

**DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN AN EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTE SPECIALISING IN INDIGENOUS
TERTIARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY AND
CRITICAL REVIEW**

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A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts by Research

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JANUARY 2009

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the organisational culture and work context at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) as it relates to diversity management and cultural safety/identity. This research will have wider relevance as a means to understanding organisational cultures in a globalising world where cross cultural collaboration is becoming commonplace. The philosophical underpinnings of this project are critical and deconstructionist with a framework based on the principles of Participatory Action Research while simultaneously incorporating an autoethnographic component.

The key concepts considered in this research include Industrial relations, organisational structure, relevant policies, affirmative action, both-ways and diversity management including cultural safety and cross-culture/cross-paradigm communication.

The term cultural safety is considered from the point of view of the literature and the participants. The types of situations the participants identified as culturally challenging are listed and the participants' reactions to these cultural challenges are divided into two main categories: Isolationism and complementarism which is further divided into incommensurability and (in)commensurability. Parallels are drawn between isolationism and solipsism and between (in)commensurability and Intersubjectivity before

examining the participants' own recommendations for improving the management of diversity within BIITE. The effects my own interaction with the literature and the participants had on my thought process during this time are also explored.

Recommendations for BIITE in relation to diversity are made. These recommendations incorporate the philosophy of both ways which underpins BIITE's current strategic plan and are based on the implementation of a more participatory management style utilising Flood and Romm's (1996) triple loop learning model. Recommendations are also aimed at educators teaching content which may be threatening to their students' cultural safety/identity.

Declaration of Originality

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

Candidate Date

I believe this thesis is properly presented, conforms to the specifications of thesis presentation in the university and is prima facie worthy of examination

Principal Supervisor Date

Acknowledgements

Primarily I would like to sincerely thank my final Principal Supervisor

Associate Professor Janet McIntyre for practicing what she preaches. She took me onboard at a time when my work lacked direction and I was seriously having doubts about my ability to complete. Janet made me feel very welcome but more importantly she made me think that my work was worthwhile and that I could complete. She always treated me with respect and kindness.

Next I would like to thank my colleagues and the participants of this study. They trusted me with their stories and I hope I have done them justice.

I think it is customary to thank my family next however they were honestly more of a hindrance than a help. Life often took over and I had to push my work into the background while I helped deal with the latest 'catastrophe'. Despite this I know that when this is all over my family will be there standing proudly by my side.

My final acknowledgement is perhaps a little out of the ordinary. I am a firm believer in balance and I decided early in this project that if I was going to push my mind to its limit I should do the same to my body. Consequently I began studying the martial arts half way through this thesis and I was recently presented with my first Dan in Tang Soo Do. My final thankyou therefore

goes to my instructors Mr. Luke Powell and Master Sharon Kimberly for helping me find that balance.

Chapter 1: Focus and framing: an introduction and statement of problem

1. Statement of the Problem and Area of Concern

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) project will examine the organisational culture and work context at BIITE as it relates to diversity management and cultural safety. The researcher is a non Indigenous academic and the data will primarily be gathered from non Indigenous colleagues, the aim being to enhance the mutual understanding of the challenges posed by cultural diversity in the workplace.

1.1. Principle stakeholder groups

The main stakeholder groups within the Institute include students, support staff, academic staff and council. The main stakeholder groups outside of the Institute include government organisations, Indigenous communities and non government organisations which either support or employ Institute students. Most of the relationships in the Institute are adult to adult.

The types of interactions described by the participants include academic to academic, academic to support staff (including management), academic to student and academic to community members. All of these different types of interactions were at times reported as culturally challenging. It is acknowledged that interactions such as those described can be problematic

in any setting. The difference at Batchelor Institute is the layer of complexity added to otherwise common sources of workplace conflict by cultural differences. Cultural differences can exacerbate and extend the imbalance of power in any professional relationship because they build on individual and institutionalised ethnocentrism (Fong & Gibbs 1995 in (Carberry 1998). It is the exploration of this layer and the effect it has on white academic staff, which is the focus of this project.

At the time of this research Indigenous Australian students comprised the bulk of the student body at BIITE. Non Indigenous students are permitted to study at BIITE but require special permission from council. Non Indigenous students are usually taught off campus.

The staff mix at BIITE can be best described as multicultural. Initially, participation was open to all non Indigenous academics within the Institute. Only white academic staff responded to each of the participant recruitment drives however, and this allowed me to focus my research even further by concentrating on issues pertaining to white academics within the Institute rather than the broader category of non-Indigenous staff. For the purpose of this project, 'white' is used to describe participants of European decent who do not claim a racially mixed heritage (Hitchcock 2002).

1.2. Location and context of the research

The physical location of this project is Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education located about 100km South of Darwin in the Northern Territory, Australia. Batchelor Institute for the most part, is managed by Indigenous staff together with non Indigenous staff and upholds Indigenous ideals.

The following is an extract from the BIITE website. It gives a brief overview of the history and purpose of Batchelor Institute:



“Batchelor Institute, formerly known as Batchelor College, began as a small annexe of Kormilda College, then a residential school for Aboriginal students on the outskirts of Darwin, in the mid-1960s, providing short training programs for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants in community schools. In 1974, the college moved to Batchelor, about 100 kilometres south of Darwin, and has occupied its present site in the township since 1982.

During 1990, reflecting the educational needs of Aboriginal people from Central Australia, a second campus of the college was established in Alice Springs. Later in the same year, annexes were opened in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

Over the last decade, programs have been expanded and diversified in response to the importance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have placed on gaining accredited awards in the areas of professional and para-professional occupations.

From a 1985 enrolment of about 100 students undertaking one teacher training program, the institute has grown to cater for over 3100 students in 2003 - from over 900 locations - studying about 80 higher education and vocational education and training courses, with over one-third of the students enrolled in higher education programs.

Batchelor Institute currently enrolls more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the higher education level than any other tertiary institution in Australia. The majority of the institute's students are mature-aged—between 30 and 45 years—while almost 63 per cent are women.

In 1989, the Commonwealth Government - through the Higher Education Funding Act (1988) - recognised Batchelor College as a higher education institution, though one outside the Unified National System of higher education.

In 1995, the college was granted autonomy from the Northern Territory Department of Education as an 'agency' within the public sector. It became the independent Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, under Northern Territory legislation, on 1 July 1999, the first ever education institution in Australia offering higher education courses to be owned and controlled by Indigenous Australians.”

1.3 Rationale for the research

The purpose of this research is to explore the organisational challenges facing Batchelor Institute in relation to cultural diversity. By cultural diversity I mean communication and understanding of values and perceptions towards teaching, learning and employment conditions across cultures. The research will have wider relevance as a means to understanding organisational cultures in a globalising world where cross cultural collaboration is becoming commonplace. Although this is a study of Indigenous/non Indigenous dimensions it has wider relevance for understanding cross cultural communication and industrial relations in terms of the following dimensions:

- Context of history of Indigenous marginalisation in Australia and the role played by Batchelor Institute in addressing this marginalisation.
- Task of Batchelor Institute to achieve better educational opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- Process of ensuring that Indigenous students are taught by Indigenous staff and non Indigenous staff who have mentoring colleagues and

students as their objective and the process of achieving diversity management in the organisation

- Exploring organisational culture at Batchelor Institute
- Addressing perceptions of non Indigenous and Indigenous academic staff in order to:
 - a) Create greater understanding and insight into the participants' experiences
 - b) Reframe challenges in such a way that it enables better communication and opportunities to address issues
 - c) Enable professionals to use participatory action research processes to reflect on otherwise taken for granted processes and routines and to address perceptions of power and to avoid stereotyping, by reframing problems in terms of organisational and industrial issues, rather than Indigenous non Indigenous issues.

I will argue that if this does not happen, then white academic staff will continue consciously or unconsciously to perpetuate the institutional racism evident in Australian society within BIITE. I recognise that I am making the assumption here that white academics who choose to work at BIITE also have a conscious desire to challenge the current, wider, dominant non Indigenous powerbase within which BIITE functions. In doing this I will examine the perceptions of both Indigenous and non Indigenous academics

employed at BIITE. The project will identify the cross cultural challenges, from a non Indigenous perspective, faced at BITTE, and explore how these challenges are worked through identifying the consequences of not being able to do so. This research might, in turn, be helpful as a springboard to organise discussion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff around the handling of diversity issues.

1.4 The research process

This project commenced as a participatory action research project.

Participants were recruited by e-mail and had input into all early stages of the project. This included determining the data collection methods as well as the questions which were to be asked and determining possible uses for this information.

20 non Indigenous academics participated and information was collected over a period of 3 years. Only 2 of the original participants remained employed at BIITE at the end of the data collection period. There were both male and female participants from the three main campuses – Batchelor, Darwin and Alice Springs. Some of the participants had been employed at the institute for several years while others had only been employed for a few months.

The majority of data used in my analysis was collected during one-on-one interviews with participants. There was also data collected during one group

session and by e-mail. This data was used mainly to verify the information collected during the one-on-one interviews. Originally participants were to respond to scenario type questions but this method was not utilised by the participants. It was also envisaged that there would be a series of focus groups to look at the data collected during the interviews but this proved very difficult due to high workloads and staff turnover and was abandoned.

Information was also collected from the Institute website and archives in the form of policies, minutes from meetings, procedures, legislation and rules.

Ethics clearance was obtained from both Flinders University and BIITE as detailed in chapter 4 entitled "Research Process".

1.5 The content of each section and/or chapter

Chapter one: This chapter provides an overview of the project. It sets out the aim of the thesis and provides information about the setting and the participants.

Chapter Two: Addresses the key concepts used in this research: industrial relations in terms of structures, processes and policies, both-ways, and diversity management including cultural safety and cross-culture/cross-paradigm communication.

Chapter three: Develops the philosophical assumptions that provide the underpinning for this study. This chapter gives the reader an insight into my interpretive decision making process used to create the theoretical arguments and conceptual framework of this research. This chapter also outlines data collection methods.

Chapter four: Contains the data collected from the participants and its analysis.

Chapter Five: Is an auto ethnographic exploration of my experiences as I interacted with the participants, the data and the literature.

Chapter Six: Summaries the major insights gained from the study and contains my recommendations. The chapter gives ideas for practical applications for the data in the form of policy development/staff development and education.

Chapter Seven: Outlines the limitations of the study, looks at the questions raised by this research and makes suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2: Key concepts

2.1 Introduction

This section addresses the key concepts considered in this research:

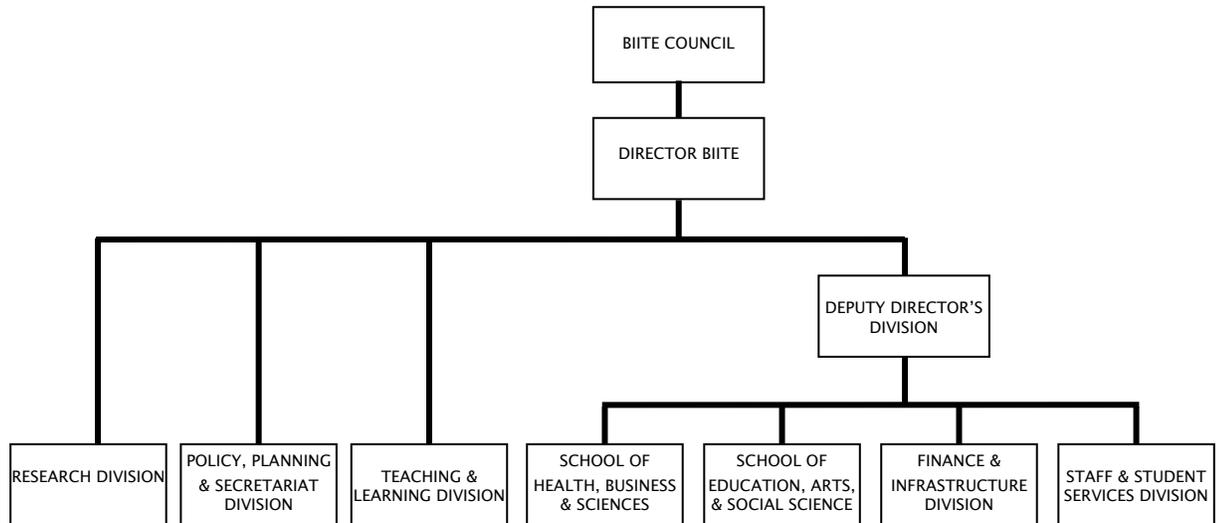
- organisational structure
- affirmative action
- relevant policies
- both-ways – curriculum development, Indigenous adult education and policy
- ‘diversity management’ including cultural safety and cross-culture/cross-paradigm communication.

2.2 Industrial relations

2.2.1 Structure

BIITE is governed by a Council and managed by a director. Council is constituted in accordance with the provisions of the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act 2005. Council acts on BIITE’s behalf to promote its objectives and interests (BIITE web site).

The following diagram illustrates the management structure at the time of this research.



2.2.2 Affirmative action

The Institute does not have a specific affirmative action policy. It does however have several policies aimed at increasing the participation and employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. The main ones include BIITE's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career pathway strategy, the Recruitment and selection policy and the BIITE Strategic plan.

The Institute's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment and career pathway strategy attempts to ensure that there is an appropriate mix of suitably qualified and experienced staff at all levels of the academic and

general staff, including a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to enable the Institute to realise its vision.

Three main goals are specified in this policy (BIITE 2002 p.1)
They include:

- *Increased employment of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.*
- *Significant Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander participation in all aspects of the life of the Institute.*
- *Maximising the influence of this strategy on employment & career development.*

The actions required to achieve this goal which are most likely to have an impact on non Indigenous staff include:

- *3.1 Progressively identify specific positions at all levels for recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*
- *3.2 Ensure that selection criteria give due weight to academic qualifications, professional experience and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience, traditions and forms of knowledge and learning.*
- *3.8 Ensure development and delivery of cross cultural training programs and learning packages, with all staff expected to participate in at least one such program each year.*
- *2.6.3 Institute practices in recruitment, selection, induction and professional and career development with a view to ensuring that: the Institute's teaching, scholarship and research community services and administration and support programs benefit from appropriate, non exclusive practices and the Institute contributes in meaningful and realistic ways to redressing inequalities in the workforce experienced by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people.*
- *2.6.4 The Institute's selection criteria and selection processes, with emphasis on requirements for levels of academic qualification; professional experience; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, experience and understandings (BIITE 2002, p. 2-5).*

The following Recruitment and selection policy and procedures (BIITE 1999, p. 4–18) also has the potential to have an impact on non Indigenous staff:

- *3.3.2 Each selection panel shall have at least one (1) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff member and whenever possible at least fifty per cent on the membership shall be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons.*

- *7.2 Affirmative Action – Where appropriate, selection criteria shall be formed so as to support the Institution’s policy of enhancing the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the staff of the Institute.*
- *Appendix C – Advice to Selection Panels – The Human Resources Management Policy & Practice Committee advises Selection Panels that, in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, consideration should be given to experiences, and to enhance the applicants’ capabilities and capacity to perform the duties associated with the academic positions for which they had applied. These are experiences and competencies that would equip an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicant to perform competently (able to do the job) and, in addition, bring an added and culturally informed understanding to the duties of an academic teaching Indigenous Australian students at Batchelor Institute.*

These augmenting experiences and associated competencies can be called ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and competencies’

The Human resources management policy & practice committee advises Selection panels that consideration should be given to strategies which would elicit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences and competencies.

The Human resources management policy & practice committee recommends the following strategies for use during job selection interviews:

- (i) *Ask all applicants general, open-ended questions intended to elicit their knowledge of:*
 - *some historical issues of importance to Indigenous Australians from the applicant’s perspective*
 - *some contemporary issues of importance to Indigenous Australians from the applicant’s perspective*
 - *at least three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations’ in the NT*
- (ii) *Give all the applicants particular scenarios involving Indigenous Australians in a range of cultural contexts and requiring a resolution to a problem. Ask the applicant for their preferred approach to resolving the situation.*
- (iii) *For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants seek further information relevant to their experiences which may augment their listed professional experience relevant to the position. Ask questions that may identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander competencies –*

skills and understandings that would be of advantage to the applicant's conduct of the duties associated with the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult students (BIITE, 1999p.17).

The new Strategic Plan contains statements such as “the operations of the Institute reflect a ‘both-ways’ philosophy that embraces values of respect, tolerance and diversity”. These concepts reoccur later under the heading Cultural Diversity which is expanded on by stating that “commitment to our ‘both-ways’ philosophical approach will ensure our ability to provide culturally sustainable education and training within a safe, sensitive and inclusive learning community”. The first of six Guiding Principles then suggests that ‘both-ways’ can be used to build a culture of respect and trust. In this work I will pay particular attention to the concept of both-ways and the value of respect for staff members.

Non-Indigenous lecturers are not discriminated against at BIITE. They are however, as illustrated by the previous policies, subject to ‘affirmative action’. This may take the form of allocated identified positions, employment on a cultural as well as a merit basis and the exclusion of non Indigenous staff from some meetings, celebrations and discussions.

