



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

TALKING TEACHER EDUCATION: FACTORS IMPACTING *on* TEACHER EDUCATION *for* INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

JO-ANNE REID¹,
NINETTA SANTORO¹,
LAURIE CRAWFORD²
& LEE SIMPSON³

1 School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University, Panorama Avenue, Bathurst, New South Wales, 2795, Australia

2 Greater Western Area Health Service, Howick Street, Bathurst, New South Wales, 2795, Australia

3 Aboriginal Health, Greater Southern Area Health Service, PO Box 1845, Queanbeyan, New South Wales, 2620, Australia

■ Abstract

In this paper we report the findings of research that has examined, from first-hand accounts, the career pathways of Indigenous Australians who have studied to become teachers. We focus on one key aspect of the larger study: the nature and experience of initial teacher education for Indigenous student teachers. Elsewhere we have reported on aspects of their subsequent working lives in teaching or related fields. We focus here on participants' talk about teacher education, particularly with reference to the factors that have impacted positively and negatively on their identity formation as "Indigenous" students and teachers. As a research collective that comprises Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teacher educators, and in the context of increased emphasis on university access following the Federal Review of Higher Education, we argue that it is time for government, universities and schools to listen and learn from this talk. In particular, we highlight in our participants' accounts the persistence of three longstanding and interrelated factors that continue to impact on the success or inadequacy of teacher education for Aboriginal people, i.e., the presence and nature of financial, emotional and academic support in university and school settings.

■ Prologue

The young man walked quickly towards the supermarket. It was hot and steamy, and threatening rain. He needed milk, tomatoes, a steak and frozen chips. He was tired; it had been a long day with Year 2. Almost Friday, his last week ahead. He needed to get going on his assessment comments ... his supervising teacher would want to see them. But as he walked through the arcade, his thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

"Hey, Mr Diamond, Mr Diamond! It's my new teacher, Dad! It's Mr Diamond! It's Mr Di..."

He turned around to greet the child, recognising the voice, pleasure infusing his whole body. It was Matt? Matthew? Matty something? But as his lips formed a welcoming smile he suddenly froze. The excited voice had stopped abruptly.

There was a gasp – a sharp intake of breath. And then a sob, and a child's tears, confused and frightened. He saw them falling as he watched. He stood helpless, shamed and impotent while the boy was jerked by the arm and pulled away, into the crowd at the front of the store.

"Don't you speak to that man. Don't you ever speak to a black man!" The words were a fierce whisper – a hiss. Not meant for him: but he could still feel their sting.

They shamed and angered him, cutting through his confidence and pleasure, and pulling the ground out from under his feet. He turned away quickly, and felt his fingers form a fist. What's the use, he thought, what is all this hard work for?

We begin with this story as an illustration of the complexity of the experience of teacher education for many Indigenous people in Australia today. "Mr Diamond", a Murri man, recounted this experience on his return from his final school placement in a regional centre in Queensland. "Mr Diamond" graduated

as a teacher a few months after this final practicum. He has never worked in a school. He took a job in student services at a city university interstate, and has remained working in the tertiary sector. This story, shared publicly with his colleagues in the late 1990s, was one of the reasons we saw a need to study the career pathways of Indigenous teachers. We believe that it will not be unfamiliar to many readers of this journal, and that it forms a strong and challenging contradiction to the accounts of Indigenous teachers who are said to “use” teacher education only as a stepping stone into other forms of public service. This paper takes up this strong counter story, based on the evidence of first-hand accounts of Indigenous teacher education. In what follows we argue that there are a set of well established factors produced within the larger discursive practice of education that continue to work to discourage and disadvantage Indigenous teacher candidates from remaining in the profession. What Nakata calls the “cultural interface” of the “intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains” (2004, p. 27), is clearly a site of confusion for many, like “Mr Diamond”. Nakata defines the “cultural interface” as:

The place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our lifeworld. For Indigenous peoples our context, remote or urban, is already circumscribed by the discursive space of the Cultural Interface. We don’t go to work or school, enter another domain, interact and leave it there when we come home again. The boundaries are simply not that clear (Nakata, 2004, p. 27).

As a fully trained teacher on his final teaching round, “Mr Diamond” is caught in this moment by the tensions of what Nakata calls the interwoven, competing and conflicting discourses that position him in the complex, ongoing and constant negotiation between his Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking and being. His story shows the uncertainty and danger of life in the interface, and the difficulties it produces for Indigenous teachers.

■ Introduction: Contextualising the study

Our study of the career pathways of Indigenous teachers was part of an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant 2004-2007 titled “Indigenous Teachers: Understanding their Professional Pathways and Career Experiences”. The study recognised that to date there has been very little detailed systematic study of the experiences of Indigenous teachers in Australia. Although there have been important collections of the stories of Indigenous teachers (Herbert, 2002),

university graduates (Bin-Sallik, 2000), several reports of conferences on Indigenous teacher education, and strong critical accounts of Indigenous teacher education in Australia and overseas (Reid, 2004), our study has aimed to make visible the career experiences of a range of current, former and beginning Indigenous educators with the view to developing a critical understanding of the factors that contribute to their under-representation and low retention rates in Australian schools.

All the participants interviewed in the study are Aboriginal people from New South Wales and Victoria who use the term “Aboriginal” to refer to themselves and their communities rather than “Indigenous”. Throughout this paper we respect this practice and also use “Aboriginal” whenever we refer to them and their experiences or quote from their interviews. In this way we are able to make a distinction in the discussion between the particular Aboriginal people with whom we have worked, and the larger group of Indigenous teachers who work around Australia. We discuss three types of support that have emerged from the data across the participant sample, and which may therefore be claimed to be necessary for the general success of Indigenous student teachers pursuing their studies. In conclusion, based on the discussion, we make recommendations about the nature of the support necessary for the future success of Aboriginal student teachers.

The study was designed in three stages. First, we conducted a demographic study of the numbers and locations of Indigenous student teachers graduating from all Australian universities in 2004; second, we sought interviews with volunteer teachers and former teachers recruited through Indigenous networks and informal advertisement through Aboriginal Education Committees and Consultative groups in the eastern states; and third, we concurrently conducted a longitudinal study of a small cohort of these graduates over the following three years. In this paper we present findings from the second stage of the study, with interviews with the former and current teachers (also see Reid et al., 2004; Reid & Santoro, 2006; Santoro et al., 2005; Santoro & Reid, 2006).

