

Contesting the curriculum in the schooling of indigenous children in Australia and the USA: from Eurocentrism to culturally powerful pedagogies.

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1. Introduction.

The paradox of the 'settler societies' of the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is that they 'simultaneously resisted and accommodated the authority of an imperialist Europe'¹. In these societies, white supremacist ideology, based on the notion that European culture was superior to all others, has continued to assault the languages, cultures and life-worlds of indigenous populations, while at the same time resistance to this process has established spaces for indigenous self-determination. The paradox is vivid in education systems, which demonstrate that practices dominated by the privileges of 'whiteness'² are still prevalent in many schools despite all the educational rhetoric concerning multicultural pedagogy.

This paper analyses comparatively the competing discourses of ethnicity in school curricula offered to indigenous children in the USA and Australia. Case studies are of four schools which serve both rural and urban indigenous populations:

- 1) A State primary school in an Aboriginal settlement in 'outback' Australia, and 2) a State primary school in a small town with a large proportion of Native Americans in the USA
- 3) An indigenous community-controlled primary school in urban Australia, and 4) an indigenous community-controlled primary school in a rural Native American settlement in the USA.

Our analysis explores how far the curriculum appeared Eurocentric in the sense of being biased towards the white supremacist worldview, how far it appeared to be offering alternatives, and the views of the teachers we interviewed about the curriculum. We frame our analysis by an interpretation of the ethnic context that relates to both countries, including the socio-educational disadvantage suffered by indigenous people in Australia and the USA. We discuss the significance of the two styles of curriculum conceptualisation that we observed, and consider the dilemmas involved in seeking pedagogic change.

¹ Settler societies are defined as 'societies in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms' (p.3, Stasiulis, Daiva and Nira Yuval-Davis, 1995, 'Introduction: beyond dichotomies'. In D. Stasiulis and N. Yuval-Davis (Eds.) *Unsettling Settler Societies. Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*. London: Sage, pp. 1-38.) The authors note that the concept of white settler societies is a racialized and gendered hegemonic myth of origin, contested by anti-racist movements seeking policies that redress the exclusion and oppression of indigenous and some migrant groups (p. 8).

² Kincheloe, Joe and Shirley Steinberg (1998) 'Addressing the Crisis of Whiteness. Reconfiguring White Identity in a Pedagogy of Whiteness'. In J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. Rodriguez and R. Chennault (Eds.) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, New York, St. Martin's Press, pp. 3-30.

Given the theme of the educational situation of ‘Black’ populations, it might be asked why our paper focuses on educational practices that affect Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders³, and Native Americans. These indigenous peoples include those who are dark in skin color, but they are not part of the African diaspora. The answer is that indigenous peoples of Australia and the Americas share with other formerly colonised peoples in Africa and the African diaspora in the Americas, the Caribbean and parts of Europe strikingly similar experiences with colonial and neo-colonial education. As teachers, we can learn from these similarities as well as from the differences. Africans, Australian indigenous people and Native Americans (erroneously called ‘Indians’ by European invaders, and now calling themselves, interchangeably, American Indians, Indians, or Native Americans) have been forced to the bottom of the socio-economic and racial hierarchies in white-dominant countries. Their experiences with racism continue to be institutionalized and systemic⁴, yet they have seized spaces for change. Identifying the similarities in the educational experiences and conditions for Australian Aborigines and Native Americans can help us understand the forces that shape the state of education for all children of color. This research has global implications. It draws attention to the questions of who defines the curriculum, and whose interest is served. The overarching concerns are with how schooling may help children of color to develop identities which are not distorted by the colonizing identity of Eurocentricism, and how teachers can learn to challenge assimilationist curricula and teach instead about the diverse histories, sciences, arts, of people of color in the world. These have been ideals of teacher education for decades, yet it is rare to see them implemented.

2. Framing the analysis: ‘whiteness’ and the Eurocentric curriculum.

To situate ourselves and explain our interests, we are teacher educators who have taught in a variety of settings since the 1970s, one a black Jamaican whose teaching career spans the Caribbean, Britain and Australia, and the other a white educator from a working-class US background, raised in Montana in a neighbourhood with Native Americans, teaching in an ethnically diverse urban center in northern California. We teach university programs which prepare teachers in multicultural, anti-racist pedagogy, and supervise student teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Our programs ask students to explore the nature of Eurocentrism, including its racial ideologies⁵, in the organisation of education,

³ Australian indigenous people, referred to as Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, comprise several distinct ethnic and language groups (eg. Koori, Murri, Wik), connected with different ancestral lands. Indigenous Australians are a range of skin shades, and some reject the use of the term ‘black’ to describe them as a group. When used, it is often used as a political term.

⁴ Spring, Joel (2001) *Deculturation and the Struggle for Equality*. Burr Ridge, Illinois: McGraw Hill Higher Ed. Charles Mills (2000) *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁵ Racial ideologies, now scientifically proved invalid, are central to Eurocentricism. They have changed slightly from one era to the next, but include beliefs that humans are biologically categorized into ‘races’ such as Caucasian, Mongoloid and Negroid, and that these ‘races’ are arranged in a hierarchy of intelligence and civilizational qualities, a belief in the social ills of miscegenation or ‘race’ mixing, and a belief that some ‘races’ are culturally incompatible (see Sandra Harding [Ed., 1993] *The ‘Racial’ Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press). Belief in a race / culture hierarchy is so strong that many teachers, socialised into Eurocentric assumptions of superiority, see no need to engage seriously with non-Western cultures and knowledge systems in their study or teaching.

its deleterious consequences for all students, and approaches for constructing alternatives⁶.

Our focus on case studies of schooling for indigenous students in this paper comes from our efforts to improve our own competencies, as teacher educators, in constructing pedagogies that recognise the special place of indigenous people in white-dominated societies. In Australia and in the USA, indigenous peoples are in such a minority (around two percent or less in both countries) that it is likely that non-indigenous teachers will be numerically dominant in the teaching service for the foreseeable future. In the U.S.A. with a 75 percent white population, nearly 90% of primary and secondary teachers are white⁷. In Australia, where the 'White Australia' immigration policy prevailed until the 1970s, over 90 percent of the population is white⁸, and the teaching force reflects this. Multicultural education has gone some way towards recognising the languages and cultures of diverse ethnicities⁹. However, the role of black and indigenous cultures is still inadequately recognised in curriculum practice in Australia and North America, as we are aware from our experience with university and school curricula. In this situation, extending the task of culturally and linguistically congruent, anti-racist, multicultural education is especially urgent.