While affirmative action within BIITE is generally supported and understood by non Indigenous staff some find the practice exclusionary. Fish (1993) gives a sound illustration of a cross cultural world without affirmative action

“When the deck is stacked against you in more ways than you can even count, it is small consolation to hear that you are now free to enter the game and take your chances”. I would like to suggest that affirmative action is well accepted as a general concept but at an individual level a non Indigenous staff member could feel disheartened as a result of an unfavourable outcome such as not getting a promotion after many years of competent service because that position has been identified for allocation to an Indigenous staff member.

2.2.3 Both-ways

2.2.3.1 Curriculum development, Indigenous adult education and both-ways

While the literature on both-ways that has emerged from Batchelor is obviously about both-ways and not specifically about Batchelor I have included this wider body of work. I have done this because both-ways is often portrayed as being the notion that underpins the practices and policies of the Institute and even research. In addition to this Batchelor may be the only national institution in the world which attempts to locate its practice wholly within a philosophy that acknowledges a native epistemology as its foundation, amid a wider philosophy of education (Fraser 2006), and as such I feel it deserves a specific mention in this section. While this discussion around the notion of both-ways is not unique to BIITE I will only be reviewing the literature on the topic of both-ways that has come out of BIITE. I am also

interested in both-ways literature that may have had an impact on the management of BIITE staff.

Within this category of literature there are several sub categories worth mentioning. These include the literature from the early 1970s - which was primarily the development of “two-way” education (Harris 1989 & McConvell 1991), the literature which came out of the Action Research in the mid 1980’s (White 2005), the literature from the 1990s which came about through the development of teacher education curriculum documents which start to specifically refer to both-ways and the more recent literature which emerged as a result of the development of cultural standards (Arbon 2006).

While I have explored the literature chronologically, other authors have taken different approaches to the literature, dividing the material into different views such as the ‘domain separation approach’, both-ways as ‘combination’ or ‘integration’, the ‘interactional’ or ‘process orientation’, and some other related approaches to Aboriginal education (Smith 2000).

The earliest both-ways documents were published in 1964 and 1973 (Watts and Gallacher 1964) (Watts, McGrath et al. 1973). Both these documents were government reports looking at Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory and contained recommendations for far reaching changes to educational programs. These reports preceded the introduction of bilingual

education in the Northern Territory, which in turn preceded the conception of Batchelor Institute and the notion of both-ways.

In 1983 the first three-year teacher education course offered by Batchelor Institute was accredited as an Associate Diploma. Along with this accreditation came a lot of theorising especially by non-Aboriginal educationalists (Morgan 1988). The subsequent reaccreditation in 1985 of this document resulted in a radically different document.

It was not until the build-up to and establishment of the first diploma course at BIITE during 1990 (Ubo 1993), that the literature on both-ways began to take shape. The debate around at this time is summarised by Kemmis (1988) in his Study of the Batchelor College Remote Area Teacher education Program 1976 – 1988. Both-ways is explored at a variety of levels and from many angles in relation to teaching and curriculum and remains contested.

Because it requires that Aboriginal teachers and communities have central roles in deciding what should be taught and learned and over how it should be taught and learned, it requires continuous negotiation and renegotiation (and the possibility of conflict) between Aboriginal people within communities, and, in the broader context of the administration of Aboriginal education, between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Kemmis, 1988 p. 139).

This resulted in the recommendation that teacher education at BIITE be accredited and controlled under the jointly-negotiated authority of the

institutions of Northern Territory and Australian Education, and Teacher Education and education in general and Aboriginal education organisations and Aboriginal communities (Kemmis 1988).

It does appear however, that the work being done at this time was far from being an imposed curriculum. Instead, it was a combination of curriculum negotiation procedures and problem posing, favouring a combination of curriculum negotiation procedures and a 'problem posing/problem solving' teaching strategy (Morgan 1988).

It is worthwhile to note that it is in precisely this environment that Ingram (2004) introduces his management style that he himself describes as a *hierarchical decision-making structure* thereby limiting what he described as *participatory decision-making*. I would like to argue that this is significant as this deviation from participatory decision making also had a stifling effect on, not only the exploration and development of both-ways through innovations like action research, but curriculum development in general.

The next significant body of literature did not come until towards the end of Ingram's time at Batchelor during the mid to late 1990's. This regeneration of the notion of both-ways occurred as a result of the exploration of the concept by two students, Mandawuy Yunupingu and Robyn Ober (2004). Together with elders, community members and school staff, the metaphor of Ganma

was developed to explain both-ways education in an Indigenous cultural context (Ober 2004).

Ganma is firstly a place. It is an area within the mangroves where the saltwater (non-Aboriginal knowledge) coming from the sea meets the stream of fresh water (Yolngu knowledge) coming down from the land. Ganma is a still lagoon. The water circulates silently underneath and there are lines of foam circulating across the surface. The swelling and retreating of the tides and the wet season floods can be seen in the two bodies of water. Water is often taken to represent knowledge in Yolngu philosophy. What we see happening in the school is a process of knowledge production where we have two different cultures, Balanda and Yolngu working together. Both cultures need to be represented in a way where each one is preserved and respected (Marika 1999, p. 112).

This article by Marika (1999) was written as a response to the then threats to bilingual education in the NT. This period was followed by a relatively quiet time as far as the both-ways debate was concerned as BIITE became more concerned with the push for standards, university status and the maintenance of funding (Ober and Bat 2007).

The both-ways debate however was rekindled by Arbon (2004) when she made an attempt to take the Institute 'beyond' both-ways towards the development and incorporation of cultural standards. A lack of detailed research undertaken, particularly by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

people, to further explore the both-ways concept or take it to new levels was identified by Arbon (2004) and a new era in the development of both-ways was ushered in by the following statement;

Much has therefore been neglected and little has been understood of the deeper connections, relationships or values important in the Aboriginal way of the both-ways concept. This lack of insight has resulted in the both-ways position not being clearly articulated and floundering in a quagmire of knowing it worked in some way but a lack of analysis to identify reasons why this occurred. There has been a resulting inability to carry the notion to more complex understandings, usage and connected practical application.

It is now time to move beyond the present situation in Batchelor Institute (Arbon 2004, p. 11-12).

Arbon's response to this was to facilitate workshops with very little success or resulting literature, except for historical accounts or a brief mention in papers on related topics.

The literature since the departure of Arbon from the Institute is mostly in this vein. This has been the price that has been paid by the Institute as it struggles to respond to the educational bureaucracy (Ober and Bat 2007).

2.2.3.2 Both-ways and Institute strategic plans

Strategic plans from 1997 onwards will be examined to determine the relationship between both-ways and the management of staff.

The 1997 – 2000 Strategic Plan had 3 main goals. These included:

- Teaching training and learning
- Research and scholarship and
- Community service.

There is a section towards the end of this document entitled 'Management development issues', which lists staffing, human resource management and performance management. This section only covers the areas of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment, Employment and Career Development Strategy
- Qualifications and experience of staff at each academic level
- Attracting and retaining high quality staff
- Performance management and
- Human resource management

This last section is very brief and covers the establishment of a new payroll system, the human resource management position, and systems which were being developed to enhance the management of staff.

There is no mention of the underpinning philosophy behind staff management. The concept of both-ways is also largely absent from this document with only a very brief mention in the context of meeting a particular 'niche' in the tertiary education scene in Australia.

The 2001 strategic plan does not mention both-ways at all and only has the following points in relation to staff management:

- 2.1 Develop and implement a framework for effective and accountable management of resources across the institute.
- 2.2 Establish and maintain effective analysis, forecasting and planning processes for the Institute.
- 2.3 Enable all employees to contribute to the organisation and management of work.
- 2.4 Facilitate the achievement of School, Division and work unit goals through the provision of sufficient and effective support services.
- 2.5 Ensure the Institute is equipped to pursue continuous improvement in a changing environment.

(BIITE 2001, p. 3)

The most recent Institute strategic plan is the first strategic plan in the history of the Institute to take the concept of both-ways out of the realm of curriculum development and educational strategies and attempt to apply it to the broader priority of Institutional Diversity and Sustainability (Priority Objective 1 BIITE Strategic Plan 2007 – 2016). It is not entirely clear from an examination of this document if both-ways is to become an underpinning staff management strategy as well as a philosophy of education.

Outcome 1.1 of the 2007 – 2016 Institute Strategic Plan states that the Institute is a diverse organisation whose governance reflects that it is an Indigenous organisation. It lists strategy (iii) as continued development and implementation of both-ways philosophy. The related performance indicators include:

- *both-ways articulated and documented as formal Institute policy*

- *publication in refereed academic journals of research articles that articulate both-ways*
- *opportunities for staff to undertake both-ways professional development activities*
- *program delivery reflects both-ways philosophy (BIITE, 2007 p. 13)*

Interestingly, strategy (iv) in the same section refers to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curricula, and the corresponding performance indicators are:

- *templates for teaching and learning ensure that curriculums reflect the diversity of perspectives and*
- *curriculum development processes provide opportunities for action research and negotiated curriculum delivery where appropriate (BIITE, 2007 p. 13).*

I am not sure why a distinction is drawn between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curriculum and both-ways in this context. Both these performance indicators relate perfectly to both-ways.

This latest strategic plan however, does signal a return to a more collaborative style of management which was originally abolished by Ingram (2004). In outcome 1.3, the Institute's policies and practices reflect the diversity of students and staff and has the following indicators:

- *increased levels of staff engagement in workplace teams and committees*
- *increased levels of collaborative consultation within and outside the Institute*

- *increased level of staff response to invitations to comment on issues/documents*
- *increased access to, and uptake of, professional development in negotiation and collaboration (BIITE, p.15 2007).*

If this strategy is implemented, then a culture of consultation and collaboration may again develop within the Institute. This in turn may produce the type of environment in which both-ways can yet again be safely explored and developed.

2.2.3.3 Reports and Both-Ways

The rejuvenation of the concept of both-ways follows recommendations made in two very significant reports the Batchelor Institute: Continuing the learning journey report by Ramsey, Cummins et al. (2004) and the 2006 AUQA audit (AUQA 2006). Both of these reports recommend that

BIITE carry out further investigation and development on expressing how both-ways may best work for BIITE over the coming years, including its relation to BIITE's values, research, curriculum and teaching (AUQA, 2006 p. 15).

and

Batchelor Institute, in conjunction with NT DEET where appropriate, undertake work to research, develop, make explicit and share the meanings of both-ways learning, including the concepts of a culturally

grounded knowledge framework and values-strengthened learning and take a leadership role in this regard in the NT and nationally.

Batchelor Institute develops explicit induction and cross cultural courses for its faculty leaders and staff, in order to develop in them understandings of both-ways learning as a foundational element of teaching and learning, including the relevance of enterprising learning (Ramsey, Cummins et al. 2004, p. 57).

Ramsey (2004) also links both-ways with research, arguing that the issue for Batchelor Institute is to decide what is different about undertaking research within a both-ways underpinning philosophy. I am unable to find a link between both-ways, and the philosophy underpinning management strategy at BIITE.

Reports relating to BIITE fall into one of four main categories; Quality, Risk Management, strategy and Curriculum/Teaching Programs.

2.2.3.4 Both-ways Policy

Both-ways began as a description given by Pincher Nyurrrmiyarri at Dagaragu in 1976 (Harris 1989, McConvell 1982). Pincer was concerned that the school system was a 'one way school' (European way) and suggested a 'two way school' (European and the Aboriginal way) which involved reciprocity and obligation, involving curriculum, knowledge, policies and power (Ober and Bat 2007). The implementation of bilingual education in the 1970's further contributed to the concept.

The majority of fresh innovative discussion and development of the idea of both-ways happened during the mid 1980's, during the reaccreditation of the Teacher Education program as an Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools). A lot of theorising on the topic has occurred since then by both Indigenous and non Indigenous staff. The concept does not have one definition, rather it has a number of perspectives. These include:

- The 'domain separation' approach which aims at culture maintenance
- Both-ways as a combination of educational traditions and practices
- Both-ways as an interactional process at the 'cross-cultural interface'

(Smith 2000)

Currently there is no specific both-ways policy, however the current Strategic plan (BIITE 2007) specifies one of the performance indicators for its first outcome as "both-ways articulated and documented as formal Institute policy". The document does not specify if this is in relation to educational policies, or staff management policies, or both.

The previous director was at one stage developing both-ways and Cultural Standards for Batchelor Institute's governance, management and academic operations/activities (Arbon 2006). This initiative was abandoned prematurely before any significant advancement or developments were made in this area. In my opinion, the main reasons for its premature conclusion were a

combination of internal politics and a failure to ensure the cultural safety of the participants/staff, particularly the non Indigenous participants. The initiative in its original terms of reference made a recommendation that a culturally safe environment was to be negotiated with the participants before discussions took place. However, when I requested feedback from members of the discussion groups as to how this took place, I was inundated with stories of how 'culturally violated' non Indigenous participants had felt. The same finding was also echoed by Arbon (2006).

The main issue which caused the most distress among both Indigenous and non Indigenous participants, was the forced separation of participants into groups based on Indigeneity versus non Indigeneity. No guidance was given by management as to how the cultural safety of participants was to be maintained. I hope this project will produce some ideas, some guidelines or even just a starting point.

2.3 Diversity management

In this thesis, diversity management is conceptualised as strategies which are implemented by the organisation in order to take into consideration different perspectives held by different stakeholders, in an attempt to address diversity and enhance creative decision making and problem solving (McIntyre 2005).

Batchelor Institute does not currently have any explicit diversity management policy or strategy. The term diversity also has not had a strong presence in Institute documents/policies. It appears for the first time in a strategic document in the current 2007 - 2016 Strategic Plan (BIITE, 2007 p. 12). Priority 1 in this plan; Institutional diversity and sustainability, calls for

an institution in which diversity shapes the practices, activities and processes that contribute to the continued growth of the Institute as a provider of education and training to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples from remote and other areas.

This section of this chapter will explore diversity management as it relates to the Institute.

What is meant by diversity has not been negotiated or defined by the Institute. Looking at the context in which it is used in the current strategic plan I think that it is closely related to Indigeneity and both-ways. There appears to be a focus on both the diversity of staff and students, however the focus is mainly on students rather than staff. Developments in both-ways are closely linked to diversity and appear in four of the nine performance indicators for outcome 1.1. There is however no mention of implementing a diversity management policy for BIITE.

A diversity management policy would assist in maximising the contribution of all staff to the goals of the organisation by recognising and valuing differences in values beliefs and mental models, reducing obstacles to participation, improving communication and conflict management skills (Nicholas 2007). I think BIITE definitely recognises differences in value beliefs. What is less clear is how these differences are 'valued' in the context of BIITE's organisational culture within a legacy of dispossession and colonisation.

The Institute's definition of diversity is not made explicit in the current Strategic Plan. There is no indication if only cultural diversity is being considered or if a broader view of diversity is being referred to. If only cultural diversity is being considered then diversity may be defined by the Institute as a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system. These social groups may in turn be characterised by minority groups and majority groups and the majority group historically may have an advantage in terms of economic resources and power (Fleury 1999).

Another option would be for BIITE to recognise diversity as all the possible ways people can differ, including values, abilities, personality characteristics or organisational function, tenure etc. The danger with a broad definition of diversity however is that it may imply that all differences among people are more or less of the same importance making it difficult to identify

discriminatory or unacceptable practices (Subeliani and Tsogas 2005). This could make a broad definition of diversity problematic for BIITE.

BIITE must be aware of the various reactions that may occur from historically higher status identity groups (Kidder, Lankau et al. 2004). This must be taken into account when formulating policy in this area. Research has suggested that taking a pro-business justification appears to result in more favourable support for initiatives such as the recruitment and retention of minorities than an affirmative action justification (Kidder, Lankau et al. 2004).

BIITE has always had a strong focus on the education of its staff particularly in relation to cultural awareness/competencies. This has been reflected in numerous Institute documents and strategic plans. If BIITE does go ahead and implement a diversity management policy, it needs to consider issues relating to staff education/development as it relates to diversity management.

2.4 Cultural safety and diversity management

The term cultural safety was originally used in New Zealand in the late 1980s by Maori nurses to analyse nursing practice in their country, from their perspective as the indigenous minority of New Zealand (Polaschek 1998).

Since this time, there has been some debate over what constitutes cultural safety, and how far it can be utilised in different countries and populations.

Prideaux (2001) for example, does not differentiate in his editorial comment between cultural diversity, cultural awareness or cultural safety, rather he lumps them all in together. Polaschek (1998) on the other hand, states that cultural safety is not cultural sensitivity and not about cultural practices as such.

Some authors keep cultural safety closely linked with nursing practice in New Zealand and the Treaty of Waitangi (Ramsden 1993; Ramsden 2000; Ramsden 2001; Webby 2001). Others take a broader view such as Wood and Schwass (1993), who state that the principles of cultural safety can be applied to all cultures, and Sherrard (1991) who maintains that all people in need of nursing should be nursed in a manner which is culturally safe. According to the literature the hallmark of a culturally safe practitioner is one who recognises, acknowledges and respects the rights of others (Cooney 1994).