Data has been processed from over 40 Indigenous professionals (34 female, 12 male, aged between 23 and 60) who have participated in the interview process over a four year period. Each participant was interviewed individually by one or two members of the research team, using a semi-structured protocol that aimed to generate accounts of their motivation, initial teacher education, work experience and the personal and social effects of the decision to take up teaching. Interim analysis of the interview transcripts produced a number of strong themes that emerged consistently through the data, and these were tested against the cultural knowledge and experience of an invitational focus group of former and current

Indigenous teachers who validated these themes against their collective experience. Confident on this basis that the study has produced what Ladwig (1995) terms “socially recognisable evidence” within the Indigenous community of its concern, we report here on the analysis of one significant area covered in the interviews: initial teacher education.

Our interpretation of the data indicates that there has been little effective change within institutional practices of teacher education from the situation described for Indigenous higher education more broadly by Bin-Sallik when she reported, 20 years ago now, that:

... although progress has been made in education, more often than not students' performances had been inhibited by a failure of government agencies and relevant tertiary institutions to respond in a way that is sensitive to Aboriginal needs and in a way that has properly involved Aboriginal people in the process (Bin-Sallik, 1989, p. 47).

Bin-Sallik's claim resonates with an account of Indigenous student performance in universities in Western Australia (Walker, 2002), and the work of Mellor and Corrigan (2004), who report that Indigenous students who withdraw from courses in higher education claim that there are three main factors influencing their decision to withdraw: 1) financial pressures; 2) social or cultural isolation and 3) the academic demands of study and insufficient academic support. Our analysis strongly supports these local findings, and with particular reference to teacher education students, we have found that the demographic differences related to age and socio-economic status, gender and geography are significant, though not spoken as separate issues. They intersect and complicate accounts of the other influences. Like Mellor and Corrigan, our study provides strong evidence from which we argue for the need for improved attention to the nature of academic, emotional and financial support provided to Indigenous teacher education students, if we are to maximise their chances of success.

In order to contextualise these findings within the Australian setting, we first provide a short historical background of Indigenous teacher education in Australia, before briefly discussing the methodological context of the project.



A short historical background of Indigenous Teacher Education in Australia

Jill Warburton (pseudonyms are used for all participants in the study) works as a teacher with the New South Wales Department of Education. She recalls a time in the 1960s when she first began to think about herself

as a teacher. “I remember Uncle Albert's words ... he sort of patted me on the shoulder and he goes, ‘Well ... I'm growing you up for a special reason’” (2004, pers. comm., June). Her words highlight the importance with which education is regarded by her community. Becoming a teacher would not only mean financial security and professional status: it was a way for other people in her community to improve their life chances for the future. Uncle Albert's special reason for supporting Jill through her years of schooling and teacher education was to use her skills and position to bring about change in the white middle-class schooling system that was failing many of their children.

At that time, however, the road to gaining a teaching qualification was difficult for Jill. It was difficult for most of the other Aboriginal teachers we have interviewed over the past four years. As in other areas of their lives, the “special treatment” they met as Indigenous students and teachers did not always support or confirm them in their choice of career. Indeed, our findings suggest that there is much to be learnt from attention to their accounts of teacher education if the attractiveness of teaching as a profession of choice for Indigenous people is to improve.

In the 1960s, when Jill's Uncle first started to frame a space for her to think about herself as a teacher, teaching was not a career option available to most Aboriginal people. When the “clean, clad and courteous” rule (Fletcher, 1989) meant that Aboriginal children needed to be acceptable to the white community in order even to attend school, Indigenous participation in State education was limited, and the educational outcomes for Indigenous students comparatively poor. This prevented most from attaining the standards necessary for admission to a teachers' college. But there are counter stories to be told about this too. Bin-Sallik (1989) notes the fact that an Aboriginal girl from the Sydney “Native School” set up by Governor Macquarie, took the prize for academic merit at the Anniversary School Exam in the early 1820s. Research shows that century later, in the 1920s, Aboriginal students were managing both to complete secondary education and gain grades high enough to gain selection into teacher training (Green & Reid, 2002). They were often selectively debarred from taking up a place in a teachers' college because of their “half caste” status. By the late 1960s, some of the participants in our study had succeeded in gaining places in teacher education programmes on the basis of their school leaving results, but this was still unusual (Herbert, 2002; Bin-Sallik, 2000). In many ways there is a feeling that this is still the case today:

One factor in the under-representation of Indigenous people in universities is the relatively low Year 10 to Year 12 retention rate for Indigenous school students. This rate is estimated to be 44 per cent for Indigenous

children, compared with 76 per cent for non-Indigenous children (DEST 2002:3). Ninety percent of non-Indigenous people who enter university have completed secondary schooling compared with only 57 per cent of Indigenous entrants (James & Devlin, 2005, p. 4).

This means that there are still very few Indigenous teachers in Australian schools. In the 1970s, after government recognition of decades of educational failure for Indigenous children (Karmel, 1971), the National Aboriginal Education Policy (NAEP) was introduced. It proposed that one solution to the problem of Indigenous education lay in increasing the number of Indigenous teachers, arguing that Indigenous teachers would better understand, and thus better support, the needs and strengths of Indigenous children. Paul Hughes' famously optimistic goal of "1000 teachers by 1990" (Hughes & Wilmot, 1982) was aimed at retraining Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs) already working in schools. But this target was not achieved. As Bin-Sallik notes, Aboriginal teacher education policy formulated in 1979 meant that Aboriginal students were "encouraged to enrol in pre-existing white-oriented teacher training courses," as this approach required "very little academic effort on the part of institutions" (1989, p. 41).

Nearly 20 years past Hughes' target date, even acknowledging the number of successful enclave programs that were subsequently established, there were just 1565 Indigenous teachers in Australian schools (including 106 in Catholic schools) by 2005 (DEEWR, 2008, p. 68). Over this period a number of strategies were put in place to encourage Indigenous people to become teachers. These included the establishment of programs at Batchelor College in the Northern Territory, which by this time had already begun training Aboriginal teachers' aides and assistants. The Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program began at Batchelor in 1976; the Deakin-Batchelor initiative (D-BATE) began in 1986 and operated until the end of 1988; and there were several other "enclave" programs such as University of South Australia's ATEP program (1980), the Aboriginal Rural Education Program (AREP) at Macarthur Institute in Sydney (1984), Deakin's Koori Teacher Education Program (KTEP) (1986), ACU's Indigenous Education Program (1989) and the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (RATEP) at James Cook University in North Queensland in 1990. Although these represent significant and successful attempts to increase the numbers of Indigenous teachers, it is clear overall that Indigenous teacher education has only a "very short history" (Grant, 1996, p. 94).

