Fluid Boundaries, Moving Conversations: Social Learning and Intercultural Dialogues

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Abstract

Intercultural dialogue is a practice, utilised by institutions and policy makers alike, to address cultural differences within pluralistic societies. A focus on reconciliation and harmony suggests that cultural divisions can be positively addressed through interaction and multivocal conversation. Taking a comparative case study approach, this research project critiques this viewpoint to highlight dialogue as a process that also challenges structures and positions of dominance in society.

The research is guided by questions that explore a) the intercultural environment in the Australian multicultural landscape, b) the factors that enhance and hinder dialogue in such environments and c) the transformation that potentially results from such learning. Theoretically, it draws on Paulo Freire's understanding of transformative dialogue, Etienne Wenger's understanding of social learning and Jonathon Haidt's views of moral psychology to frame intercultural dialogue as a process contextualised by the spheres of the intercultural space, social learning and positive cultural change. Data collection consists of semi-structured interviews with mainstream community members and members of culturally different communities, as well as observation and personal reflection arranged in three qualitative based case studies. Interviews were supplemented and triangulated by a range of other data sources including reflection, observation and text.

The thesis posits that enhancing intercultural dialogue is a multifactorial process that requires both an openness to the cultural other and sufficient humility and self-awareness to question one's own cultural identity. As a consequence, intercultural dialogue requires acknowledgement of power differentials between cultural groups and intracultural reflection into the ideological orientations that construct 'otherness'. Such ideological framing, I argue, may be determined through the discourses that mainstream cultural members use to position both oneself and 'the cultural other'. The thesis ultimately concludes that sustaining intercultural dialogue lies in a shared endeavour within and between participants to understand the multidimensionality of our humanity.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Latrobe University Human Ethics Committee (HREC No. 14-083).

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8 May 2020

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List of publications developed from the thesis

Atkinson, M. (2019) Dialogue, morality and the Deadly Questions Campaign: reconstructing, reviewing and revaluing Victorian Aboriginality, *Australian Aboriginal Studies Journal,* Issue 2, p112-124. <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=807521412738797;res=IELAPA>.

Atkinson, M. (2019) Dialogue and the Cultural Other in Conflict Situations: An Augmented Understanding. Journal of Dialogue Studies, Vol. 7 p.43-58.

Atkinson, M. (2018) Finding spaces for transformational learning in a neo-liberal World: Research paper, *Journal of Education + training, 60*(6), pp.505-515. <https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/ET-02-2018-0046>.

Atkinson, M. (2018) Refugee mentoring: Sharing the journey. Peace and Conflict, *Journal of Peace Psychology*, 24(3), p.338-342, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000316>.

Atkinson, M. (2017) Facilitating dialogue in the adult EAL classroom: Acknowledging learners, teachers and the curriculum. Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, 23(2), pp.178-196, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971417695817>.

Atkinson, M. (2016) Paulo Freire. Chapter submission in *Dialogue Theories 2.* The Dialogue Society, London. pp 125-138 <http://www.dialoguesociety.org/publications/Dialogue_Theories_II_Preview.pdf>.

Atkinson, M. (2014) Reframing Literacy in Adult ESL Programs: Making the Case for the Inclusion of Identity *Literacy and Numeracy Studies Journal Vol 1 No 2.pp 3-20. Accessible at* <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=633232711844534;res=IELHSS>.

Atkinson, M. (2014) Freirean Dialogue: reinventing a classic approach. Chapter submission in Dialogue Theories 2. The Dialogue Society, London.

Atkinson, M. (2013) Intergroup dialogue: a theoretical positioning *Journal of Dialogue Studies 1 (1)* <www.dialoguesociety.org/publications/Journal_of_Dialogue_Studies.pdf>.

List of Acronyms

AELP	Adult English Language Program
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
BC Treaty	British Columbia Treaty
CBD	Central Business District
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CoP	Community of Practice
EAL	English as Another Language
EU	European Union
HSP	Humanitarian Settlement Program
ICD	Intercultural Dialogue
ISESCO	The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SAD	Swiss Agency of Development
SETS	Settlement Engagement and Transition Support
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UN	United Nations
UNAOC	United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
UNDRIP	United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> *'intercultural dialogue across and within our societies has never been so crucial'* (United Nations General Assembly 2015, p.2)

We are nearing the end of the UN sponsored International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). The United Nations General Assembly made the above statement in the context of an early report tied to this commitment, emphasizing that 'achieving peace through dialogue constitutes a necessary foundation for the stability of our societies' (United Nations General Assembly 2015, p.2). It is a sentiment echoed by international organisations with a stake in enhancing communication between members of different cultural groups. The Anna Lindh Foundation[1] champions the role that intercultural dialogue plays in the promotion of shared values and cultural awareness (Anna Lindh Foundation 2018). The Vatican has endorsed the practice (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013). UNESCO has made intercultural dialogue a central pillar in their mission of promoting cross cultural understanding claiming that it helps to both 'defuse the tensions that can arise in multicultural societies' and 'advanc[e] inclusive peacebuilding goals' (UNESCO 2009, p. v; 2018 para 1).

Such statements are unfolding in the context of rising right-wing populism and a recognition that intercultural dialogue is necessary to support cultural cohesion (Feldman, 2017). In the context of contemporary plural cultures, intercultural dialogue is viewed as integral to cultural integration (Kymlicka 1995; Meer & Modood 2012; Parekh 2011; Taylor 1992), essential for supporting minority ethnic groups in multicultural societies (Parekh 2006) and necessary for promoting cultural relations at the local level (Mansouri et al. 2017).

Closer to home, a 2013 parliamentary inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration recommended that the Australian Government 'develop a strategic plan to support the regular convening of … intercultural dialogues [and] foster wider inter-community understanding' (Australia Parliament 2013, p. 85; p. 167). Likewise, the

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[1] Originally created in 2004 as the 'Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures', the Anna Lindh Foundation is a network of civil society organisations dedicated to promoting intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean region.

Australian Human Rights Commission foregrounds the need for genuine and authentic dialogue in the relationship between government and Aboriginal people[2] against a backdrop of discrimination, racism and intransigence around significant issues. In the context of self-determination, the failure of past policies and a renewed attempt at reconciliation by representatives of both groups, the Commission (2013, p. 11) states:

> all parties must come to this dialogue committed to listen to each other and ready to engage respectfully, in good faith and committed to addressing the issues

As the Commission (2016, p.26) further notes, dialogue offers a means of moving forward on the changes that are 'so desperately needed by indigenous communities'.

Across each of these examples intercultural dialogue is advanced as a vehicle to bring people of different cultural groups closer together through respectful exchange in a context of growing international tension over such issues. As Hardy and Hussain of the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations in the U.K. argue:

> Dialogue between and within cultures can become a powerful antidote to rejection and violence, by enabling people to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultured world, with a sense of global community and belonging (Hardy & Hussain 2017, p. 65)

Such sentiments are distinctly worthy. Nevertheless, they mask a problem.

One of the major issues facing the practice, and indeed the study and representation of intercultural dialogue, is the lack of clarity attached to the notion and correspondingly its application to areas of social and cultural challenge. In general, the term, as it is used and applied, is vaguely defined (Kaur-Stubbs 2010) with no generalised agreement as to what dialogue entails (Dulabaum 2011), nor the factors which hinder or promote its facilitation (Anderson & Cissna 1994; Bekemans 2007; Zajda 2009). The European Commission has noted that 'there is no definitive and consensual definition of what intercultural dialogue is or should be' (Giovinazzo & Williams p. 7 2019). In a related argument UNESCO points out that its 'effectiveness will remain constrained until more is understood about the

[2] I refer to the First Nations people in Victoria either as Aboriginal Victorians or Aboriginal people. In doing so I follow the ethical publishing guidelines of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2015).

conditions under which it thrives' (UNESCO 2018 para 1). While the appeal for intercultural dialogue by the U.N. and other institutions, organisations and groups is undoubtedly based on positive ideals, left unsaid is exactly what dialogue challenges us to do and how we are supposed to meet this challenge.

Despite the lack of clarity and no identifiable 'silver bullet' there is little doubt that the term 'intercultural dialogue' attempts to capture a qualitatively different form of vocal exchange from that of argument, debate or for that matter, conversation. Informed academic scholarship identifies unique features of dialogue characterised by multi-vocality (Ganesh & Holmes, 2011), change through ethical well-being (Dallmayr, 2009), respect and reciprocity (Baraldi, 2006) mutual trust (Dulabaum, 2011) and dignity (Ignatieff, 2001). Other scholars have focused on processes within dialogue. Nagda and Zuniga (2003) have looked extensively at critical reflection around power and privilege in the dialogue process. Abu Nimer (2011) and Lederach (1999) have explored the construction and reconstruction of identity while Eguren (2008), Escobar (2009) and Pace (2005) have focused on the co-creation of meaning through open listening.

Across such diversity of definitional markers, there is a collective academic recognition that intercultural dialogue is bound to a social constructivist understanding of reality where truth is seen as emergent and made in interaction (Kim & Kim 2008). In this regard, dialogue represents the quintessential form of constructivist communication deriving meaning through engaging with difference for the purpose of sharing and constructing new cultural meanings (Escobar 2009). It requires us to challenge, question and to reflect upon our own assumptions and to ethically question those of others amid the understanding that no singular culture has a monopoly on truth. A central aim is not simply cultural harmony and mutual understanding but also the co-creation of an ethical, humanitarian space where dissent and difference may be expressed to thereby stimulate collective creative expressions through reciprocal inquiry.

Such qualities augment its reconciliatory characteristics with a transformative tension that is both inherent and necessary for dialogue to occur. As communication academics and influential dialogue scholars John Stewart and Karen Zediker (Stewart & Zediker 2000, p .231) state:

> .. there is no "silver bullet" that, when injected into the lived conversation, will insure a dialogic experience…even though there is no set of instructions to follow, there is a tensional both/and orientation to the other

> and to the communicating that, when articulated tangibly, significantly enhances the likelihood that this special quality of contact will occur.

The principle aims of this thesis are to explore and articulate this 'tensional orientation to the other', identify the social learning factors that support and hinder its facilitation and understand how such factors promote a transformative ethos within a group. Such a study is timely. The recent statement in Australia's recent national multiculturalism policy, that 'inter-cultural dialogue is critical' (Australian Government 2017), the description by the United Nations High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNOAC) Miguel Angel Moratinos, of 'intercultural dialogue [as] ever more important' (Moratinos, cited in UN News 2019) and its academic positioning as a response to 'concerns about the failure of multiculturalism'(see Hardy & Hussain 2019), showcases this urgency amid the need to understand what this 'special quality of contact' across cultural difference entails.

Identifying the 'research gap' in the intercultural dialogical landscape

I first became aware of intercultural dialogue as I explored different areas of academic interest. In previous research (see Atkinson 2009), where I focused on the meaningful participation of adult students in English as Additional Language (EAL) programs, I found that dialogue between students and teacher was essential in establishing meaningfulness itself. My other academic and professional areas of interest include refugee settlement and Aboriginal reconciliation. In these latter two areas, as in adult English language learning more generally, I noticed that intercultural dialogue was a recurring, albeit under-recognised aspect of learning, social inclusion and the building of relationship. I concluded that by exploring the processes of intercultural dialogue, I could reveal something new in terms of stimulating effective social change for different cultural groups[3] and thereby help to create, in some small way, a better world.

I must admit that this initial goal was naïve. A major problem, I soon discovered, was that I did not really understand what intercultural dialogue itself entailed. Along with much of

[3] Terms used throughout the thesis, such as 'different cultures' are explained below. Suffice to mention at this point my reluctance to use cultural minority, culturally marginalised or culturally disadvantaged. Each of these terms to my mind perpetuates a status quo that is structured on a deficit positioning of the 'cultural other'.

the popular literature, I equated the term simplistically with reconciliation and cultural harmony. In coming to terms with the challenge of defining intercultural dialogue in my own journey of understanding, I found the following quote by intercultural academic Sara Silvestri to be particularly illuminating.

> intercultural dialogue is about learning how to tell a shared story. (Silvestri 2010, p.49).

The reference to learning in Silvestri's statement was the first of many references that I came across which drew such a learning-based link. The centrality of learning is evident in UNESCO's own positioning of intercultural dialogue as a process of knowledge exchange and enhanced cultural understanding:

> [intercultural dialogue] provides people with an experiential opportunity to understand, respect and forge links among cultures, as well as to exchange knowledge to seek and re-invent more creative ways to live together (Tilbury & Mula 2009)

Academically, learning is recognized as inherent to dialogue (Ganesh & Holmes 2011; Halabi, 2000; Nagda, 2006; Stewart & Zediker, 2000), intrinsic to the process of building understanding between members of diverse cultural groups (Anderson & Cissna, 1994; Bekemans 2007; Jakubowicz, 2006; Modood & Meer 2012; Parekh, 2006; Zajda 2009), and crucial for supporting inclusiveness and the accommodation of difference (Nesbitt-Larkin 2008; Wieviorka 2012).

Surprisingly however the learning processes inherent in intercultural dialogue have received little recognition in the way of conceptual understanding or empirical investigation. Contemporary theoretical frameworks have been limited primarily to psychological frameworks.[4] This is not to discount such frameworks which have offered important insights into intercultural contact and prejudice. Rather it is to point out that a learning-based framework can create different insights into dialogical processes that have hitherto received little attention. This is particularly pertinent in the case of liberal

[4] As discussed in the following chapter, Allport's Contact Theory, first conceptualised in 1954, remains influential. Theoretical frameworks around intergroup bias (Gaertner & Dovidio 2005; Hewstone, Rubin & Willis 2002) also remain relevant.

multicultural societies where culturally different groups are learning to either integrate with the dominant group or challenge it.

The theory of intercultural dialogue

In order to theoretically understand the contested space of intercultural dialogue, I took an approach informed through three primary academic fields. These three areas were a) culture, b) social learning and c) dialogue itself. 'Culture', while highly contested, offers a platform for locating dialogical interaction inclusive of cultural bias. In this thesis I utilised a critical-constructivist understanding to foreground differentials of power between self-identified cultural groups alongside viewpoints of cultural identity. This was augmented with understandings from the field of moral psychology to bring insight into how discourse both reinforces and challenges notions of identity.

To develop insight into learning in the dialogue process I found profit primarily in the work of Etienne Wenger. While learning itself has been intensely studied through a social constructivist lens, little focus has been placed on learning facilitated by cultural difference. The social learning theories of Wenger (2001) and of Akkerman and Bakker (2011), indicate the mechanisms by which learning occurs across, rather than simply within cultures.

'Dialogue' has been theorized by many scholars coalescing primarily around the ethical co-creation of meaning through multi-vocal conversations. The existential philosopher Martin Buber (1965), together with the hermeneutic philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer (1989), theories of reciprocity of Bakhtin (1984) and to a lesser extent the rational re-constructionism of Jürgen Habermas (1984) have become synonymous with the concept of dialogue. These scholars have all made significant contributions to understanding dialogue. Given the learning-based focus of this paper I found the work of Freire (1993) and to a lesser extent Buber (1965) and Bohm (1996) to be particularly useful, however. These latter scholars present a pathway to positive change emphasizing the importance of critical understanding (Freire), communion (Buber) and suspension of thought (Bohm). As these scholars warn us however, the journey of change is never easy for it requires us to come face to face with our own fears (Freire), assumptions (Bohm) and incomplete sense of humanity (Buber). Collectively these scholars suggest a vehicle to transformation through dialogue that I found particularly valuable in this thesis. The conceptual framework that

underpins this thesis is presented in more detail in Chapter Two. It is thereafter tested in the analysis of the case studies themselves.

Research questions and research aim

This thesis is motivated and guided by three interrelated research questions. The first question concerns a foundational aspect of intercultural dialogue; that of the intercultural space. Questions two and three explore respectively the learning factors of intercultural dialogue and transformations that result from such learning. The questions are contextualised by the cultural plurality of Australian society:

1. What constitutes the intercultural space between members of the 'dominant culture' and 'cultural others' in Australian society?
2. What are the social learning factors that shape the practice of intercultural dialogue in this space?
3. How does shared learning through dialogue contribute to transformation?

While these questions 'guide' the thesis, a research aim lies in testing the conceptual framework that underpins this thesis. As mentioned above, the theory is developed up front and tested through analysing the case studies.

The case study sites

The research is set in multicultural Australia. Australia is an ideal case study site, imbued as it is with its traditional Anglo-Celtic past, present multicultural designations, and an ongoing indigenous presence. In order to address the research questions, I chose case studies which directly focused on the experiences of people in areas of cross-cultural interaction in Australian society. They included a) a culturally mixed adult English class of migrant learners, b) a mentor program between members of the dominant community and people of refugee backgrounds and c) the treaty process between the Victorian government and representatives of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Case Study One is set within the delivery of an Adult English Language Program (AELP) in the Central Business District of Melbourne, Australia. Adult education has long been associated with dialogue, social justice and positive social change (Gomez 2004). Such dialogically oriented approaches are supported academically through research into the link between educational delivery, empowerment and learning itself (Auerbach 1992,

Duckworth & Brzeski 2015; Street 1984, 2003). They are afforded little space within the current hegemonic framework of adult learning delivery however, where the focus is increasingly placed on employability skills, standardisation, reporting and accountability (Black & Yasukawa 2013; Hamilton 2012). The problem with these latter approaches is that such standardization can act to depersonalize the curriculum reaffirming and even contributing to an existing sense of powerlessness for adult learners (Field & Lynch 2015). This is especially the case for learners of migrant or refugee background who are endeavouring to develop a new sense of identity in a different culture (Warriner 2008, 2010). As such the phenomenon of intercultural dialogue has important implications in the context of the pedagogical value of dialogue for adult learning and the needs of adult language and literacy students beyond employability skills.

In contrast to the heavily regulated environment of Case Study One, Case Study Two looks specifically at an informal refugee support program run by a non-government agency in an inner-city local government area of Melbourne, Australia. Alongside the various settlement challenges refugees face, the emphasis on welfare provision in settlement support programs is potentially disempowering. Not only does it discount the agency of refugees themselves, it does little to promote links between refugees and the broader society. As a consequence, some welfare organisations augment service provision with empowerment approaches to create opportunities for people on humanitarian visas to strengthen their sense of connection and identity within a very different society from their homeland. Mentor programs are one such approach where skilled volunteers from the broader society are matched with refugees and migrants seeking mentoring assistance. The alignment of mentoring with dialogical principals focused on the needs of refugees as expressed by refugees themselves makes such approaches ideal in the context of the aims of this thesis.

Case study three is different again in terms of identifying people through a shared culture rather than a category of people. The context is not one of cultural integration but cultural challenge inclusive of the recognition of and reparation for past and present grievances and injustices. It specifically looks at the treaty process between Aboriginal people and the Victorian government. In February 2016, the Victorian government hosted a meeting with 500 Victorian Aboriginal community leaders from across the state to seek their views on self-determination and constitutional recognition. The expressed desire for treaty initiated a complex process of cross-cultural interaction between the government, Victorian Aboriginal people and to a limited extent, the non-Indigenous Victorian population. On the

one hand, the reconciliatory nature of the treaty, made clear from the outset, has ensured a dialogical orientation to proceedings. On the other hand, its significance to the Aboriginal population in terms of reparation and recognition has illuminated deep divisions amongst members of the dominant culture as well as the Aboriginal community. Such tensions offer rich areas of exploration from the perspective of the aims of this thesis.

The three case studies collectively represent a spectrum of engagement between members of the dominant society and members of culturally different groups. They also represent very different areas of cross-cultural multi-vocal conversations within the context of a liberal plural society. Ostensibly, the learning of English and refugee empowerment are designed to enable members of culturally identifiable groups to integrate with a broader, culturally inclusive society. Nevertheless, these two case studies are also very different. English language provision is guided by pre-determined outcomes and a linear model of language acquisition. By contrast the refugee support program is designed to enable people to voice and act on their needs in terms of their development and engagement within the broader society. The Aboriginal treaty process, by further contrast, seeks to challenge the way the dominant culture views Aboriginality as well as seek reparation and redress for past wrongs and present discriminatory practices.

Methodology

I discuss the methodology used in this thesis in detail in Chapter Five. In this introductory chapter I provide a summary of the broader, Chapter Five discussion. I utilise a combination of hermeneutic methodology and Critical Discourse analysis within a multiple case study approach. Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (van Manen 2007) focuses on the experiences, understandings and views of people and has traditionally been used to understand social phenomena. It also has dialogical roots due to its emphasis on interpretation and thus has a natural alignment with the focus of this thesis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) draws on linguistic and social theory at sites of power differences to produce insights into the way discourse reproduces (or resists) social and political inequality (Fairclough 2003). Case study research is a natural fit. The three case studies I chose (outlined above) offer opportunities for comparison between groups and a possible generalisation on a societal level. Data collection techniques include interviews with research participants, personal observation, reflection and text from an online campaign directly pertinent for the final case study.

Defining key terms

This thesis contains terms that require clarification. The definitions below are not meant to be precise, but rather sufficiently dynamic to reflect the shifting and dynamic nature of cultural groups themselves.

Cultural dominance and the 'cultural other'

I refer to participants as members of either the 'dominant culture' or as 'cultural others'. In doing so I am following the lead of other authors writing in the refugee, migrant and ethnic space (Hage 2012; Levey 2018; Parekh 2000; Walton et al. 2018). Cultural dominance in Australia has been a contested area. For many years it has been equated with a white, Anglo core despite the shift to multiculturalism. As Walton et al. argue (2018, p. 133):

> the political shift from a white Australia to a multicultural Australia has not coincided with shedding a dominant cultural imaginary of Australia's so-called 'core' foundation as white and Anglo.

Nevertheless, Walton et al.'s position comes with a question mark. A sizeable proportion of Australians believe in cultural plurality. Foregrounding *Anglo dominance* ignores the relational aspects of cultural dominance. Where are, for example, the second generation European and Asian migrants positioned? Where do they position others? As Alba (2005, p. 41) charges, in 'all immigration societies, the social distinction between immigrant and second generations, on the one hand, and natives, on the other, is a sociologically complex one'. The notion of a white, Anglo core also sidelines the views of those members in Australian society who may identify with an Anglo background but have a cosmopolitan outlook to cultural others.[5]

Forrest and Dunn point to a shift away from the notion of Anglo dominance towards a set of shared values grounded in cosmo-multiculturalism. As Forrest and Dunn (2006, p. 225; p.212) argue:

> the concept of Anglo privilege is not one about which there is any real consensus.

[5] Over one third of all Australians believe that ethnic minorities in Australia 'should be given Australian government assistance to maintain their customs and traditions' a sizeable number of which are of Anglo heritage (Markus 2018).

> newly dominant cosmo-multiculturalists, where Anglo privilege is no longer central …creates an opening within the dominant imaginary in which non-Anglo Australians can be included.

I find Forrest and Dunn's argument persuasive in terms of highlighting the social dominance of 'cosmo-multiculturalists' rather than 'Anglo privilege'. This is not to deny the influence of whiteness and of Anglo-Australian values that continue to impact upon conceptions of national identity. Indeed, I argue that Anglo-Australian whiteness is reinforced in the national imagery to the detriment of more ethnically inclusive visions (see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion). Rather I believe the concept of a culturally *plural* dominant group is more representative of Australian society. It is for this reason that I draw reference to the 'dominant culture' rather than 'Anglo culture' or 'white culture'.

Of further relevance is that the concept of 'dominance'- that one group has access to power and resources that other 'non-dominant' groups do not - doesn't just involve a sense of positioning between members of different groups. It also includes a sense of struggle as non-dominant groups strive for representation and for equality. Cultural theorist Bhikhu Parekh (2000, p. 343) highlights this element of struggle

> Since the dominant group welcomes neither the radical critique nor the corresponding political praxis the struggle for recognition involves cultural and political contestation

Parekh's viewpoint is strongly aligned with a critical-constructivist understanding of culture (discussed in Chapter Two) alongside a learning-based focus on dialogue. A radical critique of the dominant group is a significant aspect of both dialogue and of cultural change.

Similar to my reticence with regards to the terms 'white' or 'Anglo', I am circumspect in using the term 'mainstream'. I am concerned that the notion sidesteps issues of power and representation. As such who is an insider and who is an outsider of the mainstream is constructed upon a set of undefined parameters which serve to protect the cultural status quo. Nevertheless, I feel that 'the mainstream' does have a certain descriptive value; particularly as a term used by those in positions of cultural dominance to denote a mythical, harmonious and singular cultural grouping. In such cases I enclose the term in quotation marks, to denote a self-identified, normalised and supposedly cohesive group.

In addition to referencing 'the dominant culture' I also refer to 'Australian culture'. This latter term refers to the cultural group that adult migrant learners both seek to enter and lie outside of; that refugees are accepted by and separated from. The term is an attempt to describe the perceived non-dominant aspects of the majority society from the perspective of members of different ethnic groups themselves. The cross-cultural interactions of members of different ethnic groups, as an example, are not always characterised by dominance. Soccer in Australia, a Buddhist temple and Italian restaurants are all part of Australian culture but are not necessarily part of a structure of hegemony.

The other term of identity in the research question is that of the 'cultural other'. 'Otherness' is not simply the opposite of dominance, although as Walton et al. (2018) and Parekh (2000) intimate, the two terms are relational. Political philosopher and inspirational author for multiple liberation movements, Frantz Fanon explores how the culturally dominant exerts power over him; the 'cultural other'. In a discourse which brings the emotion of 'otherness' to the fore, Fanon (1967, p. 116) links the supposed objectivity of science and the prejudice of whiteness.

> I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality

The term 'cultural other' refers to a constructed point of difference imposed on members of culturally different groups to support one's own cultural identity, reinforced through supposedly objective measures. Hage (2012, p.14) charges that from an academic perspective, actions that position ethnic identity as static, discrete and fixed, serve to reinforce cultural 'otherness' as a comparative point to the dominant culture. As members of different groups alternatively internalize and externalize such imposed identities, identity-constructs themselves are both reinforced and perpetuated (Ehrkamp 2006). This process is strengthened by the search for identity in what is missing in others. As Hall (1997, p. 2) argues:

> when you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not… a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative.

For people cast as ‘the other’, cultural engagement exists in tension as people negotiate their cultural expression and/or integration in an environment that situates them not as they see themselves but rather as they are positioned against perceived norms and values in the broader society (Bennett & Savage 2004; Shubin 2010; Windle 2004).

The term, ‘migrant and refugee other’, itself is borrowed from other scholars (Baker-Beall 2016; Cantat 2016; Ghorashi 2010; Ibrahim & Howarth 2017) who, like myself, have attempted to capture not only the sense of perceived isolation and need associated with people who are placed into this category but also the sense of ‘otherness’ imposed on members of this constructed category (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Huot et al 2016; Reicher et al., 2008). As I argue below, the primary framing of the ‘migrant and refugee other’ is in terms of deficiency in skills and knowledge to integrate in society despite opportunities to do so. It is important to note that the ‘refugee and migrant other’ is not a community of people. ‘Otherness’, whomever it is directed towards, is an imposed category.

Similar to my cautiousness in the use of terms related to the dominant cultural group such as ‘White’, ‘Anglo’ and ‘the mainstream’, I am also reluctant to use the term ‘culturally marginalised’, ‘culturally vulnerable’ ‘culturally disadvantaged’ or even ‘cultural minority’. ‘Cultural vulnerability’ and ‘cultural disadvantage’ carry a sense of objectivity that is misleading. Are Aboriginal people culturally vulnerable or culturally strong? Are the bilingual children of migrant parents, culturally disadvantaged or culturally advantaged? The term ‘cultural minority’ also carries a sense of cohesion that can be misleading. Neither refugees, nor adult learners are singular cultural groups, except perhaps in right wing tabloid journalism. I do find the term ‘cultural marginalisation’ to be useful, carrying similar meanings to ‘cultural othering’. They both signify a positioning to the dominant culture. The former term however is difficult to define with any certainty as it includes social, economic, educational and political factors that are difficult to disentangle. I am also cautious in imposing a label on an identified group. Not all adult migrant learners, support seeking refugees nor Aboriginal people would see themselves as culturally marginalised as an example.

In addition to the ‘cultural other’ I use ‘different cultural groups’ as indicative of cultures that lie outside the dominant culture. In this regard I follow the work of Markus who uses

this term in recent Scanlon Foundation reports on Australian society[6]. In such cases 'different' refers to people who, while a member of a non-dominant cultural group, are not necessarily 'culturally othered'. In this regard it shares a similar reference point to that of 'Australian culture' discussed above.

Fluid Boundaries, Moving Conversations

The short title of this thesis 'Fluid Boundaries, Moving Conversations', brings to the fore what is meant by cultural boundaries and where they exist. The concept of the 'boundary' is a significant area of academic focus connected strongly with understandings around collective identity (Todd 2005), cultural differentiation (Wimmer 2008) and ethnic assimilation (Pachuki et al. 2007). Richard Alba makes the claim that cultural difference itself 'is best conceived as a boundary with both symbolic and social aspects' (Alba 2005, p. 22). Fredrik Barth (1969, p.10) has been particularly influential in this area noting that social interaction and communication across boundaries is not inimical to their maintenance but often the very foundations upon which they are built

Work in this area reveals that not all boundaries are the same. Rather there are porous segments within cultural groups leading to important questions around the different sectors culturally different groups may enter the dominant culture. As Alba (2005) argues, some boundaries are bright and unambiguous where individuals are left with no doubt as to what side of the boundary they are on. Other boundaries are blurry and obscure, merging into other, equally obscure boundaries at ambiguous locations.

While Alba's theories have gained a lot of traction, they have also brought disagreement. Sociologist Liora Sion (2014, p. 431) questions the bright/ blurry dichotomy arguing that there is a fragility to brightness and agency in the blurred.

> what makes an assumingly bright boundary so sensitive and problematic to cross is not its impenetrability but its actual vulnerability. The state tries to police uncertain citizens and if necessary, to expunge them from the collective in order to imagine the boundaries as bright again.

[6] The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion surveys have provided a series of detailed surveys on social cohesion, immigration and population issues in the Australian cultural landscape since 2007.

Sion's positioning aligns the concept of the cultural boundary with cultural power; that the constructed clarity and unambiguous nature of 'bright' boundaries are in fact symbolic of cultural dominance itself. Put differently, a 'cultural boundary' creates certainty in an uncertain cultural landscape. Indian American anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai suggests that the uncertainty is not just about the 'other', but also reflects 'a deep and dramatic uncertainty about the ethnic self' (Appadurai 1998, p. 244). As Appadurai argues, the ethnic body itself is a 'theatre for the engagement of uncertainty' (1998, p. 226); one made real by institutional forms and defined practices.

In the title of this thesis, reference to a cultural 'boundary' is an attempt to see 'culture' as locatable in practices, beliefs, knowledges *and difference.* The allusion to fluidness on the other hand places uncertainty and vulnerability within this concept. Not only are boundaries malleable and adaptable but also indicative of a felt need for cultural certainty in an environment of cultural uncertainty. As such intercultural dialogue is not simply located at intercultural boundaries; it also asks who can or should determine what the boundaries are and where they lie (Jakubowicz 2006, p. 263).

Research justification

Intercultural dialogue and cultural plurality

Benhabib claims that 'we have to learn to live with the otherness of others whose ways of being may be deeply threatening to our own' (2006, p.61). While Australia has been presented as a successful multicultural country, distinct challenges have been identified. In a specially commissioned report by the Australian Multicultural Foundation on Australian society *Australians Today,* author Andrew Markus notes 'levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity are probably in the range of 25% to 30% of the population' (Markus 2016, p. 48). It is a divide which represents, at the very least, a strong subsection of Australian society with very definite and negative views of Australian cultural pluralism. Such intolerance falls most heavily on people of distinct cultural and religious difference. It is a particular niche represented by adult migrant learners, refugees and Aboriginal people where entrenched cultural attitudes ensure a degree of cultural othering directed towards members of these groups from sections of the dominant society.

More broadly the case studies offer an opportunity to understand the barriers and challenges of dialogue and how such barriers and challenges may manifest in different intercultural spaces. By inquiring into the factors that shape the practice of intercultural dialogue by

members of dominant and different cultural groups this thesis explores the construction of cultural difference and concurrently processes of cultural merging within the context of a modern pluralistic society. Such understanding is deeply aligned with the national agendas of multicultural states in enabling diverse cultural groups to engage with difference in meaningful and mutually enhancing ways.

The stakes for democratic multicultural countries are high. Bhikhu Parekh explicitly positions intercultural dialogue as integral to the multicultural project (Parekh, 2000, 2006). For Parekh, dialogue provides a means by which people may widen their horizons and enhance their way of life (Parekh, 2005, para 4).

> Discussions of multiculturalism should not be centred on the pathology of different communities as they often tend to do, but should also appreciate their virtues, rich insights into the human condition, and worthwhile values. This is why an equal and robust dialogue between different cultures benefits them all. Each acquires an enriching access to new visions of the good life.

Zapata-Barrero (2016, p.54) has argued that a core need of culturally plural societies essentially hinges on one basic idea 'that the interaction among people from different diversity attributions matters'.

The phenomenon of intercultural dialogue as identified and explored in this thesis offers a means to develop insight into the learning processes involved in its facilitation. As a consequence, this thesis can directly contribute to debates regarding the value and practice of intercultural dialogue in culturally plural societies. It challenges the ignorance surrounding its implementation and adds to the debate regarding possible outcomes from the dialogue process. A detailed understanding of dialogue may also provide a way forward in the context of criticism of multiculturalism that recurs in the vicinity of supposed culturally based conflict.

Intercultural dialogue and public policy context

In Australia, which is the geographical and social focus of this study, intercultural dialogue does not have a large profile in public affairs. It has scarcely been mentioned in either multicultural policy or indigenous affairs.

The *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989), Australia's first national multiculturalism policy, did not speak of intercultural dialogue.

Dialogue was not mentioned in later policy statements including *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* (Commonwealth of Australia 2003) and *The People of Australia – Australia's Multicultural Policy* (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2011). In the latest policy statement *Multicultural Australia: United, Strong, Successful* (Australian Government 2017) dialogue is mentioned in one passage where it is noted:

> Regular inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue is critical to reduce the possibility of tensions within communities and to strengthen cohesion and harmony. Such dialogue helps to reduce prejudice, promote cross-cultural understanding, improve relations between different ethnic and religious groups and enhance the sense of belonging and trust. (p.15)

A reconciliatory focus is again foregrounded. Left out of this document is how exactly dialogue is to be supported, promoted and evaluated. As Levey (2017, p.104) argues regarding the role of intercultural dialogue in Australia:

> there is little inclination or appetite for a serious, sustained and genuinely open engagement with cultural minorities on issues that directly affect them and their place in Australian society, notwithstanding the almost forty-year commitment to state multiculturalism.

Responsibility for Australian Government Indigenous affairs policy is held by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). There are no mentions of dialogue in recent policy reports concerning Indigenous people in Australia that I could find. This includes such flagship reports as *Closing the Gap - Prime Minister's Report 2020* (Australian Government 2020*)* and the 2019 version. Only cursory mentions of dialogue were found in the *Review of the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody 2018* (Deloitte Access Economics 2018). The absence of such references appears conspicuous against recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration and the Australian Human Rights Commission mentioned above.

The lack of intercultural dialogue in policy statements at the federal level of Australia contrasts with that of Europe where a backlash towards multiculturalism has resulted in the promotion of 'interculturalism' as evidenced in EU policy documents since the mid-2000s (Bodirsky, 2012). One example of such policy initiatives is the Intercultural Cities Programme led by the Council of Europe to support cities internationally to manage

diversity through an intercultural lens. While dominated by Europe the spread of the program into North America, North Africa and Australia reveals its popularity. [7] A core conceptual element is for cities to partner with business, civil society and public service professionals in order to develop a range of policies and actions which encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups. The aim is to 'facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different backgrounds' (Wood et al. 2006, p.9).

This intercultural orientation however is somewhat problematic from two perspectives. Firstly, as Meer and Modood (2012 p. 192) argue there is doubt whether interculturalism is different from multiculturalism leading to questions whether the Intercultural Cities Program is able to recognize and thereby promote dialogue beyond current multicultural practices:

> while advocates of interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and challenging illiberality, each of these qualities already feature (and are on occasion foundational) to multiculturalism too.

Secondly, while the Intercultural Cities Programme links its diffuse conception of culture with 'any means by which intercommunity dialogue can be facilitated' (Downing 2015, p.1558), there is scarcely any mention of dialogue itself. As Grillo (2017 p.155) notes:

> It is perhaps significant that the ICC programme reports have surprisingly little to say about dialogue, intercultural dialogue, but are chiefly concerned with urging recognition of the (social, cultural, economic) value of diversity.

By way of explanation into the lack of emphasis on dialogue, Grillo argues that all dialogue takes place within a specific social, economic, cultural, religious, and political context to involves the 'cultural other'. The 'cultural other', in turn, is frequently positioned according to former coloniser/colonised relationships. As MacLennan (2011) argues, policymakers need to incorporate power as a core element of intercultural dialogue. A lack of institutional

[7] In the Australian state of Victoria, the Maribyrnong City Council, Ballarat City Council and Melton City Council are members of the Intercultural Cities Network

will to engage with past histories and present power differentials contributes to a superficial rather than deep engagement with dialogue.

The lack of depth in the recognition of intercultural dialogue in the Intercultural Cities Program and the policy vacuum towards intercultural dialogue in Australia points to a need for an evidence-base on the constituting factors of dialogue. Without such evidence the term may continue to be used to confer a reificatory goodness onto a program without stimulating the change process that lies at the heart of dialogue itself.

Intercultural dialogue and the community context

While policy is problematic it appears that in many spaces community organisations are getting on with the process of dialogue. Beyond political and media discourse there exists a pragmatic sense of the cross-cultural encounter in cultural institutions, community development organisations and educational spaces. Examples abound. Iervolino (2013 p.115) speaks about the need for intercultural dialogue in museums

> in order to promote intercultural dialogue, museums need to identify new models for working with communities and to develop appropriate strategies that transform the exhibiting space into a sharing space

Westoby and Ingamells (2010 p.1766) note that proceeding with a dialogical approach in refugee resettlement and the community development space requires one to disrupt the cultural relations of everyday life and to:

> test assumptions, raise dilemmas, make the aspirations, expectations and legal requirements of both cultures explicit and provide the space to explore their implications so as to negotiate outcomes

Sorensen et al (2009), working in the educational space, argues that to develop effective intergroup relations it is necessary to move beyond intergroup harmony and create:

> structured and guided interaction for addressing the difficult issues such as privilege, power, and inequality that continue to create a sharp division between groups

In each of these ‘community based’ approaches to dialogue there is an acceptance that present structures must be challenged to create more inclusive spaces. Such observations are directly pertinent to this case study research which is similarly grounded in community based intercultural interactions. Nevertheless, similar concerns that characterise the

intercultural field more generally are also evident in this community space, especially in situations where power differentiation is minimised. As Hardy and Hussain (2019 p.15) argue, it is necessary to critique 'the applicability of intercultural dialogue as a generic approach for positively promoting intercommunity relations'

Thesis Outline

This thesis comprises nine chapters split into parts A and B.

Part A

Part A comprises three literature review chapters – Chapters 2,3 and 4. Chapter Two develops and presents a foundational framework of intercultural dialogue based on theoretical understandings of culture, social learning and transformation through dialogue. Chapter Three applies this theoretical framework to the literature as it relates to the three case study sites. It extends the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two through understandings of dialogue as they appear in practice; thereby developing a more nuanced understanding. Chapter Four explores the othering process in Australian society. It looks specifically at cultural bias and the changing identity discourses directed towards Aboriginal people and the 'migrant and refugee other' over time. In doing so it references the myths and political rhetoric that have contributed to such discourses.

Part B

Part B comprises the research methodology, presents the data-based chapters – Chapters 5-9. Chapter Five outlines the methodology which guides the investigation of the research questions identified above. As noted above the methodology is based on hermeneutic phenomenology and critical discourse analysis. Data collection techniques include one to one interviews, reflective findings and participative observation; thus, providing data triangulation. Chapter Six outlines the findings of the English language case study. Chapters Seven and Eight explore the findings of the refugee support program and Aboriginal treaty process case studies respectively. Chapter Nine also comprises a data-based discussion. It assesses and augments the discussion on discourse in Chapter Four to revisit and collate the recurring themes that were visible in the case study chapters.

Chapter Ten comprises the concluding chapter of this thesis. This chapter includes a direct response to the research questions repeated here:

1. What constitutes the intercultural space between members of the ‘dominant culture’ and ‘cultural others’ in Australian society?
2. What are the social learning factors that shape the practice of intercultural dialogue in this space?
3. How does shared learning through dialogue contribute to transformation?

It also covers the limitations and implications of the research along with recommendations for future research.

A final note

The research component of this thesis comprised an intercultural dialogue as I negotiated and constructed meanings with diverse others. I became aware of my ignorance over Aboriginal and migrant issues and the challenges they faced. Additionally, I gained an understanding of dialogue itself. I realised that often my participants, with a foot in two cultures, knew more about intercultural dialogue than I did myself. When I first realised this, I was surprised. In theoretically combining culture, dialogue and learning, I felt I had uncovered new understandings. Little did I understand that dialogue is a practice that stems not from theory but from the age-old practicality of having to negotiate with people who are different. While I theorised over the term, poring over books and articles, they lived its meaning. Like dialogue, this thesis is a journey of discovery; a little of which is contained within these pages.

Part A

Theoretical review, conceptual framework and discourse

The focus of Part A is to develop a framework of intercultural dialogue based on the literature. This framework guides data collection, analysis and the interpretation of the findings. It is therefore an essential foundational element of the thesis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the following three chapters (Ch 2,3 and 4) explore respectively the concept of intercultural dialogue, the practice of intercultural dialogue in the case study fields and the centrality of discourse to the dialogue process. A prime motivating factor for this approach lies in the current ill-defined nature of intercultural dialogue (discussed in chapter 2), the need for a nuanced framing of intercultural dialogue suitable for specific cultural spaces (chapter 3) and the foregrounding of the discourses used to position cultural others. These three foundational steps establish both the approach taken to exploring intercultural dialogue in the case study sites and the discursive context.

Ch 2: Intercultural dialogue: A conceptual framework

> [intercultural] dialogue means to learn what is meaningful for me and to learn what is meaningful for the others (Israeli professor of cultural mediation, Dan Bar-On)

In the quote above Dan Bar-On emphasises the two-way learning process in dialogue. Self-meaningfulness suggests deep reflection on what is important in one's own life both as a human being and as a member of a cultural group. Learning what is meaningful for the other suggests a depth of cultural sensitivity to *their* goals, aspirations and memories. The phrase speaks to both the social learning elements of dialogue and its intrinsic human centredness, capturing both the simplicity and the complexity of intercultural dialogue. The aim of this chapter is to create a foundational framework of intercultural dialogue that captures both its social learning and transformative elements.

As argued in the introductory chapter, intercultural dialogue can have very different meanings for different people and different groups. The relative ambiguity in the field has important considerations for developing a theoretical basis for intercultural dialogue relevant to the three case studies under examination. Initially I outline the theoretical terrain of dialogue studies by drawing on key theorists. I argue that in order to develop conceptual clarity, a useful and valid approach is to examine the concepts of 'culture', of 'social learning' and of 'dialogue' separately. It is noted that a critical-constructivist understanding of culture equips us with the means of exploring different identities in intercultural interactions. An understanding of social learning brings to the fore the mechanisms in which difference may be bridged through constructions based on inclusive learning. Likewise, a detailed examination of dialogue highlights key themes within multi-vocal conversations centred on mutuality, critical understanding and of transformation. The chapter concludes by bringing these differing strands together to construct a conceptual foundation of intercultural dialogue.

The ambiguity of 'intercultural dialogue'

Intercultural dialogue, positioned in terms of the broad based, purposeful and peaceful interaction between members of different cultural groups, has been supported by a number of high-profile proclamations. Alongside the United Nations proclamation of 2001 as the year of Dialogue Among Civilisations, has been the UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005, the designation of 2008 as

the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and latterly the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022). Various reports and programs by organisations as diverse as UNESCO, the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Council of Europe have promoted intercultural dialogue within contemporary society in the form of diverse projects from international partnerships and cross-cultural exchanges to ethnic artistic ventures.

In the context of a world in which cultural difference is increasingly positioned in terms of threat, intercultural dialogue is viewed as a potential harmonising and accommodating framework to support unity within the diversity of humankind. It is touted as integral to successful multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995; Meer & Modood 2012; Parekh 2011; Taylor 1992) through providing a pathway to inclusiveness and the accommodation of difference (Nesbitt-Larkin 2008; Wieviorka 2012). It is also framed as a vehicle for social possibility, enabling ethnic minorities to share their values with a larger society (Stokke & Lybaek 2016) thereby counteracting processes of segregation and exclusion (Zapata-Barrero & Pecoud, 2012) through shared, universal values (Helskog & Stokke 2014).

This focus on harmony and reconciliation is evident in the various definitions of intercultural dialogue as presented by major international organisations. The United Nations Alliance of Civilisations, for example, defines intercultural dialogue largely in terms of the positive effects of interactional engagement noting that it represents an 'important step in overcoming the boundaries that separate people and groups' (cited in Ratzmann 2019, p.16). The Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008), likewise focuses upon bridging the differences between people to promote 'personal growth and transformation' and 'tolerance and respect for the other' (Council of Europe 2008, p. 17). UNESCO sees intercultural dialogue as an essential element of cultural diversity supported through the 'reconciliation of cultural differences' and a 'receptiveness to others' (UNESCO 2009, p.31).

Beyond the reconciliatory focus of its popular rhetoric however, the manner in which intercultural dialogue is planned and implemented is more problematic. As Nass (2010, p.7) notes, policy documents are equivocal in their understanding of intercultural dialogue resulting in ambiguity in policy and political decision making with such 'diversity of meaning inevitably dilut[ing its] practical value'. De Perini (2019, p.1) claims that 'the EU promotion of intercultural dialogue has been characterized by vagueness and change'. From a similar perspective, Michalis S Michael (2013, p. 21-22) notes that dialogical engagement is beset by a complex interplay of 'political, strategic, economic, and above all cultural

difficulties'. Definitions which have been used are both diverse and highly flexible (Poglia, Mauri-Brusa & Fumasoli 2009; ERICarts 2008) leading some to argue that the concept is equivocal (Maalouf 2008) and lacking clarity of purpose (Anderson 2010). Phipps (2014) likewise points out, that because the term can confer a reificatory significance or goodness onto a program, project or policy, it may be used to maintain, rather than challenge existing power relations. Evidence of the viewpoint of Phipps is to be found in the recent statement by Manuel Halter (Halter 2019, p.32) Executive Director of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) who argued that:

> Tourism can be perceived as the epitome of intercultural dialogue. It allows meeting the "other", learning about different cultures, hearing foreign languages, tasting exotic flavours, bonding with other human beings and building tolerance

If we uncritically accept Halter's statement, we are in danger of equating intercultural dialogue with a mythical harmonious positioning of the other where we can safely put to one side differences associated with power. As Agnes Tuna (2017, para.1), intercultural program manager for the European Commission argues:

> When ICD [intercultural dialogue] is applied purely as a harmonization tool …ICD does not make any difference and might even solidify existing stereotypes and prejudices

Its representation as a self-evident and inherently good practice hides a complexity to the process that is seldom recognized, nor appreciated.

The equivocal meanings of intercultural dialogue broaden further beyond the linguistic confines of the English language (Zajda 2009). In Japanese for example, the word 'dialogue' is translated as 'hanashiai' where the goal focuses on harmony not only between participants of the dialogue process but also between one's 'heart' and one's social 'self'. In Korean, the nearest translation to dialogue, 'daehwa', refers to face-to-face discussions over different views with the aim of mutual understanding and cooperation primarily as a means of solving social problems. By further contrast, in Russian 'dee-a-log' is predominantly focused on an open, collaborative and positive discussion process where the end goal is mutual respect, whether there is a problem to be solved or not. From an Islamic perspective the terms 'Al hewar' or 'Al-tahawur' are closest to the Western concept of constructive or transformative dialogue but even here, these terms contain different nuances

and connotations that do not exist in the English (Ashki 2006). As Carbaugh et al. (2011, p.88) note, dialogue can mean different things in different cultural contexts:

> people may speak, and listen, as if they understand what dialogue entails, when the discursive and cultural entailments at play may be quite different.

Mutuality, interactive collaboration and inquiry with the other, prominent as these terms are in the English-speaking intercultural dialogue literature, differ in meaning and in practice in different cultural contexts.

This equivocality does not disappear in scholarly publications. Indeed, academia appears to be impaired by similar issues concerning how the term is used and defined. While the close association with cultural mediation (Augusti-Panareda 2006) is understandable, its interchangeability with similar terms as intercultural communication (Doran, n.d.) and intercultural competence (Hoskins & Sallah 2011) appears both casual and unfortunate. Intercultural communication, as a term, is connected primarily with the business community where the focus is on culture as a positivist concept and as a barrier to communication. Intercultural competence, by contrast, is primarily an educational term indicating the skills that learners develop for understanding people of different cultures. The construction and use of similar terms such as 'intercultural dialogical communication' (Yihong 2012) and 'intercultural communicative dialogue' (Elia 2007) serves to simply obscure matters further.

One of the major contributory factors to this definitional ambiguity is that intercultural dialogue, as an area of research, is not a mature field of study. The number of references to the term 'intercultural dialogue' employed in the abstracts of peer reviewed publications emerged in significant numbers only in the late 1990s. As a possible consequence, the expression is frequently used to mean different things in different contexts. Such lack of definitional clarity tends to impact on research understandings leading to an ambiguous representation of social reality.

