this language education policy was that those who entered the education system were, in fact, native speakers of English, English-lexicon Creole being no more than a form of 'broken English', which had to be corrected by the education system. (Devonish, 1986, p. 102)

The legacy for contemporary Caribbean societies was, as Allsopp claimed in 1972, that

> it imposed British English as the desirable standard in all matters of Anglophone Caribbean language (not just syntax, but actually pronunciation and vocabulary) and it also instilled a sense of apology in all Caribbean speakers of English for every aspect of their local English that differentiated it from British English. (cited in Devonish, 1986, p. 108)

Allsopp's observation in 1972 that 'the very use of a language in the education process, as a medium for acquiring literacy establishes the validity of the language in the eyes of the pupils as well as the society at large' (p. 119) attests to the fulfilment of one of the aims of educators in the previous century as outlined in a *Circular Dispatch* enclosing a suggested 1847 scheme for industrial and normal schools in the colonies. The purpose was 'to diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English language and literature as the most important agent of civilization for the coloured population' (Gordon, 1963, p. 58).

Thus, colonial education – in the language 'English' and in its specific studies of the literature of England – in the English Caribbean (as in India and colonies elsewhere) was designed for and continued to be promulgated in the service of colonialist control. It stressed the universal/imperial at the expense of the specific region; it fostered and validated the centrality of and belief in the excellence of all things English and instilled in colonial populations its pan-colonial companion, the 'cultural cringe'; and since its aim was a social control whose effective mechanism was the spread of English values, it focused on the language, religion and, in particular, the literary culture of England.

These general educational principles are not unrelated to a more particular consideration, for they affected not just the place of literature within colonial curricula, but the specific literary models available to colonised cultures. Literary texts

encountered in the processes of formal education have potent and long-lasting effects, especially those which form part of the primary curriculum. When coupled with a learning technique prevalent in primary schools up to a generation or so ago (i.e. the learning of set pieces 'by heart'), the emotional, as well as the intellectual, impact afforded a strong and subtle mechanism of Anglo-interpellation. To learn 'by heart' is to absorb into the very processes of one's being the material so taught; to absorb that text as part of the emotional core of one's nature. Like the use of the English language, learning by heart is thus one of the fundamental processes through which are produced 'persons', in the language of Macaulay's (in)famous Education Minute, 'Indian in blood and in colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' (Young, 1935, p. 346). And it is in the primary and tertiary sectors in particular that literary works are likely to be most influential – in the first because of the more widespread nature of primary education; in the second, because local literati and intellectuals with a tertiary education generally have a direct influence on policies or disseminate ideas which have a significant influence not just on secondary curricula but on the society as a whole.

While the Bible provided the early basis for learning to read in pre-and post-emancipation, non-denominational Caribbean schools, English literature increasingly replaced it as raw material for learning the skills of reading and writing. An 1870 *Circular from the Board of Education* prescribes 'Reading aloud a passage from some English prose author and also a passage from some English poet' (Gordon, 1963, p. 201). As nationalism increasingly developed through the twentieth century, however, such Anglo-affective literary material needed to be placed alongside the local world of the colonial subject, or where possible, be *re*placed by it. Amongst the conclusions and recommendations of the *1940-2 West India Royal Commission* was that 'the literary curriculum in the primary schools requires to be simplified and brought more into relation with the environment of the children'. The Commission members also noted that 'although much thought has recently been expended on this matter, and some developments have taken place, curricula are still out of touch with the needs and interests of the bulk of the population. There is too great a stress on purely literary work, and on rote as against training in clear speech and thought.' Consequently their recommendations were for 'the revision and simplification of the cultural curriculum, concentrating on clear and connected speech and thought, and giving subjects where possible a West Indian background rather than an English one'. They further recommended that history and geography be taught 'with special reference to the West Indies', in conjunction with the use of 'local topography and historical monuments'. Most significantly, perhaps, they argued for the lessening of the dominance of Cambridge 'by abolishing the Junior Cambridge Examination

which is used in the West Indies for a purpose for which it is not intended in England, and which is not taken in English schools maintained or aided from public funds'.

But such attempts to alter the biases and prejudices inculcated through the education system during the previous century now met with *local* resistance. Ten years later, the *1952 Commission* found that 'book learning' still held the keys to settled employment in government service and to the 'learned professions', and was normally preferred to a more practical type of education. The 1960s eventually saw the last O level exam administered from Cambridge, but only in the 1980s was the Junior Cambridge Certificate exam replaced by a locally administered one (the Caribbean Examinations Certificate), and in the 1990s Cambridge still controlled the senior literary examination in secondary schools, even though the curriculum for both O and A levels now had a substantial West Indian component. (The Trinidadian novelist, V. S. Naipaul, in *Miguel Street* (1959, pp. 36-45) satirised this persisting Anglo-orientation and domination through his character Elias' attempts to please 'Mr Cambridge'.)

Some of the most influential teaching texts throughout the Caribbean (and in other of Britain's colonies) were the *Royal Readers* and/or the *Irish Readers* and their descendants. Used throughout the Empire, the effect of these texts, and their role in education generally and in literary education in particular, was potent. *Readers* (or versions of them) were the basic texts in most primary schools throughout Britain's Empire (and former Empire) at least till the 1950s, and to the 1960s in some regions. Their replacement by textbooks such as *Nelson's West Indian Readers* (Cutteridge, 1971) in the early 1970s signalled localisation of much of the older ethnographic, economic and agricultural material, but the literary orientation remained substantially English. In the first series of *Royal Readers* (Cutteridge, 1952, also published by Nelson), used throughout Caribbean schools from the early part of the twentieth century until the 1960s, are to be found sections headed 'Useful Knowledge'. As with many lessons in these *Readers* a series of catechistic questions was appended:

*Question:* Into how many seasons is the year divided?

*Answer:* Four: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. (Cutteridge, 1971, p. 92)

In this way, not only the English seasons but English domestic animals, and the English house, were rendered normative and authoritative. As V. S. Naipaul and other postcolonial writers and commentators have noted, the total environment – social, climatic, economic – of the colonial child was thus seen at best as a degenerate rendition of and at worst a shameful aberration from that imperial norm. The Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, (1975, p. 71) has recounted the story of the schoolchild who found the *harmattan* 'shameful' because it was not one of the English seasons.

In this direct transfer of English material to colonial contexts, few concessions were made to the local readership. The *Royal Readers* identified the coffee plant as 'a shrub that resembles the laurel'; and 'two kinds of tea are imported into this country'. Empire and Crown loyalty are prominent in *About Kings and Queens*. Caribbean (and Australian and South African) children learned:

> Queen Elizabeth's time is not her own. She cannot always be seeking to please herself; for God has given her a great empire to rule over. The Bible tells us to honour those who rule over us; therefore it is our duty to obey the laws of our country.
> *Questions:* What are Kings and Queens?
> Who rules over the British Commonwealth and Empire?
> Why is the Queen's time not her own?
> What are we taught in the bible? (Cutteridge, 1952, pp. 117-8)

Even though Captain J. O. Cutteridge in *Nelson's West Indian Readers* supplied 'a long-felt want – viz., that of local textbooks specially prepared for West Indian schools', the colonialist educational legacy was still apparent. 'It has been my endeavour', Cutteridge (1971) writes in his prefatory note, 'to include local names and terms whenever possible, as my experience has been that the pupils have great difficulty in spelling common words which they seldom if ever see in print.' Coffee is now localised as a Jamaican product not an 'import'; kings and queens have gone; the animals, insects, plants and crops (nature study and agricultural products) are localised, and the folk-tales of Grimm and Aesop (Aesop's tales still assumed to be Greek rather than African in origin) are now accompanied by Creole ones. Nevertheless, *Poetry for Reading and Recitation* remained almost exclusively English and English oriented – Swift, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Louis Stevenson, Kingsley, Keats, and others of less canonical stature are included. In all of the poems – poems for learning by heart – English and 'white' are inevitably normative, from Kingsley's

> I once had a sweet little doll, dears
> The prettiest doll in the world,
> Her cheeks were so red and so white dears,
> And her hair was so charmingly curled (Cutteridge, 1971, p. 57)
>
> to the 'gift' of a 'sunny day' – a wonderful exception in England, but not of course in the Caribbean or Queensland. The ultimate effect of such colonialist literary education is that, as Leigh Dale notes in the Australian instance, 'England is constructed as *text* and is therefore inviolable; Australia is constructed as *context* and is therefore ultimately irrelevant' (1997, pp. 134-5).

The power of such primary *Readers*, and the practice of reciting poetry (or catechistic answers on prose pieces) by heart, is and has been interpellative to a degree difficult to underestimate. Both the pedagogy of recitation and the relevance of English material

and English norms to the West Indian context are satirised by the Mighty Sparrow in one of his calypsos, *Dan is the Man in the Van*, singling out the educator, J. O. Cutteridge, to whom V. S. Naipaul's Mr Biswas also had a particular antipathy.

However, not all colonial curricula were dominated consistently by literary concerns. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the subject of hygiene began to assume increasingly greater importance until, as Timothy Burke (1996) notes, by 1920 the standard textbook in both mission and state sponsored schools in Africa was a hygiene one, often displacing the literature-oriented Empire-wide school *Readers*. While this shift in emphasis was more characteristic of the African colonies than of, for instance, Australia, nevertheless, as prominent an educator as W. S. Littlejohn (principal of Scotch College) could write in his foreword to R. C. Everett Atkinson's 1926 *Hygiene Jingles* that 'in the past, the rudimentary principles of Hygiene and Sanitation have not been given, in school curricula, the prominence their importance deserves. On the other hand can it be said that there has not been found ample time for the less useful subject of Poetry?' *Hygiene Jingles,* by educating its young readers in the 'rudiments of personal hygiene and preventative medicine' would thus serve to 'kill the metaphorical two birds with one stone'.

By 1924 hygiene had become so important a factor in both the education of children and the very conception of Empire that the influential Andrew Balfour (1924) could rewrite its history in a preface to his *Health Problems of the Empire. Past, Present and Future* as a story of hygiene, linking it indissolubly to Empire adventuring, Elizabethan piracy and the settling and civilising mission itself. Even where the basis of hygiene teaching was more generally secular and scientific (rather than grounded in the missionaries' often uncomfortable amalgam of scientific/materialist hygiene principles and more spiritual ones), God was (as in Balfour's texts) accorded some due. In the Western Australian *Hygiene Jingles,* for instance, the body was imaged in a number of ways, but predominantly as a fantastic feat of complex engineering; a mighty machine of which God himself is both designer and operator. The prefatory poem pays due deference to this 'engineer', who is also addressed as architect, alchemist, sorcerer, sculptor, painter, (and then again engineer and architect). But having paid due respect to God (and the creative arts), Atkinson moves on to elaborate his favourite figure of up-to-date factory machinery intermixed with images of plumbing and communications:

> The rubbish-bearing stream again is flung
> Into the cleansing station of the lung
> Where every breath of air a person takes
> Winnows out refuse that his engine makes. (1926, p. 14)

Nevertheless, in spite of Littlejohn's dismissal of 'less useful' subjects like poetry (and Atkinson's clever co-option of it in his *Hygiene Jingles)*, literature remained an extremely important part of colonial and post-independence curricula, especially at primary school levels.

The situation in the Caribbean can be read as broadly symptomatic of that in both the major colonies of occupation – India and the African countries – and the settler-invader colonies which had similar primary and tertiary educational policies, histories and textbooks. The *Queensland School Readers*, also descendants of the *Royal* and *Irish Readers*, were used (as in the Caribbean) until the 1960s, and, as in Barbados, they remained popular with an older generation well after their official displacement. (These *Readers* were reprinted in the late 1980s in both Barbados and Queensland and sold out immediately to parents who planned to use them to give their children a 'genuine' education at home.) Thus, although curricula have changed at primary, tertiary and secondary levels, the effects of the dominance of British literary texts and cultural values remain powerful, at least for an older and still influential generation.

Contemporary postcolonial writers themselves have written about the effects – both good and bad – of this education. George Lamming in *In the Castle of my Skin* (1970) details the ways in which colonial and postcolonial education in the Caribbean deliberately repressed slave history and thus the ancestral origins of contemporary Afro-Caribbeans; while Canadian writer Margaret Atwood in *Cat's Eye* (1988) shows how imperial/colonial and postcolonial education reproduced those stereotypes which had enabled and facilitated European conquest and colonisation of other parts of the globe, and which were then (re)presented to school pupils, Empire-wide, as axiomatic through the authoritative *Readers*. (It was not, however, always the fault of the texts that their images and messages were so often scrambled.):

> 'The sun never sets on the British Empire,' says Miss Lumley, tapping the roll-down map with her long wooden pointer. In countries that are not the British Empire, they cut out children's tongues, especially those of boys. Before the British Empire there were no railroads or postal services in India, and Africa was full of tribal warfare, with spears, and had no proper clothing. The Indians in Canada did not have the wheel or telephone, and ate the hearts of their enemies in the heathenish belief that it would give them courage. The British Empire changed all that. It brought in electric lights. (Atwood, 1988, p. 79)

Twentieth century responses to colonialist education at all levels have thus come from both postcolonial educators and creative writers who were themselves products of this education. This response, as in the case of Caribbean Nobel Prize-winning poet, Derek Walcott, was a necessarily ambivalent one. British literature became a

loved literature, but one whose colonialist purposes and effects were disturbing. Like Walcott or Australians, Christopher Koch and Les Murray, postcolonial writers have frequently acknowledged – with ambivalent emotions – the profound influence of this Anglo-literary education on their societies and on their own lives and work. As Barbadian novelist, George Lamming, expresses it,

> Caliban received not just words, but language as symbolic interpretation, as instrument of exploring consciousness. Once he had accepted language as such, the future of his development, however independent it was, would always be in some way inextricably tied up with that pioneering aspect of Prospero. (Kent, 1973, pp. 88-9)

It is thus the investigation of the ambiguous 'gifts' of colonial education systems, and, in particular, literary education, with which many writers throughout the postcolonial world have been and continue to be engaged; and it is through this very engagement that they have produced some of the most spectacularly significant creative writing of the twentieth century. For all its obvious drawbacks, its insidious inculcation of racist stereotypes, Empire loyalty, its devaluation of the local against an English 'ideal', colonialist education with its emphasis on literary *affect*, also had, as many postcolonial writers and scholars acknowledge, both tangible and intangible benefits. It gave children across the globe knowledge of other societies (however skewed or (mis)remembered) and it stimulated the literary and artistic imaginations of colonised peoples who used what were often introduced cultural forms to challenge, overcome and outdo their former imperial educators on a multitude of cultural, social and political fronts.[5]

## Endnotes

1   Although it would perhaps be unwise to extend the analogy, what has been said of public works (such as drains and sewage) might well be said of Humanities scholarship: They do not *make* money, but contemporary Western (and other) civilisations would collapse without them.

2   The United States itself is a former settler-colony of Britain, but its role as the major imperial power in the latter half of the twentieth century has tended to occlude this history. Consequently, very little work has been done on the potentially interesting comparisons between all of Britain's settler colonies *including* the United States.

3   One obvious example would be Australia's present foreign policy. The obsession with a 'big brother' (or 'mother country') protector remains the driving force.

4   The Nobel Prize-winning novelist, V. S. Naipaul, has commented in a number of essays on the ways in which former colonies tend to be particularly dependent on manufactured imports, a dependence he attributes to a colonial inheritance.

5   Sections of this article have been published previously as 'The mission of hygiene: Race, class and cleanliness in African and Australian textbooks 1885-1935' in *Colonies – Missions – Cultures* ed. Gerhard Stilz. Tübingen: Stauffenburg – Verl., 2001, pp. 41-54; and 'Plato's Cave: Educational and Critical Practices' in *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures* ed. Bruce King. Oxford: O.U.P., 1996. pp. 143-163.

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# THE SINGAPORE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

## POSTCOLONIAL ENCOUNTER OF THE SINGAPOREAN KIND

*Aaron Koh*

…the British came, and stayed, and left. And now they are gone. And their residue is simply one more layer added to the layer upon layer of (Singaporean) consciousness[1].

## Introduction: 'Postcolonialising' Singapore

The quotation cited above provides a trenchant start to the arguments in this chapter. I have deliberately replaced 'Indian' in the original quote with 'Singaporean' (in parentheses) to foreground the importance of context in understanding postcolonial theory. I argue that a contextual engagement with postcolonial theory is *necessary* because we cannot assume that postcolonial theory is a uniform theoretical framework (Young, 2001). Moreover, as Hall (1996) reminds us, 'it need not follow that all societies are 'post-colonial' in the same way'. Indeed, if there is a further reason to contextualise 'postcolonial theory', it is the expansive 'scale and sensibility' (Goldberg & Quayson, 2002) to which postcolonial theory has now been applied. For example, the Internet is the new terrain where issues of representation and identity are now 'relocated' (Oguibe, 2002; see also McConaghy & Snydner, 2000)[2].

In 'relocating' postcolonial theory in the Singaporean context, I first begin by providing a working definition of postcolonialism given that there is a wide plethora of ways using the term. Following Quayson (2000), I am using 'postcolonialism' to engage with the study of Singapore's colonial past, and how it engages itself with the continual effects of the global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire. By situating Singapore in its colonial past and the current global (dis)order, I am taking the stand that postcolonialism is *not* to be taken as a chronological

historical marker that signals a teleological end. Instead, shifting 'economic hege-mony' (Yao, 2001, p. 45) and the new global (dis)order have given rise to new configurations of power and dominations that challenge existing power relations and structures in terms of centre-margin and the West-East divide (cf. Appadurai, 1996; Ang & Stratton, 1996). Therefore, there is a need to address the continuities and discontinuities of colonialism, and understand its aftermath effects (Gandhi, 1998; Shohat, 1992) or what Quayson (2000, p. 1) has termed 'postcolonializing' albeit the context here is Singapore.

In this chapter, my aim is to examine Singapore's 'postcolonialising' which I argue is locked in a contradictory bind. Despite the departure of British troops from Singapore in 1971, thereby signalling the end of colonialism in Singapore, the historical and cultural deposits of colonialism continue to 'colonialise' the Singaporean cultural imaginary, at the symbolic and discursive levels. There is, as I will argue, a romanticising for its colonial past. To support this argument, I refer to specific colonial 'signs' and images as examples that remain embodied in the modern cultural landscape of Singapore. Yet, paradoxically, in the political realm and discourses, postcolonial Singapore continues to engage in a denial of its colonial/Western parentage and identity by overtly contesting and criticising the corrupting values of the West through state-led Asianising discourses and strategies.

Next, I 'relocate' Singapore's 'postcolonialising' in its education system to point to the ideological contradictions in its British – Singapore hybrid education structure and curricula. For many years now, the Singapore education system still refuses to cut its umbilical cord with its British counterpart, as embodied by the existing Singapore-Cambridge connection in administering the General Certificate Examinations. It makes use of Western discourses to 'certify' its students. Yet the government elites and moral gatekeepers of Singapore expressed the anxiety that Western discourses would open the floodgates of 'Westernisation' with its attendant pejorative influence. 'Asianising' its curricula becomes a mandate and as a precautionary measure to cultivate pro-Asian values and identity. It is this contradictory bind of anti-West and pro-Asian values that this chapter attempts to tease out.

## The 'Post-/Postcolonial', Not Yet Postcolonial Debate

'Postcolonial' is a troublesome word to begin with. Hyphenating the word can change its meaning and political agenda entirely. If postcolonial is hyphenated, then the prefix 'post' suggests the demise of colonialism (Childs & Williams, 1997). Thus, 'post-colonial' marks a break from colonialism and heralds the beginning of a new historical period. However, the periodisation of colonialism followed by post-colonialism implies a linear historical trajectory, which has long come under virulent

attack. Shohat (1992; see also McClintock, 1992) argues that this simplistic periodisation elides the continuities and discontinuities that persist at the discursive level between what are supposedly two distinctive and separate historical periods. In other words, the ghost of the colonial (in its myriad manifestations) still haunts the 'post' in the post-colonial.

The ghost of the colonial is now embodied as 'neo-colonialism'. Before 'neo-colonialism' is misconstrued as another historical period after 'postcolonial', a conceptual definition of colonialism and neo-colonialism is necessary. Said (1993, p. 9) provides a lucid distinction between the two terms: 'colonialism…is the implanting of settlements on distant territory', which creates the empire/colony or centre/margin binary. By contrast, neo-colonialism retains the formation of empire(s), but without its flanking colonies. The form of imperialism in contemporary times, (read: 'neo-colonialism') takes a more covert form in that 'imperialism lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices'. In other words, 'neo-colonialism' is more insidious in that it takes less overt forms. A few examples will make the point. The ubiquitous transnational organisations such as World Trade Organisations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the embodiments of 'First World/Western' imperialism (Birch, Schirato & Srivastava, 2001). This Western superiority continues to justify intervention in Asian countries' domestic affairs. The 'rescue packages' of the IMF during the Asian financial crisis are gestures of 'the West' flexing its imperial muscle to intervene and 'rescue' the ailing economies of Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea. Notwithstanding the indigenisation thesis and the local effects of cultural consumption (Featherstone, 1995; Robertson, 1995), it has also been argued that the global cultural consumption of McDonalds, Coca Cola, Nike and American popular culture are also forms of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991). In a nutshell, the ghosts of the colonial have taken on new disguises and symbolic forms. Therefore, the 'post-' in 'post-colonialism' does not imply an absence of colonialising practices, but a transformation that takes on less overt forms (Darby, 1997).

While decolonialisation saw many formerly colonialised states ostensibly lay claim to autonomous governance and political sovereignty, they are in reality not completely free from the entrapment of the symbolic forms of colonial power and penetrating influence, as Talib (1998, p. 61) correctly points out, 'what we are dealing with (are) the symbolic extensions of these terms'. Therefore, colonialism is not dead, at least in discursive and semiotic terms. Indeed, as Chen Kuan-Hsing (1998) astutely points out, we are continually caught up in 'the colonial cultural imaginary' such that a complete break from colonialism is near impossible. Citing the penetrating influence

of the U.S. in many 'third world' countries, Chen (1998, p. 49) claims that we are 'not yet the postcolonial era'.
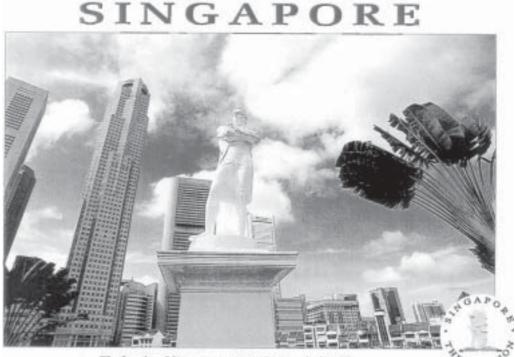
At this point I turn to the next section where I argue that Singapore is still entangled by its 'colonial cultural imaginary'. Yet this nostalgia for history - a history that seems to celebrate and romanticise colonialism – is re-embedded in the local discourse of Asian values and identity making.