The numbers of Indigenous teaching staff as a proportion of all teaching staff in government schools has remained at less than 1% over this time (0.87% in 2005), while in the Catholic system the proportion

is far smaller (0.23% in 2005). As the number of Indigenous children of school age increases, this situation becomes even more problematic. While Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008, p. 119) reported that most Indigenous students in higher education are likely to be studying education, they still only comprise 2% of education students overall.

It is therefore not surprising that many Indigenous people do not readily see themselves as teachers, or as people who would easily fit in to the culture and workplace of schooling. Furthermore, the difficult task of taking up the identity and subject-position of the "school teacher" is not something that is easy or willingly sought by many Indigenous Australians. We argue that this is an issue of identity politics, where the social practices that surround Indigenous people in the school system work to position them as "other" than the sort of person who might become a teacher, even if they want to. Jill's Uncle dreamed this position for her, allowing her to imagine and constitute herself as an Aboriginal teacher. And she has worked to perform "herself" as a school teacher within her family and the teaching profession – but this has not been an easy task. As we describe in more detail below, drawing on the stories told by Jill and other participants, the process of becoming a teacher requires considerable work at the "cultural interface". First, however, we want to stay with Nakata's concept a little further in order to make some important observations about the research process.

■ Research practice at the "cultural interface"

In analysing interview data about pre-service teacher education we have drawn on the resources of poststructuralist theories of human subjectivity (Davies, 1993; Foucault, 1980; Henriques et al., 1992). These allow us to acknowledge the complexity of human existence and the equally complex relations of knowledge and power within it. This methodological position has effects for us as researchers, too. Primarily, we are forced to acknowledge that we are working to produce knowledge through our interaction and interpretation of the words of our participants rather than seeking to find general truth statements or knowledge about Indigenous teachers that pre-exist our inquiry and lie "hidden" in the transcripts for us to "discover". We have investigated these interviews as contested space, and as sites of contestable meanings.

The data presented here are the words of participants drawn from networks of Aboriginal teachers to which we are personally and professionally connected. While many participants are located in small rural communities, others live and work in larger regional and metropolitan areas. After transcription, the interviews were returned for member-checking and further consent for us to analyse them. As a

research team we are culturally diverse, and there is a range of cultural, historical and institutional relationships of power across the team. While we are all teachers, and we have all worked as teacher educators, we are differently positioned in terms of Indigenous and Aboriginal knowledge. We are actively seeking to construct knowledge about Indigenous teacher education as a research team, we are doing this from our own histories and experiences. Our practice therefore requires us to acknowledge and accept Nakata's claim that "all Knowledge systems are culturally embedded, dynamic, respond to changing circumstances and constantly evolve" (Nakata, 2004, p. 28). In this way we have needed to interrogate and debate the data together, drawing on our different interpretive perspectives and our collective personal and professional experience, which includes a complex range of insider/outsider perspectives or standpoints (Merriam et al., 2001). This is why the process of taking our findings back to the larger focus group was necessary.

This collaborative approach ensures that our interpretations resonate with and have meaning for a number of groups, including people in Indigenous communities who might want to become teachers. In analysing the transcription texts, we have focussed on what participants have told us about their experiences as well as how they have talked about them – using both thematic and discourse analysis (Gee, 2002). We dispute the idea that the stories of "experience" are real and complete in themselves. The story told by "Mr Diamond" for instance, at the start of this paper, is not finished when the story is told – we need to understand the meanings it makes available from different positions at the "cultural interface", and then to interrogate the social structures that have worked to produce some of these meanings as more powerful, more "telling", than others. In this way, we have attempted to highlight the complexities of the student teachers' lived experiences, and the complex effects of these experiences on the construction of their different subject positions as Aboriginal teachers.

As noted above, both what and how our participants tell their stories is important for this discussion. In the next section we outline the theoretical constructs that have framed our analysis, before introducing a small number of the Aboriginal teachers we interviewed, whose stories serve to illustrate the support needs that participants identified as necessary for Indigenous student teachers.

■ Becoming a teacher means becoming somebody different

According to Davies, "people are not socialized into the social world, but that they go through a process of subjectification" (1993, p. 13). Theories of subjectivity suggest that identity is never fixed but is always being produced, changed and shifted with changing

circumstances. For Nakata (2004), this always takes place in the "cultural interface" for Indigenous peoples in postcolonial contexts. The concept of human subjectivity is important because it emphasises the idea that people become who they are by participating in everyday social practices. This means that taking up a particular subject position, such as that of "school teacher", is not a single, one-off activity of completing a teacher education course, and nor is it the only subject position available to any individual teacher. Like all learning, teacher education is an on-going process – and a teacher's professional subjectivity is built up over time, in and through the relationships s/he experiences between school and institutional practices, curriculum knowledges, and the discourses and relations of social power that frame them.

From this theoretical position the process of subjectification is therefore not the same for everyone, and we are compelled to move beyond more fixed understandings of "identity" that have produced culturalist analyses in which Indigeneity is presented as an unproblematic and static concept (McConaghy, 2000). Fixed notions of Indigenous identity circulate through vernacular and formal discourses of education and social advancement, meaning that generations of Indigenous Australians either do not feel they are capable of achieving success as teachers, or "the possibility has not even entered their horizons" (James & Devlin, 2005, p. 4).

Why this remains the case, despite decades of rhetoric seeking social justice and a growing number of examples of Indigenous success in professional and higher education is a crucial focus for educational research generally (Hickling-Hudson, 2003). We argue that the language and practices by which teachers are constructed in the Australian consciousness mean that Indigenous teachers continue to see, feel and speak themselves as different, and often as less successful than non-Indigenous people in the subject position of teacher. One of our participants, Deb, for instance, who worked successfully as a teacher educator for several years, recounted her initial inability to accept her own expertise as a teacher when she was asked to apply for a university job:

They asked me to apply, which I did, won the position, and I was too frightened to take it. That happened twice. ... I didn't take it. It was offered and I didn't take it. ... I thought, "Working in a university? Intelligent people work there. ... Who was I?" Because I felt as if I'd bluffed my way through teaching (2004, pers. comm., June).