As an example of the problems this may cause, I draw on a paper by Fraser et al. (2012) which describes a project specifically looking at dialogue between Maasai women and researchers in Eastern Africa (Fraser et al. 2012). A close reading of the paper reveals that intercultural dialogue is defined according to a theoretical framework based on two main sources, that of Dutta and Pal (2010) and of Baraldi (2006). Baraldi's theory is based primarily on communicative competence and positivistic formulations of a group (Baraldi

2006, p. 62). Dutta and Pal have drawn from only one source to frame their understanding of intercultural dialogue, that of Hammond, Anderson, and Cissna, (2003). Although this distant source is well recognised in the field, its incomplete presentation by Fraser et al. misrepresents the meaning of intercultural dialogue and reduces its analytical value.

While Fraser et al.'s project outlines a mechanism for those on the social margins to express their views across a cultural divide, it does not explore power differences and mutual meaning making between people of cultural diversity, both of which are central features of intercultural dialogue. Likewise, discussions on broader concepts such as criticality, shared humanity and change that are characteristic of scholarly understandings of dialogue are missing. This is not to say that the findings of this paper are not important. Indeed, it sheds light on processes for enabling members of marginalised groups to express their meanings. My argument is that the in the context of providing informative academic scholarship into the practice of dialogue with marginal groups, such a portrayal is inadequate.

Having questioned the definition of 'intercultural dialogue' and how it is used, it must be recognized that the term nevertheless attempts to capture a social phenomenon that is not adequately described by other terms but nevertheless represents a special form of communication beyond contemporary discourse. An interesting illustration in this regard lies in contemporary cultural practices which parallel intercultural dialogue but are not referred to as such, being situated outside established western scholarly discourse. Witteborn (2011), gives the example of constructions of Uyghur cultural identity in online discussion forums as a form of cultural dialogue that talks to historical and political forms of difference. MacLennan (2011) argues that capoeira, a hybrid African-Brazilian cultural practice, may be viewed as a dialogic practice in the context of the slave trade and ongoing racism. A further example is the reference to storytelling by the Sierra Leone child soldier Ishmael Beah. As Beah poignantly writes: 'In my culture, every story is told with the purpose of either imparting knowledge, repairing a broken bond, or transforming the listener and the teller' (2006, forward). While Beah's focus is on the intracultural, arguably the book he wrote, by presenting the wisdom of African culture, is a form of dialogue with readers from a western culture. As such examples show, intercultural dialogue is not necessarily bound to a delimited contemporary identification and definition but rather includes cultural forms of what may more broadly be understood as the multi-vocal co-construction of knowledge (Ganesh & Holmes 2011).

All these issues have contributed to the need to develop a robust theoretical basis for intercultural dialogue from which to frame its practical application. Hitherto, such theoretical frameworks have fallen predominantly on cross cultural contact and interaction. One of the most important concepts is Allport's Contact Theory (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998). Contact theory is based on the hypothesis that by bringing people of difference to work together towards a common goal on an equal footing, intergroup prejudice will be reduced (Pettigrew, Christ, Wagner & Stellmacher 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp 2006). Such contact results in a greater willingness to take the other community's perspective thereby increasing trust and forgiveness (Hewstone et al. 2006). According to this theory, equality of power is seen to be particularly important as unequal power relations may serve to confirm rather than reduce difference and thereby reinforce prejudice.

More than fifty years after the contact hypothesis was first conceptualised the theory is still used for framing understandings of intercultural dialogue and intercultural contact. The theory however has also drawn criticism. While equality of power is seen to be particularly important for quality contact, dialogue rarely takes place among equals (Stokke & Lybaek 2018). This, I would argue is particularly problematic for liberal multicultural societies dominated by a single cultural group. In such situations people who identify with the so-called mainstream are neither compelled to navigate, nor negotiate, power relations with the cultural other. As a result, the dynamics of discrimination and the biases that underpin are liable to remain intact (Sealy 2018). A further issue in the context of this thesis is that Allport's framework does not adequately address the sense of difference, pathways to mutual learning and the change process within intercultural dialogue itself.

In order to meet the challenge of defining intercultural dialogue, I follow in the footsteps of other intercultural dialogue scholars (Besley & Peters, 2011; de Turk, 2006; Ganesh & Holmes, 2011; Michael 2013) who have sought theoretical grounding by drawing on key theorists of dialogue. Such a step not only brings to the fore issues concerning difference, identity and power within multi-vocal conversations but importantly, it also provides a platform from which to base a conceptual framing of intercultural dialogue pertinent for this thesis.

What is dialogue?

The etymology of the word 'dialogue' stems from the Greek. The word 'logos' has a variety of meanings centred on speech or oration and extending to reason or account. The word

‘dia’ also has a diverse set of meanings depending on the root word to include ‘through’, ‘across’, ‘over’, ‘by’ (Michael 2013, p.56), ‘inter’ (Besley & Peters 2011, p.88) or ‘in-two’ (Rule 2004, p.320). Self-evidently, the meanings of the word ‘dialogue’ leads to a set of metaphors that represent conversation and discourse through some form of exchange. As Michael (2013) notes, in quoting the former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, the speaking and listening aspect of dialogue is a ‘two-dimensional – or multidimensional – effort aimed at coming closer to the truth and arriving at understanding’ (Michael 2013, p.40).

Notions of dialogue, in the form of discussion between master and student, may be identified in the early Hindu classical literature of India and in the Ch’an Buddhist literature of China (Besley & Peters 2011). It is the Greek philosopher Socrates, however, known chiefly through the writings of his student Plato, who has been the key influential historical figure on dialogue in modern western civilisation. His works, which focussed on rational debate and an ethical engagement with the other, served as an inspirational source for debate as the nature of conversational exchanges became once more a focus of academic attention from the early 20th century onwards (Rule 2004).

The existential philosopher Martin Buber, together with the hermeneutic philosophy of Hans Georg Gadamer and to a lesser extent the rational re-constructionism of Jürgen Habermas have become synonymous with the concept of dialogue through their studies on what may be termed ‘ethical communication’. To this list can be added Paulo Freire who has been hugely influential through his dialogical orientation to adult education and David Bohm who sees in dialogue a vehicle to human consciousness. Aligned with social constructivism, each of these thinkers foregrounds dialogue as a phenomenon of co-creation and tension (Stewart & Zediker 2000).

This list is noticeably western in its orientation, except possibly Freire who nevertheless is common in western literature. To this list could be added many non-western dialogue scholars. The Japanese philosopher Daisaku Ikeda, the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama and the indigenous scholar Tracy Bunda are three that come to mind. My aim in focusing on the scholars in the paragraph above was to engage with the most cited and well known in western academic literature in order to highlight the diversity of understandings of dialogue itself. Nevertheless, as I have noted elsewhere, it is unfortunately a list that ‘mirrors the dominant hegemony of western academia’ (Atkinson 2019a p.44) and reveals an urgent need to interrogate the lack of cultural diversity in understandings of dialogue.

As the following table and the discussion below shows academic discussion has highlighted important differences between the 'key' dialogue scholars listed above.

Scholar	**Key ideas and (in brackets) major influential work in the area of dialogue**
Martin Buber	Spiritual connection with the other (*I and Thou* 1970)
Hans Georg Gadamer	Mutual interpretation of truth and reality (*Truth and Method*, 1989)
Paulo Freire	A recognition of oneself in other and thereby the creation of a new jointly constructed reality (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970)
Jürgen Habermas	Rational, reciprocal argument and reasoned understanding in an environment of equality (*The Theory of Communicative Action.* 1984, 1987)
David Bohm	Reflection on one's own abstract generalisations and assumptions and the recognition of such in others (*On Dialogue*, 1996)

Table 1: Key dialogue scholars

Buber (1970) sees the dialogic relationship in terms of a concrete and life-enhancing possibility born by understanding one another in a spirit of authenticity through everyday life (Stewart & Zediker 2009). Consequently, Buber's view of dialogue moves beyond actual vocal conversation to include silence, thought and reflection. As Buber (1970, p. 125) himself notes:

> A dialogical relation will show itself ... in genuine conversation, but it is not composed of this. Not only is the shared silence of two such persons a dialogue, but also their dialogical life continues, even when they are separated in space, as the continual potential presence of the one to the other, as an unexpressed intercourse.

Such a perspective brings into question where dialogue begins and ends as well as the nature of such dialogue and the importance of silence. Buber would argue that dialogue continues beyond conversation into the silent reflections of oneself.

Gadamer (1980, 1989) takes a different approach, away from communion towards a readiness to shift not only one's own attitudes but also one's own sense of identity. In Gadamerian terms, dialogue, puts us face to face with one's erroneous and generalised views of the 'other' that we may have conceived of as truth. The recognition of such ill-conceived truths, contextualised through individual circumstances and unique social contexts, allows us to recognize the same feelings in others and thereby co-create a third culture; a mutual reality (Chen & Starosta 1998) made in respectful communication with the other. Consequently, genuine dialogue, according to Gadamer (1980), requires a transcendence of one's own context (including one's cultural context) in order to reach the universality of the human condition. It involves not just understanding the other, but also a genuine desire to understand oneself through the other.

Similar to Gadamer, Freire (1993) shares the viewpoint that every dialogical encounter exists within a complex of social reality as participants themselves choose to see it. Freire's focus however is not so much on the transcendence of Gadamer but rather in offering a choice to participants as to how they act and react to reality given different inputs. For Freire, non-coercive, open-ended and reciprocal dialogue activates the creative mind and thereby frees it, -enabling the previously silenced and passive to vocalise their needs and aspirations. Freirean dialogue thus acts as a means of both creation, in terms of new understandings about one's life, and liberation in terms of overcoming the barriers, both external and internal, that limit the lives of people and their sense of self. Like Buber and Gadamer, Freire shares a commitment to humanity as fundamental to dialogue. The often quoted line that 'dialogue is the encounter between men (sic), mediated by the world, in order to name the world' (Freire 1970, p.88), presents dialogue as a mutual path of united reflection and action which exists beyond the simple exchange of ideas or the imposition of a singular truth.

Habermas (1984, 1987) also views dialogue as a mutually constructed reality (Kim & Kim 2008) out of which new understandings may arise beyond our own ignorance and misplaced bias. Critical reasoning and rational conversation, according to Habermas, provide the opportunity of resolving issues through a sharing and a renewal of cultural knowledge and action directed towards cultural integration and solidarity. As a consequence, those

involved in (Habermasian) dialogue do so strategically rather than on the basis of moral equality; consensus being reached by rational deliberation based upon the better argument (Malmvig 2005).

Finally, Bohm (1996) shares Gadamer's viewpoint that each person has a set of absolute meanings that they cannot readily move away from. From a Bohmian point of view, the function of dialogue is simply to reveal these meanings so that they may be explored, and the assumptions uncovered. Through learning how to dissociate themselves from their reified thoughts, according to Bohm, people can thereby develop a different relationship with both their reasoning and emotional processes and how they come to know those processes. Consequently, Bohmian dialogue is concerned not with 'truth', that Habermasian logic is attempting to construct, nor with the communion of Buber or the critical understanding of Freire. Rather Bohm's position is concerned with meaning and assumption and, in particular, the generation and the questioning of abstract generalisations and apparent necessities with their own inherent limitations. An important focus of Bohm is on the inner mind and the suspension of thought when challenged by viewpoints opposing one's own.

The differences in the various approaches to dialogue have no doubt contributed to the various fields in which they have been differently applied alongside the differing contexts which they are perceived to be suited to. The critical deliberation of Habermas has a natural alignment with situations which promote logical, critical thinking in the pursuit of genuine consensus between equals. In contrast the dialogue of Buber and of Gadamer forces us to challenge our everyday interactions viewing human conversation as potentially extraordinary in terms of the spiritual nature of human-to-human contact. Bohm sees in dialogue the opportunity to develop skills in self-analysis thereby widening our vision of reality. Freire by further contrast views dialogue as a means of changing society, one that is characterised by power differentials between groups.

Each dialogue scholar views dialogue through a different prism (Besley & Peters, 2011) and is seen to be applicable to different areas of the human experience. They have in common however a recognition of the challenge of dialogue and its transformative potential. Whether that potential is through communion (Buber), rationality (Habermas), recognition of shared humanity (Gadamer), suspension of thought (Bohm) or mutuality (Freire) there is a common exploration of how multi-vocal interactions across difference leads to positive human change. While the argument that a given orientation to dialogue is

suitable for some situations and not others is valid, I would also suggest that each dialogue scholar offers a unique insight into transformation itself.

Creating a conceptual framework for intercultural dialogue

Given the work of dialogue scholars the question may be asked as to why the need to create a conceptual framework of intercultural dialogue? The idea that intercultural dialogue is a special case and therefore requires its own conceptual framework is contested by the work of Besley and Peters (2011, p.97) who charge that the concept of dialogue itself always takes place within a social context and has, as its object, 'the unrestrained encounter with the Other'. In other words, the 'intercultural', as a space of interaction with another, is contained within the concept of dialogue. This lays bare the possibility that intercultural dialogue itself may be explored first and foremost and exclusively through understandings of dialogue rather than through understandings of cultural difference.

Although I am sympathetic to Besley and Peter's claim, I also believe it to be both pertinent and valuable to explore what is meant by 'culture'. Without such an exploration there is a problem that all dialogue may be viewed, in essence, as being 'intercultural'. This in turn runs the risk of minimising cultural difference in the dialogue process. Additionally, 'culture' itself has analytical value thus serving an important role in terms of situating and analysing dialogical processes.

Another concern I have with scholarly framings of dialogue is that they don't have a specific focus on social learning that I have identified as important and has an explicit focus in the thesis. In returning to key definitions of intercultural dialogue outlined above, it is noticeable that the 'personal growth and transformation' of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2008, p. 17), 'the reconciliation of cultural difference' of UNESCO (UNESCO 2009, p.31) and the transcendence of the 'boundaries that separate people and groups' of UNAOC (cited in Ratzmann 2019, p.16) all posit elements of learning. In fact, mutual learning-learning that travels in both directions between cultures is an inherent facet of intercultural dialogue as Dan Bar-On indicated. Hitherto the process of learning, why it is important and how it may be theorised in inter-cultural situations are all questions that have received little attention. Although unsurprising given the emphasis on psychological or communicative principles discussed above, it highlights the challenge of understanding and theorizing the nature of learning within the intercultural dialogue process.

In order to conceptualise intercultural dialogue beyond a reconciliatory focus, this thesis takes a disaggregated approach based on three spheres. A foundational focus on culture brings to the fore issues concerning difference and identity. A secondary focus on social learning as part of the dialogue process meets a need for exploring how such differences are bridged to enable positive learning events to take place. Finally, a tertiary focus on dialogue itself captures the transformational potential that takes place through such learnings.

The intercultural space: shifting borders and cultural differences

As I have noted previously (Atkinson 2013), Otten and Geppert (2009) categorise perspectives of culture according to three major theoretical themes. These have been identified and operationalised as: (a) culture as community, based on shared group membership and the expression of identity (b) culture as a contested code based upon a resource of meaning-making through constructed symbols and signs; and (c) culture as a shared set of social values, norms and knowledges which reside in a person's subjective feelings and operationalised through negotiation and emergent cultural processes.

As Otten and Geppert (2009) suggest, if a study on intercultural dialogue operates with a strong community concept drawing sharp distinction between cultural in-groups and out-groups such as nation, territory or ethnicity, it makes sense to anticipate group-based norms and scripts as potentially meaningful for communication. Furthermore, the communicative and symbolic expressions of group identity can be a useful indicator to explain intercultural interaction. This approach may be seen to be prevalent in the area of intercultural communication where people are grouped according to a single nationality. From a theoretical sense, the influential theories of Hofstede (2001) have been utilised to support such understandings. Categorising cultures according to universal principles based upon a duality of individualism/collectivism or low culture/high culture has been a hallmark of this approach (Chuang 2003) presupposing what Merlan (2005) describes as significant, sharp distinctions between groups of people.

By contrast an understanding in which culture is seen in terms of contested symbols, meanings and signs is open to questions concerning who benefits from constructs of identity and of culture itself. In this critical conception, culture is seen as embedded within relations of power. It is a viewpoint that is particularly pertinent to the field of dialogue. As Hammond et al. argue:

> Some dialogue occasions are high visibility exercises where power is wielded and challenged with broad metaphorical swords, whereas others are quiet processes where power appears to creep silently and inexorably like summer crabgrass. Power infuses dialogue (2003, p. 125).

Hammond et al. base their understanding of power in terms of Foucault's work. As they see it, power is not just contained within formulised structures but rather exists in the fabric of society itself; a 'permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance, capable of making all visible, as long as it could itself remain invisible' (Foucault 1995, p.214). It is an understanding which foregrounds societal power as based in values, authority and other factors so constructed as to maintain the cultural status quo. As a consequence, cultural identity is not an objective truth but a social and a political concept constructed both as a means of defining oneself and also as a means of domination by members of a majority group. As Pittaway and Pittaway (2004, p.124) argue imposed cultural identity is a key mechanism which supports social hierarchy and dominance:

> when the forces of oppression become too great, the individual's self-associated identities are subsumed under the imposed labels of the oppressing group. This forced dominance of one identity label over the multiple identities of the individual leads to a shift in their relation to society.

By way of further contrast, a view to culture based upon the production and reproduction of values, norms and knowledge is more likely to situate itself at the boundaries of self-identified cultural groups and involve change both within and between groups. Communication between these groups is more likely to be based upon learning processes as people attempt to understand the other. Aligned with this constructivist epistemology, Hall (1998) and others (Lazarus 1991, Sahlins 1976) have chosen to contextualise culture in terms of interactions and constructions with others across perceived difference. Bhabha (1994) in particular, draws on the concept of the 'in between' to highlight the importance of 'the inter' to cultural identity:

> we should remember that it is the "inter"—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between, the space of the entre that Derrida has opened up in writing itself—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture (Bhabha 1994, p. 38).

This constructivist perspective of culture not only foregrounds differences between cultures but also the inner contradictions (Anderson 1983; Cohen 2009) of groups; and the multiple identities of its members (Modood & Meer 2012). As noted by Barth (1995), a cultural group is not a fixed entity but rather open to change, with its own inner contradictions, histories and meanings (Anderson 1983; Cohen 2009). In highlighting such fluidity, this viewpoint seeks not so much to define culture, as to locate it within meanings which are given value through their relationship with other meanings including those pertaining to identity (Sahlins 1976). The focus on the means, influences and processes of cultural production brings to the fore the idea that the 'intercultural' is primarily a meeting point of different knowledges and identities which are themselves, 'accumulated by learning from others' (Barth 2002, p. 2).

In a study of dialogue in situations of acute power differentials, such as in this research thesis, a view to culture incorporating both the critical and the constructivist positions recognises both the multiplicity of people's lives as determined by people themselves while taking account of the tendency of the culturally dominant to override such complexity. By focusing on the juxtaposition between meaning and power, it emphasizes who benefits from cultural constructions of the other and constructed meanings of difference, placing the intercultural in a contested zone where meanings are socially constructed and negotiated. In foregrounding notions of identity that are subject to both ongoing construction and plurality, it highlights the 'in-between' that Derrida identifies and the strongly interactive nature of culture itself. Finally, the concept of space implies mobility and the freedom to have meaningful interaction with others thereby dissociating from fixed positions and inflexible points of view (Rule 2004; Wenger 1999).

Learning in the intercultural space: border crossers and wider visions

Social constructivist principles, based on the ways in which people make meaning from their lived experiences, is an obvious pathway for framing learning across cultural difference. Social constructivism views learning as a socially contextualised process of challenge and reflection (Wenger 1999) operating both between and within individuals (Vygotsky 1978). Accordingly, we don't just learn from reinforcement of practices or tasks but also through observing, from copying from and interacting with those we perceive as more powerful or more knowledgeable than ourselves. As such social learning is not necessarily positive. People can, for example, learn negative stereotypes of the other through observing meanings within society.

A social constructivist view about learning is strongly aligned with the principles of intercultural dialogue providing a view to reality which highlights the confluence between people's inner meanings with external elements. An essential element of dialogue lies in fostering the creation of 'shared meaning based on disparate forms of knowing' (Escobar 2004, p. 60). Accordingly, understanding the process whereby people create something new together (Platform for Intercultural Europe & Culture Action Europe 2010) is an essential aspect of any learning-based theory of intercultural dialogue.

As mentioned above, however, research on learning is largely absent in the intercultural dialogue literature. While there is a great deal of research on learning itself, it is mainly centred on practices inside clearly demarcated boundaries, such as particular groups of people or certain areas of knowledge or expertise. In the context of intercultural dialogue where learning occurs across, or at the very least in the vicinity of cultural boundaries, such an orientation is self-limiting. Learning across cultural boundaries, in contrast to learning within prescribed socio-cultural spaces, has certain unique characteristics. As Lamont and Molnar (2002) note, markers of difference, whether constructed or simply a part of social practice, ensure that learning is socially and culturally challenging as people are forced to negotiate and construct new meanings in unfamiliar territory. The power of Bar-On's quote above is that it is inclusive of this cultural challenge. In the context of the dearth of theoretical approaches around cross cultural learning the work of Akkerman and Bakker (2011) on boundary crossing and of Wenger (1999) and his theoretical constructs concerning Communities of Practice are worthy of acknowledgement.

According to Akkerman and Bakker, two concepts are central in describing potential forms of cross-cultural learning. These are boundary crossing and boundary objects. Boundary crossing refers predominantly to personal transitioning and interaction along lines of continuity which span cultural difference (Suchman 1994). Boundary objects refer to artefacts which do the crossing and thereby fulfil a bridging function (Star & Griesemer 1989). With regards to boundary crossing, people are viewed as belonging predominantly to one culture but are able to enter another unfamiliar culture along potentially safe (but possibly restricted) zones of personal movement based on the degree to which members of different groups value the embodied practices or knowledges of the other. Boundary objects, in contrast, do not involve people crossing cultural boundaries but rather involve the identification of an object that is shared across cultures. Boundary objects represent

‘safe’ cultural artefacts which can be accepted by different cultural groups because they share similar meanings.

The work of Akkerman and Bakker introduces at one and the same time a concept (boundary) that serves to restrict people’s movements and a means (lines of continuity) through which people (or objects) can cross such identified restrictions. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) propose that lines of continuity may contribute to dialogical learning processes through acting as a means for differing practices and identities to meet and intersect. Allegiance to a sporting team, shared religious belief and professional identity are examples of lines of continuity.

The ideas of Akkerman and Bakker become useful for understanding potential facilitating factors at the micro level which enable people to move between and beyond pre-constructed cultural boundaries. They have been used to good effect to describe learning across different cultural spheres in local and international educational contexts (see Williams 2013, Williams & Berry 2016) in organisations and workplaces (Kerosuo & Toiviainen 2011) They thus have analytical value in terms of understanding the possibilities for bridging difference and for understanding the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness, of cross-cultural initiatives.

Despite the acknowledged value of Akkerman and Bakker’s framework, it does not cover nor explain in depth the intercultural learning experience. The reasons why people cross cultural boundaries, for example, or even how far they may cross and how much they learn and change through the experience are all questions that are left unexplored. For this reason, the work of Wenger (1999) is valuable in terms of adding a more comprehensive framework to learning across cultural difference. Wenger, in contrast to Akkerman and Bakker, considers socio-cultural boundaries as being not only porous but also contested and under constant negotiation and reconstruction. As a consequence, Wenger’s social learning theory is particularly useful in the context of a group, such as a migrant English class, a refugee support group or a treaty process, which contains culturally different members who nevertheless share a common practice or vision.

Before exploring Wenger’s theory, it is pertinent to give examples of social learning that comes from my own experience. When I was in primary school, I learnt that Captain Cook discovered Australia and that Burke and Wills were the first to traverse the continent from South to North. In doing so, while not directly taught, I took on the premise that such heroic

adventure was more valued, and more significant than Aboriginal discovery or Aboriginal knowledge of the land. In other words, beyond the facts and figures there was a lot of learning that served to reinforce a partial view to reality. Likewise, whilst in high school it was not uncommon for students to be given the afternoon off to support the boys' football team in important interschool matches but not the girls' netball team leading to gendered stereotypes regarding who played real sport. Social learning is not necessarily divisive. Indeed, a sense of community belonging through learnt practices, meanings and values lies at the heart of all religious groups.

There are three main premises upon which Wenger elaborates his theory that are particularly pertinent to the concept of social learning in the intercultural dialogue process. Firstly, our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful is held to comprise the key purpose of learning. Secondly, the creation of knowledge is a socially situated practice which is dependent upon our active engagement with the world. Thirdly, participation in a learning environment evolves from people's aspirations, and their imagination, to be part of, develop and negotiate their own sense of identity.

According to Wenger (1999) all social learning is impacted by people's sense of identity, their capacity to negotiate meanings of significance and the participative structures they have access to. Wenger houses his theory within a broad conceptual framework referred to as a 'Community of Practice' (CoP). A CoP framework is designed to capture how social meanings intersect and act upon each other within what may loosely be described as a 'group' to create broader meanings which contribute to (or block) the sense of identity of people and their potential to experience meaning within society. It should be noted that a CoP, in Wenger's terms, does not always refer to a constituted group of people within a single space and time but rather is inclusive of learning experiences, incorporated within a singular vision, which may span both time and place. A religious tradition is a typical example of a CoP which draws on both historical roots and collective spirit to create a community of learners based upon common meanings and an accessible vision.

It is here that Wenger's theories become particularly interesting. Through enhancing mutuality and trust, participants within a learning community can come to identify with a social system beyond their own immediate cultural environment. Through highlighting the importance of shared and dynamic identities, within an environment bounded by shared aspirations the emphasis shifts from constructed differences to shared learning. As an example, learning about both non-Indigenous and Indigenous knowledge in a classroom

environment is inclusive, rather than exclusive of different identities, watching both the girls' and boys' teams, constructs a more inclusive identification with a school, taking part in different religious practices may, for my sons, create a vision that *all* religious practice is boring. In the context of this thesis, an educational program, a refugee support program or a treaty may also be seen as potential Communities of Practice resulting from shared meanings to generate a sense of connection between people.

In this thesis I use the term 'social learning' to refer to the incidental learning in social spaces. I reserve the term 'shared learning' to refer to social learning practices that are designed to bridge constructed differences. While inclusive of concerns around identity, meaning making and aspiration that lie at the heart of Wenger's social learning theory, shared learning is a subset of social learning; a deliberate practice to create a common theme that members of different groups can have a stake in. As examples of social learning, people may enter the learning space of the classroom in order to learn English, but also perceive that their power is limited within this space. Equally people may take part in an Aboriginal treaty process and learn something about Aboriginal culture, but their biases remain intact. Support seeking refugees may learn how to construct a C.V. yet their lack of confidence, feelings of difference and social isolation within the broader society may remain untouched. On the other hand, from a shared learning perspective, in each of these instances people may experience a wider vision that extends their sense of belonging to the classroom, to society or to humanity.

Collectively the boundary crossing theories of Akkerman and Bakker and the social learning theory of Wenger suggest pathways for crossing cultural boundaries based on shared cultural objects and lines of continuity (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) or shared practices (Wenger 1999) A challenge we are left with however is when and why does such shared learning lead to positive human change that dialogue scholars tell us is so integral to dialogue. In order to understand the enabling factors that lead to transformation, I turn to the work of the dialogue theorists mentioned above.

Transformation: action, critical understanding and human meaning

The debt we owe dialogue scholars is that they each outline paths to positive human transformation through the reflection and the questioning of one's own meanings prompted through the challenge of others. I acknowledge the contributions of each of the scholars mentioned above. However, given that dialogue in this thesis is not between people in equal

positions of power, but rather is focused on cultural interactions between members of the dominant culture and 'cultural others', I find the approach of Freire to be particularly valuable. Freire built his understanding of positive change upon the viewpoint that interactions between members of different groups are always marked by differences in power. The choice of Freire is reinforced through his (and my) emphasis on learning within the dialogue process.

According to Freire, the dialogue process needs to address what I have identified as three key elements for transformation to occur. These are critical consciousness, mutual action and an acknowledged sense of humanity. These three aspects are discussed sequentially below.

Freire coined the term 'Critical consciousness' to refer to the process of self-reflection and thereby an understanding of the limitations of one's own thought processes. 'Critical consciousness' is based on the notion that for dialogue to work it needs to challenge the way people review both the structures in society and their own position in that society. As Zuniga et al. (2007 p.9) note:

> For a genuine dialogue to occur it is just as important for members of privileged groups to understand how they and others have been affected by privilege as it is for members of less advantaged groups to understand how they have been affected by subordination.

Freire's position is supported by others. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), the meaning-making actions of individuals and groups in making sense of their world is defined by a multitude of differing factors such as one's perceived identity, culture, beliefs and cognitive processes. When one or more of these factors changes significantly it potentially leads to confusion, uncertainty or doubt - or to use the language of psychology - cognitive dissonance. However, it also provides space for the critical self-reflection on the assumptions that are fundamental to our understanding of the world (Habermas 1971). Such reflection and critical analysis in turn leads to the creation of new, more authentic meanings as people reappraise their own views and knowledges of the world. This process has distinct parallels with the transformational learning theory of Jack Mezirow (1995). According to Mezirow, transformative learning is a process which extends from a change in one's life followed by a catalytic experience of a lived situation which sets into motion a process based on reflection and ending in new and liberating understandings about one's world. This may result in emancipation from the barriers in one's life as people arrive at more

‘enlightened’ or critical perspectives on issues that influence their everyday reality (Courtenay, 1998)

Both the individual and society can play an active role in negating change. Both can act to either maintain the status quo or challenge the sense of normality within structural inequality. An awareness of power relations and discursive and ideological formations within the individual and within groups at large is therefore essential. Similar to Habermas, who grounds critical inquiry in the presuppositions and implicit norms present wherever people engage in communication, Freire views an openness to question and revise one’s knowledge through interaction with another as the first step in creating change. The difference between the two lies in the results of such change. While Habermas pursues a society based on rational argument, Freire seeks equality through the pursuit of mutual action (Freire 1993, p. 36).

Mutuality has received a central place in theoretical understandings of dialogue from scholars generally. As Buber (1965, p.71) notes, ‘if mutuality stirs, then the interhuman blossoms into genuine dialogue’. Mutuality, as discussed here, is not the same as equality, nor is it the same as reciprocity. In the latter, while people do actions for each other both the motivation and the result function? at an individual level. Mutuality, in contrast, expresses the need to do something together that cannot be done separately. Freire’s take on mutuality is somewhat unique. In his investigation of power dynamics, Freire utilises the term ‘oppressed’ for people whose voices are limited for diverse reasons and through diverse means:

> The oppressed speak with a voice that is not their own. The oppressed are not only powerless, but reconciled to their powerlessness, … The ultimate product of highly unequal power relationships is a class unable to articulate its own interests or perceive the existence of social conflict (Freire 1970, p.34)8

[8] Interestingly such sentiments are shared by Habermas who argues that the normalisation of ideology acts to qualitatively alter societal structures; thus, reducing peoples’ abilities to reach common understandings beyond the voices of the system (Anievas 2005).

The reference to the reconciliation of the oppressed to their own powerlessness is a reminder that while 'voice' is essential, equally important are empathetic listeners who are prepared to listen to the quiet voices and those 'who are struggling to speak' (King 1992, p.2). As Myles Horton, in conversation with Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990 p.94) noted:

> if they [the marginalised] can see something that's challenging, something they believe would change things for them, and if they can see a path that they could move on towards, then I think something can be done

So often however decisions are taken *for* people rather than *with* people. There is no change because the poor, in being powerless, are not viewed as equals. Buber referred to it as 'deep inclusion'. An active acknowledgement of the reality of the other and an openness to engage according to their perspectives.

For Freire, such inclusion is grounded in an acknowledged sense of human empathy. As he notes:

> Dialogue …is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility. How can I enter into a dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?

Empathetic listening is not merely a way of listening to information but rather involves perceiving the other's internal frame of reference accurately; understanding another life from the other's perspective (Cissna & Anderson 1998, p.92) while being open to the disparate voices within ourselves. It is a viewpoint aligned with Stefan Ramaekers (2010, p.63) perspective that what is important about cultural interaction is to take:

> the differences of voices not as places where we part from one another – you against me, each having her or his own truth – but as signposts to return to ourselves.

Within an environment of trust and acceptance, it is mutual action, according to Freire, including the action of listening, that enables people to jointly engage with social reality including the reality of their own fear and ignorance. Through engaging dialogically with the other, people learn to name the worlds they inhabit in the pursuit of a joint and engaged search for positive human change. While the initial goals may be clearly demarcated into achievable outcomes the pursuit continues in struggle as a 'permanent search of people

together with others for their becoming more fully human in the world' (Freire 1993, p. 95-6).

Freire's self-affirmation lies within a broad recognition of the desire for, in Freirean terms 'a fuller humanity'. It is a viewpoint shared by others. The communion of Buber, the transcendence of oneself in Gadamer and the mutual search for a shared truth of Habermas collectively showcase motivating factors for pursuing the pathway to transformation. Freirean dialogue concerns itself with recognizing the fears, ignorances and pains within, in order to overcome them and enter into a relationship with the other in which mutual engagement between the participants is the logical consequence (Freire 1993). As a result, the struggle is both external, between individuals and internal, within individuals; a struggle of engagement with what makes us distinctly human while under the realization 'that we can only ever become more fully human' (Roberts 2005, p.136). In other words, dialogue, along the lines of Freire's understanding, is a never-ending action as people grapple with difficult, complex processes arriving at unfinished places in a journey of both discovery and of humanizing change.

In situations of cultural marginalisation, such as examined in this research thesis, the notions of critical understanding, mutual action and shared humanity, have particular poignancy suggesting a very human centred approach to dialogue.

Conclusion

The chapter began by noting the ambiguity in definitions of intercultural dialogue. A disaggregated approach focusing on dialogue and culture was viewed as a vehicle for conceptual clarity. An understanding of culture based on fluid boundaries, movable edges and contested identities presented a useful framework to understand cultural difference. The social learning theory of Wenger and the boundary crossing theory of Akkerman and Bakker provided a framework for understanding the social learning context in which dialogue itself may be situated. While learning is predominantly explored within self-contained groups the work of Akkerman and Bakker and of Wenger explores a means for understanding learning that crosses cultural difference where new meanings are negotiated as well as being created together. I formulated the concept of shared learning to indicate this special aspect of social learning to indicate a deliberate practice of bridging cultural difference between groups.

I noted that dialogue itself has been the focus of many scholars, each of whom have espoused a different understanding of the dialogue process. Integral to each of these understandings however is a pathway to positive human change in the face of tension in and between the meanings we live by. Self-evidently in this research thesis the work of Freire has been drawn upon due to his orientation towards the marginalised and oppressed. Freire makes possible the means for exploring transformation in terms of critical understanding, mutual action and humanity. The inner journey of personal reflection and critical understanding, and the outer journey involving acceptance, challenge and mutual action speaks to the simplicity, and the complexity of intercultural dialogue captured in Dan Bar-On's quote that heads this chapter. Freire's approach also highlights the intensely human element of dialogue; a journey that does not stop with understanding the other but has as its goal understanding oneself through the other.

Based on the theoretical understandings that I have outlined here I present an interim model of the theoretical framework to be used in this thesis based on three interrelated spheres:

> 1. The intercultural space
>
> An interactive space of challenge and risk where identities are transitive, multiple, imagined, imposed and emerging and where power is contested
>
> 2. Shared Learning Practices
>
> the exploration and negotiation of meanings, objects or aspects of the self through participative structures that affirm a person's sense of belonging and identity within a more inclusive group through a shared vision, a shared practice or a shared goal.
>
> 3. Transformation
>
> a process of mutual action, critical consciousness, and shared humanity leading to change in ways we view self and relation to others

I am theoretically confident in this framework. It rests on known dialogue scholars whose work has been empirically tested. In the context of the ambiguity in the field such empirical grounding is vital. In point of fact, a key aim of this thesis, as mentioned on page 6 in the introduction, is to test this conceptual framework. I am also aware that dialogue in the three case study sites may extend such conceptual understandings. This research project is grounded in the view that intercultural dialogue is invariably inscribed by multiple meanings emanating from the social context from which it takes place. As such, it is

necessary to flesh out and critique the framework above with real world examples based on what occurs in culturally interactive spaces of adult learning, refugee support and indigenous treaty.

Ch 3: Extending the theory; recognising practice

> [Dialogue was] possible because there are many locals open to engage with individual people and approach them as 'a stranger in need'. Openness and engagement characterising these contacts go beyond stereotypes, biases and labels constructed about specific groups defined by their ethnicity, culture or type of migration (Korac 1991, p. 19).

Dialogue is a human activity, and as the quote above suggests, a human need. The theoretical framework of intercultural dialogue outlined in the previous chapter, while appropriate for a generalised and theoretical understanding, may not necessarily be inclusive of the nuances of intercultural dialogue in the specific situations I am analyzing. The quote above, as an example, highlights the importance of openness and engagement leading to further questions around the factors that contribute to approaching others as 'strangers in need'. Such deeper questions and others similar are, however, beyond the conceptual framework outlined in the previous chapter. In order to develop an insightful frame of reference for intercultural dialogue suitable for my three case study sites it is necessary to explore literature where the focus is on the practice, not just the theory, of intercultural dialogue.

The aim of this chapter is to draw on the literature and extend the theoretical understanding outlined above in order to develop a more nuanced and sensitive framework pertinent to the three case study areas. The available literature on dialogue from a learning-based perspective involving adult learners, refugees and indigenous treaty is, however, scant. Consequently, in seeking insight into the practice of dialogue I sought literature where the primary focus was on the dialogue process itself rather than, as an example, adult migrant English learning in Australia. I sought articles which explored, rather than presented understandings; questioned the meaning of identity, the location of learning and the challenge of change.

The chapter initially looks at 'intercultural dialogue' within sites of adult learning beginning with a discussion of a case study on the education of adult learners within a dialogically oriented program for black South Africans during apartheid (Rule 2004). While not focused on migrants as such, the strong emphasis on dialogue for an oppressed cultural group provides important insights for this thesis. A second paper explores a Freirean approach to English language delivery to migrant guest workers in Southern United States emphasizing once more the confluence between power, identity and dialogue (Graman

1988). The third and fourth articles look at the value of a dialogical approach to adult learning in the context of a standardized, neoliberal, educational system in the UK (Duckworth & Smith 2018a) and Australia (Atkinson 2014). Collectively the four papers offer important insights into dialogical approaches to adult learning and English language delivery.

The section on 'intercultural dialogue and refugee support', takes its cue from a dialogical program for Turkish refugees in Switzerland (SAD 2011). The focus on power and identity in this article provides important indicators for the challenge of enhancing learning in cross cultural interactions involving refugees. Further articles by Merlini (2009) and Korac (2009) bring to light the messiness and risk of dialogue. A final article by Stevens, Veith and Wulf (2005) shows that dialogue does not simply happen by putting people of different cultures in the same room together. Mainstream cultural members and cultural 'others' need a reason to interact.

The final section departs from the format used above. Few nations have treaty agreements with their indigenous people. Additionally, treaty itself is considered a legal, rather than dialogical enterprise. As such, there is very little literature on the dialogical elements of agreement making involving Aboriginal people and the state. I have targeted articles which include dialogical elements in two different cases of agreement making between the state and its indigenous people. One of these cases is the British Columbia treaty process in Canada, the other case is native title in Australia. While different in terms of histories, people and processes, these two cases reveal remarkable similarities in terms of the dialogical challenges facing Aboriginal people when conducting agreements with the state.

The conclusion of the chapter extends the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter to include the practical facets of dialogue pertinent for the three case studies discussed in later chapters.

Intercultural Dialogue with Adult Migrant Learners

Adult literacy and language learning has an historical link with dialogical principles. Paulo Freire played a dominant role in introducing a dialogical approach to adult learning with the publication of what is a classic book in the adult education field *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970). His approach was widely taken up and adapted to differing contexts with intense interest from agencies who took an empowerment approach to literacy education. Jack Mezirow (2012) added to such perspectives by formulating a theoretical

understanding of social transformation within the adult education field. According to Mezirow, reflection and action through dialogue are inherently necessary in adult education if they are to lead to a transformation in the lives of learners. A key aspect of both Freire's and Mezirow's approaches is the importance of loosening the traditional dichotomy in roles and power between teacher and student. The difference between the two is that, while Mezirow focuses on individual transformation, Freire argues that such transformation must take into account the social and economic context. In this context I align myself more with Freire, than Mezirow. I acknowledge that transformation can be highly individualised. In fact, the initial two case studies focus on such 'individual' journeys. They *always* take place however within a wider social context and grouping. As an example, being a long term, unemployed adult student of refugee background with low level English skills adds a complexity to both learning and transformation. The meaning of being an adult student, a refugee or an Aboriginal person are important elements of this thesis.

Peter Rule (2004) presents an interesting case study of a dialogical approach to adult learning through an apartheid era program in South Africa. Drawing on such figures as Buber, Habermas and Freire, Rule explores both the philosophy and the practicality of incorporating dialogue in spaces contextualised by cultural marginalisation. What is notable about the educational approach described by Rule is that roles were not tied to identity markers. Rather Freire's own maxim that teachers should become students, and students, teachers, in the dialogic process was taken to heart. The focus on different, multiple and shared voices between the students and teachers led to a breaking down of traditional duties and traditional discourses, enabling students to express their own sense of identity beyond that given to them by the state.

Rule's project presents an interesting study in shared learning spaces. Beyond the obvious differences between the participants in terms of race, class, culture and educational attainment, they were bound by both the ongoing political situation and a collective vision of opposing the educational failures of apartheid. Arguably what drew these people together was a social context of educational disruption, political repression, popular resistance and violence. To ensure that the emphasis was placed on strengthening a shared belief rather than people's positions, the exercise of power, either explicit or hidden, was both identified and unpacked. In Rule's words the focus of the learning space itself was based on defined dialogical elements:

> A basis of trust, an attitude of openness towards learning from one another;

> a physical place where participants could meet in relative safety; a project ethos that encouraged participants to express themselves; and a commitment to solving problems through meeting, discussion, reflection and consensus rather than coercion (2004, p.330).

As Rule further notes, an underlying factor in generating change was its physical location on 'shaky common ground' which was subject to 'lease agreements, landowners, rentals, church hierarchies and police raids.' (p. 330). As such, it was forced to often relocate its operational premises, compelling all those associated with the project to reflect upon their collective needs and vision and act upon them. A staff commitment to 'contesting the assumptions of the system' (p. 328), with students who themselves were 'highly politicised' (p. 327) ensured that a dialogically oriented ethos was constructed in opposition to the oppressive monologue of apartheid and the constructed identities that such monologue imposed on black South Africans.

Rule's study is somewhat unique in terms of context whereby highly politicised people were teaching and learning in a highly politicised environment. In an English language teaching environment, it appears harder to escape the inbuilt dichotomy within classes themselves constructed around the 'knowledgeable' teacher and the 'needy' student. Uppermost within this dichotomy are the power differentials associated with these differing roles and a valuing of certain voices over others. A revealing study in this regard is that of Graman (1988). Reflecting upon his own teaching within a Freirean approach to adult English language learning, Graman found it difficult to close the socio-cultural gap between himself and the Spanish speaking migrant guest workers he was teaching. Despite the emphasis on critical understanding, inclusiveness and multi-vocality the practicalities between his life as an expert middle class, white, male English-speaking teacher and the lives of his learners as vulnerable foreign workers proved too difficult to bridge. The roles attributed to the identities of both parties negated a dialogical approach to learning.

This latter point introduces a key element facing adult literacy instruction today. The language of 'transformation' and 'social justice' that were more central to adult literacy classes in the past, has been marginalised by contemporary discourse where the focus is increasingly placed on employability skills, standardisation, reporting and accountability (Hamilton 2012). As adult learning academics Vicky Duckworth and Rob Smith (Duckworth & Smith, 2018a, p.530). argue,

> Human capital theory seeks to connect educational systems to neoliberal economic development strategies, positioning knowledge and learning as modes of capital and economising and commodifying the potential of human beings to contribute to productivity in employment contexts. [The] commodification of education largely occludes broader concerns and purposes particularly those connected to social justice and equality

A consequence is the marginalisation of the unique backgrounds, interests, needs and emotional wellbeing of the learner (Duckworth & Smith, 2018a, p.532).

Duckworth and Smith's study explored the intersection between women, literacy and adult education informed by an ethic of 'dialogic care'. They noted the vital role of teachers in recognizing and considering the individual experiences as compared to judging learners against normative and staged matrices of 'learning progression'' (Duckworth & Smith, 2018b p.172). Creating a safe learning environment, establishing trust and building confidence mirrors Rules dialogic approach to adult learning discussed above. Duckworth and Smith highlighted the 'egalitarian nature of transformative teaching and learning' (p.172), the importance of 'self-discovery by learners' (p.173) and the provision of 'an affirmative environment for the development of learners' aspiration (p.174). In doing so they also point to the detrimental impact that a discourse of deficit can bring to learners' lives. A dialogical approach, as the authors note, is particularly important for students previously marginalised by a rigidly linear school system, enabling such learners to become 'writers of their own educational stories' (p. 176-177).

Duckworth and Smith's (Duckworth & Smith, 2018b) paper points to the negative consequences of an overly neoliberal agenda to adult education delivery. This does not mean however that a functional approach to adult language and literacy delivery, one prescribed on the delivery of specific, functionally based skills, is entirely devoid of dialogue. My previous research explored the social meaningfulness of a functional approach to English language provision for newly arrived refugees in Australia (Atkinson 2014). As I note, a shared learning practice within the diverse social concerns of learners themselves can still be established within such a setting. An important identified issue however lay in the lack of recognition within the functional approach to the confidence of learners, the wider social context of learners' lives and the voice of learners with regards to their needs and desires. In my study, dialogical discussions, where they did take place, always did so within the confines of the English language curriculum, reinforced by institutional power and circumscribed by the role of teacher and student.

When returning to the central aim of this chapter, that of accounting for specific dialogical meanings associated with specific interactive groups of people such as those in adult English language programs, a number of pertinent dialogical points emerge. Firstly, constructing a dialogical ethos within the context of contemporary approaches to adult literacy and language learning is challenging. Discourses internalized by past educational and societal experiences can impact on students' present attitudes to learning (Duckworth & Smith 2018b). Power differentials between teacher and student can mirror those between learners and mainstream society (Graman) with the curriculum as a third player in such learning spaces having a strong influence on how learning is delivered and received (Atkinson). As outlined above, a shared vision that goes beyond simple functional attainment to build an enabling and empowering environment can mitigate the alienation of a curriculum focussed on predetermined learning outcomes (Duckworth & Smith, Rule). Nevertheless, it appears essential to continuously reappraise the dialogical space (Rule), to recognise the aspirations and fears of individual learners (Duckworth & Smith) and to be aware of the dialogical limitations of a program (Atkinson, Graman). A point to take from these studies is that a dialogical approach to adult learning not only recognizes the uniqueness of learners but also the multidimensional challenge in facilitating dialogue in contemporary adult learning spaces with people positioned as cultural others.

Intercultural dialogue and refugee support

The resettlement process and the post-migration environment has a huge influence on the capability of refugees to recover from past experiences and gain a sense of belonging with the broader community (Kaplan & Webster 2003; Steel et al. 2011). Unsurprisingly, given the nature of arrival of refugees, settlement support predominantly follows an outcomes-oriented service model. There is however a growing recognition of the need for culturally relevant, socially oriented support which acts on the social isolation, social insecurity and limited social networks of refugees (Stewart et al. 2008). Dialogically orientated programs are of special interest given that they directly target key aspects of the settlement process itself around identity and cultural learning.

A study by the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) (2011) is fascinating for its focus on the importance of power in dialogically oriented programs. SAD, a Non-government organisation, facilitated and reported on a dialogical process between Turkish refugees and migrants living in Switzerland. It may be argued whether this is intercultural dialogue when it involves 'cultural others' within a mainstream designated culture. I would argue that any

multivocal interaction involving people of difference and a hierarchy of cultural identities contain intercultural dialogical elements. What made this study so pertinent was not just its focus on power but also its exploration of cultural learning and the factors which enhanced and diminished such learning in the face of past cultural trauma and ongoing cultural tension.

In recognizing that constructed stereotypes and the power asymmetries they represent, act as strong barriers to the mutual learning process, SAD built into their program a number of activities focused on personalising the other. Alongside storytelling were joint and participatory projects designed to create an emotional and passionate space to reconsider identity of both the self and the other. A participant-identified joint project encouraged people to co-operate with each other and to move beyond their own differences to uncover similarities. To this end the organisers noted the importance of including training elements to 'create learning processes and promote positive group dynamics', including 'listening', 'voice' (p. 21) and 'taking decisions in true team fashion' (p. 24). SAD found that identity as a concept was not simply the position from which people negotiated and constructed meaning. It was also the object of those constructions and subject to ongoing negotiation, change and renewal. Committing to the dialogue process was confronting for SAD participants as it challenged participants' own sense of ethnic identity and their positioning of the cultural other as morally insufficient.

In fact, navigating between different identity positions appears a key facilitating factor in crossing borders of obvious cultural difference. As alluded to above it is a process not without difficulty as people learn to engage with deeper aspects of their self. Merlini (2009) explored the dialogue process involving a bureaucrat and an asylum seeker seeking entrance into Italy. While not part of a refugee program as such, the power differential between the bureaucrat and the asylum seeker was particularly pertinent in the context of this study. Merlini (2009) noted that for dialogue to occur required those in positions of power to question their own positions and to negotiate aspects of their own sense of self. Such inner reflection was intensely confronting, requiring people to come face to face with their own sense of privilege and vulnerability.

Unsurprisingly, an absence of identity labels can work to minimise power imbalance and facilitate integration enabling those seeking a new life to interact with the mainstream community as people who have gone through extraordinary experiences rather than as immoral queue jumpers or parasites of state resources. This was the situation that Korac

(2009) found in her study on Bosnian refugees in Italy. Korac's study focused on cross cultural learning between refugees and mainstream cultural members in their day-to-day experiences. What enabled the refugees to enter the dialogical space as equals was the acknowledged right to work, contribute to society and earn their place. In this case the absence of what may be viewed as derogatory discourse markers, enabled this group to enter conversations with the mainstream society based on past experiences and present challenges, rather than as members of a stereotyped group.