Educational systems in white dominated countries, and what is recognised as formal knowledges, are shaped by 'whiteness'. In the literature on whiteness, it is pointed out that white and European are viewed as the norm and thus not named, as other 'races' and ethnicities are named. The political agenda involved in this 'color-blind' construct denies the link between socio-economic privilege and whiteness. It erases dangerous historical memories 'in a way that severs the connection between white people's contemporary privileged social location with historical patterns of injustice'¹⁰. White blindness to the difference race makes in people's lives has a powerful effect on schools and other institutions in white dominant societies. It keeps white people from learning about the role that their privilege plays in personal and institutional racism. If white teachers want to challenge the authority of the white, western worldview, and

⁶ Hickling-Hudson, Anne (1998) When Marxist and postmodern theories won't do: the potential of postcolonial theory for educational analysis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Vol 19 No.3, pp. 327 – 340. Ahlquist, Roberta (2000) Whose world is it anyway? Multicultural science from diverse perspectives. *Comparative Education Review*, Vol 44 No. 3, pp. 356 – 363. Ahlquist, Roberta (2001) Ahlquist, Roberta (2001) 'Critical multicultural mathematics curriculum: multiple connections through the lenses of race, ethnicity, gender and social class.' In *Changing the Faces of Mathematics: Perspectives on Gender*, Reston, VA. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Inc, pp.25-36.

⁷ National Center for Educational Statistics (2000) *Population by Ethnicity, 2000*. Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education.

⁸ See table of population figures by James Jupp, (Ed., 2001) *The Australian People: an Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its people and their origin.*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, cited by George Megalogenis in 'What makes up the sum of us'. *The Weekend Australian*, 4-5 May, 2002, p 24.

⁹ Bennett, Christine (2001) Genres of research in multicultural education. *Review of Educational Research*, Summer, Vol. 71, No. 2 pp. 171 – 217.

¹⁰ Kincheloe, Joe and Shirley Steinberg (1998 p.15) 'Addressing the Crisis of Whiteness. Reconfiguring White Identity in a Pedagogy of Whiteness.' In J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. Rodriguez and R. Chennault (Eds.) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, New York, St. Martin's Press, pp. 3-30.

build an anti-racist, socially just and global curriculum, they need to acknowledge their power and privilege. This is the foundation for learning to give up that power and instead working to build anti-racist alliances across ethnic, racial, and cultural differences. A key component of such alliances is the principle of self-determination for indigenous peoples and peoples of color in public schooling. The goal is not to elicit feelings of guilt for white racism but to encourage insight into the racialized nature of oppression, as a foundation for working towards the redistribution of power and resources along more equitable lines¹¹.

A postcolonial perspective puts this process of 'unmasking whiteness'¹² into global context. It explores the ways in which the Eurocentric curriculum, which includes the practices and assumptions of 'whiteness', is often so accepted as the norm that it is invisible and beyond question for many teachers. It is rarely admitted at any level of the education system that today's curriculum still draws from the white imperialist projects of 'fostering a science and geography of race, renaming a good part of the world in homage to its adventurers' homesick sense of place, and imposing languages and literatures on the colonized in an effort to teach them why they were subservient to a born-to-rule civilization'¹³. The Eurocentrism of the North American and Australian curriculum offered to many indigenous students is not officially recognised, does not meet their educational needs, yet it is, in our view, an important factor explaining their relative lack of success in the educational system. This sort of education takes it for granted that Eurocentric learning with all its ethnocentric and racial ideologies is, and should be, the norm, the assumption being that all children, regardless of ethnicity, language, class, gender, will benefit from this curriculum. A postcolonial perspective names and challenges the legacies of colonialism and their continuation through neo-colonial practices. This perspective therefore investigates the assumptions underlying discourses of Eurocentrism including 'whiteness', and explores approaches for constructing alternatives¹⁴.

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

¹¹ . Kincheloe, Joe and Shirley Steinberg (op cit. 1998, p. 19), and Nelson Rodriguez (1998, pp. 33-35) Emptying the content of whiteness: toward an understanding of the relation between whiteness and pedagogy. In J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. Rodriguez and R. Chennault (Eds.) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, New York, St. Martin's Press, pp. 32-62.

¹² McKay, Belinda (Ed.) (1999) *Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation*. Nathan, Brisbane: Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University.

¹³ Willinsky, John (1998, p.4) *Learning to Divide the World: Education at Empire's End*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁴ Willinsky, John (1999) Curriculum after culture, race, nation. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, Vol 20, No. 1, pp. 89 – 112.

3. The socio-educational situation of Indigenous people in Australia and the USA.

Five hundred years of European colonialism resulted in an unprecedented global holocaust in terms of the mass death of peoples of color. There is not the space to cite the details here, but today the Native American population has been reduced to about two and a half million, one percent of the US population of some 281 million, while Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders now number about 250,000, an estimated 2% percent of the population of 18 million¹⁵. The survival of indigenous populations in both countries into the 20th century and their winning of limited social advances shows the resilience of their struggles in the face of brutal circumstances. Native Americans won citizenship in 1924¹⁶, and indigenous Australians won citizenship in 1967¹⁷.

In both countries, there is a significant movement expressing genuine support for the 'reconciliation' that aims at restoring justice to indigenous people and initiating an end to the social division which automatically privileges whites. In spite of some advances, there has been a continuation of institutional racism. Successive governments, notwithstanding their rhetoric, have quite simply failed to take the actions that would put an end to the acute disadvantages suffered by indigenous people. This disadvantage continues to put indigenous people at much greater risk of reduced health and wellbeing than are other ethnicities. It is well known that indigenous rates of suicide and imprisonment far exceeds their average rates in the population¹⁸. The life expectancy of indigenous peoples is about 20 years less than that of whites. What may be less well known is the high indigenous unemployment rate. This is clearly a factor that relates to other problems that both groups suffer. In the USA, Native American unemployment is about 46 percent compared to 7 percent for the rest of the

¹⁵ For recent population figures in the USA, see National Center for Educational Statistics (2000) *Population by Ethnicity, 2000*, Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education. For population figures in Australia, see James Jupp (Ed., 2001) *The Australian People: an Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its people and their origins*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Estimates of the number of Australian Aboriginal people at the time of the British Empire's intrusion into Australia vary from half a million to one million, while estimates of the Native American population living in the United States and Canada, before the European invasion vary from fifteen and sixty million. If South and Central America are included, it is estimated that during the 1400s there were over 100 million people. In comparison, Europe is estimated to have had a population of 70 million during the same time period. (Compiled from: Carl Waldman (2000) *The Atlas of The North American Indian*, Checkmark Books, NY, NY. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (1993) *The Native Americans, An Illustrated History*, (Introduction). Atlanta, GA.: Turner Publishing Inc.

¹⁶ Spring, Joel (2001) *Deculturation and the Struggle for Equality*. Burr Ridge, Illinois: McGraw Hill Higher Ed.