Deb's story echoes an account by Kevin Rogers, a member of the Wandarung people and a member of the NAEC, who in 1994 was a student teacher at Batchelor College:

My community can see the Yolgnu teacher as an “in-between” man, for he must be able to have the knowledge and respect to assist in teaching culture and also be able to understand and work in the European ways in which he has been trained. As an “in-between” man, the community knows that the Aboriginal teacher must teach the European teacher more about Aboriginal culture and ways. The European teacher must also help the Aboriginal teacher to be a real teacher. (He must not be seen as half a teacher so the community wants him to be taught basic skills on site). Some would suggest that having these skills is more important than having a formal training (cited in Collins, 2000, pp. 98-99).

It is clear in considering these two passages how the notion of the “Indigenous” teacher subject is represented as not good enough, only “half a teacher”. The Indigenous teacher is contrasted in Rogers’ words with the “real teacher” – who does not need to be described or marked in racial terms. The “norm” is white, and the “real” teacher is understood as white. We can only make sense of Rogers’ words if this is the case.

The idea of an “in-between” teacher though, can be seen not as a lesser position but a superior one. Such a teacher, who not only has “the knowledge and respect to assist in teaching [Yolgnu] culture [but is] also be able to understand and work in the European ways”, is a better option than the normal teacher in fact. Such a teacher, encouraged and prepared to teach not just “Indigenous kids”, but to teach in all Australian schools, is a much better option for a society seeking reconciliation between Indigenous and postcolonial Australians. It has been well documented that Indigenous Australians experience racism in Australian education as teachers, parents and as students. However, it is not just as a result of racist events that Indigenous Australians are alienated from Australian schools. Racism and various forms of objectification, erasure and discrimination often work in more subtle ways.

In her exploration of what she calls “the process of becoming an Indigenous teacher and, paradoxically, about unbecoming an Indigenous teacher”, Reid (2004, p. 209) highlights these issues, using Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of the habitus to show how complex constructions of identity that Indigenous student teachers bring to the teacher education process in their bodily expressions, dispositions and histories are shaped by (and also work to shape) institutional practices of teacher education. The critique that needs to be made of what goes on “naturally” and “normally” in teacher education practice, for instance, is closely connected with larger discursive constructions of racialised practice in Australian society. These constructions are based on a binary

logic which positions whiteness as dominant, as the “norm” from which all other positions are marked as different, deficient, or “other”. These constructions make it difficult for Aboriginal people to be seen, “naturally”, as teachers in schools, for instance, and for an Aboriginal child in school to see her teacher as someone “like” herself, or someone who she is “like” (or even “likes”). This is a key facet of identity formation, and the difficulty of this identification means that it is harder for an Aboriginal child to take up the position and the subjectivity of a teacher – to walk easily along the pathway to becoming a teacher. As Gillborn (2006, p. 2) notes, racism is “deeply ingrained legally and culturally” in the practices and interactions of social institutions and structures. While there are increasing efforts on the part of teacher education programs to attend to and incorporate Indigenous perspectives and staff within course structures, such critical race theory requires us to attend to the racism inherent in education and teacher education (Han, 2007; Santoro et al., 2001), rather than ignoring its presence and effects.

While there are many factors that impact on the potential success of Aboriginal teachers, including health, housing, employment and prior education, the participants in our study consistently identified three major areas which were crucial to the completion of their degrees and the constitution of themselves as teachers. These are: *financial*, *social-emotional*, and *academic* support. As noted above, these strongly parallel the findings of other Australian and overseas inquiry (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Bean & Metzner, 1985). In complex ways these support systems impact on the lived experience of Aboriginal students, either sustaining or undermining their work to produce and perform themselves as professional teachers. They cannot be understood independently from each other, and there is no simple correlation between “fixing” the provision of one or more of them to solve the problem of attracting more Indigenous people to teacher education. But understanding their nature and effects will benefit teacher education providers keen to enhance and expand Indigenous teacher education, particularly in the light of the recommendations of the national inquiry into teacher education, *Top of the Class* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007) for increasing diversity in the Australian student teacher population, and the Federal Government’s response to the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley et al., 2008), which includes plans to lift participation of “disadvantaged students” in higher education to 20% of the population by 2020.

We now go on to discuss each of these factors in turn, using the words of a number of participants in the study whose experience spans the history of Indigenous teacher education in this country. While most of the participants represented here were mature age entrants to teacher education, we use their stories

to show continuous discursive threads as well as discontinuities in the construction of an "Indigenous teacher" identity and the negotiation of different subject positions in the "cultural interface" over time.

Financial support for Aboriginal teacher education students

While Indigenous families remain among the most economically disadvantaged in Australia (SCRGSC, 2005), Indigenous people undertaking higher education prior to the introduction of government-assisted study grants experienced great financial hardship, and very few could afford to study. When Commonwealth Aboriginal Study Grants (Abstudy) was introduced in the 1970s, more Indigenous people could access financial assistance to attain professional qualifications. Those entering teacher education at this time were mainly mature-age women who studied part-time and worked full-time in order to support their families. In general, Abstudy allowed Indigenous people to study with less financial burden on other members of their families, though in many cases this was still significant. This is highlighted in the story told by one participant, Barry, who needed to give up full-time work to study teaching, and who received no financial support.

Barry, now 60, had left school at 12, worked hard in labouring jobs, and then at 18 became an AEA. He watched other Aboriginal boys at the school, only slightly younger than himself leave their outback town after successfully completing high school to attend Teachers' College. By this time he was married, and his only option was to study full-time in a mainstream program to gain his qualification. He gave up work as an AEA and relocated his family 500 kilometres east. His young family suffered:

We ate Weetbix three meals a day. ... I battled. There was no Abstudy, there was no student support. So I worked as a cleaner in Coles. I would start cleaning Coles at 3.00 in the morning, I would knock off at 8.00 and come and do my study all day. ... I would only have about 4 hours sleep a night (2004, pers. comm., June).