Korac (2009, p. 15) noted an impressive learning ethos between the two groups:

> Contacts with Italians were seen not only as a way of learning about the receiving society and its culture. They were also shaping their awareness that the process of learning, shifting and shaping attitudes is mutual, that it affects Italians too.

As Korac also noted, many Italians were 'open to engage with individual people and approach them as a stranger in need' (p. 19). This was helped by the nearness of the war, thus allowing space for the personal and social worldview of the other within an environment of human empathy. For the purpose of employment, for understanding the cultural rules of Italy or even for day-to-day existence, people felt able to communicate with mainstream members as ordinary human beings, despite experiencing extraordinary events. Korac's study directly pointed to a key aspect of the dialogue process. Dialogue is disproportionally impacted by preconceived discourses aimed at labelling the cultural other. An absence of such markers enables people to enter and even construct spaces of interaction with the cultural other as equals. It may be asked here, why there was an absence of such negative markers. As mentioned above the nearness of the war induced a sense of human empathy amongst the dominant cultural group. Additionally, the right to work enabled these refugees to approach others from a position of equality rather than deficit. More to the point however is why should there be negative markers around people's sense of identity in the context that ultimately, we are all human together.

The centrality of identity in the dialogue process was further reaffirmed in the SAD study. Expressing the depths of one's identity and being in dialogue with another takes courage that can be both intense and challenging. The following quote is particularly pertinent. It explores the storytelling process within the SAD program mentioned above to give an insight into the importance of both courage and voice for dialogue to work:

> The story-telling process within the dialogue group was not easy and

> needed to be tried out several times. Especially 'deep' stories which are touching and have the capacity to incite change within the listener were rare when first implementing this approach in the group. (SAD 2011, p. 16).

SAD found that a great deal of effort needed to be placed in creating a sense of security and facilitating relationships between members of different Turkish cultural groups. Rules of dialogue as determined by the participants, and skills of dialogue such as listening and empathetic awareness, as communicated by the program organisers, were two essential features of SAD's study. What enabled the participants to change attitudes and stay with the dialogue process lay in an affirmation of their own sense of identity by others, leading to trust between themselves and their fellow participants. This in turn helped to create a 'safe zone' where people could voice their inner meanings and hear the voices of others.

An interesting example of a program which failed in this regard is that reported by Stevens, Veith and Wulf (2005). The study involved a cross cultural program between members of a Turkish diaspora and the mainstream community in the German city of Bonn. Although not technically refugees, having come to Germany as migrant guest workers many years before, the Turkish diaspora exhibited many of the characteristics of vulnerable refugee communities in terms of economic marginalisation and isolation. At issue was not simply difference in what may broadly be defined as ethnicity. Rather it also lay in educational levels between the tertiary educated and professionally employed mainstream members and a Turkish diaspora with high unemployment and low educational achievement. An initial challenge lay in finding 'project foci which were interesting to the members of the different communities and provided a base for a multi-cultural dialogue' (p. 385). Despite the emphasis on partnership between the two groups (Turkish and mainstream), cross cultural interaction predominantly remained at the level of shared projects resulting in useful exchanges but little in the way of shared learning. The resulting lack of interaction was put down to an absence of 'an existing shared practice [and] common identity' (p.393) mirroring the lack of communication between the two groups in society generally.

This discussion points to a number of important features of the dialogue process that are not apparent in the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter. Firstly, having an identifiable reason and need to dialogue and to change is an important consideration in each of the studies on refugee integration. Where need did not meet the risk of dialogue people neither had the motivation, nor cultivated the means to enter into multi-vocal conversations on matters of significance to them. In the context of SAD, the motivation

came from providing a safe space focused on positive societal change and meaningful learning that nevertheless left room for the exploration of the 'creativity and interests of the participants' (p. 15). In the context of the study by Korac, that motivation came from building a sense of belonging with the broader society alongside the shared recognition of the 'precarious situation' of the refugees themselves and the absence of negative identity discourses. Merlini noted the importance of questioning one's own privileged position. In contrast Stevens experienced a lack of success in building an environment of dialogue and transformation as prescribed by the organisers themselves. Language, social differences and one suspects, emotional feelings of social diffidence overwhelmed the motivation, structured or otherwise, for people to create new meanings about oneself and one's society. Dialogue does not spontaneously happen, and people do not automatically gravitate to dialogue across difference. It requires a space of safety and trust, imbued with a perceived sense of honesty *and* courage from the participants and skills in dialogue itself.

But this is where its power also resides. Within these very human elements where possibilities for transformation do exist there is also a sense that people, through their dialogues, also have the possibility to shift in how they view themselves. In being recognised as a fellow human, in finding the courage to express oneself and the humility to accept the other people can move on from the trauma of the past to engage with a new life. This has echoes with Peter Westoby's reference for more 'soul', more 'us' in engaging with members of vulnerable communities. In a fashion we are able to have a deeper understanding of both the human elements that connect us across difference and of humanity itself (Westoby 2009).

Intercultural dialogue and First nations agreement making

Intercultural dialogue in the context of dialogue is extremely complex. As Alfred (2009) and others (Hardwick 2015) point out, there is both an ignorance and a denial by members of settler societies about their relationship with Indigenous peoples. Alfred goes onto say in reference to Canada and the relationship that society has with its Indigenous people:

> Real change will happen only when settlers are forced into a reckoning of who they are, what they have done, and what they have inherited (Alfred, 2009, p.184)

Hardwick (2015) also notes that the majority of Canadians remain ignorant of the history of their country and in denial of the impact of colonialism. Such authors call for a

decolonialising discourse; one whereby settlers, in the words of Sarah Kizuk 2009 p.12) must interact:

> differently with Indigenous people—with vulnerability, humility, and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort

As Bradfield writes from the perspective of Settler-Colonial Australia we (settlers) need a form of:

> decolonizing consciousness as a reflexive orientation that reforms the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous life-worlds are navigated and mutually apprehended in a settler colonial context (Bradfield, 2019 abstract)

Arguably indigenous treaty processes enter such difficult dialogical spaces.

Internationally, indigenous treaty processes draw moral support from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). As article 36 of the UNDRIP states:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors, according to their original spirit and intent, and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006, article 36).

Modern treaty processes have become highly technical with a strong focus on legality and bureaucracy (Morgan, Castleden, & Huu-ay-aht First Nations 2014). This codification is, as de Costa argues (2004), unfortunately necessary. Structures of both social legitimacy and authority are complex requiring a highly formalised approach to agreement. The emphasis has fallen towards outcome rather than convergence between two disparate groups. Nevertheless, there are clear dialogical elements in such agreement making. Issues of identity, power, participation and the structures around the treaty process are salient in the negotiation process. Additionally, the alienations of modern life experienced by First Nations people ensure that the treaty process itself presents as an unavoidable tension as people seek to understand indigeneity amidst diverse identities. Opposition from mainstream community members as well as members of indigenous groups ensures a complexity to the dialogue process.

One of the few modern treaty processes that has been undertaken by a state with its indigenous people is that of the British Columbia Treaty Negotiations Process. In 1990, in the Canadian state of British Columbia, leaders of many of the First Nations groups, together with the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier and Cabinet of British Columbia agreed to establish a task force to look into and develop a process of negotiation over Aboriginal concerns. As de Costa noted, beyond the highly structured nature of the process, initial optimism was fuelled by the belief that the negotiations would be held in 'good faith,' and that all parties would recognise the importance of 'shared values,' for the purpose of producing a 'new understanding' (de Costa 2004, p. 139). The intention of the parties from the outset of the treaty process was that negotiations would be based on an 'interest focused' approach sensitive to the needs of the other.

Evidence suggests that trust, good faith and sensitivity towards the other, important as they are for creating dialogical spaces, are not however enough in themselves. Alfred and Contassel (2005) and Contassel et al. (2009) shed further light on the dialogical challenge of the BC treaty process. As these authors pointed out, colonialism has left a legacy of crisis not limited to its political, social, and economic aspects but also to spiritual ways of living[9] that go to the heart of people's sense of identity. What it means to be indigenous and the confidence of people in their indigenous heritage had been seriously undermined through violence, dispossession and destruction. Welfare politics has contributed to the collective dependency of Aboriginal people upon the state while decades of educational disadvantage has left indigenous people a knowledge deficit with regards to the legal procedures in which states operate.

Relatedly, a notable challenge of the BC treaty process has been in how First Nations should organise themselves for negotiation purposes[10]. As a consequence of the cultural and linguistic differences between Aboriginal peoples as well as the variance between local

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[9] Grieves (2009 p.v) suggests that spirituality may be defined as 'the philosophical basis of a culturally derived and wholistic concept of personhood, what it means to be a person, the nature of relationships to others and to the natural and material world'. She also suggests that the meaning of Aboriginal spirituality cannot be adequately translated into the English. It is rather best understood through observation, listening and privileging the voices of Aboriginal people themselves

[10] The present perfect tense is used here because the treaty process is still ongoing

economies, the BC treaty process has not simply been between a state and indigenous people but between the state and multiple indigenous groups (de Costa 2004). Defining what it means to be indigenous in a way that has included diverse indigenous groups as well as diverse people in these groups inclusive of professionals, young entrepreneurs, conservative hunters and those completely marginalised in the state-based system has required a shared theme beyond the labels imposed by years of ongoing colonial attitudes. Such identity work has also required the maintenance of resilience and the confidence of being different in an environment that continuously acts to undermine such difference. As De Costa (2004) noted, a crucial priority was to engender a united front among Aboriginal communities and an inclusive and flexible sense of indigenous identity.

The formal focus on reconciliation, resources and outcomes in treaty processes however can act to sideline the spirituality of Aboriginal people and divert attention away from the self-affirmation and community relationships that are so important to Aboriginal ways of being (Alfred & Contassel 2005). As Hingagaroa notes (2000), the corporation and the state, driven by their own neo-liberal ideology and desire for business certainty are, even with best intentions, not in a position to recognise the inadequacy of their approach. To circumvent this the BC treaty process included a reworking of collective history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in ways that valued, rather than undermined, indigenous identity to highlight not just shared history but the continuous nature of cultural change. The fact that the treaty process is expected to continue for some time yet (by 2019 only 11 of 65 agreements had been reached) shows just how difficult the it can be.

In the absence of treaty, Native Title plays an important role in terms of facilitating engagement between Australia's indigenous people and the state's legal and political structures. Broadly speaking, native title is the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights and interests to land as set out in Australian Law. As Lisa Strelein argues, native title is not just a legal structure but also a symbolic act:

> the arms of the state cannot ignore the intensely symbolic nature of native title in their engagement with Indigenous peoples (Strelein 2004, p.190)

For indigenous peoples in Australia, native title acts to recognise the distinct identity of the first peoples rather than simply 'a cultural minority within an otherwise homogenous Australian polity' (Strelein 2004, p.190). In this regard it offers legitimacy of indigenous people to be law makers in their own right; a symbolic measure of equality as well as one

of the only measures that forces the state to engage with indigenous people. Such symbolism is not only important for indigenous people but also acts as a framework through which non-indigenous people can 'conceive' Aboriginal people beyond a simplified and passive rhetoric. As Strelein (2004, p.202) goes onto note:

> Symbolism reflects as well as defines what is important to us as a society. By suggesting what is important, symbols influence people's sense of involvement in the society in which they live. Native title is such a symbol.

This is not to say that such symbolism does not also have practical value. Native title offers a process of delivering outcomes to which all parties-government, industry and Aboriginal groups-can commit (Agius et al. 2004), thereby serving to guide policy making at the local level (Harvey 2004).

Both the BC Treaty process and Native Title reveal significant challenges facing indigenous people when working on agreements with the state. A key aspect of agreement making involving indigenous people includes an ongoing process of reflection by indigenous community members on how they see themselves within a cultural landscape that in many ways continues to undermine indigenous values. This however is not easy. As Taylor argues:

> The intersection of these two issues [treaty and identity] raises several complex, intensely personal, often inflammatory questions that make for passionate discussion. … How will Aboriginal identity be conceptualised, verified and ultimately authenticated? (2003, p. 88)

Resilience and confidence appear vital in this process. So too is the relationship with the state and the positioning of Aboriginal people. It was notable that the BC treaty process included a reworking of the collective history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, to value rather than undermine indigenous identity. As in the previous case study areas, shifting the discourse away from deficit towards a valuing of the cultural other is necessary. In this regard treaty involves a broader recognition from the non-indigenous community on the right of existence for indigenous people. This adds a deeper complexity to the dialogical space not seen in the previous two case study areas. Treaty is not circumscribed by easily identifiable groups but rather extends into the wider population. In other words, it is structured on the discourses of not just the immediate parties involved but the discourses of the wider population in pursuit of recognition and legitimacy of indigenous people.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the stated aim of extending the theoretical understanding outlined in the previous chapter in order to develop a more nuanced and sensitive framework pertinent for the case study sites I will examine in further chapters. In doing so I identified literature that explored the interactive dialogue experiences of migrant adult learners, refugees and indigenous people with mainstream cultural members. I sought literature that explored in depth the dialogical learning experiences of such people together with issues of identity and power. In doing so I can now develop the foundational framework I outlined in Chapter Two.

At a primary level of the framework, lies the intercultural space; an 'interactive space of challenge and risk where identities are transitive, multiple, imagined, imposed and emerging and power is contested'. Duckworth and Smith (2018b) noted the marginalisation of the unique backgrounds, interests, needs and emotional wellbeing of learners in adult literacy programs. Alfred and Contassel (2005) and Taylor (2003) both indicated the entanglement between treaty processes, indigenous understandings and constructions of identity and a government that was not able to recognize the spiritual inadequacy of their approach. Merlini (2009), from a different perspective, highlighted the importance of those in positions of dominance to question their own privilege and to negotiate aspects of their own sense of self when working with the cultural other. Collectively the papers revealed discourses of deficit directed towards the cultural other as detrimental to the dialogue process, limiting exchange to concerns around identity. In such situations dialogue cannot be divorced from the continuous negotiation of identity as people position and reposition themselves and construct alternative, conflicting and multiple meanings in their ongoing conversations with the other. On the other hand, the creation of safe spaces of trust and mutuality can mitigate against such risk. The absence of negatively defined identity labels is an essential aspect of this process (Korac 2009).

At the secondary level is shared learning. This process involves 'the exploration and negotiation of meanings, objects or aspects of the self through participative structures that affirm a person's sense of belonging and identity within a more inclusive group through a shared vision, a shared practice or a shared goal. SAD suggests that buying into a wider vision that may be shared between dialogical participants requires first and foremost a sense of security, trust and transparency. Dialogical skills such as listening and reflection, alongside personal feelings of confidence, can lead to a personalisation of the other which

extends beyond preconceived stereotypes to mutual learning. An important point is that the deeper one extends into dialogue the greater the challenge. As Merlini notes it requires people to come face to face with the challenges inherent in recognizing their multiple identities. As such the journey to dialogue is not straight forward but rather involves ongoing uncertainty and reflection. A major challenge is one of generating what may be termed a shared or dialogical ethos between people who do not share a broader agenda due to predetermined roles constructed in their immediate social and cultural world (Stevens, Veith & Wulf 2004). While dialogue, in Bar-On's words, may be grounded in learning what is meaningful for me and learning what is meaningful for the other, maintaining a shared learning environment where people are interested in engaging with such meaningfulness, may not always be possible (Graman 1988).

At the tertiary level we have transformation, a process of mutual action, critical consciousness, and shared humanity. A major challenge is that dialogue is not a linear, step by step process between groups. People move in and out of dialogue as they perceive others adapting their personal viewpoints and making the effort to understand points of view beyond their own (SAD 2011); balancing pre-existing meanings with the creation of new meanings (Merlini 2009). The transformational process within intercultural dialogue is therefore complex as people work through the underlying tension between their own sense of self, how they perceive others and how they are perceived by others. It is a process in which participants encounter and move beyond resistances, their own as well as those of others, as an inevitable experience of engaging with difference. As SAD (2011) and others noted (Duckworth & Smith 2018b; Korac 2009 Merlini 2009), transformation involves a continual ethical negotiation and renegotiation in people's sense of cultural identity and how they view others.

In taking account of this practically oriented literature, I present the following framework of intercultural dialogue to be used in this thesis.

Intercultural dialogue is a non-linear and messy phenomenon with three inter linking spheres.

1. The intercultural space

An interactive space of challenge and risk where identities are transitive, multiple, imagined, imposed and emerging and power is contested; a space of difference defined in terms of beliefs attitudes and feelings of significance expressed in discourses about the self and the other.

2. Shared Learning Practices

the exploration and negotiation of meanings, objects or aspects of the self through participative structures that span cultural borders to affirm and extend a person's sense of belonging and identity to a more inclusive group through the considered construction of a shared vision, a shared practice or a shared goal in conversations with another.

3. Transformation

The enablement of people to initiate a process of mutual action, critical consciousness, and shared humanity for the purpose of positive human change.

This is expressed in the following schematic which will be used to structure the findings throughout the case study chapters in a modified form.

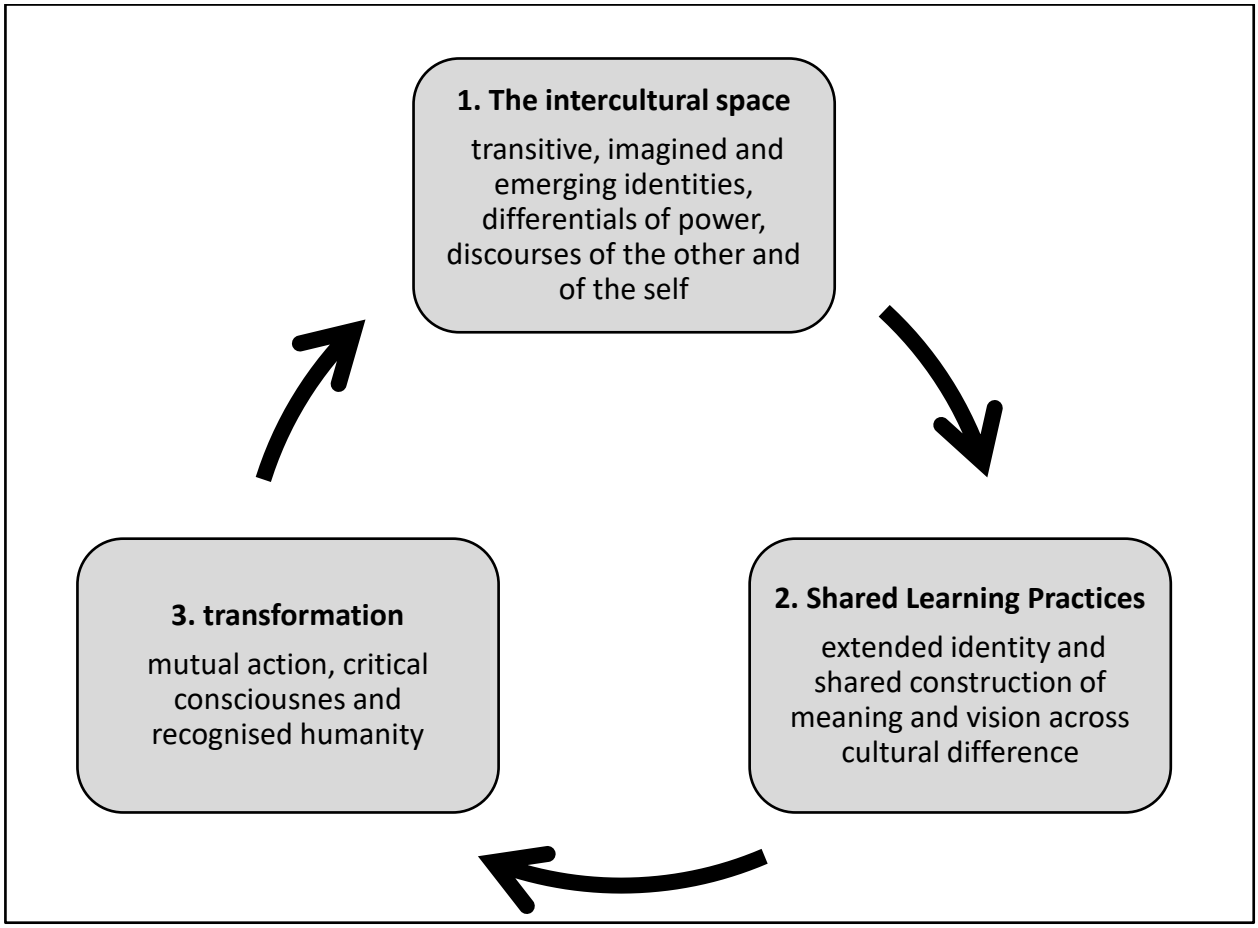

Figure 1 generalised schematic of the theoretical framework

In conclusion I'd like to draw the reader's attention to the first sphere and in particular the reference to the intercultural space as 'a space of difference defined in terms of beliefs

attitudes and feelings of significance expressed in *discourses* about the self and the other'. As argued above, identity and discourse are foundational to dialogue. Discourses that highlight mutual recognition and equality enable people to enter and construct dialogical spaces as equals. On the other hand, discourses around identity that position people in deficit are likely to close dialogical spaces. This has particular value in the context of multicultural Australia. As I discuss below, Aboriginal people have been either excluded or positioned in deficit to the dominant society from the time of settlement. Likewise, people of refugee backgrounds and adult English language learners are also positioned in deficit. In the following chapter I look deeper into the reasons that members of different cultural groups are thus positioned and the impact this has on dialogue.

Ch 4: Identity, discourse and the cultural other

> Those in the guilt industry have to consider that developing cultures and peoples will always overtake relatively stationary cultures. ((Fischer 1993 cited in ABC News 2012).)

The quote above from then Deputy Prime Minister of Australia Tim Fischer is an example of the attitudes that have pervaded the relationships between governments of Australia and Aboriginal people since federation. More generally it is an example of the use of a label to position the cultural other in deficit to the cultural self.

From a dialogical perspective, a recognition and acceptance of the other is foundational to dialogue. If people do not recognize or accept the other as fellow and equal human beings, dialogue remains mired in concerns of identity rather than moving into more effective dialogical spaces involving mutual learning and transformation. As Saskia Witteborn (2011 p.115) argues, negative labelling not only hinders 'dialogic engagement' but provides the cues by which people position others according to 'particular sociohistorical truths' (p.113) and 'archetypal emotions and historical memory' (p.115). As a consequence, clusters of characteristics tend to become associated with culturally derived labels (Hartmann & Husband 1974 p. 57). To requote Pittaway and Pittaway (2004, p.124):

> Th[e] forced dominance of one identity label over the multiple identities of the individual leads to a shift in their relation to society. Her 'social face' is narrowed to one primary identifier, which becomes the defining feature of her interactions with others, and eventually herself.

The respect that lies at the heart of dialogue (Australian Human Rights Commission 2013; Baraldi, 2006; Council of Europe 2008; Hardy & Hussain 2017; Tilbury & Mula 2009) begins with the terms of address directed towards cultural others.

This chapter directly explores this space. It begins by looking at the concept of cultural bias and the importance of imagination, story and myth in the creation of cultural identity. It also introduces the theory of moral psychology (Haidt 2012) to argue that people, ostensibly of one cultural group, nevertheless have a range of positions in which they view the 'cultural other'. This initial exploration is followed by a specific focus on the discourses that are directed towards Aboriginal people, migrants and people of refugee backgrounds in the Australian cultural context. I argue that different portrayals of Australian national

identity support different and sometimes conflicting discourses about the cultural other. Narratives based on a) a white, Anglo past or b) a unique set of Australian values, result in traditional portrayals of Australian culture to situate the culture 'other' as inferior and at fault for the perceived negative circumstances of their lives. Such portrayals contrast with national cultural meanings based on c) multiculturalism and d) what I refer to as a cosmopolitan orientation which take a more inclusive and accepting perspective to the 'other'.

The following discussion explores these identity constructs alongside the cultural othering process. It revisits Australia's cultural and political past and the myths and stories which serve to validate present constructs of identity. Despite this focus on the past, the discussion that follows is not an in-depth, nor linear account of Australian cultural history. As in all nations, Australian national memory does not correspond to documented history but is selective in the stories that are given precedence. The key aim of this chapter is to explore and explain the discourses from which people position both themselves and the 'cultural other' *today* and why such discourses remain pertinent and persistent. The statements and events included here have been chosen to illustrate the cultural framings and the discourses used to position the other in Australia's cultural history.

As Fischer reveals above, members of Australia's dominant culture have not hesitated to impose meanings upon members of different cultures. The interesting point from a dialogical perspective is where did Fischer's obvious cultural bias emerge from? What gave him the perspective that his 'developed culture' was superior? What stories, myths or beliefs did he draw on to arrive at his conclusions and who does he categorize as belonging to 'the guilt industry'? In the context of this thesis, understanding both discourse and the nature of bias is vital in order to develop insight into the social learning factors that facilitate and hinder dialogue.

Discourse

Before proceeding, I would like to clarify that in employing the term 'discourse', as the principle unit of description, I am referring to its sociological conceptualisation. As Augoustinos and Every (2007 p.125) note, the patterns of talk around race reflects

> discursive resources that perform social actions such as blaming, justifying, rationalising, and constructing particular social identities for speakers and those who are positioned as other.

Peace activist, author and academic John Synott (2003, p. 203) further argues that discourse may be viewed in terms of acts of aggression and resistance at sites of cultural boundaries. Where the focus is on the maintenance of cultural hegemony, rather than the construction of shared meaning, dominance becomes the norm, justifying constructed differences and maintaining power differentials.

> in the cultural boundaries that language forms in conflictual cultural relations, changing discourses commonly represent acts of aggression and resistance by the participants in the interaction. The symbolic interaction in such contexts represents less of an ongoing negotiation by the communicants in constructing a shared meaning … than a symbolic tactic for advancing the relative power position of the communicants who are opponents engaged in a struggle for cultural hegemony.

Because discourse is bound with cultural meanings to shape the way we view reality an analysis of discourses offers a window into the biases we hold and the reasons we hold them. I extend the concept in this chapter beyond the dichotomization of Synott. While highlighting discourse as a means to maintain or challenge power I make the case that discourses are not just characterised by a dichotomy between aggression and resistance. People can draw on discourses which bridge such duality.

Cultural bias and moral psychology

Cultural theorist Kwame Appiah (2016, para 24) argues that:

> each generation inherits the [cultural] label from an earlier one; and, in each generation, the label comes with a legacy. But as the legacies are lost or exchanged for other treasures, the label keeps moving on.

The result, to paraphrase Appiah, is that our identities are held together by narratives which we inherit from previous generations and which have no substantive essence. Benedict Anderson has a similar argument. As Anderson (1983 p.7) argues, the nation is ‘an imagined community’, one ‘conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship’. Anderson and Appiah’s arguments are important from the perspective of cultural bias. While national stories may shift and change, the associated labels have a continuing presence that traverse both space and time. In identifying ourselves as part of a national group we derive a powerful, though imagined link with both past and place. In other words, we emotionally

invest in a memory of cultural meanings which are meaningful to us because we imagine them to be so.

Further impacting on our cultural bias is that our own memories are not truth, rather they are subjective and constantly moving constructions and reconstructions of the past. As Mellor and Bretherton (2002) argue:

> Rather than 're-collecting' stored data, the mind 're-creates' the past from a bank of images which are themselves in motion.

What is more, such collective representations are impacted by present contexts and how people view the world *now*. Sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992 p.2) makes the case that how we view the past shifts with how we view our present:

> [T]he beliefs, interests and aspirations of the present which are held by groups, will shape the various views of the past as they are manifested in any historical epoch.

A consequence of such identification is a bias in the way we imagine our own cultural identity and that of the cultural other, alongside a 'willed ignorance about the dark side of the national story' (Appiah cited in Heintz, 2018 p.7). So deep is this bias that we mistake it for truth itself. As Anderson (1983 p.7) goes onto note, the national consciousness is so deeply internalized and embodied, that people are prepared to 'kill, [and] willingly to die for such limited imaginings'.

Within this biased landscape, constructed meanings around signs and actions serve to solidify the cultural characteristics of one's own group, while stereotyping the values and behaviours of others (Dovidio & Gaertner 2004; Sears et al. 2000). As Appiah (2016) argues, this trait has biological underpinnings. In an evolutionary path where sudden decisions meant life, death or opportunity, humankind has developed the means to make snap judgements of those we deem as 'others' (Appiah, 2016). The result is our bias is not only implicit but also unconscious (Pearson, Dovidio and Gaertner, 2009). National, cultural and social meanings are internalised; actively and continuously constructed. Although we may support racial equality and sympathize with victims of racism overtly, we may also possess conflicting negative emotions towards the 'cultural other' that are implicit. Our cultural bias is subtle, indirect, often rationalizable and potentially racially prejudicial (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

Such stereotyping can be overt, covert or subtle. The throwing of bananas in football stadiums in Europe is an overt racist symbol (Brentin 2019) serving as a reminder of the 'European association between Africans and monkeys' (Scott 2015, p.62). The implicit framing of black, African athletes as having an inherited physical advantage, supported through genetic arguments, devalues both the hard work and intellectual capacity of black athletes (Farrington 2012). Closer to the subject matter of this thesis, the under representation of black, non-European scholars in the dialogue literature mirrors the dominant hegemony of western academia to privilege white, western understandings; a subtle form of soft cultural influence that scholars are not necessarily aware of.

The consequences of such implicit prejudice are both theoretically intriguing and morally troubling (Washington & Kelly 2016). As academic and social psychologist John Bargh (1999, p. 363) influentially writes:

> If it were indeed the case, as research appeared to indicate, that stereotyping occurs without an individual's awareness or intention, then the implications for society— specifically, the hope that prejudice and discrimination could eventually be eradicated—were tremendous, as well as tremendously depressing.

The situation, however, may not be as depressing and may be more nuanced than Bargh (1999) suggests. Work in the area of moral psychology indicates that while we may all tend to cultural bias, that does not necessarily translate into an active or an implicit prejudice. As moral psychologist Jonathon Haidt argues, people do not react or even view the same situation the same way. Haidt's work on moral psychology (Haidt 2012; see also Haidt, Graham, & Joseph 2009) suggests that we actively construct and internalise cultural meanings cognitively, emotionally and subconsciously according to our moral foundations.

Haidt argues that our moral foundations exists on a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum are people who strongly identify with moral obligations around loyalty, authority and sanctity. I refer to this moral identification as nativism. Nativists favour an in-group bias believing that their country and culture are clearly identifiable, unique, worth preserving and superior. The loyalty, authority and sanctity they feel in their constructions of national or cultural identity frame not only how they see themselves but also others. It perceives non-natives, both in terms of people and ideas as threatening. It thus has particular appeal in times of cultural uncertainty when the connection between the state and the people is

unsettled. As Cas Mudde (2012) argues, nativists focus energy on positioning 'the cultural other' as a way of avoiding difficult questions and having to define the 'cultural self'.

By contrast those who identify with moral values of fairness and protection from harm are more likely to be culturally flexible and inclusive, foregrounding a sense of shared humanity and universal values. This is not to say that they lack identification with cultural meanings. Rather that they are more likely to take a reflective stance over those meanings while accepting that the cultural meanings of others are equally valid. People who belong to the latter group, whom I term cosmopolitans, endorse national diversity and liberation believing that such values generate virtues and practices that allow people to live in harmony as autonomous agents with their own goals. As a consequence, they feel validated under conditions where existential threats have been minimalised.

The cultural other is alternatively viewed as either a direct threat to one's own singular culture, or as a fellow human being in the broader expanse of a shared humanity depending upon whether one holds nativist or cosmopolitan values. The result is a differing set of discourses around national or cultural identity according to people's moral perspective and the way society, and threat, is framed. The differences are captured in the following quotes, one taken from an ABC discussion forum on multiculturalism and constitutional recognition (Albo 2012) and the other from the comments section of a *Guardian Australia* article on immigration and asylum (Al Crosby 2019).

> The only reason we don't have rampant divisiveness and segregation here is the fact that we don't have real multiculturalism in Australia! …What we have is a single Australian culture, that both old and new Australians generally all embrace… That is not multiculturalism. That is a flourishing and colouring of the Australian culture. Singular (Albo 2012).

> Australia is no different than any other country in the world! We are all citizens of this planet (Al Crosby 2019)

The notable point is not just the contrast between the singular and unique Australian culture of Albo and the world citizenship of Al Crosby. Additionally, the language of both comments is indicative of people who believe that they have insight into the 'truth'.

Haidt's work is not uncritically accepted. Critics have noted a lack of recognition for cultural empathy and moral courage (Gibbs 2019), and a lack of emphasis on personal change towards responsible, mature moral agency (Bloom 2016). As John Gibbs points out, the absence of the recognition of such moral characteristics is disconcerting. Human moral

development entails growth 'beyond superficial moral feeling …to affective sources such as benevolence or empathy' (Gibbs 2019, p.1). From my point of view this is an issue to be aware of. Gibbs' perspective suggests that our moral outlook is capable of change; that cultures can morally shift and develop. We can unlearn those instincts that separate 'us' from 'them' and in the right circumstances, move on from our racist, prejudicial perspectives.

Despite the reservation I find the work of Haidt extremely valuable. It is a powerful framework from which to identify moral and ideological difference within society, providing insight into why some stories acquire national symbolic status, why some people are peripheral to the national story and the differing construction of 'cultural others'. It also provides insight into how people arrive at differing positions of both themselves and others and how decisions around identity concepts are morally justified.

The discourses

As noted in the introduction, I identify four predominant public discourses directed towards the 'other' in contemporary Australia. The following discussion focuses on these discourses, and the othering process as it relates to the positioning of the 'migrant and refugee other' and Aboriginal people. The examples chosen to illustrate the discourses are primarily located in political and media rhetoric. Both areas are accessible and play an important role in both swaying and reflecting public opinion.

As mentioned above, I identify four primary discourses in Australia. I argue that the historical discourse of racial exclusion, which characterised colonial Australia and the era of the White Australia Policy[11], maintains its prominence in an ideology which valorises whiteness and colonialist attitudes of cultural superiority and the justification of settlement. By contrast, the deficit/ dichotomization discourse is structured on a set of values that are uniquely 'Australian' rather than an outmoded colonialist mentality. This discourse, while avoiding the language of exclusion of the previous discourse, nevertheless situates both the 'the cultural other' as a problem to be solved rather than, for instance, an inherent and

[11] The White Australia Policy, given effect by immigration restriction acts and acts relating to citizenship, voting rights, and rights to social benefits (Moran 2005 p 171) was a term applied to a group of policies designed to promote a white British national character and population and the exclusion of non-European immigrants. It ran from 1901, to be gradually dismantled between 1949 to 1973.

valued aspect of Australia itself. A third discourse, what I refer to as sanitised acceptance, is accepting of the presence and the worth of the cultural other but only in a delimited way. While characterised by a lack of engagement, it nevertheless includes delimited cultural interaction in the vicinity of culturally safe spaces such as food halls, sporting fields and intercultural religious institutions. Running parallel and in some ways opposing these other discourses is one which prioritizes shared humanitarian values - identified here as the humanitarian discourse. It is a discourse that views the cultural other as equal to the cultural self. It is both self-reflective and aware of the power differentials in society.

A discourse of exclusion

In discussing exclusion, I focus primarily on Aboriginal people. Finzsch (2005) views exclusion as a discourse that has its origins in colonialism and the need to justify both the superiority of western civilisation and the ensuing genocide of indigenous people that followed. Agamban (1995) likewise views exclusion as a discourse bound with the legal status of sovereignty which in turn necessitates the exclusion of those considered as threats. As Holohan (2019) suggests, exclusion acts as a discursive tool to secure *our* position as sovereign and support the hegemonic position of the nation-state. In framing exclusion through a colonial perspective and threat to sovereignty I also highlight the strongly moralistic nature of this discourse. As Wimmer (2019) and others (Wodak & Krzyzanowski 2008, p.62) argue, exclusion supports a sense of moral superiority in one's cultural self and thereby the positioning of 'the other' as at fault for their own exclusion. In other words, it justifies both the taking of land and the treatment of Aboriginal people through a misplaced sense of morality.

In Australian history the exclusivist mentality is clearly seen at the time of federation. The constitution itself mentioned Aboriginal people on only two occasions, both of which by way of exclusion (Chesterman & Galligan 1997, p. 7). Section 51(26) deemed it necessary to exclude members of the Aboriginal race from the scope of the special race power given to the Commonwealth. Section 127 excluded Aboriginal people from the census. Following the constitution, the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* further normalised Aboriginal exclusion. As Chesterman and Galligan (Chesterman & Galligan 1997, p.11) argue:

> in a late amendment to the franchise bill, every 'aboriginal native of Australia' was excluded from the federal franchise. This exclusionary clause … was systematically defined and refined by the federal bureaucracy, and utilised by successive federal governments for over six

> decades to deny Aboriginal Australians citizenship rights and benefits.

Additional legislation followed. To name just three, the *Invalid and Old-Age Pensions Act 1908* denied pensions to Aboriginal natives of Australia, the *Maternity Allowance Act 1912* barred the allowance to Aboriginal women, the *Emigration Act 1910* prohibited the emigration, without a permit, of any 'Aboriginal native'.

How do we explain how the founding fathers of federation held such high hopes, as Holbrook (2017) argues, for the civic engagement of the people on the one hand, while excluding Aboriginal people on the other? There is no doubt that racial character and national identity were potent concerns at the time. As Stratton and Ang (1994 p 141) argue, white racial purity was 'the symbolic cement for the imagined community of the fledgling nation'. This point is supported by Markus (1979) who writes that the White Australia Policy was, in effect, a deep-seated expression, even yearning, for a unique sense of national identity. Such yearning was underpinned by a sense of superiority in the white, Anglo-Celtic race, which in turn was legitimised and guided through the ideology of Social Darwinism (Stratton & Ang, 1994). As such 'lesser cultures' and races, were not only inferior to, but could not survive contact with higher civilisations (Manne 1998). As Elbourne (2003) argues, indigenous people were seen to possess neither knowledge nor virtue brought about by civilisation. Neither did they possess the transformative knowledge of the Christian God. The result was a sense of obscurity about their lives, namelessness about their ways of being and anonymity regarding their presence.

At the time of federation, when issues of race and culture were both consistently conflated and compared, a unified national identity did not, could not, extend to the Indigenous inhabitant. The Aborigine was '*a primitive other'* (Stokes 1997, p. 158). The following article from the Melbourne Age of 1896 (cited in Markus 1974, p. 66), expresses this perceived immutability where 'Aborigines' are compared to the 'black problem' in the United States':

> In Australia, fortunately, we are free from this race problem. The aboriginals were of too low a stamp of intelligence and too few in number to be seriously considered. If there had been any difficulty, it would have been obviated by the gradual dying out of the native race.

The result was not just the exclusion, but the expulsion of blackness amidst an imagined progressive, white utopia. As Michael Pusey (2008 p 17) argues:

> Here in Australia, we pushed the Aborigines aside and quickly set about constructing a nation.

The realisation during the 1930s that the Aboriginal race was not in fact 'a dying race' destined for 'extinction' (McGregor 1997, p ix) but increasing in numbers, should have called into question the supposed evolutionary superiority of the white race and the form of society that was being developed. Instead, it resulted in an ideological call to arms and a reinterpretation of the 'Aboriginal problem'. The first Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia, Auber Neville (Commonwealth of Australia 1937, p. 11) was moved to present the following rhetorical question:

> Are we going to have a population of 1,000,000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into the white community and eventually forget that there were ever any aborigines in Australia?

'Guided' through the misguided frameworks of 'eugenics, racial demographics and social Darwinism' (Manne 1998), official policy shifted towards the assimilation and absorption of the remnants of the 'Aboriginal race' within the dominant Australian society (Moran 2005). The Aboriginal population was recategorized. The 'full blood' would be allowed to dwindle. The 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and 'octoroon' could be 'saved' by assimilation (Faulkner 2019). Removing such children from their families, supposedly ensured that the challenge presented by blackness would become less of a 'problem' in successive generations (Read 2000, p.98).

According to Joanne Faulkner (2019) such actions were not just seen to be in keeping with building the nation but also morally just. The extreme nature of this discourse is such that it subdues any reflective capacity to question its own validity. As Faulkner (2019 p.602) notes with specific reference to Neville himself:

> Neville understood this strategy of separation and intensive intervention to be morally justified - even the most compassionate possible avenue - because according to his theoretical commitments the Aboriginal race could not survive.

The result in real terms was that thousands of children were taken from their parents to be brought up in white households as white children. Arguably, one of the most shameful periods in Australian history came about because one group of people in a culturally dominant position believed that the colour of their skin and the myths of their origins gave

them the right to exclude the 'other group' from the new nation of Australia. It was an action justified by 'compassion'.

Interestingly Keith Windschuttle (2010, p.10), a self-identified Australian historian who consistently underplays the racism underpinning the policy towards the Stolen Generation, also consistently frames his arguments in moralistic terms. Windschuttle claims that victims of the Stolen Generation 'were removed for both traditional welfare reasons and to help them gain some education'. As Windschuttle (2010, p.10) argues:

> Rather than acting for racist reasons, government officers and religious missionaries wanted to rescue children from welfare camps and shanty settlements riddled with alcoholism, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Windschuttle's argument is difficult to fathom given the evidence. Nevertheless, it showcases both the moral positioning of this discourse and a belief in the superiority of one's own culture.

Extraordinarily, exclusion remains. Aboriginal people are not mentioned in the constitution despite calls for such recognition. Notions of Australian history, likewise, contain exclusive designations. In reference to the frontier wars between colonists and settlers before and even after federation, the dominant culture in Australia has a selective recollection of events (Daley 2018, Krichauff 2017, Mellor & Bretherton 2002). Not only are the numbers of Aboriginal people killed through the wars disputed, there is also a failure of recognition from government of the wars themselves. Denialists question academic interpretations of the non-direct language by which massacres are referred to in what records remain (Harris 2003), frequently rejecting the oral histories of Aboriginal people themselves based on a lack of credibility.

Such biased viewpoints do not lie at the periphery of the dominant society but are arguably at its heart. Anzac Day is a national day of remembrance in Australia to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Turkey by Australian troops in WW1. While ANZAC Day itself is used to remember *all* Australians who fought in war, it fails to recognize Aboriginal people who fell defending their homeland from white invaders. The identity forming moments constructed on the shores of Gallipoli (Phillips & Smith 2000; Smith, 1991) and related national wartime stories (Fromelles, Kokoda) are overwhelmingly white, male and homogenous. Despite challenges to such myths by revisionist (Reynolds 2013) and feminist historians (Grimshaw et al. 1994) they retain their gendered, culturally uniform character.

I can provide a recent and personal observation of the inability to admit the Aboriginal story into the dominant cultural landscape and thereby the ongoing presence of this exclusionist discourse. I live in Ballarat, a regional city some 100 km from Melbourne. In 2015 a proposed new suburb was given an Aboriginal name, Mullawallah, after a local tribal leader from the time of settlement in the region. People neighbouring the proposed suburb vehemently complained on the grounds that the name was difficult to pronounce, difficult to spell and contained too many syllables. As Newton (2016, p. 128) argues in reference to the Aboriginal connection of the suburb's proposed name:

> the Indigenous, on a number of counts, had become invisible and deemed irrelevant [in the region], and for some locals who believed they were autochthonous, probably unwelcome, as it threatened the idea of 'true' local status.

Opportunity for meaningful dialogue was denied amidst a public vote involving only one Aboriginal resident of the region. The proposed name was changed to that of a wealthy pioneer by the name of John Winter who acquired an enormous fortune through land speculation before and during the goldrush of the 1850s and 60s. As Newton noted (Newton 2016, p.128) the surprise was not in the opposition, but in the "absolute opposition" to the Aboriginal name.

I argued earlier that the exclusion of Aboriginal people in the early years of nationhood was 'morally justified' on the basis of compassion. But what, if any, moral justification is used in contemporary Australia by those not accepting the name Mullahwallah, not accepting the legitimacy of the Aboriginal warrior, and not accepting the reality of massacres in Australia's history? Anthropologist Thomas Buckley (1989, p.20) used the term 'morality of progress' to describe the moral justification of progress itself. Accordingly, the ideological justification for the dispossession of Aborigines was that we 'could use the land better than they could' (Wolfe 2006 p.389).

I found support for such thinking while exploring the online comments to an ABC radio report on cultural cohesion (ABC Radio, 2016). The comments place national identity in the bricks and mortar of material development and military prowess. While there is clear identification with the 'Anglo-Celtic race', the comments also reveal that at least for some Australians, Aboriginal people have no claims to an Australian nation that they 'did not contribute to':

> the nation was planned and physically built from raw wilderness by white

> Anglo-Celtic peoples. "Australia" was in only the tiniest ways built by the Aboriginal people (Shepherd 2016).

> Aboriginals weren't Australian until the British colonized this continent, the Australian nation, nationality and culture didn't exist. They occupied the land, very sparesely (sic), so we took it. Fair and square, first Australians were those alive at federation as far as I'm concerned… If the Aboriginals wanted their land so much, they should've of banded together and fought for it. … They were a weak race, …. If anything we saved the Aboriginal (Rowan Krebs 2016)

For those who hold to an exclusory discourse, the Aboriginal presence confronts people with a meta truth that they have difficulty in accepting. White Australia, however, it is imagined, is not culturally superior, just culturally different; likewise, Aboriginal cultures have an intrinsic and undeniable human worth. Within the discourse of exclusion, it appears far easier to exclude Aboriginality than accept this truth.

While I view exclusion, as mentioned above, as a carryover from colonialism, and hence directed primarily towards Aboriginal people, it is also in evidence with regards to the migrant and refugee other. According to Michael Clyne (2005 p 192), a persistent theme in the British colonial and post-colonial history of Australia, is of threat by unwanted people invading Australia from the North. Fear of an Asian invasion was an important reason for mass migration policy in the aftermath of World War II. In 1975, during the Vietnamese refugee crisis a small neo-Nazi organization named National Action, printed a poster with the text warning:

> If Australia were ever to be a victim of a military Asian invasion the present 'boat people' invasion would be its prelude (cited in Clyne, 2005 p192).

Such white wing thoughts became more centrist after 9/11 and the advent of boat arrivals to Australia's shores containing asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The Pacific Solution policy[12], brought out by Prime Minister John Howard's government in 2001 ensured that asylum seekers who arrived by boat were to be detained and processed

[12] The Pacific Solution refers to Australian Government policy of transporting and processing asylum seekers on Manus Island and Nauru rather than on the Australian mainland.

offshore. There was also a discursive element to the program. As Clyne (2005, p. 92) notes, the government:

> skilfully used language to project asylum seekers as unlawful and unlike 'nice refugees', violent and criminal with links to terrorism and drug trafficking, unfair to others, and a threat to the Australian nation.

Such threat to Australia's sovereignty has been was used to justify Australia's harsh treatment of asylum seekers who arrive by boat virtually ever since[13]. The current policy 'Operation Sovereign Borders', continues the discursive war by positioning asylum seekers as a threat to Australia and its sovereignty. The Home Affairs Department (n.d.) of the Australian government has notably proclaimed in the homepage of its website in big bold letters that 'Australia's borders are closed to illegal migration'. Positioning asylum seekers as 'illegals' creates a moral justification for one's action cemented through the self-proclaimed task of protecting Australia's sovereignty.

In closing this section, I point out that in the case studies themselves, exclusion as a discourse has significant impact in the third case study focusing on the Aboriginal treaty process but less of an impact for the initial two case studies. The Aboriginal treaty process is contextualised both by both the past and present exclusion of Aboriginal people in contemporary Australia. By contrast, migrant English language provision and refugee support, by definition, are not exclusive of the cultural other.

A discourse of deficit

As mentioned above, how people identify themselves is directly linked to how they view the other. Less extreme than the discourse of exclusion is what I term the discourse of deficit and dichotomization. This discourse is founded upon a perspective that 'cultural others' lack the capacity to succeed by themselves and are therefore in fundamental deficit to the rest of society who have succeeded. A lack of training, an unstable home life, poor foundational skills in language or literacy or ensuing social problems are used to position difference and explain failure. Clothed in a rhetoric which avoids forms of expression which are outwardly belittling and derogatory, it nevertheless acts to sideline the identity

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[13] The Pacific solution was halted in 2008. In August 2012, the succeeding Gillard Government (Labor) reopened the Nauru and Manus detention centres for offshore processing following a similar policy

of the cultural other through diverse means supported through institutional norms, officially sanctioned practices and language itself. The result is a discourse that maintains, rather than challenges the status quo, while supporting an 'us' and 'them' reality; a form of cultural dichotomization that elevates one group over others accompanied by a process of denial that enables the perpetrators to maintain their moral self-conceptions (Moshman 2007, p. 119).

When directed towards Aboriginal people, as Fogarty et al. (2018, p.2) explain, it is a narrative of 'failure and inferiority'. It is a discourse that positions Aboriginal people not as they see themselves but rather as they are positioned against perceived norms and values of a mythological 'mainstream' society. Within such a schematic, 'success' or 'alignment' is defined by predetermined, measurable characteristics of the non-Aboriginal ideal. 'Failure', or 'absence' on the other hand, is any outcome that falls below, or outside such indicators (Atkinson 2019b). It is a sentiment further captured by Luke Pearson of the Aboriginal advocacy website *IndigenousX:*

> We look at Aboriginal prison rates and label Aboriginal people as criminals rather than looking at racism in policing or in sentencing. We see Aboriginal suspension rates, or low attendance rates, in school and blame Aboriginal children and parents instead of looking at our curriculum, pedagogy, and how and when school policies are enforced. We ignore Indigenous expertise and lived experiences and instead look at Aboriginal people as a problem to be solved (Pearson 2018, website).

As a consequence, the unique and positive contributions of Aboriginal people are seen to be irrelevant or even threatening. It is a discourse that is always contextualised by a threat to dominant mainstream Australian values. Fischer's comment above not only reveals the strongly nationalistic and moralistic methods used in this discourse but also the positioning of Aboriginal people as threat. The context in which Fischer made his comments are instructive.