¹⁷ Murphy, Brian (1982) *Dictionary of Australian History*. Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

¹⁸ There is a disproportionate number of Indians in the prison system in the U.S.A. For example, in Montana, the state with the fourth largest number of Native Americans (6.2% of the state's population and 10.3% of the student population), 15.8% of the male prisoners and 27.8 % of the female prisoners were Native American. In Australia, the imprisonment rate for indigenous adults is over 14 times that for non-indigenous adults. In 1997, almost 19% of the adult prison population and 40% of children in 'corrective institutions for children' were identified as indigenous. AusStats: 4704.0 (1999a) *The Health and Welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. (Accessed 19 June 2001) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/NT00003B36>

population¹⁹ while in Australia, indigenous unemployment is 23 percent compared to 9 percent for the rest of the adult population²⁰. Because of this, most indigenous people live in relative poverty²¹ with many forced to seek government welfare payments to survive. Indigenous people suffer a much greater burden of ill-health and social dislocation than the rest of the population. This relates to poor living conditions, poor nutrition, higher rates of disease, and exposure to the violence and substance abuse that tends to accompany dispossession²².

The education system is not giving indigenous peoples the same opportunities that it gives most other ethnic groups, although Native Americans appear to have more opportunities than Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Figures from the 1990s indicate that people who hold university degrees represent just over a quarter of the adult population in both Australia and the USA. But 9 percent of Native Americans have college degrees, compared to only 1.3 percent of indigenous people in Australia. This must have something to do with the far more successful school system in the USA, where 70 percent of Native Americans have graduated from high school (the national average is 86 percent)²³. Compare this to Australia, where 6.6 percent of indigenous Australians have successfully completed high school with a Year 12 qualification (the national average is 70 percent)²⁴. However, the educational advantage apparently held by Native Americans compared to Australia's indigenous people does not translate into better employment opportunities, and recent surveys indicate that Indian school drop-out rates are again on the rise.

The key reasons for this relative educational disadvantage are clear. While whites were developing a reasonably efficient educational system for their own kind, they excluded indigenous people and other people of color from most of the opportunities in that education system and in the wider society. From the 1840s to the 1990s, through the phases of mission schools, schools on native reservations and government schools, indigenous people were

¹⁹ <http://www.theramp.net/kohr4/interestingfacts.html> 'Interesting facts on American's First people', Page 3 (accessed July 6, 2001)

²⁰ AusStats: 4704.0 (1999a) The Health and Welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. (Accessed 19 June 2001) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/NT00003B36>

²¹ Poverty goes along with substandard social conditions in health, housing, education and life expectancy. In Australia, life expectancy is an estimated 56.9 years for indigenous males and 61.7 years for indigenous females compared with 75.2 years and 81.1 years for other male and female Australians. Housing is problematic, with 31% of indigenous people owning homes compared to 71% of other Australians, and with 50% more indigenous people living in overcrowded or substandard dwellings compared with other Australians (Austats, 1999a op cit). Currently, the poverty rate for Native Americans on reservations is 31%. See <http://www.ncai.org/mainto/pages/issues/communitydevelopment/economic dev.asp> Page 1 of 2 (Accessed 26 September 2002).

²² Alcoholism for Native Americans and Alaskan Natives is 57.3%, compared to 7.4% for all other ethnicities. Suicide for Native Americans is 24.5%, over twice that of the rest of the population (c.10.4%). The cause of death of Native Americans by homicide is 25.5%, compared to 10.4% for the rest of the population. See <http://www.doc.gov/eda/html/2b44nativeamer.htm> (Accessed 13 March 2002)

²³ <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/INAR.html> (Accessed 6 July 2002, pp. 1-4)

²⁴ AusStats (1999b) Educational Attainment (Accessed 19 June 2001) <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/ABS...3677eca2569de002539f4!OpenDocument>

pushed to the margins of education, treated as outcasts fit only for menial labor, forced to make do with pedagogical crumbs²⁵.

In the last three decades of the 20th century there were some positive developments for the education of indigenous students in both countries. These developments include affirmative actions such as specially targeted financial assistance and learning support centres in universities, the emergence of parent and community support groups, a small number of independent, indigenous-controlled schools, programs of Indigenous Studies, the education of indigenous teachers and teacher aides, and growing numbers of indigenous leaders and activists working at various levels of the system to improve the education of their people. In the USA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has played an uneven role in improving procedures for protecting student rights. At times ineffectively, and at times successfully, it has pushed for more Indian-controlled schooling²⁶. All of this provides spaces for action and improvement, but constant ongoing struggle is still necessary to win educational equity. The gains won by the American Indian Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and related grassroots actions during the 1960s and 1970s are being eroded daily. Affirmative action and bilingual education in the USA have in many places been dismantled. Racial segregation may be outlawed, but social class segregation continues, and schools have not been adequately funded to help children from poor families²⁷. It is clear from the figures of failure, dropout and lack of access that indigenous schoolchildren have not been positioned as equal players in the educational systems in either country. Educational equity is talked about rhetorically but is far from being achieved in practice.

3. The Case Studies.

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

Anglocentric Schooling: Two Cases

School 1, Australia

During the aggressive British invasion and settlement of Australia, some of the surviving Aboriginal people, from several different language groupings, were forcibly removed from their lands which were taken over by white pastoralists, farmers and the 'Crown'. In the early twentieth century, these Aborigines were thrown together by the government into communities of forced settlement in arid locations which had no economic base. Although Aborigines made efforts to regain some semblance of normal life in these settlements, they remained places with such chronic economic and social problems – including an unemployment rate of up to 95 percent – that they are still in crisis today. One of the enduring crises is the state of education for the children

²⁵ Groome, Howard (1994) Education: the search for relevance. In C. Burke and E. Burke, *Aboriginal Australia: an Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. St. Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press; Joel Spring (2001) *Deculturation and the Struggle for Equality*. McGraw Hill Higher Ed.

²⁶ Joel Spring op cit: pp. 102-103

²⁷ Kozol, Johnathan (1992) *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Harper Perennial.

in these settlements, characterised as it is by high absenteeism, poor performance in literacy and numeracy, and high dropout rates before the school-leaving age. We visited a primary school for Aboriginal children in one of these rural settlements, and the curriculum practices in this school, which we will call School 1, became the focus of our research. It is important to point out that this school was on the threshold of change because of the arrival of a new principal. Since our visit, improvements have been made. Hence, our description of School 1 is a snapshot of its recent history. We provide it because it resonates with a model of schooling in Australia that from our knowledge is still widespread, both for indigenous and non-indigenous children.