Barry's story suggests that his experience in his home town had shown him three things – first, that white collar work was easier and less dangerous than the jobs historically available to Aboriginal men in rural Australia; second, that a high school education was a pathway out of this sort of backbreaking and poorly paid work. Thirdly, he had seen that Aboriginal boys could study successfully, that they were bright enough to get into teachers' college – and that they could legitimately aspire to a different kind of life if they wanted it. His own schooling had not given him access to higher education – and he needed to work doubly hard in order to finance his dream. By the time

federally-funded Abstudy allowances to encourage Indigenous participation in higher education were introduced in the early 1980s, Barry had nearly completed his course.

Karen joined the first intake of the AREP course in Western Sydney in 1983. "If it hadn't been for the Government paying my way I wouldn't have been able to afford it, I would have been at Big W or something like that" (2004, pers. comm., June). Ironically, in 1989, the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), which might have allowed more Indigenous people to take up higher education, did not. This is because it accompanied the abolition of priority placements for new Indigenous teachers that students like Karen and Deb had been able to rely on. This discouraged people from considering teaching as a career, for without a guaranteed salary after study, their families would continue to experience the poverty that works so strongly against educational success (Teese & Polesel, 2003). Since the 1990s, most Indigenous student teachers have accessed Abstudy as their sole income, or to bridge the gaps of otherwise out-of-reach education costs. Community, university and government scholarships are also available in all states, and Indigenous people have been keen to take these up wherever possible.

The stories we heard exemplify a diversity of pathways that Indigenous people have found to gain entry to teaching. They have studied through a range of modes, including direct entry from school to university, mature-age mainstream entry, sometimes following a period of further study; special entry enclave programs; community-based and block-release programs which have allowed them to remain in their home communities and reduce the expenses of travel and relocation. Others enrolled in distance education, either part-time or full-time. The difficulties of resourcing distance study outlined by Gibb (2006) are well recognised in teacher education, as well as across a range of areas such as nursing (Reid et al., 2005).

These modes of study appear to be related to age and gender. Barry's story describes a first wave of Aboriginal teacher education students in New South Wales, for instance, who were mostly young single men. The second group were mainly mature women, employed as AEAs. These women frequently had children of their own and significant family responsibilities within their communities. Their determination to succeed, and to minimise the financial demands their study placed on their families, led to considerable hardship. For instance, even though Karen's family was supportive of her going to university, she found it difficult to juggle the demands of study, work, and home responsibilities. She says:

I worked from 4 o'clock in the morning at Safeway cleaning. I had to, you know, we

couldn't afford very much. ... There are not only issues with ... education but there's always family issues ... money issues ... housing issues ... you know, everything (2004, pers. comm., June).

Of participants who accessed teacher education from 1990s onwards, changing regulations around Abstudy meant that the struggle to study and maintain financial independence has often been difficult. As Raelene reported, while the financial support was a major incentive for her, it still did not fully overcome the lack of cultural and social "capital" (Bourdieu, 1977) that non-Indigenous students can often take for granted:

I found it difficult at university. I was away from my family for the first time. We were at university for 2 weeks and they sent us back home to do our assignments. But a lot of places didn't have the resources that you needed and it made it really hard (2004, pers. comm., June).

Without private access to a computer at home, for instance, these students report difficulties in maintaining online study commitments and accessing online support materials and peer discussion. These other "issues" can assume disproportionate importance when exacerbated by the pressures of study. Taking up the identity of a "professional in training" means participating in these sorts of activities. Aboriginal students who are prevented from access to this participation find it hard to see themselves as "legitimate", or "well enough prepared" to enter the profession alongside their better-resourced student peers. Among the younger teachers and graduating students (post 2000) we interviewed, the need for financial support has been expressed in terms of access to material resources such as computer technology.

Although our interviewees were keen to acknowledge the financial support they have received, their constant awareness of the financial burden placed on others has impacted on their determination to succeed. Their sense of themselves as needing to pay back the investment their families have made in them is keen, and, we argue, adds to the complexity of the subjectification of the Indigenous teacher in the "cultural interface". How do Indigenous teachers make sense of themselves as "owing" their families for their access to an alien institution where they actually find life difficult and where there is often little pleasure or apparent success to be had in the process of achieving their goal?



Emotional support for Indigenous teacher education students

These complexities mean that, while financial support is clearly essential, the provision of adequate financial support alone will not solve "everything".

Another dimension that the interview data suggests is crucial to success for Aboriginal student teachers is emotional support.

As noted above, several participants were members of the early group of Indigenous teachers who studied in the block-release, enclave programs introduced in the 1980s. Participation in these courses meant that they were required to leave families behind to attend university or college for up to four weeks at a time for intensive periods of course-work. There were often severe repercussions on family life, that some have attributed to the widening gulf between the subject positions they could now occupy in daily practice, their new "professional" identities and the expectations of family and partners. Some of our interviewees refer disparagingly to these block-release courses as "divorce courses".

In particular, like many other women who return to study as mature-age students, Aboriginal women experienced difficulties organising and negotiating the demands of study and family life (Edwards, 1993; Crotty, 1998). Karen recounts the challenges of being a mother, wife *and* student. Her husband struggled to accept her new identity as "student" and what it meant in terms of renegotiated family responsibilities and obligations. She claims he "still demanded the dinner on the table, and the lawns mowed and the shopping done!" (2004, pers. comm., November). Another participant, Shirley, also attributes the strain on her marriage to her studies:

It was new for him because he hadn't gone through schooling himself. ... I think what happened was we started to grow apart. ... A lot of women were going through the same thing or even the men with their partners or wives were going through it. We were all going through the same thing (2004, pers. comm., September).

Those who did have the support of their husbands saw this as vital to them successfully completing the course. As Allison says, "My second partner, thank goodness was a firm believer in education for women, or I would never have survived uni" (2004, pers. comm., November).

Complicating the range of emotional pressures, some participants have noted that resistance from within their home communities sometimes made the project of gaining teaching qualifications all the more difficult. Barry speaks about the cynicism with which some members of his own community viewed his decision to embark on tertiary education: "I had doubters back home. They'd say 'Oh Nara-gar! They're not going to let people like you in university, that's for brainy people. Stay out of it! Waste of time going down there!'" (2004, pers. comm., June).