In 1992, the High Court of Australia found in favour of Indigenous Elder Eddie Mabo and his legal claim for ownership of land on the island of Mer. The judgments of the High Court inserted the legal doctrine of native title into Australian law replacing the doctrine of terra nullius with native title rights. In December 1993, the Keating government passed legislation allowing for the practical implementation of the High Court's principles. The decision provoked significant outrage both politically and publicly. Then Liberal Party leader John Hewson called it a 'day of shame' (ABC News 2013). The Victorian premier

of the time, Jeff Kennett, made the claim that the Mabo decision put backyards at risk (ABC News 2013). It was in this context that the then leader of the National party, Tim Fischer, evoked a strong sense of the national sentiment of the time:

> Those in the guilt industry have to consider that developing cultures and peoples will always overtake relatively stationary cultures. Mabo has the capacity to put a brake on Australian investment, break the economy and break up Australia - a break, a break and a break-up we can well do without (Fischer 1993 cited in ABC News 2012).

The sub text in this explicit statement was that such legislation threatened not just economic development but the social fabric of Australia. Aboriginal people could not be trusted to do the right thing by the Australian people. They were not just a threat to land but also to progress, lacking a sense of what it meant to be a true Australian.

A further example of the deficit discourse is the Northern Territory Emergency Response intervention (NTER) carried out by the Howard Government in 2007 based on allegations of child sexual abuse and neglect in the Northern Territory. The government's actions received substantial media attention to leave a legacy which constructed Aboriginal people and communities in need of assistance because of their own moral dysfunction (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2013). As Howard (PM Transcripts 2007) said:

> What we have got to do is confront the fact that these communities have broken down. The basic elements of a civilised society don't exist. What civilised society would allow children from a tender age to become objects of sexual abuse? What responsible Government anywhere in this country can allow that to happen within their jurisdiction?

Howard's positioning of Australia as civilised and responsible and the consequent justification of actions draws interesting parallels with Windschuttle's positioning of the Stolen Generation. This is not to equate Howard's actions with the Stolen Generation. Rather it is to point out the language used to justify action through positioning the cultural other in deficit to one's own culture. The Mabo fallout situated Aboriginal people as anti-progressive. The NTER pathologised Aboriginal society. Both reaffirmed the need for a civilising influence on Aboriginal culture. As Gooda argues, the discourse of deficit 'reinforces the view that governments hold the solution to the so-called 'Aboriginal problem'' (Gooda, 2010).

With regards to the migrant and refugee other, the discourse of deficit and dichotomization has its counterpart in the identity concepts around constructed 'Australian values'. The development of Australia itself is seen as a unique, heroic story epitomising such values. As Tim Soutphommasane (2009) argues, Australian nation building is frequently associated with settling a vast continent and the laying down of physical infrastructure. As Tavan (2017, p. 156) notes, such conceptions present a skewed understanding of who has the moral right to claim constructs of national values:

> The neglect of our immigration history feeds popular assumptions that only white, British settlers and the white native born have contributed to the nation building project; that only they have the cultural, social and political authority to define the nation's values and identity

The result is a blending of identifiable values of hard work and progress with the white native born. The construct of the 'Australian way of life' in particular has been used to encapsulate Australian values and identify who can represent Australian cultural identity.

The 'Australian way of life' emerged as a significant identity concept for Australian people after World War II in response to the need to expand and diversify its immigration policy, and include immigrants from mainland Europe, predominantly Italy, Greece and what was then Yugoslavia. Post Second World War, the 'appropriate migrant', was portrayed as one who was prepared to work hard, accept Australian values and blend into Australian society (Richards 2008); in short to accept and assimilate into the 'Australian way of life' (Stratton and Ang 1994). As White (1979, p. 534) argues, the concept provided 'a vital common reference point for otherwise disparate elements in the Australian experience after the war'. In the context of identified cultural threats in the form of communism, Americanism and mass migration itself, the 'Australian way of life', presupposed a level of homogeneity and shared values which served to unite people under a shared vision. Within such a schematic, cultural identity was not based on a supposed racial homogeneity between people of different cultures, but rather proximity to the axiomatic culture. The concept was seen to be rooted in the everyday life experiences of Australians themselves and their middle-class urban lifestyles (Castles et al. 1988, p.61). Government immigration policy, centred on a self-evident 'Australian way of life', marked both the social construction of belonging and of 'otherness' (Tate 2009, White 1985).

Despite common usage and political value, by the 1970s the 'Australian way of life' was seen to be failing as a slogan to define the nation (Castles et al 1988). Whatever the

‘Australian way of life’ may have been, it was evident that it did not include everyone. The cultural values of the olive-skinned Greek ‘wogs’, Italian ‘dagoes’ and ‘winging Poms’ could not compare to real ‘Australians’ (Jakubowicz, 2016). Loneliness, a lack of welcome and racism which extended to the school yard were particularly difficult, with those from Southern Europe inevitably faring worse (Jupp 2011). As Castles et al. (1988, p. 62) point out:

> trends towards economic and social segmentation linked to race, ethnicity and gender were making the whole concept of the "Australian way of life" questionable.

Politically, the new policy of multiculturalism replaced that of assimilation and dominated for the next thirty years. With that shift, the ‘Australian way of life’ faded from political discourse only to re-emerge after conservative Liberal Prime Minister John Howard reinvigorated the concept as an alternative to multiculturalism.

Socially conservative Liberals were highly critical of any move towards a more inclusive identity (Johnson, 2002) based on respect for cultural diversity within multicultural discourse. Although appointing a National Multicultural Advisory Council the Howard government managed to rebrand multiculturalism in traditional Anglo-Celtic terms (Forrest & Dunn 2006). As noted by the Council’s Chair (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1999, p. 4):

> The British and Irish heritage, which includes our democratic system and institutions, our law, the English language, much of our humour and our oft-quoted distinctive values of the fair go, egalitarianism and mateship, together provide the foundation on which Australian multiculturalism has been built.

The following passage, taken from a discussion paper on the merits of introducing a citizenship test[14] notes the positioning of the ‘Australian way of life’ as a values-based construct at the core of Australian identity:

> it was critical that new immigrants ‘understand the Australian way of life and our shared values and demonstrate a commitment to contributing to

[14] Australian citizenship: much more than a ceremony

> that way of life and accepting those values (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, September 2006, p. 5).

The consequence was not just a reinvigoration of Australian cultural identity as unique and identifiable but the positioning of the 'cultural other', as being deficient in such values. It is of note that there is nothing distinctive about these identified cultural constructs. As Haslem argues (cited in Fozdar 2020), it is hard to 'escape the conclusion that what is unique about Australian values is their averageness'. Nevertheless, drawing on Australian cultural values to signal difference between 'us' and 'them' has been a continuous theme in public discourse resulting in a perpetual deficit placed on 'the migrant and refugee other'.

Examples abound. Previous Liberal Party Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews cut immigration numbers of humanitarian migrants claiming that 'some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life' (cited in Farouque et al. 2007, para. 1); a direct reference towards people of Sudanese and African origin. Previous Prime Minister Tony Abbott coined the term 'Team Australia', warning migrants not to come unless they wanted to join 'The Team' (Owens 2014); a clear allusion to an intrinsic sense of Australianness rooted in identifiable 'Australian' values and to differences with Muslims. Likewise, in her maiden speech to the Federal upper house, newly elected right-wing senator, Pauline Hanson identified the dangers of Islam to Australia stating that Muslims, 'bear a culture and ideology that is incompatible with our own' (Hanson, 2016). Federal liberal MP and citizenship and multicultural affairs minister Alan Tudge was quoted as saying on radio 'new migrants don't appear to be adapting to the Australian way of life as well as they did in years gone by' (cited in 4BC NewsTalk, 2018a).

As with the discourse of exclusion, the discourse of deficit is 'justified' on the basis that the cultural other lacks the morality, the skills or the knowledge to contribute equally to Australian society. The following comments and newspaper headlines reveal justification of this discourse, directed towards the 'migrant and refugee other':

> They won't be numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English. These people would be taking Australian jobs, there's no question about that. For many of them that would be unemployed, they would languish in unemployment queues (Immigration Minister Peter Dutton 2016 speaking on Australia's refugee intake- cited in Bourke 2016).

> Migrants: Unemployment rate among new Australians doubles AS MANY as a third of all Middle Eastern migrants remain on the dole in their

> first five years in Australia (Natasha Bita 2017, reporter for the Australian tabloid media, The Daily Telegraph)).
>
> There are enclaves of migrants in this country who haven't tried to adopt the Australian way of life and learn English. It's a privilege to come to this country and be in our country and that privilege goes with speaking our language (Queensland newspaper editor, Peter Gleeson cited in SBS News 2018).

Dutton's argument is fascinating, suggesting that refugees are not only uneducated but concurrently taking the jobs of Australians *and* being unemployed. Bita's article is accompanied by a picture of a woman in a niqab emerging from a Centrelink office. Not only does the picture associate Muslim migrants with high unemployment; it also serves to associate a perceived oppressive religious group with exploiting the generosity of the Australian state. Gleeson calls up the adage of the Australian way of life and 'having a go' to support his assimilationist positioning.

What characterizes the comments above is that they depict particular groups as unwilling to contribute to Australian society marking them as a threat to its values and traditions. The message is a simple one. English language skills, a positive work ethic, a desire to abide by the rules of Australia and the adoption of values associated with freedom and equality are all markers of being Australian. By default, an absence of such markers and thereby rejection of the Australian way of life that such markers represent signify otherness; an 'otherness' which can threaten Australian society itself.

There is a deeper argument. Recently the Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton claimed that ensuring new migrants can speak English is a "no-brainer", would support 'women who, in some cultures, aren't treated equally' and prevent 'ethnic enclaves' (Dutton, cited in 4BC NewsTalk 2018b). Such a statement can be compared to the quote above made by Tim Fischer; that 'developing cultures and peoples will always overtake relatively stationary cultures'. Both statements are based on moral values of loyalty to Australia to support the allusion of threat. They are also aligned with a nativist perspective and a hidden unease in one's own culture. In the context of the 'Me Too' movement and family violence, sexual inequality is not confined to 'some cultures' but is pervasive. Fischer's comment reveals the dominant culture as also culturally arrogant; that it has the right to determine the meaning and the nature of progress. Such statements are a sub-conscious reminder that the

deficit discourse, while directed towards the cultural other, also acts to distract from the deficits of the dominant culture.

A discourse of sanitised acceptance

As I have stated previously (Atkinson 2019b), sanitised acceptance is a term I have coined for the middle ground between the deficit discourse and the humanitarian discourse (discussed below). It may be viewed as a space of disengagement to move discussion away from the confrontation inherent in the deficit/ dichotomization discourse and from issues of power, voice and identity of the humanitarian discourse. Although potentially rich in cultural learning, it neither challenges the one who asks nor the one who answers. Rather it is limited to safe areas and as such lacks a transformative ethos. Nevertheless, it is an important category as people grapple emotionally with taking tentative steps in a culturally different world. The discourse of sanitised acceptance has its counterpart in Australian multicultural identity and a delimited acceptance of the 'cultural other'.

As noted above, multicultural policies were introduced in Australia in the early 1970s following the recognized inadequacies of previous policies. It gained initial legitimacy under the reformist policies of the Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam with support from then future Liberal Party Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Key aspects included the right to maintain cultural heritage, values and identity without prejudice or disadvantage; the right to social equality and a recognition of the value of immigration and diversity (Collins, 2003). It also included support for the settlement of migrants including English language tuition, migrant support agencies and public broadcasting in migrant languages (Collins, 2003; National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1999).

Multiculturalism as policy has had a chequered history in Australia. While enjoying initial bipartisan support, multiculturalism came under pressure with high levels of Asian immigration. In 1984 Professor Geoffrey Blainey claimed that the levels of Asian migrants were too large for public opinion to handle. In 1988, then Opposition Leader, John Howard reflected a broader mood in the nation by calling for a renewed focus on 'One Australia' which foregrounded:

> a loyalty to Australia at all times and to her institutions and her values and her traditions which transcends loyalty to any other set of values anywhere in the world.

The Hawke and Keating Labor Governments responded, seeking to situate multiculturalism within a nationalist narrative where cultural diversity and tolerance were part of Australian national identity (Koleth 2010). In 1996, as discussed above, governmental support for multiculturalism was undermined when leader John Howard, leader of the Liberal party came to office, resulting in a vigorous debate on Australian identity. As Jupp (2012 p.227) argues, the position taken was that Australia 'would be most effective as a stable society if cultural differences were muted'. After the demise of Howard in 2007, a Labor government drew on solid social and cultural support in Australian society to re-embrace multiculturalism as the policy position of the federal government.

Multiculturalism is not simply a political policy, however. As Modood (2007) argues, beyond a set of policies to manage cultural diversity, multiculturalism also refers to a social construct encompassing an ideological position. This macro symbolic interpretation of multiculturalism is important within the context of how we understand our society and what it is to be a member. How we identify ourselves, how we identify others and how we in turn are identified comes under the rubric of this symbolic interpretation. As Edensor and Sumartojo (2018 p.553) likewise argue:

> nationhood is emergent in everyday life, is reproduced continuously and intimately entangled with the … public encounters, everyday competencies, memories, aspirations and a range of other affective and embodied qualities that comprise how we understand and inhabit our worlds

In the context of multiculturalism, as Modood (2007) further suggests, heritage values associated with a single cultural identity exist in uneasy relationship with values which support cultural equality. Parekh (2000) likewise foregrounds such tension arguing that the juxtaposition between a constructed identity based upon a unified cultural profile and cultural others with their claims for equality brings with it a moral and emotional disorientation in the face of cultural diversity. According to Ghassan Hage (2002 p. 427) multiculturalism in Australia displays this tension between a supposed containment of the culture of ethnic minorities and an actual hybridizing form between migrant cultures and the European Australian culture.

On the other hand, there is another perspective that foregrounds a delimited acceptance of cultural plurality rather than a tension in people's sense of multicultural identity. As Markus

(2020) notes, Australian members of society don't hanker for a return to white Australia, nor do they fully embrace cultural pluralism. Rather, people are tolerant of cultural others and expect others to show signs of integration. Likewise, Edensor and Sumartojo view people's lives as embedded within a lived multiculturalism 'grounded in everyday practices and places' rather than a full embracing of the 'cultural other' (Edensor & Sumartojo 2018 p.560).

It is this delimited and circumscribed acceptance of cultural difference that contributes to the sanitised discourse. It is a discourse that, while accepting of the other, is limited in the degree of that acceptance and the degree of engagement with the cultural other, resembling what some scholars view as the default position of multicultural engagement in multiculturalism itself. As Liddicote (2009 p. 191) argues on this latter point:

> The focus for the mainstream was tolerance and acceptance of the multiculturalism of others. In practice this meant that Australian multicultural identity was construed globally as co-existence of people belonging to different cultures, with a common cultural reference point in some unproblematised 'Australian' culture. Participation in interculturality was therefore unidirectional

While I question Liddicote's conclusion regarding the unidirectionality of the intercultural interaction I do support his argument. People in the dominant culture have a choice in the degree to which they interact with cultural others, who they interact with and for what reason. As a result, despite equality of presence, there exists an 'everyday indifference to difference' (Sealy 2018, p. 701) marked by a lack of critical engagement with the other. As Tim Soutphommasane says:

> often [multiculturalism] stops at food and festivals. We should be doing more to ensure cultural diversity also makes it beyond our lobby and lunchrooms, and into our corridors of power (Soutphommasane, cited in Australian Human Rights Commission 2017)

In lamenting the lack of engagement of multiculturalism in the corridors of power Soutphommasane is reflecting the sanitised nature of the 'everyday encounter' in the food courts, markets, cafes and festivals of lived multiculturalism.

Multicultural policy does not extend to Aboriginal people. I would argue however that the attitude behind such limited cultural engagement extends to all cultural others. The discourse of sanitised acceptance contains within a reticence to engage with others where

such engagement questions or threatens the status quo and one's own sense of cultural identity. While Aboriginal people fall outside of multicultural policy they are firmly positioned as a cultural other whose culture, and cultural ways of doing things can challenge the status quo. The result is a lack of critical engagement in spaces of Aboriginal-mainstream cultural interaction.

There are many examples of the sanitised acceptance discourse directed towards Aboriginal people. As Everett 2013 argues 'welcome to country might be understood by whites as a "safe" kind of inclusive gesture of recognition'. This delimited engagement with Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal issues is further illustrated in reactions to the recent Uluru Statement of the Heart. In 2015 then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and then Leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten appointed a Referendum Council, made up of 14 Indigenous and non-Indigenous members. The Council consulted with Indigenous Australians to provide advice on whether, and how best, to 'recognise' Indigenous Australians in the Constitution. As part of this engagement a convention involving over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders met in Uluru in Central Australia in May 2017. The ensuing 'Uluru Statement from the Heart', called for:

> The establishment of a First Nations Voice [to parliament] enshrined in the Constitution and establishment of a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations that includes truth-telling about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's history (Referendum Council 2017a).

Mirroring the Uluru Statement, the Referendum Council's final report recommended the 'establishment of a First Nations Voice [to parliament]' and a space for national truth telling (Referendum Council 2017b, p.i).

While Turnbull described the recommendation for an Indigenous voice as a 'very big idea' (Turnbull cited in ABC News 2017), the recommendations of the Referendum Council were called into question. Turnbull rejected the Uluru proposal arguing that such a body would act as a third chamber in parliament. While the establishment and support for the Referendum Council over a two-year period revealed a willingness to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concerns, that engagement was delimited. Instead of a vehicle for greater discussion on, for example, the sacred links 'between land and …people' (Referendum Council 2017a), the 'torment of powerlessness' (Referendum Council 2017a) felt by Aboriginal people and what was meant by a 'fuller expression of

Australia's nationhood' (Referendum Council 2017a), nativist interests filtered and delimited the Aboriginal voice to an unreasonable demand for parliamentary representation.

The discourse of sanitised acceptance reflects a tension between a fear and a curiosity towards the cultural other. It enables people to engage with cultural difference and to learn from the cultural other to a delimited extent while maintaining the cultural status quo. Nevertheless, it is an important discourse from a dialogical perspective. While delimited to safe, sanitised spaces, the invitation to be in conversation with the cultural other has been accepted.

The humanitarian discourse

On occasions a combination of political leadership and public sentiment has worked together to challenge the ideological position of a one-dimensional version of Australian nationhood. The result has seen the creation of a parallel discourse that is far more conciliatory and far more human centred than other discourses to express a recognition of human worth and value. It has interesting parallels to the discourse of exclusion which, as I argued above, is directed more towards Aboriginal people than towards the migrant and refugee other because of the moral challenge represented by the former in the context of Australian sovereignty. Likewise it is strongly evident that Aboriginal people have at times been embraced at the very highest levels by a discourse of shared humanity. As I discuss below the connection between the 'migrant and refugee other' with the humanitarian discourse, while existent, is somewhat problematic.

The humanitarian discourse draws on notions of human rights, compassion and respect to bridge the sense of constructed difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Notable examples include the 1967 referendum, former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern speech in 1992 and the apology in 2008 by former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the 'Stolen Generation'. Although one might argue that these instances still privileged whiteness, that the power relationship still remained unequal, the discourse represents a shift from exclusion, deficit and sanitised acceptance. It is notable that in each of these events the humanitarian discourse is contextualised by a deeply reflective cultural environment. In the case of 2008, that reflective space was created by the national recognition of a deep wrong committed on Aboriginal people. In the case of the

1967 referendum and the 1992 Redfern speech, international movements combined with ground-breaking local concerns, provided a strong reflective space.

The 1967 referendum on Aboriginal rights received the largest majority vote in Australian referendum history; an unprecedented 91 percent of people agreeing that the federal government should enact laws for Aboriginal people and that Aboriginal people should be counted in the census. For many Australians however the 1967 referendum has been re-mythologised in terms of citizenship and voting rights for Indigenous Australians. Although misplaced, such portrayals were powerful, promoted by Aboriginal people and advocates for Aboriginal rights alike. For non-indigenous people there was a clear dissonance in asking Aboriginal people to fight for the country while denying them citizenship rights. For many Aboriginal people, 1967 marked the time 'when they felt they were recognised by society and recognised as proper people with proper rights' (Stretton & Finnimore 1993). Consequently, the referendum had a far deeper impact on the national psyche than simply changing the constitution. Although the change was arguably symbolic rather than genuine in terms of affecting the imbalance of power, the recognition of Aboriginal identity suggested that a shift had occurred in the relationship between 'black and white' Australia.

In 1992, in the Year of the World's Indigenous People, then Prime Minister Paul Keating delivered an impassioned speech to the nation in the wake of a broader recognition of Aboriginal land rights. The Redfern Speech, as it came to be known, drew on shared human ideals. As Keating noted:

> That is perhaps the point of this Year of the World's Indigenous People: to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognise that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous Australians up without giving up many of our own most deeply held values, much of our own identity - and our own humanity (Keating 1993, p. 210).

The reference to Indigenous people as a 'part of us', is clearly a rhetorical attempt to highlight shared humanitarian ideals rather than cultural dichotomization. Similar to the 1967 referendum, Paul Keating's speech occurred during a time of deep national reflection. Internationally it took place during the development of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP); a declaration underpinned by a recognition of the fundamental human right of peoples to self-determination, that Indigenous people can and should determine their own political status and pursue their own economic, social and

cultural interest. Nationally it occurred at a time of significant lands rights legislation changes and growing social recognition that terra nullius was a fiction.

Some 16 years later, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2008) formally apologised on behalf of the nation for the pain, suffering and hurt inflicted on Aboriginal people, and in particular, those taken from their Aboriginal parents as children - 'The Stolen Generation'. Emphasizing empathy, the apology speech highlighted the human pain and suffering of Aboriginal people within discursive formulations of `togetherness', `culture' and `unity' (Hastie & Augoustinos, 2012). Drawing heavily on the trusted values of fairness and egalitarianism to gain public acceptance of his stance, Rudd appealed to an inclusive and consensual national identity:

> The nation is demanding of its political leadership to take us forward. Decency, human decency, universal human decency, demands that the nation now step forward to right an historical wrong. That is what we are doing in this place today (Rudd 2008, p.3).

Detailed research, emphasizing a largely unacknowledged truth, political debate and a changing social landscape towards cultural plurality drew the nation towards the Aboriginal position amid the recognition that past policy towards Aboriginal children and their communities was wrong.

Such examples are suggestive that cultural values are malleable within a socially supportive context where there is the political will to push for change and a nation ready to reflect. The humanitarian discourse draws on a moral framework around universal fairness and shared humanitarian ideals. Although not overturning power imbalance, the humanitarian discourse and accompanying introspection create an environment for Aboriginal people to voice their concerns, to challenge the status quo and, to an extent, be heard. For people of the dominant culture it offers an opportunity to express a moral positioning with regards to obvious oppression. The result is not simply a wider debate on selected issues but also the creation of significant dialogical spaces directed towards change.

One would intuitively consider that the humanitarian discourse could equally be applied to the 'migrant and refugee other'. Afterall the refugee is given protected status because of such humanitarian thinking. I argue however that the link between 'the migrant and refugee other' and the humanitarian discourse is problematic. The reason is simple. Within the dominant society, the category itself is an imagined, imposed category that has no intrinsic existence. I recognize that people within the dominant culture often come from a

humanitarian positioning in their relationship with people of refugee backgrounds and long-term unemployed migrants. The second case study in particular illustrates such relationships. At this individual level I feel that the relationship is not with the otherness of the other but with their humanness. The 'cultural and refugee other' as a category dissolves into a shared journey contextualised by enabling 'the other' to express their sense of identity beyond such normative labels. At the level of political and media rhetoric however, which this chapter is focused upon, it is difficult to shift from the 'otherness' of the 'cultural and refugee other' and shift from a normalised position of deficit or, at best, a sanitised acceptance of their existence.

Conclusion

I opened this chapter by noting that a recognition and acceptance of the other is a foundational requirement of dialogue. Theories of cultural bias and moral psychology indicate however, that the actions of people are shaped from perspectives on how they see the world including their sense of national identity and how they construct the national story. As Haidt argues, loyalty, authority and sanctity on the one hand, and fairness and protection from harm on the other, frame our cultural biases. The result is a variety of discourses related to how we view the self and position the cultural other.

Ultimately, and this is the key point of this chapter, people in positions of cultural power pick and choose and legitimise the discourses in which they choose to engage with the cultural other. If we are to understand dialogue, we must also understand the perspectives from which people 'choose to dialogue'. In using the words of decolonisation (see p. 56-7), some people choose to live in ignorance, choose to be in denial and are not interested in developing a decolonizing consciousness. While there is value in pointing to the ignorance and denial of members of the dominant group, it is also important to recognise a variety of discourses and to act differently in response to the different positions people are taking.

I argue that in Australia, a discourse of exclusion associated with a white past, places the Anglo-Celtic cultural group at the centre of the national story. The deficit discourse based on constructed Australian values has extended this sense of identity beyond a single defined racial group while still maintaining the cultural status quo. Sanitised acceptance supported though lived multiculturalism has introduced a sense of plural cultural identity to people's lives and a delimited acceptance of cultural others. Finally, a humanitarian discourse

challenges the ideological position taken by the previous discourses and the power differentials in society.

The result is that different discourses are brought into the intercultural space by members of the dominant society. This is especially important in the context of the three spheres of intercultural dialogue developed in Chapters 2 and 3. Exclusion negates all dialogue, failing to engage cultural difference at the level of the intercultural space. Deficit limits conversation to meanings around identity, continuously placing the cultural other as inferior to the cultural self. Sanitised acceptance extends these conversations to the second sphere and to mutual learning, but only in delimited and pre-defined spaces that are safe for those in positions of cultural dominance. Only in the humanitarian discourse can we view a critical engagement with power allowing dialogue to flourish within the third level of transformation.

Part B:

Research Methodology, case studies and findings

Part B utilises the framework developed in Part A to guide data collection, data analysis and the interpretation of research findings. Sphere 1 looks specifically at the intercultural space based on constructed identities directed towards or felt by research respondents and members of their cultural groups. Discourse is a key aspect of Sphere 1 inclusive of constructed differences between members of the culturally dominant group and the 'cultural other'. Sphere 2 explores the social learning processes between the two groups, particularly the constructed shared learning processes that bridge difference and lead to dialogue. Sphere 3 explores the transformations, both at an individual and a collective level, that occur due to the learnings in Sphere 2. This sphere is structured on action, reflection and recognition of shared humanity amongst the participants. The arrows indicate that the spheres are interdependent. The discourses brought into the intercultural space impact upon social learning which in turn impacts the capacity of transformation; and the cycle continues.

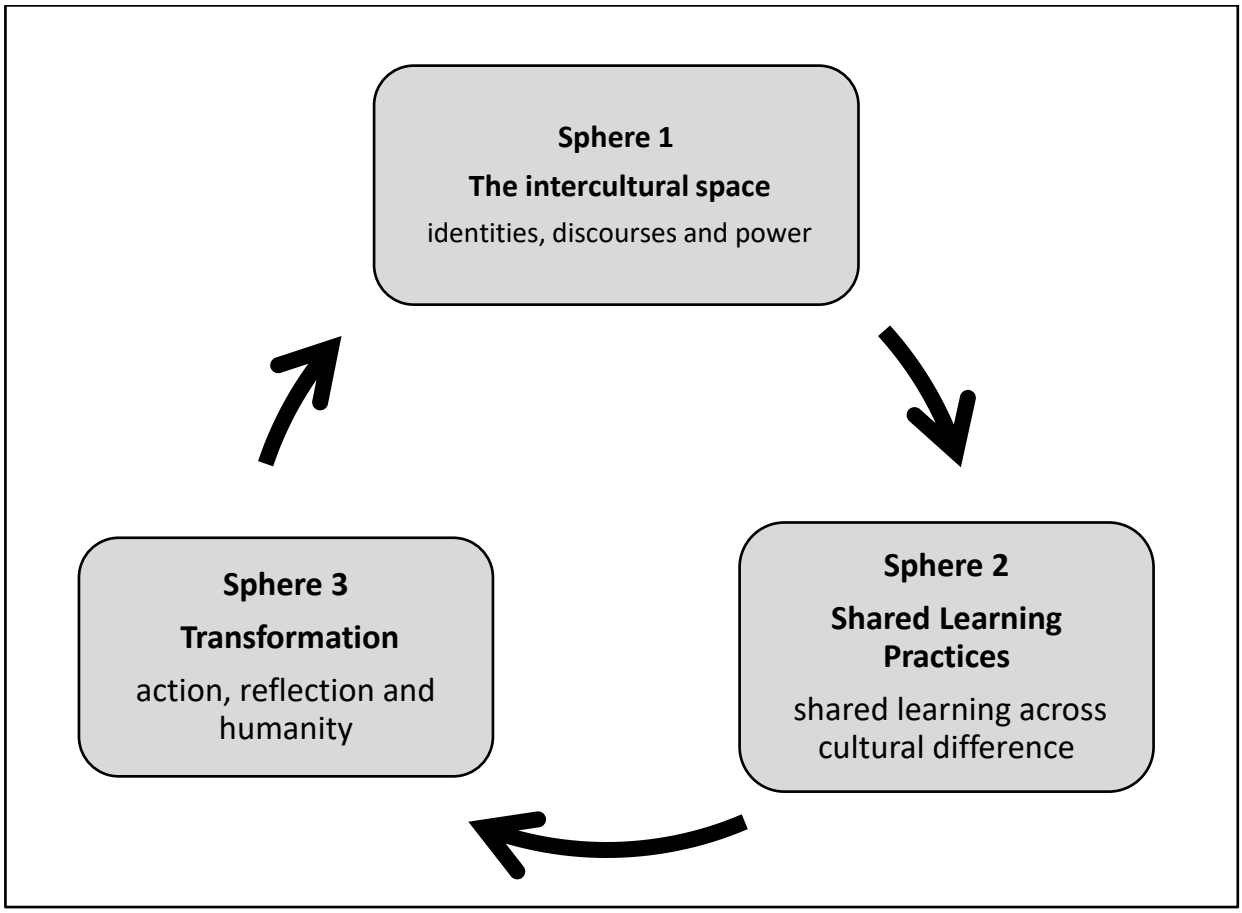

Figure 2: Theoretical framework for each of the case studies

Ch 5: The research path

Having reviewed the literature and determined the field of study this chapter outlines the methodological approach that I have employed, alongside the methodology used, data collection, data analysis, positioning and ethics. The chapter begins by exploring the philosophy that underpinned the research.

The Research philosophy

According to John Creswell (2008, p. 5), one's research design is dependent and begins with one's philosophical world view which in turn influences research methodology, methods and data collection. Social constructivism heavily influenced the philosophy behind this thesis. From a research perspective, a social constructivist approach focuses on the constructions made by research respondents in making sense of their world and the situation being studied. Accordingly, there is neither a singular truth, nor a singular pathway to truth. Rather truth is emergent and made in interaction, rather than given; thereby eschewing singular perspectives which are partial and limited. It is a philosophy strongly aligned with that of dialogue itself.

Research purpose

The research purpose is guided by the central and subsequent research questions outlined in the Introduction and repeated here for the convenience of the reader:

1. What constitutes the intercultural space between members of the 'dominant culture' and 'cultural others' in Australian society?
2. What are the social learning factors that shape the practice of intercultural dialogue in this space?
3. How does shared learning through dialogue contribute to transformation?

Research methodology: Qualitative Research

The research methodology adopted for this thesis is qualitative in approach. Qualitative research explores the hidden, unseen and less tangible meanings of the social world. Applied to the field of intercultural dialogue it offers a means of listening and interpreting experiences that may not be heard through quantitative methods. How can cultural difference be understood in the dialogue process? How does learning interact with

dialogue? To what extent is dialogue a shared social journey? Qualitative research can answer such questions.

In terms of choosing a suitable research methodology in the qualitative research tradition the following quote from Higginbottom (2009 p 5) is pertinent:

> All research questions can be answered in a variety of ways, emphasising different forms of meaning and knowledge construction. These 'research paths' and trajectories are not hierarchical but are complementary and intersecting. Exploring and investigating exactly which genre of qualitative research can best provide a template and principles for our investigations is an essential precursor to any research study. How can we establish whether phenomenology or narrative inquiry, for example, is better suited to answering our research question if we don't thoroughly research methodological approaches before we engage in our research?

In responding to Higginbottom's question regarding the importance of thoroughly researching different approaches, I explored several methodological options including both narrative inquiry and ethnography for their focus on the human experience. While narrative inquiry and ethnography offered much, my main consideration was not on the lives of respondents and their experiences but rather on how they interpreted those experiences. I finally turned to a primary combination of hermeneutic phenomenology, multiple case study research and critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Research methods

Hermeneutic phenomenology

Phenomenology became a distinct philosophical approach through the work of Edmund Husserl in the mid-1890s. Husserl argued that the only certainty in the world is derived through our experiences. Consequently, we can use our consciousness to look for truth about our lives (Husserl, 1970). Husserl's ideas were contested, transformed and elaborated upon over the years by philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas to create an extended body of thought into the nature of phenomena. In the mid-1950s, phenomenology was further extended by a group of diverse academics who were interested in applying the method as a unique research pathway (van Manen, 2014). This group, known as the 'Utrecht School', argued that while phenomenology can be viewed as the study of a phenomenon, hermeneutics can be seen as the study and *interpretation* of a phenomenon. Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur became the foremost proponents of this school of thought with Heidegger (1988) arguing that description is already interpretation.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1980) extended Heidegger's reasoning by applying phenomenology to human conversation, noting the significance of prejudice, context, and tradition for, and in, human understanding.

As Finlay (2011) argues, hermeneutic phenomenology deals with meanings that are often implicit or hidden. Such concealed meanings are seen to be 'embedded in cultures that incorporate shared language, practices and important practical knowledge about common day-to-day experiences' (Dinkins 2005, p.113). Consequently, interpretation is necessary with attention being paid to the social context (Churchill 2007) in order to uncover meanings that are not directly apparent (Merleau-Ponty 1996).

In uncovering the hidden or subtle meanings of lived experience, this methodology seeks to illuminate ways of 'being-in-the-world' through interpretive practice (Heidegger 1988, pp. 67-8). To this end reflection is a key feature whereby the researcher draws upon their own experiences to interpret findings complete with prejudices, beliefs and feelings. As such the researcher is not seen as an impartial observer but rather as a co-creator of meaning with the participant. The researcher's role is not necessarily reproductive but rather creative, reliant on a fusion of investigation with reflection; a co-construction of meaning through a deep engagement with both text and observation. The challenge lies in not simply understanding and portraying individuals' unique experiences but also in getting to the heart of a phenomenon that participants themselves agree to.

Case Study

Yin (2003 p.1) refers to case study research as a field of inquiry that explores 'a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context'; where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident; and where multiple sources of evidence are used. Multiple case study is a variant of the case study approach. It offers ways to compare constructs and enables the researcher to extend findings of a phenomenon under investigation to different contexts (Santos & Eisenhardt 2004). From the perspective of this study, a multiple case study approach offers a bounded context for the study of the social factors which shape intercultural dialogue while comparing findings across different contexts.

Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) draws on linguistic and social theory at sites of power differences to produce insights into the way discourse reproduces (or resists) social and

political inequality (Fairclough 2003). Developed in the 1970s in response to a lack of linguistic attention to the relationship between social hierarchy and power, CDA draws on social theory by critical scholars like Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu to examine power relations involved in discourse (Wodek & Meyer 2015). In particular, it relates discourse to the socio-political context to highlight aspects of injustice, inequality, abuse or domination. There are multiple approaches to CDA. The approach employed in this thesis is influenced by Wodek (2001) and Wodek & Meyer (2015) to take an interpretive approach to discourse. Discourse and text, once selected, is interpreted according to a framework of understanding leading to the identification of assumptions and meanings.

This approach is particularly evident in the final case study, where I was keen to gain an understanding of the discourses directed towards Aboriginal people in Australian society. As noted in Chapter Three, treaty is not circumscribed by easily identifiable groups but rather extends into the wider population. An online public project known as the Deadly Questions campaign (see Chapter 8) provided data on the societal discourses directed towards Aboriginal people in the context of the Aboriginal-Victorian government treaty process. While there was no recourse to interpret the meanings behind these questions with the person formulating the question, the techniques of CDA offers a means to explore the links between discourse and power in text. Utilising CDA and understandings of different discourses directed towards Aboriginal people articulated in Chapter Four enabled me to gain important insights into wider cultural meanings of the treaty process.

Conceptualisation

In Chapter Two I constructed a theoretical framework of intercultural dialogue based on the work of known dialogue scholars, highlighting the role of culture, learning and transformation. As I noted at the conclusion of that chapter, I was not convinced that the dialogue that takes place in real world situations is necessarily so linear and clear. As a consequence, I built on this framework in Chapter Three by drawing on empirical findings from academic studies exploring dialogue in sites similar to my own case studies. This resulted in a detailed framework sensitive to the dialogical experiences of refugees, adult migrant learners and indigenous people under the following labels:

1. The intercultural space,
2. Shared Learning Practices-the bridging of difference

3. Transformation

The framework itself is depicted in Figure 2 (p 91).

Data Collection Methods

Data directed towards answering the research questions was generated through four sources; semi structured interviews, participant observation, reflexivity and text.

Interviews

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions. Each participant was invited to take part in a half to one hour, audio-recorded interview. The participants were interviewed individually and in private at the location of their choice. Anonymity was protected using pseudonyms for each participant. The interviews followed a semi structured format directed towards enabling participants to voice their experiences. Pertinent areas such as intercultural interactions and transformative encounters were expanded upon in the interview process. All the interviews were conducted in English and recorded using a digital audio-recorder. English was a suitable language to conduct the research. Each of the participants for this research were chosen due to their high level of oral English language skills. Researcher's notes were taken during and after each interview. A list of interview questions is available in Appendix A.

Participant Observation

I agree with Retherford (2001) that participant observation enables the researcher to fine-tune their research technique and to react to new understandings. Participant observation includes natural conversations, informal interviews and further unobtrusive methods (Bernard 2006) characterised by an open, nonjudgmental attitude, an interest in others and an openness to the unexpected (Dewalt & Dewalt 1998). As Patton (2002) elaborates, participant observation provides important insights in terms of understanding the social context, enables the researcher to understand what is not told in interviews and gives a different view of events from a more practical perspective. Bernard (2006, 354-355) adds to this understanding noting that participant observation is particularly beneficial because it allows for an 'intuitive understanding of what's going on in a culture' I employed observation in each of the case studies in order to gather information about intercultural dialogue as an adjunct to the interview process. Attending meetings, informal conversations and general involvement in the case study areas provided a means of observing interactions

outside of the interview process. I found that the way people communicated with each other outside of the interview process offered important information concerning the dialogues I was discussing with them.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity comprises a key methodological dynamic in the collection and generation of data. It provides a means for the 'critical' analysis of the findings and the overall research methodology. According to experienced qualitative researchers, reflecting upon how one's assumptions and actions influence a research situation leads to insight into one's research practice and the research findings themselves (Argyris & Schon 1974; Nagata 2002). From this perspective reflexivity becomes a type of research method, which allows a researcher to critically analyse their own practice in order to understand or improve it. Ongoing, moment by moment iteration with the research experience thus contributes to a deeper understanding of participant experiences. Keeping this in mind I found the following statement by Westoby & Ingamells (2010 p.1771) particularly useful. They note in reference to intercultural dialogue:

> The gaze is kept on two cultures, not one.... In this, it is generally the case that each culture knows very little about the other. The journey is about learning this and working with what is familiar (emic) to the group, albeit with a critical awareness of one's own cultural biases and unconscious complicities with institutional power.

As a member of the dominant culture working with participants from a different culture the research itself takes on a form of intercultural dialogue. Reflexivity offered a means to interact with this direct experience

Text

In the final case study, as noted above, I was keen to gain an understanding of the discourses directed towards Aboriginal people in Australian society. An online public project known as the Deadly Questions campaign (see Chapter 8) provided data from which to explore these discourses. A representative sample of 100 questions was made available on the Deadly Questions website <https://deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au>. These questions provided the textual source material used in the third case study.

The cases

I chose three case studies (rather than two, or four) in order to combine manageability with comparability. The benchmark from which to gauge the suitability of case study sites was the interactive potential between members of the mainstream cultural group and members of different cultures combined with the potential for intercultural learning and change. The three case studies chosen for this thesis fit this criterion. Please note that I give specific information regarding the participants in the case study chapters. Likewise, ethics considerations are discussed below in the ethics section.

Case Study One took place in the City Campus of a small TAFE College in Melbourne, Australia. At the time of data collection, the campus ran classes in English as an Additional Language (EAL), Occupational English as well as English literacy, computer literacy and numeracy. The EAL classes were delivered at four levels of varying English language complexity to approximately 90 students by five different teachers. As mentioned previously, I was a teacher at this TAFE College where I taught to all levels. This amounted to 20 contact hours per week. The data collection stage occurred over a 3-month period in 2015. Observations were made of each of the EAL classes. Interviews were limited to the highest-level class because of the English language barrier with the other class. Unlike the lower classes, this level was designed for those who require 'consolidation of advanced level English speaking and listening, reading, writing, literacy skills' (Department of Education and Training, 2018 p.8). I also interviewed the teachers who delivered English language instruction to the learners.

Case Study Two took place in the confines of a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) in the inner-city suburb of Fitzroy in Melbourne. At the time of data collection, this NGO ran a number of refugee support programs. One of these programs was a mentor program. This program broke away from the predominant model of refugee support to target community engagement between mainstream society members and members of newer communities. Based on a model which favoured reciprocity over unilateral exchange it recognised both the needs of people of refugee backgrounds to understand the broader society so as to be part of it, and the desires of mainstream members to express and share their own sense of humanity. At the time of the research, the program had approximately 145 active mentees and 30 mentors. Interviews were made with mentees, mentors and program managers. I did not observe mentoring sessions due to privacy reasons. I did however make observations

of the mentoring site. As I discuss in the ethics section, the research was part of an evaluation of the program.

Case Study Three took place in the context of the Aboriginal-Victorian government treaty process in the state of Victoria, Australia. The complexity of the treaty process has resulted in diverse areas of interaction between members of Victoria's Aboriginal community and the non-indigenous community. A Treaty Interim Committee comprising Aboriginal community members oversaw the process of framing the treaty. An Aboriginal Treaty Assembly further informed the Interim Committee. The Victorian government took an active role in the treaty process through parliament and through the key department associated with Aboriginal affairs, Aboriginal Victoria. A facilitating organisation in the form of corporate body Ernst and Young, assisted the Treaty Interim Committee and liaised between the committee and the Victorian government. Additionally, a key aspect of the treaty process involved a structured engagement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians - the Deadly Questions Campaign. One hundred representative questions were presented to the public through the website http: deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au. The questions were analysed using CDA. Interviews were conducted with members of the Interim Committee, the Aboriginal Treaty Assembly, the facilitating body Ernst and Young, parliament members and Aboriginal Victoria. Details of the participants are outlined in the case study chapter.

Data analysis and presentation of findings

A vital aspect of this thesis was in the analysis and synthesis of data. The challenge was in assuring that participants' voices were authentically represented. As noted above the focus of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis is on uncovering explicit and hidden meanings through repeatedly examining the data. This process requires researchers to 'dwell' with and examine the data in order to progressively deepen understanding as meanings come to light (Finlay 2006). Analysis needs to be 'plausible and persuasive' from the perspective of the evidence presented in support of identified themes (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

The data analysis process followed guidelines developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to include three main stages.

Stage 1: Developing familiarity with the data and initial coding.

At this initial stage, I listened again and again to participants voices in order to grapple with the meanings both within and behind the words. I also went over my own reflective and

personal observations to identify areas of meaning. The coding of data was guided, but not directed by the framework of dialogue developed in Chapters Two and Three. Understandings of discourses directed towards minority cultural groups in Australia (see Chapter Four) assisted this process, particularly in relation to the questions emanating through the Deadly Questions Campaign.

Stage 2: Developing themes.

Stage two continued the open model of data coding initiated in stage one. Broad emergent themes were broken down into subthemes. This process contributed to further refinement as the patterns and relationships between codes were examined. Through refining emergent themes and moving back to the interviews and fieldnotes to confirm the validity of the refined themes an iterative cycle was established leading to clarity in the data. These steps helped me to identify broad themes in the data. Analysis was grounded empirically in participants' words from interviews alongside observation, reflection and, in the case of the third case study, analysis of the 'Deadly Questions'.

Stage 3: Searching for and identifying themes.

To further understand the data, I reflected on the emerging categories and sub-categories in the light of the theoretical and empirical sections. This enhanced awareness of the relationship between themes and their relevance led to a consistent and manageable number of overarching themes to structure the data presentation.

Positioning and ethics

I am a member of the non-Indigenous dominant culture. I was born in England and arrived as a migrant when I was two years old. Despite a white middle-class urban lifestyle, I felt like an outsider to what may be termed the Australian mainstream culture. I am therefore strongly biased towards what I have defined in this thesis as the humanitarian discourse. Having said that, I also believe that in this age of divisive politics we need to understand those with different attitudes and beliefs from our own if we are to oppose the rise of right-wing populism and the curtailing of democratic freedoms that this entails.

There were a number of important ethical considerations to consider while carrying out this PhD. During the data collection phase I was a teacher in case study one, while case study two doubled as an evaluation for the NGO which delivered the refugee support program. I feel that this strengthened both the research process and the ethics of the research. With

regards to case study one a compliance requirement of course delivery lies in exploring the learning experiences, challenges and aspirations of individual students in a one-on-one interview. The reason is twofold. Firstly, it helps to establish a relationship with students and secondly, such one-to-one sessions enable students to express issues of concern and reflect on their perceived progress. I utilised the relationship building processes of this one-to-one interview process to both introduce the research project with my students and to iterate and reiterate that they were in no way obligated to take part nor would be penalised if they did not take part. This was important as students are frequently reticent to speak in front of their peers and hence may make decisions from an uninformed perspective. The process that I followed was accepted by the institution. Being an insider also resulted in a specific advantage from a research perspective. As a teacher I was in a good position to observe classes, appreciate the inner world of teachers and engage with the world of my migrant learners. This added to the reflective capacity of the research as I consistently reflected on my own teaching practice. Ethics approval was granted through the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee. This process included the written confirmation of the research agenda by the concerned educational institution.

In case study two the evaluation also fell under the ethics requirements of the refugee support organisation as well as the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee. Once more participants were reminded that they were neither obligated to take part nor would be penalised if they did not take part. Additionally, the nature of the evaluation added meaningfulness to the interviews that would not have been possible in a stand-alone research project. Participants felt that their views and experiences were valued.

In all three case studies, participants were assigned a pseudonym to safeguard their anonymity.

In interpreting the words of the participants, I recognize that I cannot adequately reflect their sensitivity, cultural wisdom or knowledge. My aim is to offer insight into the dialogical engagements between members of the dominant society and members of different cultural groups. Where learning is encouraged, where it is ignored, where it is blocked, and the changes that result, offer a fascinating glimpse into the cultural values within contemporary Victorian society. I cannot do justice however to the depth of feeling and the insight that many of the respondents expressed in their talks with me.

In the data chapters reflexive findings and findings made through participatory observation are identified as 'Personal reflection' or 'personal observation'. These personal notes are distinguished from participant statements taken during the course of this research through interviews. These latter statements are identified by the inclusion of the pseudonym of the participants. In the case study chapters these sets of statements and notes collectively refer to data generated in the conduct of this research. I complied with all aspects of La Trobe University ethics requirements including participant recruitment, data storage and data collection.

Limitations

I am aware that this is not a representative sample. In the case of the English language program this included only those who knew me well, for the refugee support program it included those who had benefitted from their involvement, in the Aboriginal-Victorian government treaty process it predominantly involved those favourable to treaty. It must also be acknowledged that in a single interview it is not always possible to explore the full experiences of each individual. An interview is always interactive, and people only reveal that which they are comfortable in revealing. It is a testament to the participants themselves that they opened up as much as they did. Complicating this fact is that the complexity and the richness of the diverse aspects of the people's lives provided not just one story but many possible stories that could be told. My challenge was to decipher which stories were most pertinent. In this regard interpretation was everything. Having said this there is still much to learn about the processes of dialogue from these participants. Although I may have only captured an incomplete element of people's experiences, I am reasonably confident that I have captured the key themes of the research.

Ch 6: Dialogue and adult migrant learners: Teaching the cultural other

> 'People look at me, they hear me. They say, 'no we don't want him''
> **(Asad migrant English language learner).**

While working as an adult language teacher I frequently wondered whether we were there for the students, or whether the students were there for us. An emphasis on bureaucratic requirements and 'managing' a classroom rather than delivering a class appeared to suggest the latter. While my students quite frequently opened up about wider issues of concern, I limited myself to delivering English language instruction knowing full well that my teaching had limited impact on their lives. Asad was one such student. Fluent in English but with incomplete grammar, he was one of many whose motivation was not to learn English but to change his life; a point frequently ignored in contemporary adult migrant teaching delivery.

This chapter discusses the research findings in the context of an English language program delivered to adult migrant learners. As noted in Chapter 1, this particular case study presents as a highly structured engagement between members of the mainstream and members of culturally different groups. I initially provide a broad context of the case study through a focus on the English language delivery 'paradigm' that drives the curriculum before looking at specifics of the case study site itself. The research findings are guided by the framework developed in chapter three. At a primary stage of analysis, I look at constructs of identity and of difference between the groups involved in the program comprising students and teachers. At the second level of analysis, I explore shared learnings between and within members of these two interactive groups. The tertiary level explores transformation, through dialogue, within the program with a specific focus on mutuality, critical understanding and shared humanity. The discussion that follows these findings summarises the factors that facilitate the dialogical experience for the participants of the program.