The literacy level of most students at the school was a matter of concern, as we learnt from our conversations with teachers. Most children leave school at or after Grade 7, having attained only a Grade 3 literacy level. Nearly everyone we talked to blamed this on poor attendance. We were told that most children only attended school about fifty percent of the time, and that “It’s not a very traditional community and elders don’t have the respect that they once did. Even if they tell the kids that it’s important to come to school; kids don’t necessarily obey”²⁸

It was noticeable at all levels of the primary school that the curriculum was not grounded in the daily life experiences of the students, but rather in the dominant culture knowledge and experiences of the young white teachers, regardless of whether their style of pedagogy was didactic or relational. Days of the week, time, weather and seasons were taught in a decontextualized manner. In some classrooms children were asked to draw, paint and decorate Christmas trees, but from talking to some of the children, we felt that it was not clear that they knew what the tradition of decorating trees or even the holiday meant. Pictures on classroom walls, textbooks, and exercises children were doing, gave the clear message that the curriculum was unabashedly Anglocentric. For example, children’s literature was based on collections of books in classrooms and the library which were all from mainstream white culture. The walls displayed prominent pictures of the Disney versions of Snow White, Cinderella, The Three Little Pigs and Red Riding Hood, and other pictures and reading books included The Gingerbread Man, Humpty Dumpty, Incy Wincy Spider and Dr. Seuss.

Sentences written on the chalkboard for the children to read and copy spoke not of everyday, community matters, or of Australian or Aboriginal history, culture, wildlife, or society, but of content that had little or no connection to their daily lives. Some sentences were to do with ‘freight trains’, others were about bicycles. Students had been asked to describe parts of a bicycle that was illustrated on a large wall poster. Bicycles and freight trains, however, seemed to have little to do with the children’s experiences, and it was clear that most of the students were bored with these tasks. Introducing strange and new material in itself need not be problematic; one of the tasks of teachers after all, is to try to have students consider the unfamiliar. It is, however arguably problematic for indigenous children to be so entirely immersed in the uncritically portrayed culture of the white dominant majority. The manifest flaws in this curriculum suggested to us one reason why the absentee rate was so high.

Minimal library resources were a factor in the ethnocentric curriculum practices of the teachers. The library was a small room in disarray, with books piled in boxes and stacked on the floor. There was no evidence of a globe, atlas, world map, or local map, and no children’s books or curriculum materials reflecting ethnic diversity, although there was a row of shiny new computers that some of the children were trying out. The teachers were doing as best they could with few suitable resources. One explained that

²⁸ Interview with teacher, visit to School 1. Field notes, Australia, Anne Hickling-Hudson and Roberta Ahlquist, November 1998.

the reason that so many Disney illustrations of fairy tales and magazine cutouts were used was that it was easy to obtain these materials – some of them, indeed, had been donated – whereas it was difficult to get materials that illustrated local cultures and environments. The new principal was committed to building a viable library for the school. The principal's main goals were to increase student literacy and numeracy skills. A poignant observation from one teacher: "The kids love music, but there is no music teaching"²⁹.

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

School 2, USA.

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

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

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

²⁹ Interview with teacher, School 1, op. Cit.

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

The curriculum was clearly test-driven. The emphasis on raising standardized test scores was a high priority for the administration at this school. The principal told us that his main concern was for teachers to teach with the intent of raising standardized test scores. He supported state testing as a means of increasing teacher accountability, and explained that if he didn't get these scores increased for the school, he would lose his job. Evidence of this concern was everywhere. On the walls prompts were posted about increasing test scores, and standards were posted to show what content was to be taught. For example, in the 6th grade teachers were expected to teach world geography and world history with a focus on ancient civilizations, and that standard was posted in hall corridors and Grade 6 classrooms. Teaching for these standards is driven by the demands of standardized tests set by state authorities, which created anxiety among teachers as well as students. Aware that their principal saw higher test scores as a primary goal for the school year, many teachers were resigned that they had to accept this mandate. Yet they had very mixed views about the importance of such exams. Many expressed concerns about whether their students were ready for the next onslaught of state mandated, norm-referenced exams. Others quietly voiced their concerns about whether this was the right direction for their pedagogy. Most of the teachers to whom we spoke gave the impression that they were teaching for the tests against their better judgement.

In preparing children for the tests, one teacher had divided her class into three groups according to their level of competence in English – high, medium and low competence. Her strategy was to have the high and medium competence groups practice writing answers to sample test questions in English and Mathematics. Meanwhile, a teacher aide under her direction taught the low-competence speakers (those who spoke little or no English) how to recognise something in the test so that they could attempt an answer and not get zero. Nonsense rhymes can be fun, but we were surprised that children should be asked to copy them, and wondered what children with only a few words of English would make of this one being copied from the blackboard:

Science

F is for fish

Swimming in a lake

Blowing out the candles

On a birthday cake³⁰.

The two fourth grade teachers were teaching basic English grammar. Neither of their classrooms had pictures reflecting cultural diversity. Though the grammar lesson in one was being competently taught, it gave no nod to linguistic or cultural diversity. In the second fourth grade classroom, the children (nearly all Mexican American and American Indian) were all quietly copying a list of words and meanings from the

³⁰ Visit to School 2, Field notes USA, Anne Hickling-Hudson and Roberta Ahlquist, March 2001.

board. The teacher was absolutely in control. She had only to stare sternly at a child and say sarcastically 'Excuse *me*', for any attempt at talking to stop immediately. The children were silenced except when she asked for a show of hands. When we spoke with her, she told us that she had been teaching for over two decades and believed in strict discipline, traditional grammar, basal readers and a firm structure within which the children could work. Yet she deplored the low standards of literacy and numeracy of her students. She blamed parents for not making the children ready for school, saying that they provided neither books at home nor help with homework. However from another perspective, the problems were, as we perceived them in this classroom, that the children seemed cowed, and the work set for them, again test-driven, was boring if not stupefying. It was a class that could have come from the Victorian era.

The classroom of one teacher in the first grade was clearly an exception to the dominant Eurocentric ethos of the school. The teacher, a woman of color with a high degree of consciousness of multicultural education, had been trained in California, a state that mandates a culturally and linguistically diverse emphasis in credential coursework. This teacher did not teach from a color-blind perspective. She was committed to teaching children about how to affirm, not deny their richly diverse skin colors and ethnicities. Children had drawn and colored face masks with such paint tones as mahogany, cinnamon, toast, peach and coffee. This classroom had books from different ethnic backgrounds, photos of the children on the walls, and pictures of Native American, Mexican American and other ethnically diverse peoples. Her curriculum outlines and teaching materials reflected a strong multicultural emphasis. She was bilingual, and students spoke with her in both English and Spanish. This classroom showed much promise. Students' identities were being acknowledged, and their cultures and languages were being validated.

Indigenous self-determination: two cases.

We now consider two schools where most of the teachers were challenging the Eurocentric tradition of teaching. We describe the alternatives being presented in what we shall call School 3, a Native American controlled school in an indigenous rural community in the USA, and School 4, an independent Aboriginal-controlled city school for Aboriginal and Islander students.