## Postcolonial 'Sign-apore'³: Romanticising Raffles in the Singapore Imaginary

If Singapore's history must have a definite beginning, then it must begin when Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles first set foot on the tiny and deserted island in 1819. Although there are other historical accounts that pre-dates Singapore's history to pre-1819, historical documents are however too scarce and fragmentary to provide any concrete evidence (Lim, 1991). Thus, Singapore's colonial history begins when Raffles saw the potential for Singapore to develop into a trading and commercial centre. With his vision materialised, the story of Singapore continues to be told with Raffles as the founding father of modern Singapore. Till this day, Singapore's *raison d'etre* continues to be guided by the same economic foundation that Raffles first began.

Oddly, this continued memorialisation of Raffles as the founding father of Singapore is *sui generis* in postcolonial Singapore. Places like Zimbabwe and Quebec, Canada, who like Singapore were previously colonies of the British Empire, are quick to erase their traces of colonial history. Their colonial referents, Cecil Rhodes for Zimbabwe and Wolfe for Quebec, are by now forgotten memories (Holden, 1999). This, however, is not the case in Singapore. Not only is Raffles mythologised as Singapore's founding father, he is 'resurrected' and monumentalised, standing tall outside the Victoria Theatre (see Figure 1). The strategic location of his monument is by no means arbitrary. The site where Raffles' monument now stands was geographically where the British resided when they first landed in Singapore. This setting on which the sculpture of Raffles is erected provides a rich semiotic landmark in the Singapore landscape. It freezes a significant moment of Singapore's history in time and narrates a confidence about its past in the national imaginary (Holden, 1999).

Reading the sculpture of Raffles as a three-dimensional sign further plays out the metanarrative that is intertwined with colonial power and patronage. Raffles is elevated on a pedestal, standing at eight-foot tall. In the 'grammar' of visual semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), the pedestal where the sculpture of Raffles stands is a framing device that enhances the statue as an object of contemplation. The pedestal

The founder of Singapore in 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles.

further heightens the vertical dimension of the sculpture. It creates the effect that 'Raffles' is towering over us when one views at ground level. In semiotic terms, that 'Raffles' towers over us has, by design, power over us. The vertical dimension is also the dimension of power and reverential distance. Therefore, 'Raffles' embodies colonial power and is represented as an object to be venerated.

With his arms folded, and his 'non-transactional' gaze, 'Raffles' seems to look past us, at something distant. 'He' does not perform a visual demand or invite us to enter into an imaginary social relationship with him. This sense of detachment is further suggested by his pose. He stands at an oblique angle. Whereas a frontal angle suggests involvement, in the economy of semiotics, an oblique angle encodes that 'we' the viewers are not part of the represented. As well as his body language, conveyed by his folded arms, 'Raffles' becomes the signifier of colonial supremacy. However, it needs to be pointed out that it is not at this level of meaning that 'Raffles' is understood and appreciated. There is a preferred reading, at the hegemonic level, that translates Raffles' founding spirit into a discourse, one that valorises his founding spirit as enterprise, courage and confidence. For example, Raffles' story of 'from rags to riches' is used as a credo in the pupil handbook of a premier school, Raffles Institution. In the pupil handbook, Raffles' humble background
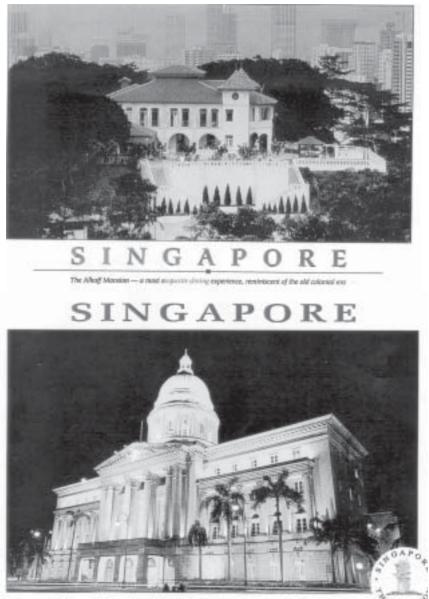
and his tenacity to succeed in extenuating circumstances is narrated as a story of courage to be emulated:

> Sir Stamford Raffles was no ordinary man. From humble beginnings he rose, against all odds, to ultimately receive the highest honour that his country could bestow on him. At a tender age he lost his father, quitting school to support his sisters and mother. He was a self-taught man. All this took a heavy toll on his health and he succumbed to tuberculosis. He fought back against the illness and went on to leave, as his legacy, the thriving nation-state of Singapore. Hard work and grit took him to the top. This is the Rafflesian Spirit he bequeathed to his Institution. (Raffles Institution, The Pupils' Handbook, 1996, p. 6)

As opposed to my somewhat negative reading of 'Raffles', within Singapore, the meaning of 'Raffles' signifies quality and tradition. In fact, it has become widely used as a 'brand name' for premier schools, corporate bodies and even a country club (Holden, 1999). Raffles Institution, Raffles Girls' School, Raffles Junior College, Singapore Airlines' Raffles Class, Raffles Medical Group and Raffles Country Club are some examples. As well as the rampant use of 'Raffles' as a kind of brand name, the preservation of historical colonial buildings such as Raffles Hotel (see Figure 2), the Alkaff Mansion (see Figure 3), the Supreme Court (see Figure 4), among many others, are architectures laced with imprints of colonial legacy. These buildings are preserved through time and constitute Singapore's colonial heritage as concrete material artefacts with imposing and powerful semiotic presence in the cultural landscape of Singapore.



S I N G A P O R E

The grandeur of Raffles Hotel speaks of Singapore's rich colonial heritage

S I N G A P O R E

*The Alkaff Mansion — a most exquisite dining experience, reminiscent of the old colonial era*

S I N G A P O R E



*The Supreme Court is one of the last colonial constructions in the city area.*

## Postcolonial Singapore: Desire and Denial

Thus far, I have argued that Singapore's sense of nationhood is built on nostalgia - a nostalgia that is constructed out of its colonial history. This nostalgia for history is possible only if there are artefacts, visual images and landscape texts that cue to the nation's past (Yeoh & Kong, 1999). As I have illustrated with examples drawn from colonial signifiers embedded in 'Sign-apore', all these fragments of cultural

memory are the very embodiment of Singapore's colonial legacy, which are viewed favourably, celebrated, romanticised and glorified. Yet there are contradictory elements in this colonial nostalgia, which are incompatible to the political and cultural ideologies that the Singapore government has hitherto espoused. Undeniably Singapore is 'already always Westernised' (Ang & Stratton, 1995, p. 67) because of its Western parentage, yet in the discursive realm it is continuously denying its Western identity by representing and foregrounding its identity as non-West. It does so by exorcising the West as the 'Other' and 'resisting', in the language of postcolonial, the values that the West has come to stand for. In this regard, Singapore's identity is constructed out of self-Orientalising and difference, by Othering and valorising the ills of Western values.

Not unsurprisingly, the government leaders are at the forefront of bashing the West. In his 1994 National Day Rally speech, Prime Minister Goh moralised a Sustagen advertisement aired on the national TV as inappropriate and over the top. The ad showed a Chinese boy with a clenched fist saying, 'Come on Dad. If you can play golf five times a week, I can have Sustagen once a day' (*The Straits Times*, 26 August 1994, cited in Birch, 1998, p. 178). The Prime Minister remarked that the portrayal of the Chinese boy challenging his Asian father in a language that is un-Asian would encourage children to be disrespectful to their parents. As was expected, the advertisement was subsequently withdrawn and a high level meeting was held between Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) and the advertising industry in Singapore. The purpose was to 'discuss ways to ensure that Asian values are not undermined in the local advertisements' (*The Straits Times*, 26 August 1994, cited in Birch, 1998, p. 178). A trivial incident it may seem, but this example illustrates that cultural managers and government elites in Singapore are constantly on the prowl and zealously guarding its cultural borders from Western contamination, symbolic or otherwise.

The ambivalence about the West is further illuminated by the ways Singapore positions itself vis-à-vis its colonial past. Although Raffles' spirit and the values that he represents are reminiscent of the Protestant ethic that helped establish modern capitalism, Protestant values are nevertheless stripped of their relation to the West. Instead they are re-inscribed, transcribed and ideologically imposed as an Asian values discourse in the Singapore body politic.

The Asian values discourse emphasis collectivism, deference, loyalty, diligence and frugality. However, as Chua argues, the Asian values discourse is a problematic construction in that it elides differences in values, culture, tradition and customs within and among so-called 'Asian' countries. What the Asian values discourse does is, it ideologically works as 'a cultural (re)invention of the past to frame the present'

(Chua 1999, p. 577). Holden (1999, p. 93) also observes a parallel connection between 'the colonial governmental rationality through which Raffles' life is narrativised' and the 'economic instrumental rationality' (Chua 1995, p. 19) that underlies the first-generation PAP leadership's ideology of pragmatism'. Therefore 'Raffles' is a cultural sign, a floating signifier whose meanings have been 'localised' and re-worked to embody a distinctive Singaporean approach to governance and identity building that is cast in the rhetoric of Asian values.

This contradictory symbolic patronage to imperialism and a clearly articulated Asian discourse also finds its way into the curriculum planning and policies in the Singapore education system. A striking feature of Singapore's education system is its long tradition of connection to Cambridge. For several decades now, under the joint effort of Ministry of Education Singapore (MOE) and the University of Cambridge, MOE continues to offer the Cambridge General Certificate Examination (G.C.E.) 'Ordinary' and 'Advanced' level (previously also known as High School Certificate (H.S.C.) examinations to Singaporean students.

## Marketisation of Cambridge Certificate

Historically, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) was the most prominent examination authority that was awarding school-leaving certificates in the colonies after ousting its competitor, Oxford, to gain the largest share in the imperial market (Stockwell, 1990). This enterprise dates as far back as 1821 and has been considered as a form of cultural imperialism (Watson, 1993). In many of these colonies, the Cambridge certificate was highly esteemed as it was a pathway to employment in government and commerce during colonial days. The access to an English education means acquiring social status, position, rank and wealth (Pennycook, 1994). Because of its centuries of experience as an examination board, the Cambridge Examination Syndicate is widely regarded for its 'impartiality, incorruptibility and infallibility' (Stockwell, 1990, p. 217). This explains why for many years now Singapore refuses to cut its 'umbilical cord' to its Cambridge counterpart. Till this day, the G.C.E. examinations are set in consultation with Cambridge, and students' examination scripts are still flown to Cambridge for marking and they remain the final arbiters in the assessment of Singaporean students' knowledge. What belies this enterprise between Singapore and Cambridge is a postcolonial manoeuvre that is couched in contradictions. Despite overtly renouncing its Western parentage and values, Singapore still relies on Western discourses and knowledge to 'certify' its kids. Yet it has to compensate for the risk of 'Westernisation' by 'Asianing' students' learning experience. The latter takes the form of curriculum interventions that promotes Asian values and a distinct Asian cultural identity.

## Cut the Cambridge Connection

Cambridge's reputation for its 'infallibility' was however tarnished when it lost 259 Singapore students' O-level literature scripts in 1994 (*The Straits Times*, 1 March 1994). Despite an intensive search, the scripts were never recovered. As a result, Cambridge awarded the candidates grades based on the grade they had obtained in their schools' preliminary examinations. Because of this incident, the idea of cutting the Cambridge connection was debated in the national press. Although general support was garnered to cut the Cambridge connection, the then Education Minister, Lee Yock Suan, was quoted as saying that the 'Cambridge certificates were recognised worldwide' and that 'Cambridge examiners had a wealth of expertise and experience' (*The Straits Times*, 12 Jun, 1994). The proposal to cut the Cambridge connection was therefore dismissed as not feasible, and the case rested. Hence, Singapore remains one of the few Commonwealth countries that still send scripts to Cambridge for marking (*The Straits Times*, 12 Jun 1994).

My purpose of recounting this 'cut the Cambridge connection' saga is to illuminate two points. First, this saga reflects Singapore's direct admission of a deep-seated colonial mindset that acknowledges the superiority of the West; paradoxically positioning itself as the inferior 'Other' who looks up to the 'intellectual' West for recognition and authentication as far as academic knowledge is concerned. MOE is concerned that, if examination papers were to be set and marked locally, it may not have an international recognition and standing without Cambridge's endorsement. This is an expression of a lack of faith and confidence of its own system and also an expression of a colonial attitude that regards anything associated with the West as 'good' and 'prestigious' (cf. Birch, Schirato & Srivastava, 2001).

## A Battle of 'Tongues': Bilingual Language Policy

Like many postcolonial nations, Singapore also appropriates the language of its colonial master. What began as a language spoken by a small English speaking elite who either worked as administrators for the colonial government or for pro-British interests, became a language that is most valued and widely used in Singapore. Of course, there was the early initial resistance against what was regarded as a Westerner's language and therefore perceived as a threat to the dominant Chinese-speaking community (Hill & Lian, 1995). It was not until a pervasive dissatisfaction and unrest arose in the Chinese schools that the government conducted an All-Party Committee in 1956 to resolve the tension of language policy in the education system. The government argued successfully to maintain the teaching of English as a priority in schools as it saw English as a vital link to the world of business, capitalism, science and technology. Hence, English became a compulsory subject for all and has been used as

a medium of instruction since 1965. Therefore, what was a native tongue of the colonial masters also became indigenised as a national language of Singapore.

While the government clearly saw the benefits of English fluency among the populace, it was also aware that learning an 'Other' tongue also meant opening the floodgates of Western values and 'undesirable influence'. As early as 1965, Lee Kuan Yew, who was then the Prime Minister, expressed the fear that English might lead to the deculturalisation of the population (Hill & Lian, 1995). This time also saw the emergence of the 'Hippie Culture' which was seen as evidence of a hedonistic alternative lifestyle that could infect the body politic (Gopinathan, 1995). It was under these circumstances that a bilingual education policy was introduced.

Apart from studying English as a first language, students are also required to study their mother tongue as a second language – the official mother tongue being Chinese, Malay and Tamil, which is also directly related to one's ethnicity. The purpose of studying mother tongue is to imbibe ethnic values and tradition and act as cultural ballast to the perceived negative influence of Westernisation made accessible through the exposure to the English Language. The bilingual policy to this day remains a cornerstone in the education policy of Singapore. In a Parliamentary statement in 1999, Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong reiterated the importance of Chinese Language in schools. He maintains that:

> ….the mother tongue gives us a crucial part of our values, roots and identity. It gives us direct access to our cultural heritage, …it provides us with the ballast to face adversity and challenges….maintaining our distinctiveness and identity as an Asian society will help us to endure as a nation… (1999, p. 2)

Lee's argument on language learning clearly articulates and endorses the view that learning a language is never neutral. Learning a language is also learning a culture and identity. The bilingual language policy is significantly another postcolonial manoeuvre about the bifurcation of identity politics, one that is divided over 'West' and 'Asian' identity. Endorsing and making the mother tongue compulsory is a way of cultivating or essentialising a preferred identity, one that is Asian, over 'Other' identities. Therefore the bilingual language policy takes a neutralised and utilitarian approach that treats English as a working language, and a language that connects to the 'West'. The mother tongue is however significantly instrumentalised ideologically for shaping a distinct Asian 'culture' and 'identity'.

## Special Assistant Plan (SAP) Schools

Another attempt to 'Asianise' schooling in Singapore is the set up of the Special Assistant Plan (SAP) schools. These schools were established principally as a further

means of strengthening the attainment of bilingual policy where students are offered to study both the English Language and their mother tongue as a first language (Gopinathan, 1995). At present there are 10 such schools. However, these schools were, and still are, attended by academically inclined ethnic Chinese pupils. That is to say, few if any minority ethnic pupils attend such schools. As a consequence, one strong criticism arose out of these SAP schools. It has been argued that SAP schools promote racial segregation and may also inculcate racial intolerance amongst the predominant Chinese students (see *The Straits Times*, 22 March 1999; 24 March, 1999; 5 April 1999; 13 April 1999). However, SAP schools remain a part of the school system in Singapore as the system saw a need to preserve the cultural identity (read: Asian/Chinese identity) and ethos of these schools. Lee's (1999, p. 3) view that SAP schools play an important role 'to nurture a Chinese cultural elite', I argue, belies a wider ideological project of cultivating an Asian identity as Singapore plugs into global capitalism.

## The Great Literature Divide: English Literature versus Singapore Literature

Another example of the symbolic overtures of the imperialist patronage is the preponderance of British texts in the Literature syllabus of Singapore schools (Holden, 2000). A closer examination of the choice of texts offered in the 2001 G.C.E. 'O' level syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2001) supports my point. For example, the choice of texts offered are Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Shakespeare's *Julia Caesar*, *The Calling of Kindred*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Philip Jeyaretnam's *Abraham's Promise* (which happens to be the only Singapore literature text used). Although some would argue this is already a vast improvement considering the fact that in the past all the texts used were primarily English literature, the choice of texts are nonetheless visibly biased.

It is instructive to point out that historically during colonial times, the study of English Literature was to immerse the natives in the English way of life, and for 'them' to adopt its values, taste and culture. As such, studying English literature was seen as a way of 'civilising' the native population (Eaglestone, 2000). This is where lies the contradiction in the literature curriculum in Singapore schools. If literature is a means to inculcate and forge a national identity, Singaporean students should then be studying at least a selection of literature texts written by Singaporean authors rather than British texts since 'a nation's history is reflected in its Literature' (Singh, 1999).

With a visible and growing number of Singaporean writers, there is no lack of Singapore literature texts from which to choose. Yet, an entrenched colonial attitude remains that tends to denigrate Singapore literature as inferior writing compared to

the so-called canonical texts of the West. In a penetrating criticism of Singaporeans' 'colonised' attitude towards its own literature, Kirpal Singh (1999, p. 9), a local poet and literature professor, remarked that Singaporeans 'have generally tended to pooh-pooh our own literature, and continued, blindly, to value 'the other' which came and continues to come to us from afar'. The deep-seated colonial attitude and a symbolic homage to the West is a colonial mentality that I argue will continue to remain embedded in the psyche of the national consciousness.

## Religious Knowledge/Confucianism: A Controversial attempt to Asianise

A more obvious attempt at 'Asianising' the learning experience of Singaporean students was the controversial curriculum inclusion of Religious Knowledge (RK) in the national curriculum in 1984. The implementation of RK was to 'inoculate' Singaporean students with moral values, which were perceived to be under threat from Singapore's rapid modernisation. RK was offered only to upper secondary students. They had six given options, Bible Knowledge, Islamic Religious Knowledge, Buddhist Studies, Confucian Ethics, Hindu Studies and Sikh Studies, from which to choose (Tan, 1997).

It was by no means a coincidence that RK was introduced at a time when Singapore and the 'Asia' tigers (notably South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, then, also known as 'Four Mini-Dragons') were making waves in the world economy. A culturalist thesis which explains the rise of industrial East Asia attributes it to Confucian values and ethic, which is widely interpreted as thrift, diligence, discipline and respect (Tu, 1996). While these values are not much different from the Protestant ethic which also explained the rise of modern capitalism for the West, East Asia capitalises on its ascendancy by self-Orientalising its success as distinctively Asian. In effect, this set Asia apart as successful in navigating an alternative modernity called Asian modernity. Ironically, these are also the values perceived to account for the wide spread of corruption and cronyism that took the toll of Asian economies during the 1997 Asia financial economic crisis. Thus, RK coincided also with a campaign to promote Confucianism among the general public (Kuo, 1996; see also Chua, 1995).

Despite strong support from the then Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, the campaign soon came to be entangled with political issues (Kuo, 1996). Politically, the minority groups saw this as an attempt to 'Sinicize' the entire nation (Chua, 1998). Many also saw the campaign as an ideological tool to justify the government's authoritarian approach to governance (Kuo, 1996). However, this was not the reason for the incomplete re-vitalisation of Confucianism. What triggered a closer scrutiny of RK and its subsequent abandonment was that it ignited a divisive religious fervour

that caused concern to a political system that upheld religious and multi-ethnic harmony (Gopinathan, 1995; Kuo, 1996; Tan, 1997). Therefore in 1989, the government announced that RK would no longer be a compulsory school subject. Students however had the option of studying RK outside curriculum hours.

Nevertheless, this isn't the death of 'Asianing' a national curriculum. It has re-emerged as a new curriculum re-packaged as National Education. This curriculum has been introduced as a national curriculum in 1997. I have argued elsewhere that National Education is a situated response to the ramifications of globalisation (Koh, 2001). National Education is a national initiative to foster a more robust national identity when cultural/national identity is even more subjected to the perilous influence of global cultural flows. Singapore's retreat from a hybridised, fluid and evolving identity to an essentialised and ideologically imposed identity construction is not just contradictory but also difficult to sustain.

## Conclusion: Embedding Capitalism the Singapore way

Singapore's 'postcolonial encounter' is indeed an encounter of 'the Singaporean kind'. It cannot break away from the West because it is too small a nation to function economically on its own. In pragmatist terms, for it to remain in the nodal point of capitalism's flow, it has to embed itself into the global flow of capitalism. However, it does so in a uniquely 'Singaporean kind' by re-inventing its local culture for capitalism's embedding (Wee, 2001). Nevertheless, re-inventing its culture does not suggest that Singapore operates in complicity with the logic of capital en masse. Instead, it operates in a contradictory way by cooperating *and* resisting. And it is this contradictory bind that I argue postcolonial Singapore is entangled in.

In this chapter, I showed how postcolonial Singapore engaged in cooperation and resistance in the continual effects of colonialism and its aftermath. At the state level, it resists 'Western' values and translates and localises Western discourses by constructing the Asian values rhetoric. As argued, while Raffles is romanticised in the national imaginary, and indeed constitutes an important narrative of Singapore's history, yet paradoxically, the embodiment of Raffles is layered in a discourse stripped of its association with ('Western') Protestant ethic, but re-worked into a discourse on Asian values. In a sense, 'Raffles' has been Asianised.

The Singapore education system is, likewise, a contradictory hybrid mix of a British examination structure and curricula with a curriculum intervention that aims to cultivate an Asian cultural identity. To this end, I have highlighted the bilingual policy, the establishment of Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools and the unsuccessful implementation of Religious Knowledge (RK) as examples of the state's intervention of crafting a preferred schooling identity over other identities. While the education

system continues to deploy Western discourses to certify its learning and knowledge, it also seeks to embed and reproduce structures and curriculum that maintain a distinctive 'Asian' learning experience and outcome.