Wood and Schwass (1993) also identify the 3 Rs of cultural safety as recognise, respect and rights. These are contrasted with the culturally unsafe 3 Ds diminish, demean and disempower. In the case of the patient/nurse relationship, the 3 Ds will threaten a person's cultural safety and result in poor health status and a reluctance to seek appropriate medical care when required. This, in the case of Maori patients, may result in health disparities between Maori and non-Maori (Ellison-Loschmann 2001) and in turn

perpetuate the poverty cycle for Maori as ill health is associated with lower educational outcomes and lower rates of employment. In the case of the Maori student nurses, it will result in family disintegration, mental illness and loss of self-esteem.

The majority of the early literature from New Zealand can be divided into two categories. The first is very supportive of the cultural safety concept and is very positive about developments and initiatives in the area. The second category comes mainly from a group of white nursing students and some academics, who I believe have had their own cultural safety threatened by the developments in this area. This work focuses mainly on this second category. The reason I am more interested in this second category is because there are important lessons that can be learned from this literature pertaining to cultural safety education. Batchelor is currently about to embark on compulsory cross cultural communication education for its entire staff. It is imperative that these sessions are successful. To be successful, the sessions must not be so culturally threatening to non Indigenous staff that they are not able to learn.

It could be argued, based on the accounts of the early days of cultural safety education (Furner 1995), that the non Maori students in New Zealand and lecturers who experienced difficulties embracing cultural safety were decentred as non Maori. This is a novel experience for people who are used

to taking whiteness and power for granted. In the case of the students it is possible that they were not helped to deal with this decentring in a positive constructive manner. I am suggesting that if, as with any students, these white nursing students were not culturally safe in their class room they would have consequently found it difficult to learn new material and adjust to new ways of thinking. The majority of the cultural safety literature concentrates on the cultural safety of Maori student nurses in relation to culturally unsafe teaching environments. It is highly unlikely that white nurses will be 'immune' to the same emotions/scenario.

This research explores ways to enhance better understanding of diversity management. Greater understanding will enable the Institute to find ways to ensure that academic and non academic staff and students find ways to enable freedom, to the extent that the freedoms of others are not undermined, while making it clear that the objective is to educate Indigenous Australians and to redress the disadvantages of the past. As such, the bureaucracy of the organisation should support the development of the Indigenous power base at the Institute and the development of policy favourable to Indigenous staff and culture. To achieve these goals, the aim of the research is to develop diversity management strategies in order to build a safe organisational culture that supports morale, staff retention rates, high productivity and targets.

The focus of this research is on identifying ways to enhance diversity management and communication as a component of staff development. This is particularly relevant to the area of cross cultural education/communication. Three key elements have been identified as necessary when teaching cultural diversity, developing cultural awareness or fostering cultural safety. These include: the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their own cultural safety, interacting with others who will represent and explain their own differing cultural identities and a desire to practice in a manner which values, respects and enhances the cultural identity of others (Prideaux 2001).

This project will take into account the organisational tasks, structures and all three of these elements will need to be taken into consideration. Participants are encouraged to reflect upon their own working experience.

Demographically, non Indigenous staff at Batchelor Institute are still a majority. Indigenous staff currently make up 30% of the total number of persons employed, although it is acknowledged that the figure is probably slightly larger as some staff still choose to not identify as Indigenous. The concept of the non Indigenous minority is more of a philosophical/cultural one. The Institute promotes Indigenous culture and values, and Indigenous culture and values are upheld as the ideal.

While some of the policies and procedures currently implemented at BIITE do take into account the cultural diversity of its workforce. There are very

valuable benefits which could be gained if the Institute was able to manage diversity in a more positive way. I would envisage that by managing diversity better, the Institute could reap the following benefits:

- A reduced employee turnover
- Ability to attract the best talent
- Reduced number of complaints and grievances
- Improved team working and communication
- More equity in working practices and procedures and
- Compliance with legislation (Richardson 2004).

I am particularly interested in the possible benefits to team work and its relationship to creativity, especially as it relates to both-ways.

Teams with diverse membership and a collectivist orientation are likely to have a deeper well of resource upon which to draw when generating ideas, combining them and subjecting them to critical evaluation. The likelihood of adopting a sub-optimal trajectory therefore is reduced, especially if the team's approach to systematizing creativity and problem solving is highly developed (Bassett-Jones 2005, p173).

This is essential if the Institute is to continue its development and implementation of its both-ways philosophy.

2.4.1 Diversity management and cross-culture or cross-paradigm communication

In his paper, Zhu (1999, p.581) asks the question

If the argument is “true” that methodological choices are not random but largely dictated by deep-seated theoretical assumptions, not context-driven but practitioner-driven (Brocklesby & Cunnings, 1995), then how realistic is to expect practitioners, who are generally trained by a particular culture, to select and to use methods fostered by radically different cultures, without distorting those methodologies and/or problems/tasks at hand? In simpler words, while cross-disciplinary and interprofessional approaches are necessary and desirable, are they possible or viable, why, and how?

This research will examine how BIITE staff can more effectively cross the boundary of their own culture for the benefit of BIITE staff and students.

While both-ways can be viewed as a sort of framework for interactions within Batchelor Institute, it must be remembered that every staff member employed at the Institute comes with their own frameworks which over time they must adapt through dialogue and learning.

Through this dialogue and learning comes mutual understanding. To enable this mutual understanding it becomes necessary for underlying incommensurable paradigms to be granted commensurability through meta-theoretical reasoning (Zhu 1999). According to Zhu (1999) this meta-level reasoning draws upon the Habermasian epistemological theory of universal human participation in work and interaction.

Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests suggests that as human beings we have three interests inherently built into our nature: a technical interest in prediction and control, a practical interest in mutual understanding, and an emancipatory interest in freedom from ideology traps as well as oppressive power relations. Ideally, these three differentiated yet interconnected interests should be operating and manifesting in a balance in human actions. Social ills emerge when humans fail to recognize, differentiate, and establish or restore a proper order among these interests (Zhu 1999, p. 591).

While the importance of dialogue is recognised this research will argue that dialogue alone is not sufficient if participants are to adapt their cultural frameworks. To do this the participants need to learn and then implement what they have learned. This research tries to determine what type of interaction is the most likely to lead to “a broadening of methodological choices” and a better ability to recognise, differentiate, and establish or restore a proper order among the above interests, as listed by Zhu (1999).

To do this, I will be examining the approaches used by the participants to deal with cross cultural interactions they have identified as culturally challenging. I have divided these approaches into three categories; Isolationist approaches, commensurable approaches and (in)commensurable approaches. I will now give an overview of each of these approaches.

I have based the headings for the different approaches taken by the participants, on a model borrowed by Flood and Romm (1996) from Reed (1985), which was a tool designed to model thought about possible ways of positioning/relating different theories. I have chosen two of the original four possibilities: isolationism and complementarity. I have further divided complementarity into two sub categories: commensurability and (in)commensurability.

2.4.2 Isolationism

The first of these categories, isolationism, refers to the theoretical position where clear ontological and/or epistemological beliefs are held, are consistently subscribed to and protected against perceived extraparadigmatic enemies (Flood and Romm 1996). This may then translate into methodological isolationism where a single methodology is used in all problem-solving circumstances (Flood and Romm 1996). The main problem with isolationist approaches is that the promotion of 'one way' by definition, results in demotion of others, which is oppressive (Flood and Romm 1996).

This type of approach is very much at loggerheads with the philosophical underpinnings of a place like BIITE. In particular, the philosophy of both-ways which clearly becomes impossible if an isolationist approach was implemented to cultural interactions by non Indigenous BIITE staff. The oppressive nature of this approach will not allow for diversity and will promote

the culturally determined interests of the participant subscribing to this approach. Cross cultural communication may occur but learning, in order to facilitate mutual understanding does not take place. In fact the participant may deliberately try to limit interactions which may expose them to “cultural threats”. Learning does, however, take place when interactions do occur but this learning does not result in benefits for BIITE staff and students. It is more likely to result in destructive practices.

2.4.3 Complementarism

While Isolationism promotes ‘one way’ Complementarism tries to preserve diversity in theory and methodology. The problem, however, is that it is difficult to find a way to satisfactorily theorise and act with different notions of the world at the same time (Flood and Romm 1996). It does however provide a means for keeping alive the optimism and potentially nonrepressive nature of diversity (Flood and Romm 1996).

Complementarism is divided up by Flood and Romm (1996) into Commensurability, which is defined in terms of being measured by a common standard or the reconciliation and integration of theories, and incommensurability, which means that there are no common measurement standard and therefore no way of comparing theories. For the purpose of this study, I have only used incommensurability as a category to classify my data as I see this as a way for the participants to deal with threats to the

participants' existing cultural frameworks by simply saying "I believe this but I respect the right of others to believe something else and I will not impose my beliefs on them". In other words, they will agree to disagree. There is usually an attempt to critically analyse one's own behaviour and the behaviour of the other in light of each cultural framework, but there is no attempt to implement a feedback loop by which these perceptions can be checked. There is no meaningful dialogue. Again, learning takes place but it takes place in isolation from the other. This may lead to an improvement in relations despite the lack of feedback but it is a "hit and miss" strategy.

The final category I have borrowed from Flood and Romm (1996) is (in)commensurability, which allows people to define themselves in relation to theoretical alternatives enabling them to make choices for the purpose of pursuing specific agendas at specific points in time. Each choice is made by using locally generated criteria informed by wider consideration (Flood and Romm 1996b).

We suggest that tension between different theories, methodologies and models, as modes of knowing and intervening in organisational and societal affairs, needs to be kept in consciousness and their radical differences acknowledged. Keeping radical differences (and tension) in consciousness allows us to reformulate the relationship between the apparently incomparable options they equip people with. The term incommensurability, therefore, is useful only insofar as it allows us to keep in consciousness diversity and the radical differences in position,

which open up a wide set of choices. To highlight this feature of choice making we now speak of (in)commensurability (Flood and Romm, 1996b p. 8).

In the context of Batchelor Institute, this means that participants using (in)commensurable strategies to deal with perceived threats to their cultural frameworks, are able to recognise the benefits in particular situation of options which they normally would not opt for. For example, a non Indigenous staff member may be satisfied to remain employed in a position for which they are over qualified as the position above them is identified for an Indigenous staff member as they know that in the larger scheme of things this is important and worthwhile.

For coping strategies to be classified as (in)commensurable there must also be an element of reflection by the participant and then a “checking” of their theories/perception through respectful, meaningful dialogue with Indigenous students and/or staff.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the key concepts considered in this research including the organisational structure at BIITE, affirmative action and relevant policies. Both-ways has been considered in relation to curriculum development, Indigenous adult education and management of staff. An overview of diversity management including cultural safety and cross-

culture/cross-paradigm communication has been given, along with an introduction to the terms Isolationist, complementarism, incommensurable and (in)commensurable. The following chapter will detail the research process.

Chapter 3: The research process

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by locating the author as co-participant and researcher in this study. It then explores the methodological assumptions and philosophical underpinnings of this project. The rationale for data collection methods used and an exploration of these methods is included. The final part of this chapter specifically looks at ethical issues.

3.2 Locating the author as co-participant and co-researcher

At the outset, I will turn the lens upon myself and reflect on how the Project came about, thus what follows is an autoethnographic account of my experiences in relation to diversity, up to the beginning of this project.

As stressed in the rationale for the research in Chapter one, this research has implications for better cross cultural communication within organisations, in order to enhance organisational management. This project for me is as much a personal learning journey as it is a piece of research.

As I am part of my subject matter, I will explain that I am originally from Sweden. I immigrated to Australia, with my parents in 1972 as a ten year old. I can easily remember being a “foreigner” and learning to speak English. When I first started school in Australia my English was a problem and I withdrew from most of the other children even remaining practically ‘mute’ for

several years. My first friend was another girl who was also very quiet and withdrawn. She was different, just as I was different, but she also had darker skin colour and I immediately identified her as another immigrant. I tried to communicate, as I thought she would not mind my broken English. Thinking she was another migrant child like me I tried desperately to find out which country she had come from. Patience however, insisted she was from Australia. I eventually came to the conclusion that perhaps Patience had been born in Australia but her parents must have come from somewhere else, because to me she was obviously not Australian. I became increasingly confused and even irritated when she insisted that her parents also came from Australia. At this point I think someone tried to explain that Patience was Aboriginal but I did not have a concept for this word and it was not until many years later I understood who Patience was.

My childhood was filled with similar stories to this one. Even as an adult, my primary school teacher husband was transferred to a remote Aboriginal community in Cape York. I went with him, only to discover an Australia I did not know existed. When the plane landed on the red, bauxite airstrip at Aurukun, I honestly thought the plane had missed Australia and landed in a foreign country. I was as unfamiliar with the remote areas of Australia as many other Australians who live in more populated coastal areas still are.

I lived at Aurukun for 5 years. I initially worked as a primary school teacher and later as a registered nurse. I became very interested from the start in cross cultural issues, and issues pertaining to remote area nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers, in particular work stressors.

I left Aurukun when my oldest child began high school. After a short stint in Alice Springs and the Tiwi Islands, I returned to Cape York working in several other communities as a locum. By this stage, I had a keen interest in Aboriginal health and in particular the contribution made by Indigenous Health Workers. I had heard a lot about Batchelor Institute from the Health Workers on the Tiwi Islands and I decided to accept a position there as course coordinator of the General Health Higher Education Program.

At the time of writing this thesis, I had been employed at Batchelor Institute for over eight years. My experience at Batchelor was an opportunity for me to combine my keen interests in education, nursing, Indigenous health and research.

I acknowledge that I still have a lot to learn and this project is a small part of that learning. It is my sincere wish that, through this project, others will also have the opportunity to explore and learn.

As a non Indigenous academic I was very much an “insider” in this research project. However, I recognise that each of the participants has their own background both personally and professionally, which will separate them from myself and give them a different view and contribution.

3.3 Background

During my time at BIITE, I decided to enrol in research based further study. I had a keen interest in Indigenous health workers and my original proposal was a project designed to examine the factors limiting Indigenous Health Workers in the workplace. During this research, I experienced strong feelings of despair as a result of material I read about non Indigenous researchers conducting research with an Indigenous focus. Some of the literature was less than flattering of ‘western’ culture and, in my opinion, at that point, definitely not accepting and respectful. I now realise that what was happening was my cultural identity was being decentred, and I was unsettled by this experience.

In this research I consider identity in cultural and racial terms and how my whiteness allows me to acquire and retain an unequal distribution of power (Puzan 2003). This has allowed an expectation of domination and control of my surroundings. By being in the centre, I mean that I am used to having access to power, control of resources and the ability to enforce my own values (Hitchcock 1998). For example, my whiteness becomes decentred

when my values and opinions are taken for granted, not sought after, not the ideal or criticised.

While non Indigenous academics may not consciously acknowledge that they have more social privilege and power than their Indigenous colleagues, they may not have had the opportunity to critically examine their own culture and identity and the associated social rank they implicitly and explicitly attract because of their identity. On the whole however, I would like to suggest that non Indigenous academics at Batchelor Institute would have an above average awareness of the implications of their identity. They may not however, have had the opportunity to have open frank discussions about their identity and its implications. While I was aware to some extent of my privileged position, I struggled to express this before reading the literature. Before I came across this literature, I focussed on cultural safety. While cultural safety is an important aspect it was not a direct fit. Through this research participants will have an opportunity to explore some aspects of their identity and the impact this has on their working relationships at Batchelor Institute with both Indigenous students and staff.

I would like to stress, that in the early stages of this research I was not specifically aware that it was my identity as a non Indigenous academic that was being decentred. Instead, I described this feeling I was experiencing as threats to my own cultural safety. This is reflected in how I phrased my

earlier work, such as the interview questions upon which a lot of the data I have collected is based.

Initially, I asked myself the question “how do other non Indigenous researchers work through this”? I also spoke to my academic peers about how they coped, when their identity was questioned in the workplace. The responses were varied and many. Through these conversations it occurred to me that it may be beneficial and interesting to document this knowledge in the form of a research project.

3.4 Methodological assumptions

The philosophical underpinnings of this project are critical and deconstructionist. Originally the framework was drawn from the principles of Participatory Action Research. Ultimately my research goals are to improve reform, empower and change the current situation (Byrne-Armstrong, Higgs et al. 2001). Data will be examined from the perspective of the privileged and the dominant position, in the hope that through this analysis new concepts and practices will be developed (Lewis-beck, Bryman et al. 2004). I acknowledge that there are limitless possibilities of interpretation of data and that I do not have absolute standards for judging one interpretation over another (Carspecken 1996).

3.5 Critical theory and critical ethnography

Critical theory is an ideal foundation providing a means to analyse the competing power interests between groups and individuals in each situation nominated by the participants, thereby identifying who gains and who loses power in each situation (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003). This is then taken a step further by asking the participants to explore why they react the way they do and the possible consequences for individuals and the Institute of those reactions. Finally, if the consequences are detrimental to individuals or the Institute, participants are asked to suggest and explore alternative ways for dealing with situations which have less destructive outcomes for all concerned.