Barry's journey into tertiary education meant relocating "down there", out of "country" to a

place that was foreign, both geographically and metaphorically. The advice of his peers to “stay out of it!” while probably well intentioned, suggests university is a fearsome place that the “likes of him” should avoid. “Naraga”, an exclamation of disbelief meaning “in your dreams!”, works to construct Barry either as foolish because he doesn’t understand the gravity of what he was about to embark upon, or as “above his station” because he thinks he is as capable as the few bright boys who finished high school – someone “they” would let into university. For some of our participants, this sort of criticism from within their own communities compounded the difficulties they faced. Furthermore, Aboriginal people who pursue study can sometimes be criticised for “big noting themselves”. Criticism of this type highlights the tensions between moving into further education, and taking on an identity usually seen as reserved for “whitefellas”, while still maintaining contact and solidarity with family and community.

A number of participants mentioned that racism, including institutional and individual racism, was an additional emotional problem. Cole (2004, p. 39) defines institutional racism as “[c]ollective acts and/or procedures in an institution or institutions [...] that intentionally or unintentionally have the effect of racialising, via ‘common sense’, certain populations or groups of people”. Often, the institutional racism that interviewees reported was around the whiteness of teacher education curriculum and its lack of recognition of Indigenous knowledge. As Kristen says about her experience of education from a young age:

I was very much brought up at school thinking this is what a school is about and this is what the teachers are about, sort of thing ... so from a really young age we were also taught that what happens at home we’re not to take to school and that was because Mum had been through a lot like that ... so we ... I was very aware of what teachers did and how it was done sort of thing. And knew that it was a different setting to home (2004, pers. comm., June).

Kristen’s understanding of what was and was not acceptable in the institutional setting of school was acquired through her participation as a “different” member of this discourse community. Further, institutional “common sense” understandings of Indigenous cultures as homogenous have caused tensions for some interviewees when they were students:

“Tensions” is such a strong word. [...] I just think, too, I was so young going through that. I was dealing with lots of other stuff ... I think ... there was a couple of times I ... one instance was with another Aboriginal ... they had a guest speaker

come in, an Aboriginal lady, and, ... she got a bit aggressive in the actual lecture and I was up the back of the room thinking you don’t know me how dare you, I’m thinking I’m a black fella here, you are saying I don’t know this crap – in my head, and that’s when I got up and shouted (2004, pers. comm., November).

Hesch (1994, 1996) says that the process of becoming a teacher is in itself a fraught one for Indigenous people – requiring them to be incorporated into what is still a colonialist discourse of schooling which has discriminated against them and their people. While he speaks from a Canadian perspective, his argument is supported by Indigenous Australian researchers such as Hickling-Hudson (2003) who sees the need for challenges to what she terms the “culturally problematic school”. As Hesch writes:

Ironically, aboriginal preservice teachers cannot teach unless they can satisfy agents of the state that they can produce the practices that excluded many of them and that will continue to exclude members of their original social category (Hesch, 1996, p. 271).

Without the emotional support provided by Indigenous units within universities or education faculties, many of the participants reported that they would have not been able to survive the social and institutional racism they encountered in their teacher education context. Our analysis suggests too, however, that while the provision of emotional and financial support for Indigenous people taking up teacher education places is crucial for their ultimate success, many participants commented on the academic support they felt they needed when beginning their study. However, as we detail in the next section, this form of support seems to be both less generally useful and less essential for Indigenous academic success than is commonly supposed.

Academic support for Indigenous teacher education students

As illustrated in the chronological account above, there have been a number of waves of Aboriginal teacher education modes and approaches, each of which has had its own, different characteristics and challenges. The college and university experience of members of each of these cohorts has varied greatly. Those who studied in the mainstream prior to 1980s had no Indigenous cultural support and virtually no academic support, other than that provided by individual lecturers. They single-handedly traversed their way through this totally alien environment of academia, where no one from their family or community had ever been. The importance of academic support services in

the teacher education institutions is clear. Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist note the dominance of the Anglo-centric curriculum in Australian schools, even remote Indigenous schools, and the ways in which cultural incongruity is ignored in both the schools and in teacher education, where universities provide “little or no preparation to teach anything other than the Anglocentric curriculum” (2003, p. 73).

Most of the people who shared the dream of education and took up the challenge to gain qualifications when “block release” modes of study were first promoted felt a lack of confidence in their own abilities, and knew they lacked practice in the academic writing and study skills necessary for success in higher education. This meant that the provision of specialised academic support was a necessity for them to feel able to meet this challenge. While they could draw on life and educational experiences to understand the content of their courses, many realised that their previous education had been inadequate as a preparation for university study. As Mellor and Corrigan note, too:

Ironically, it may be that in attempting to redress Indigenous under-representation in higher education, the enabling and special entry programs through which many Indigenous students initially enter university may ... have the unintended consequence of making such students feel unworthy of the place they have gained (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004, p. 21).

Ian reflected that he had a break of 12 years or so before he went back to university to study. He struggled in the first few months. However, another Aboriginal student at the university introduced him to some tutorial support from the Aboriginal Unit:

It was a place where I wasn't the only one feeling like this. I talked to other people studying and they said, yeah, it's really hard after a long break [...] The tutorial support was the thing that got me through. Because the person that taught me showed me how to set out assignments, how to reference stuff. Here I was 25, 26 or something, trying to do this, whereas people who were straight out of school, 18 or 19 were breezing through it (2004, pers. comm., November).

Although Ian's comment about student teachers “straight out of school” is not descriptive only of Indigenous students, it is significant because, as the number of Universities providing the “block release” mode of delivery began to increase during the 1990s, the age of Indigenous student teacher cohorts began to change. They were and still are much younger, including more (though still not large numbers

of) school leavers along with the mature-age “late starters”. Some of the younger Aboriginal student-teachers in the study have had role models who are closely connected by family or community and they have grown up with “educated professionals” in their families. As Nicole, whose parents chose a private school for her secondary education, and who took out her teaching degree “With Distinction”, said, “I think it is because of Mum and Dad. They both work. Like, they both have full-time jobs. Mum went to uni – she did nursing college” (2005, pers. comm., May).