In navigating itself into capitalism's flows, Singapore is faced with a Hobson's choice. It has to reinvent itself constantly in order to embed productively into the nodal point of global capitalism. And it does so in a uniquely 'Singaporean kind' by mobilising on a contradiction that seems to work so well.

## Acknowledgements

## Endnotes

1    This quotation is adapted from Walder's (1998, p. 1) introductory chapter, 'Introducing the Post-Colonial', where he quotes Nayantara Sahgal who delivered a keynote address in the Silver Jubilee Conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury, in August 1989. The original quotation reads:

     First we were colonials, and now we seem to be post-colonials. So is 'post-colonial' the new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured? My own awareness as a writer reaches back to x-thousand BC, at the very end of which measureless timeless time the British came, and stayed, and left. And now they're gone, and their residue is simply one more layer added to the layer upon layer of Indian consciousness. Just one more.

2    The access to technology is by no means equal. Oguibe (2002) argues in *Connectivity and the Fate of the Unconnected* that cyberspace or what he calls 'netscape' is not an all-inclusive terrain. He claims that there are 'conditionalities' that preclude largely the 'Third-World' from being part of the network community. It is not surprising then, he argues, that those who are connected are represented while those who are disconnected are either 'silenced' or 'Othered'. McConaghy and Snyder (2000) take the issue further by advocating web-based literacy practices that decolonise the 'symbolic violence' of racial representations, racialising practices and racism against Indigenous people in Australia.literacy.

3    I borrowed this obvious typo error for Singapore from Lee Weng Choy's (2001) book chapter, 'McNationalism in Singapore' as a semiotic term that constructs Singapore as a city of signs.

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# SECTION 3

## Pedagogical Interface:
Fractured identities and asymmetrical power

# PERVERSE HYBRIDISATIONS, QUEERING POSTCOLONIAL PEDAGOGIES

*Vicki Crowley*

## Abstract

*As a practice of exploring the limits of extant thinking in postcolonial pedagogy and social justice discourses, this chapter moves through a brief trace of themes and tenets that are core to postcolonial and queer theory. It then centres on a recent global clubbing phenomena – Drag Kinging. Throughout Europe, Scandinavia, South America, North America, the United Kingdom, Asia and Australia, Drag Kings are appearing and performing, pushing the boundaries of identity politics. It will be argued that Drag Kings and Drag Kinging are an expression of identity and identifications that simultaneously challenge the visceral and the corporeal. Arguably, it sits on the very edges of mimesis and hybridity and travels into worlds of knowing that are often inadequately captured through postcolonial or queer theory. Through a case study of Mario, a Drag King from the regional city of Adelaide, South Australia, this chapter sets out to install a series of positions that raise questions about the ways in which postcolonial theory and queer theory can be brought to challenge prevailing understandings of identity and subjectivity that are, more often than not, practised as singularities despite purported complexity.*

> Take any exercise in social mapping and it is the hybrids that are missing. Take most models and arrangements of multiculturalism and it is the hybrids that are not counted, not accommodated. So what?
>
> *Jan Nederveen Pieterse*

## Introduction

Some time ago when I was for the first time visiting a major tourist city in the south of the USA, I was starkly and harshly confronted by tourist literature that marked certain parts of the edges of the city as out of bounds and dangerous, and through its various codings, the edges were represented as especially dangerous to 'white' women[1]. Mulling over this I flipped to check information I had elsewhere collected on gay and lesbian spaces, bars and venues. This idle but routine checking to establish a sense of the city and the city's sense of itself through tourism triggered a steep moment of vertigo and, indeed, *déjà vu,* along with 'a certain degree of rage' (Spivak, 1986). Invariably, it is the very streets that mark the 'no-go' zones in terms of danger of the Other, and particularly the racialised Other, that other Others are to be found. As is so often the case, places coded as dangerous are home to 'diversity'. Not only as Jan Piertese might claim are the hybrids missing, but importantly the possibilities of hybrid space are whitewashed, gendered and sexualised in very particular ways.

This moment and repeated experience is neither trivial, nor small. It is a response and witnessing of the marking of frontiers, territories and boundaries whose reiterations effect separate histories and experiences belying lives that have always criss-crossed, been perverse and indiscrete. Like cities everywhere these 'dangerous' zones world travel, diaspora, mobility and margin. This is not outside the postcolonial and the queer. Arguably, it is indeed within their very, and often deeply, interconnected hearts.

The introductory anecdote is both description and interpretation suggesting ruptures to universality. It is intended to point to dividing practices (Foucault, 1982; Rasmussen, 2002) that are often perpetuated through pedagogies of social justice of postcoloniality and anti-homophobia. The assertion here is that invariably in schooling and education, practices of social justice replicate the sociopolitical geographies that circumscribe our cultural worlds. So singular is their focus that they reinscribe various forms of Otherness and particularity by marking territories and belonging through the mobilisation of tidy identities and identifications. Any pedagogy that does so practises historical and contemporary narratives that cordon and segment, compartmentalise, disavow and disallow. Hybrid actualities go missing!

In his recent article, 'Joined-up politics and postcolonial melancholia' (2001), Paul Gilroy makes mention of the importance of journeying 'to the limits of our political language', (p.158) reasserts by way of criticism that culture is process not property (p.163) and writes of 'the slow and unglamorous labour' (p.161) that is required as we unravel the historical shapings and implications of raciology, its effects and workings in our particular contexts. While these selective elements do

not constitute the substantive part of Gilroy's article, they attest to political commitment and endeavour that are required and critically so at this particular juncture in world politics where we face a profound shift to the right, deepening and hardening of antipathies to asylum seekers, the exiled and those historically marginalised. Just as the tendrils are tightening around the Othered through a re-racialisation, so too are the tendrils of vilification and denial of rights to queers (who may already be racialised Others) – these are by no means unrelated practices, though the representation of these as discrepant articulations is a vehicle for success and clearly one that education and schooling must monitor with vigilance.

Queers and the postcolonial as subjects and in theory may entail an indivisible identity and simultaneous identifications. Clearly, the postcolonial and queer are not parallel or equivalent. Yet certainly and at a theoretical level they share some common ground. Both are vexed and contested terms often accused of being distanced from lived actualities and in postcolonialism in Australia, for instance, overlooking questions of land and the Indigenous in favour of the migrant and 'ethnic'[2]. This suggests, as indeed this complete collection attests to, that postcoloniality will necessarily be read and understood as taking particular shape in particular contexts. Specificities and particularities do matter. So too do planes of overlap and resemblance. In order to disturb and unravel the at times oversimplified carriage of postcolonialism into education, I want, in broad terms, to review briefly the core precepts of postcolonialism and queer theory in order to illustrate shared preoccupations. This is a tactic that spotlights and highlights the strange educational disinterest or distance that postcolonialism holds to queer theory[3], and arguably to perhaps a lesser extent, queer theory of postcolonialism. Having noted the common ground and the irony of discrete endeavour, the chapter will loop back to locating postcolonialism and queer theory in education and schooling. From there I will turn to the small, though global, phenomena of Drag Kings[4] and kinging to note, in particular, the questions it impels about relations of performativity, mimesis and hybridity. Put in even more simple terms, it is to argue that this seemingly perverse and queer space is able to tell us much about the contemporary cultural workings of hybrid worlds that should never be mistaken as singular and static. It is here that the argument is made for the importance of disrupting preconceptions and broadening postcolonial pedagogy as hybrid and diasporic space and place.

## Resembling the Other – Some Common Precepts

Postcolonialism and queer theory attend to history, historiography, knowledge, power, subjectivity, identity, diaspora, desire, hybridity and politics understood in poststructural and postmodern terms as conflicted, contestable, unstable. Both are

concerned with issues of universality and a centre that elides its constituent fractions and mutually constitutive actualities. For postcolonialism these elements cohere around the coloniser and the colonised, the colonial aftermath, imperialism and Orientalism. For queer theory they cohere around the universal of heterosex, heteronormativity and the occluding of sexual diversities (lesbian, gay, intersex, queer, trans, homosexual). Both attend to the construction of Others as embodiments, questions of the normative, normalising and Othering gaze, imagined communities and communities created out of historio-political exigency rather than essence. Both are concerned with identity politics and assume diversely critical positions regarding essentialism. Both note the vexed and circumstantial importance of strategic essentialism, that categories are problematic yet important. Both attend to questions of diasporas, exile, alienation, belong-ness, globalisation and, in varying ways, both resist, analyse and critique over-determined constructions of self and Other. Both traditions and positions share an historical association with the workings of fascism and the holocaust. Both attend to the experience of those currently in the sights of the increasing shift to the right. Arguably, both adhere to a sense of continuity and interface without amnesia and see the political project as one mindful of dystopia and utopia, while desiring a place in the world unencumbered by the privations of hate.


[Insert Table 1 around here.]


Postcolonialism and queer theory are studied through literary studies, history, historiography, cultural studies, politics, education, psychoanalytics and philosophy. As theory and theoretical approach neither can be reduced to a single strategy, thus, crudely, there are queer *theories* and postcolonial*isms*. Both theorise the subject, but postcolonialism as a term, and while connoting the importance of identifications and subject positions,[5] does not denote an individual identity, whereas the queer in queer theory more readily lends itself to identity politics and the subject position queer. In everyday discourses, postcolonial subjects are unlikely to name their identity or mobilise an identity category of postcolonial. In everyday discourses, those outside the heterosex may name their identity and mobilise an identity category – queer. In this practice, the identity category of queer may or may not reference queer theory and queer theories.[6]

Queer theory is a much more recent theoretical practice than postcolonialism. It emerged as a theoretical and political approach to subjectivity and in critique of identity politics associated with gay and lesbian studies where identity politics were seen to drive theory. While postcolonialism is never theorised beyond the subject, questions of sex-gender/s are often derivative. What is of importance and especially to be noted in this discussion of the relations between theory and subject is the ease of slippage between embodied theory and identity politics. There can be no simple or automatic lines of connection between embodied theory and identity politics. The subject of theory has no necessary equivalence to its object-subject. This is another and important precept and site of resemblance between postcolonialism and queer theory – a precept that often goes missing in education.

The sketchy lines of resemblance drawn between postcolonialism and queer theory lie, however, across a core distinction about the nucleus of oppression for postcolonialism oppression (as noted above) lies in relations between the coloniser and the colonised, and these are questions of raciology and imperialism. For queer theory, the nucleus of oppression lies in relations between heterosex and other sexualities and these are questions of heteronormativity.

While this outline is brief in the extreme, several things emerge as critically important. First, while being internally complex and multiple, queer theory and postcolonialism do share a set of significant precepts. Secondly, postcolonialism and queer theory are articulated to subjects and histories of 'oppression', yet the terms postcolonial and queer are variously and unevenly attenuated to identity politics and identifications. Thirdly, the nucleus of attention for one is historical and contemporary relations of colonisation and raciology, and for the other, the historical and contemporary relations of heterosex and heteronormativity. The planes of distinction occur across significant common precepts from which a bespoken separateness must surely be brought into question. This is not to argue for an even more pure hybrid – it is to question how it is that each occludes the other. It is also to suggest a return to the zones of 'no-go', to see what criss-crossing lines exist and what they mean for our politics as educational practices.

Having traced a raft of not dissimilar terrains and distinctions, it remains crucial that neither be seen as synonymous with the other. For the purposes of this chapter, it is crucial to note that, given a series of political positions and an avowed though problematic and problematised immersion in hybridity, invariably the postcolonial is presupposed as heterosexual and queer is presupposed by white hegemony. While increasingly work exists that challenges such a universal baseline and assumes a conflicted, shifting and incomplete subject and humanity, it still remains that in

education and schooling the notion of postcolonialism is not extended to queer. The hybrid remains the singularly inscribed racialised body – always-already heterosexual.

## In Absentia: Postcolonial but not Queer, Queer but not Postcolonial

Schooling and education seem almost everywhere to occlude the possibility of a space of postcolonial and queer. In many ways the absence of cross-over is not surprising given that discourses of social justice in schooling and education are based on liberal notions of tolerance and inclusion – discourses in schooling within which both issues of racism and homophobia are recognised and located. If and where postcolonialism enters educational discourse, it is most likely configured amid issues of race, racism and multiculturalism as they were established a quarter of a century ago in the mid 1970s. If queer theory enters educational discourses, it is most likely configured and received amid issues of sexual health (HIV) and homophobia and as they were established in the mid to late 1980s[7]. Where they exist in education and schooling, racism and homophobia are invariably configured as sites of amelioration rather than radical reconfigurations and elaborate articulations. Contested though they are, the prevailing reasons for this reside in education's traditions of psychology and individualism in which historico-political issues are primarily constructed as problems of the subject and the subjective in identity. Schooling and education are thus more likely to take up questions of identity than they are politics.

While queer and the postcolonial lie at the margins of education discourses, the nexus of racism and homophobia has not gone without attention. Increasingly, it is a site of analysis in education and schooling – perhaps beginning with Didi Khayatt (1992), followed by Debbie Epstein (1993) and certainly continuing through the work of Deborah Britzman (1995) and others.[8] Edward Pinar's edited collection, *Queer Theory in Education* (1998), contains chapters that address questions of ethnicity, racialisation and queer sexualities (see Walcott; Sumara & Davis) as indeed do the edited collections of Epstein and Sears, *A Dangerous Knowing* (1999), Epstein and Johnson *Schooling Sexualities* (1998), Kevin Kumashiro's, *Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality* (2001) and Susan Talburt and Shirley Steinberg's collection *Thinking Queer* (2000) All of these contain chapters that directly address questions of ethnicity, racialisation and queer sexualities. None of these authors and these major edited collections, however, expressly address or index postcoloniality or, indeed, postcoloniality and queer. Even more conspicuously, the question of homophobia and racism is singularly absent from postcolonial discourses in education.

Identity within education is thus likely to occur as a matter of singularity, even where the subject may be considered hybrid. Hybridity remains a deeply contested term in postcolonialism with rejection of its biological affiliations with mutations and mongrelisation as only ever an example of abjection and ruin[9]. Postcolonialism's hybridity is often constituted and almost always implicitly as the embodied subject as admixture of coloniser and colonised. It is also embodied in space, place, histories. Hybridity raises questions of the ethical agent and reaches into issues of utopian postnational ethics of hybridity where issues of negotiation and exchange refract a subject constructed and represented as interactive and dialogic (Ghandi, 1998). Even across the conflicted terrains of postcolonialism's attention to hybridity – it remains terrain configured around race where issues of race and racism are constituted on, through and across the heterosexual body.

Hybridity in queer theory occurs amid questions of spaciality and temporality and the problematic inevitability of the presupposition of heterosexual/homosexual binaried embodiment. It is not necessarily the marked body or the body as marker per se that is at issue in queer theories' attention to hybridity. Here multiplicity of genders and sexualities constitute the site of debate about hybridity. The hybrid space claimed by queer theory, however, is one that is often prefigured and occupied by the white body or where it is not, such as in the important attention Linda Scholl gives to narratives of hybridity in multicultural education (2001), hybridity remains a *property* of mixed heritage and double identities rather than being a site that seriously disrupts conceptions beyond the individual.

Hybridity does not hold uniform or uncontested meanings in either queer theory or postcolonialism and, while this line of argument itself entails many, many difficulties and oversimplifications, for the purposes of this chapter, contestation over the term constitutes a site of resemblance that again points to the ironic and certainly curious practices of occlusion and elision. Where hybridity is contested in extant postcolonial literature, especially as allied to questions of essentialism, it often remains a question of the subject as always-already the unmarked heterosexual. The question of hybridity in queer theory is rarely one of postcolonialism.

More than simply cataloguing occluding practices, I would suggest that the questions of identity, space and place have been quarantined in education and schooling just as certain no-go zones appear in tourist maps. The issue of hybridity continues to loom large and encouragingly it remains unresolved.

In order to argue for the possibility of conversation between postcolonialism *and* queer theory beyond identity as the property of the individual in education and schooling, I want to now turn to the recent small, spontaneous yet global emergence of Drag Kings and kinging. While never free of collapsing the political into the

individual, the essence into the hybrid, Drag Kings and kinging, it will be argued, is a transverse phenomenon that pierces the stability of identity categories, makes explicit the performativity of subjectivity and identity, demonstrating multifarious identifications and, arguably, demanding a proliferation of identities that proposes a 'differing subject' (Chambers, 2001, p. 3) that is conspicuously unstable. It presents to education and schooling knowing subjects whose practices problematise easy adherence between individuals and singular identity categories. Indeed, it will be argued that this albeit small, sub-cultural phenomenon holds the opportunity to prise open no-go zones and to illustrate criss-crossed worlds. In here hybridity is as much about performativity as it is about mimesis; as much about space, place and time as it is about a recombination of inherited essences.

## Perverse Hybridisations. The Site of Expropriation: Clubbing, DK's and Drag Kinging

Drag Kings and Drag Kinging is a small, and in Judith Halberstam's (2002) terms, a sub-cultural phenomenon that has emerged in all continents of the world, most major cities as well as in some regional areas. Drag is neither a new[10], abstract nor obsolete concept or practice. It is most commonly, but far from exclusively so, associated with homosexual men's transgressive gender practices. In recent times, films such as *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* bring drag into popular lexicon though it is a lexicon often unfamiliar with traditions of classical drag in cabaret and burlesque, cross-dressing, transsexual and transgender embodiment. Women cross-dressing and performing as men in cabaret, theatre and film also has a long, but lesser known, history[11] and within lesbian histories is often associated with butchness and butch women (Bornstein, 1993; Feinberg, 1993; Rubin, 1992). Since the early to mid 1990s, major cities in the Western world as well as parts of the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand, Asia and South America have experienced a burgeoning of Drag King culture. Most of the documentation of this phenomenon has occurred in the USA where there are distinctive East and West Coast Drag King cultures (Halberstam, 1998). In the USA and UK, Drag Kinging seems mostly to be associated with clubs, clubbing, competitions that may include lip-synching (part of classic cabaret) or simply strutting the stage, being interviewed and audience appreciation as an indicator of drag success. In Australia, the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras has at various times included massed female to male drag/cross-dressing in celebration of television series such as LAPD or pop stars such as George Michael. In Y2K, Melbourne's lesbian and gay festival, *Midwinta*, invited international star and former Club Casanova owner and host, Mr. Mo B. Dick, to perform and host a Drag King competition[12]. In1996, Ben Dover performed solo in Adelaide, Australia, later

forming the Drag King troupe, Ben Dover and His (16) Beautiful Boys who took the audience by wild surprise as the culminating act at the Opening Party of *Feast,* the annual Adelaide Lesbian and Gay Cultural Festival in 1998. But Drag Kinging is not just an on-stage performance – it is also style, gender-play and transgendering practice of the everyday and overnight. The streets of Manchester Mardi Gras in 1999 saw, for instance, a Drag King accompanied by his girl-partner and baby in pram. The queered family was on sidewalk parade. Drag Kings are often to be found as ordinary punters in bars, as part of the crowd at gay, lesbian and queer events. Drag Kinging does not necessarily represent a transsexual trajectory or desire, nor does it necessarily signify a transgender identification[13], though some Kings identify as Trans Kings. Drag Kings may be heterosexual women, they may be any age, any socioeconomic background, any ethnicity. They may be young women at school. For quite some time in Adelaide and elsewhere there have been drag king workshops such as those reported by Shannon Bell (1993). Indeed, a workshop was held recently for young Adelaide women interested in Drag Kings and kinging. Some of the young women who attended were of secondary school age and still attending regular high schools.

Drag Kings and Drag Kinging are not easily defined, but some of their sensibility can be grasped through the names of venues and clubs: in the USA *HerShe Bar*, *Club Casanova* and Fast Friday Productions *DragDom*, in London *Club Confidential, Club Geezer,* and *Jewels*, in Adelaide *Enigma* and *Queer Lounge*. In Toronto the Manhattan Club presented the Dukes of Drag. Drag King names – which may be stage names or, as with Drag Queens, the drag persona – include: Lizerace, Elvis Herselvis, Justin Kase, Pencil Kase, Mo B. Dick, Tony Las Vegas, Dred, Murray Hill, Buster Hymen, Evil Case Boy, Retro and Uncle Louis (Halberstam, 1998; Volcano & Halberstam, 1999). In Adelaide there is Jock Jones, Jesus Wept, Roger That, Phil Anderer, Blak Elvis, and Ben Dover and his boys, Dick Head, Cool Hand Luke, Chip, Frank Lee, Mikki, Prof Anton D'Ik, Rick, Bazza, Mack, Tom, Hugh G. Rection, Mr Mark Up, Fabian, Michael; The Queer Boys of Quebec – Maverick, Mussimo, Inglebert, James and Rick; the Downe Brothers including the now solo, Mark Fitzpatrick.[14] The kinds of masculinities that are embraced include for instance retro, home boys, bear men, mountain men, boyz from the hood, barrio and gangland, queer boys, street rappers, classics of the screen, impersonation of male singers such as Elvis and Tom Jones, neo-nazis, pimps and 'ozzie blokes' (Crowley forthcoming; Halberstam, 1997, 1998, Volcano & Halberstam, 1999). The masculinities reflect popular, national and local cultures. Most of these are heterosexual masculinities and display a penchant for women. But not all are heterosexual.

Judith Halberstam notes that,

> Drag King takes what is so-called natural about masculinity and reveals its mechanism – the tricks and poses, the speech patterns and attitudes that have been seamlessly assimilated into a performance of realness'. (Volcano & Halberstam,1999, p. 62)

Importantly, Halberstam goes on to argue that Drag King performances 'are neither essentially rebellious and inherently transgressive, nor are they simply a harmless attempt to dress up the feminine in new garb' (Volcano & Halberstam, 1999, p. 41). Still further, she goes on to write, that 'Some Drag Kings confront us with the limits of gender, others confirm the intransigent nature of categories that we would like to wish away…Above all (Drag Kings) are contradictory, confusing – and intentionally so' (Volcano & Halberstam, 1999, p.41).

At the most obvious level, Drag Kings bring into question identity as *essence* in terms of genders and sexualities, but as the Drag King style and names suggest, the masculinities that are performed are much more than genders and sexualities. Through emphasis and understatement, the excess and seriousness of genders and sexualities, identity and identification, in some instances also bring the workings of raciology to centre stage. Questions of racism have been shown to be as acute in Drag Kings and kinging as they are elsewhere (Halberstam, 1998). I would suggest, however, that to stop at that point would be to miss the venturing into quarantined arenas that may be an active and useful staging of questions. Thus, just as Drag Kings and kinging emerge to bring an even closer interrogation of the limits of our practices and thinking around genders and sexualities and in particular an explicit rearticulation of genders and sexualities founded on an unhinging of sex-gender, so too is it possible that, through particular stylisations and representations, ethnicity, race and whiteness are shown to be sites of the varied and positioned meanings of 'race' and ethnicity in all their local, national and global complications. It is in here that hybridity moves well beyond a disenfranchised and simplified Other into an unfamiliar and disquieting self and acknowledged heterogeneity (Chambers, 2001), requiring a rethinking of the very premises that seem to bring categories into fixity. Drag Kings, kinging and clubbing may appear to be at the fringes of the worlds of the school subject. It may be, however, that these fringes have much to suggest to our understandings and positioning of a postcolonial pedagogy.