School 3, USA

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

This is a small primary school, about thirty years old, with 150 American Indian students, 120 in the kindergarten to 6th grades, and 30 in the 7th and 8th grades. It is rural and located on reservation land. Students have the option to go to an urban high school in the nearest town, twenty miles away. Strong community support and parent involvement were visible features of this primary school. Nearby was a health and wellness center which was being actively used. Parents were in the cafeteria, eating with their children, in the garden center helping arrange new plantings, in the library searching for a book for their child. A majority of the teachers were American Indians. All had state-required teaching credentials. Hiring policy favored the hiring of qualified Indian teachers. Some staff were teacher aides without credentials. The curriculum adopts a 'both ways' approach, meaning that there is a balance of indigenous and non-indigenous content. The curriculum is discussed, reviewed and

modified by a school board including teachers, staff, parents and other community members.

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

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

The library was well organized and stocked with a rich offering of Native and Western books. It also included a display of medicinal herbs used for a wide spectrum of ailments. The atmosphere on the campus was welcoming, informal, stimulating, friendly. It was evident in the structure of the buildings as well as classrooms that Indian culture and values were affirmed. Teachers and staff met regularly to assess and build on student learning. The school portrayed a special, caring educational environment. The teachers and staff at this school are struggling to provide a culturally congruent education for their students at a difficult time. Unemployment is high and, with the slashing of Federal funding, poverty is on the rise in many Native communities like this one³¹. There was no paved road to the school, making access difficult. This has been an issue on many reservation schools. Federal government money for economic development projects has been drastically reduced. This means that rural schools like this one have to do more with much less money than in the past. This community school is not isolated from the problems of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse, and single-parenthood, which face most communities in the U.S. Yet there is an open acknowledgment that these problems exist, and there are ongoing efforts to work with community members to address these critical problems as they impact children in the school.

School 4, Australia

School 4 is a small independent school of under 200 students, most of whom are at the primary level and a few of whom are at the secondary level. Only about ten years old, it is an indigenous school in an urban location in Australia. A few children from other

³¹ <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/INAR.html> (Accessed 6 July 2002, pp. 1-4)

ethnic groups also attend. One of several visits that we made was to attend the school's annual 'Speech Night'. There was a strong sense of community, with parents, students, teachers and general staff working together to make the Speech Night successful. Students appeared confident, enthusiastic, energetic and assertive. They were the organizers and main actors in the performances of singing, dancing and speechmaking. Student work was exhibited in the classrooms for the public to view. There was a strong sense of self among the student performers; they organized themselves on stage, they took on the responsibility of presenting their music and dance confidently. Adults were the appreciative audience; students were at the centre of things. Nothing was stiff, awkward or stilted; instead things were 'easy' and friendly. It was a life-affirming atmosphere.

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

The school is seen as an institution belonging to the community of parents and interested citizens, not separate from it. The board members, all indigenous, are well known in the community – they are public figures. Parents who visit keep coming back. The staff treats them with respect, and they have a real say in their child's education. Many of the parents are from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, and benefit from the adult evening classes provided by the school. Some have obtained jobs in the city as a result of their studies. The school's emphasis is on establishing a family-style environment which provides care for the children's social and health needs. We observed that the Principal is very accessible. Children hold her hands, talk with her, sit on her lap. She explained that some of the students come from foster homes or are in care, and that 'they regard us as their family. Families have meals together, that's why the school emphasises giving breakfast and lunch. Parents or caregivers contribute \$5 a week per child towards the cost of this food. It doesn't cover costs, but it's a contribution. Some parents volunteer to help in the kitchen and canteen. Every morning, four buses pick the kids up, bring them to school, and take them back home after school'³².

The school provides its students with several kinds of health services including dental and optical care in partnership with the Optometry division of a city-based university, and hearing services in partnership with a large State Hospital. The State's Community Health Service Department has an ongoing partnership with the school, and helped it to remodel rooms devoted to health care. The school prides itself on helping children to overcome any behaviour problems they may have. Many students choose to come to the school from other schools where they are not doing well or have a reputation for being badly behaved, and with help, settle into the new culture where students enjoy school and treat each other with respect. We were told that the school had two guidance counsellors, including a Child Protection worker to make sure that the Family Protection Agency carries out its duties³³.

³² Visit to School 4, Field Notes, Anne Hickling-Hudson, May 2001

³³ Visit to School 4, op cit.

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

The cultural studies program emphasises indigenous history, society and culture. This is one of the things that differentiates the school from other schools. Teachers use indigenous texts as much as possible, and they write a lot of their own material. But even when they use mainstream texts, the teachers put their own indigenous slant on the material. Students study topics such as 'invasion and resistance' and 'the stolen generations' that might be considered controversial in other schools. Community elders are regular visitors to the school. They drop into classes informally, and tell the children stories. Two dance educators visit regularly and teach the children in every grade traditional Aboriginal and Islander music and dance. The school has decided not to teach Aboriginal languages. The Principal explained that 'Students come from twelve different language groups and the issue would be: which language(s) do you maintain? All Aboriginal groups support the school, and part of maintaining neutrality is not to teach any particular Aboriginal language or any religion'³⁴. Most of the students speak English as their first language, except for a few who come from indigenous communities in rural areas.

The school receives the same funding as any small independent school, but it is not supported by a fee structure. The Principal has to devote time to writing submissions to seek funding. Salaries are at State level, following the bands and steps of the State system. The school occasionally receives gifts from citizens. There is a fair number of computers, because it is relatively easy to get money for them. The library suffers from a shortage of funds, yet it has several inviting book displays of multicultural children's literature, a well-stocked wall of Aboriginal books for adults and children, and a few giant picture books including Aboriginal stories for the teacher to reading aloud and display to the class. The walls are lined with pictures of Aboriginal people in their cultural context. This library could not be mistaken for anything other than one which is proudly emphasising Aboriginal culture.

4. Comparing the Cases

Our case studies helped us to understand more clearly the nature of the problematic curriculum with which many, perhaps most indigenous students are faced, and the distance that schools need to travel to change this. Australian and US schools are characterised by what Sleeter³⁵ describes as 'the overwhelming presence of whiteness' in the teaching and administrative staff, in the student body, in social relations between groups, and in the curriculum. While this is clearly so, a further point is that most indigenous students in state schools are not given the high quality of schooling that is available to elite groups of whites. Their schooling is not only Anglocentric and white-

³⁴ Visit to School 4, op cit.

³⁵ Sleeter, Christine, 2001, Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: research and the overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education* Vol 52 No. 2, March/April 2001, pp. 94 – 106.

dominated: it is also outdated, didactic and not geared to producing a positive and self-confident scholastic identity. These characteristics became clear from our first two case studies. They are only two cases, but our regular visits to schools as teacher educators suggests to us that the model of schooling described here is generalisable to many schools.