English language teaching

Adult education has long been associated with social justice and positive social change. The South American academic and educator Paulo Freire has been particularly influential

in promoting a transformational, respectful relationship between teacher and student (Bartlett 2005). This led to a distinct Freirean and dialogical influence in Adult Education that filtered through to Australia. As D'Cruz (1989 p.7) noted however, concerning English language delivery pre-1990, such Freirean influences were themselves 'diluted' by the propensity simply to get on with the job of teaching:

> The essentially 'adult' nature of the enterprise that constitutes adult basic education is one that needs to be reflected on and, for which, an adequate philosophy needs to be articulated. Much of this philosophy needs only to be articulated, because in typical Australian fashion a few people 'got cracking on the job' without too much theorizing about it. That is not to deny the Freirean influence of the early providers in the field … [A]lthough as the more psychological and interpersonal elements of the one-to-one and small-group relationship in the provider-client interaction developed, and as the social relational dimension is being increasingly worked up, a more inclusive perspective than even that of' Freire may need to emerge.

As D'Cruz suggests, inclusive relationships are especially important in the teaching of language to adult learners belonging to cultural groups different from the dominant culture. Language and literacy professor, Dr Bonny Norton (2000) makes the case that second language acquisition for people belonging to such groups is *always* multifactorial and strongly affected by social relations of power. As Norton (2001, pp. 165-166) argues, English language acquisition is more akin to a journey towards an imagined sense of cultural identity than the acquisition of clearly defined skills:

> …different learners have different imagined communities, and …these imagined communities are best understood in the context of a learner's unique investment in the target language … [W]hen language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world

The importance of including the social context in adult literacy and language instruction is supported by academics Vicky Duckworth and Gordon Ade-Ojo who argue for the maintenance of a socially transformative agenda in adult learning:

> …if literacy is to empower the learners through its recognition of their historical and social contexts, if we are to move away from the age-long

> banking model of literacy curriculum first identified by Freire, we must ensure that both the literacy curriculum and its attendant pedagogy we offer our learners are transformative (Duckworth & Ade-Ojo 2016, p. 287).

It is an argument that has profound implications for exploring dialogue in adult learning classrooms where learners are frequently long-term unemployed migrants isolated not just linguistically but also culturally from the broader society. It follows that an English language and literacy program is not limited to the delivery of a curriculum but is rather an integration of different meanings within a shared cultural space giving significance to the personal, social and cultural transformation of learners (Gomez, 2004).

A major problem facing the adult learning sector in Australia today however, similar to much of the English-speaking western world, is that the language of 'transformation' is marginalised by contemporary discourse where the focus is increasingly placed on employability skills, standardisation, reporting and accountability (Hamilton 2012). The 'more inclusive perspective' that D'Cruz spoke about in 1989 simply did not happen. While learners see themselves as traveling towards an imagined future (Norton 2001), they do so within a society that focuses not on future imaginings but rather narrowly defined needs and a supposedly achievable progressive and linear employment pathway. Classroom delivery and assessment processes are aligned with institutional need and wider compliance requirements established at regulatory level rather than the everyday practices of learners themselves (Duckworth 2013; Duckworth & Brzeski 2015). In theory such standardisation ensures a level of accountability to funding authorities as well as adaptability to workplace demands framed by the need to assist learners to acquire the skills necessary to function within the workplace or the broader community.

In practice this depersonalization of the curriculum can act to reaffirm and even contribute to an existing sense of powerlessness for adult learners (Field & Lynch 2015). The trust and connection between student and teacher, so important for adult learning, is undervalued by a model which views students primarily as lacking in the foundational workplace skills necessary to compete in the modern economy. Such an approach fails to recognise the broader social contexts of students' lives inclusive of present challenges and future aspirations. The primary goal sits in the delivery of a structured and measurable English language course.

Literacy Professor Mary Hamilton recently reiterated this generalised focus on skill development in the UK arguing that 'literacy is now funded and discussed almost entirely

in terms of employability' (2012, p. 172). Hamilton and Pitt further argue that in the UK literacy delivery is characterised by:

> a long-standing discourse of individual deficit within a functional model of literacy … overlaid by a discourse of social exclusion that views adult learners as entrepreneurial global citizens who must compete within a market economy (Hamilton & Pitt 2011, p. 596).

As Barton et al. lament, positioning the adult literacy learner in deficit is:

> a powerful dominant discourse [where] literacy seems very one dimensional. It is something which people have or do not have and it leads to deficit views which define people in terms of what they cannot do (Barton et al. 2012, p. 5).

As expressed in Chapter 4, in Duckworth and Smith's (2018b), study on literacy education in the U.K., a dialogical approach is particularly important for students previously marginalised by a rigidly linear school system, enabling such learners to become 'writers of their own educational stories' (Duckworth & Smith 2018b p. 176-177). A discourse of deficit in contrast can be particularly detrimental to learners' lives where they are judged against predefined criteria.

The situation in Australia is very similar to that of the UK. Moves to link language and literacy delivery to the deficits in the functional skills of learners first appeared in the 1990s becoming stronger at the turn of the century (Bannon 2016). As Black and Yasukawa argue in separate articles:

> Current approaches are underpinned by deficit notions (Black & Yasukawa 2011, p. 2)

> Adult literacy education today in mainstream educational contexts is positioned by policy as a service role for industry. . . to accommodate [people] according to the human capital they are formally assessed to possess and need (Black & Yasukawa 2013, p. 214).

For teachers who sense the insufficiency of this current standardized approach there is a lack of options. While teachers have flexibility in how they deliver courses the pervasiveness of the standardized, compliance-oriented approach, based on predetermined and measurable learning outcomes has a disproportionate impact on teacher delivery away from dialogically based approaches (Smith 2004). The theoretical conceptualisations of

Freire and other transformational adult educationists sit uneasily amidst the formulised curriculums of today's adult learning industry. Socially oriented models of language and literacy education, although supported academically (Auerbach 1992, Duckworth & Brzeski 2015, Street 1984, 2003), are afforded little space within the current hegemonic model.

This combination of the complex learning needs of adult migrant learners, the pervasiveness of the functional approach to classroom delivery and past adult learning traditions, makes this a particularly interesting study from a dialogical perspective.

The research site

Following the functional trend described above, adult English language delivery at the research site in which this case study was based is accredited against a framework of qualifications known collectively as the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Framework[15]. The EAL Framework utilises a criterion referenced and performance-based approach which aims to provide a common language for describing both course provision and the English language competencies of learners (Department of Education and Training 2018, p. 6).

Each certificate level is delivered according to core and elected units. Core units focus on the four macro skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Elected units cover subjects as diverse as Australian history, healthcare and IT skills. Each unit is described according to a set of learning outcomes which students must meet in order to gain competency. These learning outcomes in turn are assessed against predetermined elements based on measurable functional skills. The result is the standardisation of students' level of English against pre-determined competencies made in accordance with the endorsed component of the EAL Framework itself.

Whilst the case study took place in the Central Business District (CBD) of Melbourne, it did not necessarily draw students from the Central Business District itself. Students were

[15] There are 10 courses overall in the EAL framework. These are Course in EAL, Certificate I in EAL (Access), Certificate II in EAL (Access), Certificate III in EAL (Access), Certificate IV in EAL (Access), Certificate II in EAL (Employment), Certificate III in EAL (Employment), Certificate IV in EAL (Employment / Professional), Certificate III in EAL (Further Study), Certificate IV in EAL (Further Study)

drawn to the adult educational centre for a variety of reasons. Some were keen to mix with students outside of their community group in order to enhance their English language usage, exploiting the geographic convenience of the case study site. Other students sought social contact with friends who lived in a different region of the broader Melbourne area and found the CBD a mutually convenient location. An overwhelming factor was not based on choice at all but rather the recommendations of job service providers for meeting Centrelink requirements through engagement in English language course provision. As a consequence of these differing factors, students were highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, previous educational background and reasons for attending the course.

In total there were approximately 90 students enrolled in four certificate courses in the Adult English Language Program (AELP) at pre-beginner, beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, corresponding to the four different certificate levels (Certificates I, II, III and IV EAL). The EAL Framework, in its various levels, was delivered by five teachers each tertiary qualified in English language and literacy education. Three of the teachers were on contract and two were casually employed. I was one of the casually employed teachers. Two teachers were placed on each class and divided the administrative requirements between them according to their teaching load. A teaching assistant also entered each daytime class for two hours per week and assisted students with skills in pronunciation or grammar. Each of the teachers and the teaching assistant were tertiary educated. and save for me, female. One of the teachers was born in Hong Kong, another in Spain. Both of these teachers came to Australia in their teens. I was born in England and the two remaining were born in Australia but had Anglo heritage.

The level IV day class, upon which this case study was based, contained approximately 16 students. This number is approximate due to some students leaving the class and others entering during the research. In the class, students ranged in age from their mid-20s to mid-60s and differed individually in their length of residence in Australia from a few months to many years. The bulk of the students were unemployed with two working in unskilled part time jobs. Two other students did voluntary work. They varied in their employment history from those who had worked professionally in their home country to others who had never held a job. Students came from Africa, Asia, Europe, South America and the Middle East. The class was skewed towards women over men (60:40).

The students ranged markedly in their English language ability and their pace of learning. Some of the students for example were repeating or re-repeating the course having decided

that their English was not of a suitable standard to go onto further study. Additionally, some of the students were placed in the level four class despite low English language skills for this level. This was due to students being pushed up from level three to fulfil social security requirements despite their weak English. In fact, the EAL course generally was attractive to many people on unemployment benefits, some of whom had been studying, and repeating, the various levels of EAL over many years. The ethics considerations for this case study were discussed in Chapter 5.

The research participants

Twelve students agreed to take part in interviews. These students were selected due to their willingness to be involved in the research and their English language ability. English language ability was important as the interviews were conducted in English. Interviews focused predominantly on the experiences and the interpretation of those experiences by students inside and outside the classroom environment. In total three of the five teachers who delivered the various courses were interviewed. My own reflections and observations also played a part in this case study. Reflexive findings were kept in the form of a written diary. The interviews lasted from ½ hour to 1 hour in duration and took place at the research site. They were recorded using an audio recording device. To aid the reader, the pseudonyms of student respondents are in bold.

The Intercultural Space

In this adult English language case study, the intercultural space lies between teachers and students and is further contextualised by the EAL curriculum.

The learners

One of the most striking aspects of the adult learners was their diversity. This diversity was evident in obvious markers of ethnicity, age, religion and in terms of how long they had been in Australia:

1. How many years have I been here? 15 years maybe. I come as a refugee from Somalia (**Asad**).
2. I am from Cambodia. I came as refugee a long time ago. I need to learn everything (**Chaya**).
3. I am a Buddhist nun. I teach at the temple (**Thuy**).
4. I was a doctor in Russia. I've been here maybe 4 months (**Vlad**).

5. I am atheist you know. I have no religion. I am from Syria-a Syrian atheist. I came in December (5 months before the interview took place) (**Nizar**).

As I have discussed previously (Atkinson 2017), the above quotes also allude to the differences in educational background of the research participants. Aligned with these quotes the Somalian refugee came with a history of disrupted schooling. The refugee from Cambodia had very little schooling in her home country and with minimal English, went to high school in Australia before dropping out in year ten after one year of education. The Buddhist nun completed twelve years of schooling and underwent further Buddhist studies after finishing high school. The doctor from Russia had obvious extended studies and the atheist from Syria had just completed his year 12 in Syria.

Aligned with the rhetoric of the AELP, students were often very clear on the skills of English they needed to master, noting the importance of grammar and the four macro skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening:

6. Teachers have more skills and knowledge than us. They teach us skills and knowledge. They know this society (**Thuy**).
7. I need to learn everything. Speaking, Reading, Writing, Listening. Everything…. teachers teach us what we need to learn. We don't know. This is what teachers are for (**Chaya**).

Many migrant learners expressed the desire to improve their chances of securing employment or of being accepted into a future course of study as reasons for attending the EAL course:

8. I am here because you know in business…for business you need perfect English (**Asad**).
9. This is the one place for me to practice my English. At home I cannot practice English. While I wait for my accreditation this is the place for me (**Vlad**).
10. I want to be a psychologist. I need English to go to university (**Nizar**).

Of note in the statements above is the obvious constructed distinction that students made with teachers and their place in the broader society. The allusion that they (students) don't know the society (**Thuy** statement 6) don't know what they need to learn (**Chaya** statement 7) yet need perfect English (**Asad** statement 8) acts to locate students within a discourse

that highlights and foregrounds the skills that they don't have rather than those that they do.

While the statements above reiterate the acknowledged importance of functional English they reveal only a partial truth. As I have also discussed (Atkinson 2017), the lives of migrant learners at this research site and their motivations and investment in learning was far more complex than what at first sight appears to be a linear arrangement between English language acquisition and the development of learners' professional, social or economic options. The following observation made while I took the class indicates that although the learning of English is the prime motivating factor for people to attend the class, that participation can mean very different things for different people:

> 11. We discussed the reasons that people came to class. The nun discussed her desire to help teach people Buddhism to people in Australia, the retired woman mentioned how bored and depressed she felt at home. The Russian doctor expressed his frustration at Australian bureaucracy and the current vacuum in his life as he waited for his accreditation to be accepted in Australia. Others discussed the need to get a certain IELTS score (Nizar), the desire to attain a certificate and thereafter employment (Asad). A number of broad smiles and nods also emerged as I mentioned the need to meet Centrelink requirements (personal observation).

Aligned with my observations, such differences in the motivations for the migrant learners to attend the class were not isolated examples but rather indicative of the student body as a whole. In other words, while people attended the English class principally to learn English, the meaningfulness of that attendance, was experienced differently by each person in the context of their social lives. Concurrently English itself was a spoken social practice aligned with the desires of the Vietnamese nun (Thuy) and Cambodian woman (Chaya). It could also be equated to a set of rules to master (Vlad), a future workplace skill (Asad) and a gateway to future study opportunities (Nizar). The EAL course was all this and more based on the significance of English to the participants in the course and the impact on their lives and their learning.

Aligned with this observation, the following statements further reveal the strong emotions associated with learning English as a migrant and touch on the sense of shame and

embarrassment, bordering on despair, that many research participants felt over their inability to communicate fluently within Australian society:

> 12. I feel embarrassed not speaking English well (**Chaya**).
> 13. I can't speak. I have no confidence in speaking (**Thuy**).
> 14. I drive a taxi. For fifteen years. But this job is not me? How do I get there? This I don't know. English is the hardest thing to learn.... In Somalia I was a businessman. Here I am nothing? It is English. English stops me (**Asad**).

This latter statement is worthy of further comment. Asad had come to Australia some 15 years before and had worked as a taxi driver to support his wife and family. In that time, he had acquired a reasonable level of fluency in his spoken English, not matched however by grammatical accuracy. The above statement was principally made in reference to the frustration he felt in constructing a life in Australia akin to how he saw himself rather than how the 'system', saw him. As he further noted:

> 15. The system is against me 100 %. I want to give to this country, contribute. I know I can do anything, but I have no chance. People look at me, they hear me. They say, 'no we don't want him'. But they do not know me. What can I do? (**Asad**)

In this case the 'system' refers to the structures in society which fail to recognize the work experiences and qualifications of people whose lives fall outside of western parameters. As Asad saw it, his years as a businessman in Somalia counted for nothing in the Australian context. It was the recognition of his own incomplete English combined with his desire for professional self-fulfilment that had been the prime motivators to join the English class. As he noted:

> 16. Without education in this country, you cannot get what you need, to get a good job. This is why I am here. This is the first step. The first step to doing what I need to do for me (**Asad**).

Asad's 'first step' is metaphorically suggestive of journey. 'Journey' and related terms such as empowerment and transformation are themes that are frequently used in the context of migrant English and refugee settlement (See quotes by Westoby & Ingamells (p. 96) Duckworth & Gordon Ade-Ojo (p.104) and Norton (p.104)) to describe the steps or the stages that people take in moving towards their sense of wider community belonging while

navigating present barriers. As Nunn et al. (2017 p.46) argue, the refugee journey is one of 'ongoing negotiation of unstable, multi-scalar socio-political terrains in the pursuit of viable futures' Such journeys, according to the authors, are non-linear, precarious, unpredictable and imagined (p. 47). In this thesis I use the term 'cultural journey' to indicate the progress of people towards an imagined viable future while negotiating present cultural challenge.

Fighting a system that appears 100% against you in pursuit of your own goals is aligned with this constructed sense of a 'cultural journey'. Asad was not alone in these feelings. As mentioned previously, all the students lacked confidence in their English language ability which affected their day-to-day interactions. Many of the students were long term unemployed with consequent impacts on their self-esteem. Younger students in particular had aspirations to go to university though frequently expressed doubts that they could get there. People were not simply looking for another job, nor seeking linguistic knowledge. They were seeking to change their lives by acting on what they perceived as the central barrier in their lives. As one student noted:

> 17. I need to find my life. My life in Australia. I know my life. But I don't know my life in Australia (**Ayniri**).

The teachers

The English language teachers at the research site identified first and foremost in terms of their professional status. Although each teacher foregrounded the teaching of English language and learning skills in terms of their professional identity, there was also a recognition that teaching Adult English included cultural knowledge and what may be termed human-to-human values:

> 18. I'm a facilitator. I facilitate student's learning… I think one of the most important values you learn as a teacher is patience, to go over the same thing again and again and not put a judgement on that (Paula).
> 19. I teach students what they need to learn in order to navigate within society (Maria).
> 20. I teach what seems to work; work in the sense of developing some sense of confidence in the classroom (Emma).

From my own perspective, the first step of teaching lay in creating an environment where all students had the confidence to make mistakes.

In the context of teaching a predetermined curriculum it is not surprising that teachers saw the diversity of students' learning skills and the different levels that students were at, with regards to their English ability, as a major challenge in their teaching work. It was a challenge made more complex by the demands of the curriculum itself structured on a competency-based framework. In other words, the intercultural space was not simply between teachers and students but between teachers, students and the needs of the curriculum. There was also an element of what teachers saw as performance; a felt expectation to meet predetermined constructions of the teaching role as seen by both students and management:

> 21. I think the hardest challenge for me is the diversity of levels in the class and their pace of learning. Some students can pick things up extremely quickly and others extremely slowly and in the end, it is impossible to meet the needs of all (Paula).
> 22. If I assess the students according to the standards of the curriculum half of them will fail (Emma).
> 23. Ultimately, I'm an actor. We're all actors. We all perform. I'm not so good when it comes to ticking the right boxes. (Emma).

These latter three statements reveal not only a tension in how teachers saw their pedagogical roles but also allude to a tension in how they saw their students. The reference to performance was made in the context that teachers perceived their role partly as a psychological one where the emotional experience of learning was as important as learning itself. As Alle, the fourth of five teachers noted, 'is my role to make students happy or to help them learn?' (personal conversation with the author).

It is a point that led to detailed debate in the staffroom concerning what to do with students who didn't appear to be motivated to learn and a management structure that did not appear to be concerned:

> 24. We talked about students who had plateaued; those students who never seemed to progress beyond a certain level. We spoke at length about individuals. The students who had been at the institute for years, the ones who had been incorrectly placed. What they should do, where they should go. We compared them with 'good' students; those who worked hard and applied their learning. Finally, we spoke about management who didn't seem

> to care as long as they represented ‘bums on seats’ (Personal observation).

Alongside the issue of categorising students as weak the statement above also reveals a bias in the way that teachers view those in the classroom. Whether teaching English is seen primarily as a process of facilitated learning (statement 18) knowledge transfer and skill development (statement 19), psychological support (statement 20) or even an act (statement 23) there is a predetermination in classifying students a certain way. In other words, teachers view students through the prism of their own values which predominantly, but not completely align with the deficits in the functional skills of students themselves. As mentioned above, identity constructs placed on ‘the cultural other’, impacts on potential dialogue at a foundational level. To be viewed according to one’s English language level leaves out other aspects of people’s lives that are fundamental to learning. People’s past lives, present circumstances and future aspirations are ignored in favour of their functional English language skills.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, there are multiple ways of teaching that do not place people in deficit. Duckworth and Smith (2018b), as an example, point to the need for a caring approach, one that is centred on recognizing and considering the individual experiences of learners. Rule also notes the value of a dialogic approach whereby teachers become students and students, teachers. The point is, judging students according to predetermined markers that they supposedly require to be economically functional, is a partial view of learners’ lives. This is especially the case given that students are low in confidence, and linguistically and socially isolated from society. They have, as I explore in depth below, little power and are acutely aware of this.

This ‘outcomes-based approach’ to viewing students, one which prioritises management needs, led to some farcical situations from the perspective of the pedagogical needs of learners. One such incident, expressed below, took place in the context of an important auditing requirement for teachers to deliver and explain a course plan to students. As part of this auditing process, students were obligated to sign a hardcopy of the plan, thereby agreeing that they both understood and approved of its delivery. A major problem however was that course plans were written in complex language:

> 25. Together with the class we battled through the descriptions of each unit. I found myself defending the curriculum and

> generously interpreting the complex language in the hope that students would find the choice of units meaningful. The confused look on students' faces told me I had not been successful in the task. I 'forced' students to sign the plan anyway as requested by management. Only later did I find out that an administrative error had included the wrong units. I hadn't even noticed. The admin department maintained the student signature page, replacing the incorrect form with the correct one (personal observation).

In other words, students were asked to sign a hardcopy of a document they could not understand re-affirming their own sense of powerlessness. Additionally, their signatures were then used without their consent enlisting staff in unethical practices. From my own perspective the above exercise served to unite all the students in the face of meeting a nonsensical bureaucratic need. In the broader scheme of things however, aligned with Freirean understandings of dialogue, such acts marginalise both students and teachers by undervaluing their worth, imposing requirements that have little to do with pedagogical principles and creating distance between the classroom and management itself. It is an example of the positioning of students in deficit to broader structures.

Related to such incidents and a management structure that didn't seem to care was a felt powerless by students to change things even in the face of widespread disgruntlement about certain teacher practices:

> 26. Teachers have power. We don't have power. If we don't like something, who listen to us (**Asad**).
> 27. We have no power. You have power, we do not. You can do something. We can do nothing (Group of students in personal conversation with the author).

An interesting reflective point about such comments was that I myself felt powerless to affect change. In an environment where increasing pressure was placed on meeting compliance requirements there was no forum in which to express pedagogic issues of concern.

This element of power was reinforced in the physical spaces of the AELP. There were no common places for students to mix outside of the classrooms and management and support staff were accessible to students only through reception. While the AELP offered an identified space to develop skills in speaking or listening, writing or reading (statements 6,7), it was also a reminder that their lack of English skills cast them as a cultural other in

a society that did not recognize their worth (statements 12-16). While it represented a step or stage on the journey of establishing a life in Australian society concordant with how students saw themselves rather than how they were seen by society (statements 8-11, 16-17) it also contained an emotional element as students grappled with the challenge of cultural adjustment (statements 12-15), recognition and integration (statements 16,17). By contrast, for teachers the AELP was a space of professional recognition in Australian society associated with enabling people of diverse backgrounds to acquire linguistic and cultural knowledge. Within the context of managing a recognizably disparate group of learners with disparate learning skills and challenges she or he was a performer, a facilitator of a learning space as well as deliverer of language instruction (statements 18-21). The constructed space of difference between teacher and student was reinforced by a discourse of what made a 'good student' (statement 24), management need (statement 25), and power differentials (statements 26,27). In other words, the intercultural space contained a structured discourse of deficit. However, there was also a softening around this discourse by teachers themselves represented by a recognition of the needs of students (statement 21) and a questioning of both the curriculum (statement 22) and of teaching itself (statement 23).

Shared Learning Practices-the bridging of difference

Within the cultural environment of the intercultural space made up of different identities and discourses, it was immediately noticeable that a desire to learn English did not bridge the sense of difference between individual learners. In other words, aligned with Wenger's social learning theory, there was a lack of shared learning between students themselves. As noted in the theoretical chapter, shared learning, whether from an intracultural or an intercultural perspective, is integral to intercultural dialogue. The two statements below were somewhat typical of student-to-student interaction:

> 28. I don't talk much with others. Only some. Just hello how are you. This is all. I don't know them (**Tin**).
> 29. Working in groups is fine if you have the right group. In wrong group how can I learn? How can I learn if English, if their English lower than me (**Moon**)?

This is not to say that engagement between students did not take place. Indeed, friendships between people of different ethnicities was in evidence while allegiances between people of the same ethnic or religious group were also strongly in evidence. Rather it is to point

out that much of the student-to-student engagement in the classroom occurred along lines of similarity rather than across lines of difference. Whilst people with similar professional experiences or cultural backgrounds formed working relationships with each other this did not extend to a learning environment shared across the learner cohort:

> 30. It is notable that students do not engage with each other readily beyond the small group they know. Not only is there a reluctance to talk with each other. Some students are not aware of the names of other students weeks and even months into the course. The issue does not appear to be one of English language deficiency but a lack of desire to engage with difference (personal observation).

Such reluctance to engage with each other is a hindering factor for bridging the differences within a group. Consequently, people are reluctant to express their needs, aspirations, goals or concerns.

In this environment of difference, classroom tensions were unavoidable. Students speaking their own language in class, the use of mobile phones, even the degree of silence allowed in discussions were constant sources of tension. Additionally, teaching practices themselves could act to affirm felt difference. To the statements above on the felt lack of power of students (statements 26 and 27) could be added the following statements (31 and 32) revealing different attitudes to the same teaching practices. Statement 33 reflects my own culturally biased practices:

> 31. This film The Clap [a film shown as part of the syllabus], it was so good, so good for learning. I loved this film (**Ayniri**).
> 32. You know this film, The Clap is insulting for us, for our religion. All she [the teacher] needed to do was ask us. Say do you want to watch this. We say no we don't want to watch this. No problem. But she didn't ask us. This is the problem (**Asad**).
> 33. In the course of this research one of the students told me that she needed more time in teacher led discussions to answer questions that were put to the group and disappointed when particular students dominated classroom discussions. I was shocked to realize that I had placed her in the 'shy Asian' category with little to say (personal reflection).

In the context of constructing a shared practice which bridged cultural difference such statements reveal a strong disconnect with a dialogical approach. Being insulted, where

one's cultural needs go unacknowledged and are not heard are self-evidently detrimental to dialogue

Relatedly the way tensions themselves were expressed and voiced was of interest. In my own observations, not infrequently teacher voices dominated discussions, overshadowing other voices. Consequently, it was particularly difficult for students to express issues of concern as the statements above indicate. Possibly for this reason when complaints did arise, they were major and frequently resulted in students voluntarily leaving the institution or shifting class. On one occasion a teacher was removed from class, the process of which was intensely interesting from a dialogical perspective because it showed a reversal in the typical power dynamics of the classroom:

> 34. The level two class was particularly diverse made up largely, though not exclusively of Vietnamese and Somali students with very different experiences and understandings of education. A delicate hand was needed to balance the needs of the quiet but more literate Vietnamese with the oral demands of the Somali students. Into this mix came a new teacher who didn't grasp this delicacy resulting in serious classroom management issues. The Vietnamese put together a complaint letter recruiting me to help in the writing and a Middle Eastern student to orally express their concerns. The teacher was removed by management. I used the complaint letter as evidence of competency (personal observation).

This is a case of a binary clash of two cultures who have been thrust together in a third-party context. The person who had the power to make decisions in that space failed to comprehend the dynamics at play and was unable, or unwilling, to intervene in a way that would ameliorate the tension. In the multidimensionality of the classroom with people defending their own personal positioning, removing one party or the other was seen to be the easier option. In this instance it was impossible to remove a block of Vietnamese students which would result in wider student (and management) issues. Of further interest was a lack of dialogue where learners and teacher could reflectively explore their attitudes towards others, their behaviour and the behaviour of others in a safe space. In other words, there was a failure to grasp an opportunity of enriched understanding between cultural others which dialogue promotes

Aligned with Bohm's understanding of dialogue, reflection enables people to recognize the limits of their own practices and viewpoints and expand them. While this was obviously

limited in the above example it was very much in evidence for teachers involved in course delivery as expressed in statements 21-23 above. In the context of the dialogical limitations of the standardized model of adult EAL delivery it is interesting to further explore the statements below where it is possible to discern a recognition of the broader social learning needs of students beyond the narrow confines of the curriculum and management practices. In using the term social learning rather than shared learning I am indicating teachers' sensitivities to a perceived lack of meaningfulness for students in the curriculum itself rather than a deliberate practice of embracing students within a shared practice that all students can engage in:

35. I try to get the curriculum out of the way to teach to student need (Emma).
36. I don't teach to the curriculum. … I teach to where they are at (Maria).
37. I don't try to teach them. It's more carrying out a role. Some of them have been here for years. They're not here just for English. They come for other reasons (personal reflection).

The above statements touch on an important point from a dialogical perspective showcasing an obvious reflective process in questioning current processes and attempting to move beyond them. Looking deeper into these statements also raises concerns around the meaning of 'student need' (statement 35), where students actually are 'at' (statement 36) and the 'other reasons' students come to class (statement 37). While each of these statements go beyond the limits of the curriculum and have an obvious reflective element, they still impose a teacher understanding upon students that don't necessarily correspond to reality.

From my own observations and reflections, teachers maintain a binary view of the classroom and are not aware that they are dealing with a multi-stakeholder group with potentially competing agendas that they themselves can inadvertently add to. From a dialogical perspective an important skill lies in listening to diverse voices and bringing these voices together under a shared vision to enable learning to develop. While at times this can happen naturally, for people who have been culturally cast as deficient in the necessary skills to play an economic role in Australian society, creating an environment where people are comfortable in sharing their learning can be deeply challenging. I was not immune to this binary tendency:

38. The evening class looked at different topics to discuss-politics, evolution, religion. We chose the Middle Eastern terrorist organisation ISIS which everyone had an interest in. The classes were animated bringing out different views and a wealth of learning. I tried the same tactic with my level IV day class ending in complete failure. Some were passionate, even animated, others completely disinterested. I tried different approaches (grammar, cultural stories) and different topics (refugees, migration). It was difficult to move the environment from one dominated by a single voice (my own) to one of shared voices and multiple contributors (personal reflection).

A shared learning space is essentially one in which all people have a stake in a learning environment, thereby bridging the differences between people rather than extending them. It enables people to learn across, and from, cultural difference. The issue I had not recognized with my students, many of whom had been unemployed for a considerable length of time, was that the priority was not learning about ISIS, or any of the other topics I explored, even though such topics were ostensibly designed to extend their English skills. It was in overcoming the barriers that affected their lives and thereby continuing with their own journey of integration; defined in terms of progress towards an imagined viable future while negotiating present cultural challenge (see page 112). In short, while the pedagogical approach I brought to the classroom was potentially sound, the execution was somewhat naïve. I failed to create a shared learning space within the classroom.

The following statements reveal a simpler, more direct approach to generating a shared learning space:

39. Paula makes sure everyone learns. Everyone learns at the end of the day. Everyone understands. She asks you do you understand. I say yes I do or no I don't. Then if no she talks to me, explains to me how to do. She makes sure (**Asad**).
40. Paula, she is so organized. 100% I learn. Everyday she teach I learn (**Tin**).
41. Alle, she is an angel. She listens to me. Listens to everyone. She is very patient. She has time for me, time for everyone. Together we make a plan. Make a plan to make English good (**Unot**).

As discussed elsewhere (Atkinson 2018 a), in observing these teachers, it was apparent that they embedded their teaching practice within an environment that directly mattered to students themselves, that of overcoming the central barrier that was affecting their life; their

confidence in understanding and using English. They were very different teachers. Paula delivered highly organised and structured classes following the learning outcomes themselves. Alle focused almost exclusively on grammar. The openness of Alle to being questioned and her skill in giving clear explanations of key grammar points engaged students in learning together. As noted by Rule in Chapter Three a dialogical approach and good teaching practices can be mutually inclusive. Paula on the other hand set high and definite expectations for her students while offering a pathway to meet such expectations.

In these examples the importance of teaching to collective student need was purposely and skilfully achieved. Both teachers generated an ethos of learning aligned with the following teacher statement and my own observation:

> 42. I preamble each of my classes with a clear idea for students what they will learn in the lesson. I repeat this throughout the day. It's important for me that they leave the classroom with a little more than they entered (Paula).
> 43. I visited Alle's class. The classroom was animated, learners, even those shy and demure were asking questions of the teacher or were in earnest discussion with their partners. People appeared engaged with both the whole class activities and their partner activities. Everyone appeared comfortable to share their learning. Each question was met with respect. I wasn't sure that what they were learning was valuable for them. But they thought it was (personal observation).

Both these teachers constructed an environment around learning that students themselves had a stake in; a learning space where their input was valued. They created a shared learning space which bridged the differences between people providing opportunities for dialogue to occur. Just as importantly it was a theme that bridged the ideological divide between management, the curriculum, teachers own passions for learning and student's desires to learn. The emphasis on human values of respect, consideration and valuing of students themselves was also powerful and uniting within this ethos of learning, enabling students to question and engage. In the classroom space the power differential between student and teacher was reduced in the sense that both required the other in the functioning of the classroom.

Such findings suggest that for learners who are on the borders of society, a focus where all students experience learning gains that are significant *for them* can engender a shared learning community across cultural difference. This is not to suggest that other areas do not

or would not work. ISIS for example provided a shared learning focus with my level IV evening class where students moved beyond the learning of English to utilising English to learn from each other. For those students with few employment prospects and unsure of their future, such conceptual topics paled into insignificance against the challenge of finding a space to express oneself in a society that failed to recognize their worth.

Collectively the statements in this section reveal, on the one hand, a lack of engagement between students across cultural difference within a classroom space where only certain voices were heard, and others were suppressed. The teacher and management practices, as representative of the dominant society, potentially reinforced a sense of inadequacy within students through constructing a culture where disapproval was difficult to express. As such it was a space of imposed meanings and identity constructs made by people in positions of cultural dominance towards the 'cultural other' (statements 24-27, 32-33, 35-37). On the other hand, statements also revealed elements of a dialogical approach (statements 39-43) where students were valued, listening practised by the one in power and learning constructed with the other.

Transformation

I must preface this section by explaining that at this research site I recorded few instances of transformative experiences. As mentioned above, I have defined transformation as inclusive of critical reflection, mutual action and a sense of shared humanity both at the individual and the collective level. This lack of transformation was not simply because the student cohort itself was a difficult one in terms of creating a bonded group. As the statements above indicate, a sensitive focus on learning from the perspective of learners worked to bridge identified difference. Rather the structure of the course prevented such transformation by continuously failing to acknowledge the aspirations, the voices and the agency of individual students. Nevertheless, the following quotes are instructive:

> 44. Teacher Emma said to me 'why do I look so afraid when I ask you a question. You don't need to be afraid. You don't need to get grammar right. You just have to learn' 'Yes' I thought 'why am I afraid'. After this time I no longer afraid to speak. It changed my life (**Ayniri**).
>
> 45. You don't know what you do for me. You listen to me. No one else listen to me. It made me feel confident. I can do things. My life is my own (personal conversation with a student).

Both statements indicate what first appears as an incidental nature of transformative experiences. They were made however within an environment of trust where people connected on a human-to-human level beyond the designated role of 'teacher' or 'student'. Action, whether it was simply 'observation' or, as in my case 'listening', were powerful because they articulated strongly with the person's own social situation leading to change in how they saw themselves (Atkinson 2018a). In many ways they corresponded with a transformative experience of my own. The following reflective statement is a continuation from statement 38 above:

> 46. It was difficult to move the environment from one dominated by a single voice (my own) to one of shared voices and multiple contributors. Eventually we turned to learning English itself. We talked about fear, lazy and disrespectful teachers, mobiles in class, homework and hope. It was a profound moment. For the first time I felt I understood my students (personal reflection).

The key point about each of these statements (statements 44, 45 & 46) is that the dialogical experience led to an insight for the individual concerned which frequently centred on their actions in the vicinity of a wider cultural environment. From my own perspective I learnt something of how it felt to be an EAL adult student. On reflection it was the shared trust that had been generated in the class over several months that enabled me to put myself in a situation of vulnerability and enable students to express their views of a very personal topic.

Despite the evidence of such statements, it must be acknowledged that such experiences were singular events, incidental to the curriculum. From a dialogical perspective this does not necessarily need to be the case. In the context that some students are on a cultural journey (statements16,17,44,45) and teachers are motivated to assist students on this journey, the transitional zone between EAL course and the next stage represents a potentially powerful shared learning space.

Once more I remind the reader of the context of student's lives. Many are unemployed and have been unemployed for years. Many feel constantly embarrassed about their English language skill hampering their sense of belonging within the broader society. Navigating the challenges thrown up in people's everyday lives was balanced by a vision of future work or study opportunities or just simply speaking English itself without embarrassment.

For these students amid the isolation of their lives the English language class was not viewed as an end in itself but a beginning to a different life.

The reality is however that this transitional zone was largely ignored within the context of a standardised curriculum:

> 47. The student counsellor came to the class to talk about future student pathways. Even the quietest students asked questions, motivated by a desire to understand their future study and career options. People spoke of their aspirations and how they could meet them. Amongst talk of resume and course applications we got to fear, lack of contacts, not understanding the culture of applying for a job and working out what to do with one's life. There was no space in the course to accompany students on this next step, however. Arguably where they most needed help they were left to their own devices (personal observation and reflection).

I recognize that the above statement is concerned with getting a job or pursuing a career or further study. For people without a job, who never had a job or had a job in meat works or mushrooms farms this lack of support once more reaffirms that they must navigate societal structures alone. It may also be argued, from a management perspective that the role of the course is limited to helping students to learn English. The issue from a dialogical perspective is that learning must be contextualised by a collective interest within the group on issues that everyone has a significant stake in. Ignoring student aspirations, such as a job, career or further study, negates a key collective motivation for learning.

In placing people who come into EAL classes in the category of student we can ignore the very real individual circumstances that brought them to the English language course in the first place. This is not to say that the category of 'student' is not valid. Rather it is to point out that by grouping people in such a way we fail to realise the multiple realities of peoples' lives. An environment of human trust and sensitivity (statements 44,45 and 46) can bridge the designated roles of 'teacher' and 'student' enabling people to move into situations of vulnerability and potential transformation. On the other hand, those in a position of dominance can always close down such potentially transformative spaces through minimising voice, reinforcing difference and following the structural confines of the system (statement 47).

Discussion

The classroom space is a cultural space inhabited by a diversity of people with different motivations and meanings for being there. For learners it is a step or a stage on a broader cultural journey of integration into Australian mainstream society. An opportunity to acquire competency in English and learn about the cultural complexity of Australian society. For teachers it is a professional space; one made meaningful by assisting learners to develop English language skills through the facilitation of a learning environment.

The findings in this case study also suggest however that this picture does not capture the complexity of learners' lives. A curriculum which frames English language delivery in terms of steady progress towards a measurable goal misrepresents the reality of adult migrant learners. A corresponding space of constructed identities around 'the student' and 'the teacher', casts the former in deficit to the latter and to Australian society itself serving to reinforce feelings of inadequacy. As noted repeatedly above, judging a student according to their functional skills ignores many aspects of their lives that are fundamental to learning. The predominant discourse on learner competencies is potentially disempowering for those who are linguistically, culturally and economically isolated as many adult EAL students are. This is not to say that students do not lack skills necessary to live in society. Rather, in the context that people could have been in Australia for ten or more years, it fails to interrogate why people have failed to learn in the first place. This is especially problematic from a social perspective to learning which views the acquisition of skills to be socially acquired.

Teachers that take a highly active stance towards classroom practice, such as Paula and Elle, notably incorporate both the needs of the curriculum and the motivations of learners. For such teachers, classroom delivery is not a matter of imposing a teaching methodology but rather constructing an approach together with students that is inclusive. Reflective humility appears an important aspect for constructing shared learning practices that bridge not only differences between students but also bridge the power differentials between teacher and student. Seeing the validity of other voices, however, requires an acknowledgment of the limitations of the predominant structure which in this case is represented by a standardized curriculum and a management structure concerned with administrative compliance rather than student learning.

While an environment of human trust and sensitivity can enable people to move into situations of vulnerability and potential transformation, such spaces are always going to be narrow. Transformation is limited where a functionally oriented curriculum, fails to recognize and act on both the aspirations of learners and the human values of teachers. In the context that the classroom represents a step or stage on a journey of integration for learners, failing to acknowledge the broader aspirations and cultural contexts of people's lives presents as a dialogical silence.

Ch 7: Dialogue and NGO refugee support; Sharing the Journey.

> 'I knew I was a good person… but I did not know how to continue with my life' (**Amerah, mentee and former refugee**).

Amerah had arrived from Iran many years previously. Articulate in English and politically knowledgeable she hardly mentioned her previous life, focusing primarily on the challenges of settlement. While thankful to the Australian government she reserved her gratitude for her mentor, Joan, who had 'changed her life'. I realised I had interviewed Joan previously, a woman who, while speaking of her doubts in her own mentoring skills, had a clear passion for understanding what she termed the human spirit; that element of life that gave people meaning. In speaking to Joan, I was reminded of a quote of Victor Frankl, the Jewish survivor of the German Holocaust:

> being human always points, and is directed, to something or someone, other than oneself (Frankl 1946, p.110)

This chapter discusses the research findings of the second case study centred on a program to support refugees in their cultural journey. This is a term I introduced in the previous chapter to describe navigating the 'challenges and opportunities towards one's aspirations while maintaining personal identity and cultural integrity'. Unlike the highly structured English language program this second case study is informal, without the limitations of the compliance requirements that characterised Case Study One. As in the previous chapter I initially describe the context of the program itself. Following this summary, I utilise the framework developed in chapter three to explore the program from a dialogical perspective. A primary level of analysis explores constructs of difference in the intercultural space comprising members of mainstream society (the mentors), the people of refugee or migrant backgrounds who are seeking support (the mentees) and the facilitators of the program (managers). At the second and third level of analysis I explore learning between and within these groups before turning my attention to the effect of dialogical interactions to facilitate transformation. The conclusion focuses on the factors that facilitate the dialogical experience for the participants of the program.

Refugee support in Australia

Since 2000, the annual number of humanitarian entrants into Australia has remained relatively steady at between 12,000 and 15,000. Significant exceptions to this trend occurred in 2012–2013 when the former Labor Government increased the Humanitarian Program to 20,000 visas and in 2016-2017 when it rose to over 20,000 with the Syrian crisis (Cousins 2018). During their initial settlement period, humanitarian entrants receive support through the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) (generally up to six months). Such support includes assistance with housing, health, educational and welfare opportunities delivered through service providers on behalf of the Australian government. After this initial period, humanitarian entrants are referred to on-going settlement services provided through organisations funded under the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program. The SETS program funds organisations to implement projects that assist new arrivals to orient themselves to the mainstream community and promote social participation and integration for a further five years.

Settlement for people of refugee backgrounds can be highly challenging. Significant difficulties include English language, unemployment and financial problems (Bailey-Smith, 2001) with changed social status and changed gender roles being significant stress factors for men (Easteal, 1996). In addition, the medicalization of the refugee experience combined with the emphasis on welfare in this period is potentially disempowering, leading to passive responses by refugees to their social situation (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003). Consequently, refugee lives can spiral into a self-perpetuating cycle of isolation reinforced by internal feelings of inadequacy and external mainstream social factors (Northcote, Hancock & Casimiro 2006). The result can be a period of identity reconstruction amid collective and individual strategies of acculturation where people's desire to take on an Australian sense of identity exists in tension with feelings of being an outsider (Colic-Peisker & Walker 2003; Hatoss, 2012). This can be especially problematic for emerging communities who cannot draw on the established links of older established community members. What is more, the five-year limit in terms of SETS assistance means that many people of refugee backgrounds have limited options for support at a time of social need after this period. This can be especially problematic for those who have been isolated due to family commitments, or for social or linguistic reasons and have yet to acquire knowledge and skills of the broader society.

Given the multiple challenges in the integration process for people of refugee backgrounds, progressive welfare organisations have been turning to empowerment approaches to augment service provision and create opportunities for people on humanitarian visas to create direct links with the mainstream community. In this regard dialogically oriented programs, supported by organisations which focus on the social needs of the refugee are uniquely placed. A dialogical based approach foregrounds the potential of people to exercise control over their lives while (re-)constructing relationships with others and with themselves (Westoby 2008). It is especially consistent with Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley's notion of 'ethno-belonging' (2014) which they define in terms of the emotional connection to the nation state and its people. Engagement, interaction and connection are principal characteristics of such programs (see Pittaway & Stort 2011; United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2013; Westoby 2008). Collectively they aim to promote purposeful societal relationships thereby promoting trust with the broader community and the development of personal and cultural identity (Philip, Shucksmith & King 2004).

Despite such positive ideals, understanding what leads to and makes for quality contact is open to debate. Not all dialogically based programs work. While a transformative effect in terms of acquired skills, knowledge and personal reflection is a key aim, positive change is not always realised (Sawrikar, Griffiths & Muir 2009). In terms of mentoring, relationships between refugees and mentors can be problematic. From a wider dialogical perspective questions emerge around what makes for dialogue, and for that matter transformation. Such questions are a key area of focus in this case study.

The research site

The second case study took place through a Non-Government Organisation that works to prevent and alleviate poverty in Australia through concentrating on points of social vulnerability. The organisation runs a number of programs for people of refugee backgrounds. finding that, despite a strong desire to participate in mainstream Australian society, many people of refugee backgrounds do not have the opportunity to engage in a way that validates their own sense of being. At the same time there are many members of the mainstream community willing to support such people in a volunteer capacity. These individuals have specific talents and resources to share, however they are unable to contribute directly as they are unfamiliar with how to reach these communities in a facilitated and culturally appropriate manner. Mentoring combines the aspiration of

refugees and migrants to make a life for themselves with the skills and desire of members of the mainstream community to help.

The mentoring program that is the focus of this second case study is based on a vision that mentors and mentees work together within an inclusive, welcoming and enabling environment to identify and act on expressed areas of need contextualised by the recognition of community strengths and skills, the dignity of reciprocal learning, and the potential for knowledge, delivered empathetically, to significantly change people's lives. At the time of the case study the NGO ran the mentoring program in the inner city of Melbourne. While this area had similar levels of ethnic diversity as Melbourne generally, it also received large numbers of refugees from North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Sudan and the Middle Eastern areas. Such increases corresponded to a low base level of many of these community groups and a limited capacity within these groups to support newly arrived members of their own community. It was this potential vulnerability that provided the impetus for the mentoring program.

In-kind support as well as funding from philanthropic organisations enabled the NGO to resource the program. Based on a model which favours reciprocity over unilateral exchange, the program recognized both the needs of migrants and refugees to understand the broader society to be part of it, and the desires of mainstream members to help others in need. Through matching skilled mentors with mentees, it enabled the latter, the refugees, to learn particular skills, to work on individual goals or to develop community projects pertinent for them. As such the program broke away from the predominant model of refugee support to directly facilitate community engagement between mainstream society members and members of newer communities.

In terms of size the program had approximately 145 active mentees at the time of data collection (2015-2016). Mentees were drawn predominantly from North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Middle Eastern areas showing a strong correlation with the humanitarian entrants within the local area. Many of these mentees came in sporadically when need arose while others met their mentor on a regular basis.

The research participants

Fourteen mentees and nine mentors took part in interviews for the research. The two managers of the program and the program administrator also took part in a focus group. As

addressed in the methodology chapter, the case study formed part of an evaluation of the mentoring program. Research participants were identified and contacted through staff who ran the program. Interviews focused predominantly on the experiences and the interpretation of those experiences by respondents. My own reflections and observations played a part in this case study. The interviews lasted from ½ hour to 1 hour in duration and were recorded using an audio recording device. Reflexive findings were also kept in the form of a written diary. To aid the reader, the names of mentees are in bold.

The Intercultural space

The intercultural space is made up of a) mentees b), mentors and c) program facilitators.

Mentees

One of the most striking aspects of the mentees is their diversity. This diversity extends from obvious markers of identity such as ethnicity and religion to educational and professional experiences in their home country and to the length of time people have resided in Australia. This latter point demonstrates that for many people of refugee backgrounds the integration process is far longer and far more complex than the five-year limited service model of the SETS program.

1. I'm from Uganda. I came as a refugee. I've been here 13 years (**Tonu**).
2. I'm doing international development I've been here 11 years from South Sudan (**Mary**).
3. I'm a lecturer from Iran. I came to Australia with my son many years ago (**Amerah**).
4. I come from the Congo with my children in 2007 (**Nai**).
5. I'm from Eritrea. I work at the hospital. I've been here 10 years. I came because a friend said it would be good for me. (**Suuli**).

The ethnic and religious diversity of the mentees was matched by their different motivations for joining the program. For the mentees mentioned in the statements above, this motivation ranged from seeking help in looking for a job (**Suuli**), establishing a cleaning business (**Nai**) or establishing a charity (**Tonu**). It also included assistance in what could be termed life direction (**Amy**) and guidance with developing writing skills (**Mary**).

Although the mentees I spoke to were diverse in terms of religiosity, ethnicity, educational and professional background, they frequently shared a common experience. The vast majority of the mentee participants, for example, were at pains to point out how friendly and accepting Australians were. This experience of welcome however was frequently followed and even coupled with the realisation that settlement involved starting their life again from scratch:

> 6. When you first start (settlement in Australia) you are isolated. You cannot express yourself. Someone cannot help you. You start below zero (**Sam**).
> 7. Here I start again. Begin again the life. The start was really hard. … I was very confused in my life. I had to change everything (**Nai**).
> 8. I was qualified in my country. But that qualification counted for nothing. I felt at zero. My confidence was zero. I was rejected so many times; even for factory jobs (**Suuli**).

In the context of their isolation, many mentees viewed their lack of English ability as a primary factor in their (in)ability to integrate with the broader community. A key point in this regard was that English can not be viewed as a single skill. Rather it is a multiple skill set inclusive of formal writing requirements with its own formalised structures. Writing an essay, establishing a business or applying for a job are examples of formal writing requirements that can represent the difference between dependence upon social security and securing employment. At the same time texts in the form of bills, bank statements or fines all work to marginalise those with low-level literacy skills from the broader society.