## Mario at the Mirror

Following a play about lesbian identity, a forum, 'Lesbian identities: You can't judge a Leso by her Outer', was held at *Feast* 2000 with a panel comprised of local

queer, lesbian personalities. One of the panel members, Ellen, presented a scripted slide show of her Drag King, Mario, who is one of Adelaide's most flamboyant, personable and notorious hirsute King's with ginger facial and body hair that any Bear Man would be proud to own.[15] Ellen describes Mario in his own and her terms as a 'handsome hunk of manhood', a bloke who makes 'other blokes very jealous' and who 'really drives the ladies crazy with his natural charm and good looks'. Mario's car is a red Holden Monaro with 'fake fur seat covers and a cupid doll on the dash'. Mario has a very elaborate life story. He is a married man with a 'missus' who 'looks after me very well, she's a good cook and gardiner so Mario never goes hungry at the end of his busy working day'. Mario had an early career as a travelling salesman selling drapery items to 'many ladies around Adelaide'. He was very popular with the lady customers, but never more so than when he decided to 'introduce his ladies to his new range of marital accessories'. Sales boomed and profited, so he bought himself a shop on the main road that leads out of the city of Adelaide to the Port area where Mario lives. Mario was involved in a legendary incident. When being filmed doing a promotional stunt outside his shop, Mario so distracted a driver that he caused a traffic incident. The accident, small though it was, did cause damage to two cars and forced Mario to reconsider his street spruiking. At the forum and on Mario's behalf, Ellen handed out a survey to the audience to glean ideas for a less hazardous publicity campaign.

The slides that accompanied this talk included shots of Mario grooming himself in front of a mirror and spruiking outside his shop. The slides also depicted Mario's domestic life, including shots with his 'missus', his 'hairy mutt Charlie' and relaxing with his family in 'rare… but always happy' get-togethers. The brothers, Luigi, Josephi and Giovanni, are variously described as less handsome than Mario, as consulting him about the ladies, he being 'older and wiser… in the ways of the ladies'. Luigi is 'very shy', Josephi is 'too busy' and Giovanni 'prefers to do other things'. As the names suggest, Mario and his brothers are not Australians of Anglo or Celtic heritage – yet Ellen, the woman behind and within Mario is. The slides that were shown included Ellen's 'real' home and garden, 'real family' – her partner, her dog and three brothers. But the photos involved the superimposition of an elaborated representation of ethnicity. Part of the audience to this representation and performance was as bemused as some audiences are when they first encounter Drag Kings, though the audience, for the most part on this occasion, was not 'new' to Drag Kings and kinging. The bemusement was of a particular kind and arose around issues of racism which, in Australia, is felt acutely and actualised across the historical trajectories of Indigeneity and 'ethnicity'[16].

The moment of bemusement is significant. It is moment and bemusement that entails complex cultural mappings and workings of a local, national and global kind. The bemusement involves ready ascriptions and accusation of racism understood in Australia as the impropriety of performing an ethnicity that one is not. It also involves a sense of impropriety around the fabulations presented to evoke and invoke ethnicity. The fabulations are read pejoratively as equalling and only being a mobilisation of stereotype. I do not want to suggest that there is no reason to pause to consider issues of stereotype and propriety, but I do think there is cause to carefully consider 'disappeared elements' (Butler, 1990), especially if they are considered in simple terms or as an emphatic assertion of 'no-go zones'. To do this would be to erase histories of communities that are manifest in Mario and the narrative of Mario's life-history.

Ellen's performance of Drag King Mario and the slide-show (re)presentation of Mario may be simultaneously speaking a series of alienations *and* affiliations. What is not made present in this slide show (and nor did audience questions lead to this revelation) is that Mario is named after a close teenage friend of Ellen's and one of her brothers. The friendship entailed a navigation of issues of racism and parochial Australian childhoods in suburban Adelaide, and while the ginger whiskered Drag King Mario bears no physical resemblance to Ellen's teenage friend Mario, his personable style, participation in family and direct participation in Ellen's family do appear in Drag King Mario's life-story and persona. That Ellen's 'real' house and family lend themselves to embellishment along overtly ethnicised lines also suggests lines of continuity in social and cultural practice that are never quite discrete and containable. Indeed, one needs to ask where is the ground zero in Ellen and Mario's 'real' world that is not cosmopolitan? Just as genders and sexualities are performative, so too are the accoutrements and histories of embellishment that enhance and imbue gender-sexualities with 'race'. From this, provocative and controversial though it may be, we can ask questions of ethnicity and 'race' – asking the questions as a form of open-ended inquiry – an inquiry that does not belie particularist *and* relational histories. Ellen and Mario enter no-go zones, but zones they have each been a part of. This being a part of, or in the space of, represents a cultural intervention produced by subjects constructed across 'contradictory relations between dominant and minority identifications' (Halberstam,1998, n22, p. 303). This is not to suggest an equivalence of experience. It is, however, to suggest that universality and authenticity continue to be terms and practices in need of intense interrogation.

The tendrils of this line of analysis are well inside deeply controversial issues of the hybrid, of identities and subjectivities. They suggest that a useful line of enquiry and critique is a consideration of a practice, to borrow liberally from Sedgwick, that

is 'directed towards a restoration of the multiple dimensions of relationality that underlie any performative situation' able to entail a project 'of articulating subjectivities that purposefully move across boundaries… as an exploration involving… the search for a responsive community, new forms of mastery and self-mastery… opportunities for pedagogical give and take and in particular, self-construction, self-legibility, and self-recognition' (2002, p.1).

This small cultural practice of Drag Kings and kinging is no haven of the idyllic or ideal exemplar of the hybrid. It does, however, illustrate the deeply knowing ways in which subjectivity, identity and identifications are performed and understood as imperfect and incomplete. The presentation of an argument about hybridity through Drag Kings and kinging is a direct response to the workings of postcolonial theory that have profoundly destabilised traditional Western modes of thought to bring a series of tensions to centre stage. There is a necessity to transform perceptions of the world and worlds as profoundly transversed. In today's global travelling of theories and bodies, space, place and subjectivity are more than likely to be perverse, contrary and hybrid.

## Conclusion

Drag Kings and kinging may well be a part of what José Munoz refers to as 'a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within' (1996, p. 148). It is also important to remember that the worlds that our students inhabit are varied and often little known to teachers. For students who are clubbers and interested in the cultural worlds beyond the mainstream, and for young lesbian, gay and queer students, Drag Kings and kinging may not be the obscure event that it may seem to teachers, educators and postcolonial conference delegates alike. Likewise, the cultural experience of our 'postcolonial' students may include familiarity with, and practices of sex-gendered embodiment that are beyond the strictures of western normative bodies, bodily comportment and presuppositions.

Thus, this paper is not advocating that clubbing and/or kinging ought to be a part of curriculum in any direct form of 'Drag Studies'. Rather, Drag Kings and kinging and associated clubbing acts as a site of reminder that hybrid worlds are worlds of expropriation and as such are worlds of cultural vibrancy not wholesale or partial victimhood. It is to assert that schooling and pedagogy need to constantly interrogate their practices of closure, their practices of singularity, their practices of heteronormalised racialisation and their racialising heteronormalisation. It is also to say that the lives of pupils and students may be and often are in delicious contradiction to the normalisations presented in schooling and education. Perhaps in education and schooling it becomes more important to ask: How has postcolonialism in

education and schooling considered its cross-overs, linkages and possible connections with queer theory? What cultural sites are available for considering a subjectivity that is conspicuously hybrid, able to bring into view the ironies of identity politics as they have been shaped by late millennial influences of feminism, postcolonialism, sexual and identity politics and globalisation?

Schools are hard places. Education is a hard process. As a student, both education and schooling require inordinate navigational skills – skills in being able to get what is needed, possibly even greater skills in terms of being able to get what is wanted. Secondary schools are places where maintaining docile bodies are the grist of the enterprise. The idealised body at the heart of schooling and education is, if nothing else, the profoundly white, profoundly heterosexual and the profoundly middle class consumer. Education and schooling have a number of policies, well intentioned, to ameliorate their core. These policies are, invariably, a source of alienation to those it intends to accommodate. Hybrid subjects and hybrid lives need spaces of possibility, perhaps even empty spaces, and by that I mean spaces that are not replete with the desires of a knowing pedagogue, but replete with the pedagogue that recognises the inkling, is able to hold the curtain back and wait to see what might be there. Hybrid bodies may be estranged bodies, but hybrid and estranged bodies live in worlds that are not only or always estranged. They have, seek and find 'homes'. Estranged school bodies glimpse worlds through clubbing and a part of clubbing at this very time is the queer zone where genders and sexualities are many and their practices, at times, defy the embedded desire for recognition and certainty. Educators and teachers do not have to spot the postcolonial queer or the queer postcolonial, but rather establish a curriculum that always supposes its presence or the presence of uneven hybrid spaces routinely inhabited by many in our postcolonial and decolonising times. Drag Kinging is not a synonym for postcolonialism or the postcolonial, but its hybridisation, its refusal of specificity, its mimetic playback of mimesis challenges the visceral and the corporeal that schooling so seeks to stabilise. What this holds for postcolonial pedagogies, and for schooling, is a moment of destabilisation that more certainly than not will be able to provide ground for the Other. It may be that transiting the perpetual diaspora is not lack, inadequacy, subjugation, effect without substance, but space and place of pleasure kept aside with some deliberateness. It may be that transiting a perpetual diaspora are perverse hybridisations and the queering of postcolonial pedagogies that refuse the absolutes of any identity in favour of a spatiality more complex than simple.

## Acknowledgments

## Endnotes

1    In Chapter 1 of *Beyond The Pale*, Vron Ware (1992) retells a particularly apposite cultural myth that exemplifies the workings of racism, fear, encounter, space and place – elements crucial to the privileged position of white heterosexual femininities. The irony of the tourist construction is that through my surface as 'white woman' I am deeply implicated in racism and racialisation. Erased sexualities do not minimise or mitigate this, but they should alert us to possibilities beyond the surface.

2    To speak about postcolonialism in Australia is to speak in deeply conflicted terrain where the notion of postcolonialism and the terms hybridity and diaspora are treated with deep suspicion despite the history of colonialism being a profoundly uneven experience for the Aboriginal peoples of the mainland, Tasmania and the Torres Straight Islands. (For a discussion of postcolonialism and education see *Discourse, 19*(3), 1998.)

3    Queer theory has a long and contested history, but generally can be taken in its most simple terms as, 'an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional gay and lesbian theories' (Jagose, 1996, p. 1). It is also characterised by indeterminacy and fluidity with, for instance, debates raging about whether or not queer is an identity.

4    Drag Kings are a recent global phenomenon. Judith Halberstam describes a drag king as 'a female (usually) who dresses up in recognizably male costume and performs theatrically in that costume' (1998, p. 232). Most familiar to people are Drag Queens who have over a 200 year recorded history. Drag Kings and kinging emerged in the mid 1990s as a part of queer performance and politics and while there are some connections with the traditions of drag queens, many argue that Drag Kings and kinging are distinct phenomena (see Volcano & Halberstam, 1999).

5    The centrality of the subject to postcolonialism is, for instance, forever and inescapably marked as critical through such foundational articles as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1988) – a writing in which the politics of the subject, rather than a self-identifying category is at issue.

6    It is impossible here to trace the complexities that are queer theory/queer theories and identity contestation. It is important, however, to note that popularly queer identities include heterosexual and bisexual identifications in critique of, or seeing themselves as outside the 'respectable', heterosexual. In this sense, queer may be a term mobilised to express a subject position that desires a fluid sexuality and sees fluidity as a social, cultural and perhaps

political critique of mainstream society and traditional Western construction and practices of family, sexual relations, embodiment, etc. Outside of this heterosexual-queer identity and identification, however, a queer identification is usually understood to denote and connote a critique of the categories lesbian and gay as being adequate representations of sexual identities beyond the heterosex. The meanings of queer and queer theory remain a deeply contested arena in gay, lesbian and queer identity and community politics. This discussion, however, shows immediate accord with Gayle Rubin where she notes that the 'realm of sexuality has its own internal politics, inequities and modes of oppression' (1993, p. 4).

7    Despite Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies in Australia, issues of homophobia and sexuality were accorded lesser attention than issues of gender-women and girls, and 'race' and ethnicity. The HIV/AIDS pandemic provided a window through which these issues, along with disability, could gain some leverage. Despite Australia's leading role in management of the HIV/AIDS crisis, programmes, especially in schooling, remain within health parameters that invariably rest on the notion of a healthy society in a cost-effective nation. This is not to ignore the radical intent of many activists and educators.

8    Discourses of postcolonial education, however, draw on a plethora of significant work such as that by Avtah Brah (1996), Isaac Julien (1994), Kobena Mercer (1994), to some extent bell hooks (1990) whom, while addressing issues of racism and sexualities, draw on the work of postcolonial theorists such as Franz Fanon (1970), do not take an expressly postcolonial perspective despite writing in and of decolonising spaces and places where the aftermath of colonisation continues to be acute for Indigenous peoples/Indigenous nations such as those in the north Americas (Canada and the USA). John C. Hawley's, *Postcolonial, queer* (2001) brings together essays that stage a global encounter between queer and postcolonial studies. While suggesting possibilities for new mappings, they are in social and cultural contexts outside of education and certainly outside of schooling.

9    This statement is a crude overstatement yet, in Australia it is often an immediate response to any use of the term hybridity. This is because of the contested nature of 'Aboriginality' and a history of the colonisers classifying Indigenous peoples as, for instance, quadroons, octoroons and this being the justification for the Stolen Generations – the practice of forced removal of children from their families. It is no small point in terms of issues of land, ownership, survival and belonging. Still further, the struggle is not yet over.

10   Some of what follows appears in different versions in *The Drag King Anthology* and has been used in papers presented at a number of seminars during the early stages of research on Drag Kings.

11   Indeed Australia's $20 note depicts Mary Reiby, one of Australia celebrated convicts. It is little known, however, that when apprehended for her crime of theft she was wearing male attire – a practice that at the time added to the severity of crimes committed by women. Among women convicted and transported to Australia, Mary Reiby was not alone in her practice of wearing men's attire.

12   See Club Victoria, http://www.fig.net.au/kingvictoria/

13   In research with Ben Dover and His Beautiful Boys carried out in 1999, only one Drag King defined themselves as 'possibly trans' (Crowley, 1999).

14   The Drag King scene in Australia is quite extensive and the King Victoria website provides examples of east coast kings and kinging: http://www.fig.net.au/kingvictoria/

15   Bear Men are homosexual/gay men who relish bigness and hairiness which for many entails a deeply complex political sexual identity and identifications. Drag King Bears are not common and Mario is not a Bear Man as he is avowedly heterosexual. However, some of his friends believe that he prides himself on appealing to Bear Men as well as to 'the ladies'.

16   In the trajectories of racism in Australia, ethnicity is understood in terms of the Chinese migration of the mid 19th century and post World War 2 migration that includes the racialisation of peoples from southern and eastern Europe prior to the end of the White Australia Policy. Ethnically identified groups in Australia after the late 1960s include 'migrants' and refugees from any nation or state. In Australia ethnicity is a racialisation that applies to any non-white migrant settler. It does not include 'Australian' or 'Australians' or Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander peoples who are understood and themselves of preferring to be understood through 'race' and as a 'race' of people. In popular parlance and multicultural discourses, people from Asia are referred to as 'ethnic' but they are also understood, in conglomerate terms, as 'race'. This means that place of origin or self-ascription in 'ethnicity' is ignored. See Ian Ang, et al. (2000), Ghassan Hage (1998) and John Stratton (1998).

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# RACISM, RACIALISATION AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

*Julie Matthews and Lucinda Aberdeen*

## Introduction

This chapter examines the complexities of racialisation and racism[1] in the Australian post-Reconciliation[2] context and illuminates the persistence and ongoing reconfiguration of settler mythologies. Few teachers and educators will be surprised to hear that racism remains as prevalent in Australia as elsewhere. Our intention in this chapter is to stimulate a deeper understanding of the untidy malleability of racial discourse in settler colonial contexts and to offer teachers and educators new insights into the ways it may challenged. To this end, the first section of this chapter highlights the ongoing legacies of racial thinking under settler colonialism, and the second section underlines more specifically its contradictions, contestations and reconfigurations.

We use the term racialisation and racial discourse to refer to the ideological or discursive process by which understandings, expressions and actions are expressed through racial, cultural and ethnic symbols and signifiers (Goldberg, 1993; Hatcher & Troyna, 1993; Hollinsworth, 1998; Miles, 1989). The use of racialised symbols and terms is not an effective indicator of racism. In a previous study, we showed that students' understanding of Reconciliation is racialised in as much as it is based on particular notions of 'racial' difference, which may or may not evoke overt racism (Aberdeen & Matthews, 1999). Distinguishing racism from racialisation enables us to understand the range, complexity and contradictions of the ways that 'race' structures the real and the imagined ways we make sense of, and express, our own and others' position and identity (Goldberg, 1993; Hollinsworth, 1998).

Australia is a settler society and the result of European settlement of non-European territories. In settler (or settler-invader) colonies, invading Europeans and their descendents killed and displaced Indigenous populations to become the majority and exercise political domination. Settler societies commonly regard pre-settlement

history irrelevant and date their history from European settlement. Indigenous labour and land are appropriated and justified through settler histories, mythologies and discourses embedded in notions of *terra nullius* (meaning land belonging to no one), dying race, fatal impact and manifest destiny. (McGregor, 1997). Culture and institutions are aligned with the 'mother country' and practices and policies promote unity and cohesion, deflecting attention from the historical and contemporary diversity of their populations. Finally, a range of coercive, ideological, legal, administrative and cooptive mechanisms include and exclude Indigenous and non-European migrants (Strasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995).

Postcolonialism often treats colonisers as unified representatives of European interests and practices (Stoler, 1992) and focuses mainly on the conditions of the colonised in colonies of occupation. Settler societies are historically and politically distinct from colonies of occupation such as India and Africa where 'indigenous people remained in the majority, but were administered by a foreign power' (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1998, p. 211). In settler colonies, the invaders stayed and the occupied territory came to represent home and belonging for the dominant majority and more recent migrants. The relatively recent achievement of national identity in settler-colonies, and failure to come to terms with the uneasy history of their coloniser history and status, make them particularly resistant to Indigenous pressure for change (Moran, 2002, Lawson, 1992; Strasiulis & Yuval-Davis, 1995). While racist and racialising colonial discourses may have emanated from the colonial centre, their mobilisation and mediation in setter-colonial contexts is distinctive.

This study of racism and racialisation under settler colonialism is based on a two-year research project funded by the University of the Sunshine Coast (1997-1998). In the second year focus group discussions were undertaken with forty Year 9 high school students of Indigenous and Anglo backgrounds,[3] at two schools. Enrolments in each high school were approximately 1,000, predominantly Anglo-background students. Twenty-seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in one school and nine in the other. Groups of 3-5 students were provided with five predetermined questions.[4] All students were advised that they could seek the assistance of the researchers if they needed to clarify the questions. Those of Indigenous or minority background were encouraged to form a separate group so they could speak freely and were not put in the position of having to listen to ethnocentric or racist viewpoints. The discussions within each group proceeded with minimal intervention of teachers and researchers. All discussions were audiotaped and later transcribed. The transcripts were then analysed to identify recurring themes concerning the sources of young people's understanding of Australian Reconciliation. The data showed that students rarely engaged critically with pre-existing knowledge and ideas

in their discussions. It was also apparent that teachers and school curricula materials were not a primary resource. Where school sources were cited, information was dimly recalled, disputed or distorted. What emerged from the transcripts were 'common-sense' accounts of Indigenous people where histories of settlement, colonisation and invasion were stripped away and replaced by the misinformed settler mythologies illuminated by the vignette below.

### *Re-doing Settler Colonial History*

This account of a school address was attended by one of the researchers and took place in a local primary school:

It is the centenary of Federation Day, 2001 on a sunny May morning in a leafy Brisbane suburb. Some 40 Year 4 primary students are seated in the school's amphitheatre. The predominantly Anglo-European students are gathered to hear the president of the local historical society address them about the history of their suburb as part of the school's commemorative celebration of the centenary of Australian federation. His address begins by talking about the significance of the suburb to the European settlers of Brisbane and moves to discussing the first land sales held there in 1859 and the European naming of features of the local landscapes. The fact that the landscape had pre-existing names given to it by the Indigenous people who had occupied it for over 40,000 years before the arrival of Europeans has not been mentioned by the speaker. Soon, enlarged laminated maps of the area showing its division into farming properties are shown to the children.

After some ten minutes, the first mention of the original inhabitants of the area is made by the speaker by way of a derogatory reference to them having been known as 'devils' because they were found to be frightening to the settlers. The fact that they may have been attempting to defend what was their country for generations has been overlooked. So too have the appearances of the Year 4 children with Chinese and Indian heritage as the speaker has told the entire grade that 'all' their great great grandparents came from either England, Scotland, Ireland or possibly Germany. Mid-way through this presentation, the speaker asks the students whether any of them know the name of the Aboriginal tribe which inhabited the suburb. Perhaps he plans to indicate that the area had another and much older history, but his purpose appears only to be semantic. No one knows that answer so he tells them, incorrectly, that it was the 'Tarbal' people. He means the Turrabul people, but his knowledge does not extend to realising that he is mispronouncing the term (Steele, 1983: 163).

The European occupation of the suburb and its 'gradual' conversion into a farming area and then a modern suburb have been depicted as natural, peaceful, rightful and worthy by the speaker. Upon conclusion, none of the children are the wiser to understanding that there is another history to the area which dispossessed the original inhabitants and left an ongoing legacy of Indigenous disadvantage today. It seems that all is well in this lovely Australian suburb. Its settler colonial history has just been re-done.

This narrative highlights a number of pertinent themes concerning the mythologising of settler colonial history. First, the certainty and confidence with which it is possible for a white Australian to speak of the history of Australian settlement as an orderly and natural civilising process in an educational context. Second, the persistence of a notion of *terra nullius* endorsing the naming of the landscape as if it were previous nameless. Third, the stereotyping and denigration of those who rightfully occupied and protected their land.