The two state schools, School 1, educating Australian Aboriginal children, and School 2, educating mainly American Indian and Mexican American children, were perpetuating a European industrial factory model of schooling, which regiments learners and disregards their interests and backgrounds. In this model, most teachers pay no heed to the tenets of progressive education that advocate cultural diversity. If 'world' history and geography are taught, these are conceptualised in a Eurocentric fashion. Organisation is so rigid, hierarchical and teacher-controlled that there is little or no space for student collaborative responsibility. The curriculum foregrounds the doings of white folk to such an extent that children of color do not see themselves represented in most of the written materials, texts, movies, videos or literature. They are not visible as contributors to the development of science, mathematics, histories, or literatures. From this perspective it is white men who made history, discovered other lands, shaped the histories of science, the arts and humanities, made the 'important' contributions to the world.

This kind of curriculum pays little attention to social context, ignoring the systemic structural factors which produce inequities of race, class and gender as part of corporate capitalism. Pedagogy is teacher-centered and test driven. The focus is on rote learning and memorization of atomised factual data. The methods are driven by the demands of curriculum content, rather than being student and problem-centered. Parents and elders do not play an important role in the school: indeed, they have little to do with it. The ethos of this kind of schooling is remarkably similar to that of the school experience of forty years ago described by Kris Johnston, an Australian Aboriginal woman: 'When I think of "School" I think of a white institution I attended through the 1960s. A place of sour milk, marching, standing to attention, singing "God Save the Queen" while the national flag, a symbol of Empire and the oppression of Aboriginal people, got raised. It was a place with many rules and regulations – none of which seemed to have any relevance to me' ³⁶.

The two independent schools, School 3 and School 4, were imbued with the indigenous culture that the first two schools lacked. Self determination was shown in the control of the school by the indigenous community, even though this concept is fraught with problems. Poverty conspires to undermine efforts at self-determination. Teacher turnover rates, lack of money for adequate curriculum resources and materials, burnout, all can contribute to uneven leadership and participation. The presence of parents and elders was strong in both schools. Most of the teachers were indigenous, and had worked out ways of teaching both Western and Indigenous curriculum strands so that there was a sense of local culture embracing global culture. School 4 had shown that with this kind of curriculum, and with response to individual learning needs, students can pass state-imposed tests at a high level. Student identities and histories were validated and affirmed. The curriculum was generated from their lived experiences, cultures and interests. Because of the strong programs of holistic care in both schools, the teachers had come to know the students in their family and cultural contexts, and there was trust and mutual respect. These schools are examples, rare in our experience, of how school communities can be collaborative, involving learners, teachers, parents, students and general staff in working towards similar goals.

³⁶ Johnston, Kris (1998) Learning to be White. In Lorraine Johnson-Riordan (Ed) *Travelling Tracks*, NSW, Goolangullia, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, pp. 29 – 32.

Avoiding binaries, it is important to note that not all of the teachers were of a kind in the case study schools. In School 1 in rural Australia, a few teachers were outstanding in their level of care and concern for the children. Spaces for statements of cultural pride were evident, such as in the display of Aboriginal murals on some buildings. School 2 in the USA appeared efficiently run and orderly, offered several extra-curricular activities, and had a few teachers, such as those in Grade One, who were creative in their attempts to 'customize' the curriculum for their students. However, such teachers were in a minority within the prevailing narrowly traditional ethos of both schools. In the third and fourth case study schools, not all teachers were succeeding in the ambitious goals of the school to balance local and global culture. But most of them were striving to reach these goals, and were being supported in their efforts by the school's administration as much as by its community.

It is this second model that needs to inform the search to displace the much more common model of the school as a resented institution imposed on communities by the laws of the land. Nonetheless, poverty and unemployment cast a cloud over school communities even when the curriculum is culturally relevant, and even when school graduation rates are relatively high, as in the USA. When the students graduate, what will they do? Unemployment figures for indigenous ethnic groups suggest that most of them (perhaps apart from the small minority who complete tertiary education) have poor chances of good jobs in an economy that is downsizing and constricting employment possibilities. We need to ask if schools and communities are preparing them to address these economic concerns. Alcoholism and drug abuse become coping mechanisms when one's self esteem is destroyed by the inability to provide food, housing and shelter for one's family.

4. Framing the change agenda: some dilemmas

As we pointed out earlier, many educators of indigenous students are likely to continue to be white in white-dominant countries. The challenge is a complex one: that of educating these educators to deconstruct and displace the Eurocentric discourses of 'whiteness' and to collaborate in exploring discourses rooted in epistemologies which are unfamiliar to them. This could lead to changing school practices from those which are dominated by the kind of Anglocentric curriculum practised by Schools 1 and 2 of our case studies, to those which integrate the community of parents and elders into a curriculum which blends the best of indigenous and Western traditions, as was happening in Schools 3 and 4. In this section, we discuss a number of dilemmas that can be expected in moving towards this kind of collaboration.

Learning and Employment Prospects

The dilemma is that while education is often touted as a beacon of hope, those who succeed in the Anglocentric educational paths which are so predominant will probably be severed from their culture and community of origin. The role played by Eurocentric schooling in a community where the majority of adults have little hope of employment is, often, to remove or alienate young people. For most, school is puzzling and often perceived as irrelevant, humiliating or oppressive³⁷. In order to go on to secondary school, students in rural areas often have to travel outside of their community (this was the case with students in both Schools 1 and 2 of our case studies), and many will seek work in other towns. Given these circumstances, it is little wonder indigenous students' absenteeism tends to be high and their performance poor, as was the case in

³⁷ Malin, Merridy (1997) Mrs Eyers is no ogre: a micro-study in the exercise of power. In G. Colishaw and B. Morris (Eds.) *Race Matters. Indigenous Australians and 'Our' Society*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

the first two schools we studied, and that few parents are involved in their children's schooling.

Turning this situation around would necessitate developing meaningful local employment in tandem with meaningful indigenous education, perhaps the most difficult dual challenge that currently exists. Some indigenous communities are demanding and initiating action in tackling the challenge, but there is a long way to go. In California, New Mexico, Nevada, and Arizona, in the U.S., some tribal communities are moving out of poverty because they have built gambling casinos on reservation land, and this is providing the tribes with added income. There are experiments in Arizona involving the training of Navajo construction workers in the building trades, and in Australia involving the setting up of indigenous-owned enterprises³⁸. It would be useful to research and document the successes of these economic ventures.

Curriculum content

Postcolonial perspectives challenge the domination of the curriculum by the culture of whiteness which provides students with decontextualized fairy tales, Disney stories and pictures, lies and omissions about indigenous histories and cultures, and histories of white settlement emphasising 'pioneers', 'progress' and the 'Great Men' approach. All of these examples were evident in Schools 1 and 2 in our study. Advocacy for changing this kind curriculum can come up against resistance from teachers who argue that children from ethnic minorities need to know this kind of material in order to have access to the cultural capital of mainstream (i.e. white) society. In their view, ethnic minorities need to know European fairy tales and the stories of white Australia, and they need to know who are the heroes of mainstream tradition. Some advocates of this view justify it by arguing that knowing the language and culture of the dominant society would give minority students a better chance of social mobility.