I acknowledge that all interpretation is historically and culturally situated (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003). The Institute itself, during the time of this study, underwent significant changes which in turn impacted on the culture of the organisation itself. Therefore, data which has been collected at the beginning of the study may be interpreted slightly differently by participants who have come to the study at a later date and who are new to the Institute. At this point I did try and “set the scene” for them and situate the data into the cultural environment for them as I perceived it at the time.

Critical hermeneutics names the world as a larger effort to evaluate it and make it better (Kincheloe and McLaren 2003). The difference in this study is that the participants are not usually the ‘powerless’ they are, generally

speaking, 'the powerful'. In this particular setting however, this power may be challenged. How these challenges are handled by the participants will determine if they recognise their class position or their position within the organisation and relinquish/share some of their powerbase, or manoeuvre to maintain it, or decide to leave.

While there is benefit in assisting non Indigenous Academic staff working through threats to their identity in a positive way, there is potentially even more to be gained by the organisation and the Indigenous staff and students within the organisation.

3.6 Rationale for research approach

The aim is to enhance the mutual understanding of the challenges posed by Cross cultural diversity and industrial working conditions, in order to maximise the human potential for freedom and equality (Morrow 1994).

It is fair to say that this research stems from my own personal need, and while it is my sincere hope that this research will have a positive effect on cross cultural relationships within the Institute and perhaps even wider society, I acknowledge that my own values have to a large extent determined my choice of subject and site. My own value orientation however should not determine my research findings (Carspecken 1996).

I have used this approach because initially, I wanted to know how other Non Indigenous academic staff employed at Batchelor Institute maintained their own identity in a cross cultural environment. To do this, I first needed to discover the sort of things/situations non Indigenous academic staff found culturally threatening. I am assuming that if their identity is threatened, then there is possibly also a corresponding threat to their believed powerbase. In some situations, they may react by relying on strategies which result in them relinquishing some of that power and in others they may rely on strategies which have the effect of maintaining that power base. These reactions in turn may have positive or negative outcomes for the Institute.

3.7 Participants

Originally, I invited all non Indigenous academic staff to participate in this project, however only white staff volunteered. I found this simplified the project and it also allowed me to explore the literature on identity with my participants. Some of the participants, like me, are from a non English background.

While all the participants were white there was a good ratio of male to female, experienced to non experienced and diversity in teaching location and school.

One of the difficulties encountered was the 'turn over' of the participants. At one point I was toying with the idea of calling my project the "exit interview",

as a significant number of the interviews occurred at the end of the participant's time with the Institute. I acknowledge that as a result, some of the participants may have been in a negative frame of mind, which in turn may have influenced the responses to the interview questions. At the same time however, it may have allowed them to express feelings which they may otherwise have self censored.

It was also interesting to note that all the participants who left shortly after the interview, expressed a wish to continue on with the project even after they had left the Institute. I decided not to take them up on this offer however, as I wanted the participants in the focus group to reflect on their practice in the setting. If they were no longer participating in the setting, they would not be able to modify their practice in the setting as a result of the focus group sessions, and therefore the project would lose its cyclic structure.

Towards the end of the data collecting phase however, this became an unobtainable ideal and I extended my data collection to non-Indigenous lecturing staff who were no longer at the Institute. This had the unexpected effect of allowing participants to look back at the identified issues and take advantage of "hindsight".

3.8 Information collection techniques

A list of interview questions was developed by the original participants/me and one of my original supervisors. The time and location was negotiated with each participant on an individual basis. I conducted all the interviews myself, one on one either face to face or by telephone. The interviews were recorded by a digital voice recorder and transcribed by me.

The first few interviews were much shorter than the later interviews as I did a lot of the talking myself. This was a great source of frustration when it came to transcribing the interviews, as I had very little actual participant data and a great deal of my own ramblings on the topic. I put this down to my inexperience in interviewing techniques, and limited my input in future interviews to asking the questions and encouraging elaboration through non verbal techniques, rather than sharing my own ideas on the topic. This resulted in longer interviews, which allowed the participants to more time to explore the issues at hand while using exactly the same interview structure.

The original plan was also to have a live focus group. This however, was abandoned in favour of a “virtual” focus group, allowing participants to contribute by e-mail rather than face to face or telephone in a simultaneous group setting. The reason the original plan was abandoned was that towards the end, only three participants remained and it proved very difficult to get

these three together at the same time (I tried for 6 months to set up one meeting that was suitable to all three without any success).

The other benefit was that through a “virtual” focus group some participants who were not comfortable with a face-to-face situation were able to contribute as their comments could be de-identified. This method increased the number of focus group participants from 3 to 9. The other benefit in adopting this method was that it provided an avenue for participants who had left the institute to continue to participate. During the project I repeatedly had requests from participants who had left the Institute to continue to participate and while I initially decided against this I later changed my mind. This was however a diversion from the original proposal and therefore a letter was written to the Flinders ethics committee advising them of this change. At this point I also considered some of the other issues pertaining to electronic data collection. The main disadvantages in using this method related to group discussions using mailing lists. This was an important consideration as some participants wanted to remain anonymous even to the other participants. Therefore a mailing list was not used. Instead each participant was e-mailed individually one at a time. While this had the advantage of anonymity and eliminated the risk of unknown readers or lurkers and conversations between participants outside of the group as identified by Kralik, Price et al. (2006) it did eliminate the possibility of spontaneous conversation between participants. Other risks which had to be taken into

account included the risk of e-mails being passed on to others to read, e-mails being accessed by information technology staff or hackers (Kralik, Warren et al. 2005).

In this instance, this form of data collection was of benefit as it eliminated the need to transcribe data and it was well suited to the collection of sensitive data (Courtney and Craven 2005).

Data pertaining to Institute policies and procedures was also collected from the BIITE website, library and archives. This information was in the form of minutes from meetings, Institute publications, policies, procedures, rules, enterprise bargaining documents, strategic plans, reports and bylaws.

3.9 Rigor

The data for this project was collected over a period of three years. While this ensured prolonged engagement with the participants, it also had its drawbacks. The political climate within the Institute underwent some significant changes during this time, which was reflected in the data. Many participants also left the Institute during this time, and very few original participants remained at the end of the data collection phase. This meant that the data was verified by a different group of participants to those who contributed the original data. This could also be interpreted as a confirmation that the data is reflective of a general opinions held by non Indigenous BIITE academics.

3.10 Interpretive procedures for analysing data

Initially the data collected in the interviews was sorted into three main categories, which in turn were broken down further into sub categories. These categories then served as the catalyst for the focus group discussions.

The first category was a list of cultural challenges which had been experienced by the participants. The second category contained “positive” (as judged by myself and later confirmed by the participants) ways in which the participants had dealt with these issues. The final category was comprised of “negative” (again as judged by myself and confirmed by the participants) ways in which these issues were dealt with by the participants.

My original plan was to give the list of cultural challenges to the participants and let them have a look at the subcategories and re-arrange them if needed, then select the ones which they would like to explore further in their group. I intended to withhold the last two categories until the end to see if similar ways of coping were identified by the group and to see how they categorised these themselves. Differences and similarities could then been explored before making any final recommendations.

However, concern was raised about the possible effect of withholding information from the participants and a decision was made to give all the information to the group before commencing formal sessions.

Ground rules for the group were discussed by the participants in the first session, with an emphasis on maintaining confidentiality.

The original proposal also contained two case studies which I envisaged the participants would analyse in writing and submit to me at the interview. No participants completed this task. Therefore this method of data collection was abandoned.

In the end I abandoned the original categories of positive and negative coping strategies, and instead categorised the participants' responses into isolationist, commensurable and (in)commensurable strategies.

3.11 Triangulation

There was considerable triangulation of information throughout the study. Information was collected through a variety of means, such as one on one interviews, e-mails, focus groups and Institute documents. Case studies were originally also supposed to be used, but this method was abandoned due to a lack of interest by the participants.

3.12 Participant debriefing

No official formal participant debriefing occurred, and none of the participants indicated that they thought this was necessary.

3.13 Limitations

This study was limited to non Indigenous lecturing staff and it is recognised that while suggestions for the change of policy and practice may come from this study, they will have to be explored further by both Indigenous and non Indigenous staff from all areas within the institute. Another limitation which became apparent was the difficulties experienced when trying to set up a live focus group. While I think there were advantages in the alternative method

there were also benefits inherent in the live group which the study subsequently missed out on.

3.14 Ethical Issues

I initially struggled with the demand of PAR to have the participants participate in all stages of the research process, and the requirements of the ethics committee to have information such as the structure of the interview questions, possible uses of the information etc. prior to recruiting participants. To try and solve this problem, I e-mailed around a request for people who were interested in the topic to give feedback on a list of suggested interview questions, two case studies and topics such as suggested uses/ways of publishing this information. It was made clear that the project did not have ethics committee approval and that they were in no way committing themselves to the project.

This information was then used to complete the ethics forms for BIITE and Flinders University, before advertising for participants or collecting any data. All the lecturing staff who contributed formally volunteered to participate in the project, however only one of these original participants made it through to the focus group stage of the study.

At the time that the focus group stage of data collection was due to begin, only two participants from the original recruiting drive remained, and written

permission to re-advertise for participants for the focus group was sought and obtained from both ethics committees.

The main ethical concerns in this study were the difficulty in maintaining confidentiality of the participants, and the risks to job security or undermining the organisational culture. Each participant decided individually on which type of data collection they wished to participate in. Some participants were very happy to be interviewed but decided not to participate in the focus groups. Some of the concerns of those participants who decided not to participate in the focus groups, included being identified as participating in the study and the fear of any repercussions should the results of the study be received negatively by staff at the Institute. The other main reason given for not participating was fear of victimisation by the other participants. However the majority of the original participants left the institute well before the focus group sessions took place.

The move towards a “virtual” focus group counteracted some of the above concerns and opened the focus group to participants who saw the face to face option as ‘too risky’.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter began by locating the author as co-participant and researcher in this study. It then explored the methodological assumptions and philosophical underpinnings. The rationale for data collection methods used and an explanation of these methods were given including an outline of some of the difficulties and challenges which were encountered. The final part of this chapter specifically looked at ethical issues. The following chapter contains the analysis of the data collected throughout the project.

Chapter 4 Analysis of the participant data

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will be analysing the data obtained during this study in an attempt to create greater understanding and insight into the participants' experiences, and reframing these in the hope of facilitating better communication and working relations. This chapter begins by looking at the definitions of cultural safety from the point of view of the literature and the participants. I then list the types of situations the participants identified as culturally challenging. The participants' reactions to these cultural challenges are then divided into two main categories: Isolationism and complementarism which I then further divide into incommensurability and (in)commensurability. The final section of this chapter examines the participants own recommendations for improving diversity management at the Institute.

4.2. Ways participants dealt with threats to their cultural safety.

While these sections of the interview specifically referred to cultural safety and asked how participants coped with threats to their own cultural safety, I now realise that I was actually asking the participants for their personal approach/methods used to manage diversity in their workplace. I have attempted to examine these approaches under the headings of Isolationism and Complementarism, which I have further divided into (In)Commensurability and Incommensurability. These terms were introduced in chapter two and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. I will

also discuss the relationship between these headings, and concepts such as solipsism and intersubjectivity. Before I begin my exploration of this data however, I feel I need to define the term Cultural Safety as I understood it at the time of the interviews and then determine the participants' understanding of the term.

I have retained the term cultural safety, as this was the term I used when I first began collecting my data. Since that time however, I have come to the understanding that, what I was in fact asking the students was to consider challenges, not so much to their cultural safety, but their identity. However, I did not pose the questions in the context of identity, so for the purpose of this analysis I will continue to use the term cultural safety.

As detailed in chapter two, the term cultural safety was originally used in New Zealand in the late 1980s by Maori nurses to analyse nursing practice in their country from their perspective as the indigenous minority of New Zealand (Polaschek 1998). Since this time, there has been some debate over what constitutes cultural safety and how far it can be utilised in different countries and populations.

There are several perspectives in the literature. Prideaux (2001), for example, does not differentiate in his editorial comment between cultural diversity, cultural awareness or cultural safety, rather he lumps them all in

together. Polaschek (1998), on the other hand, suggests that cultural safety is not cultural sensitivity and is not about cultural practices as such.

Some authors keep cultural safety closely linked with nursing practice in New Zealand and the Treaty of Waitangi (Ramsden 1993; Ramsden 2000; Ramsden 2001; Webby 2001), others take a broader view, such as Wood and Schwass (1993), who state that the principles of cultural safety can be applied to all cultures. In regards to nursing, the hallmark of a culturally safe practitioner is one who recognises, acknowledges and respects the rights of others (Cooney 1994). Wood and Schwass (1993) identify the 3 Rs of cultural safety as recognise, respect and rights. These are contrasted with the culturally unsafe 3 Ds diminish, demean and disempower.

The consequences of a person's Cultural Safety not being met are numerous. In the case of the student nurses, it was family disintegration, mental illness and loss of self esteem. In the case of Maori patients, the consequences were poor health status and a reluctance to seek appropriate medical care when required, resulting in health disparities between Maori and non-Maori (Ellison-Loschmann 2001). This in turn is likely to perpetuate the poverty cycle for Maori, as ill health is in turn associated with lower educational outcomes and lower rates of employment.

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were all asked what they understood by the term cultural safety. It was clear by their answers that some of them had thought and read quite a lot about cultural safety while some of the others were not familiar with the term at all. For example the respondents said:

“I haven’t done any deep thinking or theorising on this issue so I’m pretty much a lay person when I’m talking about this kind of stuff.”

“The more I thought about it the less I could be clear about what it meant”

“From hearing one session only about it”

“I’m not really familiar with the term”

While not necessarily familiar with the specific term, all the participants could describe what it meant to them personally. It may be that the participants had reflected on related topics and just simply not thought specifically about the term ‘Cultural Safety’. In the light of the difficulty some participants had with discussing how they maintain their cultural safety, I would argue that while employed by an Institution which is very obviously cross cultural, the majority of participants had not spent a lot of time critically reflecting on their own interactions with the ‘cultural other’ and, more importantly, had spent even less time talking to their colleagues/students about it.

Merleau-Ponty/Crossley (1996) recognises that shared speech not only has the potential to share thought in a mutually informative way, but also can stimulate the speaker or listener to reflect on the issue being discussed. Chances are that the participants have gone about their work in a non reflective way in regards to identity and so are unlikely to have had any need to reflect on the topic, unless something out of the ordinary happens.

The grasp on alterity afforded by perception and the mutuality and sharedness of this grasp is ordinarily completed through action and speech, according to Merleau-Ponty. Perception, action and speech combine in a mutually informing way to provide a cohesive grip on the world. In some cases (of speech) this can involve a fundamental transformation itself into a reflective and reflexive subject. In many instances, however, this is not so. The body-subject acts in a meaningful way, which we would describe as involving both knowledge and understanding, but neither the knowledge, understanding nor meaning assumes a reflective or reflexive form. They are not present to consciousness. Eg driving a car. – Only an unusual event, such as an instrument failure, will provoke reflective thought (Crossley, 1996 p.32).

None of the participants related the term cultural safety to the New Zealand definition. Their definition was not tied to the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand or nursing. The participants took a much broader sense of the word, and maintained that it had a variety of meanings depending on what perspective you were coming from.

“I think cultural safety is one of those terms that has many different meanings depending on who you are and where you are”

The participants in their definitions put a heavy emphasis on cultural sensitivity and the rights of the individual to practice their own culture without reprisal. This is in direct contrast to writers on the subject such as Polaschek (1998) who maintains that cultural safety is not cultural sensitivity and is not about cultural practices.

“I suppose a lack of threat um it’s to me it’s the perception that you are free to practice your own culture without reprisal I suppose”

“what it means to me is that you cultural safety is you’re not in a position nobody should be in a position of having to their cultural identity or any cultural issues being compromised or being ignored or being miss used and that peoples culture should be fully regarded”

“Well for me it would be able to practice your own culture without prejudice from other people”

The participants also did not elaborate a great deal on the situation. They did not show any concern that a lack of cultural safety would result in health disparities, poverty, lower educational outcomes and lower rates of employment (Ellison-Loschmann 2001) as it had for the Maori minority in New Zealand. This was probably due to the short term effects of any perceived threats to their culture safety, as the participants came from a well-off majority group. Cultural safety was therefore likened to social safety and spiritual well being, but the next step of identifying possible negative outcomes or threats to one’s social safety or spiritual wellbeing was not taken.

“Its about its about feeling safe in a holistic way but in a kind of focus on the fact that your culture is a safe place for you or a safe site for you and you are not put at risk by reason of your culture or by reason of the interaction of your culture with other cultures so in some in some ways I guess its no different from a general feeling of personal safety yea social safety you might say”

“I guess its not just physical safety it refers to a whole range of spiritual well being ”

At this point I had a reasonable grasp of the definition Ramsden had given of cultural safety. However, I was not entirely satisfied that this was what I actually wanted to know about, when I was asking the participants for information regarding threats to their cultural safety. Since then, I have come to the conclusion that what I was interested in was more how participants dealt with challenges to their identity and challenges to cultural diversity in their workplace. I wanted to know what happens to them when they are driving their “cultural vehicle” and the “wheels fall off”. Does this force the knowledge and understanding that they possess into their present consciousness, allowing them to critically reflect on their circumstance and if it does, what is the result of this reflection?