Many of the Anglo students in this project also positioned themselves as the rightful inheritors of Australia, where ' they' [Indigenous people] threaten 'us' [rightful setters] because Indigenous people: a) have no respect for property, b) misuse history to promote land claims, c) receive greater government assistance, d) are more leniently treated by the law and e) have more 'rights'. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the study were aware of such views. In addition, they reported that they were singled out, excluded and abused in and out of school. Both groups agreed that Aboriginal students would get 'paid out' (that is victimised) in school: '. . . if you think about it, if a Black came into our class, how many people would pay him out? I know David and John and Clinton'[5] (SA1:7). Students were well aware of those in their class with racist inclinations. For Anglo students, knowledge that Indigenous students would likely encounter racism was contradicted by the belief that they 'get it pretty easy' (SA4: 14). For Indigenous students, however, the awareness that they were likely to be 'paid out' heightened their vigilance and expectation of racist encounters.[6]

We want to argue that in this context Reconciliation and multicultural education are an inadequate response and that 'Aboriginal and Indigenous Studies, and even anti-racism, are often too narrow to adequately tackle the composite legacies of colonialism' (Crowley, 1999, p. 102). The problem is that the multicultural 'facts' of history and culture, as well as the 'counter-discourses' of cultural awareness and anti-racism training, are all able to be reworked and modified back into racial discourse and mythology.

For example, a number of students cited the film *Fringe Dwellers*[7] as a source of information about Indigenous people and culture encountered in school. The film

was not understood as an indication of endemic institutional and individual racism in Australia, but as evidence that Indigenous people are 'given' housing commission homes and are unable to maintain them: 'They get like housing commission homes and that. But they don't even treat them very well' (SA4: 14). Students did not read the images of poverty and disadvantage portrayed in the film as an indication of systematic and structured oppression, but as an indication of the inability of Indigenous people to appreciate privileges given to them. Gelder and Jacobs (1998) comment on the 'uncanny phenomenon' of 'a culture which sees Indigenous people has having 'too much' and 'not enough' at the same time' (Gelder & Jacobs, 1998, p. 16).

## Reconfiguring *Terra Nullius*

The doctrine of *terra nullius* became the expedient legal basis upon which the British Crown claimed possession of Australia in the late 18th century. It was over 200 years before the High Court of Australia overruled what became evident as a fiction. The pre-existence of land rights, known as Native Title, was finally recognised in 1992. By this stage, the legacy of colonialism had left its imprint permanently on the Australian psyche, landscape and social and political relations (Aberdeen, 2002).

While many Anglo students acknowledged prior occupation of Australia by Indigenous nations, they disallowed the connection of contemporary Indigenous people with past histories of colonisation in a number of ways: by dismissing connections as bogus; by locating them in the distant past; by treating them as impeding development and progress; and also by assuming a confidence in their own legitimate right to represent and occupy the normative position 'Australians'. All these provided self-justification for students' resentment and outrage towards Indigenous people and their traditional relationship to land

Historical disassociation allowed students to disconnect themselves from legacies of colonialism. Alternatively, where acknowledgement of sacred connection of Indigeneity and land was recognised, it was used to suggest that Indigenous claims to land prevent development and settlement:

> They just go, 'Oh, well yeah, we'll take that land there in the middle of Brisbane, eh. We used to own it two million years ago' (SA4: 6).

> ————————————————————

> Yeah, and like that Eddie Mabo guy, well, he might have been a bit of a true Aboriginal but, still how can they have all this land and we can't own it? We paid for it (SA3: 6).

> ————————————————————

> . . . this Aboriginal came along and said 'No, that's sacred land.' And so they couldn't build the house (SA1: 1).

Some students saw state attempts to redress the consequences of colonial seizures of Indigenous owned land as bowing to unfair moral pressure based on prior events that 'we' were not responsible for:

> But, they do get more and more.
> I know because they ask for it. And they go 'You stole our land', so you have to give us more money. And it's crap.
> Except we didn't steal it.
> We didn't steal it. We came here, and so, they're bagging us and shit like that… bagging us white people when it was like two hundred years ago that our… whatever it was. Yeah (S1: 12).

Even where students had a sound grasp of dispossession, they reported it as safely in the past and as indicating that the colonial project was over and 'we' won:

> The Aborigine people have been here for lots of thousands of years.
> Like sixty, fifty thousand years and we've been here for two hundred and we've totally changed all them, cause we came here with like guns and crap and they only has their spears.
> Yeah, we had guns and disease on our side.
> And we killed em all and then we took all their land (S4: 11).

Tactics of dissociation erasing the legacy of dispossession from the contemporary circumstances of Australia have problematic implications for teaching. It is difficult to see how acquainting non-Indigenous Australians with even more details of historical dispossession will automatically promote a greater commitment to change. The rejection of responsibility for past histories of invasion and settlement and subsequent privileges of whiteness in white settler society were evident in the comments below:

> I don't really understand the problems that were caused but they're sort of carrying it on and blaming now-a-day people and it wasn't really us.
> It's like what we did 50,000 year ago and we're paying for it.
> So it wasn't us that actually did it (S3: 3).
>
> ———————————————————
>
> Well they shouldn't make us [apologise] they shouldn't have to make us because we're not the ones who have done whatever they reckon we have.
> But we're the ones who came here and said, 'Hello, we'll have this land'.
> It wasn't us.
> No?
> Generations ago.
> I know but still…
> It wasn't us.
> It wasn't us who came along said, 'Oh we'll have this land' (S1: 6).

## Stereotyping and Denigration

Stereotyping and denigration are not the effect of misinformation, ignorance or lack of education and will not be swept away by correct information, tolerance and liberal multiculturalism. Stereotypes are an effect of efforts to install, secure and fix negative representations, where language and meanings are notoriously difficult to pin down and where words, ideas and representations articulate and form associations with others. It is precisely because language and representation are slippery and mobile that stereotypes must be constantly articulated to confirm and thereby outlaw particular differences. However, the reiteration of stereotypes necessarily forms new associations and calls forth new meanings. So while stereotypes seek to fix difference, their repetition makes them internally contradictory and thereby exposes their fragility (Bhabha, 1994a).

A large number of student concerns revolved around the myth that Indigenous Australians receive more Government assistance than other Australians or enjoy special privileges and financial exemptions:

> They get extra money, like, you know how people get like this extra money for like child custody and stuff. They just get it because they're Aboriginals.
> Because they're Blacks.
> It's shocking (SA1: 6).

——————————————————

> I don't see why they should get special rights.
> Well they're Aboriginal. Yeah, they were actually the original people here, yeah.
> Man what's that got to do . . . (SA5:4).

On the one hand, students criticised 'special rights' as unfairly based on 'cultural or racial difference', but on the other, they recognised that Indigeneity represents an original status outside this rationale.

> Below, Indigenous people are deemed unappreciative of their 'special rights' because they waste the money they are said to receive:
> They reckon they want more money and they just go and spend it on alcohol … they're richer than us (SA1: 21).

——————————————————

> We give them heaps and they just spend it on metho (SA4: 3).

Students thus locate themselves as the benefactor of Australian goodwill and monetary resources and the victim of perceived injustice and resentment:

> If you're living next door to Aboriginals we'll pay 10% rates or something and they'll pay like 2%.
> We give heaps and they don't take anything.
> I reckon it's unfair.
> They don't appreciate it (SA4: 5).

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Yeah, they always give em money and we don't get any.
It's unfair (SA3: 1).

Using stereotypes, myths and denigrating comments, students position themselves as standing for the Australian nation-state. 'We' white, Anglo-heritage students serve as a metonym for a state that carries the burden of financial support for those alleged to be ungrateful and undeserving. The relationship is hierarchical where non-Indigenous Australians and the Australian nation-state have the power to offer assistance, but at the same time it is inverted so that non-Indigenous Australians take on the victim status reserved for oppressed minorities.

A common theme in many discussions was the argument that Indigenous people broke the law and showed contempt for law enforcers. One student said:

They think they're above the law (SA4: 11).
_____

They do what ever they damn well please (SA1: 5).
_____

They're not scared of any one any more. It's even the police. They don't even listen to the police.
Just cause they're black that means that no white man can touch 'em, cause if they do then that means that they're discriminating against 'em which is stupid (SA3: 8).

In view of the fact that Indigenous Australians are more likely to be treated harshly by the police and over represented in crime statistics (Cunneen, 2001), the perception that they are treated leniently by law enforcement agencies and that they have more power is of concern. For example, one student commented:

I don't think that they should have power over us. Like how they get, they get let off easier with the coppers and everything (SA2: 1).

Again, such 'inequalities' were thought to be endemic and entirely unjust. Equality can prevail only if everyone is treated like 'us' (white Anglo-Australians):

The Aboriginals, I have nothing against them but they're saying that they to be treated equal and everything and this Abstudy thing. If Aboriginals are saying that they want to be treated as equals, as Australians, why do they go and accept all these benefits and stuff. They should get the same benefits as everyone else (SA5: 5).
_____

I think that it is not really fair that they get, you know, different, allowed to get away with things than us. I think that it should be all even (SA2: 2).
_____

If they want equal shares, like say Australia's hundred whatever, we should get fifty-fifty and they should get no more benefits… No one more gets more than, the same (SA1: 7).

Clearly the commitment to universal principles of equality (regardless of 'race') fore fronted in notions of sameness and identical treatment are not automatically concomitant with the recognition that 'race' based inequality exists, persists and cannot be addressed by treating everybody the same. Indeed, liberal notions of equality and justice manage to make the specific inequalities, such as those of 'race', appear irrelevant (Aberdeen & Matthews, 1999).

## Indigenous Students

Indigenous young people involved in the study were well aware of the contradictions of racism: 'We're not racist against white people. Why are they racist against black people?' (S2: 4). They experienced persistent racist exclusion and discrimination and, even when racism was not apparent in school, it was an experience that informed their knowledge of themselves and the world.

> I went to Dreamworld with my friend Shannon not long ago and … we were lining up for, well, she was lining up for the Tower of Terror, and, there was a group of black people, and they were Aboriginal, I think, and they were next in line, and they stopped it, and there were like two more seats left in the cage but they didn't fill it up. And they waited till they left and then they asked for two more people to get on it.
> It's embarrassing.
> Especially when it's like your friends are allowed to go in and you're not like … (S2: 23).
> They offered the following scenario:
> Aboriginal people, they get treated differently because of the colour of their skin.
> Yeah.
> Like sometimes, not in all times, but sometimes they do.
> And they get treated differently because …
> And like, say a whole lot of black people walked into a shopping centre, then the shop-keeper just looks at em and watches them and thinks that they're going to steal stuff.
> Yeah.
> But if like a whole group of white colours walked in there, they don't even care.
> Yeah.
> Maybe it's cause . . .
> Like, if at school like, if everyone's like, if two white people are having a fight and there was a black guy or black girl, you know they would really get in trouble.
> Yeah, the black person would get into more trouble than the white.
> Yeah.
> If at school there's a white person walking around and a black person walking around, and a bag got stolen, they'd blame it on the black person (S2: 3).

Realising that skin colour visibility made them the target of suspicion, blame and denigration, it is little wonder that Indigenous students commonly responded to situations in anticipation of racism:

> Researcher: When I sat down here, and you all sort of looked over there quickly because you heard the word Aboriginal, why was that? [Laughter]
> I thought, I thought . . .
> They were saying . . . something bad.
> That's what I thought.
> Yeah, that's what I thought, they were saying.
> We jumped to conclusions basically.
> Well, Like, we don't, we just sort of, when we hear it, cause we hear it a lot, 'Oh Aboriginals, you know. .
> . . . you always, you always feel it cause you've had it ever since you were like at primary school, it's a habit. It's just a habit (S2:15).

Indeed, it may appear to Indigenous students that an *effective* and *legitimate* means of forestalling the expectation of racist abuse and aggression is to develop a reputation for responding with aggression. Such reputations can culminate in the impression that Indigenous students are outside the discipline systems of a school, thus one Anglo-Australian student who had attended a primary school with a large Indigenous population believed that:

> I went to a really bad school actually to start with, my primary school years and there was …they were just bad. They were moving around in gangs and scaring everybody, making threats . . . they even brought knives and stuff to school (S3: 18).

The student's observation, in this instance that 'the school didn't do anything' (S3: 18), suggests that the complex racial dynamics outlined above were not adequately understood or addressed by the school.

It cannot be assumed that Indigenous young people are immune to settler colonial myths about the special treatment of Indigenous people. One Indigenous student observed:

> A lot of people are racist cause we get treated better than them, like we get money for Austudy and that… (S2: 2).

The fact Indigenous students are underrepresented in education (Partington, 1998) and state aid is provided to redress this makes it easier to go along with myths of special privilege than to counter assumptions and accusations of welfare-dependency.

A dominant narrative of settler colonialism features 'ordinary' Australians and new migrants successfully marching towards tolerant multiculturalism and Reconciliation. But as Hage (2000) argues, tolerant multiculturalism does not disallow the power to be intolerant. It does not change power structures and the capacity of those to exercise their power to be intolerant. Rather than assuming that racism and racialisation in settler colonies are things of the past, which Reconciliation enables us to progress beyond, we have tried to identify their specific forms and characteristics

in Australia. We have tried to show how 'the racist imagination turns the world upside down' (Cohen, 1992, p. 90) and that, in the Australian context, its appropriation of existing structures and discourses of power are hewn from discourses of settler colonialism.

The case of One Nation offers a graphic demonstration of the way that adopting the mantle of victim-hood offers those of Anglo background an ideal position from which to exercise power and practice victimisation (Fleming, 1998). To take on victim status, the Anglo-background students below directly invert the power hierarchy while at the same time exercising power:

> There's a lot of racial discrimination around and I think it's the Aboriginals but they're discriminating against us (SA3: 3).
> _____
>
> They don't have any social disadvantages; they get more money than we do now. They don't really have any disadvantages although they think they do (S3: 4).
> _____
>
> They shouldn't be treated like Royal family.
> They should be, they should be, treated like us, but they're not (SA4: 9).

## Interruptions

While we want to stress the powerful presence of racist and racialising discourse, student discussions did not string out in unidirectional racist lines. In many transcripts we noticed significant points of ambiguity and contradiction in the statements of individual dissenting students. At the same time as some students attempted to sustain or reinforce positions of power or privilege, others in the group managed to undermine that position. It is difficult therefore to understand student discourse as the exercise of power over powerless - oppressor over oppressed – racist over victim or coloniser over colonised (Bhabha, 1994b; McConaghy, 2000).

> Students were certainly aware of the material effects of racist discrimination:
> Sometimes Aboriginals think they're disadvantaged because they cannot get like proper jobs and everything because some people are racist. So that's why, that's why they can't get, like, that's why some of them are on the street and things, because they can't get proper jobs and everything because some people are racist (SA5: 5).
> _____
>
> But also, I saw these people up north and they were like really poor. And they were Aborigine people, and they wouldn't get any money because they were Aborigine people, and people wouldn't give em jobs because they were Aborigine people (SA4: 6).
> _____

> Yes, like you don't, you don't see half the, em, the amount of people that Aboriginals
> that do actually try and get jobs and stuff, it's all, you actually see is the bad people
> because they're like around the parks.
> They're the majority.
> But that, you don't, I don't really know if they are the majority because, you don't
> perhaps, you don't see the other half. You only the see the people that aren't, that
> are living in the parks (S3: 19).

One student recognised that there was a great deal of misunderstanding on the part of both 'Australians' and 'Aboriginals':

> I mean a lot of, teenage, and like, a lot of Australians have the wrong idea about em,
> Aboriginals and stuff like that, but a lot of Aboriginals have the wrong idea about
> Aboriginals and white people and stuff like that as well (S1: 9).

For Bhabha (1994c) it is the gaps and slippages in colonial discourse that enable its authority to be undermined. The persistence of 'neo-colonial' relations in the new world order not only authenticates histories of exploitation, but also prompts strategies of resistance such as 'mimicry' (Bhabha, 1994b) and 'sly civility' (Bhabha, 1994c). Claims to cultural purity and rigid cultural hierarchies are untenable because cultural identity is forged through the mutual imbrication of contradictory and ambivalent positions. Indeed, it is willingness to seize the productive capacities of hybridity which:

> may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the
> exoticism of multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and
> articulation of cultures hybridity. (Bhabha, 1994d, p. 38)

Racism and racialisation in settler colonies are ordinary, not monolithic nor clear-cut, and people do not line up as straightforwardly racist or anti-racist; this is why they are so difficult to address. In response to crude racism and reverse victim discourse, one student turned the discussion to highlight the negative connotations associated with the term 'black':

> But you know, just because they're Black doesn't mean that, you know, like, it's a
> bad thing (SA1: 2).
> Another student observed:
> But still they shouldn't, that's what I'm…… the point I'm trying to make is, we shouldn't
> judge people because we don't know them? You know what I mean? (SA1: 7).

This conversation ranged though common racist stereotypes and the use of pronouns 'they' and 'we' enabling one student to indirectly challenge the racism of others in the group.

In another group, a student responded to a string of racist mythologies with the interjection 'they all get pulled down. They all get paid out so . . .'. The accusation implicit in this comment was deflected by another student who said, 'We're joking David' (SA3: 2). Jokes and humour played an ambivalent role in student commentary.

In response to a question about what being Australian meant and how it might be different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, one student said, 'You can tell funny jokes about them' (SA3: 3). Although this group became preoccupied with telling racist jokes, participants were also aware of their constructions of Aboriginal-as-Other and the binary opposite of Anglo-Australian-as-Normal. At one point, a student began a joke with 'there were two children, an Aboriginal child and a normal child' to be met with laughter and the query 'A normal child?' (SA3: 11). Finally, a member of this group decided that the jokes were actually serious and said, 'Its not funny John it's racist' (SA3: 12). However, it is disturbing that racist jokes serve as the basis of some students' understanding of Indigenous people. Thus, in response to a question about the sources of their ideas, one student said, 'Media and stuff like that, magazines, jokes' (SA3: 14).

Students also used irony to contest and challenge both the sources and validity of one another's views and opinions:

> I think some of the kids that were stolen from their Aboriginal culture and were brought up with white people would have been pretty lucky in those days, because a lot of people just going around shooting Aborigines. Er, I found this out from, em, my grandparents. Well they, he doesn't like…
> Are they the Klu Klux Klan?
> No, they're not the Klu Klux Klan. But my grandparents don't really like Aboriginals.
> Well that's great, Bill (SA4: 4).

Many students struggled in their conversations to make sense of issues such as human rights, the stolen generation, disadvantage, racism and equality. In the absence of informed discussion and guidance, it is not surprising that they commonly sought recourse to popular Australian racist mythology. Confusion is evident in the following meandering discussion about social disadvantage:

> I don't think they are treated bad.
> No, why on every form…?
> I think they are.
> Why on every form that we fill out has it got…?[8]
> Yeah, exactly.
> Because they get right, they get special….
> Do you know?
> Why do they get special something?
> Why do they get treated differently? (SA6: 6)

The importance of making up your own mind was something one group of students spoke directly about:

> I get most of mine [opinions] from my mum cause she's very racist and she watches the news. I don't watch it that much but, I just get all the back draft from her, blah, blah, blah.

> Probably my main, main source is, you know how like you just sit down, like, you just like talk about heaps of stuff and everything. I probably get my main ones from my dad. But then I'll just disagree with him, have a big argument and then I'll make up my own mind.
>
> My family, for sure, everybody, everybody in my family, including my 8 year old brother, is a racist.
>
> So you're the only one that's not? (SA5: 12)

In response to the question, 'What is the source of your ideas about Reconciliation?', another group noted that their ideas and opinions were based on limited knowledge and understanding of Reconciliation and Indigenous issues. After a debate that cited racist jokes, made recourse to anecdotal stereotypes and touched on American movies, Pauline Hanson and racism, one group of students concluded:

> Well, I, for one thing, I think schools need to focus a little bit more on it, it's the only, really, the unit that we did on it was the one like last year eh. And it was like, not much. That's why it's so hard for us to answer these questions.
>
> Yeah.
>
> I'm gonna go and find my opinions.
>
> Yeah, exactly. We don't really know much about . . .
>
> Er, it should be taught (SA6:17).
>
> Another student said:
>
> Let us decided, like teach us all the facts and let us decide for ourselves (SA1: 12).

Clearly racism has not gone away. However, the interruptions identified above are critically important because they constitute significant points of intervention for students, teachers and educationalists, and raise the question of how spaces of dissent can be extended.

It is necessary to examine and deconstruct the specific contingencies of everyday experience, structures of knowledge, identities and the ways these are imaginatively reformulated in practice and thinking (Spivak, 1990). Emancipation will not be addressed through the assertion of minority, class, ethnic, racial or sexual identities, but by developing a vigilance to the ways in which these are able to be systematically appropriated to various forms of oppressive identity politics; to this end:

> the postcolonial teacher can help to develop this vigilance rather than continue pathetically to dramatize victimage or assert a spurious identity. She says 'no' to the 'moral luck' of the culture of imperialism while recognising that she must inhabit it, indeed invest it, to critique it (Spivak, 1993, p. 63).
>
> The phrase 'unlearning our privilege' is used by Spivak (1990) to emphasise the cultural locatedness of knowledge and truth. The situated or relational power of the privileged means they can choose not to be tolerant, benevolent or supportive, and to forget the histories of colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, capitalism, racism and patriarchy that enabled such positions in the first place.

## Conclusion

The history and practices of settler colonialism make it all too easy to disregard the privileges and benefits accorded by colonial dispossession. This point is reiterated by Crowley:

> Colonialism in Australia is a story about the dispossession, dislocation and genocide of Indigenous people. It is also a story of intervention and creative continuity … It is the story too of colonisers, and of what Ashish Nandy (1993) has termed as 'non-players' – those who refuse to participate in an imperial world view, even though they may be the direct beneficiaries of its effects. (Crowley, 1999, p. 102)

In this context racism is not either direct and overt or covert and institutional, and racial discourse enables particular logics and rationale to buy back, and reconfigure, anti-racism or multicultural intervention. We have shown that students are able to disassociate themselves from colonial legacies, to dismiss them as bogus, to refuse to recognise anything but their own positions and status as legitimate, and to mythologise Anglo-Australian citizens as the rightful representatives of the Australian nation-state. Indigenous students are also well versed in setter colonial myths and stereotypes. These inform their self-perceptions, responses and anticipated interactions.

We have argued that students already occupy spaces of resistance and these can be further explored in teaching and pedagogy. In addition, we have highlighted the creative and yet limited ways students use language and racialising concepts to speak about problematic and sensitive issues. Jokes and humour play an unpredictable role in sustaining stereotypes and also reversing or deconstructing them. The challenge for teachers and educationalists is how to underline and disrupt coloniser/ colonised, victim/beneficiary story lines; how to expose incongruities and contradictions; how to deconstruct myths, stereotypes and derogations, and how to supplement and extend limited vocabularies. In short, how to use the ambiguities and contradictions of traditional mythologies to open up points and spaces of pedagogical intervention.