It is of course essential for ethnically oppressed students to master the discourses of power. What is often not understood is that the discourses of power cannot be taught by means of an uncritical curriculum. Much of the Disney tradition, for example, is a highly problematic and twisted re-interpretation of tradition which promulgates a sanitised 'Mickey Mouse history' replete with racial stereotypes and caricatures³⁹. When Disney material is presented, teachers should accompany this with critiques of it as well as with other traditions, so that they can help children to see stories and histories as being subjective, located in place and time, and representing diverse ideas – some of which are oppressive. Teachers are unlikely to be able to teach in this critical way unless they understand power-knowledge discourses in the curriculum along a continuum ranging from uncritical to critical. Their 'critical' skills would be evident when, for example, they can have their students explore how narratives and knowledge are embedded in specific historical contexts, and how this knowledge can influence subjective identities.

³⁸ Pearson, Noel (2001) Rebuilding indigenous communities. In P. Botsman and M. Latham, *The Enabling State: People Before Bureaucracy*. Annandale: Pluto Press, pp. 132 – 147.

³⁹ Michel, Claudine (1996) Re-Reading Disney: not quite Snow White. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Vol 17, No. 1, pp.5 – 14. Rains, Frances (1999) Indigenous knowledge, historical amnesia and intellectual authority: deconstructing hegemony and the social and political implications of the curricular "Other". In J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. Rodriguez and R. Chennault (Eds.) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, New York, St. Martin's Press, pp. 317 - 332.

Another barrier to reframing curriculum might arise if indigenous parents argue that white teachers should teach indigenous children white culture and leave the teaching of indigenous culture to the indigenous community. This perception is often based on a concern about the danger of putting an indigenous curriculum in ignorant hands⁴⁰. This is a valid fear given the immersion of white teachers, even sympathetic ones, in Western learning shaped by a disciplinary power that normalises individualistic instead of collective behaviour, that is imbued with assumptions of Eurocentric superiority, and is unused to considering other ways of knowing. Some indigenous teachers too, schooled in this system, might at first not know how to teach in other ways. Perhaps Western trained teachers should be required to do part of their teaching internships in indigenous-controlled, culturally negotiated schools, so that they may become open to ways of educating not encountered in their training⁴¹.

There is also the dilemma of the inadequacy of teaching materials. Books, films, texts and examinations have predominantly been shaped by conceptions of whiteness. Teachers seeking change need to familiarise themselves with studies of children's literature that analyse representations of race, such as the interesting studies of representations of Native Americans by Slapin and Seale (1992)⁴² and of Australian Aborigines by Bradford (2001)⁴³. Teachers should themselves be supported in becoming writers of alternative materials, and could encourage their students to do the same. Meanwhile, librarians can comb the globe to stock their shelves with books that represent cultural diversity from global perspectives. It is possible to move towards a library that is not dominated by whiteness, as was shown by the libraries of Schools 3 and 4 in our case studies.

Assessment

An integral component of curricular dilemmas is how to change unsuitable assessment models. Just as white dominant countries continue to teach all public school students a Eurocentric curriculum, regardless of language, ethnicity, or origin, these students are also tested on a regular basis to determine if they have absorbed this whitestream curriculum. Governments in Australia and the USA are increasingly attempting to 'manage' the quality of schooling by means of the centralised testing of how far students have reached performance standards at specified grades. High stakes standardized tests are supposed to measure school effectiveness using a single yearly battery of tests from grades 2-11. In reality research shows that these tests undermine standards and increase educational inequities. As our case study School 2 suggested, these centralised, norm-referenced tests are often grossly unfair for students who are different from the monocultural mainstream⁴⁴. The format and nature of the tests, as

⁴⁰ Fettes, Mark (1999) Indigenous Education and the Ecology of Community, in Stephen May (Ed.) *Indigenous Community-Based Education*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, pp. 21-41.

⁴¹ Christie, Michael (2000) Galtha: the application of Aboriginal philosophy to school learning. *New Horizons in Education*, No.103, November, pp. 3 - 19. McCarty, Teresa (2002) *A Place to Be Navajo: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-Determination in Indigenous Schooling*. New Jersey-London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

⁴² Slapin, Beverley and Doris Seale (1992) *Through Indian Eyes: the Native Experience in Books for Children*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

⁴³ Bradford, Clare (2001) *Reading Race. Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature*. Victoria: Melbourne University Press.

⁴⁴ Meadmore, Daphne (2001) The pursuit of standards: simply managing education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 5. No. 4: 353 – 365.

well as the constraints which they can place in the way of creative pedagogy, provide stumbling blocks for such students. Reductive and simplistic tests have the potential to do enormous damage, not only to students who are the victims, but also in terms of placing extra, onerous time and record-keeping burdens on teachers⁴⁵.

Yet, as our case study of School 4 showed, it is possible for teachers to prepare students to excel in centralised tests while at the same time maintaining community culture. At this school, student success in tests was underpinned with close individual attention and response to the needs of each child experiencing any learning difficulties. At the same time, the tests were just a small part of a culturally congruent curriculum. Teachers need to become assessment literate so as to be prepared to utilise assessment as a criterion-referenced, culturally sensitive tool that improves student learning⁴⁶. In the US, the current ‘accountability’ proponents, who have ensured that children will be tested nationally several times during their school experience, have been challenged by a teachers’ movement advocating criterion-referenced tests, which are at least more fair to linguistically and culturally diverse students.

The teaching of Indigenous languages and culture

Indigenous languages are being lost at a rapid rate. It is estimated that most indigenous languages will disappear by 2025 in the USA unless something drastic is done to maintain them⁴⁷. In many Australian and US schools, languages other than English are taught in a token way, and indigenous languages are not taught at all. In some states in the USA, laws have been passed mandating that the curriculum should only be taught in English in public schools, apart from transitional, bridging programs in other languages. Aside from the educational shortsightedness of such mandates, given the cognitive advantages of multi-lingualism⁴⁸, it is clearly impossible for non-English groups to maintain their cultures authentically when the schools are invalidating their languages.

In the case of indigenous languages, one dilemma is that, with the number of speakers rapidly decreasing, there are not enough teachers of these languages. Another dilemma was illustrated by our case of School 4 in Australia, where students came from over a dozen language backgrounds, making it unviable for the school to select any particular languages to teach. The situation of Creole Englishes is even more complex: these blends of English and other languages, spoken by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities⁴⁹, are predominantly oral and are often not regarded as being

⁴⁵ Apple, Michael (2000) Racing towards educational reform. The politics of markets and standards. In R. Mahalingam and C. McCarthy (Eds.) *Multicultural Curriculum: New Directions for Social Theory, Practice and Policy*. New York: Routledge, pp. 84-107.