If the preservation of ‘Cultural Safety’ is an attempt to preserve diversity in order to enhance the opportunity that people have to manage intelligently and responsibly the issues that arise in the organisation (Flood and Romm 1996), then how do the participants approach this challenge?

4.3 Challenges

To determine how participants approach perceived challenges to their own cultural safety it was necessary to gain some kind of understanding of the types of situations the participants found challenging. I have tried to categorise these situations into several main categories.

The first of these categories I have labelled 'Cultural Misunderstandings'.

The majority of these situations involve unintentionally breaking some kind of cultural protocol and as a result of this the participants suffered some kind of retribution which ranged from being grunted at to having their vehicle smashed.

"No- one talks to you (community member) no-one tries to greet you no-one gets up from where they are sitting no one can give you a decent answer if you ask politely where is somebody you get a grunt or lack of interest."

"If you drive when they've closed roads for sorry business and you didn't know they (community member) could be very angry and smash your vehicle or hit it with sticks and rocks and things."

"Another thing I seen a (non Indigenous) colleague sitting with married women harmless thinking they were all assistant teachers he did not know he was breaking any protocol. They were all sitting around having a talk and the lady was screaming in "language" for him to leave otherwise her husband....."

"When I raised the issue of palliative care with a student who said they didn't talk about this in their culture then she actually went to an Indigenous lecturer who told her that I was being observed and that I was under I was being observed because I was discriminating."

"Problem and I didn't know I didn't know I didn't know who I should or what skin people was ok to go hunting with because it was mainly young women and kids."

“She (community member) was leaving her husband and from what I gathered I was getting into incredible deep shit just being there I got frightened and an old lady pulled of her clothes.”

“Because I can’t speak the language and I don’t always know when I am allowed to drive or not”

“I’ve been in situations which I didn’t understand particularly when I first started working with Aboriginals”

The second category relates to feelings of being disadvantaged due to not being Indigenous. This is an important challenge for the participants to be able to work through, if they are to remain working in an Indigenous organisation.

“My view has not been accepted as valid or just as valid as you know an indigenous person”

“And almost like a bit of double standard you know that one thing that was ok for one person might be more open to flexibility because someone else is Indigenous”

“Criticism of the racist tension in the organisation and the confusion in the at levels of administration and things like that and I didn’t feelcultural I didn’t feel I could be relaxed working there”

“You find yourself in an institution like this that takes part of what might be called a second class citizen kind of syndrome. I guess and um that’s not always easy to take”.

“ I think, I think that it hasn’t happened to me but I have seen people (Non Indigenous) being called racist which doesn’t make me feel too good especially when you kind of unpack the issues um where I have seen that happen and you know its not really about that anyway its sometimes a term that’s used I think when people themselves (Indigenous) are feeling threatened and that’s a certain thing that comes out.”

“So though nothing of it got back to me later that um that person (Indigenous Lecturer) felt like the group was behaving in a racist way and that was a complete shock to me”

“There is always this underlying thing you know where you get disadvantaged if you are not Indigenous.”

“I found out that there’s an ATSI e-mail list the ATSI people have their own Christmas party and forums”.

“Stop being so elitist you know stop being so divisive you you’re creating division”

The third category contained examples where the participants had directly observed acts of physical violence. I think it is fairly safe to assume that all acts of violence would be fairly traumatic for any observer. In this situation however, it was also culturally traumatic for the participants as the violence was underpinned by culturally foreign concepts such as ‘payback’.

“Been a couple of murders in the time that I’ve been there and while I haven’t been involved with them they are very brutal ah and there’s payback which white people don’t understand in fact the Batchelor location I’m at there was a man from a nearby community that killed a local guy. The police allowed payback – traditional payback on that man and he has now just died so I I’m fearful of what that will mean in that community.... There could be a mob from.....come down because isn’t just one person now there was punishment from a number of men and they must have been Because he has now died so that’s very unnerving and very unsettling for me.”

“The other time when I’ve felt very unsafe is umm when it’s been grog weekend and I’m trying to sleep and everyone (community members) is drunk and swearing and there’s women screaming like they’ve been raped or murdered.”

“Death by drunken people rolling cars killing kids I’d seen a number of deaths by hanging and had to and a lot of others I Hang themselves um I had seen starvation, failure to thrive babies, violence perpetrated on children one guy ran into a kid....eight year old in a Troopie and drove the Troopie and knocked this kid sideways.”

“I’ve seen um trying to setting fire to infrastructure breaking into the school smashing things rocking my roof lighting fire to the old clinic.”

I have labelled the next category expressions of anger and hurt. In these instances the participants have been verbally attacked specifically because they are non Indigenous.

“There is your own sort of level of personal response to that which is to decide how personally you want to take that kind of those kind of expressions of anger or hurt or grief or yeah usually just straight anger or bitterness.”

“Yeah I suppose I suppose you know generally speaking I know it’s the wrong term half caste people (students/lecturers) that have this enormous chip that um that just want to attack....”

“but I also get quite bitter in that I look at a lot of what I think relatively uneducated Indigenous people and I mean uneducated in terms of Indigenous culture right who are bitter have enormous chips on their shoulder and have this the mainly urban people that they’re the generally the people who do this sort of stuff that attack.”

“I think that within Batchelor and within some Indigenous and non Indigenous groups there is a kind of a norm of talking about white culture and indeed non Indigenous people in a way which is you know dismissive or bitter or as a whole range of kind of negative kind of tags to it or negative signs sort of scattered throughout the communication.”

“The other situation that I find can be quite challenging is um simply the kind of cultural norms of a its hard to put it its kind of like jumping I don’t know I ...i always tend to think about it in terms of my experience within kind of the feminist movement and stuff like that where I’ve been in many situations where there have been bunches of women talking about men and there’s a kind of a an assumed kind of position of tension or kind of a put down thing I guess and its which bears relates to a lot of feelings of oppression in the past I guess and or history of oppression.”

“Aboriginal people feel they can say what they want to because they feel they have some feeling that I gather they sot of have a greater right to Batchelor than the Europeans.”

In this next category the participants are made to feel uncomfortable because they do not feel they are able to speak freely without some sort of reprisal.

“I think there would be a lot of pressure sometimes on the white staff members to tow a particular party line or political stance that they may not agree to and they may feel that if they didn’t do that their position would be undermined.”

“A few of the white lecturer’s feel that they have to be very careful what they say even if it is said innocently because it may be misinterpreted or leapt on by someone with another agenda.”

“I am sometimes aware that something that I might say that I thought would think was innocent because I would seek not to be racist could be picked up and there is a wide spread fear of political incorrectness which seems to be more relevant to the white.”

“.... there is the fear that you may offend when you don’t intend to”

“I guess one of the things about working in a cross cultural situation is that in some ways that your own culture is under constant challenge and you can either say well it shouldn’t be or it needs to be dealt with in a way which is not so challenging.”

This next category relates specifically to challenges experienced by the participants in relation to students. Some of these challenges are common in any student teacher relationship. In this case however this is exacerbated by a difference in opinions as to what constitutes normal debate in Indigenous terms versus non Indigenous terms.

“There’s at least one student whose extremely radical and quite violent in his verbal carry on and I believe there has been issues at the highest level.”

“.....(Student) considered by most of the class and even the lecturers to be totally out of order and violent and frightening in fact I believe one woman lecturer has asked if he won’t his not allowed to attend her class and there has been counselling sessions with him and its been played down and its been said thatnormal debate in Indigenous terms but I know it has worried people who have taught him.”

“I guess just being the only non Indigenous person in a room full of Indigenous students and Indigenous lecturers is likely to result on occasion in some kind of challenge.”

“Students becoming abusive because one example a student attacked my lack of not being Indigenous my academic knowledge”

“Other examples have been when I’ve had students who perhaps are like their from down south basically they have very little Indigenous cultural knowledge um and you try and relate stories to get points across based upon an Indigenous knowledge set or practice or whatever and I think it’s a fear in those students that they actually missed something which they have um who then attack you pretending to know.”

The final category contains cultural challenges the participants have identified in relation to interacting with their Indigenous colleagues.

“I have felt compromised as a supervisor by having you know people (Indigenous Managers) intervene because I have not been an Indigenous person.”

“I’m gona be this little white guy sitting in the corner when all these powerful Indigenous people get up and take all the credit for it and that shits me so I don’t know that I do want to come back and I can see a lot of inequality that goes on you know.”

“The Indigenous member of our team went (to an overseas conference) he has no background in any of this and I just finished my masters on it.”

“Another thing that gets me too is that they are employing people Indigenous people without the skills to do the job.”

“They’re putting in people (Indigenous) who can not do the job.”

“Yeah there’s a bit of fear in terms of you’re you know what is going to come of this and a perception well my perception is that being non Indigenous in Batchelor I will always come out second best.”

“A lecturer that I was supervising um abusing me because I was not Indigenous”

“Difficult isn’t it you never know whether you’re taking of a job that an Indigenous person should be doing.”

“So when you know you’re a white bastard and you don’t know anything this or the hierarchy (Indigenous) is going to agree with that person (Indigenous) regardless of what I have got to say.”

I will now begin to examine how the participants deal with challenges to what they perceive to be their cultural safety and I have divided their responses into two categories; Isolationism and Complementarism which I have further divided into (in)commensurability and incommensurability.

4.4 Isolationism

The first of these headings Isolationism is based on a tool for modelling thought about possible ways of positioning/relating different theories developed by Reed (1985) and borrowed by Flood and Romm (1996).

Theoretical isolationism occurs when specific ontological and/or epistemological beliefs are held and not only constantly drawn upon but also protected against possible challenges. Methodological isolationism describes the consistent use of one particular methodology when problem solving (Flood and Romm 1996).

In this particular study I have allocated this descriptor to strategies which the participants use to deal with culturally threatening situations which deliberately limits or avoids interaction with the other or the issue at hand.

Through this avoidance, which can be physical or mental, participants aim to

keep their current way of thinking unchallenged. At that point in time, this is also the only strategy that the participant uses. Some examples include:

“I just remove myself I record it coz I suppose.....cultural safety you feel that there can be reprisals. yea so I record it remove myself.”

or

“Maintaining their boundaries – gate keeping their own identity so that they are not vulnerable to other people’s whims, experiences or expressions.”

In the first example the participant is physically removing themselves from the culturally demanding situation thereby protecting their existing beliefs against possible challenges. This option also clearly limits further interaction with persons who may challenge or threaten the participants existing beliefs. Existing beliefs and strategies will not be challenged, as the participant simply is not there to be challenged.

In the second example there may be some continued interaction by the participant, however they remain consciously resistant to any type of perceived attempts to change their own identity. An excellent example of this is the students participating in the cultural safety education in New Zealand. They were forced to physically participate to gain their Nurses registration, but some of the students openly admitted to “keeping their heads down and their mouths shut” (Furner 1995) to enable them to get through. Some even suggested the experience made them even more unlikely to change their existing beliefs.

I am not arguing that the participants, who used these two methods, used these methods exclusively. I am arguing that at the time of being challenged this was the only way they dealt with the problem. At other times it is likely that they use a variety of methods, depending on the severity of the perceived threat, and that this method was part of a larger repertoire of strategies. It is possible that while this method may have decreased the threat in the short term, the opportunity for reflection and exploration of issues may have been lost, thereby further isolating the participant. The emphasis therefore is perhaps more on the protection against perceived extraparadigmatic enemies (Flood and Romm 1996) rather than just subscribing to one method. I acknowledge that I have not explored the intent behind each statement and that this is solely my interpretation through my own experiences.

I would now like to examine the relationship between isolationism and solipsism. In this case, solipsism is referring to someone who believes that they are the primary person who matters in a particular situation (Coleman 2005). While the term solipsism is fairly strong, some degree of isolationism must be present for solipsism to exist, in particular the element of guarding and protecting against possible threats to existing beliefs. Again it is not argued that solipsism as such is rife in Batchelor or even exists in its purest form, it is argued that if staff engage in Isolationist strategies to cope with threats to their own cultural safety, then they are more likely to move along the continuum towards solipsism.

Solitude and communication cannot be the same two horns of a dilemma, but two 'moments' of one phenomenon, since in fact other people do exist for me. We must say of the experience of others what we have said elsewhere about reflection: that its object cannot escape it entirely, since we have a notion of the object only through the experience. Reflection must in some way present the unreflective, otherwise we should have nothing set over against it, and it would not become a problem for us. Similarly my experience must in some way present me with other people, since otherwise I should have no occasion to speak of solitude, and could not pronounce other people inaccessible (Merleau-Ponty, 1970 p. 359).

Solipsism is undesirable because it has the potential to be a hindrance to the formation of ethical relationships with other people. Solipsism may serve to lessen the extent that we recognise that other people exist in their own rights and have important projects of their own that amount to more than our private thoughts about them. If other people are reduced by the participants to just the idea they have of them, then any obligation towards them is also reduced, as in a strict sense there is nobody to be obliged to (Crossley 1996). This in turn can aid in the justification of 'bad treatment' of the other.

The argument therefore could be that the less a participant interacts with Indigenous staff/students the more they base any actions or decisions on the perception of the other in their mind rather than an other which has been arrived at through mutual confirmation and negotiation. Husserl in Crossley (1996) expresses concern regarding solipsism because other perspectives on

the world than our own are necessary if the objectivity of the world is to be established. Human encounters are also necessary to establish subjectivity as people are not usually alone and interacting with just the world of things is not sufficient (*Barral 1985*).

By physically avoiding interactions with Indigenous staff/students the chance of any interchange by which the participants can verify or modify their perspective is also reduced. I am arguing that this in turn increases the possibility that the participant will draw upon isolationist coping strategies simply because they will not let themselves or have not had the opportunity to be exposed to any other way of thinking or ways of coping. These limitations are significant as the adherence to one particular method will in turn restrict possible alternative views and ways of dealing with challenges (*Flood and Romm 1996*).

It is also acknowledged that the participants' ability to expand their repertoire of ways to deal with cross cultural challenges may be initially caused by the adoption of value standards which limit the range of possible solutions they can imagine and the means they could employ to achieve them (*Heritage 1984*). By using isolationist coping strategies these values are rarely questioned or challenged so the limitations remain intact.

In the case of isolationist coping strategies however there should not be the assumption that there is a conscious choice made to rely on this way of dealing with situations. Sometimes familiar strategies are accessed over and over again because of particular overwhelming circumstances the participants have found themselves in. An example of this is when they are new to the organisation and do not have easy access to other staff to enable them to verify or modify their perspectives. In this example, there may not be a self imposed, conscious guarding of current beliefs, there is simply a lack of available options and/or opportunity for interaction. This type of situation is evident in the following extract from one of the interviews. In this extract, the participant was recalling the circumstances they found themselves in at the beginning of their employment with BIITE. The participant had been successful in gaining a position that an existing Indigenous employee had also applied for. The participant was confronted by the existing employee and told that they should have been given the position as they were an Indigenous applicant.

“It was an Indigenous person yeah and I have to saylike it did rock me and because I was new to the position so there were not many people um within Batchelor with whom I could discuss this issue because I didn’t have any you know didn’t establish any relationships.....trust with any of my colleagues and in fact I still don’t know the full story but I mean.... that really rocked me”.

In the following example the same participant attempts to cope by avoiding an uncomfortable situation but has enough insight to realise that as a result of this self imposed isolation their ability to relate to colleagues begins to suffer.

“I still had to communicate with that person the communications between us were probably I probably tended to avoid it...avoid it...not a good thing to do and I mean we sorted out a bit of the stuff later but it certainly I think it affected my ability to relate to my colleagues...other colleagues as well”.

This example can be viewed as isolationist as it relies on deliberately limiting interaction. It also moves the participant one notch closer towards solipsism, as the participant is operating in a self preservation mode where the emphasis is on limiting unpleasant experiences without specific regard for the other. It is not suggested that the participant is unusually uncaring or selfish, it is argued that in this particular situation, the participant found themselves in an unexpected circumstance for which they were unprepared and as a result of this, they reacted in a way by which they were able to reduce exposure to an unpleasant situation. While the participant identifies that there was a detrimental effect on the relationship there is no suggestion that there is any deliberate attempt to inflict any sort of harm to the other.

It is important again to note that in this particular moment the participant moves towards solipsism. True solipsism would only be possible if the participant managed to be tacitly aware of his existence without being or doing anything, which would be impossible as existing is being in and of the world (Merleau-Ponty 1970). This deliberate withdrawal, while an attempt at moving towards solipsism and an attempt at limiting communication, it is still in itself a form of communication (Merleau-Ponty 1970).