## Endnotes

1   We want to distinguish racism, which we understand as beliefs and actions sustaining the oppression of racial groups, from more ambivalent practices of racialisation, which may not necessarily be racist in effect or intent. For instance the identification of oneself as member of a 'racial' group is not necessarily intended to subordinate others.

2   Aboriginal reconciliation is an Australian state policy intended to promote community understanding of the unique position of Indigenous Australians and address Indigenous social, economic and political disadvantage. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1991-2001) was established by the Federal Government. It generated official documents and initiated events such as study groups and a national convention. However, Reconciliation has been criticised for directing resources away from Indigenous communities.

3   We use the term 'Anglo background' to refer to the culture and white ethnicity of those who have the power to assume that their culture and ethnicity is 'normal' and 'ordinary' (Gillborn, 1996).

4   The disadvantage of self-directed focus groups is the difficulty distinguishing the voices of individual students in transcripts. Quotes followed by a notated reference refer to only one speaker and conversations between several speakers are referenced at the end of the dialogue.

5   Student names have been changed to secure anonymity.

6   See Essed (1990) and Matthews (2002) for accounts of tactical responses to the expectation of racism.

7   The film, directed and produced in 1986 by Bruce Beresford, is based on a novel *The Fringe Dwellers* (1961) by Nene Gare. The central character is an Indigenous teenager, Trilby, who aspires to better herself and her family. To this end, she persuades her family to move away from their community's impoverished settlement on the outskirts of an Australian country town into a white suburban Housing Commission home. The film vividly depicts the family's encounters with economic hardship to meet the rent, cultural conflict and racism which ultimately overwhelm their attempts to live in their new home. Trilby's aspirations, however, are not overwhelmed by this experience. At the end of the film she remains determined to make something of her life and again leaves the settlement to which her family has now returned.

8   Here the student is referring to the common practice in Australian schools requiring students to identify whether they are of Aboriginal or Non English Speaking Background.

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# OFFSHORE AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION:

## A CASE STUDY OF PEDAGOGIC WORK IN INDONESIA

*Parlo Singh*

## Introduction

Australia's public entrepreneurial universities have been immensely successful in their campaign to export higher education for international students. On 31 March 1988, 18,207 international students[1] were enrolled in Australian universities (onshore campuses), comprising 4.3% of the total enrolment. This had grown to 95,607 by 2000, comprising 13.7% of the total university enrolment (DETYA, 2001). In undergraduate programs, the overseas proportion of enrolments grew steadily throughout the 1988 to 2000 period from 3.8% to 12.0%. In the postgraduate sector, there has been an overall growth in overseas student participation from 7.3% to 20.5% (DETYA, 2001).[2] Furthermore, 'full-fee paying students from Asia constitute 80% of all international enrolments' in Australian universities, and 55% of all Asian students are from South-East Asian countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (Maslen, 2002, p. 2). Put simply, the provision of study-abroad education and training to international students is a major element of Australian export trade (DETYA, 1999, p. 11). In 1999, the industry was reported to 'earn in excess of AU$3 billion annually and expected to rise to AU$4.49 billion by 2001'(DETYA, 1999, p. 11).

Some analysts have argued that the most 'dynamic component of tertiary education' is likely to be 'international education within the students' country of domicile', and that this will eventually take over from this study-abroad market (Jolley, 1997, p. 63). As of May 2001, Australian universities had 3,895 formal agreements with overseas higher education institutions (AV-CC, May, 2001). Moreover, between

1993–1999 Australian universities had developed 625 offshore programs[3] in the Asia-Pacific Region (mainly China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore).[4]

This growth in the export of Australian education has been accompanied by a proliferation of studies centred on cost-benefit analyses (Baker, 1996; Creedy, Johnson & Baker, 1996; Jolley, 1997), future market projections in terms of onshore, offshore and online education delivery (Back & Davis, 1995; Cunningham et al., 2000; Jolley, 1997) and subsequent immigration patterns (Naidu, 1997). In addition, research policy studies have hypothesised about the nature of educational provision motivated by aid, trade and an internationalising imperative. Many of these policy studies have taken a critical stance arguing that an increasingly deregulated/re-regulated higher education system impacts on the quality of provision for domestic students (Andressen, 1992; Auletta, 2000) and institutional research productivity[5] (Humfrey, 1999). Policy research studies have also analysed Australia's strategic educational marketing efforts in the Asia-Pacific region, focussing specifically on issues of cultural homogenisation given the historical legacy of Western colonisation in this region (Jolley, 1997; Knight & de Wit, 1997; Kwon & Park, 2000; Nakornthap & Srisa-an, 1997). The rapid growth of the education export industry has also led to a spate of quality assurance studies aimed at measuring the educational outcomes for international students of offshore and onshore programs (Coleman, 1998; Dobson, Sharma & Calderon, 1998; Hacket & Nowark, 1999; Humfrey, 1999).

## Australian Offshore Higher Education and Pedagogic Work

By contrast to the studies reviewed above, I examine the pedagogic work of the education export industry through an analysis of the interview accounts provided by Western women teachers working offshore. Specifically, I examine one component of pedagogic work, that is, the construction of classroom knowledge about cross-cultural issues. Thus, my interest is in examining the ways in which historically constituted power relations between Western teacher and Indonesian student, and the current epoch of a global knowledge economy[6] (Castells, 2000; Hall, 1996), impact on the selection and construction of cross-cultural classroom knowledge. In this paper, I ask who inhabits the space of Australian offshore higher education in Indonesia. In addition, I ask what is the content and form of pedagogic relations in these spaces, what is sayable and speakable to whom, and how, and consequently what types of pedagogic innovations are imaginable? In such contexts, the Western woman teacher is often expected to negotiate ambivalent[7] and contradictory power relations. For example, on the one hand, Western women teachers are constituted as the bearers and distributors of desired Western symbolic and knowledge commodities. On the other hand, they are constituted as embodying undesirable attributes of Western femininity

and thus capable of relaying sexual mores, speech and dress codes that may produce trouble, disturbance and opposition (see Luke, 2001).[8] Thus, my focus is specifically on how Western women teachers account for the ways in which they attempt to develop the dispositions and demeanours associated with modernist Western critical thinking skills and English language proficiency, and at the same time show consideration or sensitivity for the religious, cultural and national differences of their student clientele.[9] Such pedagogic negotiations are in themselves part of the postcolonial legacy, a move to respect the difference of other cultures/religions and at the same time relay Western forms of knowledge, values and interests.[10]

National government policies on anti-colonialism, development and modernisation are likely to impact on the pedagogic relations between Western teacher and Indonesian student. For example, policies on economic development (pembangunan) were formulated by Suharto's New Order government in a concerted effort to Westernise and modernise Indonesia, and thereby constitute the nation-state as a player in the global networked economy. While the New Order's discourse of development was not overarchingly coherent, it was 'premised on numerous techniques and technologies at work in both punitive and non-punitive institutions including schools, health clinics, interest group organisations, the family planning programme and the bureaucracy' (Philpott, 2000, p. 92). In particular, Suharto's New Order government rejected the separation of state and civil society, and constituted an ethics of authoritarianism and Pancasila Democracy[11]

> ... in part through its discourse of "dual function" (dwi fungsi) in which the military is not only society's protector, but has a role in "stabilizing" and "dynamizing" society. Dwi fungsi therefore formed an element of the New Order's creation of conditions conducive to economic growth, partly because of the military's involvement in infrastructure projects and partly through its role in maintaining social order (Philpott, 2000, p. 166).

In terms of maintaining social order, Suharto's New Order government 'used terror, extra-judicial murder, intimidation, harassment and a range of other forms of intervention to silence individual dissent, to control particular interest groups such as journalists or to curb the activities of nascent mass-based opposition movements' (Philpott, 2000, p. 162). This hard line approach was concurrent with national economic expansion. Indeed, from 1990 to 1995 Indonesia 'experienced growth rates in its GDP of around 7% per year' (Daly & Logan, 1998, p. 13). At the same time, however, the Suharto government had to deal with internal cultural, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic conflicts produced in part by this modernisation project, as well as legacies of the colonial Dutch regime (Errington, 1998; Philpott, 2000).

As Anderson (1991, p. 120) has argued, the colonial Dutch regime constituted the Indonesian nation-state by attempting to unify a huge population that were and continue to be geographically fragmented , differentiated by religious affiliations , and culturally and linguistically diverse . The New Order government of Suharto attempted to fashion an Indonesian identity by

> … a relatively enigmatic politics founded upon routine explicit reference to 'traditional values' (*nilai-nilai tradisional*), 'cultural inheritance' (*warisan kebudayaaan*), 'ritual events' (*upacara*), … that bear an acute sense of social responsibility. Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of New Order rule is the remarkable extent to which a rhetoric of culture enframes political will, and delineates horizons of power. (Pemberton, 1994, p. 9)

This project of constituting an Indonesian identity began under Dutch rule through the technologies of colonial schooling where the common or unifying language of instruction was Bahasa Indonesian. Indeed, the Dutch colonial government was reluctant to expand Western education for the majority of the Indonesian people and only opened a few Dutch native schools 'at the primary, junior secondary and senior secondary levels, enabling a small number of Indonesians to study to the University level, either in Indonesia or the Netherlands' (Singh, Parker, Dooley & Murphy, 1999, p. 13). With independence in 1945, but particularly since the 1970s, the Indonesian government attempted to expand educational provision to all citizens (Schwarz, 1994). However, per capita expenditure on education continued to be 'very low and absolute education levels remain relatively low, particularly in rural areas, beyond the primary school level, and amongst women' (Singh, Best & Dooley, 1999, p. 18).[12] Moreover, in the 1990s three factors, namely, family poverty, the expense of technical and scientific education, and declining returns on personal education investments were identified as the major reasons for declining higher education enrolments, as well as enrolments skewed in favour of Social Science and Humanities disciplines (see Singh, Best & Dooley, 1999).

In addition, Suharto's New Order policies clearly differentiated between the role of men and women in economic development and modernisation. For example, the New Order's Applied Family Welfare Programme (PKK) assigned the following responsibilities to women:

> … correct child care; the use of hygienic food preparation techniques; securing total family health (physical, mental, spiritual, moral); effective household budgeting; housekeeping calculated to maximize order and cleanliness; and development of family attitudes appropriate to the modernization process. (Sullivan, 1991 cited in Philpott, 2000, p. 157)

Furthermore, women were relegated to the private sphere of the home and family, while men exercised power in the formal public political domain. Consequently, women were expected to manage the set of structures and relationships imposed by men in the public sphere. The demarcation of different responsibilities for men and women were backed up in school text books and modes of classroom and school conduct. The clear aim of these technologies of New Order governance was to 'produce young Indonesians who live ordered, disciplined lives who will serve nation and state by being virtuous citizens' (Philpott, 2000, p. 58).

In the remaining sections of this paper, I theorise one component of empirical data collected for an Australian Research Council funded study.

## An Empirical Case Study: Australian Off-Shore Pedagogic Work in Indonesia[13]

The data collected for the empirical study on exporting higher education involved a total of 26 interviewees in offshore campus contexts in Indonesia. All participants were involved in course administration, teaching, and/or recruitment of international students. English language and foundation studies (Bridging Course, Diploma, Certification and Foundation programme) courses were provided at the various offshore campuses. . These courses were designed to develop students' generic and academic English language proficiency, communication, study and computing skills. In addition, the courses were designed to teach Indonesian students about Western/ Australian academic and social/cultural mores. In other words, the main objective of these various courses was to prepare students for independent, successful participation in onshore Australian university studies. Thus they were illustrative of the customisation of Australian educational services and commodities to meet the escalating need of Indonesia to modernise and position itself within the global knowledge economy (Singh, Parker, Dooley & Murphy, 1999).

## Analysing Offshore Pedagogic Work

In this paper I report only on interview data collected from Western female teachers working at offshore campuses in Indonesia during the mid 1990s.[14] Although data were collected for the research project in Indonesia over a three-year period, all of the interview data reported in this paper were collected during one field trip in the mid 1990s. During this time, Indonesia was still considered to be one of the Asian tiger or miracle economies (Daly & Logan, 1998).[15] President Suharto was still in government, and the pervasive presence of the Indonesian armed forces in the polity continued and was 'legitimized in a discourse that linked concepts of order and development' (Philpott, 2000, p. 159; see also Editorial, 2002b, p. 15).

Shortly after the interview data were collected for this study, Indonesia was caught up in the Asian financial crisis or meltdown which destabilised the nation more than any other nation-state in South-East Asia. Thus the field-work took place before significant tensions were produced in Indonesia-Australia diplomatic relations as a result of the downfall of President Suharto in 1998,[16] the separation of East Timor in 1999[17] and the Bali Terrorist Attacks in 2002.[18] In the mid 1990s, due to the strategic policy initiatives of the Keating Labor Government (1991-1996), diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Australia were still sound. At the same time, however, some commentators started to attribute the declining enrolments of international students from South-East Asian countries to the anti-Asian racism tacitly supported by a Conservative government elected to power in early 1996.

I have also limited the data analyses to the cohort of Western female teachers that were interviewed during this field trip. My reasons for limiting the data analyses to this cohort of interviewees are two fold. First, the data revealed that Western women (predominantly white) tended to be employed in lower paid teaching-only positions, as opposed to managerial or administrative positions. Since my focus was on the construction of classroom curricular practices, these interviewees had a great deal to contribute to these topics. Second, given the historical legacy of colonisation in Indonesia, I was interested specifically in the content and form of postcolonial pedagogic relations between Western, white female teacher and Indonesian student. All the participants were asked questions relating to the three broad areas of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. However, in the following discussion I focus only on that data dealing with controversial issues in regard to the topic of cross-cultural studies encountered in day-to-day pedagogic interactions.[19]

I framed the following questions to guide the data analyses:

- How were curriculum and pedagogy about cross-cultural issues designed and negotiated in classroom practice? What assumptions about Western and Indonesian/Asian culture were articulated in these practices?

- What assumptions about the Western teacher, Indonesian student and the pedagogic relation between teacher and student were articulated in teacher professional talk about classroom practice? How were these assumptions negotiated/contested at the level of classroom practice?

## Data Analysis

Four main controversial themes were identified by each of the eight interviewees, namely, Indonesian government's position on human rights; everyday discourses about Islam in Australia; sexual freedom and tolerance in Australia; and Australian vs. Indonesian government policy on multiculturalism and racial/ethnic tolerance.

The construction of these themes as controversial and therefore sensitive and delicate areas for pedagogic negotiation are consistent with those identified by Philpott (2000) in his analysis of the discursive construction of knowledge in the discipline of Asian studies. Philpott (2000) argues that the statements of ambassadors, conference organisers, journal and newspaper editors, while not necessarily consistent, work to constitute limits and boundaries about acceptable and unacceptable topics of educational discussion and debate, and therefore what counts as public knowledge about Indonesia.

In what follows, I analyse the teachers' accounts of syllabus design in their respective institutional context, as well as their own innovations to this curricular design in their day-to-day pedagogic practices. Five of the eight teachers (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher E) worked in one institution (Institution A), while one teacher (Teacher F) worked at Institution B, and two teachers (Teacher G and Teacher H) worked at Institution C. At the time of data collection, Institutions B and C had only recently established an offshore campus in Indonesia and were still in the process of adapting pre-packaged curriculum materials developed in Australia or the US to meet the needs of the locale clientele. By contrast, Institution A had developed and marketed a 'Cross-Cultural Studies' unit that was incorporated across all of the English language courses. Teacher A, one of the middle managers at Institution A, suggested that the unit was designed to modify students' behaviour through coherent and logical development of instructional topics relating to cross-cultural awareness and understanding what it means to move from one culture to another. Moreover, she stated that personnel at the institution were constantly designing and innovating curricular for new niche markets. At the same time, all teachers were expected to work within the curricular and pedagogical parameters authorised by the institution.

### Case Study One: Institution A

All of the five interviewees who worked at Institution A had some involvement in the 'Cross-Cultural Studies' unit. Moreover, all these teachers spoke about the ways in which they personally modified the unit to incorporate specific curricular content on controversial issues in their respective classes. During the course of the interviews, three of the five teachers (Teacher B, Teacher D and Teacher E) stated that they had married Indonesian men and/or converted to the Islam religion. All three teachers had worked at the Institution between three and seven years, and claimed that they used knowledge gained from their personal experiences of inter-ethnic marriage and/or personal knowledge of Islam (religion and local communities) to inform their teaching practices.

## Pedagogical Strategy: Researching Sensitive Topics and Becoming Outspoken

Teacher B took primary responsibility for designing and updating the 'Cross-Cultural Studies' unit. In extract one below, she talked about encouraging students to research the topic of sensitive questions that they may be expected to answer when studying in Australia. Thus, individual students were expected to conduct a mini research project, present their findings to the class and then answer a series of questions or quizzes.

### Extract One:[20]

**R3:** *What would be some of the other main cross-cultural issues that are important?*

**Teacher B**: *Um, sensitive questions, there's been something that we've been trying to get the students prepared for, you know, questions that they might be asked but they would never be asked in Indonesia, or that they would expect Australians to ask.*

**R3**: *What sort of stuff?*

**Teacher B**: *Oh, East Timor of course. I had one of my students doing a mini-research project on the sensitive question topic and he surveyed expatriates and Indonesians, and 100% of the Indonesian students here surveyed expected to be asked about East Timor, whereas only about 60% of the Australians thought that they would. … [Other sensitive topics include] anything to do with politics and questions about Islam.*

In the preceding extract, Teacher B constructs the Indonesian student as a learner that needs to take individual responsibility for attaining knowledge about possible problems/conflicts that might be faced in Australia, and then develop strategies for dealing with these potentially difficult situations. Later in the interview she suggests that Indonesian students experience problems dealing with difficult situations in Australia because they tend to adopt a passive position in relation to knowledge acquisition. Moreover, Teacher B stated that *'generally Indonesians don't speak up when there is a problem, won't get aggressive, won't criticise or add any constructive criticism'*. These characteristics of the Indonesian learner were attributed to the rules of appropriate conduct, character and manner in the social order of culturally traditional pedagogy, namely, *'that the lecturer is always right'* and *'that you don't really criticise your guru, you know, your guru is, teachers are really really respected here'*. Moreover, Teacher B suggested that the dominant model of teaching/learning in Indonesia was based on rote learning[21] and respect

for the authority of the teacher. Demeanours or dispositions acquired through such culturally based pedagogical styles were not only difficult to change, but also meant that Indonesian students found it difficult to acquire strategies for dealing with sensitive or controversial issues in Australia.[22]

## Pedagogical Strategies: Personal Narratives, Role Play and Pragmatic Responses

Similarly, Teacher D suggested that the 'Cross-Cultural Studies' component of the English programmes dealt with cultural differences between Australia and Indonesia in terms of '*everyday social interaction and ways of showing politeness and respect'.* The learning objectives of the course were stated simply as: '*before they go to Australia they need to see there is another set of cultural rules in another country that's valid for another group of people'.* Teacher D suggested that she used two main teaching strategies to deal with controversial or sensitive curricular topics. At the beginning of the course she used the following teaching strategy: '*giving out family photos and [encouraging students to] ask about my in-laws and my husband* (who is Muslim) *and where we met. That's a good time to start talking about what questions you can't ask people in the West, in terms of the first time you meet'.* Towards the end of the course, Teacher D indicated that she used group work and encouraged students to role-play being an Australian student and participate in tutorial discussions accordingly.

## Extract Two:

**R3:** How does this sort of approach [non-questioning of teacher knowledge] affect your teaching style?

**Teacher D:** *My teaching style. I try to put them in groups to discuss things where I think they won't be open in front of the whole class. So particularly those difficult question ones, I break them into groups and hand them a card each and I say, "When you're got this card in your hand, you're an Australian asking the question", so that identity is taken away from them and they can be a little more candid, we hope.*

In extract three below, Teacher D speaks at length on the topic of dealing with controversial or sensitive issues in the 'Cross-Cultural Studies' unit. Specifically, she details her own pedagogical innovations to the unit initially designed by Teacher B.

## Extract Three:

**R3:** *Did you design the syllabus component of Cross-Cultural Studies or does it come from somewhere else?*

**T*eacher D***: *It has grown over the years. I don't know who's responsible for its beginnings but it has certainly grown and different teachers have added to it. While I've been here I added something on sensitive questions because my husband's Indonesian and when we're in Australia he says, "Look, if we go to one more party and one more person asks me about East Timor, I'm going to walk out of the room." He just got so sick of trying to explain what his government was doing there, and so that's been a very interesting area to develop because Indonesians find it extremely difficult to deal with questions about why their government, why their military is in East Timor and do they have democratic elections. And their answer is "yes, of course, we have democratic elections every five years." But to Australians it doesn't look democratic at all. I mean the same president for another thirty years or something makes everybody very sceptical. And then they have to explain that their system of democracy is different from our concept in the West and that everything is based on Pancasila.*

*(a number of turns deleted)*

**Teacher D:** *It's that word democracy. It's the associations it conjures up for Westerners, like freedom of speech and the right to criticise the government which just don't exist here. It'll land you in prison and that's what some of them say to me, they say, "If someone asks me about these things. Ah, its dangerous for me to speak about them." So well then there's your answer, just tell them then. "That even when you're in Australia you feel it's dangerous for you to speak openly about these things."*

In the above extract, Teacher D talked about how her marriage to an Indonesian man enabled her to understand the difficult questions posed by Australians to Indonesians. In addition, while her husband provided a polite public response to these questions, she witnessed his private anger and frustration when he was repeatedly expected to justify the political agenda and actions of the Indonesian government. Teacher D explained that such positioning was difficult for a number of reasons. First, under President Suharto's rule it was *'dangerous'* for Indonesian citizens to criticise the government. This *'danger'* was not lessened for Indonesian citizens if they were in Australia. Second, such questions failed to acknowledge the different paths that nation states may make towards modernity, and therefore the different interpretations and articulations of concepts such as democracy and freedom of speech during different phases of the modernisation project. Third, it seemed unreasonable to hold individual citizens responsible for the Indonesian government's

actions. On the basis of this knowledge, Teacher D suggested that her task was to assist students develop strategies to move across the boundaries regulating the different social, cultural and political norms of Australian and Indonesian higher education. Later in the interview, she stated that the young urban elite students did not find this particularly difficult, as they had already developed boundary-crossing strategies in their everyday lives. Teacher D suggested that young urban elite students:

> … *often travel overseas, go to Perth for a weekend or Singapore. Summer holidays are spent in Europe or America and they seem to separate the two worlds. They have absorbed some Western influence but they know what's expected at home.*

She emphasised, however, that this represented only a small percentage of the entire cohort of students enrolled at Institution A. By contrast, the civil servants had been so moulded that they tend to use the standard political/government line during classroom discussions, and refuse to engage in critical debate and discussions pertaining to controversial issues.