⁴⁶ Gipps, Caroline (1995) *Beyond Testing: Towards a Theory of Educational Assessment*. London: Falmer.

⁴⁷ Reyhner, Jon (2001) Interview with Roberta Ahlquist and Anne Hickling-Hudson, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona, March 27, 2001.

⁴⁸ Hakuta, Kenji, Rafael Diaz (1985) The relationship between degree of bilingualism and cognitive ability: a critical discussion and some new longitudinal data. In K. E. Nelson (Ed.) *Children's Language*, Vol.V, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

⁴⁹ Suarez, Megan (1999) Aboriginal English in the Legal System. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, Vol. 27 no. 1, pp. 35 – 42. Shnukal, Anna (1996) Language in Learning at Thursday Island High School. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, Vol 24 No. 2, pp 42 – 52.

suitable for formal learning. Yet the language dilemma must be faced and solutions found so as to give students a chance of being comfortable with their vernacular languages and cultures as well as being proficient in English, the language of power.

In Australia, white educators who for years had tried with little success to implement a western version of an Aboriginal-influenced curriculum have recently been experiencing the true Aboriginalisation of a school in a rural community, Yirrkala, under a new Aboriginal principal. The curriculum was being redesigned according to a 'both ways' philosophy 'where both western and Aboriginal viewpoints were to be heard, respected and presented alongside each other'⁵⁰. Through the regular visits of Aboriginal elders to the school to teach Yolgnu knowledge and philosophies of learning, the white educators came to see not only how powerful these philosophies were for learning, but also how they showed up the mistakes and arrogance of the white Australian imposition of a narrow Western schooling. The Rough Rock Community School in Arizona is another powerful example of the ongoing struggle for self-determination in public schooling. This community has been working for thirty years to reclaim an indigenous pedagogy and to provide a 'both ways' education for Navajo students. Using some aspects of the Hawaiian Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), which is a comprehension-based literacy and oral development language program, teachers at Rough Rock crafted their own version of a bilingual language program suited to their specific needs. These are among several indigenous language education programs which are promoting indigenous languages and strengthening education rights in Native American communities⁵¹. In Aoteroa New Zealand, with a population of only three million, indigenous Maori peoples (around ten percent of the population) have developed 'language nests' in early childhood schooling, Maori-medium secondary schools and tertiary institutions, and Maori philosophy schools⁵². The success of all of these approaches in reversing the threat of the loss of language and culture warrants careful study by communities faced with similar problems.

Teacher Education

The dilemma is the contradiction between the current practice of teacher education, which offers predominantly assimilationist and Eurocentric programs⁵³ and its rhetorical goals, which are those of a culturally diverse and pluralist education. In the USA, some states mandate coursework across the curriculum that is at least superficially multicultural. Some US teacher-educators take this a step further into anti-racist and race-relations teacher preparation. In California State University, throughout its twenty two campuses, there is a requirement that multicultural content be infused through the entire teacher education program. This involves teaching the pedagogy of literacy for those who are newly learning English, and incorporating

⁵⁰ Christie, Michael (2000) Galtha: the application of Aboriginal philosophy to school learning. *New Horizons in Education*, No.103, November, pp. 3 - 19.

⁵¹ McCarty, Teresa and Lucille Watahomigie (1999) Indigenous community-based language education in the USA, in S. May (Ed.) *Indigenous Community-Based Education*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, pp. 79 – 94.

⁵² May, Stephen (1999) Language and Education Rights for Indigenous Peoples, in S. May (Ed.) *Indigenous Community-Based Education*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, pp. 43 – 66.

⁵³ Hickling-Hudson, Anne and McMeniman, Marilyn (1996) Pluralism and Australian teacher education. In Maurice Craft, *Teacher Education in Plural Societies: an International Review*. London: Falmer. Hatton, Elizabeth (1996) Dealing with diversity: the failure of teacher education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, Vol 17 No. 1, pp. 25 – 42.

ethnically diverse perspectives into history, literature, the sciences, and social justice issues. However, as our case study of School 3 in the USA suggested, not all teachers receive this kind of teacher education or translate it into classroom practice.

In Australia, state education authorities may suggest but do not usually mandate intercultural coursework let alone anti-racist pedagogy. How far to implement this is left up to the decision of university departments of teacher education, and in turn, to individual teacher educators. Most teacher education departments offer cross-cultural programs as optional electives, which are taken by only a minority of student teachers. It is rare in both countries to find universities that make it compulsory for student teachers to be prepared for the responsibility of teaching indigenous students and teaching about indigenous cultures in a way that draws from authentic scholarship. A few universities show that it is possible to do this. For example, an Australian teacher education university course described by Hickling-Hudson and McMeniman⁵⁴ not only had intercultural education subjects pervading the degree, but also required second year students to study indigenous culture taught by lecturers from its department of Aboriginal and Islander Studies. This was followed by elective specializations in indigenous or multicultural education in the third and fourth years.

Conclusion.

In the process of European colonialism, teachers were instruments of deculturalisation, 'the educational process of destroying a people's culture and replacing it with a new culture'⁵⁵. Western schooling became pivotal to the attempt to eradicate the cultures of indigenous peoples across the globe. In most white dominant countries, this deculturalisation continues. Our comparative case study analysis found striking examples of this in the public school curricula and teaching methodologies provided for indigenous groups that we observed in Australia and the USA. This kind of pedagogy is challenged by culturally negotiated indigenous schools such as two of those in our analysis and others cited in our discussion.

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

When there is ownership of the curriculum and teachers work collaboratively to develop a bilingual and bicultural program for students, indigenous self-determination can become a reality. If learning is contextualized, culturally relevant, and authentic, students will become more engaged in their education. There are many dilemmas in the process of developing culturally and linguistically authentic education. Yet the rewards for students, teachers and the community are profound.

To prepare teachers to implement authentic pedagogy for indigenous students, they need to be provided with a different kind of teacher education. The unmasking of the socio-

⁵⁴ Hickling-Hudson, Anne and McMeniman, Marilyn (1996), op. cit. pp. 21-22.

⁵⁵ Spring, Joel (2001) *Deculturation and the Struggle for Equality*. Burr Ridge, Illinois: McGraw Hill Higher Ed., p.4.

political role of 'whiteness' and of its instrumentality in furthering Eurocentrism should lead to a deeper understanding of the pedagogies of deculturalisation imposed by Western schools and the devastating impact of this imposition, not only on indigenous students but also on other subjugated ethnic 'minorities'. Teachers and teacher educators need to study alternative epistemologies, multiple perspectives, and critical multicultural pedagogies, including 'both-ways' curricula, which would lead them to different ways of educating. They need to experiment with the difficult task of creating alternative curricula and pedagogical approaches that not only rock the boat, but ultimately overturn the boat of the traditional curriculum grounded in the dominant culture of unexamined 'whiteness'.

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