In the next example there is some degree of hostility evident, however. In this instance the participant deals with a difficult cross cultural situation by isolating themselves from the other, as in the earlier example. This time however there is the suggestion that after the initial withdrawal, as in the previous example, there is a deliberate move towards causing damage to the other.

“Well I was very stressed and tended to I had been very positive to Aboriginal people and I had been doing a lot of hunting and hanging out with them but after that I just sort of went inward for a few weeks I just stayed at home.”

This participant goes on to identify several negative outcomes as a result of this situation, and being unable to deal with it in any other way.

“I felt I didn’t feel good about the place.”

“I was very agitated not thinking clearly quite harsh in my criticisms irrationally harsh.

What happened was I carried that for another year it came out probably as racism.”

Victims of racism usually suffer some kind of negative outcome. In this particular example the participant not only isolates himself in an attempt to protect himself he deliberately disregards the wellbeing of the other and causes them possible negative outcomes through displays of racism.

There is also another important difference in this second example. In the first example, the isolation is partly a direct result of not having forged relationships in the first place. In the second example however, relationships existed but were abandoned when the participant was unable to deal effectively with the cross cultural challenge. In the first example, situational isolation leads to further isolation which presented itself as an inability to relate to the other, where as in the second example, the self imposed isolation is accompanied by strong negative attitude not only towards the other, but also the setting in which the challenging interaction took place.

In the second example 'bad treatment' of the other, manifesting itself as racism, occurs increasingly as the participant isolates themselves and only interacts with the other that exists in their mind and whom they, due to their isolation, cannot challenge through meaningful interaction. Through the utilisation of Isolationist coping strategies, there is a risk that the other may be reduced to nothing more than the consciousness that this participant has of them.

While both of these participants were able to reflect on their behaviour during the interview, I do not know to what extent they reflected on it during each of these situations. It is possible that they were operating in a pre-reflective state reflecting the adoption of pre-objective and pre-reflective attitudes (*Crossley, 1996*). I would like to suggest that is this lack of reflection that

keeps the participants from being able to break away from Isolationist coping strategies. This cycle is explained further by Crossley in the following extract:

Perpetual consciousness is, in the first instance, practical consciousness and as such it is pre-reflective, pre-objective and pre-egological. The seer remains largely self-unaware, at a reflective level. Furthermore they are even unaware (at a reflective level) of what they see. What they see calls forth a responding action from them and they often respond without the mediations or awareness of reflective thought. Furthermore, what is seen is framed by the activity in which the seer is engaged, such that there is a dialectical movement between perception and action: action frames perception whilst perception calls forth action. Perception, in this sense, enjoins the seer to a field of action. The seer's world is neither contemplated nor observed, as such. It is participated in (Crossley, 1996 p. 28).

In the examples given in this section, the participants have been exposed to a situation that they have experienced as unpleasant or threatening, and they have removed themselves from further exposure. There is little immediate thought behind this process of moving from perception to action.

Parsons conceptualises patterns of cultural values as operating to motivate the actors 'behind their backs'. Accordingly, the actors will tend to lack 'insight' into the normative underpinnings of their own actions (Heritage 1984, p. 30).

and

The net effect however is, as Garfinkel puts it, that the actors cannot 'see through' the normative system in which they are, willy-nilly, enmeshed. Deprived of this crucial element of 'reflexivity', the actors will inevitably remain welded to any or all the institutionalised systems of action with which they come into sustained contact (Heritage 1984, p. 31).

If the above statements are true, then it is possible that the participants have been proceeding in a pre-reflective mode, when suddenly they encounter an unexpected circumstance for which their present 'patterns of cultural values' does not have an immediate solution. The reaction therefore, is to remove themselves from the challenging stimulus and retreat, thereby avoiding any further challenges to their 'normative system' within which they normally operate and to which they are true.

4.5 Complementarism

The remaining data comes under the heading of complementarism. While isolationism attempts to remain true to one set of theoretical premises complementarism tries to maintain diversity in theory and methodology (Flood and Romm 1996). Difficulties arise when the perceived need to compare diverse theories and methodologies cannot be resisted.

At this point there are two suggestions. One is that there is no common measurement standard and therefore no way of comparing theories – incommensurability. The other option being commensurability, with the temptation of reducing diverse theories to common measurable standards by

which they can be compared and measured. The problem is that commensurability is concerned with a common strategy which can be consistently used in all situations. If a common strategy could be successfully determined then there is the risk that commensurability will begin to resemble isolationism. Flood and Romm (1996) overcome this by arguing for (in)commensurability. (In)commensurability maintains that theories can be compared but the comparison must occur in relation to a particular circumstance or condition. The best strategy is only best in that particular situation and circumstances. Therefore the participants must have available to them a great range of strategies which they can intelligently draw upon in the light of specific conditions. In this way:

Choices can be defended on the grounds that they incorporate a degree of sensitivity to other options as well as an effort to encounter these without thereby subsuming them in a prefavoured language (hence the partial commensurability of positions, which suggests that purposes can be chosen on the basis of some form of reasoning about alternatives (Flood and Romm 1996 p.90).

Therefore rather than using commensurability I have decided to use (in)commensurability.

4.5.1 (In)Commensurability

I have used (in)commensurability to describe methods identified by the participants that are accepting of diversity, while attempting to respectfully identify/find some common ground in each specific situation upon which choices can be made. This method relies heavily on the interaction between the participant and the other.

It also relies on the constitution of a common ground between the self and the other through communication, where they are eventually woven into a single fabric (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Through this communication the participants are able to reflectively determine how each situation is best handled and which theory or way of dealing with the situation is best applied.

Through this process, there is no leader and the conversation flows and 'perspectives blend' into a shared 'common world', as thoughts are grasped 'the moment they come into being'. While there is the creation of a shared world neither of the actors is considered the creator rather, throughout the interaction, thoughts are drawn from the participants which neither of them may have consciously possessed and as these thoughts are shared they are also reciprocated, in turn generating more thought (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

Or as Gadamer in (Crossley, 1996 p. 33) puts it,

The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way,

but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows in advance what will 'come out' of a conversation.

This is where a degree of open-minded interaction is important. It is not enough that the participants require a large number of options to draw from, they also need to intelligently and sensitively match suitable options, with specific solutions through respectful communication with others who may be affected by their actions.

I have already argued that in order to establish the objectivity of the world or even establish subjectivity other perspectives on the world than our own are necessary as people are not usually alone, and interacting with just the world of things is not sufficient. Therefore, if participants are to accurately assess a particular situation or circumstance in order to enable them to determine the strategies most appropriate to deal with that situation, communication with all stakeholders is necessary. As the number of perspectives increase so does the detail of the fabric.

The problem of objectivity versus subjectivity is acknowledged by Walsh (1967) in his introduction to Schutz's book *The Phenomenology of the Social World*:

If objective knowledge of human beings can only be achieved by regarding them as 'types' which one must not 'fold, spindle, or mutilate,' is not objectivity by definition, then, precisely the attitude and approach which

misses the human reality? Is not the true understanding of human beings to be achieved rather in face-to-face encounter in interpersonal relationship, in 'dialogue, in 'commitment'? (Walsh, 1967p. xi).

(In)commensurable strategies are an attempt by the participants to discover the human realities of their peers through dialogue. In the following examples which I have labelled as potentially (in)commensurable strategies there is a clear attempt by the participants to interact with the other and any existing stakeholders in an attempt to resolve threats to their cultural safety. In contrast to the participants utilising Isolationist strategies these participants not only live in their subjective experiences they also reflect on them. They not only have direct experiences of the world they think and speak of their experiences using concepts and judgments (Schutz 1967).

(In)commensurable strategies rely on the shared understanding which can potentially occur through this type of interchange. In the first three examples it is made explicit that some form of conversation is taking place.

“Approaching the person directly and discussing issues on a one to one basis”

“Use peers and colleagues Indigenous/non Indigenous to talk through issues.”

“That’s what this particular session was about how to ask older people questions to find out what they need and they (students) were saying that as Indigenous people we don’t need to we don’t need to formulate questions we just know um and I was saying I really don’t understand that as a non Indigenous person can we talk about that?”

In the two remaining examples conversation is implied. I would argue that it would be very difficult to build rapport and a relationship without interacting verbally. It would also be very difficult to develop respect without some sort of verbal communication.

“Rely on my relationship with the students and build up rapport and a sense of who I am and my own integrity as an individual that I have in my role as a lecturer”

“Work at developing respect across cultures”

As with the examples in the section dealing with isolationist strategies the aim of the participants is to deal with perceived threats to their cultural safety. In these examples this is not done through withdrawing and isolating themselves from the other it is done through deliberate further interaction and working together. While this is serving the need of the participant there is a strong suggestion that a mutual positive relationship is maintained with the other throughout the process.

In my exploration of isolationist strategies I argued that there is a relationship between isolationist strategies and solipsism. I would now like to argue that there is a similar relationship between (in)commensurability and Intersubjectivity. If solipsism is located at one end of the spectrum then Intersubjectivity is located at the other. The following is an explanation of intersubjectivity:

Human subjectivity is not, in essence, a private 'inner world' which is divorced from outer (material) world: that it consists in the worldly praxes of sensuous, embodied beings and that it is therefore public and intersubjective. Secondly, that subjectivity consists, in the first instance, in a pre-reflective opening out onto and engagement with alterity, rather than in an experience or objectification of it. Thirdly, that human action, particularly speech, necessarily assumes a socially instituted form and that this form is essential to its meaningfulness. Fourthly, that much human action and experience arises out of dialogical situations or systems which are irreducible individual human subjects. Taken together, these four points enable us to conceptualise intersubjectivity as an irreducible interworld of shared meanings and to understand human subjectivity as necessarily intersubjective (Crossley, 1996 p.24).

For the purpose of this project I would like to concentrate on intersubjectivity as 'an irreducible interworld of shared meanings' and argue that in the case of (in)commensurability speech is the means of entry into this interworld. In conversation we take up the communicative resources of our culture, resources which are shared throughout our culture, and we address ourselves to our other, with the expectation that they will reciprocate (Schutz in Crossley, 1996 p.79).

It is recognised that we are unable to choose or refuse relations with others as soon as we are born and we are at that moment in a place and time and in a determined situation within a particular family/culture/country (Barral 1985). We live our intersubjective relations before we even recognise ourselves, and are recognised by others, as subjects (Barral 1985). While it is obvious that

there are many other ways of interacting with others, speech is primarily what will separate (in)commensurable strategies from other strategies such as isolationist strategies and incommensurable strategies.

I would like to suggest that if participants are to effectively utilise (in)commensurable strategies there are several factors which must to some degree be present. There must be an existing, trusting relationship and an understanding of the role of values, emotions and consciousness (McIntyre-Mills 2007).

4.5.2 Incommensurability

Alternatively, I have used incommensurability to describe methods which acknowledge that there are differences, but where no obvious attempt is made to find some common ground. The participant recognises diversity, but tries to deal with it solely by adapting the self, rather than interacting with the other.

In these examples participants have experienced an interaction with the other which they have found challenging. However, rather than continuing that interaction in order to determine that best way of working through any issues, they withdraw and reflect on the interchange. In some of these examples, there is also an element of attempting to 'adjust' the self in the hope that future similar situations can be handled well.

Further experience then becomes based on the participant's experience of the other and the other continues to exist in the participant's consciousness and may even be observed from a distance but there is little attempt to communicate to verify the participant's perception of the other. This is similar to Husserl's explanation of his experience of the world and others in it. I am of course assuming that Husserl's experiences are predominantly not necessarily verbal in this instance.

In changeable harmonious multiplicities of experience I experience others as actually existing and, on the one hand, as world Objects – not as mere physical things belonging to Nature, through indeed as such things in respect of one side of them. They are in fact experienced also as governing psychically in their respective natural organisms. Thus peculiarly involved with animate organisms, as “psychophysical” Objects, they are “in” the world. On the other hand, I experience them at the same time as subjects for this world, as experiencing it (the same world that I experience) and, in so doing, experiencing me too, even as I experience the world and others in it (Husserl, 1991p. 91).

In these examples there is no stated attempt made to interact further verbally with the other to evaluate these attempts at 'adjusting' the self. At this point it could be argued that this is perhaps a form of isolationist behaviour. I would like to argue that the striking difference between incommensurability and isolationism is that in the case of isolationism there is no wish or attempt

made to evaluate one's strategies or immediate/conscious wish to do things better.

There is also a degree of solipsism inherent in incommensurable strategies whereby the participant does not rely on further interaction to decide on further action. The difference however is that the Solipsist is primarily concerned about their own needs while the participant who utilises incommensurable strategies on the other hand is very concerned about the other, so much so that they reflect on the interaction with an aim to change their own thinking or behaviour in an attempt to improve future interactions for both parties.

There is also an element of justification/acceptance of the other's behaviour that the participant has found challenging. It is as if the participant is saying that a challenging interaction has occurred but they recognise that there is diversity in methods and that they have a variety of options open to them in regards to dealing with this diversity depending on how they view the situation. There is however no attempt to find 'common ground'. At the end of the interaction the participant and the other are in different places however a greater understanding and desire to do things differently next time may be present even if it remains one sided.

Examples include:

"Depersonalising criticism"

"Maintain a sense of a bigger picture which can be used to not take things personally"

"Accept the situation as it is without internalising it too much".

"Support critical thinking and political activism and see threats as this rather than a personal attack and support students in situations like this."

"You may get a bit disadvantaged here but for the whole thing it is ok"

In these examples the participant copes with stereotyped, negative feedback from the other by rationalising that, while this may apply to some members of a certain population, it does not apply to them personally thereby separating them from an identified category in the hope that this will enable them to interact with the other in the future without feeling like they have been personally criticised. In contrast the isolationist approach to this would be to most likely to take the criticism personally and avoid all future interactions with the other. The (in)commensurable approach would be to remain in respectful communication with the other until both parties have for example fully explored what was meant by the criticism, who it was actually intended for and possibly how it made both parties feel. They would then explore how this could be handled better in the future.

There is a mention of maintaining a sense of the 'bigger picture' and seeing things in the context of 'the whole thing'. This is an important strategy as described by Descartes:

In addition it further occurs to me, that one must not consider a single creature separately, when one seeks to inquire into the perfection of God's works, but generally all creatures together. For the same thing that might, perhaps, with some reason, seem very imperfect if quite alone, may be very perfect in its nature if it is looked upon as part of the whole universe (Descartes, 1968 p. 135).

Behaviour that may at first appear challenging can take on a different light if viewed from different perspectives.

In the following scenarios the participants have assessed the other's behaviour as challenging but on the whole acceptable 'under the circumstances'. However this conclusion is arrived at by critically reflecting on the situation from an assumed historical/social justice perspective rather than through continuing to interact with the other.

The participant may even find a deficiency in themselves and identify that they need to find new experiences and information (broaden their horizons) to enable them to be more accepting of situations they may have found challenging. This in turn would potentially have the effect of giving them more options for action in the future. This is in contrast with isolationists, which separate themselves in an attempt to limit challenges to existing beliefs rather than to allow for reflection.

I think that this is similar to what Descartes was referring to when he states:

It is true that, while I merely observed the behavior of others I found little basis in it for certainty, and I noticed almost as much diversity as I had done earlier among the opinions of philosophers. Hence the greatest profit I derived from it was that, seeing many things which, although they may seem to us very extravagant and ridiculous, are nevertheless commonly accepted and approved by other great peoples, I learned not to believe too firmly those things which I had been persuaded to accept by example and custom only; and in this way I freed myself gradually from many errors which obscure the natural light of our understanding and render us less capable of reason (Descartes, 1968 p. 33).

Here there is acceptance of diversity which may at first seem 'extravagant and ridiculous' through the identification of beliefs which are grounded in example and custom. These beliefs can then be suspended allowing for greater understanding and reason. The participants too attempt to do this by the following efforts:

"Broaden their horizons"

"Taking a few steps back and reflecting on the situation/issues"

"Make allowances"

The following example sums up the concept of incommensurability cogently. There is simultaneously an attempt to protect the self from challenges while accepting that there are differences that may challenge you. There is however, an indication that different strategies should be learned and drawn

upon to protect oneself, making this different from the Isolationist strategies which would rely mainly on one strategy without much thought to alternatives.

”You have to learn different skills and a different way of being within your culture where your safety is – where you can protect yourself where your safety does not depend on your culture remaining unchallengeable”

The next examples in this category are dependent on attempting to develop personal attributes or skills, as a way to deal more positively with cultural challenges. An example of this would be attending a cross cultural course in order to become more informed. Many cross cultural courses are an excellent example of incommensurable strategies, as they often focus on changing the thoughts and behaviour of the participant through information giving and reflection, rather than increasing the level of open genuine interaction with the other. The emphasis is more on observation and reflection rather than actual information sharing through a two way dialogue.

”Be objective, well informed and sensitive”

”Observe and listen – be receptive”

”Think of it as a learning experience – this is how Indigenous people probably feel like a lot of the time.”

There is a problem with this method of dealing with cultural challenges however, which is illustrated by the previous example where the participant makes the assumption that ‘this is how Indigenous people probably feel like a lot of the time’.