However, it needs to be remembered that there are still many young Aboriginal people who have not had similar experiences, and although the provision of academic support is not needed or only initially needed by increasing numbers of Aboriginal students who have completed high school, most of the Aboriginal teachers interviewed reported that they had quickly realised that their previous education had not prepared them for the academic demands of university work, particularly writing assignments. As Karen said:

I do lots of mind mapping [...] It used to take hours to be able to put each brainstorm into a suitable paragraph, but I could sit there and tell you about it. [...] ‘Cos, see, essays are a standard white way of doing it, and if you don't do it you'll get marked down. If you don't use the right grammar, you'll lose [marks]; if you don't have sequential [ideas] you'll lose points – Indigenous people don't do that. So not only do they have to meet, “this is what they want”, but [also] “this is how they want it” (2004, pers. comm., November).

The sense that Aboriginal people learn “differently” from non-Aboriginal people further complicates the general perception of their need for academic support. Closely tied to this is the notion that Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners value different forms of knowledge, and there is a significant body of literature supporting a binary divide between how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people learn and how they understand knowledge and the nature of learning. Our analysis, however, does not strongly support this position. Indeed, it leads us to suggest that the situation is much more complex than these accounts allow. Certainly Aboriginal student teachers who have completed high school and gone on to university study do not report learning “differently” from their non-Indigenous peers. Their need for academic support for successful study has not been as great as the needs of colleagues who have not had the opportunity to complete school. In fact, their needs have not been as great as many of their non-Indigenous cohort, and we see this as a trend that may continue in Indigenous higher education more generally as greater numbers of Indigenous students finish secondary education.

Even where they may start off, uncertainly, as university students, several report that they “found their feet” quickly, and towards the end of their studies did better on their own than with the support of a tutor. Unlike their teacher-elders, they are not subjectified as either inadequate or inappropriate. As an Aboriginal teacher educator, Deb contrasted the Aboriginal student teachers she has taught with her own self as a student: “We [the first group of Aboriginal teachers] were putting our toes into the water very tentatively and we would be scared it would be like the crocodile – he’d pull you in and drown you. These young ones aren’t scared like this” (2004, pers. comm., June).

The young student teachers we have followed over their first three years of employment know themselves as people with the capacity to succeed, and they experienced success in terms of their studies and their teaching. But this is not a general experience, and although Alford and James (2007) for instance note that national average Indigenous school retention rates and trends are improving (35.7% in 2001, 39.1% in 2003), this still means that the vast majority of Indigenous young people do not complete secondary education. They also highlight the experience reported in their Victorian study:

Literacy and numeracy issues are not being adequately addressed. Koori children bring a language mix of Indigenous words, Aboriginal English and Standard English to school, but literacy programs and texts recognise only Standard English. “Koori English” is not used as a literacy teaching tool. One result is a growing gap in literacy levels between Koori and non-Koori students in the region and in reading abilities in particular (Alford & James, 2007, p. 9).

These issues will continue to impact on teacher education as older Aboriginal people decide to enter the teaching profession in future years, and will find the same support needs as their earlier colleagues reported here.

■ Conclusions

It is clear that without the provision of a threefold system of financial, emotional and academic support offered to Indigenous pre-service teachers, there would be even fewer who have completed teacher education. Aboriginal teachers interviewed in this study consistently identify these three areas as crucial to the completion of their degrees. Our discussion has shown that in complex ways these supports impact on the lived experience of Aboriginal students, either sustaining or undermining their development as professionals. There is no single factor that appears to stand out as more important than the others in the accounts we have drawn on here, and it is clear that these factors cannot be understood independently from each other.

It is also important to note that there is no simple correlation between “fixing” the provision of one or more of these support factors and an easy solution to the problem of attracting more Indigenous people to teacher education. This is particularly the case for mature-age students who may be seeking career changes, and still have families to support and the same sorts of wider community responsibilities that have characterised the experience of most of the Indigenous teachers who have participated in this study. When we talk about Indigenous education and teacher education, we need to ensure that the understandings of the nature *and* the effects of successive forms of teacher education provision for Indigenous people we have outlined here remains both consciously and productively in focus. As Goulet and McLeod note, “Aboriginal teacher education needs to consider the historical and societal context in which it takes place. One cannot ignore the impact of past colonial practices on the students in our programs” (2002, p. 356).

This research has highlighted the commitment of Indigenous communities, families and individuals to actively participate in ways to improve the experience of schooling for Indigenous children everywhere. This is the “special reason” that has led the great majority of the participants in this study to enter teacher education and sustain the struggle through their own studies and subsequent careers. Their stories indicate that there is a continuing need for enhanced provision of financial, emotional and academic support structures that acknowledges and extends this commitment, along with an enhanced sensitivity on the part of teacher educators and other key stakeholders to the practical politics of identity work, student experience and cultural struggle.

■ References

- Alford, K., & James, R. (2007). *Pathways and barriers: Indigenous schooling and VET participation in the Goulburn Valley Region*. Canberra, ACT: Government of Australia.
- Bean, J. P., & Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research*, 55, 485-540.
- Bin-Sallik, M. (1989). *Aboriginal tertiary education in Australia: How well is it serving the needs of Aborigines?* Underdale, SA: Aboriginal Studies Key Centre.
- Bin-Sallik, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Aboriginal women by degrees: Their stories of the journey towards academic achievement*. St Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and symbolic power* (Trans; G. Raymond & M. Adamson). London: Polity.
- Bradley D., Noonan P., Nugent H., & Scales B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final report*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