English was not the only major challenge that mentees faced. It simply represented one strand within the canvas of cultural knowledge that mentees had to thread in their journey of understanding the broader society so as to be part of it. The following two statements were not unique examples but rather symbolic of the interactions between culturally and linguistically marginalised humanitarian entrants and mainstream society more broadly. Uppermost within these interactions were the feelings of confusion and disorientation associated with a lack of knowledge and understanding of Australian society:

> 9. They told me, go, go to the factories and knock on the doors. You will get a job this way. No one gets a job this way. The

boss does not have the time to see you. This is a horrible way (**Suuli**).

10. I got a fine, a fine for the transport. But I did not pay it. I think what is this and I throw it in the bin. Then I got another and one after that. I think my God what is happening. I have to pay a lot of money but I did not know. My son leaves the feet on the seat and he did not tell me about it [the fine] (**Mary**).

The mentoring program offered a way out of this confusion not simply through overt teachings on clearly defined matters of significance as identified by refugees themselves but also on less obvious but equally important areas. The following statements are chosen because they represent the need to acquire cultural knowledge in the way society operates as recognized by the mentees themselves:

11. You need to know the way the system works. There is a gap, a gap in your knowledge. A gap with understanding the way the system works. You need to fill it (**Amerah**).
12. No one tells you, I didn't know that for each job, each different job you need a different C.V. One resume I put for a thousand jobs but it goes in the bin. I just didn't know. If you don't have anyone it is really hard (**Jool**).
13. You need to learn the culture, the thinking, the way of thinking, to be part of the environment. You don't understand the system. The cultural system. (**Michael**).
14. You have to learn commitment to time. If you have an appointment at two o'clock, you turn up at three o'clock and people look at you. This is not the right way in this community. This we had to learn.(**Suuli**).

Learning work skills, registering a business or charity or completing tax forms were just some of the many areas of mentoring that mentees cited as important learning experiences in the program. The challenge was not just located in the acquisition of skills but a paradigm shift in how to interact with society. The following comment by a mentee who had gone through obvious shifts in his own cultural adjustment, gives insight into this challenge:

15. Back home there are not too much institutions to support individuals. Here we have a lot of institutions. Refugees they rely on individuals not on organisations. That mentality is strong. They prefer some individual, more than institutions. That is what they are used to. The result for the newcomers is

they are unable to navigate the resources of organisations or systems (**Mary**).

In my own observation it was obvious in speaking to many mentees that some had travelled a long way in order to bring into accord the highly institutionalised meanings of the dominant culture with the community minded orientation of their own cultural meanings. It was a process however that required a recognition that their own meanings, inclusive of, but not limited to, their lack of ability in English, were insufficient for negotiating the complexity of the society they found themselves in. For many people this was a tremendously disconcerting experience which led to intense feelings of uncertainty and emotional pain often combining the trauma of what happened in the past with the uncertainty of the present. The following statements were produced and reproduced in various forms by many of the mentees who were interviewed for this research.

16. You can see my eyes are red. I cry. I cry every day. War destroy my people. I cry for what is happening over there (in the mentee's home country) and what is happening over here (**Hlau**).
17. It is about self-esteem. I felt so shameful, so much shame. I think to myself I'm a failure. I'm so passive. Not proud. When I walked on the street I looked down so people could not see my eyes. I felt like a criminal. I asked myself why, why can't I contribute. I felt so selfish. I felt so low. How can I help others if I can't help myself? This is what I was thinking (**Suuli**).
18. I was so confused, so confused about the culture, everything (**Nai**).
19. My life, so hard, I worked in a meat factory for five years. I see some people working ten fifteen, twenty years. I think this is not for me. But what can I do? No English. That is where I start. But very hard, everything is very hard…You have to learn. … I joined the program because I have to learn (**Mang**).

Each of the statements above moved me when they were recounted by the mentees I interviewed. They carried an emotion, a feeling and a meaning I could only guess at; an allusion to a determination which for many, began in a refugee camp, pushed through the confusion of settling in a new and alien society, to the point in which they could negotiate and navigate in mainstream society.

In the context of the aforementioned statements, the following are especially salient. They point to specific examples of the wider cultural journey that mentees traversed while hinting at the need for help and guidance in the process of cultural adjustment:

> 20. If you don't have someone who can really help you it is difficult. It is difficult to get to where you want to go (**Thao**).
> 21. If you go to a completely new country … you need a guide otherwise you can't get anywhere. Being guided is really important as 'ignorance is the worst enemy' (**Mary**).

It is a theme that all the mentees I interviewed shared in one form or another. Within the context of people's lives there was invariably a sense that they were each, in one way or another on some form of journey that was both intensely emotional and uncertain. In such a situation 'a guide' was a useful analogy to help navigate the incertitude presented by a very different cultural landscape.

Mentors

In contrast to mentees, it was noticeable that the majority of the mentors in the program, and all the mentors that I spoke to, had many years' experience working in a professional capacity. They were also a mix of religious and ethnic backgrounds including people of Asian and African backgrounds. One mentor was a former refugee from Eritrea drawing into question the assumptions we hold around cultural difference. Professional backgrounds included work as tax agents, lawyers, teachers, health professionals and public servants with qualifications ranging to doctorate level. Many could look back on highly interesting professional careers. Such experiences gave mentors not only insight into Australian cultural meaning, but also the confidence to manipulate those meanings to further one's own success. Collectively they represented a diverse resource base with specific skills in writing, educational attainment and C.V. construction as well as insight into specific and diverse professional environments.

For many mentors it was the opportunity to 'give back' (Amy), 'help others' (Flynn) and transfer some of their know-how, that were the main motivating factors for contributing to the program. By and large, as the following statements reveal, they saw mentees, not as cultural others, but foremost as people albeit with very different cultural backgrounds.

> 22. I see them as human beings (not as cultural others) but I like to be culturally sensitive (Flynn).

23. I just treat people as human beings. I behave in a way that is appropriate and respectful to all human beings. (Amy).
24. The people I mentor are no different from the people I live next door to. They just haven't done certain things that people here have done. In terms of basic humanity, they are just people. I'm just a person and they're just a person. Mentoring. It's just two people having a conversation (Martin).

Within these statements there was a clear perception that mentees, by growing up in a different cultural landscape, had simply not attained the cultural knowledge to navigate Australian society in a way that was advantageous to them. When asked about how they saw their role in the mentoring process it was noticeable, given the above context, that mentors focused primarily on developing the skills necessary to navigate society and understand the 'cultural way we do things' (Martin statement 26).

25. My primary role is helping with study and also how to deal with educational and state bureaucracies. How do you find your way around and through the Australian system - the formal representations of culture - the cultural way we do things. Differences in cultural attitudes about who do you approach and how do you approach things. (Martin).
26. I see my role as one of how to do things, how to approach study, how to approach things, it's sort of know how. Say preparing for an interview or writing a job interview I tell them you must write it in a way that makes the people think it is just for them.(Cynthia).

There was also a recognition that everyday cultural knowledge, was neither everyday nor necessarily self-evident.

27. A lot of the times it is almost like being like a translator. A lot of things we find easy and straightforward are not easy or straightforward for someone with a different background from us. Translating what is being expected (sic). Simple things such as structuring an essay - those kind of things that are culturally expected, but not explicit (Amy).
28. What you assume everyone knows it's very clear that she (her mentee) doesn't. It's just that you suspect that people who operate in this society know certain things, that intuitive stuff. Some of it is the gap in information about how things are done (Ann).

Such qualitative findings are indicative of the motivation of the mentors to teach mentees the skills and knowledge to navigate the dominant society within a discourse of shared humanity and what I term ethical humility; that the cultural other is first and foremost another human being.

Facilitators of the program

While intercultural dialogue revolved predominantly around the pairing of mentee and mentor, at a very basic level the administration of the program allowed such dialogue to take place in terms of 'matching the needs of the mentees with the skills of the mentors' (Martin) and in 'booking and confirming appointments' (Amy) through reception. It may seem mundane, but such administrative roles were deeply appreciated by mentees and mentors alike beyond the logistics they represented. For both groups the reception desk was an important connection with the program. A further strength was its flexibility. Mentees and mentors were free to choose how they conducted their mentoring sessions and the focus of such sessions. Although the majority of sessions were predictive in terms of C.V. construction or educational support, there remained the opportunity for exploring very different areas of mentoring as identified by mentees themselves inclusive of skill development and citizenship preparation classes.

Within the flexible and fluid nature of the Mentoring program, a further defining feature was its welcoming and supportive environment. All the respondents that I spoke to commented on the friendliness of the staff inclusive of those not involved in the program and in particular the helpfulness and accessibility of the program manager who served both as a source of inspiration and a reaffirmation within many people of their own value. The following statements are just some of the many that expressed the value of such positive support:

29. I'll really miss Marta when she goes. She's terrific. She's a very warm and giving person and she sees the best in people (Ann).
30. Marta gave me a lot of support and the warm and inclusive feeling … here has given me a lot (Joan).
31. All this thanks to Marta. I have a debt to Marta. If I have any issues I can just call and Marta always takes the time (Martin).
32. I had talks to Marta (about a cultural conflict). She took the time to understand how I worked. She then gave me mentees (with different needs). It really helped me (Joan).

The comments above can be better appreciated in reference to the social vulnerability of mentees themselves and the uncertainty that some mentors expressed about their roles. In a program involving people who were doing something new, together, a welcoming and accessible ethos helped to bridge the uncertainty inherent in communication across cultural difference.

Surprisingly, given such a focus on welcome, there was a lack of structured emphasis placed on building bonds between participants of the Mentoring program despite their importance. The two statements below show a felt absence of direct and indirect institutional support felt by mentors:

> 33. I think early on I was a bit puzzled about the whole thing. We didn't get the volunteer newsletter. We felt a little bit sidelined and I know another mentor felt the same way (Ann).
>
> 34. I didn't hear anything (from my mentee) and I thought I had really over done it (the proof reading). We all need feedback. It is terribly important. People forget to do that, to acknowledge. You don't want to patronize people. You are on the boundary of what you know (Joan).

Mentoring, especially over the long term, can be a challenging process without clearly defined benchmarks or outcomes leading to feelings of insecurity with regards to how mentors felt about their effectiveness. While such statements were rare, they reveal the importance of bonds with other mentors or staff, even if those bonds are simply through a newsletter.

A further point in the context of intercultural facilitation was an apparent lack of diversity in the mentor body. The overwhelming orientation within the focus of the program was on text-based support by people with a professional background. In reference to this lack of diversity one mentor noted:

> 35. An important strategy for the [NGO] is to ensure they recruit mentors from a wide range of backgrounds. By recruiting them from a wide range of backgrounds you get quite different expertise (Ann).

The following personal observation supports the statement above. It must be said that the observation represents a snapshot in time rather than a complete overall view of the

program. Nevertheless, in the context that both mentees and mentors experience the program through similar ‘snapshots’ in time, it has its own validity.

> 36. The emphasis on mentoring is largely placed on C.V construction intellectual skills and knowledge. Mentors are predominantly highly educated professionals or university students drawn from mainstream middleclass society. Mentees are predominantly seeking support in writing assistance, the construction of C.V.s, registering their organisations or assistance in developing professional communicative skills. The emphasis, the culture if you like, is on navigating the formal communication ethos of ‘professional, white collar’ society (Personal Observation).

In referencing such statements (33-36) I am not indicating a structured flaw in the program. My point is that the program itself was oriented towards mentees acquiring and navigating professional and text based or formal communication-based skills through the input of an ‘expert’ in these areas. Such a focus however potentially limits professional diversity within the intercultural space of the program thereby impacting on potential shared learning practices. Having said that however it must be noted that a major feature of the Mentoring program was not simply directed towards skill acquisition, but the confidence developed through relationship building.

To summarise this section, while mentees were culturally and socially diverse (statements 1-5) they shared the experience of having to build their life anew in the Australian landscape (statements 6-8). A lack of English language skills and of knowledge and understanding of Australian society contributed to a sense of cultural confusion, disorientation (statements 9-10) and disempowerment in their lives (statements 11-15). This in turn resulted in intense feelings of uncertainty bordering on emotional pain (statements 16-19) and a recognition of the need for cultural assistance (statements 20-21). Mentors on the other hand departed from mainstream meanings of the support seeking refugee as a burden, viewing their role primarily as cultural navigators, translators or guides (statements 25-28) within a broad humanitarian ethos (statements 22-24). The third player within the intercultural space were the facilitators of the program and the wider staff. An environment of welcome and support helped facilitate an inclusive environment (statements 29-32). The importance of this was emphasized by statements that indicated where such inclusiveness could be extended and improved (statements 33-36).

Shared Learning Practices-the bridging of difference

As noted in Chapter Two, I reserve the term 'shared learning' to refer to social learning practices that are designed to bridge constructed differences. Before looking at shared learning practices in the intercultural space, it is important to clarify a difference between short and long-term mentoring approaches. These differences may be seen in the following two statements:

> 37. I mostly do it for them. One I don't have the time. She doesn't have the time. She doesn't have the English. But most of the people I do resumés for are people going for semi and unskilled jobs. The point is to get them a job (Ahmed).
>
> 38. I said to my mentee 'you have to learn how to do these things for yourself so you don't need me'. Their writing can be so awful but there's a big difference between helping someone and doing it for them. There's a line between proof reading and turning something that is a total mess into something acceptable. They have to do the work and you can help them. It's saying from the start you must make the effort (Cynthia).

I acknowledge that both forms of mentoring can have long term effects and lead to change. I also acknowledge that short term mentoring has its place, particularly with regards to enabling mentees to meet the needs of clearly defined tasks such as the construction of resumés. However, in the context of constructing a shared learning space conducive to enabling mentees to negotiate the cultural meanings of society, long term mentoring has obvious benefits in terms of relationship building, skill development and knowledge transfer. Consequently, it is this latter practice that this section focuses primarily upon.

The following is presented as an introduction to the practice of long-term mentoring:

> 39. I work with a Somali woman with very poor English. She never went to school, her brothers did but she didn't. She says now it is her time. Her vocabulary is very limited. Over time you can see this person gain in confidence in what she's able to do. I taught her the techniques that I learnt in school. She is so pleased with herself because she has learnt how to sound out the words. She is so happy because she is learning and is achieving and that is its own reward. Her pace of learning is not an issue. She feels she's achieving something and I think, by her achieving things, I feel I achieve things. It has to be a two-way relationship (Ahmed).

The above statement illustrates key aspects of the mentoring process in terms of a two-way practice leading to mutual benefit constructed on and around a learning relationship. Manifestly such learning relationships do not arise spontaneously. They require supporting processes which enable people to come together for mutual benefit and a practice which assists people to learn from each other.

With regards to the actual mentoring relationship, it was noteworthy that within the Mentoring program the person with access to the knowledge of the dominant culture in society, that is the person in power, was not the person who was setting the agenda. Rather the negotiated task was established around the needs of the one with lesser power i.e. the mentee. In this context, one of the first challenges was the establishment of the task itself:

> 40. You have to be quite flexible. What the person might need is not necessarily what they initially come in with (Martin).
> 41. It took a while to work out what they (a community group) wanted to do. They already knew in general terms but not in specific terms. I had to get them to think about planning in advance, to be more specific, more strategic (Ahmed).
> 42. It's not necessarily a clear goal. It's a matter of understanding what they want to achieve (Amy).
> 43. Keep asking questions until one clicks and getting lots of dialogue from them, what they like, their frustrations. This way you can know what they want help with, learn how to help them and what works and get to understand them (Flynn).

This understanding of 'what they want to achieve' (statement 42) and of working out 'what they want to do' (statement 41) was not necessarily a fast process. Nor was it a process that was completed and thereby ticked off. Rather it appeared to be part of an ongoing process, fundamental to which were a number of 'mentoring strategies' which reinforced the two-way communicative relationship between mentor and mentee.

One of the primary strategies as expressed by mentors was on 'understanding the other' (Martin), 'offering genuine help' (Joan) and 'connecting with the humanity of other people' (Ann). As one mentor noted:

> 44. I start with the position of wanting to help. Generally, people are very receptive if they know you are there to help them (Flynn).

Such help was not limited to cultural knowledge. Mentors also offered deeper links into the services available that mentees themselves could call on. As was noted above, for many mentees it was difficult to connect with institutional services as it was something they were not used to in their own country (statement 15 Mary). The following statements directly epitomize the willingness to assist such people to navigate the structures of society.

> 45. I feel a sense of responsibility that she is obeying the legal strictures of what she's taken on I put her in contact with people that can provide her with assistance that I can't and I'm quite good at that getting her legal support, getting her other types of support, getting her hooked up with Centrelink. Just the whole legitimization she is doing (Ann).
> 46. Knowing what kind of follow up I can offer my mentee is vital if I'm to help them. I don't know what services are out there but Marta does. That information to help people go further in their journey is what I depend on. I need that support in terms of referring people (Cynthia).

The power of this focus on the human aspect of mentoring can be better appreciated through the poignant words of the mentees, in the context of their deep emotional vulnerability as outlined above:

> 47. He supported me mentally… It is not just knowledge. It is confidence [in me]. He gained my trust. He is a good listener, very calm, a good person. He takes time to help me, for nothing. He is a rare person (**Suuli**).
> 48. I felt supported, my mentor never stopped guiding me, she would step in to help and I felt there was trust and she had a sense of belief in me. I was like baby. She was so patient with me. She was like a mother with a baby. She helped me with confidence in my small English (**Nai**).
> 49. She guided me back to myself. …. She listened to me. Not just with her ears. But with her heart (**Amerah**).
> 50. A good mentor is someone who shares the vision of the mentee, will support you, listens and has an understanding of what you want to do (**Mary**).

What can be seen in the above quotes, which were produced and reproduced by all the mentees I spoke to in various guises, is that in light of the despair, the confusion and the social and linguistic marginalisation that mentees felt, listening and trust in particular was

experienced as a genuine valorisation of people's sense of being. While knowledge and skill transfer were important, it was the belief, trust, heartfelt guidance and genuine understanding that people received through the mentoring which transformed the pain within.

While mentors brought knowledge, a desire to help and an investment in mentoring techniques to the relationship, mentees contributed a strong determination to learn.

> 51. I came to learn. To learn Australian way (**Tonu**).
> 52. There was challenge, but if there is no challenge you cannot get a better life. We have to adapt to the system (**Mary**).
> 53. You have to learn. I am still learning. I joined the program because I have to learn. Everyday you learn about Australian culture. I have to learn how to help other people. This is why I came. (**Mang**).

Additionally, it was notable that cultural knowledge transfer was not just one way but rather a two-way process as mentors themselves learned of and about the culture of the 'other'. For every mentee who was thankful for being supported to write better essays, complete job applications or understand Australian society there was a mentor who was thankful for being introduced to different foods or broaden their understanding of cultural matters. As one mentor pertinently expressed in the context of the current antagonism towards Muslims:

> 54. I've learnt a lot about what it's like to be a relatively newcomer in this society and to be a Muslim in this society (Ann).

Ann was speaking from the perspective of shopping with her Muslim mentee, an experience she described as confronting in terms of the looks she received from fellow shoppers.

It was the recognised achievement of learning however that moved mentoring from a cross cultural interactive event to a shared human connection. As reiterated by one mentor 'They have been through so much, they are not going to stuff up now' (Martin):

> 55. On one level mentoring is a one-way street - a one-way flow of information. The rewards come from a different way when you see people start progressing, little things as people improve (Martin).

56. It's the satisfaction that you've actually helped someone. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction and makes me feel good (Ann).

For many mentees there was a strong desire to share their actions and their successes with their mentees as a way of saying thank-you:

57. When I got my job … I signed my work agreement with my mentor (**Suuli**).
58. I say everything to [my mentor]. I say what working. We discuss together (**Nai**).

From one perspective shared learning involved an ongoing negotiation of need as expressed by the person with less cultural power (statements 40-43). The onus on the voice of the mentee within a positive and supportive environment (statements 44-46) was both practically and emotionally reassuring for mentees at a time of deep psychological need (statements 47-50). Mutual learning revolved around mentees seeking knowledge of Australian culture (statements 51-53) and mentors open to learning about mentee culture (statement 54) to create a culturally rich interactive space and a mutually enriching experience for both (statements 55-58). The question was not whether the mentoring program led to knowledge transfer or assisted mentees to adapt their own cultural meanings to that of the broader culture in order to be part of it. It clearly did. Rather, in the context of the cultural isolation that many mentees felt, mentors represented a human element to guide people towards an extended sense of identity aligned with their cultural needs (statements 47-50).

Transformation

The importance of humanity, mutual support and critical reflection have been identified earlier as inherent elements of the dialogical change process. Critical reflection may be viewed as a questioning of one's own values in the face of difference to arrive at more informed understandings about oneself and others. Mutual support refers to an active interest in the other person's life journey while a sharing of humanity is strongly tied with a recognition and a belief in humanitarian values. Unlike the previous case study, there were many instances of transformation expressed by the participants of this study.

Before exploring such transformation however, I would like to refer back to two points I made in Chapter Four. As I noted in the conclusion (p.90), only in the humanitarian

discourse can we view a critical engagement with power allowing dialogue to flourish within the third level of transformation. Additionally, I noted that the link between 'the migrant and refugee other' and the humanitarian discourse was problematic (p.89). I gave my reason based on the idea that the category of the long-term unemployed migrant and that of the support seeking refugee is an imagined, imposed category. To paraphrase Pittaway and Pittaway (2004, p.124), the social face of such people is limited to one primary identifier, which becomes their defining feature rather than their multiple identities. Having said that I also acknowledge that people within the dominant culture often come from a humanitarian positioning in their relationship with people of refugee backgrounds and long-term unemployed migrants. That the relationship is not with the otherness of the other but with their humanness. It is at this individual level (rather than the level of the cultural group), where the 'cultural and refugee other' as a category dissolves and the other becomes a fellow human being, that such transformation can occur. This second case study is a fantastic illustration of this.

A key strength and uniqueness of the Mentoring program was the mutuality between mentor and mentee. For mentees, transformation was linked with the hardship that many had gone through, their need to talk to someone about such hardship and the compassion of people to listen with their hearts:

> 59. Everything felt untouchable for me, when I became involved in the program, that stopped, I felt like I can manage. By really guiding and encouraging, without that guide you would never reach anywhere. Trust is the best thing and they (mentor/staff) create trust (**Thao**).
>
> 60. I met my mentor. That's how the journey starts. He was a supporter, he supported me mentally. That motivation. It was not just knowledge. It is confidence. He gained my trust. He is a good listener, very calm, a good person. He takes time to help me, for nothing. He is rare person. People are struggling. If they get support they will be positive for the community. We came like friends I can ask him many things. He checks that I understood. He is patient. Trust is a feeling. It is interest, interest in me. You cannot fake this. I am on my journey … (**Suuli**).

Such references to shared journey, such as that by Suuli (statement 61) were made by almost all of the mentees I spoke to. At times the expressions used were almost biblical in their representation.

61. My mentor gives me a light. I see a light. The way to go. The people they help you. If you fall down the people come and pick you up again. They give you hope (**Mang**).

The results were both profound and transformative.

62. I saw Australia from a different angle. It was like grey, cloudy before. Then I say it is a beautiful country. You bring home food for your daughter. You put it on the table. She greets you. I signed my work agreement with my mentor. …It changed my life (**Suuli**).
63. I didn't know what to do with my life. I did not know where to go. I didn't know who I could trust, who I could turn to. My self was damaged when I came here. I knew I was a good human and this was a comfort to me but I did not know how to continue with my life. I was very depressed. Having a friend like [Joan]. I couldn't have a better friend (**Amerah**).
64. I appreciate everyone. It changes people's lives. You think it's a small thing but it's big for us (**Mary**).

The statement by Amerah (statement 63) is worthy of further comment in the sense of people's cultural journey. For Amerah, the challenge was not just in negotiating the meanings of a new culture but in visualizing a new life; a viable future congruent with her own authentic self.

The transformative experiences of mentees and mentors within the mentoring program was qualitatively different. One reason was that mentors had a choice in how much they engaged with difference. As an example, many mentors spoke in terms of maintaining professional distance and their own privacy in their relationship with mentees. The following statements contrast with those above (statements 59-61, 63):

65. I try not to form relationships with someone. …I like to become friendly but I like to maintain a certain distance so I know what our role is which is for me to help them (Martin).
66. It's a bit in me. You keep yourself separate. It's their stuff. You don't tell your own stories. I sometimes wonder if I should share my stories with other people. Would that help them? (Joan).
67. I know more about my mentee's life than she knows about mine…. I'm a fairly private person… She's given me more access to her than I've given her to me. (Ann).

Relatedly, it is worth pointing out that while such cross-cultural interaction was challenging, the mentoring program was structured upon the assumption that mentees needed to understand the meanings of the dominant society which mentors were expert in. In other words, despite the inclusive orientation of the program it was structured on mainstream dominant values.

Nevertheless, there was an obvious sense of critical reflection brought about through working on the edge of one's cultural boundary while foregrounding mutuality and human sharing. The following statements are typical examples which show this aspect of the mentoring program:

> 68. I found it quite a stressful relationship. She was always late. She would saunter along hours late. I would be so annoyed. In the end I thought stop it and I'd read a book. If I chose to I could have been quite authoritarian and say 'if you want to succeed in this society you have to be on time'. There were so many things, so many issues that I didn't (say this). She was low in confidence. She was wonderfully generous. I was constantly being culturally tested (Joan).
>
> 69. It sounds a bit funny, but you do have to push. The people are trying to achieve stuff. You have to help them by saying 'no you have to do this yourself'. The people are in the unknown. From understanding where they've come from you can get a feeling for how much to push to get them to do things for themselves. Their story gives you a feeling for why they may be hesitant in doing things (Martin).

Joan prioritised the confidence of her mentee over cultural learning, Martin balanced 'pushing' the mentees he worked with, with a sensitivity to their present circumstances. This empathetic awareness of people's lives combined with a genuine desire to help was evident in many statements. While mentors maintained their professional relationships, such boundaries were flexible within this human centred ethos:

> 70. It was sort of naturally happening anyway that my mentee would tell me more and more information about various things she's gone though in her life. The last time we spent time together she told me in great detail about some stuff which I was quite troubled by but in a way flattered that she felt enough confidence in me to tell me that (Sam).

This possibility of being a positive influence in the lives of those that needed obvious help was a prime motivating factor for all the mentors. In the very human centred nature of such

help and the desperate place that many refugees felt themselves in, it carried its own transformative potential.

It was obvious in speaking to many mentees that some had travelled a long way. They had a foot in both cultures and were able to adapt themselves accordingly, to think and act from two different world perspectives. While there were obvious cultural challenges for participants of the Mentoring program in terms of expectations around relationship (statements 65-67) and cultural meanings such as time (statement 68) and effort (statements 69) such challenges were overcome though a human centred sharing of a cultural journey (statements 59-61). A further advantage of the mentoring program was not just that it led to deep transformation in people's lives (statements 62-64); it also represented a graphic example of the value and meaningfulness of conversation for creating new cultural values together. As one mentee said:

> 71. building a society does not come from one side, but all sides.
> Putting one culture into another makes perfect (**Thao**).

For mentors, at one level, change was limited. Although people may connect with their humanity, learn to feel what it means to be a Muslim woman, and expose themselves to different cultural values, the cultural environment of the mentoring program remained strongly entangled in Anglo-Celtic values and on the primacy of the formal communication ethos of mainstream professional society. Left unchallenged was the expertise of the mentors and the corresponding structural barriers to integration of such formal communication facing the mentees (Atkinson 2018b). Nevertheless, there was also a deep sharing of humanity within the mentoring program, initiated by assisting a cultural other in their journey of integration. The mentoring program was not simply about conveying information or deepening people's skills but connecting with others as a fellow human being. It was this sense of connection, of helping someone in need, that provided mentors with a deep sense of personal fulfillment and meaningfulness.

Discussion

An initial finding of the research was the confusion, the desperation and the lack of confidence that characterises the settlement experience. Few mentees had connections with people in mainstream society they could trust. Many were grappling with very different cultural meanings in a language they were not familiar with and an institutional framework

they found difficult to relate to. Many of the mentees I spoke to had been ashamed of their status as unemployed and were desperate to play a part in Australian society. Coincident with this, there were people within the community who had the time, the knowledge and most importantly the desire to help those in need.

The Mentoring program provided an inclusive and welcoming environment which supported the needs of mentees, valued the skills of mentors and space for both to meet and work towards negotiated shared goals. The flexible structure of the mentoring program was a key strength providing a platform for mentees and mentors to experiment with new ways of learning. In so doing it provided mentees an immediate social bridge into the broader society and thereby links with mainstream services and resources. It also provided access to people with know-how regarding how the cultural system in Australia works and how to negotiate that system. For mentors it provided an opportunity to give back to society that was powerful and reaffirming. They felt that they were making a difference in the lives of other people.

The Mentoring program was patently effective in meeting elements of clearly defined indicators associated with employment and education. Preparing people for interviews and enabling people to negotiate the necessary text-based skills associated with constructing C.Vs, registering businesses and meeting educational requirements was an important focus. While the first stage of the partnership was one of negotiating aim and purpose, it was the determination to learn on the part of the mentee, and the desire to help a fellow human being on the part of the mentor, that created a shared learning space. Through placing the onus on mentees to express their needs it ensured that those with power in terms of knowledge of the broader society were placed in the role of listener. Momentum came in the form of achievement as mentees slowly gained confidence in negotiating the complexity of Australian society and mentors experienced a sense of achievement in helping others.

This is not to say that the mentee/mentor relationship was devoid of tension. Cultural difference ensured that issues arose that occasionally threatened the relationship itself. At the same time, it was cultural difference that turned the relationship from one-way knowledge and skill transfer to mutual learning as people struggled with the cultural meanings of the other. Importantly, the learning experience extended beyond knowledge and skills to include an enhanced feeling of self-worth that for mentees supported their transition through the confusion of the present. Transformation came through supported action. For mentees it was the support, the compassion and the guidance of the mentor that

made the challenge of integration possible. For mentors helping a cultural other was contextualised by human related values. In the process the Mentoring program manifested an altogether broader realisation of multicultural society as a two-way exchange of cultural meaningfulness.

Ch 8: Dialogue and the Aboriginal Treaty process: Exploring the unknown

> 'Symbolically we're still on the edge of town, we're not too sure how to come in and whether we're welcome' (**Raul, Aboriginal respondent**).

This case study, which is focused on the treaty process between the Victorian government and the Victorian Aboriginal[16] community, is dialogically different from the previous two. Aboriginal people are seeking to challenge the dominant culture; not integrate with it. Raul told me that during the missionary era and beyond, Aboriginal people had been housed at 'the edge of town', outside the limits of mainstream service provision amongst the rubbish dumps of the towns. While the physical location may have changed the mindset had not.

This study begins by outlining the background to the treaty process upon which the case study is based. Following the structure of the previous two case study chapters, I utilise the framework developed in chapter three to explore the dialogical experiences of the research participants. The first of three levels of analysis investigates cultural differences between a) members of Victoria's Aboriginal community directly involved in treaty b) the facilitators of the treaty process, and c) members of the Victorian non-Indigenous society who participated in a key culturally interactive component - the Deadly Questions Campaign. At the secondary level of analysis, I explore learning, both potential and actual, between and within members of these three groups. My final level of analysis explores transformation, at both an individual and a collective level, through the dialogical interactions.

The Victorian Aboriginal treaty process

Treaties between a government and Indigenous people are formal and binding agreements reached by respectful negotiation for the purpose of mutual benefit. From the perspective of the state, a treaty represents a pathway to achieving certainty at a time when the past suppression of Aboriginal rights, titles, and privileges through biased legal structures is no longer viable. From an Indigenous perspective, the treaty process has been variously

[16] As noted in Chapter 1, I refer to the First Nations people in Victoria either as Aboriginal Victorians or Aboriginal people. In doing so I follow the ethical publishing guidelines of the AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) (2015).

described as an acknowledgement of past injustice (O'Sullivan 2008), a crucial step in postcolonial struggle (Blomley 2015), a means to satisfy new claims (Cornell 2002) and protect indigenous knowledge and lore (Battiste 2013). As Keal notes (2003), it potentially delivers an opportunity to revive the complex web of relationships that make up indigenous systems of identity while fighting against the misrepresentation of indigenous ways of being.

As early as 1979 the Fraser Liberal-Country government established an Aboriginal Treaty Committee with the aim of promoting the idea of a treaty to non-Aboriginal Australians. The committee ran until 1983 when a newly elected Labor government shifted policy. As noted on the Parliament of Australia website (2011) in 1983.

> The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs' report, Two Hundred Years Later – a report on the feasibility of a compact or 'Makaratta' between the Commonwealth and Aboriginal people was tabled. It rejected the idea of a treaty because of its connotations of an agreement between sovereign states. The Committee concluded that sovereignty was not vested in Aboriginal peoples other than that which they share in the Commonwealth.

When the Hawke Labor Government backed away from national land rights, calls for a treaty became stronger. In 1988 then Prime Minister Bob Hawke committed to delivering a 'compact' or Makarrata' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by 1990. Failing to achieve bi-partisan support however, the focus switched to reconciliation, self-determination and social justice. Following the election of the Howard Liberal Government in 1996, all calls for treaty were rejected. As Howard said, "A nation … does not make a treaty with itself" (Howard-quoted in Brennan et al. 2004 p.308). In the period between 1996 and a change of government in 2007, federal treaty talks were characterised more by intransigence than progress. It took a change of government for any substantive change to take place. Such change however backed away from treaty towards constitutional recognition.

In 2010, under a Labor government, funding was directed towards the facilitation of community conversations advocating for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; a community program referred to as the Recognise Campaign. Despite the funding, the enlistment of high-profile Aboriginal ambassadors and the

sponsorship from equally high-profile companies and organisations, many Aboriginal leaders viewed the Recognise Campaign as a vehicle to suppress claims of sovereignty (Haines 2016). The Australian government's plan to hold a nationwide referendum to recognise Aboriginal people in the preamble of the Constitution was abandoned by the Gillard Labor government in 2013 citing low public support (Korff 2019). In 2014, following a change in government the previous year, a review panel recommended that the Government proceed once more towards a referendum. Then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and leader of the Opposition Bill Shorten established a Referendum Council in 2015 to advise on a path towards this aim (Parliament of Victoria, 2018). The resultant 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' (2017) asked instead for a First Nations Voice to parliament and national truth telling. A request rejected by the then Prime minister Malcolm Turnbull (see page 76 for further discussion). Once more, what progress there was remained mired in talks that achieved little.

It was against this backdrop that, in 2015, the Victorian Labor Government led by Premier Daniel Andrews, undertook a review of its own service delivery-focused program to Aboriginal people delivered through the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria. The review recommended the establishment of a new body, Aboriginal Victoria, as well as changes to ensure it was best placed to deliver on the state Labor Government's commitment of enhanced engagement with the Aboriginal community (Hutchins, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 2015). Charged with providing advice to the Victorian Government on Aboriginal policy, Aboriginal Victoria initiated the establishment of a new engagement framework with Aboriginal leaders, which focused on 'high-level strategic issues relating to the future of Aboriginal people in Victoria' (Hutchins, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 2015).

In February 2016, as part of the new engagement framework with Aboriginal people, Aboriginal Victoria hosted a meeting with 500 Victorian Aboriginal community leaders from across the state to seek their views on self-determination and constitutional recognition. The 2016 gathering unanimously rejected constitutional recognition in preference for a treaty. The premier accepted their wishes. In May 2016, on National Sorry Day, Premier Daniel Andrews stated:

> Victoria's treaty with Aboriginal Victorians will be the first of its kind in our nation's history. And Aboriginal people will lead this change (Andrews 2016).

The reconciliatory nature of the treaty was made clear from the outset. As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Natalie Hutchins stated:

> We understand that it's not for us to decide what treaty or self-determination should look like. We know that action needs to come from the Victorian Aboriginal community (Hutchins 2016)

In July 2016, the government created a 14-member Aboriginal Treaty Interim Working Group (the Working Group) to consult with the Aboriginal community on options for a representative body. Aboriginal Victoria engaged the consultancy firm Ernst & Young, to work with the Working Group. Ernst & Young, together with the Working Group presented the consultation findings in a state-wide forum to the Victorian Aboriginal community in 2016 and 2017. Following these presentations, an Aboriginal community assembly was established to provide recommendations to the Working Group on the Representative Body's structure, representation and governance. In early 2018 The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission was established to continue the work towards treaty and 'operationalise the outcomes of the Aboriginal Community Assembly (Petrie & Graham 2018).

During the same time period the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Natalie Hutchins, introduced the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018* to parliament. The bill set out the government's commitment to advancing the treaty process in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians. During the second reading of the bill, Hutchins (2018) outlined the bill's purpose.

> The bill requires the Aboriginal Representative Body and state to work together to establish three elements: a treaty authority, a treaty negotiation framework, and a self-determination fund.

As Hutchins herself noted however: 'We are still at the very beginning of that pathway' (Hutchins 2018). Alongside parliamentary procedure, part of the Government's commitment to self-determination and treaty included a structured engagement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. Following consultation with the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group and the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission, the Deadly Questions Campaign (the Campaign) was designed.

Aboriginal Victoria, with marketing communications company Clemenger BBDO, launched the Campaign on June 2nd, 2018. The stated aim was to build understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. An online public space enabled non-Aboriginal Victorians to ask questions about Aboriginal culture from Victorian Aboriginal 'Champions'. Champions included community leaders and well-known personalities such as rapper, comedy writer and actor Adam Briggs. A second phase of the campaign, launched in the third week of September 2018, focused on the role of Treaty in Victoria and what it could mean for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. Digital, radio, print and billboard advertising, focusing on selected questions and answers, were used to promote the campaign throughout Victoria. As noted on the Aboriginal Victoria website:

> The landmark campaign gives non-Aboriginal Victorians the opportunity to ask the questions they have always wanted to ask but may be too afraid or embarrassed to ask… This will be an opportunity to dispel myths and celebrate the cultures and achievements of Aboriginal Victorians (State Government of Victoria 2018).

More than 2600 questions were submitted to the Deadly Questions Campaign. Many more Victorians engaged with the billboards and the website associated with the Campaign with more than 370 pieces of earned media and 222,000 unique hits (Adnews 2018). The campaign was declared a success by both Clemenger BBDO and by Aboriginal Victoria with executive director of Aboriginal Victoria, Josh Smith, reported as saying that the Campaign had provided 'an important avenue for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Victorians to engage in meaningful discussion as we move towards Treaty'(quoted in Adnews 2018). A list of 100 representative questions were made available on the Deadly Questions website <http: deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au> alongside responses by the Aboriginal Champions.

The treaty process is ongoing. As the foregoing discussion shows, there is a complexity to both the process and to the identities of people involved. There are also dissenting voices from both within government and on occasions from Aboriginal people themselves. With regards to this latter point it is important to note that the Victorian Aboriginal population is not a single collective group. Rather it is made up of different tribal groups within which are different clans with heritage ties to the land extending back long before white settlement. Key voices within Aboriginal communities include Aboriginal Elders who have

gained recognition as custodians of knowledge and lore as well as traditional owners who are directly descended from the original Aboriginal inhabitants of a culturally defined area of land. Aboriginal people may also be members of different Registered Aboriginal Parties which act to give advice and knowledge to the Aboriginal Minister at state level in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria (Parliament of Victoria, 2012). Additionally, many Aboriginal people living in Victoria are from interstate or are part of 'The Stolen Generation'[17]. Across such diversity it would be concerning if there was one collective voice. Aboriginal resistance to treaty was most notable by former Greens member in the Victorian Legislative Assembly Lidia Thorpe. The Yorta Yorta Council of Elders was also not convinced by treaty.

While the Victorian treaty process is still in its formative stages, it has nevertheless exhibited many of the challenges associated with treaty between Aboriginal people and governments of dominant cultures generally (see Chapter 4 for earlier discussion). The treaty process itself faces monumental challenges not least of which includes engaging the broader non-Indigenous community. Differences within individual Aboriginal groups and between high profile Aboriginal people has created challenges in terms of creating a united Aboriginal front. The opposition Liberal National Coalition is also opposed to the treaty process. From the point of view of this thesis it offers a fascinating insight into diverse dialogue processes involving an historically excluded cultural group.

The research participants

In this case study participants were drawn from a) Aboriginal Victorians directly engaged in the treaty process, and b) the facilitators of treaty from within the dominant society[18]. Additionally, I drew on the questions submitted to the Deadly Questions website for information concerning the feelings of identity of the non-Indigenous Victorian community. Interviews were carried out with seven Aboriginal members of either the Interim council or the Aboriginal Community Assembly. I also interviewed five facilitators

[17] The Stolen Generation refers to a federal policy where Aboriginal people were removed from their families between 1910 until the practice was abandoned in 1970.

[18] As explained in Chapter One, reference is made to the 'dominant culture' rather than Anglo or white culture due to concerns I have with these latter terms. For further discussion please refer to p.10.

of the treaty process and three parliamentarians. Each of the facilitators and parliamentarians were members of the dominant culture. For ease of readability I have grouped these latter two categories together to collectively refer to them as facilitators. The parliamentarians I interviewed had little direct role in facilitating treaty. They nevertheless were members of the Labor Party that supports the treaty process and provided valuable information with regards to their attitudes to treaty and to Aboriginal people more broadly.

The interviews lasted from ½ hour to 1 hour in duration. The nature of Aboriginal treaty meant that people involved in the process were not in one place or involved in one organisation. As a consequence, interviews took place in diverse locations. The interviews were recorded using an audio recording device. I also attended two meetings concerning the treaty process. Reflexive findings were also kept in the form of a written diary. To aid the reader, the anonymous names of Aboriginal respondents are in bold.

Sphere One: The Intercultural Space

The intercultural space for this third case study is made up of three groups. These are a) the Victorian community through the Deadly Questions Campaign b), the facilitators of treaty identifying with the dominant society and c) Aboriginal Victorians working in the treaty space.

The Victorian community through the Deadly Questions Campaign

Of the representative questions on the Deadly Questions website, stereotypical viewpoints towards Aboriginal people were not uncommon.

1. Is being Aboriginal just the colour of your skin?
2. Why don't we see many Aboriginal people around the city?
3. Do Aboriginal people really pay less tax and get more welfare?

Situating ‘the Aborigine’ as black, in the bush and a welfare burden feeds a common stereotype. The questions themselves engage with a fixed narrative around Aboriginality rather than with Aboriginal people themselves.

Perceived cultural difference extends to a sense of immorality within Aboriginal society itself:

4. I want to know why Aboriginal women who speak out about violence toward women and children are silenced by their own people.

5. Why is there so much lateral violence between Indigenous people?
6. Why are so many Aboriginal people in jail?

These latter questions showcase the key characteristic of each of the questions pertaining to the deficit discourse. A deep ingroup cultural bias supported through select narratives, constructs Aboriginal culture as insufficient, problematic or dysfunctional. As discussed in the following chapter (Ch 9), the moral and emotive reasoning that underpins this discourse ensures its justification even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

Many of the questions fell in an area I earlier described as 'sanitised acceptance' (see page 81 for a discussion). They are 'safe questions' in terms of avoiding the cultural challenge directed towards Aboriginal people inherent in the deficit discourse and issues of power and critical reasoning inherent in the humanitarian discourse (discussed below). Many questions in this category emerge as a point of reflection around the engagement that members of the dominant culture have with Aboriginal people. These include terms of address, spaces around cultural interaction and a key interface of the Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relationship, that of 'welcome to country'.

7. Do you prefer 'Aboriginal' or 'Indigenous'?
8. Are there cultural taboos white people unknowingly break when meeting an Indigenous person?
9. What is a welcome to country[19]?

A large proportion of questions seek answers to social areas of concern inclusive of issues around identity, racism and cultural appropriation.

10. As most of us are mixed heritage, do you also relate to those parts of your heritage that are non-Indigenous?
11. Are light-skinned Aboriginal people treated differently?
12. How do you feel about white people wearing Aboriginal motif clothing?

The most interesting from a dialogical perspective, are those that throw the gaze back onto 'white' society either in terms of knowledge or attitude.

[19] A Welcome to Country is a protocol where Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners welcome others to the land of their ancestors.

13. What is the one thing that you wished more non-Indigenous Australians understood about Indigenous Australians?
14. How do you feel when white people champion for you?

This category is intriguing. Collectively the questions in this category reveal, on the one hand, a lack of knowledge of, and engagement with Aboriginal culture. Additionally, questions avoid issues directly concerned with power. The complexity and contested elements inherent between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are circumvented. On the other hand, the questions also reveal a willingness to learn about Aboriginal culture from Aboriginal people themselves. The invitation to speak together, to hear one another afresh has been taken up. There is reflection around traditional, conservative modes of situating Aboriginality and an acknowledgement that the positioning of Aboriginal people has hitherto, and may still be, wrong. While the topic is delimited, the invitation to talk as equals has been tentatively accepted.

As I discuss elsewhere (Atkinson 2019b), the humanitarian discourse goes a step further to draw on notions of human rights, compassion and respect. It is also characterised by critical reflection with the potential for mutual action and positive transformation for members of both parties. Notably, an attempt to bridge the sense of constructed difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia is made in support of equality, health indices or simply understanding.

15. What can white Australians do to support Indigenous Australians in moving towards racial equality?
16. What are the biggest issues facing Aboriginal people today?
17. What can we do to bridge the gap between our two cultures?

As the following statements reveal, ‘difficult issues’ are also broached.

18. What do you think about the reputation of substance abuse in Aboriginal communities?
19. Is child abuse and domestic violence an issue in some Aboriginal communities and how can it be addressed?

The juxtaposition of these questions with those in the deficit category above reveals important differences. Markedly absent are the imposed constraints of national identity and

moral arrogance so strong in questions based on deficit. Such constraint is replaced by an invitation for Aboriginal people to voice their answers to complex cultural concerns.

Issues around power, identity and equality are key areas of concern within the humanitarian discourse. While the first question below reveals a level of naivety, it differs from questions in the previous category, that of sanitised acceptance, by focusing on the pain inflicted on Aboriginal people by the culturally dominant society. The other two questions likewise target genuine areas of Aboriginal concern.

20. Are the Stolen Generations still important today?
21. Why is self-determination important to Aboriginal people?
22. What does a reconciled Australia look like to you?

The humanitarian discourse is one which confronts difficult questions while inviting Aboriginal people to speak. There is a sense of respect and humility in recognizing that the 'mainstream' population is part of the problem and not the solution. There is also a recognition of inequality that extends from the past into the present alongside a recognition of the need for change. While morality can be a focus it is based on a shared moral fairness and societal wellbeing within a broad recognition that we are all human together (Atkinson 2019b).

Collectively the Deadly Questions Campaign reveal not simply different discourses of Aboriginal culture but also, I suggest, different constructions of the dominant culture. On the one hand are those people who favour fixed cultural narratives underpinned by perceived different values. On the other hand, there lies an acknowledgement of shared humanity divided through wrongs in the past and inequality in the present. Between these two perspectives are people willing to converse with and to learn from Aboriginal people. The point made in Chapter 4 is supported in terms of the layering of the culturally dominant society. In other words, there is not one 'mainstream' Victorian community with a collective sense of cultural identity. The interface between the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal culture is far more complex.

The facilitators

The question of how facilitators viewed their cultural identity was met with a sense of difficulty in terms of finding an acceptable answer. While respondents were very comfortable in identifying with their professional selves, their cultural identity was much more problematic. For many respondents, this difficulty was coupled with, and possibly a

direct result of, the sense of discomfort they felt regarding what may be referred to as popular national constructions and a white nationalist discourse.

> 23. I don't feel comfortable with what it means to be Australian (Sella).
> 24. in the 'gross unwashed middle Australian psyche' the viewpoint frankly is just get on with it or get over it. It was hundreds of years ago that wrongs took place. Why can't aboriginal people move on? (Nom).

As one facilitator graphically put it

> 25. We've got culture just some of it is shit. (Fleck).

While facilitator respondents were clearly uncomfortable with a 'mainstream' national discourse there was clear identification with what may be termed humanitarian values. Variations of the following statement by Nom were common.

> 26. The basis of being a good human being is to care about others and have some form of empathy. There is also a responsibility as a member of the human race to look more broadly (Nom).

Interestingly two facilitators chose an extended sense of identity imbued not by cultural values but by story. For Hock, his ancestral story was rooted in Celtic ancestry. For Fleck, what he terms the 'British Judea Christian tradition' served as a moral guide in viewing, relating and respecting people as fellow human beings.

> 27. I'm a Christian humanist. Being Australian for me is about place, imbued with a set of values that come in any society…the British Judea Christian tradition sits behind that. I see that as linked to the Australian story and my story as well. (Fleck).
> 28. My origins are with the Cornish Celts… Celtic Saxon warrior sage. My identity is characterized by ancestry (Hocke).

It is an interesting question as to what constitutes both the British Judea Christian tradition and the Celtic, Saxon warrior identity. My sense in talking with these two participants is that they may be equated with stories given substance by the deeds, knowledges and morality of people in the past, who have bequeathed a coherent, accessible and personally meaningful narrative for the present. Above all they assisted these participants to move beyond the stereotype of the white, privileged 'mainstream' Australian and thereby relate to Aboriginal people from a moral or ancestral-based cultural perspective.

Cultural difference with Aboriginal people was alternatively structured around privilege, positioned as a narrative, and shaped by present and past abuse.

> 29. The difference I guess in lifestyle and opportunity is pretty stark. I have a relatively privileged background (Nom).
> 30. My story does not involve exclusion … Aboriginal people, because of invasion, because of exclusion, dispossession have actually bound together in terms of identity (Fleck).
> 31. As a member of the mainstream we don't have to deal with the fear that people's perception of my cultural group is going to be influenced in how I will engage in everyday conversations. It is an enormous burden we don't have to think about (Zeich).

I find this latter comment particularly informative. Being a product of the dominant cultural group ensures freedom from the responsibility of defining, defending and authenticating one's cultural identity.