The error in the empathy theory is two fold. First, it naively tries to trace back the constitution of the other self within the ego's consciousness to empathy, so that the latter becomes the direct source of knowledge of the other. Actually, such a task of discovering the constitution of the other self can only be carried out in a transcendently phenomenological manner. Second it pretends to a knowledge of the other person's mind that goes far beyond the establishment of a structural parallelism between that mind and my own. In fact, however, when we are dealing with actions having no communicative intent, all that we can assert about their meaning is already contained in the general thesis of the alter ego (Schutz, 1967p. 115).

While there is not an upfront reliance on communication in incommensurable strategies, there is a reliance on mutual feelings of respect and acceptance. This could perhaps be as a result of direct observation of the individual and conclusions that have been drawn, or as a result of an inherent goodness in the observer.

There is also mention of a transferred respect from colleagues to students, rather than relying on actual interaction on that level with the students themselves.

"Trusting that whatever the feelings that people are feeling at some other level that they will know that I'm not someone who brings any conscious animosity however much there might be unconscious baggage

"Rely on professional colleagues to respect me and respect me as a colleague in front of students so there is a kind of relying on your fellow team members to acknowledge you and give you professional respect that then transfers itself to students"

I have already argued a relationship between Isolationist strategies and solipsism and (in)commensurability and intersubjectivity. I would now like to explore the relationship between incommensurability and subjectivity. If we attend to and interpret in themselves the phenomena of the external world which present themselves to us as indications of the consciousness of other people, then they take on objective meaning. On the other hand if we look over and through these external indications, into the constituting process within the living consciousness of another living being, then we are concerned with subjective meaning or their 'intended meaning' (Schutz 1967).

Schutz (1967 p. 38) argues that:

In ordinary life we call a halt to the process of interpreting other people's meanings when we have found out enough to answer our practical questions; in short, we stop at the point that has direct relevance to the response we shall make ourselves. The person's subjective meaning will very likely be abandoned if his action becomes evident to us as objective content in a manner that relieves us of any further trouble.

4.6 Participant Solutions

In the final part of the Interviews the participants were asked if they had any suggestions for making it different, at personal, group and institutional levels. None of the answers were Isolationist in nature. The majority of the answers centered around cross cultural education for staff. Several mentioned

debriefing as a recommendation, but did not elaborate on whether this debriefing would be with Indigenous, or non Indigenous, staff.

“I think that there needs to be abetter induction process at Batchelor”

“the very least you should do is make a serious and I mean serious attempt to prepare staff to create a good preparation for the environment.....work in and I’m not saying you can prepare people for a lot of a lot of more culturally what is the word immersive situations you know where people are going to work on communities and stuff I think in some ways you are just going to have to try and set people up with.....they can rely on ...talk to ...debriefing process but I do think that in general we need to be giving and seen to be giving and buying inthe best cultural cross cultural training that there is”

“I guess that Debriefing And I know that we do have a kind of counseling service I guess but that always seems to be fairly extreme ...step to take I would think probably not one that many staff would take unless they really felt you know thatdesperate I don’t think that we I don’t think that it would be good to have a situation wheredid not wait until they were desperate before they got addressed um so maybe so maybe I’m just arguing for better management – I don’t know”

“Perhaps for a more sophisticated cross cultural training for our management in cross cultural team management techniques or something does that?”

“maybe consciously looking at the range of different kind of cultural models or cultural models particularly ...education but not just for educationkind of stuff looking at the way that theyacross cultural teams looking at the way other around the world and around Australia that other organisations deal with cross cultural team building and team maintenance um that’s I guess that’s what I was thinkingperhaps”

The underlying theme in a lot of these responses was for the Institute to manage diverse or ‘cross cultural’ teams better. There is a call for ‘better management’ in general, and recognition that talking ‘debriefing’ about issues can be beneficial.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the data obtained during this study, in an attempt to create greater understanding and insight into the participants' experiences. Reframing these experiences may facilitate better communication and working relations within BIITE. I began by looking at the definitions of cultural safety from the point of view of the literature and the participants. I then identified the types of situations the participants identified as culturally challenging. The participants' reactions to these cultural challenges were then divided into two main categories: Isolationism and complementarism which I then divided further into incommensurability and (in)commensurability. The final section of this chapter outlined the participants' own ideas in relation to improving diversity management at the Institute. From here, I will now explore my own journey and growth through this project, before making my own recommendations/suggestions for improving the management of diversity within the Institute, based on the data I have collected and my interpretation of that data in light of the relevant literature.

Chapter 5: My own journey

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will explore my own journey from the start of this project to the present point. I will look at the effects my interaction with the literature and the participants had on my thinking during this time. I acknowledge that I still have a lot to learn however as I have completed my data collection and analysis for the purpose of this project I will examine my journey up to this point.

5.2 My journey

I came to this research with a fairly negative state of mind. I had just spent 18 months writing the first three chapters of my thesis and was now looking at giving all that work away in order to make a fresh start. My first attempt at my thesis had come to a dead end for two reasons. The first reason was that as part of my literature search I had come across a number of fairly challenging articles which were written from an Indigenous perspective and which were quite critical of non Indigenous researchers conducting research into Indigenous issues.

At that time I was not able to work through these challenges and some other related cultural challenges that were also present. I had ethics clearance from BIITE and two Flinders University ethics committees. I had completed my literature search and written the first three chapters when I decided to give it all away and start again. The deciding incident occurred when I was

collecting my first lot of data. The first group I approached was a cohort of thirty or so Certificate Three Aboriginal Health Worker students. I carefully explained the project and all the ethics forms and considerations. I discussed the fact that participation was optional and that there was no obligation for them to participate.

I was conducting this session immediately before lunch. One of the students put their hand up and asked if they did not participate, would they be able to go to lunch early? I said yes, and immediately the room was vacated except for one student who wanted to complete the survey. I found this response overwhelming, and decided that I was not going to be able to collect the data I needed, and abandoned the project at this point. In hindsight however, and with the information I have since come across I am not so sure this was the best option.

Through an exploration of the literature and the collection of my data, I have discovered that there are several ways I can view what happened in this scenario. Firstly, I was a non Indigenous Registered Nurse asking Aboriginal Health workers to be critical of non Indigenous Registered Nurses. Secondly, according to the whiteness literature I had experienced a decentring of my whiteness and consequently had my taken for granted powerbase challenged through the literature critical of non Indigenous researchers doing research with an Indigenous focus, and this was reinforced by the response I got from

my first participant group (Rains 2001, Dyer 1997, Kincheloe and Steinberg 1998, Aal 2001, Apple 1998 and Hitchcock 1998).

Looking at it from a Cultural Safety perspective, I perhaps should have been happy with the response I had, as the students felt safe enough and empowered enough, to get up and walk out on me without any fear of upsetting me or any sort of retribution. This safety probably came about as a response to the students feeling safe in the BIITE environment, and as a result of me stressing the option of voluntary participation in the project.

From a both-ways perspective, this encounter was not successful since the students did not choose to share much knowledge with me. However, I was not really offering to share at this stage either. This is probably due to the data collection method selected. If I had collected the data through a group discussion or a team presentation format, then both-ways sharing may have taken place. The filling in of surveys is not terribly conducive to both-ways sharing.

After this incident, I initially isolated myself and thought long and hard about what to do next. I decided that I needed to take some time out from this research and contemplate what I had just experienced. At this point I came up with the idea of trying to find out how other non Indigenous lecturing staff coped with challenges such as this, and decided to make this the focus of my

research instead. Having now largely completed this exercise I can look back at what I have been doing and examine my actions from a diversity management and cross-cultural communication perspective.

My initial response to this culturally challenging situation was to withdraw from further interaction. This isolationist approach, as examined in my previous chapter, allowed me to avoid further challenges and protected me from the prospect of having to change the way I was interacting with my participants.

After a while however, it became apparent that if I was to achieve my objective of completing my thesis, it was necessary for me to work through these challenges. This process was however, totally self reflective and at no point did I attempt to discuss the issues I was working through with Indigenous peers or colleagues. I arrived at my plan of action entirely through self reflection, reading and the collection of information from non Indigenous participants. Therefore, at no time was the information I based my course of action on, tested from an Indigenous perspective or with any other stakeholders.

I relied entirely on incommensurable strategies to work through the situation. I now realise that this limited my options as far as outcomes were concerned. Had I taken on a more (in)commensurable approach to this challenge, by

taking time to test my perception with Indigenous peers, I may have come to a very different place and perhaps continued on with my original research. One of the things which has always played on my mind was the fact that when I put my original proposal up to the Indigenous ethics committee at Flinders University, they made special comment about the importance of my original research proposal.

I took the challenge of working across cultural differences almost to the extreme, and decided that my research would take place within my own scope of experience and belonging. To an extent, I became what Motzafi-Haller (1997) calls “native” or “ethno” scholars. This kind of work too has been concerned with “the methodological aspects of such autoethnographic work – whether one’s native familiarity with the language, the unspoken cultural codes of the community, or one’s social ties within the research site facilitates or hindered one’s research project (Aguilar 1981, Fahim 1982, Jones 1970 and Kim 1990 in Motzafi-Haller 1997)” I am slowly coming to the understanding that both options of researching as an “outsider” or an “insider” will have its inherent problems, which need to be understood and minimised throughout the project. I have also come to the conclusion that you can never completely be an insider. For example, I am female, while some of my participants were males and therefore may come to the project with quite different experiences to my own.

The final idea that I began to explore before I decided to finalise the other part of my study, was that of identity. I am currently trying to see the threats the participants faced not as threats to their cultural safety but as threats to their identity. I think that perhaps I found the original challenge of doing cross cultural research challenging not only to my identity as a white person, but also my identity as a nice, well-meaning and helpful person. While interacting with literature, such as the book *Decolonising Methodologies* (Tuhiwai Smith 1999) I felt that my genuine wish to help and improve a situation which I saw as detrimental to the health of Indigenous Australians, as not wanted and not appreciated. I found this challenge unpleasant and I was unable to deal with it effectively.

In addition to my journey through the literature, I have also learned from my participants. From them I have learned that they too struggle with cross cultural interactions within the Institute. I listened and learned what they found challenging and how they deal with these challenges. Sometimes, I related very strongly and sometimes, they showed me a dimension I had not considered. I learned that while I purposely tried to research a group closely similar to myself, they were also very different. One of the things the participants pointed out to me, that I had not realised at the beginning of the study, was that these types of challenges occur in any setting where there are diverse minority groups or individuals i.e. gender, sexual orientation, age, religion. While this seems obvious it had not occurred to me. I also learned

that the participants felt more could be done to manage diversity at BIITE and that BIITE should be a leader in this field.

At this final point of the study, I am also beginning to look at ways in which I can apply what I have learned in my own teaching. I have currently started in a new position which involves teaching predominantly non Indigenous students about Indigenous health. I am now faced with the challenge of coming up with ways to try and ensure my students do not take up isolationist coping strategies, if they are challenged during their study of this topic. Simultaneously, I am trying to facilitate mechanisms where the students are able to utilise (in)commensurable strategies, if they so choose. I understand that there is so much more that I could be doing and so much more that I could explore and learn. However, I need to finalise this study at this point.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored my own journey from the start of this project to the present point. I have examined my interaction with the literature and the participants. Finally, I have looked at how I am beginning to apply some of the knowledge and insight I have personally gained throughout this project. The next chapter will contain my recommendations for BIITE in relation to diversity management.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I make recommendations for BIITE in relation to diversity management, based on interpretation of the data I collected throughout this study. Firstly, my recommendations will be for BIITE as it struggles to manage the cultural diversity of its workforce. I tentatively suggest that any developments could be underpinned by the both-ways philosophy on which Bachelor Institute has decided to base its current strategic plan on. The second part of my recommendations will be for those who teach topics that challenge the very identity of their students.

6.2 Recommendations - BIITE

Through my study of Institute documents, I have determined that Bachelor Institute, at the time of this study, did not have a distinct affirmative action policy. While I suspect that the development of an affirmative action policy may assist BIITE in dealing positively with the issue of workplace diversity my data does not support this as a preferred strategy. This may be a result of the data being collected from a group that may not themselves be the recipients of the potential benefits of an affirmative action policy. I would like to argue simultaneously that some participants even alluded to the distrust of equal opportunity initiatives, by suggesting that Indigenous people were being put into jobs they were not able to perform.

Alternatively, the majority of the participant solutions centered on education and preparation for staff including better induction processes and cross cultural education. Other suggestions focused on offering debriefing as a strategy or limiting divisiveness amongst groups.

The research data collected however, did contain information on how participants coped positively with challenges to their cultural identity. I think that BIITE should draw on this information when developing future policies and procedures. The majority of this information was contained in the section which examined (in)commensurability.

(In)commensurability was used to describe methods identified by the participants that were accepting of diversity, while attempting to respectfully identify/find some common ground in each specific situation upon which choices could be made. This method relied heavily on the interaction between the participant and the other. I am therefore suggesting that BIITE needs to take the concept of (in)commensurability into consideration, when developing policies, procedures and staff development initiatives.

From the data that has been collected throughout this study I would like to recommend the following strategies; facilitating the opportunity for open discussion and ensuring the development of respectful, trusting relationships. Both of these initiatives are compatible with the Institute's strategic directions in relation to the focus on diversity management and both-ways. The first two

guiding principles for BIITE's 2007 – 2016 Strategic Plan p. 11 state that the Institute will "Use both-ways approaches to build a culture of respect and trust" and "develop sound collaborative practice by fostering open and honest communications". BIITE's values are listed as respect, teamwork, cultural diversity, empowerment and communication which are all compatible with the idea of (in)commensurability.

I was only able to identify one strategy however, in the BIITE strategic plan 2007 – 2016, which may possibly facilitate (in)commensurability and this was "provide training in cross-cultural competence for staff and students". Some of the performance indicators, which may indicate the achievement of BIITE's priority objectives compatible with (in)commensurability and the outcomes of this study however, include opportunities for staff to undertake both-ways professional development activities, development and ongoing delivery of cross-cultural training, enabling staff and students to develop effective cultural competencies.

Both-ways underpins the strategic plan, and I would like to suggest that both-ways is very compatible with the idea of (in)commensurability, as both are underpinned by a willingness to learn from and respect each other's knowledge base (Ubio 1993). While a lot of effort has gone into both-ways to develop it as a philosophy to underpin teaching within BIITE not much work has gone into allowing both-ways to underpin staff relationships and policy

development at BIITE. I hope that this study provides some of the initiative for further development in this direction.

To date, according to the Australian Universities Quality Agency (2006, p.14) both-ways has not been the unifying concept BIITE has hoped for.

The Audit Panel investigated the understanding of the both-ways concept among staff and students of BIITE. The Panel found a lack of clarity and understanding of both-ways learning, resulting in a variety of interpretations. These include staff and students learning from each other, curricula embodying various central perspectives, and students-centered learning. Staff do not know whether these (and others) are all equally valid and acceptable interpretations or whether there is a preferred BIITE model. Furthermore, none of these understandings is being widely implemented.

The AUQA report goes on to discuss the 2006 working party on both-ways, which stated that both-ways involved operating in both worlds at the same time and acknowledged that enabling these cultures to speak to each other was not easy. The report goes on to recommend further investigation and development of both-ways in a way that may work best for BIITE. This could then be shared through publication resulting in the development of a common understanding.

As discussed in an earlier chapter a previous attempt to explore both-ways in 2004 was also not successful

Looking at Aboriginal ways of knowing as compared to western scientific position on knowledge proved to be extremely difficult. A number of non-Indigenous staff appeared to spiral into personal self-fulfilling positions and to lack of desire to critically look at the western position on knowledge as but one construct amongst others. Emotionality was powerfully triggered and some individuals saw attempts to explore both-ways education as succumbing to oppositional dichotomies, personal attacks on them as individuals, a lack of acknowledgement of their capacity to work multi-disciplinarily and a compartmentalising of Institute staff into 'them' and 'us', What was going on here? (Arbon 2006 p. 225)

It is evident that BIITE needs to reconsider how it approaches attempts to explore both-ways and perhaps there needs to be a lot of work and discussion across cultural groups before any further explorations are attempted.

To do this it becomes imperative that open, respectful conversation around the topic is maintained at all times. At no point should the discussions be allowed to disintegrate into the 'them' and 'us' mentality as described above by Arbon (2006). Once this is allowed to happen the participants are utilising Isolationist strategies to deal with threats to their identity and consequently existing personal beliefs and ideas will remain intact as the individual 'protects' themselves by withdrawing from the potential threat and further interaction.

It must be made clear right from the beginning that ideas will have to be tested, not in a way to prove them true or false, but to work out how they will affect the people they are likely to impact on as described by McIntyre (2005, p. 195):

The emphasis is on respectful dialogue and the need to test out ideas, not in the sense that they are falsified, but in the sense that they are explored by many stakeholders, in order to assess their implications for all those who are to be at the receiving end of a decision. The testing process is about exploring viewpoints in terms of the three worlds of the objective, subjective and intersubjective domains and their implications for the stakeholders through unfolding the values of the participants and sweeping in the social, cultural, political and economic values within context.