- Cole, M. (2004). "Brutal and stinking" and "difficult to handle": The historical and contemporary manifestations of racialisations, institutional racism, and schooling in Britain. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 7(1), 35-56.
- Collins, J. (2000). *Report on the Inquiry into the Effect of Education Training Programs for Indigenous Australians – Katu Kalpa*. Canberra, ACT: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2007). *Top of the class: Report on the inquiry into teacher education*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training. Canberra, ACT: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia
- Craven, R., Tucker, A., Munns, G., Hinkley, G., Marsh, H., & Simpson, K. (2005). *Indigenous students' aspirations: Dreams, perceptions and realities. Self-concept Enhancement and Learning Facilitation (SELF) Research Centre, UWS*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Crotty, M. (1998, July). *The pain of a paradigm shift: Mature female students entering tertiary education*. Paper presented at Annual Conference of Australian Association for Research in Education, Adelaide, South Australia.
- Davies, B. (1993). *Shards of glass: Children reading and writing beyond gendered identities*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2008). *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2007*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Edwards, R. (1993). *Mature age women students: Separating or connecting family and education*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Fletcher, J. J. (1989). *Clean, clad and courteous: A history of Aboriginal school education in New South Wales*. Sydney, NSW: Southwood Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Truth and power. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by M. Foucault* (pp. 109-133). Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Gee, J. P. (2002). *Social linguistics and literacies*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Gibb, H. (2006). Distance education and the issue of equity online: Exploring the perspectives of rural Aboriginal students. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 35, 21-29.
- Gillborn, D. (2006). Critical race theory and education: Racism and anti-racism in educational theory and praxis. *Discourse*, 27(1), 11-32.
- Goulet, L., & McLeod, Y. (2002). Connections and reconnections: Affirming cultural identity in Aboriginal teacher education. *McGill Journal of Education*, 37(3), 355-369.
- Grant, M. (1996). Development of a model using information technology for support of rural Aboriginal students off-campus learning. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 12(2), 94-108.
- Green, B., & Reid, J. (2002) Constructing the teacher and schooling the nation, *History of Education Review*, 31(2), 30-44.
- Han, J. (2007). Getting world English speakers student-teachers to the Top of the Class: Making hope for ethno-cultural diversity in teacher education robust. *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(3), 291-309.
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London: Methuen.
- Hesch, R. (1994). A Canadian Preparation Program for Aboriginal teachers: Instrument for incorporation. *Teaching Education*, 6(1), 31-40.
- Hesch, R. (1996) Antiracist educators Sui Generis? The dialectics of aboriginal teacher education. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 33(3), 269-280.
- Herbert, J. (2002) *Learning journeys: Indigenous teachers sharing their success stories*. Townsville, QLD: James Cook University.
- Hickling-Hudson, A. (2003). Multicultural education and the postcolonial turn. *Policy Practices in Education*, 1(2), 381-400.
- Hickling-Hudson, A., & Ahlquist, R. (2003). Contesting the curriculum in the schooling of indigenous children in Australian and the United States: From eurocentrism to culturally powerful pedagogies. *Comparative Education Review*, 47, 64- 91.
- Hughes, P., & Willmot, E. (1982) A thousand Aboriginal teachers by 1990. In E. Sherwood (Ed.), *Aboriginal education: Issues and innovations* (pp. 45-50). Perth, WA: Creative Research.
- James, R., & Devlin, M. (2005, November). *Towards a new policy environment for Indigenous people, culture and knowledge in Australian Higher Education: An examination of issues and possibilities for institutional and government policy*. Paper presented at Education-Led Recovery of Indigenous Capacity: Reshaping the policy agenda, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia.
- Karmel, P. (1971). *The Karmel Report: Committee of enquiry into education in South Australia, 1969-1970: Education in South Australia*. Adelaide, SA: Government of South Australia.
- Ladwig, J. G. (1994). Rhetoric, science, and the construction of socially recognisable evidence in educational research. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 21(3), 77-96.
- Lee, A. (1992). Poststructuralism and educational research: Some categories and issues. *Issues in Educational Research*, 2(1), 1-12. Retrieved 16 August, 2008, from <http://education.curtin.edu.au/iier/iier2/lee.html>.
- McConaghy, C. (2000). *Rethinking Indigenous education: Culturalism, colonialism and the politics of knowing*. Flaxton, QLD: Post Pressed.
- Mecurio, A., & Clayton, L. (2001). *Imagining themselves: Imagining their future*. Wayville, SA: Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia.
- Mellor, S., & Corrigan, M. (2004). The case for change. The review of contemporary research on Indigenous education outcomes. *Australian Education Review*. Camberwell, VIC: Australian Council of Educational Research.
- Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseans, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405-416.
- Nakata, M. (2004) Indigenous knowledge and the cultural interface: Underlying issues at the intersection of knowledge and information systems. In A. Hickling Hudson, J. Matthews, & A. Woods (Eds.), *Disrupting preconceptions: Postcolonialism and education* (pp. 19-38). Flaxton, QLD: Post Pressed.
- Reid, C. (2004). *Negotiating racialised identities: Indigenous teacher education in Australia and Canada*. Melbourne, VIC: Common Ground.
- Reid, J., Santoro, N., McConaghy, C., Simpson, L., Crawford, L., & Bond, B. (2004). Making spaces for Indigenous teachers in 'the impenetrable whiteness of schooling'. *Proceedings of the Australian Teacher Education*

Association Annual Conference, *Making Spaces: Regenerating the Profession*. Bathurst, NSW: Australian Teacher Education Association.

Reid, J., Simpson, T., & Zundans, L. (2005). Discourses of exclusion. *Education in Rural Australia*, 15(2), 21-30.

Reid, J., & Santoro, N. (2006). Cinders in snow? Aboriginal teacher identities in Australian schools. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 34(2), 7-18.

Santoro, N., Reid, J., & Kamler, B. (2001). Teachers talking difference: Teacher education and the poetics of anti-racism. *Teaching Education*, 12(1), 191-212.

Santoro, N., Reid, J., McConaghy, C., & Simpson, L. (2005). Exploring the Career Experiences of Indigenous Teachers: Beyond Policy and Resource Initiatives. *Refereed proceedings of the Australian Educational Research Conference, Doing the Public Good: Positioning Education Research*. Melbourne, VIC: Australian Association for Research in Education Conference.

Santoro, N., & Reid, J. (2006). All things to all people: Indigenous teachers in the Australian teaching profession. *European Journal of Teacher Education, Special Issue: Diversity in the Teaching Profession and Teacher Education for Diversity*, 29 (3), 287-303.

Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Commission (SCRGSC). (2005). *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005*. Canberra, ACT: Productivity Commission.

Teese, R., & Polesel, J. (2003). *Undemocratic schooling: Equity and quality in mass education in Australia*. Melbourne, VIC: Melbourne University Press.

Walker, R. (2000). *Indigenous performance in Western Australia universities: Reframing retention and success*. Evaluations and Investigations Programme Higher Education Division. Canberra, ACT: DETYA. Retrieved 3 March, 2009, from http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/eippubs/eip00_12/index.htm.

■ About the authors

All four authors have worked together since 2003 on the Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project *Career Pathways of Indigenous Teachers*. Jo-Anne Reid and Ninetta Santoro work in the School of Teacher Education at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst; from where Laurie Crawford has recently moved to work as an Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the Greater Western Area Health Service, and Lee Simpson, a former teacher educator at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, now works for the Greater Southern Area Health Service, as an Administrator in Aboriginal Health.