## Pedagogical Strategy: Getting Sequence in the Subject, Narrating Stories

Teacher E also talked about the organisation of the 'Cross-Cultural Studies' unit and the pedagogical strategies that she deployed in the classroom. She suggested that the knowledge that she had accumulated from her everyday experience of living in Australia could be taught to the students in order to '*reduce the amount of culture shock'*. According to Teacher E, Indonesian students planning to study in Australia were likely to experience '*culture shock'* '*when they go [to Australia] or … when they come back'*. In particular, Teacher E focused on the different forms of gendered social relations in Australia, namely the lack of physical contact between friends of the same gender. She also identified herself as a Muslim with strong contacts and connections with the Islamic community in Australia. Moreover, she stressed that students in her classes seemed to be '*put at ease'* once they were informed of her religious identity and access to Australian Islamic communities. Throughout the interview, however, Teacher E pointed out that her own tertiary qualifications were in Indonesian studies and not English language learning. She argued that it seemed *ironic* for her to be teaching Indonesian learners who had '*a terrible thirst for learning English'* because it was perceived as the '*international language'* and the language of the '*globalisation era'*. And yet she had no formal training in English language, English literature or teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (*see* Exley 2001a, b; 2002).

**Extract Four:**

*R3: Well getting back to the cross-cultural classes, how is the syllabus organised for that? Do you handle that or does that come to you from somewhere else?*

*Teacher E: We have a cross-cultural coordinator, Teacher B. Um, she gave me a list of what could be done and said basically it was up to me. It is very hard to get sequence in that subject because a lot of it is … stuff like touching, stuff like greeting, customs like that, and then on the other hand you've got things like, how to get a Medicare card, how to go to the doctor, very practical sort of [information], survival skills. It's very difficult to blend the two together, um, so we don't really, we just do something different each time. I try to get things to link if that's possible. Sometimes if someone asks me something in class I like to follow it up. We had a question about Sunday markets. You might think: "why would you want to learn about Sunday markets?" But it lead on to the idea of op-shops which people don't have here, getting second hand books, car boot sales and that's good for students on a low budget and it's a good way of having a look at a fairly common aspect of Australian life.*

The preceding account provided by Teacher E challenged Teacher A's account about the internal coherency and logic of the subject 'Cross-Cultural Studies'. Put simply, Teacher E stated that she found it difficult to develop a logical sequence of knowledge (skill and conceptual development) in the subject. While the everyday knowledge that Teacher E had acquired about living in Australia may have been of crucial significance to the students and perhaps a good entry point for talking about more complex issues, it is clear from the above account that there was no attempt to systematically develop a coherent set of skills or concepts. Moreover, it seems that there were no explicit criteria for evaluating students' acquisition of knowledge.

### Case Study Two: Institution B and C

By contrast to Institution A, teachers employed at Institution B (Teacher F) and Institution C (Teacher G & Teacher H) did not work from a locally customised 'Cross-Cultural Studies' curricular unit. At the time of the interview, two teachers (Teacher G & Teacher H) had worked and lived in Indonesia for approximately seven weeks, while Teacher F had been in the country for seven months. However, they had all worked in other Asian countries (e.g., Korea, China, Thailand) and with Indonesian students in onshore foundation courses in Australia for several years. While Teacher F had worked as an International Student Adviser ('*personal and academic*

*counselling and basic support services'*), Teacher G had taught *'Economics and Business Law in the onshore foundation program'*, and Teacher H had experience teaching *'English to refugees in Thailand'*. All three participants spoke about the cultural studies component of the foundation studies course (see extracts 6-8). While Teacher F and Teacher H talked about plans to innovate curricular content, Teacher G talked about her own experiences in mentoring the Indonesian teachers employed at Institution C to utilise Western modes of pedagogy. Teacher G suggested that, while the Indonesian teachers had acquired their subject discipline (mathematics, computing) knowledge in Australia (or Canada), they had not completed studies in curriculum, pedagogy or English language immersion methods (see Exley, 2002).

## Extract Five:

**Teacher F**: *Um we are implementing like it hasn't been done yet. But we're implementing a personal issue seminar for example, which is sex education. They do cultural studies in the sense of day-to-day life in Australia, writing essays, writing diaries about what they expect compared to here and just looking at Australian society as well. They, a lot of their essays are not to do with academic issues, they are to do with multiculturalism which is big in Australia.*

## Extract Six:

**Teacher H** *… a lot of the more modern text books when they start talking about say the English education system or the American education or the Australian education system or different cultures and beliefs, they do a lot of the advantages of and the disadvantages of both.*

## Extract Seven:

**R2**: *How are you trying to get them [Indonesian teachers] to be like Australian teachers, working in the Australian system?*

**Teacher G**: *Basically the meetings that I've been having I've talked about problems that I may have, imaginary problems and what I would do to overcome them. I also suggest that in, in future it may be a better idea to give demonstrations in the classroom. But the teachers are somewhat hesitant to do that, as they're not being paid to do that, they're only paid for their hours in the classroom so getting them to do any extra work is not easy. Besides teaching is quite difficult, yeah.*

All three interviewees talked about the need for designing curricular about cross-cultural issues. Teacher G spoke of the difficulty of teaching subjects such as *'monopolies in ((pause)) Indonesia or say government intervention in the Indonesian economy'* and her experience of student disengagement from lessons when these topics were covered in the curriculum. In addition, she talked about how one male Muslim student wore T-Shirts with *'sexually explicit language'* in class after her colleague, Teacher H, had presented a lesson on pornography. Teacher G suggested that, while this particular student's *'behaviour in class has been very much um, respectful to me, … his clothing is definitely not'*.

### Pedagogical Strategy: Analysing Media Representations:

Teacher H suggested that her teaching approach was not oriented to a model of the stereotypical Asian learner, but a model of a *'teenager'* with a *'short attention span'* and who is *'quickly bored'*. Indeed, she distanced her own position from the *'commonly held belief that Indonesian high schools encourage students to learn by memorising rather than participating in lateral thinking, or thinking for themselves.'* She claimed that this stereotype did not account for the fact that Indonesian students now participate in *'a wide variety of types of education and types of high schools'*. Moreover, she claimed that some of the students at Institution C had already studied in *'Language schools in Australia or America or Singapore during vacation periods'*. Thus these students had not been socialised simply within a homogenous traditional education system, and were aware of the *'expectations of a Western education system'*.

Moreover, Teacher H suggested that she drew on her own everyday knowledge of *'movies, music and what's good to go and see in Indonesia'* to encourage pedagogic engagement. Teacher H stated that while she weakened the boundary insulating teacher from student by recourse to a common identity of young person, she did not *'cross any cultural boundaries in terms of dress'* and was careful to wear attire deemed appropriate for the social order of the classroom. In extract eight below, Teacher H described how she dealt with sensitive or controversial issues, for example, racism against Asian students or questions about East Timor.

### Extract Eight:

**Teacher H**: I think most of them are aware, aware of such issues like racism[23]

**R1:** Is that um, something that you have to actively engage with your students here and prepare them for, is it a concern that they've got, or do you raise it as an issue?

**Teacher H**: None of my students have brought it up

**R1:** Hmm

**Teacher H:** Um, at all (( )) ahh, yet I'm sure they might. Um, some of the staff members here have mentioned it and said 'Oh yeah the numbers [of students] for Australia might be going down because of it' … some staff members here bought it [anti-Asian racism in Australia] up because student numbers went down. …

*R1: Ahh*

**Teacher H**: And um, there were four of us teachers here talking about it be cause they[Indonesians] also brought up East Timor as being an example of Australian press sensationalising things, that's how they saw it.

The crucial point to be made here is the expressed need to address the concerns of lower student enrolments at the institution. These lower enrolments were attributed initially to the anti-Asian racism depicted in the Australian media , and picked up by the Indonesian papers, namely the Jakarta Post, an English language paper. In addition, Australia's position on East Timor, as depicted in the Australian media, was raised as a possible subject of concern for Indonesian students planning to study in Australia. The pedagogic strategy deployed by Teacher H in this context was to engage the students in comparison and contrast media exercises, that is, to examine how the Jakarta Post and the Australian newspapers depicted the same events. The role of the Western media in constructing sensational stories was also a strategy deployed in the classroom. The objective of these pedagogic strategies was to defuse students' concerns about Australian racism.

## Discussion

In this paper, I have discussed aspects of pedagogic work in the Australian export education industry, particularly in terms of pedagogic relations between white Western woman teacher and 'Indonesian student' when dealing with cross-cultural studies curricula. I suggested that such an analytic focus was missing in the research literature on exporting education. Specifically, I examined the power and control relations constituting the selection and organisation of controversial cultural studies curricular content in day-to-day classroom practices. I argued that Western symbolic goods and commodities delivered by white Western women teachers constitute ambivalent and contradictory relations in offshore education programs. The data revealed that teachers within three institutions certainly accounted for the ways in which they

modified existing curricular resources through the use of informational resources garnered from personal, professional and academic scholarly experiences. At the same time, however, many of the teachers talked about the lack of sequence, internal coherency and logic to subjects such as 'Cross-Cultural Studies'. In addition, these subjects lacked explicit criteria in terms of evaluating students' acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, the teachers' own articulations of curriculum design centred on models of invisible or progressive pedagogy as the only viable option to the so-called culturally traditional Indonesian modes of pedagogy.

Numerous researchers (Bernstein, 2000, 1996; Martin, 1999; Sadnovik & Semel, 2000) have reported on the beneficial learning outcomes stemming from progressive modes of pedagogy. In particular, these researchers have suggested that progressive pedagogic strategies such as role play and discussion of personal experiences maybe beneficial as they 'potentially make possible the inclusion of the culture of the family and the community' into the pedagogic space of schooling (Bernstein, 1975: 127). However, in writing about pedagogic relations with students, these researchers warn that:

> … we must make very certain that … [progressive education] does not lock the child into the present – in his or her present tense. … we [must] seek to understand systematically how to create a concept which can authenticate the child's experience and give him or her those powerful representations of thought he or she is going to need in order to change the world outside. (Bernstein cited in Martin, 1999, p. 123)

Extrapolating their argument to this case study, it would seem that progressive pedagogies can work only if a number of conditions are met, including: '(1) careful selection of teachers; (2) adequate preparation time for teachers; and (3) time to construct lessons that allow students to recognize themselves' (Sadnovik & Semel, 2000, p. 197). It was apparent from the teacher interviews that few of these conditions were met. Teachers were given little  professional development before taking up positions in offshore campus contexts. They were often employed in short-term contract positions and expected to teach from prepackaged curriculum materials, with little  time for educational research, curriculum preparation and innovation. However, it has been argued that innovation by highly skilled knowledge workers is essential to maintaining competitiveness in a highly competitive global economy. If educational institutions are to remain competitively viable then they need to create work conditions conducive to innovative pedagogic work. In addition, they must develop professional development strategies to assist Western women teachers to deal with the ambivalent and contradictory pedagogic relations implicit in offshore pedagogic work. Crucial to such pedagogic work is reconstituting discourses of the

'Other' - variously constructed as 'the barbarian, the pagan, the infidel, the wild man, the "native", and the underdeveloped' (Trinh, 1989, p. 54).

## Acknowledgements

## Endnotes

1    The term international student came into wide usage to distinguish full-fee paying overseas students from domestic/local students (who were also expected to pay for tertiary education via full-fees or the Higher Education Contribution Scheme).

2    These figures hide the decline in the proportion of international students enrolled in research higher degrees (17.7% down to 11.9%, though a slight increase in real numbers), as well as the growth (five fold) in enrolments of international students in coursework higher degrees, from 6.8% to 34.0% of all such enrolments (DETYA, 2001).

3    The terms offshore education and twinning programs are used by the AV-CC (May 2001, p. iv) to refer to programmes which contain the following elements:

• The programme is conducted in accordance with a formal agreement between the Australian university and an overseas institution or organisation;

• The programme offered is taught partly or wholly offshore (distance education programmes to be included only when there is a formal agreement with an overseas institution/ organisation to participate in some way in their delivery);

• The completed programme results in a higher education qualification;

• The Australian university has developed the programme and has a responsibility for overseeing the academic standards.

4    Total number of offshore programmes between Australian universities and overseas higher education institutions at May 2001 was 1,009 (AV-CC, May 2001). 'There has been a significant growth in offshore enrolments of universities during the past few years with offshore student numbers increasing by over 167 per cent during 1996-1999 and accounting for a third of all overseas enrolments in 1999. Some smaller universities appear to be targeting the offshore market in particular with offshore enrolments accounting for between 60 and 95 per cent of overseas students.' (DETYA, 2001, p. 65)

5    Proliferation of customised, niche market course work masters programmes, rather than research higher degree studies. Intensive teaching required for a non-traditional clientele of students, particularly when insufficient attention is paid to student support services.

6    It was only during the late 20th century that the 'world economy was able to become truly global on the basis of the new infrastructure provided by information and communication technologies, and with the decisive help of deregulation and liberalization policies implemented by governments and international institutions' (Castells, 2000, p. 101). Appadurai (1996) suggests that the global relationship between five scapes, namely ethnoscapes (movement of people); technoscapes (global configuration of mechanical and informational technologies); finanscapes (commodity speculations and currency markets); mediascapes (electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information); and ideoscapes (political ideologies constituted through diasporas of intellectuals) is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable. Each of these scapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives (political, informational, techno-environmental), and at the same time each acts as a check and consideration for movements in the other.

7    'Ambivalence refers to affective states in which intrinsically contradictory or mutually exclusive desires or ideas are each invested with intense emotional energy. Although one cannot have both simultaneously, one cannot abandon either of them' (Flax cited in Ang, 1996, p. 44).

8    See Doherty & Singh (2002) for an analysis of the way in which cultural ambivalence is played out in foundation studies programmes designed specifically for international students.

9    In the Singh & Doherty (2002) paper we compare the negotiation of cultural sensitivities in on and offshore pedagogic work with international students.

10   Philpott (2000, p. 27) argues that in the era of decolonisation, it was unthinkable to constitute knowledge explicitly premised on the superiority of 'white races', partly because 'colonial powers were swept aside by Japanese military might, dispelling the myth of "Western" superiority, and partly because epistemologies of superiority were incompatible with the discourses of democratic triumph which accompanied the defeat of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan'. Thus post World War 11 or American Orientialist discourses constituted an 'underdeveloped third world' in need of political and economic Western development – a marked discursive shift of pre-WW11 British and European Orientialist discourses of the (racially) inferior 'native' population, that is, people characterised by 'indolence, laziness, sluggishness, backwardness and treacherousness' (p. 35). In more recent times, American Orientialism has constituted cultural accounts of South-East Asian economic development, political governance and religious movements.

11   'Panca Sila was Sukarno's formulation of pan-Indonesian beliefs and social values but has come to be, in the [Suharto] New Order's own English phrasing, a national ideology. It consists of five general social principles – Belief in One Almighty God, Nationalism, Humanitarianism, Popular Sovereignty, and Social Justice … Panca Sila is now complemented by an ideology of modernism and development, *pembangunan*' (Errington, 1998, pp. 57-58).

12

| Educational Attainment | 1980 | 1985 | 1987 | 1994 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. No schooling | 29.48 | 21.32 | 16.94 | 3.13 |
| 2. Some elementary schooling | 37.51 | 33.92 | 24.15 | 25.75 |
| 3. Finished 6 year Elementary | 21.26 | 27.41 | 34.43 | 33.87 |
| 4. Finished Junior Sec. Elementary | 4.02 | 5.79 | 7.62 | 10.79 |
| 5. Finished Senior Sec. School | 2.47 | 4.04 | 5.79 | 7.08 |
| 6. Finished Senior Vocational Sec. School | 3.28 | 4.77 | 6.94 | 6.35 |
| 7. Finished Diploma courses | 0.43 | 0.78 | 1.19 | 1.51 |
| 8. Finished University courses | 0.38 | 1.54 | 0.77 | 1.54 |
| Total % | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Indonesian Labour-force According to Educational Attainment(MOEC, 1997, p. 3)

13  For confidentiality reasons, all names of people and places used in this paper are pseudonyms.

14  This paper builds on/or sits alongside the following research papers published from the Australian Research Council funded project: Doherty (2001); Dooley & Singh (1998); Singh & Doherty (2002); Doherty & Singh (2002); Exley (2001a;b, 2002).

15  Singh, Best & Dooley (1999) argued that by Asian standards Indonesia was still considered relatively poor even in 1997. Moreover, between 1970 and 1997 it has been claimed that the number of Indonesians living below the poverty line declined from 60% to 15% (Oey-Gardiner, 1997; Schwarz, 1994).  The Asian financial crisis or melt-down of 1997 significantly increased the number of Indonesians living below the poverty line.

16  This was in part produced by the Reformsi Movement in Indonesia demanding greater accountability, transparency and democratic governance by elected political parties. There was a great deal of internal violence and hostility aimed at the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and at Western nation states such as the US and Australia which were perceived to be interfering in Indonesian internal/domestic affairs. The Australian embassy recommended that all Australians employed in non-essential services leave Indonesia.

17  This produced a rise in anti-Australian sentiment evidenced in the burning of Australian flags and threats against Australian interests/personnel in Indonesia, as the Australian government was perceived to be supporting the East Timorese fight for independence. Again, the Australian embassy recommended that all Australians employed in non-essential services leave Indonesia.

18  The Australian press repeatedly suggested that these attacks were against Australians, Westerners, foreigners and non-Muslims (Editorial, 2002a; Editorial, 2002b).

19   Interviews were open-ended. However, all researchers aimed to elicit comments pertaining to the following:

  (1)  Curriculum (What content is taught and who decides)

   •   Description of Courses, Curriculum Content

   •   Who designs syllabus and decides what content is included?

   •   Representations of Indonesian and Australian institutions, politics, everyday social relations

   •   Relation between Local Knowledge and Official Knowledge

  (2)  Pedagogy (How is curriculum content taught? Who controls what in terms of sequencing, pacing of knowledge? What is the model of the teacher and learner implicit within the pedagogic relation?)

   •   Cultural Norms in Pedagogy

   •   Teaching style/methodology used

   •   How do you use critical/democratic pedagogy and still ensure that cultural, religious and national differences are recognised/legitimated and not recolonised? (Use of provocation – communicative buzz)

   •   Asian Learning Styles, Model of the Learner

   •   Australian characteristics or attributes of higher education institution.

   •   Student Pedagogic and Local Identities

  (3)  Evaluation

   •   Course and teacher objectives in terms of student learning outcomes

   •   Why do the students enrol in this course? Student expectations of learning outcomes?

  20   Transcription Conventions (transcripts were edited to ensure clarity of meaning) R1,2,3: Researcher 1 (white Australian female), Researcher 2 (Asian Australian female),

Researcher 3 (white Australian male)

…: words/lines deleted

Bold: emphasis

( ): untranscribable

[Other sensitive questions]: text included to add clarity of meaning.

21  A number of classroom-based studies in Indonesia have found that lessons tend to emphasise rote learning and deference to authority. Patterns of classroom interaction take the following form: 'narrating … or describing …pausing at key junctures to allow the students to fill in the blanks. By not responding to individual problems of the students and retaining an emotionally distanced demeanor, the teacher is said to be sabar (patient), which is considered admirable behaviour' (Kuipers, 1993, pp. 125-126). ( See also: Raharjo, 1997; Oey-Gardiner, 1997; Oey-Gardiner & Gardiner, 1997).

22  The stereotypes about Indonesian culture and Indonesian learners have been contested in the research literature. For example, Lewis (1996) concluded that although authority-oriented modes of teaching and learning predominate in secondary schools, there is no evidence that Indonesian students in general are passive, lacking in autonomy and unable to criticise or take risks (see also Sugeng, 1997; and Pikkert & Foster, 1996 for similar findings).

23  A number of the interviewees talked not only about the racism that students might experience in Australia, but also racism against different ethnic groups in Indonesia

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# THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN EAST TIMOR

*Roslyn Appleby*

My plan to do in my future is, I want to be a political famous after I now english I will be going everywhere to every country (Agustinho).[1]

When learning English I feel beatifell so thingking language english the best for my country. And I know the offilar used language Porto but for young we dificult learning Porto but only Englsh very Easy for we …(Thomas)

all person must learn English because English is keys in the world (Bernardo).

## Introduction

This paper examines aspects of an English language development programme taught by Australian English teachers in the context of East Timor, a country emerging from centuries of colonial domination. The programme was conducted in 2000 in a disused university campus at the request of the university students, and was an interim measure following the referendum for independence and before the re-opening of the new national university. This tumultuous context highlighted various paradoxes in the standard practices of teaching English as an international language. Some of these paradoxes are explored through extracts from students' writing which reveal multiple, diverse responses to the discourses inherent in the conventional materials used to teach the English language.

The role of English in East Timor is presented within the broader historical and linguistic context, and the relationship between English and international development aid is also considered as a framework for understanding the classroom culture. The language programme was conceived as an exercise in the technical transfer of skills

for academic and vocational purposes, but the significant and specific historical, cultural and political influences needed to be acknowledged and accommodated in the construction of texts in the new language.

## The Historical Context

The colonial history of East Timor reveals centuries of external interference and occupation. For over 500 years East Timor was part of the Portuguese trade network and colonial system, interrupted when the island became a battlefield for Australian and Japanese troops in WWII (Dunn, 1983). Resistance organised through the Indigenous political system, embedded in traditional social, cultural and economic structures, was a feature of the Portuguese era, continued in opposition to Japanese control, and was harnessed in the struggle for independence from the 1970s (Taylor, 1999). However, in 1975 neighbouring Indonesia launched a full scale invasion followed by a brutal 24 year occupation.

Continued resistance to Indonesian occupation and pressure from the United Nations resulted in a successful vote for independence from Indonesia in 1999, but in the wake of the vote, violence, destruction and chaos engulfed East Timor leaving thousands dead, thousands more homeless and the country in a state of collapse. As an English language teacher living in the capital, Dili, in August-September 2000, I saw a society where civil, government and administrative functions had ceased; there was no water reticulation, communication facilities or systems to maintain law and order; no legal, health or education systems, traffic control or commercial and banking facilities. Dili had been all but destroyed and little remained untouched amidst the piles of rubble. In the streets of Dili armed soldiers, military weapons, equipment and vehicles of the United Nations Peace Keeping Forces were an ever-present sight. Overhead there was the drone of military aircraft, and in the evenings helicopters flew low over the ground with large spotlight beams swooping over beaches and palm jungles that fringed the city. A US marine fleet arrived to dominate the harbour with jump jets and Chinooks taking off from the deck of a giant aircraft carrier flanked by battle ships.