It is within the nexus of privilege, inclusivity and reflexivity that I feel we can begin to define the cultural values of the facilitators. Identifying with universal humanitarian values, an imagined ancestry, or a sense of story engenders empathy and understanding of Aboriginal people beyond a narrow minded and opinionated nationalistic cultural discourse. This raises intriguing dialogical questions from an 'intra'-cultural, not just an 'inter'-cultural perspective. For those members of the dominant society, the treaty process is not limited to working with Aboriginal people concerning Aboriginal demands; it also concerns a reflective orientation towards their own culture and sense of identity.

Aboriginal people involved in the treaty process

In contrast to facilitators, questions around Aboriginal identity drew a considered, self-confident response from Aboriginal participants.

> 32. It is about tapping into something bigger than who we are (**Ena**).
> 33. Culture and identity is what we live and breathe. It is being strong, black and proud (**Ellie**).
> 34. It's pride, to think that I belong to one of the oldest living cultures in the world gives me immense pride (**Reh**).

Aboriginal respondents expressed the sense of difference with the dominant culture in diverse ways. Predominant themes included ancestry, family, connection with the past and continuity with the land.

35. White culture – it's very different, Aboriginal people are very family centred, family orientated (**Ellie**).
36. '65,000 years of strength, you don't have that'…We know something because we can feel something the sense of place is about a knowing that is inside us, that lives within us (**Ena**).
37. White society. It lacks commitment to spirituality … Aboriginal people are very spiritually based (**Raul**).

I recognize that I was dealing with a select group of Aboriginal people; community leaders committed to the strengths of their culture. While there is an implication that white culture is not family centred (Ellie), does not have a sense of place (Ena) nor spiritual commitment (Raul), the comments appeared grounded in the strengths of Aboriginal culture, rather than a stereotyping of the dominant culture. In point of fact, I was drawn to the sense of positivity, authenticity and what I interpret as resilient possibility contained within these meanings. Whether it was the 'something bigger than ourselves' of Ena (statement 34), of exploring strength, pride and what it means to be 'black' of Ellie (statement 35), or of belonging to 'one of the oldest living cultures in the world' of Reh (statement 36), there was an undeniable pride in Aboriginal culture that carried over to an identified difference with the dominant culture (statements 42-44); a sense of cultural embeddedness absent from the expressions of cultural identity expressed by the facilitators.

Interestingly, the sense of surety in Aboriginal culture did not necessarily translate to a sense of ease or effortlessness in understandings of Aboriginality. Indeed, as the following statements reveal, there was an element of struggle and emotional challenge for Aboriginal respondents when engaging with their cultural identity.

38. Mate that's a PhD…It's an in-depth question, its got many answers (**Raul**).
39. I still struggle with what that means, as the whole Aboriginal community struggles with what that means and the mainstream community struggles with what that means. It raises its own dilemmas and questions constantly (**Ena**).
40. It conjures up a lot of emotions, a lot of happiness, pride, sadness at the same time (**Reh**).

Despite the indistinct, indefinable quality regarding Aboriginal identity apparent in these comments there was a definite understanding of what was being fought for, what was being defended. As shown below, the spiritual tiredness and fatigue associated with a seemingly

never-ending struggle against racism and ignorance was countered by the spirit of those who have gone before, and those to come.

41. It's exhausting, it really is, but that's what keeps me going (**Reh**).
42. You're dealing with racism and ignorance on a daily cycle it's exhausting, but who's got the right to lay down. You've got to find a way to protect the future or create a future (**Raul**).
43. It is exhausting [the struggle]. Our people are still dying young. Our old people fought so hard and they had absolutely nothing, we can't give up on it (**Ellie**).

I think, this is the point. Aboriginal culture is resilient and contains possibility because of the continuous struggle to define and be true to itself under the imposed constraints of the dominant culture. A continuous effort by community leaders that draws on both the struggles of the past and the aspirations of the future to create shifts in the cultural landscape in the present. As one respondent said:

44. I identify with the struggles of my community that they have faced over the last couple of hundred years. We've survived, adapted, been resilient and we are strengthening culture and re-enlivening cultural practice…because of who we are (**Adi**).

One of the biggest challenges in this 'struggle' was the failure of the dominant culture to recognise the past, or even be aware of the struggle facing Aboriginal people.

45. [I feel] sadness that there were crimes against humanity that were committed on Aboriginal people in this country and the rest of the country don't want to talk about it (**Reh**).
46. For Aboriginal people, this country is the mother earth, yet we are the ones who have to fit in to a society or culture that doesn't understand, or want to accept the past (**Ellie**).

It is here, I believe, that we can begin to discern a key dialogical element around the Aboriginal-mainstream divide. While not proposing that such sentiments are expressed by all Aboriginal Victorians, for these Aboriginal respondents, understanding and discussing the past is a necessary part of cultural renewal. It also presents as an opportunity to explore a shared cultural history with the dominant culture.

To sum up this section, there is not one 'mainstream' Victorian society with a collective sense of cultural identity, but rather a morally layered community. At one extreme are those who view Aboriginal people from a stereotypical, deficit perspective (statements 1-6). There are also those who take a humanitarian perspective to cultural difference to seek ways of moving forward together (statements 15-17), explore difficult cultural issues (statements 18, 19) and recognize that 'white people' have been part of the problem (statements 20-22). Between the two extremes is a discourse I refer to as sanitised acceptance. A space of learning from Aboriginal people about Aboriginal culture (statements 7-14). Facilitators of treaty were culturally unsure (statements 23, 24) and uncomfortable with mainstream depictions of culture (statements 25-27). Identifying with broad based humanitarian values (statement 28) or extended meanings around cultural identity (statements 29-30) helped to establish a sense of connection with Aboriginal people not withstanding a recognition of privilege and exclusion (statements 31-33). By contrast Aboriginal people, to paraphrase Ellie, lived and breathed culture (statements 34-36) and were strongly aware of cultural difference with the mainstream (statements 37-39). While there was challenge and struggle in understanding Aboriginal identity (statements 40-42), overcoming such struggle was a key strength of Aboriginal culture itself (statements 46) enabling people to continue (statements 43-45) in the face of perpetual prejudice. At the same time reluctance of government and the dominant culture to recognize the past and the strengths of Aboriginal culture was a source of present pain and constraint (statements 47-48). As such, while Aboriginal culture draws strength and pride from a deep connection with the land, and with ancestors, the journey is not easy. At the same time, it is a struggle tempered by a deep sense of appreciation, bordering on awe of the elders who have paved the way and an aspirational future for Victorian society.

Shared learning practices and the bridging of difference

Shared learning refers to the exploration and negotiation of meanings that span cultural borders through the considered construction of a shared vision. An obvious beginning point for shared learning practices in this case study was the idea and the ideals behind treaty. What differences there were between non-indigenous and indigenous respondents, whether in terms of past stories or present experiences, were bridged, at least outwardly, by the aspirational vision of treaty. Having said that the treaty process, and the treaty itself, represents an unknown path. There are no examples or models to choose from that can accommodate the unique position of Victorian Aboriginal people.

47. The vision for treaty is something that is quite powerful, it is complex and we don't quite know where it is going but the vision is there. That vision has been a powerful driver for the process (Zeich).
48. It's not a dictated process that will follow from A to B. Its very nature is that it is going to be fluid and discursive and that too seems great to me (Nom).
49. It [treaty] is not a static kind of thing (**Ellie**).

Within this fluid process there was a clear acknowledgement and agreement that treaty will involve reparations for past actions and political representation. Additionally, the vision for treaty goes beyond these legal and political rights. The importance of truth concerning the past and equality in the present are uppermost. This desire for a seismic shift in the cultural relationship that includes reparation, changes in power relations and human to human recognition between Aboriginal people and the broader Victorian community is clearly in evidence in the following statements:

50. Treaty is about rights recognition reparation and legal effect-this is a framework for them to think about a response to a situation A recognition of the theft of land, dispossession, a consequence is the state of affairs today (Fleck).
51. I'm not saying that treaty should just be symbolic, there has to be reparation, but from my personal point of view it's about that true acknowledgement of the past, it's about that true acknowledgement of who we are today. … This is about recognition and this is about truth telling, about Aboriginal society, aboriginal cultures taking their rightful place on an international platform (**Reh**).
52. The treaty process is about acknowledging the aboriginal presence, about acknowledging history, the horrors of history, it is a about coming to an understanding that this has happened because you annihilated a whole race of people-about hearing that story, of owning that story it's a cost to you it's cost you immigrant invaders a lot more (**Ena**).

From the point of view of shared practice, the treaty process, as it currently stands, is borderless in time and space; the latest chapter in an ongoing process of recovery from the brutality of settlement, the ignorance of mission and the horrendous racism of the Stolen

Generation. In the following statements Reh outlines the continuity with the past, Ellie with the future. Raul points to an agreed vision of an acknowledged and esteemed place in society for Aboriginal difference.

> 53. When you look at colonisation in the country-ignorance brutality, emotional cultural brutality, then massacres started to decline, then came no voice lone rangers-individual Aboriginal campaigners, then birth of Aboriginal organisations (**Reh**).
> 54. Treaty-it's an agreement to forge a shared vision, one we can shake hands on….to create a vision together, a world we aspire to (**Raul**).
> 55. I want my kids, grandkids to be accepted in the country they were born in and have connections with for tens of thousands of years (**Ellie**).

Additionally, treaty as a metaphoric journey, is not one *just* for Aboriginal people and the Victorian government alone. It also requires a cultural shift for the dominant culture foregrounding the recognition and acknowledgement of Aboriginal people:

> 56. I think it is all Victorians' journey. I think it is important for non -Aboriginal Victorians to stay informed to stay up to date with what is happening, to voice your opinion. If you can support what we are trying to achieve you have a responsibility in not being bystanders (**Reh**).
> 57. This process of recognition is important and it might be even more important for the white people than for the black people (**Adi**).
> 58. Join, we can't do it by ourselves. We need the support of non-Aboriginal people. We need the understanding of non-Aboriginal people (**Ellie**).

The journey of treaty, to extend Reh's metaphor expressed above, may represent multiple things to multiple people and present differently to different groups, but ultimately there is general agreement that it represents a societal movement towards a more inclusive, *and better* society.

Equally there is general agreement that a major challenge to the treaty process lies in the cultural prejudice of modern society. In this regard the gaze of treaty is strongly focused on

three related areas. These are a) the perceived prevalence of racism and ignorance within the Victorian community:

> 59. there is a real ignorance about Aboriginal people, what we want, how we want to be treated (**Ellie**).
>
> 60. Lack of maturity, lack of vision, lack of depth. The lack of knowledge of indigenous people in the modern economies. Very stereotypical knowledge of Aboriginal people …. mainstream people are knowledgeable about the deficits (**Raul**).

b) the approaches to tackle such bigotry and prejudice:

> 61. The process of treaty is to slowly change perceptions through exposure to the aspirations of Aboriginal people (Haal).
>
> 62. The hope for transformation lies in education-educating young people into the truth of what occurred in Australia and in Victoria while acting on the bigotry that still exists (Nom).

and; c) the recognition that racism is not just about attitude but also the cultural mindset:

> 63. It's an historical sense of superiority that has infiltrated national identity (**Adi**).
>
> 64. We have problems in society today because of a lack of coherent moral guidance. People don't know the language of morality. When power gets involved over love, problems emerge (Fleck).

In the context of the Victorian Aboriginal treaty, tackling racism is a shared concern, acting to bridge cultural difference between Victorian Aboriginal people involved in treaty, mainstream facilitators of treaty and members of Victorian society themselves (see statements 15-17, 20-22 as examples).

It is notable however that shared learning, is delimited to certain areas. In other words, while there were identifiable and shared areas of concern between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents engaged in the treaty process, such as the treaty process itself and tackling racism, there were other areas that were touched on but not explored deeply. One area is the disengagement of the broader Victorian population with the treaty process itself. The following statements show that disengagement is recognized. There is nevertheless a lack of focus on the treaty process around how to engage with this category:

> 65. Symbolically we're still on the edge of town, we're not too sure how to come in and whether we're welcome. The town is not

going to shift. You have to figure out how to operate in that. You're in survival mode because people by and large wouldn't blink if we weren't in the town (**Raul**).

66. Why wouldn't you want to learn about the country you were born in, it's history, it's cultural connections, our old people were amazing warriors, scientists (**Ellie**).

67. How do you bring non-Aboriginal Victorians into this journey into the conversation about the benefits of what treaty means for them (Zeich)?

The category of 'sanitised acceptance' introduced above, has a natural alignment with this delimited engagement with Aboriginal culture. 'Positioning people on the edge of town' (statement 69), metaphorically speaking, places Aboriginal people far enough away to avoid direct engagement while still close enough to maintain the status quo. Not learning about the country, you were born in (statement 70) avoids difficult questions about the supposed superiority of western culture and the western scientific worldview. Not engaging with treaty (statement 71) avoids looking too deeply into one's cultural baggage; the cultural meanings that frame identity based upon an incomplete reading of cultural truth. Such examples illustrate an aspect of Freirean understandings of dialogue where issues are limited to areas of clear identification and naming. Engaging with the disengaged appears as an under-represented concern in the treaty process.

To summarise, this section on shared learning reveals 'treaty' as a powerful vision to bridge difference between facilitators of treaty and Aboriginal people involved in treaty. While it is not necessarily a clear, demarcated focus (statements 49-51), it provides a space for a renewed vision of Aboriginal-'dominant' societal relations (statements 55-57) and a sense of shared journey to something new (statements 58-61). There is also a recognition of the challenge of broader societal attitudes (statements 62, 63) and ways to explain (statements 67, 68) and counter such racially based ideals (statements 64-66). Touched on, but not a strong focus was the identification of disengagement with Aboriginal culture and with treaty itself. While treaty is powerful in terms of creating a vision of change and to tackle and investigate clearly identified areas of concern there is less space to explore more nebulous areas that nevertheless may have important impacts on treaty.

Transformation

In Chapter Three I describe transformation as the enablement of people to initiate a process of mutual action, critical consciousness, and shared humanity for the purpose of positive human change. I also have noted that transformation can occur at an individual or a collective level, impacted by the discourses applied to the cultural other. While the first two case studies gave examples of transformation at an individual level, this case study involving the relationship between members of the dominant society and Aboriginal people in Victoria, exhibit elements of a collective transformation.

I make the case here that one area of transformation was in a shift in discourse away from deficit. From a practical perspective, as an example, there was a reversal in the dialogues between dominant cultural members and Aboriginal people in who was deemed to have important knowledge and the corresponding direction of learning. As noted in Chapter One, learning that travels from members of the group with lesser power towards members of dominant cultural groups is a powerful element of intercultural dialogue. Non-Aboriginal facilitators of treaty were notably learning from Aboriginal people rather than the other way around.

> 68. The treaty is acting on what Aboriginal people want (Fleck).
> 69. It's about listening to Aboriginal people talking about what they want … to keep learning of self-determination what that means practically. I think learning that is not simple but key (Haal).

A state-wide forum in April 2017 that I attended to discuss community consultations on the treaty process is a further example of such learning. At times it brought out heated discussions between Aboriginal people on the floor, representatives of the interim treaty council and the Aboriginal Affairs Minister Natalie Hutchins. Nevertheless, as the following personal observation shows, there a was a bidirectional flow of information within what was a charged atmosphere of treaty discussion:

> 70. The statewide forum was not easy for the facilitators of the treaty who were consistently questioned regarding the treaty process. What impressed me was not just that facilitators listened to the criticism, but expressed the underlying message that they were in fact seeking answers at the forum rather than delivering information (personal observation).

The appearance of government listening to Aboriginal people as equals within a vision of treaty and an acknowledgement of self-determination is also an example of such learning.

> 71. The Andrews' government-if anything they have cracked the door open. At least that conversation—that moment of invitation has happened (**Ena**).
>
> 72. Building a representative body is a political act, to stand toe to toe with government and negotiate treaties …. It requires government and society to give stuff up. The first task is representation. It means letting go of power. If you want to empower any disadvantaged group, they need their political institutions (Fleck).
>
> 73. This government has been really strong on self-determination and on treaty (**Ellie**).

While not explored directly in this case study, for Aboriginal respondents the funded opportunities to discuss Aboriginal issues in the context of positive cultural change at the community assembly appeared transformative. In other words, the treaty process was also a shared learning space for Aboriginal people themselves that had a transformative potential. Coming to agreement across a diversity of views, while problematic, appeared to strengthen key meanings around Aboriginal culture.

> 74. When I participated on the community assembly I was privileged to work with people from different walks of life, a whole raft of people who had one thing in common and that is we are Aboriginal people. It was really hard. Thirty-three people with different views and opinions…it just demonstrated for me what our old people did in the past. You sit around, you talk, you have your robust discussions. At the end of the day we all came to agreement about things. It gave me real hope and knowledge. It was amazing (**Ellie**).

Cultural transformation was not limited to Aboriginal people but extended to non-Aboriginal people in the treaty process. Haal and Nom both spoke of the cultural value of interaction. I, myself felt touched in my conversations with Aboriginal community members:

> 75. The most significant aspect of the treaty process. The exposure to these amazing aboriginal leaders and their generosity in

allowing us to walk with them along the journey and assist in the small ways we can (Haal).

76. They were as open to us as we were to them. It was humbling … we just didn't know; we hadn't thought about it. I learnt how blinkered I and I guess collectively we are and that needs to change (Nom).

77. One of the first people I met at the statewide forum was a young Aboriginal man, with his partner and young baby. To my western middle class eyes they appeared 'rough'. We talked about prisons and I wondered if he had been in prison myself. I mentioned, almost apologetically that I was not Aboriginal. His reply forced me to recognize and reflect on my cultural prejudice. 'Doesn't matter, we're all human eh' (personal observation).

Additionally, a further area of potential transformation lay within the vision of an aspirational future. There was a recognized onus on members of the dominant culture to facilitate change within the national mindset of people along with significant interest by Aboriginal people in instigating change in the dominant culture in order to make it more inclusive:

78. There is truth, there are competing truths. The responsibility we have to understand what is the baggage of my truth that I don't get your truth (Fleck).

79. we' the non-Aboriginal community, not just the white community but non-Aboriginal Australians We all need to take responsibility for helping support Aboriginal Victorians …in finding a successful future (Nom).

80. The adoption of Australian identity that incorporates indigenous notions of ways of being, doing and knowing [sharing the] positive aspects of our culture that can be shared. White Australian society will be better off as soon as that occurs and will experience that sense of belonging that can only really make positive difference in this country. They need to stand up in the face of the onslaught of detractors in the process of treaty (**Adi**).

The treaty process has created transformative learning spaces where otherwise they would not have occurred. The acknowledgement that treaty concerns Aboriginal needs (statements

68-70) and that government is listening to Aboriginal people (statements 71-72) to act on self-determination (statements 73) is a departure away from previous processes. Likewise, creating spaces for Aboriginal people to discuss meanings of Aboriginality itself within the context of identity shows a readiness to support, rather than undermine, Aboriginal culture. At an individual level there is also a clear enhancement of cultural awareness (statements 75-77) amid a recognition of the need for change (statements 78-80). However, as Nom notes there is still a long way to go.

> 81. The original brief was to help people see the value of the contribution that the Aboriginal Victorian community made. That is job one. We've got a long way to go (Nom).

At this point in time transformation at a societal level is an aspiration, a dream; one for Aboriginal Victorians who are learning to 'dream big' (Ellie), 'live in two worlds' (Reh), and to hang on to the integrity of the ancestors under a constant barrage of cultural domination. However, it is a dream shared by members of the dominant society who value Aboriginal culture. Exploring whether transformation occurs when a critical mass of people change the way they think or whether a new discourse emerges that collectively shifts people's attitudes and biases within a society is not an area of direct focus in this thesis. Adi, I believe, makes the case for the latter in making the case (statement 80) that 'White Australian society' needs to stand in the face of the onslaught of detractors in the process of treaty. I tend to agree. That while individuals can make a difference it is only when we collectively reflect on what is important in life can we make the necessary shifts to be, in Freire's words, more fully human.

Discussion

The cultural backdrop of the treaty process is characterised, on the one hand, by the cultural imposition by the dominant society on Aboriginal people. There is a deep sense, that Aboriginal culture is not accepted, embraced nor valued. Instead, Aboriginal people remain in survival mode, fighting for their rights 'to be'. What is more, the lack of recognition, acknowledgement and political representation ensure that Aboriginal culture has always been and continues to be vulnerable to the whims of government and the norms of the dominant culture.

In this case study the intercultural space was positioned in terms of Aboriginal respondents involved in treaty, facilitators of treaty inclusive of parliamentarians and the Victorian

community who participated in the Deadly Questions Campaign. Aboriginal respondents strongly identified with Aboriginal culture. As one respondent noted, 'it is what we live and breathe' (Ellie). The courage of those who had gone before, and those to come not only provided the impetus to maintain the struggle but helped define Aboriginal culture itself. Facilitators in contrast, were more comfortable with their sense of professional identity and in identifying with humanitarian values. Far from defending Australian mainstream culture they saw a need to understand Aboriginal culture and the racist elements, that impacted so heavily on Aboriginal life. Within the complexity of the non-Indigenous Victorian community an obvious finding from the analysis of the 'Deadly Questions Campaign' was the diversity of attitudes towards Aboriginal people. There were those sympathetic to the Aboriginal perspective on history and the continual fight for recognition today. Equally there were those opposed to any such recognition, seeing themselves as cultural victims while peddling a racist discourse that minimized the value of Aboriginal culture and the brutality of the colonial past. Between these two groups were those comfortable to engage with Aboriginal culture, but only so far.

The treaty process offers a space for Aboriginal people to pursue recognition and acknowledgement in a society that has hitherto offered little of either, a coming together of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people for a culturally better society. While the practicalities of treaty are somewhat nebulous, ideals of reparation, recognition and acknowledgment of the past created a shared learning space. Within this shared vision, there is a sense of treaty as a mutual journey; one to build understanding in all Victoria. A principal challenge in this regard are the attitudes of members of the dominant society. Identifying, understanding and confronting the bigotry underpinning the deficit discourse and engaging with the disengaged are two foci of this case study. Notably however, while there is a recognized need to engage with racism there is less emphasis on engaging with the disengaged. The shared learning space in this regard is limited.

From a transformative perspective, mutual action, shared humanity and critical understanding were key features of the treaty process for both interview participants and those Deadly Questions respondents who held a humanitarian bias. Both the political process and the Deadly Questions Campaign offered tangible projects from which to drive a transformative agenda. As Ena said (statement 75) the 'invitation [to talk] has happened.' Although not explored within this case study it was obvious that spaces created by the treaty process for Aboriginal people to talk about Aboriginal issues, such as the treaty assembly,

were potentially transformative in the sense of creating a critically reflective space of reflection. As noted in the framework, a foundational element of transformation lay in reflection over one's identity and the positioning of the identity of the other.

From the perspective of Australian culture there were also shifts. Not only were mainstream facilitators learning from Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people were also being resourced to do their own research about what they wanted, aligned with Daniel Andrews' statement that 'Aboriginal people will lead th[e] change'. There was also a clear orientation to stimulate meaningful change within the dominant society, to change perceptions, to move away from a language of deficit and understand self-determination. Nevertheless, from the perspective of Australian culture transformation remains aspirational rather real.

Ch 9 Comparing case studies: Dialogue in the cultural landscape

> His answer shocked me. 'Why, what have we got to learn from you' (personal reflection CS 3).

This reflective statement was made in the context of speaking to an Aboriginal academic regarding my expressed belief that cultural difference creates opportunities for people to learn from each other. His response resulted in my own self-reflective questioning of the role of dialogue in society. What do we learn through dialogue and why? What have we genuinely got to teach each other, and why do people respond differently to cultural others? They were questions that I pondered repeatedly during this thesis as I sought to understand the phenomenon of intercultural dialogue. Such questions shape the focus of this chapter which, collectively compares each of the three case studies and responds the the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 4.

The chapter opens by revisiting the theoretical framework which guided both the research methodology and the research analysis. As the reader is aware, I based this theoretical framework on a model comprising three spheres a) the intercultural space, b) shared learning and c) transformation through shared learning. Furthermore, I highlighted the importance of three discourses in positioning the cultural other - the deficit/dichotomization discourse, the sanitised discourse and the humanitarian discourse. This chapter foregrounds the impact of discourse on social learning and transformation to address questions about why we may choose to learn or not to learn from others and the ensuing changes that may result.

Revisiting the framework

In Chapters 2 & 3 I built the case for a three tired framework to theoretically position intercultural dialogue. The framework was based on a) the concept of cultural difference between groups inclusive of different discourses, b) the bridging of difference through an inclusive vision and c) transformation, both individual and collective, framed through the understanding of predominant dialogue scholars. I briefly outline here the key aspects of this framework as it has played a crucial methodological and analytical role in the thesis.

For the initial sphere, exploring the concept of difference between groups, I used a critical-constructivist understanding of culture. This provided both a means for exploring the way in which cultural difference was constructed between people, as well as the juxtaposition between such difference and the social context. I included a sense of people's morality in this category. This serves to foreground the cultural bias that we *all* have towards 'others' as well as the different influencing factors that contribute to cultural bias within (not just between) cultural groups. To frame an understanding of such moral bias, I utilised Haidt's moral foundation theory (see Chapter Three). To recap, Haidt (Haidt 2012; Haidt, Graham & Joseph 2009) suggests that we actively construct and internalise cultural meanings both cognitively and emotionally according to our moral foundations. A moral positioning around values of loyalty, authority and sanctity favour an in-group bias. I referred to this as 'nativism'. Nativists favour an in-group bias believing that their country, their culture is clearly identifiable, unique and worth preserving. The loyalty, authority and sanctity they feel in their constructions of national or ethnic identity frame not only how they see themselves but also others.

By contrast those who identify with moral values of fairness and protection from harm, the cosmopolitans, are more likely to be culturally flexible and inclusive, sharing a viewpoint that a 'universal community of world citizens functions as a positive ideal to be cultivated' (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2013, para. 1). The former group, the nativists, view the cultural other as threat; the latter endorse universal care and cultural inclusiveness. Between these two poles, though occupying its own unique space, lies what I refer to as sanitised acceptance - a space of readiness and willingness to learn about the cultural other but a reluctance to learn too much. The overall result is a different set of discourses brought to the intercultural space directed towards the cultural other. Nativism contributes to discourses of exclusion and deficit; cosmopolitanism plays a role in forming a discourse of shared humanity. Between these two groups lies the discourse of delimited, or 'sanitised acceptance'.

For the second sphere, focused on the bridging of difference in the dialogue process, I found profit in the social learning theories of Etienne Wenger (1999). According to Wenger all learning is socially contextualised and impacted by people's sense of identity, their capacity to negotiate meanings of significance and the participative structures they have access to. Wenger's focus is on how people negotiate such difference within a shared learning environment and an inclusive or overarching vision. It makes intuitive sense that the

discourses we hold towards the cultural other and towards ourselves will have an impact at this social learning level. Learning from the 'other' in reference to the rhetorical question that opens this chapter, is impacted by the moral bias we position both ourselves and those we see as culturally different from ourselves.

The third sphere, transformation, focuses predominantly on exploring how dialogue contributes to both individual and collective cultural transformation. I drew on three main figures in my framing of this process. Paulo Freire (1970), who has been hugely influential in the area of pedagogy and human development through his critical orientation to dialogue, David Bohm (1996), who sees in dialogue a vehicle to human consciousness, and Martin Buber (1965) who extends dialogue into spaces of silence and solitude. Collectively these three authors emphasize the importance of critical understanding, mutual action and a sharing of humanity to enhance cultural dialogues. Again, the discourses used in the intercultural space will have impacts at the level of the transformative sphere.

The following figure, reproduced from the introduction of Part B, depicts this framework. Identified difference, emerging identities and discourse are key aspects of Sphere 1. Spheres Two and Three respectively identify shared learning and transformation as two further aspects of this model of intercultural dialogue. The arrows depict this framework as cyclical where the intercultural space impacts on both shared learning practices and transformation to further impact the cross-cultural interaction at a foundational level.

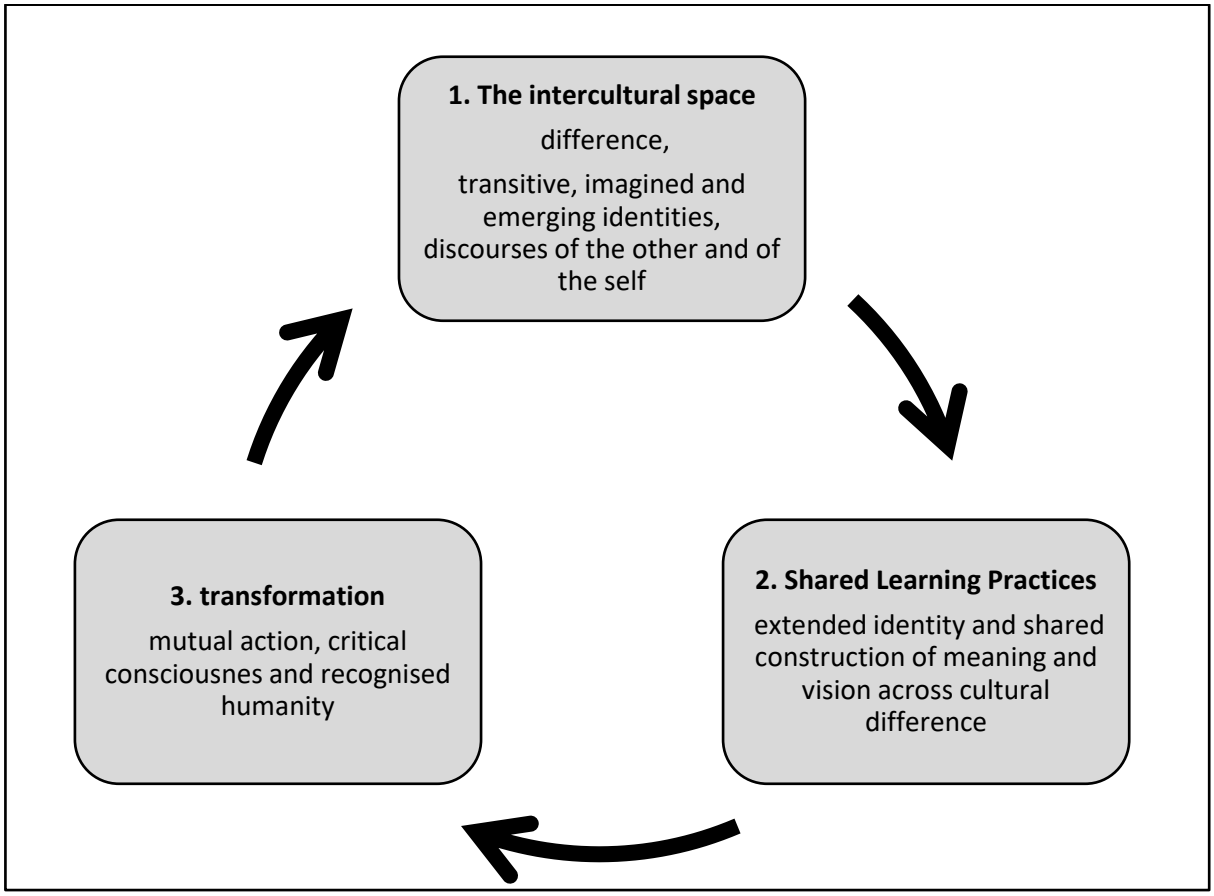

Figure 3 The theoretical framework for each of the case studies

The three case studies

To explore the phenomenon of dialogue in Australian society I conducted multiple case study research. Case Study One took place in the campus of an adult learning college in the Central Business District of the City of Melbourne. It also took place within a broader social, cultural and pedagogical context. The focus of adult learning delivery is increasingly on employability skills, standardisation, reporting and accountability. This contrasts with the dialogical traditions of adult education and a belief that any wholistic framing of adult learning must be inclusive of people's emerging sense of identity (see chapter six for a fuller description). As such the case study presents a tension between traditional learning ideals and contemporary approaches.

Case study two took place within a mentoring programme for people of refugee backgrounds run by a local NGO in the inner city of Melbourne. There is a recognition that the emphasis on welfare provision in settlement support programs does not meet the cultural needs of people of refugee backgrounds (Fozdar & Hartley 2014; Hatoss, 2012). As a consequence, some welfare organisations augment service provision with

empowerment approaches to create opportunities for people on humanitarian visas to strengthen their sense of connection and identity with Australian society. Mentor programs are one such approach. The alignment of mentoring with dialogical principals focused on the needs of refugees as expressed by refugees themselves makes this case study ideal in the context of the aims of this thesis and an interesting counterpoint to Case Study One (see Chapter Seven).

The third case specifically looks at the treaty process between Aboriginal people and the Victorian government. Treaty is a dialogical phenomenon. While the reconciliatory nature of the treaty process in this case study ensures a dialogical orientation to proceedings, its significance to the Aboriginal population in terms of reparation and recognition has illuminated cultural challenges in terms of identity for Aboriginal people and deep divisions amongst members of the dominant culture. Such tensions again offer rich areas of exploration from a dialogical perspective (see Chapter Eight).

Discourse and dialogue

In the dialogue space, it is through discourse that people defend their viewpoints, express their sense of identity and share their differences and similarities with others. As a foundational element of the intercultural space (see Figure 3 above), an exploration of discourse provides a comparative framing of the case studies. It thereby provides insight into how and why some people fail to engage, or even block, dialogical processes with 'cultural others' and the discursive differences within, not just between cultural groups. I find this latter concern particularly important as it challenges the interpretation of cultural groups as singular and cohesive. Additionally, the inclusion of the sanitised acceptance discourse provides an important middle ground in the positioning of the 'cultural other' between deficit on the one hand and shared humanity on the other. While this middle space is dialogically difficult to identify, characterised by disengagement and uncertainty, it is vital for understanding intercultural dialogue generally, especially in the context of cultural challenge.

The discussion that follows, while remaining anchored in the framework of intercultural dialogue described above, is structured upon the discourses themselves; that of deficit/dichotomization, sanitised acceptance and shared humanity. Statements taken from case studies are referenced according to the anonymous name of the respondent, statement number in the Case Study Chapter and the number of the Case Study (CS) itself. As in

previous chapters, the anonymous name of the ‘cultural other’ is referenced in bold text. Questions drawn from the Deadly Questions campaign are proceeded by the initials DQ. Where they are inclusive of Aboriginal responses the initials DQ are in bold type.

The deficit/dichotomization discourse

Moral values of loyalty, authority and sanctity support an in-group bias and a nativist understanding of social reality. The result is dichotomization with those identified as the ‘cultural other’ based on deficit and constructed difference. While the deficit discourse is observable in each of the case studies, I initially focus on the Aboriginal case study and the Deadly Questions campaign where questions regarding the past and welfare support, clearly reveal aspects of this discourse:

1. It's 2018, why is Aboriginal culture stuck in the past (DQ)?
2. You say you want to be equal, but you get so many concessions that the average Australians don't, do you think this is equality (DQ)?

The allusion that members of the Aboriginal culture are either ‘stuck’ or getting ‘concessions that the average Australians don't’, situates Aboriginal people not only in deficit, but as a welfare burden to the ‘fair’ and ‘equitable’ ‘mainstream’ society. Such identified ‘deficit’ extends to the perceived morality of Aboriginal people in casting themselves as victims of atrocities that have long since finished. In the questions that follow, Aboriginal people are positioned as perpetrators; mainstream members are, accordingly, the victims:

3. Why are non-Aboriginal Australians made to feel guilty about the past (DQ)?
4. If we are about healing from the past, why are Aboriginal people still trying to fight for land rights if we should be equal now (DQ)?
5. How do people alive today genuinely claim injury for something that happened to others more than 200 years ago (DQ)?

As I discuss elsewhere (Atkinson 2019b), such statements as those above (statements 3-5) not only reveal an extraordinary level of ignorance over the impact of colonization and ongoing racism, they also reveal the strongly moralistic perspective that people can hold

towards the cultural ‘other’. On the one hand the moral right of Aboriginal people to claim ‘present impacts through past actions’ is viewed as deceiving, on the other hand the right of members of the dominant culture to claim ‘unfair treatment’ is morally justified. As discussed in Chapter Four, justifying one’s position through blaming the other for ‘their deficits’ is a key a characteristic of this discourse designed to create an identifiable dichotomization between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It also serves to distract from the deficits of the dominant culture.

In order to gain insight into the moral motivation behind such questions and the philosophy of cultural nativism, I interviewed a parliamentarian who was against the treaty process. In reference to sentiments such as those expressed in the statements above, he argued the point that even though ‘you’ve got to respect the past … you can’t let it ruin the future’. The perception was that Aboriginal people use the past to seek unfair advantage. In so doing Aboriginal culture fails to take opportunities to ‘move forward’ in contrast to a ‘progressive Australian society’. The perceived narrative of ‘victimhood’ associated with the frontier wars and the Stolen Generation, was viewed from this perspective as being at odds with constructed Australian values of progress, fairness and development. It’s an interesting moral argument serving to situate Australian identity in values that Aboriginal people ‘lack’.

Interestingly the style of the deficit/dichotomization language is founded on a sense of stereotypical certainty. Aboriginal people ‘can’t get over the past’, they make ‘non-Aboriginal Australians … feel guilty about the past’ and ‘get so many concessions that average Australians don't’. Such language, contextualised by moral duality between a ‘progressive’ mainstream on the one hand and a ‘stuck’ Aboriginal society on the other, minimizes ambiguity to enhance dichotomization through a constructed stereotype of the ‘cultural other’ in so doing framing ‘culture itself as a positivist concept.

Positivist understandings of culture were mentioned above (page 34) where I noted that such framings are based upon the viewpoint that culture may be objectified. This approach has been particularly prevalent with communication-based theories to cultural interactions in order to explain the perceived dissonance between members of different cultural groups (Chuang 2003). From a dialogical perspective, as shown in this thesis, such an approach is limited as it potentially reduces intercultural dialogue to questions of identity rather than an interactive process whose parameters are constantly evolving.

Such nativist views were apparent in each case study. In fact, a noted area of similarity across case studies was the stark contrast between a nativist/collectivised categorization of the 'cultural other' and the diversity within such identified groups. In the first two case studies involving the adult migrant learner in the English language case study and people of refugee backgrounds in the mentoring program, there was obvious diversity which extended from markers such as ethnicity and religion to educational and professional experiences. In contrast to this diversity was the bureaucratic tendency to treat all adult migrant learners the same in adult English language provision. Likewise, the 'mainstream' referencing of refugees as a singular group means that the experience of societal integration is expressed not by the people themselves but the bureaucrats and the media of the dominant society.

In the third case study, while people strongly identified with Aboriginal culture, there was also a notable diversity. Respondents noted the key challenge of coming to agreement across the diversity of Aboriginal people who took part in one of the bodies to inform the treaty process; that of the Treaty Assembly. I observed very different attitudes to treaty. Treating all Victorian Aboriginal people as a singular collective group, such as occurs in mainstream discourse, ignores the complexity of Victorian Aboriginal identity. In other words, nativism mispresents the cultural reality of those positioned as the 'cultural other'. It foregrounds deficit while reducing the diversity of people's voices. As discussed below the results of this deficit discourse can devastating.

A similar theme across the case studies lay in the experiences of people themselves as a 'cultural other'. This included a sense of feeling culturally inadequate, awkward or deficient:

6. There was always these unanswered questions that nobody ever wanted to talk about and I had that kind of mind that kept saying wait a minute there's something wrong here. I started on a journey of self-discovery…. It just raised questions…. I had no concept of who I was (**Ena** CS 3).
7. I feel embarrassed not speaking English well (**Chaya**-statement 12 CS 1).
8. Sometimes you don't know the right way, the right way to do things (**Sam**-statement 9 CS 2).
9. I felt so shameful, so much shame. I think to myself I'm a failure (**Suuli** statement 19 CS 2).

a lack of cultural recognition:

10. You know this film, The Clap is insulting for us, for our religion. All she [the teacher] needed to do was ask us. Say do you want to watch this. We say no we don't want to watch this. No problem. But she didn't ask us. This is the problem (**Asad**-statement 33 CS 1).
11. I want my kids, grandkids to be accepted in the country they were born in and have connections with for tens of thousands of years (**Ellie** statement 57 CS 3).

and being cultural positioned:

12. Symbolically we're still on the edge of town (**Raul**-statement 69 CS 3).
13. The system is against me 100%. I want to give to this country, contribute. I know I can do anything but I have no chance. People look at me, they hear me they say no we don't want him. But they do not know me. What can I do? (**Asad** statement 17 CS 1).
14. I was qualified in my country. But that qualification counted for nothing. I felt at zero. My confidence was zero. I was rejected so many times; even for factory jobs (**Suuli** statement 8 CS 2).

Limiting the legitimization of people's culture, failing to understand the cultural challenges of their lives and casting doubt on their worth acts to devalue people's sense of cultural place, limiting any potential dialogue to the legitimacy of their presence. Likewise limiting a person's sense of power while minimizing the challenge of reconstructing one's cultural meanings in a new cultural environment, adds further layers to the stereotype of the 'cultural other'. Such 'delegitimization' not only places judgements on people's cultural journey; it also sidesteps the deeply emotional aspect of being 'culturally othered' that those in positions of dominance do not experience, nor can personally appreciate.

Interestingly, besides the Deadly Questions Campaign, the deficit discourse was strongly apparent in the English language case study. The labels of 'adult migrant learner' and 'teacher' in Case Study One acted to cement power differentials within the wider context of developing functional language skills that teachers were knowledgeable about and learners were not:

15. Teachers have more skills and knowledge than us. They teach us skills and knowledge. They know this society (**Thuy**).

16. I need to learn everything. Speaking, Reading, Writing, Listening. Everything…. teachers teach us what we need to learn. We don't know. This is what teachers are for (**Chaya**).

The curriculum, the system of delivery and assessment processes likewise favoured a structure where students were categorised according to their English language skills thereby ignoring other aspects of their lives inclusive of aspirations, imagined futures, past traumas and present cultural isolation. Everyday discourse reproduced such dichotomization. The subtle labelling of some students as 'good' in the following (statement 17) puts value judgements on those that are 'bad'.

17. We talked about students who had plateaued; those students who never seemed to progress beyond a certain level. We spoke at length about individuals. The students who had been at the institute for years, the ones who had been incorrectly placed. What they should do, where they should go. We compared them with 'good' students; those who worked hard and applied their learning (Personal observation statement 25 CS 1).

Such constructed deficit in turn was used to justify who made decisions in the intercultural space and who was favoured in such decisions.

Obviously, Aboriginal people have been positioned in a dichotomous relationship with the dominant society since colonisation. The 'migrant and refugee other' has been likewise positioned. Members of the dominant culture who utilise such a discourse, I suggest, are not seeking information from the 'cultural other' but rather cultural certainty by imposing meanings *on* the cultural other. A result of such a discourse is the marginalisation of cultural voices, a blocking of mutual cultural interaction, a reduction in the cultural confidence of the 'other' and a limitation on their cultural presence. Such meanings, contextualised by 'deficit' and 'nativism', serve not only to maintain a sense of cultural difference but to also limit interaction to questions around identity rather than supporting conditions for dialogue in spaces of mutual learning and transformation.

Sanitised acceptance discourse

In Chapter Four I described sanitised learning, as inhabiting a middle ground between the deficit and the humanitarian discourse. It moves any discussion to safe areas thereby negating the confrontation inherent in the deficit/ dichotomization discourse and issues of power, voice and identity of the humanitarian discourse. Although potentially rich in

cultural learning, it neither challenges the one who asks nor the one who answers. In minimising conflict, it controls spaces of interaction to limit cultural learning to acceptable areas. As such it lacks a transformative ethos.

As noted above, I view the English language case study as primarily based on a deficit model through highlighting the deficits of students and differences between students and teachers. This is not to say that the classroom itself was characterised by a deficit discourse. As I discuss below, individual teachers frequently (though not always) shifted the discourse away from student deficit. It was noticeable that teachers Alle and Paula recognised the detrimental impact that an exclusive adherence to the curriculum could bring, generating a shared learning space despite a curriculum which marginalised student voices:

> 18. Paula makes sure everyone learns. Everyone learns at the end of the day. Everyone understands. She asks you do you understand? I say yes I do or no I don't. Then if no she talks to me, explains to me how to do. She makes sure (**Asad** statement 40 CS 1).
> 19. Alle, she is an angel. She listens to me. Listens to everyone. She is very patient. She has time for me, time for everyone. good (**Unot** statement 42 CS 1).

In further support of Unot's comments (statement 19), Alle's grammar oriented EAL class was clearly inclusive and welcoming to take account of the confidence of students:

> 20. I visited Alle's class. The classroom was animated, learners, even those shy and demure were asking questions of the teacher or were in earnest discussion with their partners. People appeared engaged with both the whole class activities and their partner activities. Everyone appeared comfortable to share their learning. Each question was met with respect. I wasn't sure that what they were learning was valuable for them (personal observation statement 44 CS 1).

In observing Paula and Alle, it was apparent that they embedded their teaching practice within an environment that directly acted on what students saw as the central barrier affecting their lives; that of their (lack of) confidence in using English. In Alle and Paula's classes it is also evident that there was authentic negotiation in the relationship between student and teacher. The comments of Alle's student, Unot reveals a practical, student centred outcome to these learning-based values:

21. Together we make a plan. Make a plan to make English good (**Unot**).

Despite such inclusiveness, the approach was limited dialogically. On the one hand this discourse moves away from a positivist formulation of a group to a view of culture based upon the production and reproduction of values, norms and knowledges (see page 34 for a wider theoretical discussion). Within this framework, language, as one set of meanings, is an acquired skill that people accordingly can develop over time. This viewpoint however is problematic. As I have repeatedly argued language is not just a functional skill (see p.51) but also a social practice dependent upon one's sense of belonging and social interaction within the broader society. Ignoring this element is particularly concerning for long term unemployed migrants who are at the margins of society.

A characteristic of the sanitised discourse is that it does not explore the impact of power on people's lives or their learning. Rather, it is a discourse contained by the meanings of the dominant society. Delivering grammar instruction in the controlled space of the classroom, such as the case in Alle's class for example (see statement 43, p. 122) does not necessarily address the cultural marginalisation of adult migrants whose only socially meaningful interactive experiences with Australian society may be the classroom itself. It is noticeable that even where there were negotiations between teacher and student, such as those expressed by Unot, they were *always* bound by cultural meanings of the curriculum and formulised structures which reinforced, rather than bridged, difference. The social learning environment was delimited by the power differentials between student and teacher, with the latter making decisions around what was learnt and why. As Asad noted:

22. Teachers have power. We don't have power. If we don't like something, who listen to us (**Asad**).

This filtered aspect is in further evidence in the following observation made during the data collection phase in the English language case study. The focus this time is in the area of student support by a student counsellor whom I asked to come into the classroom and provide a reflective space around future options for students:

23. The student counsellor came to the class to talk about future student pathways. Even the quietest students asked questions, motivated by a desire to understand their future study and career options. People spoke of their aspirations and how they could meet them. Amongst talk of resume and course applications, we got to fear, lack of contacts, not understanding the culture of

> applying for a job and working out what to do with one's life. There was no space in the course to accompany students on this next step, however. Where they most needed help they were left to their own devices (personal observation and reflection-statement 47 CS 1).

For people low in confidence, 'othered' by society, it is one thing to prescribe a path to integration; another to travel the journey.

A sanitised discourse was further in evidence in Case Study Two where the mentor/mentee partnership moved away from defined and demarcated areas of mentoring to more nebulous areas of the cross-cultural relationship itself. In such cases those in the position of cultural dominance, that is the mentors, had the power to both define the relationship and the limits of that relationship according to their own cultural meanings:

> 24. I try not to form relationships with someone. …I like to become friendly but I like to maintain a certain distance so I know what our role is which is for me to help them (Martin).
> 25. It's a bit in me. You keep yourself separate. It's their stuff. You don't tell your own stories. I sometimes wonder if I should share my stories with other people. Would that help them (Joan)?

I mentioned on pages 38-39 that Wenger's social learning theory is particularly useful in the context of a group, such as a migrant English class. As Wenger notes, our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful is held to comprise the key purpose of social learning. As such the creation of knowledge is a socially situated practice which is dependent upon our active engagement with the world. Likewise, participation in a learning environment evolves from people's aspirations, and their imagination, to be part of, develop and negotiate their own sense of identity. Such elements however are not part of the discourse of sanitised acceptance. This is very clear in Case Study 1 where there is little focus on students to express and develop their own sense of identity. It is also apparent, in Case Study 2 (the mentoring program).

As I noted in an article on the mentoring program (see Atkinson 2018) even for those with deep cultural sensitivity, it is difficult not to come from a culturally biased perspective in our relationships with cultural others. What we take for truth, including that about ourselves, is a construct informed by our own ideological perspectives. Although people

may connect with their humanity, learn to feel what it means to be 'culturally different', and expose themselves to different cultural values, the cultural environment of the mentoring program remained one strongly entangled in Anglo-Celtic values and in the primacy of the formal communication ethos of mainstream professional society. Left unchallenged was the expertise of the mentors and the corresponding structural barriers to integration of such formal communication facing the mentees. In other words, while there were strong humanitarian elements throughout the refugee support program of case study two, they were contextualised by cultural meanings that limited the spaces of interaction to those validated by the dominant culture. This is not a criticism of the mentoring program. I recognize its good intentions. It is to note rather that from a dialogical perspective the sanitised discourse acts to place borders around cultural interactions.

Case Study Three highlights additional aspects of the sanitised learning discourse which share elements from the comments above while being unique to the cultural context of the case study itself and the cultural relationship between mainstream cultural members and Aboriginal people. The following two rhetorical questions, asked by Aboriginal people, question the lack of engagement of dominant cultural members with either elements from the past or with the expertise of the First peoples of the land in the present:

> 26. [I feel] sadness that there were crimes against humanity that were committed on Aboriginal people in this country and the rest of the country don't want to talk about it (**Reh** statement 46 CS 3).
>
> 27. Why wouldn't you want to learn about the country you were born in, it's history, it's cultural connections (**Ellie**-statement 70 CS 3)?