It is very difficult to engage in the type of interaction which would facilitate open, respectful communications and the testing of ideas without the staff being confident, secure and accustomed to that type of interaction. This is difficult to achieve without the right workplace culture and management style. I would like to suggest that the participatory management style which was a predominant feature in the 1980's prior to the arrival of John Ingram as Director was a major contributing factor to the development of both-ways during that period.

It is evident from the literature from that time, that not everyone was in agreement. The conversations continued to take place driven by the

participants themselves, including staff from all levels, community members and students. This debate however, came to a halt with the introduction of Ingram's (2004) hierarchical decision-making structure which deliberately limited what he described as 'participatory decision-making'.

After careful examination of BIITE documents, I would like to suggest that if BIITE is to successfully carry out Recommendation 3 from their most recent AUQA audit, and further investigate and develop both-ways then it needs to provide staff and students with the kind of environment which will facilitate this. This would involve a deliberate return to the participatory management style evident in the 1980's. The recent attempt at participatory management by the current Director is not sufficient. For example, the majority of the information collected from staff for the current strategic plan was collated by e-mail. I would like to suggest that this form of information collection, while a sign of the times, does not necessarily facilitate open, respectful discussion and debate.

A better option would be the one put forward by McIntyre (2005) which is to apply participatory action research to governance and return to the participatory management style BIITE enjoyed in the 1980's. This process would involve all stakeholders, not just staff, but students and community members as well. It would involve trying things and then reflecting, through discussion, with all participants and possibly then trying something else. It

would involve BIITE managers and policy makers having the ability to be able to see the world through multiple sets of lense, and understanding the implications for the way people think and act (McIntyre 2005) and seeing multiple viewpoints simultaneously. To keep the meaningful, respectful conversation flowing in an organisation such as BIITE, the Director must be able to draw on the expertise or personal knowledge of the people who have direct experience, by asking the right questions under the right conditions as described by Buchanan and Colebrook:

The assumption that underpins this work is that good governance requires asking good questions and providing the conditions – not merely to allow – but foster good conversations and the asking of good questions. Providing space for diversity and for convergence is the challenge of good governance based on networks and alliances that create a weblike politics of emergence, rather than a block versus block entrenched political approach as per Deleuze and Guttari (Buchanan and Colebrook in McIntyre 2005 p. 242).

Flood and Romm's (1996) model of triple loop learning could be used to guide questioning. Triple loop learning is described by Flood and Romm (1996c p. 592) as

Looping (between alternative discursive arenas) is a term to which we impart a specific meaning. In Diversity Management: Triple loop learning (1996), we locate these major types of loop which consciousness should be able to attend to. The first loop enables cognisance of (or thinking about) what we call design or structural

matters concerning the coordination of our relationships (including relationships with nature). The second loop enables cognisance of (thinking about) the way in which intersubjectivity in society can be enhanced through processes of mutual encounter in which we enrich our understanding (of the world through debate). The third loop enables cognisance of (thinking about) the way in which knowledge and power may become entangled in practices of knowledge-construction in society, in that questions of what is true or right may be buttressed by the support of 'the mighty' and/or the force of (presumed) 'right argument' may become threatening.

I would like to argue that with the deliberate move away from participatory management by John Ingram, BIITE management became stuck in a single loop obsessed by improving processes and meeting government dictated standards and deadlines. The 'are we doing the right thing' argument moved to the background and the question 'are the processes we are trying to follow really suited to BIITE' was never asked. According to McIntyre (2005) participation is about more than technology and processes

It is about sweeping in and unfolding a wide range of social, political, economic and environmental considerations and holding in mind all of these simultaneously (McIntyre, 2005 p. 193).

At an academic level, the second and third loops were sometimes approached at the time of curriculum development when the underlying philosophy of a course was developed. Unfortunately however it was often a

rehash of previously written work and received little debate in comparison to the actual listing of content. I am, of course, speaking from the point of view of a School of Health Business and Science lecturer and there may have been more robust debate in the School of Education. If it did take place however, it had very little impact on the wider BIITE community and the direction of management. Content, rather than the underpinning philosophy, generally took precedence and opportunities were missed.

I agree with McIntyre (2005) that no tool for participation has all the answers, and that despite our best efforts we are only partly rooted within our context and only partly able to reflect on it.

At this point I would like to acknowledge that the process of making these recommendations has been a solitary process and I have not involved others in the process of interpretation. I have therefore, in a way, gone against my own recommendations in relation to involving all stakeholders in discussion and decision making. I acknowledge this and I accept that while I can see the compatibility between both-ways, the suggestions made by my participants and triple loop learning, the return to a focus on both-ways may not be the path favoured by all stakeholders. If this topic was opened up for discussion then the decision may be made to reject both-ways as a viable option all together.

6.3 Recommendations - education

The second part of my recommendations is for educators who are teaching students' material, which may challenge the students' own cultural identity/safety. When teaching material which may be challenging to a student's cultural identity, I would like to recommend that the educators themselves become very familiar with the three main strategies a student is likely to utilise in an attempt to deal with this challenge. This includes using isolationist, incommensurable and (in)commensurable strategies. The teacher can then avoid challenging a student to the point where they begin using isolationist strategies.

In the case of the data I collected the behaviour identified by the participants that was associated with them having resorted to isolationist coping strategies were withdrawal and what they described as becoming 'unduly harsh or racist'. In the literature pertaining to cultural safety, the reactions of students in this situation was to either keep their head down and shut up (Furner 1995), or speak out and risk being labelled culturally unsafe and failing the requirements for registration as a nurse. I would like to suggest that if students are not culturally safe in their classroom, they will consequently find it difficult to learn new material and adjust to new ways of thinking. In addition to this, the stress created can also act as a barrier to making positive adjustments required and this may also result in resistance rather than adjustment (Byrnes 1993).

In addition to avoiding challenging students to the point where they resort to isolationist coping strategies educators can also aim to facilitate learning experiences which will allow students to utilise (in)commensurable strategies to deal with challenges to their cultural identity/safety in the classroom. For example in an attempt to enable external students studying on line to utilise (in)commensurable coping strategies when learning about issues in Indigenous health I have set up a series of discussion boards based on 'culturally sensitive' topics. Each of these discussion boards has an Indigenous 'guest lecturer' who is an academic and an expert in the field interacting with the students. The students are able to 'test' what they have learned through discussion with the 'guest lecturer', and fellow students over a period of time. Currently the discussion boards are allocated a very small amount of marks however I would like to see participation become voluntary.

6.4 Conclusion

In this section I have made some recommendations based on my analysis of the data I have collected. Firstly my recommendations were be for BIITE as it struggles to manage the cultural diversity of its workforce. I tentatively suggested that any developments could be underpinned by the both-ways philosophy which Bachelor Institute has decided to base its current strategic plan on. The second part of my recommendations was aimed at educators teaching material that may challenge the cultural identity of students. The following and final chapter will outline the limitations of this research, explore questions it has raised and give some recommendations for further research.

Chapter 7: Limitations and further research

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to have a further look at the limitations of this research, explore the questions it has raised and give recommendations for additional research.

7.2 Limitations

The limitations of this study are numerous, but some of the limitations which have caused me the most concern will be discussed as a result of conversation with Janet McIntyre. The first of these is the way in which the study is framed to consider how non Indigenous staff perceive the experience of working within an Indigenous organisation. In some ways, the lack of Indigenous input is problematic. The focus of this study however, is on how non Indigenous staff perceive the experience of being decentred. This study came about as a result of my own feelings of being decentred. The study is useful since it turns the lens onto my own experiences and perceptions, and reflects on these feelings along with the perceptions and experiences of non Indigenous colleagues. Non Indigenous staff at Batchelor, therefore, provide unique insights into how the experience of discrimination is structured.

Another limitation was my inability to bring the participants together in focus groups after the interview data had been collected. There was one focus group, but it served little purpose other than to confirm the data that I had extracted from the interviews. It did not really add any further information. I did originally envisage that I would utilise focus groups and implement their recommendations and then evaluate these recommendations with further focus groups as a cyclic occurrence. This was not to be.

Another limitation was the inability to go back to individual participants for further clarification of points. This was largely due to the fact that many of the participants left the Institute shortly after completing the interview. I did however, as stated earlier, confirm the data with the one focus group although very few of the members of this group contributed to the original data.

I would also have liked to have confirmed the information and conclusions I came to, after my examination of the historical documents pertaining to BIITE. There are people who worked at BIITE during the early 1980's still in Darwin and it would have been good to have had the ethics clearance to find them and discuss my impressions and conclusions.

One of the other limitations raised by one of the participants, was that the study only defined the minority group according to culture rather than along

other lines such as sexual orientation or gender. Some of the participants were eager to draw parallels between this study and what they had experienced previously as a part of another minority group.

7.3 Further questions

The next section of this chapter will look at the questions that this research has raised. The first question concentrates on the staff selection process at BIITE. Is the current process selecting staff that are going to be able to positively deal with the various race and cross cultural challenges they will face at BIITE? Is the process valuing the 'correct' attributes in the individual applying for the position? Do we know what the 'correct' attributes are?

The next question is that once staff have been selected, are they orientated and given the skills and support they are going to need to cope with the cross cultural environment they are entering? The process of recruiting and orientating staff are obviously issues which are common to any organisation. At BIITE however, special consideration must be given to not only the technical skills and qualifications of prospective staff, but also their ability to function within the environment without causing 'harm' to themselves or others.

The next question is what is the best governing structure for BIITE? This study has made some recommendations in regards to this, but this question

needs to be put to a much wider audience, including all of BIITE's stakeholders.

7.4 Further research

The main areas I would like to see researched/discussed further, would include the recruitment and selection of staff, the professional development of staff in particular in relation to orientation and cross cultural courses, and finally, the governing structure of BIITE. With regards to researching recruitment and selection processes, I would like to suggest that data is collected using focus groups pertaining to what BIITE is really looking for in an applicant and how this can be reflected during the selection process. Data from exit interviews could be examined to determine what the issues were in relation to cross cultural relations. Successful applicants could also be followed up and interviewed at specified intervals to determine how well they are dealing with cross cultural issues.

The effectiveness of professional development in relation to staff coping with the specific challenges is another area which warrants further study. This is of special significance as a research topic as this is perhaps the area, which potentially, is the most likely to be useful outside of BIITE in other areas where diversity is a factor. The participants in this study have come up with some recommendations in relation to this topic that could be implemented as

part of an overall strategy. These recommendations could be implemented, evaluated and amended as necessary.

The final area which could possibly be researched further is the area of governance. BIITE needs to be governed in a way that is going to acknowledge and benefit from diversity. I have suggested a participatory model and this could be compatible with a cyclic participatory action research design. All stakeholders including staff, students, community members and organisations need to be included and considered in the research design and if, as a result of this study, a model for governance is implemented the research process needs to continue to enable feedback and continuous adaptation to occur.

7.5 Final thoughts and conclusion

This study came about as a result of my own inability to effectively deal with the cultural challenges I experienced while employed at BIITE. This research was my attempt at discovering if anyone else was having similar experiences and to try and discover how they deal with these challenges in the hope that this knowledge might enhance the mutual understanding of the challenges posed by cultural diversity in the workplace.

In the process I learned first of all that non Indigenous staff employed at BIITE do find the BIITE environment culturally challenging. These challenges

were able to be divided into several categories. Secondly I learned that staff used two main approaches when dealing with these challenges: Isolationist approaches or complementarism which I further divided into (in)commensurability and incommensurability. During my exploration of these strategies I drew parallels between these approaches and solipsism and intersubjectivity.

I then used these approaches for dealing with cultural challenges in conjunction with information I had collected from Institute documents as a basis for several recommendations relating to policy development within BIITE aimed at improving diversity management within the organisation. Finally I looked at some of the limitations of this study and made suggestions for further study.

Parallel to all this was my exploration of my own journey. I have found this reflective exercise a very long but valuable one. I have been exposed to a wealth of information and a small part of that information has been documented in this thesis. I am already implementing what I have learned in my teaching and I am sure I will continue to utilise this information and build on it in future research.

My final thought however hinges on the initial reason I resisted Indigenous participation in this project in the first place. I now can see that by deciding

that the institutional and emotional hurdles were too insurmountable I have in turn limited myself to isolationist and incommensurable strategies when dealing with threats to my own cultural safety/identity. My next step is therefore to take my own advice and share my findings.

Appendix I: Participant Information Sheet

Dear potential Participant

Thankyou for considering participating in this project

My name is Lolita Wikander, and I am employed as a lecturer B at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. I am currently studying at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. My research is under the supervision of Professor Judith Clare and Dr. Yoni Luxford in the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery. The title of my thesis is ‘When the majority becomes the minority – beyond cultural awareness’.

The aims of the project are to:

1. document how non Indigenous Academic staff maintain their cultural safety in a cross cultural teaching environment
2. identify the consequences of not being able to maintain cultural safety and
3. make recommendations for professional development and/or changes of practice within the workplace.

This is a Participatory Action Research project and some of the anticipated benefits include:

1. allowing for critical reflection of the issue of cultural safety
2. opportunity for participants to improve their own practice, their understanding of their practice and the situation in which they practice.

Information will be published in the form of a thesis and education/seminar/conference presentations as negotiated by the participants. Some information may also be presented for publication in selected journals.

During the data collection period information will be stored in a secure cabinet/computer by me. When the project is complete information will be stored in the archives section of BIITE. At the end of five years the information will be shredded/deleted. Any information which is presented will not include the names of the participants.

Please note however that it may be difficult to guarantee absolute anonymity within the Institute. There is also a risk of experiencing emotional upset and/or negative professional consequences as a result of participating in the project.

Informed written consent will be sought from each participant. If you choose to participate you will be able to withdraw at any time if you change your mind. If you do withdraw any data/information you have contributed will also be deleted if you wish.

If you wish to participate then you will be given the opportunity to negotiate data collection methods, publications means and possible uses for the data after analysis.

If you choose to participate and you find yourself becoming upset at any stage you are able to access the Employee Assistance Services. You can contact this service on (08) 89411752.

This project should be complete by the end of 2005. If you would like a summary of the results please let me know so that I can put you on the mailing list.

If you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Institute Research and Ethics Committee Executive Officer at the following address:

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
Research and Ethics Committee Executive Officer
Curriculum and Research Unit (CARU)
Batchelor NT 0845

Telephone (08) 8939 7240 Facsimile: (08) 8939 7354

Lolita Wikander

Appendix II: Ethics form

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT - HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL CONSENT FORM

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| I (Participants name) | Of (Locality) |
| Hereby consent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken by: | Lolita Wikander (Researcher name) |

And I understand that the purpose of the research is (to be completed by researcher; outline summary of the project)

4. document how non Indigenous Academic staff maintain their cultural safety in a cross cultural teaching environment
5. identify the consequences of not being able to maintain cultural safety and
6. make recommendations for professional development and/or changes of practice within the workplace.

1. I understand the aims, methods, anticipated benefits, and possible hazards of the research study, which have been explained to me. |
2. I understand that I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such a research study.
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.
4. I understand that where my participation has formed the basis of the research study, that if I complete a survey or questionnaire, - or participate in any interview formally or informally, my knowledge will be kept absolutely confidential and my name and address not used for publication purposes without my permission.
5. Please forward a copy of the transcript Yes ___ No ___
6. I understand that the results of the research will not be published in a form that permits my identification without my consent.
7. My contribution will not be used for any purpose other than that for which consent was gained, unless further permission is given by (insert name of individual and/or relevant community organisation)

_____ and, the
 return, storage or destruction of data
 has been negotiated with.
 _____ to its satisfaction.

I understand the points raised above and I freely and voluntarily participate in this project.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Participant's Signature | <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> | Date | <p>/</p> <p>/</p> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|

Appendix III: Question schedules and case studies

Interview questions/themes

How long have you worked at Batchelor?

Have you worked in any other Indigenous organisations prior to coming to Batchelor?

Do you speak any Indigenous languages?

What is your understanding of the term 'cultural safety'?

Can you think of any situations during your employment at Batchelor Institute where your cultural safety has been threatened?

How do you work through these situations?

Are there ever times you have difficulties working through these situations? How do you make sense of it or resolve it? What happens if you do have difficulty? How do you feel if this happens?

In retrospect is there anything you would have done differently?

What suggestions do you have for making it different, at personal, group and institutional levels?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Case Study 1

You are in your office and in there is a class in progress in the room next-door. It is a common unit "Communications" and the students are presenting their speeches. They are using the loud speaker and are easily heard in your office. One of the speakers is calling for the, "getting rid of all white lecturers from the institute and anyone else white in the place." You are due to address the group in the next session. How do you feel and how do you work through this?

Case Study 2

You are delivering a workshop and you have asked a senior Indigenous staff member to guest lecture. During this person's presentation numerous derogative comments about non Indigenous people in general are made. You are in the room during that time. After the presentation one of the students corners you and says how embarrassed she was for you being in the room and she asks how you can put up with those sorts of comments. How would you handle this situation and what do you think you would say to this student?

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