Following the vote in August 1999 and prior to the assumption of full independence, East Timor came under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). In August 2000, the Conselho Nacional da Resistencia Timorense (CNRT), a coalition of Timorese resistance groups, came together to consider policies for the eventual government of East Timor. Tension surrounded the first congress of the CNRT which coincided with the anniversary commemorations of the 1999 referendum. As the anniversary was commemorated there were celebrations in the streets during the day but at night the unlit streets

were lined with candles in a silent vigil to remember family and friends lost in the violence surrounding the vote and in the 25 years of Indonesian occupation. In the absence of an effective media service, news was spread by rumour. Stories circulated of imminent militia attacks, security alerts, evacuation plans and continuing gun battles between troops and militia on the border to the west of Dili.

The transition towards independence was a difficult and frustrating process, made possible with the support of foreign aid and intervention of international agencies. A fine balance between independence and dependence characterised the transitional state and a resistance that had been maintained over the centuries towards outside intervention marked negotiations between East Timorese and foreign agencies in the process of developing the new nation. In this process, East Timor was connected to international political and socio-economic forces that were also connected to the use of English language.

## The Language Issues

Some 15 to 20 Indigenous languages are used in East Timor, with one of those, Tetum, functioning as a lingua franca across large areas (Hajek, 2000). Portuguese had little linguistic impact until the mid 20th century when the colonial administration embarked on a plan of 'linguistic acculturation' through mass education in Portuguese in order to 'neutralise rising anti-colonial sentiment' (p. 403). After 1975, Indonesian became the language of the state and the medium of education for a whole generation of Timorese, while Portuguese became the language of the resistance, and Tetum was strengthened through its association with the Catholic church (Hull, 2000b).

From September 1999, the arrival of the United Nations Peace Keeping Force, along with workers from the international aid agencies and UNTAET, raised the demand for English as a means to gain access to the economic, social and political benefits of the foreigner influx. The CNRT had declared Portuguese the official language, Tetum the national language and English and Indonesian unofficial utilities; but in 2000 the language situation was 'nothing short of chaotic' (Hajek, 2000).

Debate over language policy was fierce. It reflected the struggle to construct a national identity, and the struggle over political power and representation (Hajek, 2000; Hull, 2000b). For many East Timorese student activists, who had played an active role in the resistance but had been educated solely in Indonesian, the promotion of Portuguese threatened economic and political marginalisation. The students advocated that official status be accorded to Tetum, and also vigorously lobbied the United Nations for English language training. As a result, a training programme was conducted for some 1,000 students and was located in the disused university campus that they occupied.

The programme was delivered by a group of English language teachers engaged by a non-government aid organisation as part of the Australian relief effort in East Timor. Regardless of my personal beliefs, as a teacher on this programme I represented both the professional expertise of the English language teaching community and the cultural and political aspirations of Australia's interests in its northern neighbours.

The students' campus encapsulated the state of the capital. Surrounded by barbed wire, much of the building was fire bombed and bullet riddled, battle commands were plastered on the walls, and through the open windows the smells and sounds of the military and the city invaded the classroom. This constant flow created an awareness of physical connection to the political environment. It gave a tangible sense to our embedding in the context of life in East Timor and an awareness of the social, cultural and political influences we embodied in our relatively autonomous classroom space.

## Theoretical Framework: Conflicting Views of Development and English Language

The connection between development aid and English language programmes centres on an assumption that training in English, as the primary language of international communication, science, technology and academic study in higher education, will increase technical and specialised labour skills, thus allowing the economic growth necessary to alleviate poverty (AusAID, 1996; Dee, 1990). Further, the model for economic growth envisaged for most development programmes is based on 'the classic image of the West' inherent in industrialised market economies (Gertzel, 1994, p. 2). In this model, English language is viewed as a technical tool that is 'socially, culturally and politically neutral' (Pennycook, 1994, p. 164), and teaching programmes are generally delivered by native-speaker 'experts', despatched throughout the 'Periphery' with skills that are assumed to be universally relevant (Phillipson, 1992). Since English language training tends to emphasise efficiency in the transfer of skills, rather than questions of cultural and political power, recent programmes have been restricted to short time frames with a focus on measurable outputs, accountability and efficiency (Sharp, 1998).

Critical evaluations of this model argue that concepts of 'developmentalism' as a linear progress towards modernity ignore alternative values, ideologies and cultures, and support power structures that privilege Western knowledge (Remenyi, 1994, p. 2). Similarly, a critical approach to the spread of English as an international language focuses on its legacy of association with the dominant political and economic power of the British Empire and, since World War II, the United States. English has

been described as a language of class interests and imperialism which poses a threat to Indigenous languages and plays a role as a gatekeeper to socioeconomic advantage and influence in many societies (Pennycook, 1995). In this view, deliberate policies which ensure the hegemony of English have produced and reproduced global inequalities in which 'one part of the world has become politically, economically and culturally dominated by another' (Naysmith, 1987, p. 3). Such domination ensures unequal distribution of benefits from the spread of English, bringing positive rewards for some people, mostly in 'centre' countries, and harmful effects to others, mostly in the 'periphery'. This approach, therefore, claims that English language teaching (ELT) practices originating in the dominant English speaking countries, and operating within the restrictions of international development programmes, fail to recognise the social, historical, cultural and political context and relationships in which the language is to be used.

The challenge for development programmes is to find a framework for English language teaching that is other than the modernisation model, which links English solely with progress and development, or the critical 'Trojan horse' model which links the spread of English with the production and reproduction of global inequalities. Such models examine how English may be appropriated to specific cultural and political contexts of use so that the classroom becomes a site for engagement 'in the struggle to oppose the centre's claim to control over meaning and to create new meanings in opposition to the hegemonising character of Western discourses and English' (Pennycook, 1995, p. 53). The consequent formation of counter-discourses has often become the focus for language use in programmes which aim for empowerment. Certain understandings of language appropriation are influenced by Freire's approach to critical literacy, although Freirean pedagogy has also been criticised for a tendency to overestimate and romanticise the institutional consequences of human agency in social transformation (Luke, 1996). Nevertheless, the construction of alternative texts, drawing both from the appropriated language and the identity of the writer in a specific cultural location, can mark a resistance to the conventional focus of English language teaching and texts. This is one aspect of appropriation that can be seen at work in the writings from my classroom in the period of East Timor's transition to independence.

Despite extensive explorations of critical approaches to English language teaching in certain contexts, and critical analyses of the integration of English language and the discourses of colonialism, an ahistorical, apolitical approach continues to inform the English language classroom in many postcolonial and development contexts (see, for example, Kenny & Savage, 1997; Shaw, Lubelska & Noullet, 2000). At the same time, in the tumult of East Timor, individuals, community and national

identities are being constructed and English is being used not only to access socioeconomic mobility and modernity, but also to create historically and politically grounded identity and representation in a new language.

### Implications for ELT in Development

Recognising and highlighting the historical, cultural and political concerns of the local context offers an approach to teaching and learning that moves beyond the teacher-centred/learner-centred dichotomy. Teacher-centredness risks dominating the classroom culture with foreign or 'alien' values, interests and priorities arising from and relevant to the social arenas familiar to foreign teachers. The introduction of these priorities may result in silence and the reproduction of the inequalities associated with English. On the other hand, learner-centredness is a somewhat 'false' notion that is difficult to bring about in contexts where there is an expectation that the teacher will direct the learning process. Rather than this choice, a model for learning where a space is created for many different world views, life experiences and learning style preferences, embodied by teacher and students, could be utilised and the expertise and contribution of teachers and students could be explored. This would require teachers to be attentive not only to 'the historical and local conditions that influence identity formation when contextualising language activities in the classroom', but also to 'address their own sociopolitical assumptions inscribed within TESOL's theories and technologies of language acquisition' (Morgan, 1997, p. 447). In the interface between local concerns and global influences, teachers and students can explore the possibilities for new identities and knowledges to take shape in English. The following sections explore some of the texts that exemplify this interface between universalising forms of ELT and the resistance and appropriation of those forms in the context of East Timor.

## Affirming the Traditional/Modernist View

In many ways, the expectations of the English language programme affirmed the modernist/traditional approach that appears to dominate ELT practice. The East Timor programme was a short term 'emergency' measure, with foreign English language teachers, in their capacity as foreign experts, required to set a curriculum, employ appropriate methodology and achieve set outcomes for the course, with little or no preparation or opportunity to develop an understanding of the complex and chaotic local context. The aims of the course were to improve academic and vocational English and thereby assist students' access to higher education and job opportunities; the success of the programme was to be measured by evidence of a predetermined increase in students' language proficiency. The expectation of teacher-

centred authority in the classroom, and a lack of printed resources in the community, led to an initial reliance on fairly conventional methodologies (communicative, functional or genre based) and standard ELT textbooks for teaching. By looking at the textbook content and the responses of students' writing in the classroom, we can see some of the discourses that act on the classroom culture and the dynamic tension in the contact of the different discourses.

### The Promise: 'English can pick me up'

One mode of construction for identity in a second language has been explored in student second language (L2) writing practices. Following Weedon (1997) and Kramsch and Lam (1999), Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) argue that subjectivity is socially produced, and claim that 'the written self is crucial to the construction of an L2 identity' rather than being simply a reflection of a pre-given 'reality' (p.422). This section explores such constructions of identity and experience in students' written texts, through responses to textbook representations and through the link between personal, national and international positioning at an historical time of Timor's transition and transformation.

Students' writing included a range of texts from sentence level exercises, longer structured texts based on specific functions and genre, through to unstructured journal writing and texts based on a free choice of topics. Free writing in journals provided the space for students to represent their own experiences in English language. Extracts from unstructured journal writing by the students indicate how closely their identity was tied to the cultural politics of the new nation.

Affirming a view of English as holding the key to a better life, students often wrote of the importance of the language that represents modernisation, material success and knowledge in the world's wealthiest countries:

> English is the international languages very important to my self. I must learn English because we had inside globalization era with foreign country. Communication in English can pick up me in international community. I can have everything information for another country like culture, politics, economic, science etc. and to follow technology, microelectronica, biotechnolgi on the industries country like Japan, England, America, Europe etc. (Saturnina)

English represented as a necessary connection to the power of the international community to maintain Timor's freedom, as it emerged from historical isolation:

> After Timor Loro Sae got freedom on August 30 1999, English language is very important. because Timor Lor Sae cann't live self. This is important to make decision anything (Fatima).

Of course, the most immediate example of a wealthy community using English as an international language was the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This student's recommendations for the external agent suggest trust in the development agenda to deliver both reconstruction for independence and entry to the modern world:

> UNTAET to in East Timor directions to collection two asigment excellent how we looks at under here:
>
> first assigment to buildup come back in east timor. and secondly assigment or peporation East timor direction to independent total … in order can developmen timor become like many country in the world. (Sabino)

## Responses to the Textbooks' 'Image of the West'

Typical of international ELT textbooks, the representations of 'normal life' contained in the books available in the programme revolved around Western culture, depicting the patterns of daily life familiar in countries where such books are produced. Our textbooks showed routines of work and study regulated by clocks and timetables; travel in cars, trains and planes; shopping in supermarkets where every conceivable product is available; eating in restaurants; enjoying leisure and relations in comfort at home. Critical analyses suggest that these orthodox ELT materials, and the methodologies they espouse, embody particular cultural norms and ideologies (Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 1994 and others), interests and lifestyles alien to development contexts. Globally marketed textbooks, especially, represent materialistic and middle class norms and values in their representation of daily life (Brown, 1990) and embody assumptions that 'the West is best' and a state of modernity or 'normality' to which the rest of the world might aspire.

In Timor, the material 'normality' of everyday life depicted in textbooks did not exist. There were no trains, phones, libraries, classes, schools, job ads, banks, computers, washing machines, kitchen appliances, supermarkets, books or pets. In stark contrast to representations contained in the world of the textbooks, the lived culture of the students was marked by economic struggle, political turmoil and concerns about retribution for war crimes and repatriation of militia. Meaningful vocational or academic situations, which may have provided a focus for English language use outside the classroom, were difficult to distinguish. The language had little currency in the community, apart from situations where the needs of the transient foreign community were to be serviced, and the university had not been functioning for some time.

Students responded to the textbooks and their language learning activities in a variety of ways. Some, mostly those educated in off-shore Indonesian universities, adapted to the new behaviours and attitudes required in conventional ELT texts and methodologies; others responded with silence and confusion. Rather than interpreting the latter response as 'passivity' (Canh, 2000; Hiep, 2000) or educational 'deficit', however, it can be read as a form of resistance to 'alien discourses' (Canagarajah, 1993, p. 617), as a means of rejecting irrelevant texts (Auerbach, 1995) or as recognition that students in these situations rarely have the authority to be 'legitimate speakers' (Peirce, 1995). Both the 'adaptation' and 'rejection' interpretations indicate the independence and resistance of students to the dominant pedagogy, practices and texts of ELT.

Although most journal writing did not directly address the textbook contents, a cogent example of students' opposition to the alien discourses they represented was produced after a lesson where students studied pictures of supposedly typical Western houses replete with furniture and modern appliances. Such pictures are presumably intended to provide rich inspiration for vocabulary development; however, the message of wealth in the acquisition of such consumer items necessary to provide suitable comfort in a Western home provided the basis for some interesting responses. In the following extracts, alternative values are evident. One student's description of his house gave some insight into the cultural distance between a house, defined by material possessions, and a home that provides shelter and peace:

> I live in Cidade Street. West of Dili city. it is simple house and not have expencive accessoreis like expensive sofa, sterio, lamp or do not have expensive interior rooms and exterior rooms. But my family can be stay ther with shadow and piece [peace] (Florindo)

Another describes a house which is small and crowded but happy:

> My house is very small but I'm very happy. in the house I have four brothers and five sisters. In the house I have four bedroom. two bedroom to my father and brothers and two another bedroom to my sisters and I. I have a garden and my garden I to plant flowers and fruit … In the house I'm very happy.(Natalina)

Rather than relating to lesson content prescribed by textbooks, the most prevalent theme arising in the students' writing revealed a marked political consciousness. In this writing, students constructed a social and historical persona in English which located personal experience in a larger political perspective. These writings present a counter to the cultural representations of the textbook world. Recalling the strength of nationalist fervour that has marked many struggles for decolonisation, students

related both personal recounts of the resistance and also historical events in the national struggle for independence:

> Twenty five years ago when East Timor people fight with Indonesian regime. a lot of people feels under pressure. For example: discrimination, violence, warriors, etc. and untill September one years ago we celebrated liberation of East Timor which many peoples for another country give supports to our human rights. For now East Timor peoples have be makes everything and free nation. Free for speaks, free for works and security (Gaspar)

Students reflected on the enormity of the challenges involved in the nation's new identity:

> Understanding about nation identity and to proud as East Timor peoples like patriotism, my herroes and my country. but we have challenge on the future like the fight against illiteracy … In our future is good can proved by what are begin now. and gived contribution for our nation and our country (Mouzinho)

> As the world know about East Timor new country because the country start to zero(0). All the goods paroporty East Timor destroid by militia pro Jakarta so we will trying make and found building, construction and than people and my lang[uage] to better (Ismael).

In the majority of these texts, students maintained a positive representation of the current foreign intervention in Timor. However, resistance once again became evident as the months of intervention continued. Doubts about the development agenda to deliver its promise surfaced in both classroom debates and in some written texts. In the observations made in this journal entry, one student captures the sense of alienation and frustration resulting from the obscurity surrounding the workings of the UN:

> Everiday if we around on the streets and see many people very busy and staff UNTAET with UN cars very busy too but what are they doing? Maibe they have a meeting and spoke about East Timor future but how about action like development problems, educational problems and market orientation. UNTAET has progress about 10 months but can't programs for gived solution for emergency problems … (Maria)

Students writing about the Timorese language situation also represented the ambiguities and dilemmas facing the nation and individuals. A variety of responses to the fluidity of the language situation were expressed, with many students frustrated at the probable impact of the pro-Portuguese language policy on academic opportunities. On the one hand, this student saw the need for many languages to be used in connecting the people of the new nation to the world:

so to creaved work relation with others country, must need many language, including portuguese, German, france and English. So that East Timor people must study many language, first english language and portuguese … (Marcos)

On the other hand, the pressure to respond yet again to external forces by learning one or more new languages led to feelings ranging from anxiety to despair. This student was anxious about the need to learn yet another new language to re-enter university. The English training programme had been free, but without material access to jobs, the promise of economic independence evaporates. Further study, this time probably in Portuguese, is the only option:

Now, I have sprit for study but my difficult financial after English course, I hopeless for study because I'm difficult in the language Portuguese (Amaro)

### *Negotiated Texts*

In the complex culture of the classroom, curricula and pedagogy are mediated by both the teacher and students in a process of conscious and unconscious adjustment (Canagarajah, 1999). As a result, the teachers' planned methodologies, textbooks and syllabus provided only some of the initial elements of classroom practice around which teachers and students could negotiate teaching and learning. Over the course of the programme, as teachers and students shared ideas, knowledge and culture, texts were constructed jointly and used English to engage with aspects of Timor's unique history, as well as the current economic and political configuration. These texts engaged the class in an exploration of traditional narratives; the physical environment of Dili, including institutions that were previously closed to students; problems and challenges facing individuals and the nation; language and economic issues and visions for the future, both personal and national. The tasks related to these issues included regaining access to institutions such as UN offices and foreign businesses; examining the role of students in the resistance, the militia and the CNRT; constructing texts using memories of events in their personal history and the history of the nation; discussing material and cultural differences between Australia and East Timor; debating priorities for the UN and the new government.

### *Historical and Political Dimensions of 'Context'*

What do the students' written English language texts tell us about the context in which English language was being used? The role and impact of the UN, East Timor's relationship with Australia, the nation's past and future and memories of the years of occupation: topics such as these were recurrent themes in journal writing and were especially evident at the time of the anniversary of the referendum when most

students attended memorial services and celebrations. Considering the determination to write these stories, it was apparent at times that students were keen to integrate their experiences, views and related cultural and political concerns into classroom activities. Despite the difficulty of representing their 'lived experience' in conventional English language and the restrictions imposed by the programme parameters, these alternative concerns and experiences permeated classroom life and provided a clear contrast with, and resistance to, the topics associated with Western technical, vocational or academic texts in ELT textbooks.

The students' journals constituted a 'parallel syllabus' and a counterpoint to the conventional topics and focus of English language teaching and materials. Interestingly, they also represented the historical and cultural identities constructed by the students for the teacher, as the audience and a representative of an 'outside world' ready to witness their stories. These identities were not unified and singular, but encompassed a multifaceted response to the discourses carried in the English language. Students desired the benefits of socioeconomic mobility promised with access to the English speaking world, accommodating the dependence on 'foreign experts' this entailed. At the same time, their use of English marked a resistance to certain policies of the local political regime. They were also prepared to use the language to construct a reality based on their own personal and national histories, and cultural and political events.

The responses of the university students to English during the course of the teaching programme recalls Taylor's theme of 'resistance' that runs through Timorese history (1999) as a cornerstone of local response to external interference over the centuries. But the relationship between resistance, autonomy, accommodation and dependence is not a simple one. Indigenous resistance to the previous political regime led to the possibility of autonomy, but also resulted in dependence on other foreign agents for national reconstruction. In addition, dependence on external military intervention was required to guarantee continuing independence. At an institutional level, the assistance of international agencies was integral in the development of educational, civil, legal and governmental infrastructure for independence. Within the classroom, independence had brought the right to request and receive English language training, yet students showed responses of both accommodation and resistance to the discourses that were introduced as a result.

## Conclusion

Teaching in this situation is clearly a complex process intertwined with many other social, cultural and political struggles. In such a situation it is not possible to 'just teach English' from a pool of resources situated in the conventional

methodologies and materials of English language teaching. In order to teach professionally and ethically in such situations, it is necessary to retain an awareness of the role of English globally and in the particular local, historical, cultural, economic and political context in which it is taught. In this sense, the classroom is a microcosm of the world outside its walls, reflecting the forces acting in the cultural political environment, in the local and global contexts. However, the classroom is also a 'relatively autonomous space' (Canagarajah, 1993) in which the various discourses, introduced by teacher and students, can be explored with unique results. This concept lies between a deterministic view of classroom relations as reproducing the patterns of knowledge and power in the wider world, and a view of the classroom as a 'sealed box', a 'self-contained, autonomous system, insulated from external political concerns where teaching and learning take place' (Auerbach, 1995, p. 9). In order to allow diverse discourses to enter the culture of the classroom in a useful way requires a contribution from both teacher and students to curriculum and learning tasks. Such participatory curricula (Auerbach, 2000), developed from dialogic collaboration with learners, also requires an approach to planning, the setting of objectives and achievement of outcomes that is at odds with the pre-determined plans and outcomes, and short time frames of most language programmes.

Development programmes may conceive of language learning as an apolitical, ahistorical process in which both teachers and students are constrained to perform according to prescribed roles, focus on prescribed genres and achieve success according to prescribed criteria. However, in places such as East Timor where there is intense upheaval or change, social and political forces obviously permeate the classroom culture and can disrupt, or even reverse, these roles and expectations. Language learning programmes that adopt the institutional constraints of short time frames, restricted measurements of success, materials and methodologies developed elsewhere in the world, risk losing the opportunity to engage effectively with the local context in which students, rather than foreign teachers, are the experts.

In the transition to independence, between the end of one regime and the beginning of another, many possible pasts and futures are being constructed and imagined within the community, and some of these can be seen in the varied texts produced in the language classroom. In this language programme, the students' writing evidenced their desire to access success in the many fields where English is seen to be the key. Yet students also used the language to construct both personal and national identities that accommodate situated social, cultural and political influences. In this way, the target language is appropriated to develop a social persona 'not built on the [limited] identity of an Other in a foreign or second language' (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 422). The recognition of the students' multifaceted

desires in classroom practice challenges the transmission model of English language teaching and the limitation of language to strictly transactional functions, restrictions that persist in many development contexts.

In Timor the continuing demand for English seems inevitable, despite claims of linguistic imperialism, the threat to Indigenous languages and fears that the promotion of English will ensure East Timor becomes a 'cultural satellite of Australia' (Hull, 2000a, p. 7). Rejection of English does not seem likely, and so educators involved in the spread of English need to be aware of the implications of language programmes in the broader sociopolitical context and to be open to the many local concerns and experiences already present in the culture of the classroom.

## Endnotes

[1] Each quotation is identified by a pseudonym for the student writer.

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