Such limited engagement is unsurprising. As peace researcher John Brewer highlights there is a disturbing uncertainty inherent in culturally sharing both a past and the future.

> Peace asks a lot of you. Peace asks you to share memory. It asks you to share space, territory, specific concrete places. It asks you to share a future. … It is walking into the unknown (cited in Cejka & Bamat, 2003 p.265).

Limiting engagement, either in terms of history or the validity of knowledge, is a means of maintaining certainty and may present as a far easier option for some than the vulnerability inherent in questioning one's cultural identity. In the statements above, learning 'about the country you were born in', or engaging in the past, is a walk into the unknown which exists

outside of the cultural reality of people's everyday lives and relationships. From a social learning perspective, unless that reality is supported through relationship or a wider narrative, people will choose the security of the familiar.

This leads to a potentially extra dimension of this discourse that is worth discussing. Statements in the Deadly Questions campaign frequently revealed a reflective element towards their own culture by those in a position of dominance:

> 28. What is the one thing that you wished more non-Indigenous Australians understood about Indigenous Australians (DQ)?
> 29. How do you feel when white people champion for you (DQ)?

Emma's allusion to acting, and both my own and Alle's reflection around one's role from Case Study One are similarly situated:

> 30. Ultimately, I'm an actor. We're all actors. We all perform I'm not so good when it comes to ticking the right boxes (Emma).
> 31. I don't try to teach them. It's more carrying out a role (personal reflection).
> 32. Is my role to make students happy or to help them learn (Alle personal conversation with the author)?

In each of these questions and statements there is a reflective questioning of the dominant culture, either at a social or a local level. I surmise that such sentiments emerge from a desire to develop relationships away from a 'constructed dichotomy' towards a proactive and respectful engagement with the other. The following statement by Aboriginal respondent Adi I believe, captures this felt need for a deeper human to human cross-cultural relationship:

> 33. there is an anxiety around belonging…there is a movement that recognize the truth of our history. Change will come slowly but surely into the identity of this nation…everyone is trying to make Australia home and the best way to do that is reconcile with indigenous culture (**Adi**).

The possibility emerges that the sanitised learning discourse is not simply one that limits dialogue to predefined and safe places. It also offers tentative steps towards engagement structured both on identity and on relationship. In this regard it represents a significant shift away from the deficit/dichotomization discourse. While learning is limited there is an openness to this discourse, a journey away from constructed certainty towards the vulnerability of the cultural unknown.

A shared humanitarian discourse

From a humanitarian perspective there is a recognition of difference encased in a sense of shared humanity:

> 34. I just treat people as human beings. I behave in a way that is appropriate and respectful to all human beings (Amy).

framed by moral values of universal responsiveness and care:

> 35. I feel a sense of responsibility that she is obeying the legal strictures of what she's taken on. I'm quite good at that getting her legal support, getting her other types of support (Ann-statement 47 CS 2).
> 36. The basis of being a good human being is to care about others and have some form of empathy. There is also a responsibility as a member of the human race to look more broadly (Nom-statement 28 CS 3).

and an empathetic awareness of the cultural other:

> 37. I've learnt a lot about what it's like to be a relatively newcomer in this society and to be a Muslim in this society (Ann-statement 56 CS 2).
> 38. My story does not involve exclusion (Fleck statement 32 CS 3).
> 39. What can white Australians do to support Indigenous Australians in moving towards racial equality (DQ)?

Positive learning and seeking truth are not, I suggest, serendipitous events that occur through dialogue. Rather it is because people recognize the legitimacy of other viewpoints alongside gaps in their own knowledge and experiences that they seek learning. In this regard humanitarian-based learning is the easiest category to recognise. It is a space of confidence and trust in the other:

> 40. A good mentor is someone who shares the vision of the mentee, will support you, listens and has an understanding of what you want to do (**Mary** statement 50 CS 2).

Positive ideals:

> 41. I start with the position of wanting to help. Generally people are very receptive if they know you are there to help them (Flynn statement 46 CS 2).

Humility, and acceptance of vulnerability:

> 42. It was humbling … we just didn't know, we hadn't thought about it. I learnt how blinkered I and I guess collectively we are and that needs to change (Nom-statement 87 CS 3).

Other cultural worlds and frames of reference are sought, I suggest, because people are open to learning that comes with a recognition that no matter how much one knows or has learned, one's cultural world view remains incomplete and is thereby bound with the co-creation of understanding with the other.

Evidence of the humanitarian discourse and related areas of transformation that such discourse impacts upon, differed across the three case studies. In the English language case study, I recorded few instances of a humanitarian discourse. The structure of the course failed to acknowledge the aspirations, the voices and the agency of individual students. Nor did it allow for a challenge to dominant power structures. Rather, a focus on deficit and sanitised learning reduced opportunities for positive change and genuine, human to human recognition despite the actions of such insightful teachers as Alle and Paula.

By contrast, it was notable that the refugee support program was centred not on predetermined meanings imposed *on* the other but rather on shared human elements. While this program, like that in Case Study One, was structured on the learning of the 'cultural other', the object of that learning was not separated from people's personal cultural journey but an integral part of it. Such recognition was not easy, however. It required an emphasis on the voice of the cultural other:

> 43. Keep asking questions until one clicks and getting lots of dialogue from them, what they like, their frustrations. This way you can know what they want help with, learn how to help them and what works and get to understand them (Flynn statement 46 CS 2).

a shared understanding of the cultural challenge facing the 'cultural other':

> 44. You need to learn the culture, the thinking, the way of thinking, to be part of the environment. You don't understand the system. The cultural system (**Michael**).
>
> 45. My primary role is helping with … the formal representations of culture-the cultural way we do things. Differences in cultural attitudes about who do you approach and how do you approach things (Martin).

And the generation of relationship based on humanitarian ideals:

> 46. The people I mentor are no different from the people I live next door to. They just haven't done certain things that people here have done. In terms of basic humanity, they are just people. I'm just a person and they're just a person. Mentoring. It's just two people having a conversation (Martin).
> 47. He supported me mentally… It is not just knowledge. It is confidence [in me]. He gained my trust. He is a good listener, very calm, a good person. He takes time to help me, for nothing. He is a rare person (**Suuli**).

Support, trust, acceptance, and voice of the 'cultural other' were all aspects of such dialogues resulting in genuine change in people's lives.

With respect to the third case study, the focus for many was on equal and clear recognition and acknowledgement of Aboriginal identity by both Aboriginal people and members of the dominant culture:

> 48. from my personal point of view [treaty] is about that true acknowledgement of the past, it's about that true acknowledgement of who we are today. … This is about recognition and this is about truth telling, about Aboriginal society, Aboriginal cultures taking their rightful place on an international platform (**Reh**).
> 49. Treaty is about rights recognition reparation and legal effect- this is a framework for them to think about a response to a situation. A recognition of the theft of land, dispossession, a consequence is the state of affairs today (Fleck).

Such recognition included the need to act on prevailing attitudes about Aboriginal culture by members of the dominant society:

> 50. there is a real ignorance about Aboriginal people, what we want, how we want to be treated (**Ellie**).
> 51. Getting the language right, it's a simple thing but so important. Discussions are framed in a deficit way (Haal).

alongside a vision of a pathway to move forward

> 52. it's an agreement to forge a shared vision, one we can shake hands on….to create a vision together, a world we aspire to (**Raul** statement 56 CS 3).

Such statements align with the theoretical framing of intercultural dialogue developed in this thesis. Across each case study, a key aspect of the humanitarian discourse was a sense of critical mutuality amid a more encompassing and inclusive humanitarian framing: This is seen in the statements below (statements 53-56):

53. I met my mentor. That's how the journey starts. He was a supporter, he supported me mentally. That motivation. It was not just knowledge. It is confidence. He gained my trust (**Suuli** statement 75 CS 2).
54. I think it is all Victorians' journey (**Reh**).
55. There was always these unanswered questions that nobody ever wanted to talk about and I had that kind of mind that kept saying wait a minute there's something wrong here. I started on a journey of self-discovery (**Ena**).
56. How do you bring non-Aboriginal Victorians into this **journey** into the conversation about the benefits of what treaty means for them (Zeich)?

We can extend theory, however. As the following statements show, there is also a strong sense of being guided and supported towards a more encompassing feeling of self:

57. She guided me back to myself. …. She listened to me. Not just with her ears. But with her heart (**Amerah**).
58. If you go to a completely new country … you need a guide otherwise you can't get anywhere. Being guided is really important as 'ignorance is the worst enemy (**Mary**)'.
59. You don't know what you do for me. You listen to me. No one else listen to me. It made me feel confident. I can do things. My life is my own (personal conversation with a student).

While each of these statements explore an element of transformation - critical consciousness, mutual action and an acknowledged sense of humanity (see page 41 for a wider discussion) they also allude to what I referred to earlier as a cultural journey for respondents. Earlier (Chapter 6), I introduced the term 'cultural journey' in reference to navigating challenges and opportunities towards one's aspirations while maintaining personal identity and cultural integrity. The theme of 'journey' is not my term but rather one that appears again and again in different forms throughout each of the case studies. I feel that understanding this theme is vital to understand dialogue itself. People who were

identified in this thesis as the 'cultural other' were suffering from a lack of connection, a lack of belonging with Australian culture and a lack of confidence in themselves. They had been cast in deficit which they felt keenly. A guide is not just someone who enabled them to understand a foreign cultural landscape but someone who enabled them to see themselves not in deficit but equal. The result was a shared connectedness that crossed the dichotomy of cultural difference alongside a shared vision for enabling the cultural other not just to find their place in society but to express their cultural selves in society.

A problem with the humanitarian discourse

While I endorse the humanitarian discourse as being essentially dialogical, I also feel that it, too, is a partial discourse in terms of its positioning of others. This concern emerges from the conversations I had with respondents and with what I view as a confluence between morality and cultural bias. As examples, one of the Aboriginal respondents asked a rhetorical question that stayed with me; 'why are people scared of treaties'. Her speculation was that it was 'racism and meanness'. In writing an article for the *Journal of Australian Aboriginal Studies* I was told not to mention people like Pauline Hanson and especially Andrew Bolt. As I was told, the journal 'will not be legitimizing these people in any way' (personal email with the AAS Journal). One respondent of the dominant culture (Sella) felt embarrassed to be Australian in the context of our 'immoral' treatment of both asylum seekers and Aboriginal people. Could it be, I thought, that even those with a 'humanitarian bias' delegitimise 'the moral other'?

The following statements are suggestive that there is in fact a dichotomy between those who espouse a humanitarian discourse and those they see as 'the moral other':

> 60. The more I think about what it means to be Australian the more uncomfortable I am with what people currently think it is… I think there are a lot of gaping holes in what people see as being Australian (Haal statement 25 CS 3).
> 61. in the 'gross unwashed middle Australian psyche' the viewpoint frankly is just get on with it or get over it (Nom statement 26 CS 3).

While the humanitarian discourse is a culturally inclusive discourse that values, rather than marginalises the 'cultural other' it holds a moral bias. As Craig Calhoun (2003, p.532) argues, 'cosmopolitan liberals often fail to recognize the social conditions of their own

discourse', presenting it as freedom from social belonging rather than a special sort of belonging'. As Calhoun (2003, p. 538) continues, those who have what he terms a cosmopolitan position believe that 'the highest and strongest obligation of each person is owed to humanity as a whole'. As such they remain, in Calhoun's (2003, p.545) words, 'prejudiced against ethnic and other attachments'. Likewise, James Lebovic discusses different mindsets people have in situations of cultural conflict with others. According to Lebovic (2013 p 28), what he terms the 'self-authoring mindset' is self-reflective, empathetic and willing to embrace cultural complexity. As he notes however, while there is empathy and sensitivity towards the cultural other in this moral positioning there is also a sense of moral 'right' and a naivety that 'others can and will operate as they do'. The following self-reflection made during the third case study adds further context to what I see as a bias inherent in the humanitarian space:

> 62. I interviewed an Aboriginal academic. I suggested that Aboriginal people and 'mainstream' members could learn from each other. His answer shocked me. 'Why, what have we got to learn from you'. 'How can you say this' I thought. 'How can you not reciprocate my own humanitarian positioning' (personal reflection).

It may be that the Aboriginal academic was deliberately challenging me from presupposing that Aboriginal people need to learn from the dominant culture; a position possibly derived from his own personal experience. Whatever the case it resulted in the awareness that my own humanitarian positioning was not inclusive of the diversity of possible viewpoints held by Aboriginal people themselves.

Aligned with Calhoun and Lebovic, I saw evidence of a lack of awareness in the humanitarian discourse regarding the complex moral positions that people take in their discourses with others; a discursive ignorance regarding why people hold the views that they do. While I align the humanitarian discourse with cultural inclusion, this is not an unfettered endorsement of the discourse itself. Any discourse blinkered in its understanding of other discourses, is dialogically incomplete. This however is, I believe, a cause of dialogical optimism which I illustrate in the context of one of the questions of the Deadly Questions Campaign.

One of the most widely responded to questions in the campaign is that of the following:

> 63. What can we do to bridge the gap between our two cultures (DQ)?

The question drew detailed responses from Aboriginal champions:

> 64. When the broader mainstream society of Australia learns to embrace Aboriginal stories, Aboriginal history as being quintessential to their Australian identity (**DQ**).
>
> 65. I think it's about sharing, I'm all about sharing, wanting to share our culture, share our education and what we know with everybody so they feel a part of it (**DQ**).
>
> 66. To understand that we're all humans and that we all share a lot in common regardless of where we come from. And if we just saw the humanity in one another consistently, we'd be a much better community, much better country, much better world (**DQ**).

Each of these responses extend a sense of humanity and sharing across a cultural divide which is to be applauded. However, the reference to a 'broader mainstream society' (statement 64) ignores its deeper divisions, inner diversity and dynamism. Asking people to partake in Aboriginal culture (statement 65) assumes that members of the mainstream feel a sense of security in their own culture to reach out to another. Appealing to people's inclusive humanity (statement 66), does not necessarily engage with those people who identify with a singular cultural identity based on predetermined cultural values around nation building and progress.

I am not suggesting that I have a better approach. Rather, by understanding the moral positioning that people are coming from, a more nuanced dialogical approach may be explored. As an example, the stereotypical certainty of the deficit/dichotomization discourse and its moral justification is an exhausting and confronting discourse for the cultural other. Understanding this discourse as one defending a limited understanding of Australian cultural identity however suggests that it is not just a discourse directed towards undermining the cultural other but rather supporting a mythical sense of cultural self. As such supporting a reflective ethos within the dominant culture may create a softening around this discourse and lead to a more inclusive sense of Australian culture. Likewise, while the 'sanitised acceptance discourse remains controlled and delimited according to the cultural meanings of the dominant culture, it nevertheless hints at a recognised incompleteness in dominant cultural values, amid a sense of cultural uncertainty and possibly. Exploring such uncertainty by all cultural members may result in identifying

shared spaces of mutual learning with the cultural other as a collective journey of cultural completeness. Again, I'm not suggesting a better method than that used by Aboriginal champions, rather dialogical possibilities.

To summarize this section, a transformative humanitarian discourse is, self-evidently, human centred; morally supportive and empathetic to the other. In addition to these values it understands the cultural challenge of 'otherness', recognizes their cultural selves, presents a genuine desire to help and accepts one's own ignorance. This is not to say that such a discourse is easy. It requires an understanding of one's own cultural meanings alongside techniques to enable the cultural other to express their needs and the creation of a more culturally equal vision. Above all it involves the capacity to imagine oneself in relationship with the cultural other, a belief in a creative cultural act, and an acceptance of the risk required to journey on unknown paths towards constructive social change. Despite all these dialogically positive qualities I believe however that we must be careful not to place this discourse on a pedestal. I question whether those who hold to a humanitarian positioning understand those who hold a deficit discourse or understand how to engage with those who come from a position of sanitised acceptance. This presents as an exciting proposition as it creates possibilities for promoting dialogue even in the face of cultural bias.

Discussion

From a dialogical perspective the deficit discourse hinders cultural voices, blocks mutual cultural interaction and maintains a narrow cultural perspective based on an 'us' and 'them' mentality. The sanitised acceptance discourse avoids such cultural certainty. While it contains reflective elements suggestive of possible cultural sensitivity and change, it is nevertheless dialogically limited in recognizing the challenges facing the cultural other and the significance of hope and aspiration in people's journey of cultural transition. The humanitarian discourse is different again and is the only discourse I believe that dialogically acts on differentials of power. While it does not move completely beyond dominant societal structures, it does explore and is strongly based upon genuine cross-cultural relationships to enable the cultural other to recognize their place in Australian society.

These different discourses result in different impacts within the intercultural space and ensuing spheres of social learning and transformation. Collectively the three case studies reveal the intercultural space as multilayered and complex; one that is contextualised by a

broader cultural context of deficit with concomitant emotional impacts on the 'cultural other'. At the case study level, it is a space of imposed identity aligned with a deficit discourse (CS 1), defined and delimited framings of the cultural other aligned with sanitised acceptance (CS 1, CS 2) and the recognition and acknowledgement of emerging and established cultural identity (CS 2,3) aligned with a humanitarian discourse. In other words, more than one discourse inhabits the intercultural space both within and across the case studies.

From a social learning perspective, the emphasis on human values of respect, consideration and valuing of the other is powerful and uniting, enabling members of both the dominant society and the 'cultural other' to question and engage around themes of learning confidence (CS 1), cultural journey (CS 2) and treaty (CS 3). In the mentoring space, this happened naturally as people acted on what mattered in terms of cultural integration. In the case of the adult English language course, it is a constructed learning space that bridged the ideological divide between management, the curriculum, teachers' own passions for learning and student need. In other words, teachers found sensitive and creative means for educational delivery which placed the student at the centre of learning despite the designs of an institutionally driven curriculum. Nevertheless, issues around power remained untouched, thereby limiting learning to areas sanctioned by the dominant culture. By further contrast the treaty process created spaces of deep cultural reflection both on the meaning of Aboriginality and cultural dominance. A questioning of Australian identity alongside an identification with humanitarian values provided members of the dominant culture with a sense of connection with cultural others. This is matched by Aboriginal people with the cultural confidence to question 'mainstream' meanings of Aboriginality itself.

The different discourses had a dramatic effect at the transformational level. The intercultural space of the classroom failed to recognize and act on the individual aspirations of learners resulting in a dialogical silence around this critical space. Although an environment of student centredness generated student-centred learning spaces, such spaces were narrow, confined by a functionally oriented curriculum. Within the deep emotional aspects of the life of the cultural other the mentoring program of Case Study Two extended the learning experience beyond knowledge and skills to relationship building and an enhanced feeling of self-worth. Transformation came through a shared and guided cultural journey made possible through empathy, knowledge and a willingness to learn. Likewise, cultural identity is at the heart of the treaty process to create spaces of challenge, reflection,

and critical understanding. A central theme of cultural recognition supports mutual learning processes and a clear vision of meaningful change. It is evident however that cultural change is a far greater challenge than individual journeys of cultural integration. As a consequence, cultural transformation in the third case study remained aspirational rather than real. This is not to say that transformation did not happen. Aboriginal people gained a renewed understanding of Aboriginality through the treaty process while non-Aboriginal respondents talked of how humbling engagement with Aboriginal people was. Pathways towards cultural transformation however remained uncertain and non-specific.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

> You are on the boundary of what you know. … I was constantly being culturally tested (Joan CS 2).

Joan's statement alludes to a key tension of intercultural dialogue. Not just the tension of being on the boundary of knowingness, but also how willing and comfortable people feel in the uncertain world of the cultural boundary. The work of Anderson, Appiah and others suggest that our cultural identity and ensuing cultural interactions are based on a mythical sense of self. Inherited narratives and the practices, relationships and actions that make up our world are tangible aspects of who we are. To borrow a phrase from Baxter and Montgomery (1996 p.4) dialogue is but a 'a polyphony of dialectical voices [which] struggle against one another to be heard, and in that struggle, they set the stage for future struggles'. The heart of dialogue lies in staying in cultural contradiction.

In revisiting the work of Haidt around moral psychology, we can begin to appreciate a further foundational aspect of the dialogue process. While some people seek surety in the authority of their own cultural meanings, others seek authenticity in universal humanity. The 'tensional orientation to the other' that Stewart and Zediker (2000) identified as integral to intercultural dialogue (see p. 3) lies not simply in working with cultural difference, but in recognizing the moral contradiction within our cultural meanings, through exposure to the meanings of the other.

The result is that intercultural dialogue is not just cultural. It is also ideological. Cultural discourses around exclusion and deficit support an ingroup bias. By contrast, a discourse based on humanitarian values seeks inclusiveness. Both positions are discursively partial. The seeking of surety within the nativist is tainted through the prisms of the cultural imagination. Likewise, our humanitarian bias is another form of cultural belonging (Calhoun 2003). Both support a sense of identity that becomes real in our imagined selves to create a sense of difference with moral or cultural others.

There are signs of a growing awareness concerning the moral complexity of intercultural dialogue and the fine line between culture and ideology that this thesis has identified. The Anna Lindh Foundation, which represents a network of civil society organisations dedicated to promoting intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean region, recognizes that intercultural dialogue is not limited to *cultural* conversations. As it notes 'fostering dialogue between the liberal and conservative population within each country is equally

important' (Anna Lindh Foundation 2018 page). Alison Phipps (2014 p.108), first introduced in Chapter Two, makes the case that the concept of intercultural dialogue 'is at best, limited and at worst, dangerous', arguing that dialogue itself can be imposed "as a colonizing discourse" by political elites (Phipps 2014: 110). Petito (2009) further questions whether core assumptions based on western liberalism need to be challenged to enable an authentic intercultural dialogue to emerge. In other words what we take as a universal practice is in fact mired in cultural, and ideological assumptions. Such examples indicate that cultural identity and cultural dialogue has an ideological component that extends into spaces where people have a vested interest in maintaining or challenging constructions of difference. While intercultural dialogue is seen as a 'good', there are qualifications around the term.

It is within this context that this thesis and the three questions which have guided it, presents as a timely reminder of the key challenge of engaging with difference and with dialogue itself. Asking what constitutes the intercultural space in Australian society (question one) serves to interrogate the concept of cultural identity, power and space itself. Exploring the factors that impact on the social learning that emerges from the cross-cultural interaction between members of the 'dominant culture' and 'cultural others' (question two) leads to understandings of not just what is learnt but also how learning is both enhanced and blocked in the intercultural space. Examining transformation through dialogue (question three) suggests that dialogue itself is a struggle because ultimately it puts us in positions where we must question who exactly we are and who is the cultural other. Answering these three questions is directly addressed in this concluding chapter.

1. What constitutes the intercultural space between members of the 'dominant culture' and 'cultural others' in Australian society?

Earlier (p.61), I described the intercultural space as:

> an interactive space of challenge and risk where identities are transitive, multiple, imagined, imposed and emerging and power is contested; a space of difference defined in terms of beliefs attitudes and feelings of significance expressed in discourses about the self and the other.

I also refer to 'space' as an associative term to imply mobility and freedom where people can potentially escape fixed and inflexible positions to have meaningful interactions with others. A key characteristic of the intercultural space are the associated experiences and feelings that people bring to this space informed and influenced by what they experience in

the broader cultural environment. While this appears obvious it results in significant complexity. People's sense of cultural difference and the discourses and ideological frames of reference from which they view reality all contribute to a potentially entangled cultural environment; a non-verbal cultural element to intercultural dialogue itself. Constructing an insightful understanding of the intercultural space demands that we ask pertinent questions around cultural identity both about ourselves and about the cultural other.

A primary theme in the cultural life of those I have labelled the 'cultural other', beyond the discourses imposed by others, is that of 'cultural journey'; the challenge of navigating dominant cultural meanings towards an imagined future (see Ch 5 for an introductory discussion). Many adult migrant English learners were on a journey of establishing a life in Australia concordant with how they saw themselves rather than how they were seen by society. As **Ayniri** stated (statement 17, CS 1),

> I need to find my life. My life in Australia. I know my life. But I don't know my life in Australia.

Likewise, refugees seeking cultural support, did so within the broader context of the challenge of their emotionally intense journey of integration; one made difficult by the confusion and uncertainty in their lives.

> Here I start again. Begin again the life (**Nai**, statement 7, CS 2).

Aboriginal people pursued treaty for both reparation and recognition. While reparation challenged the dominant culture through legal effect, recognition involved both an inner journey where Aboriginal people could explore what it meant to be Aboriginal and an outer journey with members of the dominant society where they could express their cultural selves *with* members of the dominant culture.

> I think it is all Victorians' journey (**Reh**, statement 56 CS 3).

Concomitant with this sense of journey were the emotional aspects of people's cultural lives; the embarrassment, the reduced self-esteem and lack of confidence of the English language learner (statements 12-14 CS 1), the confusion, feelings of rejection and uncertainty of the refugee (statements 6-8, 12-15) and the sadness, the exhaustion and the cultural pride of the Aboriginal person. For the 'cultural other', the intercultural space carries associations with the challenges, the aspiration and the struggle of their social lives.

On the other hand, for research respondents of the culturally dominant group, the intercultural space, was qualitatively different. It did however also represent a space of reflection. What it meant to be Australian, what it meant to be a teacher, what it meant to be a person working with a 'cultural other', were frequently shaped by a self-appointed cosmopolitan positioning and a humanistic sense of identity.

Despite an acknowledged and shared humanity between members of the dominant cultural group and the 'cultural other' amongst the participants of this research project there were also significant differences between the two groups. A predominant difference was that those in positions of dominance had a choice in the cultural meanings and the discourses they chose to identify with whether it was that of the Anglo-Celtic warrior sage (Hocke, statement 28 CS 3) , the Christian humanist (Fleck, statement 27, CS 3) or more broadly, the humanitarian. Being a product of the dominant cultural group ensured freedom from the responsibility of defining, defending and authenticating one's cultural identity alongside the confidence to manipulate mainstream cultural meanings. The 'cultural other', in contrast, was constantly vulnerable to the meanings imposed upon them as they sought to understand dominant cultural meanings and assert their own cultural identity. In other words cultural difference was not marked by ethnicity, skin colour, even country of origin but by the power to choose one's cultural meanings for those in positions of dominance; and the struggle to defend and express one's cultural meanings for the 'cultural other'.

The intercultural space was also a discursive space. In this thesis adult English language delivery (Case study One) was constructed upon the deficits of adult English language learners. While teachers may have sought to shift the discourse away from deficit the wider structural context based on measurable competencies of the learner ensured that the prevailing discourse was at best one of sanitised acceptance of the 'migrant student. Structures of power remained untouched. The mentoring program (Case Study two) by contrast supported a humanitarian discourse. Although the focus was strongly on transferring cultural knowledge from the one who knows to the one in deficit, the emphasis was based on a shared sense of humanity. The Deadly Questions Campaign was a direct window into each of the discourses. A discourse of deficit and dichotomization sought to highlight and maintain cultural 'otherness' while protecting a mythical sense of a homogenous and singular sense of national self-identity. A sanitised discourse was marked by both disengagement with and willingness to learn from the 'cultural other' in delimited

spaces. A humanitarian discourse on the other hand exhibited a willingness to engage with the power differentials that marked constructed differences and otherness itself.

The acknowledgement of these discourses leads to a further element of the intercultural space that requires comment. Perceptions of cultural identity are shaped by narrative. Both our own and those of others we do not culturally identify with. This includes narratives we inherit from the past, those we form in the present and those imposed upon us. The comment by Ellie below expresses not just the ever-present feelings of culture for Aboriginal people but also a subtext in terms of reclaiming cultural identity and positioning it as a strength in the face of generations of cultural oppression:

> Culture and identity is what we live and breathe. It is being strong, black and proud (**Ellie**, statement 33, CS 3).

The statement by Suuli below alludes to both the psychological challenge in starting one's life anew when coming to Australia as a refugee but also the need to restate the identity he once had, and the challenge of beginning one's life in an alien culture that denies this early sense of identity:

> I was qualified in my country. But that qualification counted for nothing. I felt at zero. My confidence was zero (**Suuli**, statement 8, CS 2).

The statement by Sella, by further contrast, seeks to challenge normalised concepts of Australian identity:

> I don't feel comfortable with what it means to be Australian (Sella statement 23, CS 3).

Aboriginality is strong, black and proud in Ellie's eyes; an act of defiance against dominant cultural discourses of exclusion and deficit. Suuli highlights the impact of cultural positioning on one's life. Sella is not comfortable with what it means to be Australian because of the government's stance on cultural others. In highlighting these comments, the aim is not to claim that people I have labelled as the 'cultural other' are confused, proud, ashamed or feel like 'zero' in their culturally interactive experiences. Nor is it to claim that dominant cultural members that are oriented to a humanitarian discourse consistently question their Australian identity. Rather, I seek to indicate that people view the intercultural space as a vehicle to reaffirm, reflect on, reconstruct, or even remake their own sense of cultural identity in relation with those of different cultures.

Parekh makes the point that no dominant culture likes to take on the risk of dialogue. As he argues, dialogue requires the dominant culture 'to justify assumptions that it has long taken for granted and whose validity it cannot always be sure of establishing'. (Parekh 2004, p. 15,16). As Parekh goes on to note, cultural diversity alone is not a sufficient condition of intercultural dialogue. Rather, serious questioning from within the dominant culture creates space for an internal debate; a questioning of assumptions and reflection upon its moral direction. I think we can add to Parekh's viewpoint. Those who share a humanitarian ethos are, I believe, both looking outside for new inspiration and questioning the self-righteous and singular nature of the mainstream culture. Those adhering to a sanitised acceptance of the place of 'the cultural other' in Australian society are also accepting that 'we' do not have all the answers. Those adhering to a deficit discourse, by contrast, are seeking evidence to support an 'us' and 'them' reality. Relatedly, as the 'cultural other' grows in confidence they too demand their space in the cultural landscape to challenge hegemonic narratives.

In returning to the question asked above, the intercultural space is a space of tension where we seek to reaffirm or reshape our cultural selves not just by who we think we are, but who we think we are *in relation* to others. As a consequence the 'intercultural' contains a psychological component that goes beyond interaction with another to incorporate a need to defend, a desire to reaffirm, or an openness to have one's own cultural meanings challenged.

What are the social learning factors that shape the practice of intercultural dialogue in this space?

As I noted in Chapter One, informed modern scholarship identifies unique features of dialogue characterised by multi-vocality (Ganesh & Holmes, 2011), respect and reciprocity (Baraldi, 2006) mutual trust (Dulabaum, 2011), dignity (Ignatieff, 2001) and the co-creation of meaning through open listening (Eguren 2008; Escobar 2009 and Pace 2005). These aspects were identifiable here, particularly in the latter two case studies. This thesis however goes beyond these very human aspects of cross-cultural communication

A consequence of viewing the intercultural space as a tension is that we can clearly see dialogue across cultural difference as a struggle; a multivocal discussion that takes on difficult topics order to look beyond. In this regard dialogue is a never-ending process of staying in conversation while engaging in topics that challenge how we view the cultural world. This has dialogical ramifications from a social learning (rather than a shared

learning) perspective. Where people are exposed to the deficit/dichotomization discourse again and again, they are in danger of applying those same values to themselves, to position themselves in deficit to the dominant society.

The following statements reveal such socialised learning:

> I can't speak. I have no confidence in speaking (**Thuy** CS 1).
>
> Sometimes you don't know the right way, the right way to do things (**Sam**-statement 9 CS 2).
>
> I felt so shameful, so much shame. I think to myself I'm a failure (**Suuli** statement 19 CS 2).
>
> Symbolically we're still on the edge of town (**Raul**-statement 69 CS 3).

'A lack of confidence in speaking', thinking that you 'don't know the right way to do things', 'shame' and to relearn again and again that you are 'on the edge of town', are factors that not just hinder dialogue but create an environment for a discourse of otherness to flourish. A culture of constructing 'otherness' in the Australian cultural landscape ensures that otherness exists thereby hindering dialogical spaces. In other words, constructing 'otherness' and imposing labels and characteristics on the 'other' is a prime hindrance to dialogue. This may sound obvious, but in close to 250 years in Australia, I would argue, members of the dominant society have collectively not shifted from imposing meanings on Aboriginal people.

By contrast, in the area of shared learning, people seek to explore and negotiate meanings that span cultural borders and extend cultural meanings with, rather than against the other. A vital element of intercultural shared learning begins in the intercultural space with a reflective view of one's own culture. Questioning what it means to be Australian, an Aboriginal person, a teacher, a mentor serves to shift dominant discourses away from deficit and dichotomization. Such capacity for cultural self-reflection is a vital and necessary factor in dialogue.

Beyond this reflective element it was evident in all three case studies that bridging identity differences to include the aspirations of the cultural other involved creating a vision, which members of all parties had a stake in. The following three statements are examples from each of the case studies:

> I preamble each of my classes with a clear idea for students what they will learn in the lesson. I repeat this throughout the day (Paula statement 42, CS

1).

> A good mentor is someone who shares the vision of the mentee, will support you, listens and has an understanding of what you want to do (**Mary**, statement 50 CS 2).

> Treaty-it's an agreement to forge a shared vision, one we can shake hands on….to create a vision together, a world we aspire to (**Raul**, statement 54 CS 3).

These statements reveal the clear link between dialogue and shared learning. Paula's approach in terms of presenting a clear idea for students is not just part of good teaching, but also an insight into the dialogical basis of good teaching. Telling students what they will learn is not simply a practical pedagogical skill but a recognition and reaffirmation of their learning abilities. Mary's statement alludes to the importance of the mentor in acknowledging the vision of the mentee. Raul is visualising a different society, alluding to a world where Aboriginal people are equal to those of the dominant society. Such an inclusive vision creates space to enhance dialogue between members of different cultural groups.

Arriving at an inclusive vision requires what I term sympathetic insight; an understanding beyond one's own innate cultural biases of where people are coming from and where people wish to go to. A key aspect of this process, perhaps the key aspect of shared learning lies in creating an environment where people can engage with the other in a safe and meaningful space over time; one where people have the confidence and the trust both in themselves and in the other to stay with the vulnerability of their own aspirations. Within this sphere of shared learning there is a willingness to engage with the cultural other but not a requirement to engage too much. The cultural challenge is both manageable, hopeful and non-threatening to people's sense of cultural identity; a delimited and tentative space of building relationship To return to Joan's statement, a shared vision softens and reconstructs the cultural boundary away from constructed difference to one in which cultural complexity becomes a space of exploration rather than a problem to overcome.

To conclude the response to this question, a discourse of deficit and exclusion hinders shared learning and the practice of intercultural dialogue. On the other hand, cultural reflection, a shared vision, sympathetic insight of the other enhances both shared learning and dialogue. One can add here that part of the social learning process is an acceptance that it will be messy, that it takes time, that there will be false starts. It is for this reason that I

would add a further defining feature to the social learning factors that enhance dialogue. Combined with an environment of safety and meaningfulness is a need for patience; where people can be vulnerable and explore the construction of new cultural meanings *together*.

How does shared learning through dialogue contribute to transformation?

The framework of dialogue upon which this thesis is based, is constructed upon an understanding that transformation is central to the dialogue process. As noted in the theoretical chapter (Ch 2), critical understanding, mutual action and a sense of shared humanity are inherent aspects of the transformative process as identified by the dialogue scholars quoted in this thesis. These three elements are captured in a relatively ordinary story below:

> I work with a Somali woman with very poor English. She never went to school, her brothers did but she didn't. She says now it is her time. Her vocabulary is very limited. Over time you can see this person gain in confidence in what she's able to do. I taught her the techniques that I learnt in school. She is so pleased with herself because she has learnt how to sound out the words. She is so happy because she is learning and is achieving and that is its own reward. Her pace of learning is not an issue. She feels she's achieving something and I think, by her achieving things, I feel I achieve things. It has to be a two-way relationship (Ahmed statement 39, CS 2).

In the above passage the mentee's 'pace of learning is not an issue' because the aim is not to meet identifiable targets but to build relationship. That relationship in turn is based on a mutual journey framed by the self-identified achievement of an uneducated Somali woman who has decided that it is now 'her time'. The dialogical power of this story lies not in individual achievement, but in its mutuality; the achievement of one is linked with the achievement of the other.

The statement of Amerah, the university lecturer from Iran, further illustrates this connection:

> I didn't know what to do with my life. My mentor helped me to have new hope. To find my own way. My self was damaged when I came here. Having a friend like (mentor's name). I couldn't have a better friend (**Amerah**, statement 63, CS 2).

Amerah's mentor was Joan, the mentor who wondered whether it would help if she shared her stories with her mentees. For both Joan and Amerah dialogue became a quest of

meaning; a journey that was both inward, in the realisation of their own cultural incompleteness, and outward in the actions and events that brought them closer together. Moving to a shared and transformative journey in the intercultural space is not necessarily spectacular, nor quick. It takes time for trust and confidence to occur. It fundamentally involves a process of recognising the meanings of the other, while recognizing the biases in one's own cultural world.

A key cross-cultural challenge in transformative dialogue and a privilege of cultural dominance is the recognition that those in positions of cultural power can either support the cultural journey of the other; or hinder it. The following paired question and response from the Deadly Questions campaign illustrate this 'privilege'. The question is by a member of the dominant society, the answer by an Aboriginal champion:

> What's the most helpful thing a non-Indigenous Australian could do to support Aboriginal Australians (DQ)?
>
> I always think of my mother with that, because she was a white woman having to raise two Aboriginal kids on her own and understood the importance of us knowing our culture. I think if people, if white Australia, took the time to do what a single mother had done to ensure that we learned our mob (**DQ**).

This is not to suggest that white people can teach Aboriginal people about their culture; far from it. Rather that people in positions of dominance can create spaces for the cultural other to explore and understand their cultural selves. In doing so those in positions of dominance can also reaffirm their own sense of humanity. To restate the point above, a transformative, sustainable dialogue lies in the recognition that one's own cultural journey is linked with the journey of the cultural other. The 'cultural other' is not a burden to one's culture but a vital link to a more inclusive sense of self. While it may be affirmed through collective action, mutual reflection and a shared humanitarian ethos it is my belief that ultimately it is experienced as an inter-dependency; that *their* success is linked to my own.

This introduces an important aspect of the dialogue process that has been raised throughout the case study chapters and concerns whether transformation occurs on an individual, or a cultural level. A key element of a shared sense of humanity is that we need the cultural other to fully express our own cultural self. Through seeing oneself in the other, dialogue can enter the difficult cultural spaces that provide the tensional orientation to the other out of which dialogue acts and change occurs. I believe that only if we, as members of the

dominant society, engage with 'refugees' and 'long term unemployed migrants' as a resource for our own cultural development, can transformation in the status of refugees and our own cultural meanings be possible. At present however the emphasis on the 'long term unemployed migrant', at least in this thesis, was placed on their deficits. The emphasis on the support seeking refugee was on the skills they needed to support their journey of integration. Only in the Aboriginal case study was transformation possible. Only in this case study was there a recognition of creating the conditions to enable Aboriginal people to explore and strengthen their culture and challenge the dominant status quo. In short, while transformation is possible at an individual level for all 'cultural others', it is only possible at a cultural level for those groups who have the collective cultural integrity to question the cultural mainstream.

There is a further element of transformation that we must attend to. An important dialogical challenge is to recognize how to engage across the spectrum of moral, not just cultural diversity. The humanitarian discourse, in laying claim to being inclusive of the cultural other, is in danger of excluding the moral other who opposes such inclusiveness. If we are to truly understand intercultural dialogue as a transformative practice, we must consciously venture into the intra; those spaces that lie not just on our cultural boundaries, but also on our moral boundaries. It is important, if not vital to engage with discourses of exclusion, deficit and sanitised engagement knowing that *all* discourses are dialogically partial. In other words, in recognizing cultural difference as an opportunity to extend our sense of cultural identity, it is also important to recognize moral difference as an opportunity to understand our moral identity. An effective framework of intercultural dialogue is inclusive of both understanding the cultural other and understanding the discourses of dominance that limit the sharing of cultural journey.

A dialogue on 'dialogue'

Before concluding this thesis, I'd like to return to the beginning where I expressed my own naïve understanding of dialogue (p.4) and my desire to 'test' the conceptual framework (p.7) reproduced here:

> 1. The intercultural space
>
> An interactive space of challenge and risk where identities are transitive, multiple, imagined, imposed and emerging and power is contested; a space of difference defined in terms of beliefs attitudes and feelings of significance expressed in discourses about the self and the other.

2. Shared Learning Practices

the exploration and negotiation of meanings, objects or aspects of the self through participative structures that span cultural borders to affirm and extend a person's sense of belonging and identity to a more inclusive group through the considered construction of a shared vision, a shared practice or a shared goal in conversations with another.

3. Transformation

The enablement of people to initiate a process of mutual action, critical consciousness, and shared humanity for the purpose of positive human change.

Having come to the final section of my thesis I view the theoretical model as a beginning rather than end point in conceptually describing dialogue. Like dialogue itself there is much to explore on the borders of the concepts described in this thesis.

A case in point is the underlying but undetailed focus on ideology in the framework above despite its omnipresence in the thesis itself. As I have argued in this thesis, there is considerable profit in understanding the ideologies we (and others) are using and from which we frame our dialogues. A focus on this 'ideological' perspective could bring to the fore a different, albeit important line of inquiry and set of questions from those that have guided this thesis. As examples, can we hold two different ideologies at one time, how do we recognize the limitations of our own ideological bias and how do we transition from one ideological position to another?

The thesis itself offered insight into such questions. Case study one which explored adult English language teaching, as an example, was structured upon an ideology which positioned learners in deficit. This discourse nevertheless frequently shifted to a space of sanitised acceptance in the classroom where teachers worked with students on issues that were important to them. Such shifts suggest that a key skill of dialogue lies not just in qualities of dignity, mutual respect and trust but also in recognising and shifting discourses that frame the dialogical environment. The question around transitioning from one discourse to another expressed above also suggests lines of inquiry around the most suitable approaches for enhancing dialogue within, not just between cultures. How should we, the culturally privileged, talk to those who hold Aboriginal people in deficit? How can we extend cultural conversations based on a sanitised discourse into areas of power and

identity? Asking such questions reiterates the importance of including the intracultural with the intercultural.

The focus on shared learning practices above assumed a sense of group membership which spanned differences in cultural identity. In this thesis a classroom, a mentoring program and a treaty were given as examples of social learning spaces which led to shared learning practices. Missing from this conceptual orientation is the importance of the imagination within the wider concept of a 'group'. What element of treaty, as an example, captures the imagination of all people in Victoria beyond its legal ramifications? What do people imagine when they first enter an English language classroom, or a mentoring program and how does that impact their cultural conversations. While I feel the concept of shared learning practices is important for understanding dialogue, I feel that we need to delve deeper into shared imaginative practices of both the self and the other in order to grasp the transformative potential of dialogue itself.

The latter point in the paragraph above introduces a further potential area of dialogical exploration. What exactly is transformed in our dialogues with others. This thesis suggests that positive human change, emerging through dialogue, lies in how we view and communicate with others, alongside our reflections on the ideologies from which we frame cultural others. There is a further area of transformation that sits on the border of the conceptual framework above. In the context that quality conversation enables us to be proactive in our relationships across cultural difference the question remains why we don't pursue skills and use privilege to better enable others to lead a fuller life. In positing this question, I recognise that this is well beyond the questions that guided this thesis. Nevertheless, I feel if we are to truly to understand dialogue it is also important to realise that there will always be gaps in our understanding and spaces to pursue. *All* conceptual frameworks into intercultural dialogue represent a new beginning point. What is being transformed is our understanding of what it means to be human in an increasingly complex social world.

Implications for further research

This study has implications for further research into intercultural dialogue in several areas. First, it points to a need to interrogate definitions of intercultural dialogue in academic literature with the understanding that all dialogue is based within a context of power. Unless

dialogue includes references to power, question marks remain as to whose agenda benefits from the use of the term.

Second, as I noted in the introduction on page 7, there is a lack of reference to intercultural dialogue in areas of multicultural, (or intercultural) policy in Australia. This begs the question as to what the federal government has to lose in engaging in sustained and genuinely open dialogue with members of different cultural groups on issues that directly affect them? Exploring this space, keeping in mind Haidt's framework of moral psychology, would provide insight into the genuineness of government efforts to pursue a culturally cohesive society.

Third, this research posits that there will always be people who seek to support a more culturally diverse and culturally cohesive society. There will also be those who seek surety in cultural certainty and an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. Additionally, there will be those somewhere in the middle, willing to engage with cultural others but only so far. If we are to overcome the cultural challenges of our time, we need to understand the frameworks from which these different groups operate. The cultural challenges lie not just in cultural difference but also moral difference. A research focus on the 'intra', not just the 'inter' can provide added insights into the factors that both enhance and hinder dialogue within and not just across cultures.

Finally, as the discussion above suggests, this thesis represents a beginning rather than end point for further inquiry. Too often dialogue can be viewed as a prescriptive approach for discussing matters of importance. From this structured perspective of dialogue, the process itself has limitations. It challenges people and groups and can be subverted or used to promote one group over the other. On the other hand, as dialogue scholars John Stewart and Karen Zediker (Stewart & Zediker 2000, p .231) argue dialogue is not just a structured discussion but also a 'special quality of contact'. As such it is not just about consensus, but about talking and learning with others, to create a more inclusive society for all. From this perspective, the limitations of dialogue are related to our own willingness to explore a shared humanity amongst all human beings. How else can we navigate our differences but through talking skilfully with others?

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that while intercultural dialogue is a vital aspect of human society it suffers from a lack of definitional clarity and understanding of the factors that make it

flourish. The theoretical frameworks of this paper, particularly as they relate to cultural bias, offer an analytical framework at a cultural level, based on people's sense of identity, their sense of difference with others and what they are prepared to learn, or not learn, from the other.

A foundational element of this process is an understanding of identity and the discourses people bring to the intercultural space. In liberal multicultural societies, cultural difference is frequently equated with ethnicity, differences in lifestyle, forms of expression or presumed experiences. At the level of policy, and I suggest in public discourse, there is a lack of reflection in how such markers contribute to cultural difference itself. What it means to be a member of the 'Australian mainstream', what marks someone as Aboriginal in their heart and not just on a piece of paper, what it means to be of refugee background, or an adult migrant learner, defies easy explanations. Yet these labels are an accepted part of everyday discourse. It is not just that identities are fluid. Additionally, the meanings behind such identities have diverse meanings. Creating reflective spaces around the meanings attached to identity is vital to move conversations away from the labels we apply to others and enhance critical learning.

As such dialogue from a shared learning perspective becomes a skilful venture requiring insight into the fears and vulnerabilities that people hold. We open ourselves to learning from cultural others when we recognise our own culture as incomplete. In doing so we construct new meanings, together. The privilege of being a member of the dominant culture is that we can create spaces to support and extend the cultural journey of the 'cultural other'. Supporting people to explore what it means to be an adult learner, a support seeking refugee or an Aboriginal person is impacted by the worth that the dominant society places on these categories. An important aspect of dialogue lies in finding creative spaces and processes of ethical inclusiveness; of creating an inclusive vision rooted in the challenges of the real world yet providing room for aspiration to be expressed. Coming to a transformative understanding of the cultural other lies in creating new meanings, together, that recognizes and values cultural difference as a force for a broader vision that all groups have a stake in.

From a transformational perspective, the essence of dialogue, lies in realising that cultural difference, however it might be defined, is in fact a source of opportunity to embrace and not a challenge to ignore, dismiss or overcome. Mutuality, humanity and criticality characterise a process that refuses to frame cultural difference in terms of dualistic polarities. Dialogue becomes the essence of connecting, finding and being with another; a

commitment to recognizing that the journey of the ‘cultural other’ is not separate from our own. Likewise, the gift in recognizing the partiality in the discourses of deficit, sanitised engagement and shared humanity is that they guide us to become better in how we ‘dialogue’. The intracultural becomes firmly linked with the intercultural in a struggle of moving beyond wrong and right in an increasingly polarised world.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide 'the cultural other'

Identity

- What does it mean to you to be a student/ a refugee/ an Aboriginal?
- What are your aspirations for your life at the present time/ What imagined future would you like to see
- What do you see as the barriers for meeting these aspirations?
- How do you view difference between yourself and teachers/ mentors/non-indigenous people in government?

Learning

- What have you learnt in class/in the program/through treaty?
- What do you need to learn?
- What do teachers/mentors/non-indigenous people need to learn, when helping/talking with students/mentees/Aboriginal people?
- Do you feel welcome in the class/in the program/in society? Do you feel that you are given respect? Do you feel heard?
- Do you learn from other students/people in the program/Aboriginal people? What do you learn from them? What helps you to learn from them?

Change

- What has been the most significant aspect for you about your class/the program/ the treaty process? What gives you confidence and why?
- What has changed for you through your involvement with your class/the program/ the treaty process?

Dialogue

- How important is talking/dialogue with your teachers/mentors/the government and what has worked/not worked in your conversations?

Interview Guide: Dominant cultural members

Identity

- What does it mean to you to be a teacher/a mentor/a facilitator of treaty?
- What does it mean to be Australian?
- What are your aspirations? What imagined future would you like to see?
- What do you see as the barriers for meeting these aspirations?
- How do you view difference between yourself and indigenous people?

Learning

- What have you learnt in class/in the program/through treaty?
- What do you need to learn?
- How do you engender inclusion in the class/in the program/in society? How do you create respect? Ensure everyone is heard?
- What do you learn from your students/your mentees/Aboriginal people?
- What do teachers/mentors/non-indigenous people need to learn, when helping/talking with students/mentees/Aboriginal people?

Change

- What has been the most significant aspect for you personally about the class/program treaty process?
- What has been the most significant aspect for Aboriginal people about the treaty process?

Dialogue

- How important is dialogue and what has worked/not worked in your conversations with students/mentees/mentors?